

given that passages like 1 Samuel 3:1 affirm that there were periods in history when God did not send many prophets or visions to direct Israel.)

Note 36 – Romans 15:13

Romans 15:13 Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that (1519) ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost. 14 And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another. 15 Nevertheless, brethren, I have written the more boldly unto you in some sort, as putting you in mind, because of the grace that is given to me of God, 16 That I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost. 17 I have therefore whereof I may glory through Jesus Christ in those things which pertain to God. 18 **For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ hath not wrought by me, to make the Gentiles obedient, by word and deed, 19 Through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God;** so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.

The prayer articulated by Paul in verse 13, including the phrase “through the power of the Holy Ghost” is simply a petition for God to work miracles among the Romans, as we will now demonstrate. This will also be able to explain the initial portion of the prayer in which Paul asks that God would “fill” the Romans “with all joy and peace” and the relationship these things have to miracles.

First, we notice the Greek word for “that” in the phrase “that ye may abound in hope.” This is the Greek word “eis” (1519), which means “into, unto, towards, or for.” Here we have the basic concept of some action or thing in the direction toward something else. In this sense it can refer to intended purpose of an action or thing. As such, it is reasonable to conclude that Paul is praying for God to fill the Romans with joy and peace but he is not asking God directly to make them have hope. Instead, Paul believes that hope will result indirectly if God answers Paul’s prayer to provide joy and peace.

Second, for additional insight on Paul’s train of thought, we turn to Jesus’ teaching in John 15.

John 15:3 Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. 4 **Abide in me, and I in you.** As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. 5 I am the vine, ye are the branches: **He that abideth in me, and I in him,** the same bringeth forth much fruit: for **without me ye can do (4160) nothing (3756) (3762).** 6 If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. 7 **If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.** 8 Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples. 9 As

the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love. 10 **If ye keep my commandments**, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love. 11 **These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.**

Notice that the content of John 15 is centrally focused on Jesus' disciples remaining faithful to his teaching as indicated plainly in verses 3, 7, and 10. In verse 7, Jesus also plainly states that his disciples' ability to ask and receive from God depends on their remaining faithful to his commandments. And, according to verse 11, the result of these things will be "that your joy might be full." But, this reference to "asking and receiving" also entails the ability to work miracles.

Number one, the phrase "ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you" in verse 7 is conceptually parallel to verse 5, which says "without me you can do (4160) nothing (3756) (3762)." Note the Strong's Concordance numbers behind the key words. Consider this phrase, "you can do nothing" alongside similar phrasing in elsewhere in John. John 9:32-33 comments on Jesus miraculously healing a blind man and says, "If this man were not of God, he could do (4160) nothing (3762)." As we can see from the Strong's numbers, the phrases are nearly identical. However, it is clear from John 9, that this phrase is being used in reference to the miraculous healing. But, we can also compare this phrasing to John 14:12-17.

John 14:12 Verily, verily, I say unto you, **He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do;** because I go unto my Father. 13 And **whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do**, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. 14 **If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.** 15 **If ye love me, keep my commandments.** 16 And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; 17 **Even the Spirit of truth;** whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.

As indicated in verses 12 and 15, John 14 already contains the emphasis on remaining in Christ's commandments that is thematic in chapter 15. Chapter 14 also contains the theme of "asking" and God doing or acting in response to our request that we have seen in chapter 15. However, chapter 14 is clear that such language pertains to Jesus miraculous works as can be seen in verse 12, which says "the works that I do shall he do also, and greater works than these." And, verse 17 even references the Holy Spirit as part of this discussion. This isn't surprising, however, given Paul's description of the Holy Spirit as the facilitator of miraculous gifts in 1 Corinthians 12:4-11.

Number two, notice that not only do John 14 and 15 connect Christian joy with staying in Christ's teaching and with God performing miracles for us (and through us), but chapter 14:12 connects this to remaining in "belief" in Jesus Christ. Moreover, this connection between miraculous works and belief in Jesus in John 14:12 is itself synonymous with phrases like, "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you," which are also repeated in these chapters. The phrase "in

believing” in Romans 15:13 serves the same purpose. Paul isn’t asking God to unilaterally or irresistibly cause the Romans to believe. He is petitioning God to work miracles among them because they were “in faith,” in accordance with Jesus’ promise that God would do miracles for those who believed in Him.

Number three, if we read just a few verses farther, we see that Paul confirms that his intention is in reference to miraculous gifts. In Romans 15:18-19, Paul refers back to “those things which Christ hath not wrought by me” among the Gentiles “through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God.” Here the phrase, “power of the Spirit of God” is clearly a reference to miracles. As such, we should interpret this same phrase just six verses earlier in Romans 15:13 in the same manner in reference to miraculous power.

Consequently, when Paul petitions that God would “fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that (1519) ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost,” we know that he is merely reiterating the instructions of his Teacher, Jesus Christ, in John 14-15. There is nothing in this prayer that is meant by Paul to infer that God would directly, internally act on the minds of the Romans by the Holy Spirit to irresistibly and unilaterally cause them to feel things like joy and peace or to have hope. Instead, in verse 13 Paul is petitioning God to do miracles among the Romans by the Holy Spirit. And, of course, the natural result of such external evidence of God’s love and power will be to increase the Romans’ joy, peace, and hopeful assurance of divine deliverance. This is a petition for God to continue to provide additional external evidence, not a petition for God to irresistibly cause any man to feel or to believe anything.

Note 37 – Romans 15:30-33

Romans 15:26 For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem. 27 It hath pleased them verily; and their debtors they are. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things. 28 When therefore I have performed this, and have sealed to them this fruit, I will come by you into Spain. 29 And I am sure that, when I come unto you, I shall come in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ. 30 Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me; 31 That I may be delivered from them that do not believe in Judaea; and that my service (1248) which I have for Jerusalem may be accepted (2144) of the saints; 32 That I may come unto you with joy by the will of God, and may with you be refreshed. 33 Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen.

The key element in this passage comes in verse 31 when Paul urges the Romans to pray. The first part of the prayer entails a basic prayer for deliverance, which is a fairly typical request in scripture. But the second part is a petition “that my service which I have for Jerusalem may be accepted of the saints.” Is Paul here

asking the Romans to pray that God will cause the saints in Jerusalem to choose to accept his service?

First, it is important to note what Paul means by “service” here. It is the Greek word “diakonia” (1248), which is a noun that means “service” but is used frequently in the New Testament to refer to things like apostolic preaching or the distribution of financial support to poor members of the church. We see this second meaning of “diakonia” used in Luke 10:38-40 where it refers to Martha “serving” Jesus, presumably providing food or drink perhaps as a normal host would for their houseguest. But we also see this second meaning clearly in Acts 6:1-2 and 2 Corinthians 8:1-4. In Acts 6, the widows are said to be neglected in the “daily ministration,” which is contextually defined as providing food to the widows in the Christian community. Widows were notoriously poor at that point in history. While verse 1 uses the word “diakonia” in reference to the neglect of the widows, verse 2 connects this concept to the phrase “serve tables.” This phrase is comprised from the related Greek noun “diakoneo” (1247), which means servant, and the phrase “trapeza” (5132), which means “a table on which food is placed.” In 2 Corinthians, we find the phrase “ministering to the saints” used to describe a financial gift to support poorer believers. We will have more to say on the relevance of 2 Corinthians in a moment.

Having established this normal usage of “diakonia,” we can now see how the context of Romans 15 conforms to the idea of providing material goods to someone. In verse 26, Paul makes mention of “a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem.” Here the language is notably similar to verse 31, which speaks of “diakonia” for the saints in Jerusalem. In verse 27, Paul provides further confirmation of his meaning when he explains that the Gentiles who provided this contribution are obligated to support the Jewish believers in “carnal things,” meaning material needs. Consequently, we can conclude from the vocabulary and the context that verse 31 is fundamentally a prayer regarding a financial contribution for the poor Jewish saints in Jerusalem.

Second, it is also important to understand the Greek word for “accepted” in verse 31. The way this is translated into English in the King James Version (and other versions) suggests that Paul is petitioning for something about the saints, namely, that the saints will accept the financial gift, which he is delivering. However, the Greek word for “accepted” is “euprosdektos” (2144), which is actually an adjective, not a verb, as indicated in the definition below.

2144 euprosdektos

from 2095 and a derivative of 4327; TDNT-2:58,146; adj

AV-accepted 3, acceptable 2; 5

1) well received, accepted, acceptable

We can also survey the other a few of the other occurrences of “euprosdektos” in the New Testament. Romans 15:16 uses “euprosdektos” in the phrase “that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable (2144), being sanctified by the Holy Ghost.” Here “euprosdektos” refers to the characteristics or of the offering.

In 2 Corinthians 6:2, “euprosdektos” is used in the phrase, “behold, now is the accepted (2144) time; behold, now is the day of salvation.” Again, it “euprosdektos” is describing a characteristic of the time period. Consequently, as an adjective, it is clear that “euprosdektos” is meant to describe a characteristic of a thing. It is not meant as a verb depicting the choice or action of the saints in Jerusalem. This is critically important because it demonstrates that on a purely grammatical level, Romans 15:31 is not a petition to God regarding an action or choice of the saints in Jerusalem. Instead, it is a petition for God regarding the quality of the gift itself.

Third, the particular historical circumstances might also provide some insight. Earlier we mentioned 2 Corinthians 8. But we can take a closer look at the connection between Romans 15 and 2 Corinthians.

Number one, notice Romans 15:26 specifies that it was the Christians from “Macedonia and Achaia” who made the financial contribution to the saints in Jerusalem. Macedonia and Achaia were two Roman provinces located roughly in modern day Greece. Encyclopedia Britannica helps fill in some important geographic details.

“Thessaloniki – after 146 was the capital of the Roman province of Macedonia... Two letters written by the Apostle Paul were addressed to its inhabitants (Thessalonians), and its first bishop, Gaius, was one of Paul’s companions.”

– <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/591866/Thessaloniki>

“Corinth – In 44 BC Julius Caesar reestablished Corinth as a Roman colony. The new Corinth flourished and became the administrative capital of the Roman province of Achaia. The city is known to readers of the New Testament for the letters addressed to its Christian community by the apostle Paul.” – <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/680327/Corinth>

Consequently, when Paul states that the financial gift for Jerusalem came from Christians in Macedonia and Corinth, we know that he is either outright referring to or at least including the Corinthians and Thessalonians.

Number two, typically scholars date both of Paul’s Corinthian epistles prior to the epistle to the Romans as indicated by Britannica below.

“Saint Paul, the Apostle – The probable chronological order (leaving aside Philemon, which cannot be dated) is 1 Thessalonians, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, and Romans.” –

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/447019/Saint-Paul-the-Apostle>

“Letter of Paul to the Romans – Letter of Paul to the Romans, the longest and doctrinally most significant of St. Paul the Apostle’s New Testament writings, probably composed at Corinth in about AD 57.” –

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/508652/Letter-of-Paul-to-the-Romans>

“The Letter of Paul to the Corinthians – The first letter, probably written about 53–54 CE at Ephesus, Asia Minor, deals with problems that arose in the early years after Paul’s initial missionary visit (c. 50–51) to Corinth and his establishment there of a Christian community...The Second Letter of Paul to the Corinthians (II Corinthians in the New Testament) was written from Macedonia in about 55 CE. The letter, which may have been written after an actual visit by Paul to Corinth, refers to an upheaval among the Christians there, during the course of which Paul had been insulted and his apostolic authority challenged. Because of this incident, Paul resolved not to go to Corinth again in person.”

– <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/137622/The-Letter-of-Paul-to-the-Corinthians>

As stated in these entries, 1 Corinthians is dated to 53-54 AD and 2 Corinthians is dated to 55 AD. Romans is dated to 57 AD, two years after the writing of 2 Corinthians. It is not necessary to be strict about these dates. The point is that it is reasonable to conclude that Paul wrote both letters to the Corinthians prior to his letter to the Romans. Given Paul’s reference in Romans 15:26 to the contribution from the Christians in Achaia, which no doubt included the Corinthians, it would make sense for Paul to write the Corinthians beforehand to ask for their contribution. Of course, it turns out that Paul wrote two whole chapters about this in 2 Corinthians 8-9, even referring directly to “Macedonia” and “Achaia.” We won’t quote the entire passage here, but 2 Corinthians 9:2 states, “I boast of you to them of Macedonia, that Achaia was ready a year ago.” Notice that Paul is here referring to the Corinthians as “Achaia.” And, as stated by Britannica, it is possible that the letter to the Romans was actually composed by Paul while he was at Corinth. Two factors flow from these considerations.

Number three, after boasting of the Corinthians zeal to give in verse 2 of chapter 9, Paul goes on in verses 3-4 to caution, “I sent the brethren, lest our boasting of you should be in vain in this behalf; that, as I said, ye may be ready: Lest haply if they of Macedonia come with me, and find you unprepared, we (that we say not, ye) should be ashamed in this same confident boasting.” Verse 6 follows with an encouragement for generosity, stating, “He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully.” The whole point of chapters 8 and 9 of 2 Corinthians is to persuade the Corinthians not only to give, but to give abundantly and to have the collection ready when he arrived. Obviously, Paul was concerned about the quality (or quantity) of the financial gift for the poor saints in Jerusalem. It is equally clear that Paul has this concern in mind as he writes his request in Romans 15:31, “that my service (1248) which I have for Jerusalem may be accepted (2144) of the saints.”

Fourth, now that we know Paul is asking God in regard to the characteristics of the financial gift rather than the choice or action of the saints to accept it, we

might ask what Paul expects God to do regarding this gift? How does Paul expect God to help?

Number one, it is clear from 2 Corinthians 8:2 that the Corinthians had committed to contributing a year before Paul wrote the book of 2 Corinthians. If Paul was either at Corinth (or still on his way to Corinth) when he wrote the letter to the Romans, it is possible that Paul was still engaged in collecting the contributions.

Number two, we already know that Paul was speaking at length to persuade the Gentiles to give. Not only are there 2 whole chapters in 2 Corinthians, but in 2 Corinthians 9:2, Paul says that he provoked “very many” others to give in other places like Macedonia by boasting of the Corinthians’ pledge to contribute. So, it would seem that everywhere Paul stopped along the way and every place he wrote to, he was most likely speaking to persuade the Gentiles to give.

Number three, remember that Britannica stated that the epistle to the Romans was probably written from Corinth. And we know that 2 Corinthians 8-9 is clear that Paul needed to stop back by Corinth before taking the financial gift to Jerusalem.

Number four, Acts 18:1 is the last mention of Corinth by name before Paul arrives at Jerusalem in Acts 21:17. When explaining the reason for his visit to Jerusalem in Acts 24:17, Paul states that “after many years I came to bring alms to my nation, and offerings.” From Acts 24, we know that it was on this trip to Jerusalem that Paul brought the contribution that he spoke of in Romans 15 and 2 Corinthians 8-9.

Number five, along that route between Corinth and Jerusalem, Acts 18-21 describes that Paul came to Ephesus (Acts 18:19), Caesarea and Antioch (Acts 18:22), “all over the country of Galatia and Phrygia” (Acts 18:23), back to Ephesus where he was heard by “all Asia” and worked mighty miracles (Acts 19:1, 10-11). However, Acts 19:21 describes how Paul would pass once more through “Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, saying, after I have been there, I must also see Rome.” (This is interesting since it potentially corresponds to Romans 15:32 in which Paul mentions his intention to come to Rome after Jerusalem.) Although Corinth is not mentioned by name in Acts 19:21, it would be reasonable to conclude that Paul stopped there while in Achaia. If so, we should only count those places that Paul spoke to or wrote to after Acts 19:21. From this point, Paul stays in Asia and Ephesus (Acts 19:22, 26), various “parts” of Macedonia twice (20:1, 3), Greece (Acts 20:2), Philippi and Troas (Acts 20:6), Assos (Acts 20:13), Mitylene, Chios, Samos, Trogyllium, and Miletus (Acts 20:14-15), Coos, Rhodes, Patara, Phenicia, Cyprus, Syria and Tyre (Acts 21:1-3), and finally Ptolemais and Caesaria (Acts 21:7-8) before arriving in Jerusalem in Acts 21:15-17. Whether we count from Acts 18 or Acts 19, it stands to reason that Paul was asking all of these Gentile Christians to contribute to the poor Christians in Jerusalem.

Number six, we also know that Paul described his written words as having “the Spirit of God also” (1 Corinthians 7:40) and his spoken words also to be directed

by wisdom given from the Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:4, 13, 12:8). In anticipation of all these opportunities in various Gentile cities, it would make sense for Paul to petition God for wisdom to speak compelling words (and the ability to perform miracles as he did in Ephesus) in order to persuade the Gentiles to contribute.

In light of these considerations, there is no reason to insist that Paul is petitioning God to cause the saints at Jerusalem to choose to accept the gift or that his petition pertains to their response at all. Nor is it even necessary to insist that Paul expected God to cause people to give. Instead, there is reasonable evidence to conclude that Paul was simply requesting God's help raising sufficient funds and that Paul expected this divine help to come by means of God giving him wisdom (and miracles) as he wrote and spoke everywhere to convince Christians to contribute.

Note 38 – Romans 16:24-27, 2 Thessalonians 2:13-17, Jude 1:24-25, and Ephesians 3:12-21

Romans 16:24 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen. 25 Now **to him that is of power (1410) to stablish (4741) you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ**, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, 26 But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith: 27 To God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen.

The noteworthy phrase in this petition occurs in verse 25, when Paul describes God as “him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ.” Does the word “stablish” here refer to God acting inwardly and unilaterally on the decision-making faculties of an individual to irresistibly cause them to accept the Gospel?

First, the word “stablish” is the Greek word “sterizo” (4741), which means “to make stable, strengthen, confirm.” We will discuss the implications of this term in greater detail momentarily.

Second, this epistle isn't written to unbelievers as an evangelistic device intended to convert pagans to Christianity. As such, it would be unnatural to conclude that Paul is intending to describe a conversion mechanism here, something by which God brings people to accept the Gospel. He is likely talking about a mechanism that strengthens people who have already accepted the Gospel. But, if Paul feels the need to pray so that the Romans will be strengthened in the faith, this strongly suggests that Paul does not perceive their “establishment” in the gospel to be a foregone conclusion.

Third, this action of establishing is connected closely with Paul's gospel and “the preaching of Jesus Christ.” It is possible, that the means or mechanism of “strengthening” people comes entirely by means of the external act of hearing

additional Christian preaching. After all, in Romans 10 Paul has established the general need for an external preacher in order for people to hear, and in turn by means of hearing, come to believe the Gospel. Likewise, in 1 Corinthians 14 Paul goes to great lengths to emphasize that it is better to speak to someone in a language they understand than in a foreign language they don't understand. During this segment, Paul repeatedly argues that someone can be edified or encouraged when they comprehend. Given these comments from Paul, it would be perfectly natural to conclude that Paul believed ongoing teaching was likewise a means of strengthening existing faith. Moreover, human beings both persuade and encourage one another to do all kinds of things (good and bad) all the time by means of verbal discourse. So, there is nothing inherently irresistible or unilateral about the process of external communication as a means to strengthen conviction.

Fourth, it is interesting here that this word “sterizo” is coupled with the Greek verb “dunamai” (1410), which means, “to be able, have power.”

Number one, “dunamai” is also closely related to the noun “dunamis” (1411), which is derived from it and denotes, “strength, power, ability” including “power for performing miracles.” Although often used more generally, “dunamai” and “dunamis” (1411) are normal New Testament words used in reference to miracle-working ability. “Dunamai” is used in Matthew 9:27-28, when two blind men request that Jesus miraculously heal them and restore their sight. It is similarly used in Matthew 17:14-15 when a father petitions Jesus to heal his son and states that Jesus' disciples were “unable” to heal him. In Mark 1:40, it is used when a leper declares that Jesus is able to miraculously heal him of leprosy. In Mark 6:5 uses “dunamai” when stating that Jesus could not do mighty works in a particular place, except healing a few sick people. In John 3:2, Nicodemus uses “dunamai” when describing Jesus' ability to do miracles. And we see similar uses also in John 9:16, 33, 10:21, 11:37.

Number two, consider the concepts described in the following passages.

Mark 16:20 And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and **confirming (950) the word with signs** following. Amen.

Hebrews 2:3 How shall we escape, if we neglect so great **salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed (950) unto us by them that heard him;** 4 **God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost,** according to his own will?

1 Corinthians 1:6 **Even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed (950) in you:** 7 **So that ye come behind in no gift;** waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ: 8 **Who shall also confirm (950) you unto the end,** that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Each of these passages asserts that God confirmed the teaching or testimony about Jesus with signs, such as miracles and supernatural gifts. There are two important

points worth noting. First, although the Greek word “confirm” is “bebaioo,” not “sterizo,” the two terms overlap significantly in meaning. As can be seen from the definitions below, “bebaioo” means “to make firm, make firm, establish” and “sterizo” likewise means “to make firm or confirm” and is translated as “stablish” here in Romans 16:25.

Strong's G950 - bebaioō

Part of Speech: verb

1. to make firm, establish, confirm, make sure

Strong's G4741 - stērizō

Part of Speech: verb

1. to make stable, place firmly, set fast, fix

2. to strengthen, make firm

3. to render constant, confirm, one's mind

Second, it should be noted that in Mark 16:20, Hebrews 2:3, and 1 Corinthians 1:6, it is the testimony or teaching of Christ that is confirmed, whereas Romans 16 specifies that it is the people who are “stablished.” However, 1 Corinthians 1 actually uses “bebaioo” twice, once in verse 6 where it applies to the testimony of Christ and again in verse 8 where the same word is applied to the Corinthians themselves. Moreover, the close-proximity usage of “bebaioo” in verses 6 and 8 make it clear from the context that the actions are related directly to one another. In other words, it is the confirming of the testimony of Christ by means of the miraculous gifts (such as described in 1 Corinthians 12-14) that confirm, or strengthen, the conviction of the Corinthians. (Of course, this is the result we would naturally expect when someone witnesses external evidence, and it does not require any Calvinistic notions.) More importantly, this dual-application of “bebaioo” in 1 Corinthians 1 demonstrates that the application of “sterizo” to the people in Romans 16:25 does not mean Romans 16 is discussing a different concept than 1 Corinthians 1, Mark 16, and Hebrews 2.

Ultimately, there is good biblical precedent supporting the conclusion that the “strengthening” described in Romans 16:25 is occurring either by further preaching or by means of further miracles among the Romans. A prayer for either of these does not in any way entail the expectation that God would cause the Romans to persevere in the faith by unilaterally and irresistibly acting on their decision-making faculties. And, identifying this prayer as a reference to God sending teachers (or giving wisdom to teachers) or providing miracles is certainly more suitable than interpreting this prayer in reference to Calvinistic mechanisms, which are already contradicted by Paul’s perception that the Roman’s perseverance in the faith cannot be assumed.

Now that we have examined the use of “sterizo” in the prayer in Romans 16:25, we can examine a few related prayers in scripture, including 2 Thessalonians 2:13-17 and Jude 1:24-25.

2 Thessalonians 2:13 But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because **God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth:** 14 **Whereunto he called (2564) you by our gospel,** to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. 15 Therefore, brethren, **stand fast (4739),** and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle. 16 Now our **Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father,** which hath loved us, and hath given *us* everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, 17 **Comfort your hearts, and stablish (4741) you in every good word and work.**

First, we might take a moment to briefly discuss verses 13-14, which describes how God chose the Thessalonians for salvation from the beginning and called them by the gospel. Number one, here it should be noted that Freewill theology, particularly as exhibited by the earliest, non-canonical Christian writers, held to a view called simple foreknowledge, which asserted that God had omniscient knowledge of the future without impeding human freedom of choice. In support of this conclusion, below we have provided these quotes below. The first quote is a summary from Encyclopedia Britannica describing the view of foreknowledge in "Classical Theism," which includes early Christianity. The second quote is an excerpt from Dr. John Sanders who is an opponent of simple foreknowledge but nevertheless explains its ancient origins. And the third quote is an example from writer Justin Martyr in the earliest post-canonical Christian period in which Justin critiques the notion that there is any sort of fatal necessity in God's foreknowledge.

"Pantheism, Nature and significance, Freedom or determinism – To be sure, Classical Theism holds to the freedom of man but insists that this freedom is compatible with a divine omniscience that includes his knowledge of the total future." – Encyclopaedia Britannica 2004 Deluxe Edition

"Dr. John Sanders: First, simple foreknowledge is the view that God does not know the future because God determines or ordains the future; God knows the future by simply previsioning the future...And so, this view of foreknowledge is perhaps the most popular view of omniscience in terms of applying to foreknowledge **throughout church history** (the simple foreknowledge view, which **started with the early church fathers,** has been held by the eastern orthodox church through to today, is popular by many Roman Catholics, and of course in the Arminian Wesleyan tradition). " – Calvinism vs. Open Theism Debate, featuring Dr. James White (Calvinist) and Dr. John Sanders (Open Theist), MPEG Audio File, Part 1 of 5, approximately 13:35-40 minutes in

"But lest some suppose, from what has been said by us, that we say that whatever happens, happens by a fatal necessity, because it is foretold as known beforehand, this too we explain. We have learned from the prophets, and we hold it to be true, that punishments, and chastisements, and good rewards, are rendered according to the merit of each man's actions. Since **if it be not so, but all things happen by fate, neither is anything at all in our own power.** For if it be fated that this man, e.g., be good, and this other evil, neither is the former

meritorious nor the latter to be blamed. **And again, unless the human race have the power of avoiding evil and choosing good by free choice, they are not accountable for their actions**, of whatever kind they be. **But that it is by free choice they both walk uprightly and stumble, we thus demonstrate.** We see the same man making a transition to opposite things. Now, if it had been fated that he were to be either good or bad, he could never have been capable of both the opposites, nor of so many transitions. But not even would some be good and others bad, since we thus make fate the cause of evil, and exhibit her as acting in opposition to herself; **or that which has been already stated would seem to be true, that neither virtue nor vice is anything, but that things are only reckoned good or evil by opinion; which, as the true word shows, is the greatest impiety and wickedness. But this we assert is inevitable fate, that they who choose the good have worthy rewards, and they who choose the opposite have their merited awards.** For not like other things, as trees and quadrupeds, which cannot act by choice, did God make man: for neither would he be worthy of reward or praise did he not of himself choose the good, but were created for this end;(2) nor, if he were evil, would he be worthy of punishment, not being evil of himself, but being able to be nothing else than what he was made.” – JUSTIN MARTYR, THE FIRST APOLOGY OF JUSTIN, CHAP. XLIII--RESPONSIBILITY ASSERTED.

Of course, merely demonstrating what ancient Christians believed is not the same as proving that they were correct. However, our point here is that the link between foreknowledge and divine determinism is one that has not been universally recognized, especially in the earliest centuries of Christianity. There are non-deterministic models for divine foreknowledge. And consequently, the mere mention that God chose the Thessalonians for salvation “from the beginning” should not be presumed to only fit with Calvinism. In order for a Calvinistic model of foreknowledge to be proven by this passage, it would be necessary to prove that the selection was not only “from the beginning” but also unconditional and to demonstrate that the “calling” was irresistible and automatic. A thorough examination of these general concepts can be found in our other studies. However, it is clear that this brief prayer in 2 Thessalonians 2 neither comments on nor proves whether election is unconditional or whether the calling is irresistible. Although arguably, the entire function of foreknowledge in election logically suggests a surveying of certain qualities upon which election is conditional. Nevertheless, this particular prayer is simply an assertion that foreknowledge was involved in election.

Number two, it is also clear that this prayer does not directly connect God’s foreknowledge to the calling in any exclusive sense. It states that God chose them “from the beginning” and that God called them, but the grammar does not tie the calling to the election, nor does the text comment at all on whether God called others as well. In other words, it does not say that God only called those that He elected by foreknowledge for salvation. This lack of any explicit exclusive relationship articulated by the text is important because it allows this verse to fit perfectly without contradiction to Jesus’ teaching in Matthew 22:1-14 (and more briefly in Matthew 20:16). In Matthew 22, Jesus tells a parable in which the

primary focus is inviting people to the kingdom. The Greek word translated as “call” or “bidden” throughout the parable is the same Greek word used by Paul for “calling” in 2 Thessalonians 2:14. Over the course of the parable, a great variety of people are called to the wedding feast of the king’s son, which represents the kingdom of Jesus Christ. However, some of those who are called, turn down the invitation and others accept the invitation only to be found unworthy and be cast out when they arrive. Thus, the parable ends with the summary given by Jesus in verse 14, “many are called, but few are chosen.” This passage explicitly teaches that God calls more people than those who end up chosen.

Number three, the phrase “called you by our gospel” in verse 14 strongly suggests that Paul understood this “calling” occurred by means of his preaching, which incidentally is exactly what happens during Jesus’ parable in Matthew 22:1-14. Thus, any assertion that this verse includes a Calvinistic, irresistible inner “call” by God Himself directly acting on human decision-making is shown to be secondary at best and simply unnecessary at worst. In other words, there is no need to suggest the presence of an inner “call” given the fact that the mention of “calling” in this verse is already sufficiently and entirely identifiable in terms of Paul’s external preaching.

Second, we might note that while Paul prays that God would “stablish” the Thessalonians in every good work in verse 17, in verse 15 he instructs the Thessalonians themselves to “stand fast.”

2 Thessalonians 2:15 Therefore, brethren, **stand fast (4739)**, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle. 16 Now our **Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father**, which hath loved us, and hath given *us* everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, 17 **Comfort your hearts, and stablish (4741) you in every good word and work.**

The Greek word for “stand fast” is “steko” (4739), which means “to stand firm” or “persevere.” Not only is this literally a command from Paul placing the responsibility to persevere within the Thessalonians’ power, but it also acknowledges that it was possible for them to fail to do so, which is why Paul felt it was necessary to admonish them in this regard. Moreover, as we can see from the Strong’s Concordance Number, the word “steko” (4739) is related to “sterizo” (4741), the word translated as “stablish” in verse 17. “Steko” and “sterizo,” (along with “stereo,” 4731) are all considered derivatives of the word “histemi” (2476), which means to cause to make stand. This use of related words more than suggests a cooperative process in which both God and the Thessalonians must participate but are able to voluntarily not participate, which in turn is what prompts Paul to petition both God and the Thessalonians to do their respective parts.

Third, we still have to ask an important question. What does Paul indicate that God’s part is in this process as designated by the word “stablish” in verse 17?

(We might take note that the same word is used by Paul in 2 Thessalonians 3:3, although it may not necessarily be considered a prayer.)

2 Thessalonians 3:3 But the Lord is faithful, who shall stablish (4741) you, and keep *you* from evil.

Because the use of “sterizo” in 2 Thessalonians 3 follows only 3 verses after the use of “sterizo” in 2 Thessalonians 2:17, it is clear that whatever is meant by verse 17 is also intended in chapter 3:3 as well. So, by resolving the meaning of one we can resolve the other also.

On this question, we simply need to draw upon a trend we have already established. Earlier in this section we noted the similarity in meaning between “sterizo” and “bebaioo,” both meaning “to make firm,” “confirm,” or “establish.” We also saw how “bebaioo” was used in passages like Mark 16, Hebrews 2, and 1 Corinthians to denote how both the message and the conviction in the recipients are confirmed by means of the external evidence of miracles. In addition, we might note that the full phrase in verse 17 is “stablish you in every good word and work.” This, too, affirms the connection to miracles as confirmation of the message. The phrase “stablish you in word” suggests either that the word of the preacher would be confirmed among them or perhaps that preaching itself would be the means of strengthening them, as we have already discussed above based on Paul’s remarks in Romans 10. Likewise, the phrase “stablish you in every good work” seems quite parallel to the phrase “the testimony of Christ was confirmed (950) in you: So that ye come behind in no gift” from 1 Corinthians 1:6-7. In the context of the New Testament, “good works” would naturally include both natural and supernatural works. In 1 Corinthians 12:6, 10-11, Paul uses the Greek the verb “energeo” (1754) as well as the noun “energema” (1755), which is derived from it. In fact, he uses each word twice.

1 Corinthians 12:6 And there are diversities of operations (1755), but it is the same God which worketh (1754) all in all...10 To another the working (1755) of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another *divers* kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues: 11 But **all these worketh (1754) that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.**

“Energeo” comes from the adjective “energes” (1756), which is comprised from the Greek preposition “en” (1722) and the noun “ergon” (2041). “Ergon” happens to be the same word translated as “work” in 2 Thessalonians 2:17. In simple terms, here in 1 Corinthians 12 Paul is describing miracles as a “work,” particularly a work of the Holy Spirit using Greek words directly related to the term used by Paul in 2 Thessalonians 2. So, not only do we have the conceptual similarity between 2 Thessalonians 2:17 and the “gifts” that “confirm” the “testimony of Christ” in 1 Corinthians 1:6-7, but we also have miraculous gifts described as “works” in 1 Corinthians 12 using language similar to 2 Thessalonians 2. These contextual details provided a solid basis for concluding that Paul is petitioning God to continue to strengthen the Thessalonians by means

of external preaching (equivalent to sending laborers or giving wisdom to local leadership) and miraculous works. An alternate, Calvinistic mechanism that acts internally, irresistibly, and unilaterally on the decision-making faculties of the Thessalonians is neither directly mentioned nor necessitated by the text.

This brings us to Jude 1:24-25, which also relates to the patterns we've seen in 1 Corinthians 1, Mark 16, and Hebrews 2.

Jude 1:24 Now **unto him that is able (1410) to keep you from falling (679), and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory** with exceeding joy, **25** To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.

1 Corinthians 1:6 Even as the testimony of Christ was **confirmed (950) in you: 7** **So that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ: 8** **Who shall also confirm (950) you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.**

679 aptaistos

from 1 (as a negative particle) and a derivative of 4417; ; adj

AV-keep from falling + 5442 1; 1

1) not stumbling, standing firm, exempt from falling

The word for “falling” in verse 24 is “aptaistos” (679), which conveys the idea of “standing firm.” Notice the similarity between Jude 1 and 1 Corinthians 1. 1 Corinthians speaks of “establishing” Christians so that they will be blameless at Christ’s return. And Jude speaks of God establishing Christians to present them as faultless until they come before him. Could it be that like 1 Corinthians 1, Jude is speaking of God’s ability (and habit) of providing confirming proof of the gospel by means of miracles?

We should also note that we covered a related passage earlier in 1 Timothy 1:12-13. There we saw the phrase, “Christ Jesus our Lord, who enabled me.” We noted that the Greek word “endunamoo” (1743), which comes from the Greek word “dunamoo,” (1412) and ultimately “dunamis” (1411). We also mentioned that “dunamis” is commonly associated with miracle-working in the New Testament, which in turn is commonly associated with apostolic ministry, including by Paul in such passages as 2 Corinthians 12. And, as we saw, 2 Corinthians 12:12 describes the characteristics of an apostle as “signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds” and the Greek word for “mighty deeds” is “dunamis” (1411).

On this note, it is important to highlight that the Greek word for “able” here in Jude 1:24 is “dunamai” (1410). Given the presence of “dunamai” in connection with a word that means, “standing firm,” it seems likely that this passage is simply another example from a different New Testament author, commenting him on the same theme. New Testament authors seemed to frequently petitioned God to provide miracles to continue attesting to the gospel message, thereby strengthening their assurance in the faith. Once again, it is noteworthy that the

passage does not say anything that would specifically describe a Calvinistic mechanism and all the contextual details point to petitions for further miraculous gifts to strengthen new believers by means of external evidence.

Another passage that contains this type of prayer is Ephesians 3.

Ephesians 3:12 In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him. **13** Wherefore I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you, which is your glory. **14** For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, **15** Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, **16** That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with **might (1411) by his Spirit in the inner man;** **17** That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, **18** **May be able to comprehend** with all saints what *is* the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; **19** And to know the love of Christ, which **passeth knowledge**, that (2443) **ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.** **20** Now unto **him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us,** **21** Unto him *be* glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

This passage includes a petition for others to be “strengthened with might by God’s Spirit in the inner man.” It’s clear that what is being strengthen is the inner man. With that much all parties will readily agree. The question pertains to exactly how, by what mechanism, God acts to strengthen the inner man. Does God act directly, unilaterally, and irresistibly on the inner man causing it to have more faith, etc.? Or does God take some external action that has the potential to strengthen conviction?

Two things are noteworthy about the details of this passage.

First, the Greek word for “might” is “dunamis” (1411), a word we have repeatedly seen used to refer to miracles, which we know are the work of the Holy Spirit from passages like 1 Corinthians 12:3-11.

Second, notice the outcome of this strengthening as described in the subsequent verses of the passage. No sooner does verse 16 say, “strengthened with dunamis by his Spirit” than verses 17-18 state, “that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith” and “that ye” may “be able to comprehend” and “to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge.” It seems very much that the result of the Holy Spirit’s effort here comes in terms of belief and knowledge of God’s love.

But are these results anything different than what we’ve seen in the New Testament pattern so far regarding strengthening by means of miracles? After all, what results from the Holy Spirit performing miracles? Miracles deliver the sick and the needy, thereby demonstrating God’s love for men and compassion for the plight of mankind. And miracles confirm the gospel message, thereby bolstering peoples’ confidence that the gospel is true. In short, when the Holy Spirit provides

the external evidence of miracles, the result is belief in the gospel and seeing first-hand how much God loves us.

There are two places in Ephesians where we get confirmation that the central mechanism here entails miracles.

First, there is verse 20 of Ephesians 3.

Ephesians 3:20 Now unto **him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask (154) or think, according to the power (1411) that worketh (1754) in us**, 21 Unto him *be* glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

Number one, notice the connection here between “the power that worketh in us” and Christians asking. The depiction here is one in which God is acting in response to a request for help initiated by Christian prayer. To take the idea of God “working in us” as a unilateral, unconditional action would be against the grain of this context.

Number two, notice that the word for “power” in verse 20 is “dunamis.” We have already seen the connection between “dunamis” and miracles. In fact, we see “dunamis” translated as “miracles” in connection to the same Greek word for “worketh” in Paul’s comments on supernatural gifts in 1 Corinthians 12.

1 Corinthians 12:10 To another the working (1755) of miracles (1411); to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues: 11 **But all these worketh (1754) that one and the selfsame Spirit**, dividing to every man severally as he will.

We have also already examined the connection between miracles and asking in John 14.

John 14:12 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, **the works (2041) that I do shall he do also; and greater works (2041)** than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father. 13 **And whatsoever ye shall ask (154)** in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. 14 **If ye shall ask (154) any thing in my name, I will do it.**

Number three, we should note that the Greek word for “ask” used twice in John 14 is the same word for “ask” used in Ephesians 3:20, as denoted by Strong’s number 154 behind each word. It is the word “aiteo.” We might also note the conceptual parallel between Ephesians 3:30 and John 14 conveying the superlative nature of such miraculous works. John 14 refers to works that are even greater than those miracles performed by Jesus. No wonder when Paul refers to miracles in Ephesians 3, he describes God’s ability as exceeding our petitions and imaginations.

And number four, the word “works” that appears in John 14 is also familiar to our study. It’s the Greek noun “ergon” (2041), from which the verb “energeo” (1754) is derived. “Energeo” is the Greek word translated as “worketh” in Ephesians 3:20.

From this remarkably similar vocabulary, it is clear that Paul’s comments in Ephesians 3:20 are meant in reference to Christians petitioning God for miracles and to God’s miracle-working power at work among them. But most importantly, the most natural application of this fact is to conclude that the same meaning is intended with regard to “dunamis” just 4 verses earlier in Ephesians 3:16. In both phrases, Paul is referring to God’s power to produce miracles, external phenomena that provide objective evidence to help strengthen their conviction. There is simply no warrant and no hint at a Calvinistic divine work acting directly, unilaterally, and irresistibly on the inner man to cause belief, repentance, or any other attitude or response.

Second, we can look slightly earlier in Ephesians 3.

Ephesians 3:1 For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, 2 If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: 3 How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, 4 Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) 5 Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; 6 That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel: 7 Whereof I was made a minister, **according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working (1753) of his power (1411).** 8 Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, **that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ;**

Here we see Paul referring to the gift God had given to him, which he describes as “by the effectual working of his power.” The word for “working” is the Greek noun “energeia” (1753) and the word for “power” is, of course, “dunamis” (1411). “Energeia” is also derived from “ergon.” It would be fair to translate this as the “working of miracles,” which Paul then directly connects to his preaching among the Gentiles. As we have already mentioned, the New Testament description of miracles as confirmation accompanying the preaching of the Gospel is well established in such passages as Mark 16:16-20, 1 Corinthians 1:4-9, and Hebrews 2:3-4. It is clear that Paul’s mention of “dunamis” throughout Ephesians 3 is intended as a reference to miracle-working power that provides external evidence to corroborate Christian doctrine, not any kind of internal action that God take directly on the human heart or mind to irresistibly cause men to believe or repent.

Third and lastly, we should consider the meaning of the phrase, “that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God.” We find this in verse 19 of Ephesians 3 as part of Paul’s prayer.

Ephesians 3:16 That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with **might (1411) by his Spirit in the inner man;** 17 That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, 18 **May be able to comprehend** with all saints what *is* the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; 19 And to know the love of Christ, which **passeth knowledge**, that (2443) **ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.** 20 Now unto **him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us,** 21 Unto him *be* glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

We have already firmly identified the references to God's power in verse 16 and 20 in reference to the external evidence of miracles. But doesn't the phrase "filled with all the fullness of God" at least convey some sort of Calvinistic divine compulsion toward God's righteousness?

First, we note Paul's use of the Greek word "hina" (2443), which is translated as "that" at the start of this phrase. "Hina" means, "in order that" or "so that." In short, Paul is asking God for miracles in verse 16 but this phrase in verse 19 describes one of the items that Paul hopes will result if God does perform miracles. In other words, Paul isn't petitioning God to fill the Ephesians with all the fullness of God. He is petitioning God to perform miracles in order that the Ephesians might be strengthened in their faith and, consequently, receive the fullness of God.

Second, what does this phrase "fullness of God" refer to? The Greek word for "fullness" is "pleroma" (4138). It is used in Ephesians 1:23.

Number one, in Ephesians 1:22-23, it is used in the phrase "the church, which is his body, the fullness (4138) of him that filleth (4137) all in all." We can see that the verb "filleth" is closely related as indicated by the Strong's numbers.

Number two, "pleroma" is associated immediately in the very next verse in Ephesians 2:1 with the phrase "And you who were dead in trespasses and sins." The King James includes the phrase "hath he quickened" near the start of this verse but in italics designating that it is an interpolation by the translators and does not actually appear in the Greek manuscripts upon which the King James was based. But either with or without the idea of "quickening," the proximity and connection between these phrases strongly suggests that the filling has to do with the resurrection from the dead. This phrase that Christ "fills all in all" is parallel to 1 Corinthians 15:21-23, which declares that "by man came also the resurrection of the dead" and "in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming."

Number three, verses 19-20 begin with the phrase, "And what *is* the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead." The word "dunamis" is not used in the phrase "working of his mighty power" in

verse 19. But it is used in the preceding phrase “the exceeding greatness of his power (1411) to us-ward” in the opening of verse 19. Incidentally, the word “working” is “energeia” (1753) and “wrought” is “energeo” (1754).

In this context the church is seen as Christ’s body and in this sense he is depicted here as the “head” or prototype for what will happen to the saints. Just as Christ was resurrected from death and exalted to authority, so also will those who are members of his body. And how will this resurrection be accomplished? Paul’s understanding is obvious. God has supernatural power. Miracles are a foretaste of that supernatural power at work. But the ultimate dispensing of that supernatural power occurs in the resurrection of the dead, a work that Paul describes as “filling” us (or perhaps enveloping or bathing us) in God’s supernatural power. When we apply this earlier precedent to Ephesians 3, we see the entire picture emerge. Paul is petitioning God for miracles to confirm the gospel among the Ephesians so that they will be reassured by such external evidence and, having been strengthened in their faith in this manner, will endure in faith till Christ’s return at which point they will receive the resurrection. That is what Paul means by the phrase, “that ye might be filled with the fullness of God.”