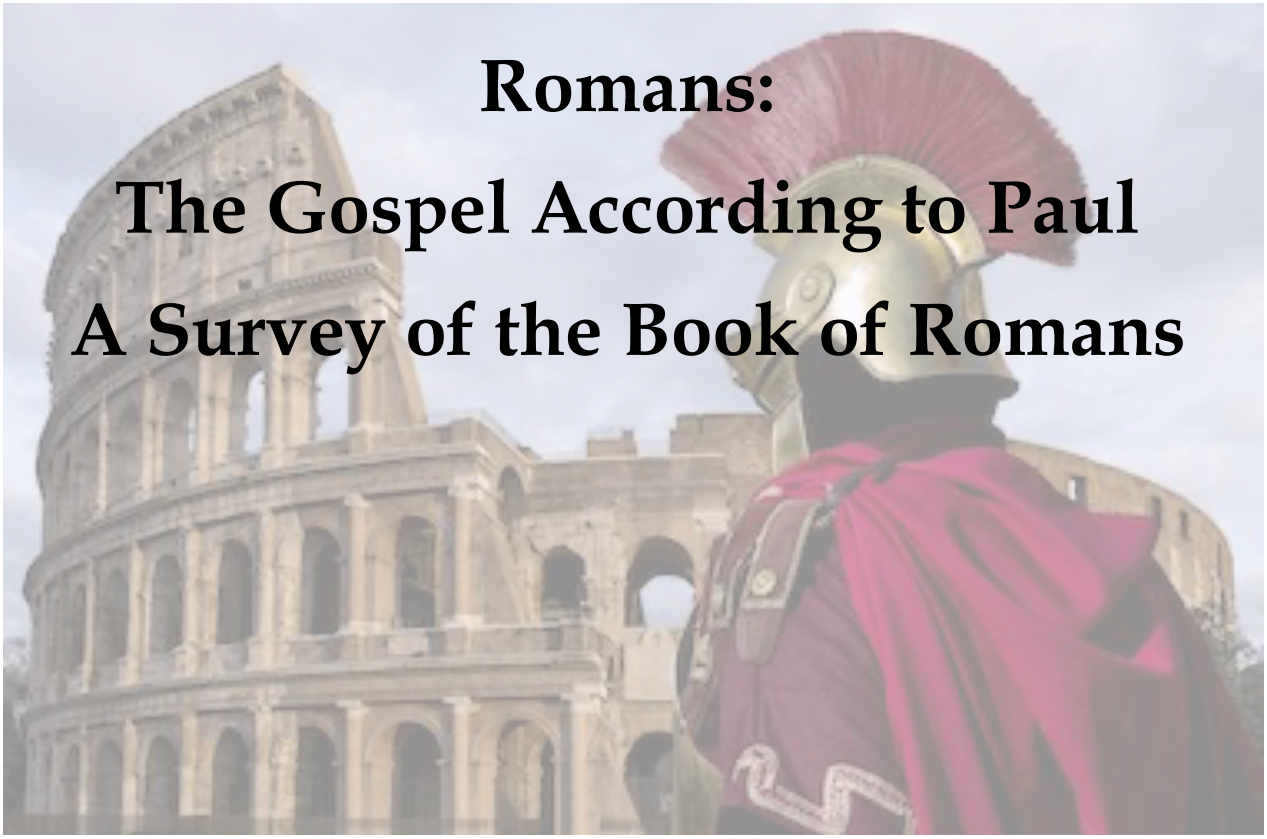

Romans:
The Gospel According to Paul
A Survey of the Book of Romans

H. Michael Anderson

Romans: The Gospel According to Paul

I Course Objectives

A. Show the purpose of the writing of Romans.
B. Recognize the righteousness of God.
C. Recognize man's need for the righteousness of God regardless of his status in life.
D. Reveal how the righteousness of man is attributed to God.
E. Recognize why the Jews failed to attain the righteousness of God.
F. Point out the factors of the righteousness of God manifested in the Christian's daily life.
G. Aid the class members in appropriating the truths of the epistle in their personal lives, thereby strengthening their witness for Jesus Christ.
H. Understand the sovereignty of God in relationship to Israel and the church.

II. Course Resources

A. The Holy Bible (King James Version)
B. The Message of Romans (David K. Bernard)

III. Other Resources

C. The Communicator's Commentary—Romans (D. Stuart Briscoe)
D. Correspondence with a Cripple from Tarsus (H. Beecher Hicks, Jr.)
E. The Bible Exposition Commentary—Romans (Warren W. Wiersbe)
F. The Epistle to the Romans (William MacDonald)
G. Exploring Romans (John Phillips)
H. The Freedom Letter (Alan F. Johnson)
I. Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible
J. Notes on the New Testament—Romans (Albert Barnes)
K. The Preacher's Outline and Sermon Bible
L. Tyndale New Testament Commentaries—Romans (F.F. Bruce)

Course Introduction

The Book of Romans is the first epistle in the New Testament. An observant student will notice that the order of the New Testament letters follows II Timothy 3:16,

"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness."

- Doctrine - Romans (the great doctrinal book)
- Reproof - I and II Corinthians (where Paul reproves sin)
- Correction - Galatians (where Paul corrects false teaching)
- Instruction in righteousness - Ephesians and Paul's remaining letters (where Paul teaches holy living based on Christian doctrine)

While all Scripture is inspired by God and profitable, some parts of the Bible contain more doctrinal truth than others. The Book of Romans is an excellent exposition of faith. It is the complete and most logical presentation of Christian truth in the New Testament.

If a Bible student wishes to master any book of the Bible, let it be Romans! Understanding this book is a key to unlocking the entire Word of God.

Chapter 1

Meeting Paul

"9For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers; 10Making request, if by any means now at length I might have a prosperous journey by the will of God to come unto you." Romans 1:9-10

The Book of Romans is one of the critical letters of the New Testament. Paul begins with an undeniable urgency, "I must see Rome. I must see Rome." His longing to visit the believers there is fueled by his deep commitment to the gospel, as in Romans 1:9-10. Paul continually lifts them in prayer and desires a journey by God's will. However, before Paul's passion for Rome, he pursued Sinai. As a new Christian, he withdrew to the desert, immersing himself in the Word of God, seeking divine revelation apart from human influence. He thought through the entire Old Testament, considering Calvary, and came back with Romans, Galatians, Ephesians, and Thessalonians in his heart.

That is how he started. Now, as an old man, getting on in years, he is saying, "I must see Rome." In those days, it was a maxim that all roads led to Rome. A vast concrete web of super-highways crisscrossed the Roman world. The Roman Empire had an interstate system that was only rivaled in modern times. There were 50,000 miles of first-class military highways. Paul utilized some 200,000 miles of secondary highways to spread the gospel.

Traffic could move swiftly across those great arterial highways of the Roman Empire. Julius Caesar was able to travel 800 miles in ten days. A Roman courier achieved 360 miles on those old roads in 36 hours. Paul took the maxim that all roads led to Rome and turned it inside out. Paul said that if all roads lead to Rome, all roads must equally lead from Rome.

It became his burning ambition to reach Rome and accomplish something that would impact the empire's farthest boundaries. "I'm coming," he said. He kept writing Rome at the top of his itinerary, and God kept altering his plans. However, Paul kept putting it back, "I must see Rome by any means" (1:10). God told Paul He would take him at his word and sent Paul to Rome as a prisoner. It only bothered Paul if he got to Rome.

Paul wrote this letter about AD 58. He wrote it from Corinth (16:1) on his third missionary journey during the "three months" referred to in Acts 20:3, just before his last visit to Jerusalem and his arrest that would eventually land him in Rome. The Book of Romans is the longest of all of Paul's letters. It is saturated with Old Testament quotations, containing at least 70 quotations from 14 Old Testament books. There are more Old Testament quotations in Romans than in all the other epistles. In this way, Paul

demonstrated that the gospel message is the same throughout all ages.

Romans is full of great Pauline words. He took the old Greek vocabulary words, passed them through his giant intellect, and hammered new meanings into them to suit the needs of the gospel. Paul used words such as "law," "all," "righteousness," "faith," "sin," and "death." These words took on a new dimension after they passed through Paul's mind. Seventy-eight times, we find the word "law." Of course, Paul was writing to the legislative capital, Rome. Seventy-one times, the word "all" appears. Sixty-six times the keyword "righteousness." Sixty-two times the word "faith." Sixty times the word "sin." Forty-two times, the word "death." Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John gave the facts about Christ's sojourn on Earth, but Paul gave the meaning of it all.

Paul was about 60 years old when he wrote this book. He was nearly exhausted from the hardships. You must read the catalog of sufferings that he had endured for the gospel that he includes in his second letter to the Corinthians (Chapter 11) to know that poor old Paul had been beaten and punished, imprisoned, starved, and practically drowned time and time again. He was in constant need of the physician's attendance.

He had written other letters but had yet to hammer out a systematic theology of the Cross. That's what he does in this letter to the Romans. It is the gospel, according to Paul. It is divided into three parts:

I The Principles of the Gospel (Chapters 1-8)

II.The Problems of the Gospel (Chapters 9-11)

III.The Practice of the Gospel (Chapters 12-16)

We begin with the principles of the gospel. Paul will first address sin, then salvation, and finally sanctification.

He begins with the question of sin. The opening chapters of this epistle are court scenes. The court involved is the Supreme Court of the universe. Paul does not describe that court to us. Later, the Apostle John does that in Revelation 4. He explains that great, white, rainbow-circled throne and He who sits upon it like unto a jasper and a sardine stone. There is something mystical and mysterious about it all. The jury of the 24 elders, the crown royalties of Heaven, call servants forth as terrifying cherubim. The prosecutor is the Spirit of God, and the Lord Jesus is the Judge of humanity.

It begins, then, with this court scene. First, you have the summons. He calls into court three classes of people—the heathen, the hypocrite, and the Hebrew. First to the stand is the heathen. The question often asked is whether heathens are lost. Paul responds that they most certainly are, and they are lost for three reasons:

First, the heathen is guilty of willful blindness. When they knew God, they glorified Him, not as God. There is no excuse whatsoever for every man, woman, boy, or girl of

Adam's ruined race not to have some rudimentary knowledge of a true and living God. He witnesses Himself in creation and, in conscience, cuts the ground from under every individual unbeliever on this planet. He is guilty of willful blindness.

Second, the heathen is guilty of wicked beliefs. He turned the glory of the incorruptible God into an image like unto corruptible men, four-footed beasts, birds, and creeping things. Willful blindness, wicked beliefs, and then . . .

Third, the heathen is guilty of wanton behavior. Paul goes down that terrible list of sins:

> Romans 1:29-32, 29Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, 30Backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, 31Without understanding, covenant breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: 32Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.

Paul sat in Corinth writing this letter and saw all these dreadful sins enacted in the city. It is the lifestyle of a corrupt and decadent age, and it is becoming like that in the world today. We have gone a long way down that road, which has led to judgment.

The heathen, first, is summoned and is found guilty before God. Next, he brings up the hypocrite. The hypocrite is the man who wraps the robes of his self-righteousness around himself and looks down his nose at those who sin. However, all the while, he is doing the same thing on a different level. You see it amply illustrated in the story of the prodigal son and the elder brother. We watch the prodigal son make his way to the far country. We see him sitting amongst the swine and eating the husks that the swine did, then making his lonely and penitent way back home. And all the time, his older brother has the same faraway country in his heart. "Hey," he says, "thou never gavest me a kid I may make merry with my friends" (Luke 15:29). He had the far country in his heart the whole time—a hypocrite.

One of the most terrible indictments against the human heart is in this section on the hypocrite. One of the most terrifying statements in the Bible is here:

> Romans 2:16, In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel.

We have the heathen and the hypocrite, and now Paul calls to the judgment bar the Hebrew. Here is a man with God's inspired Word in his hand. He has every religious and spiritual advantage. It is a tremendous opportunity to know God by divine revelation and not by the groping of human reasoning, as it takes him further from God's knowledge. A divine revelation, a mighty galaxy of gifted, godly, and great men who

gave the Word of God to their nation and people. Israel had every religious and spiritual advantage yet was satisfied with the outward trappings of religion. And so steeped in hypocrisy as to make the very name of God a name of mockery amongst the Gentiles. People blasphemed God because of what they failed to see of God in the lives of those who claimed to be the people of God.

So, we have the summons of the heathen, the hypocrite, and the Hebrew brought into court. The summation follows the summons. The whole human race is collectively seen standing naked and shivering before the Great White Throne of God. The verdict?

> Romans 3:10-12, 10As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: 11There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. 12They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.

The infallible Spirit of God points to man's vile thoughts, his venomous tongue, and his violent temper and finds him guilty. Every mouth is stopped. The whole world is guilty before God. Man is without excuse and escape.

People do not have to wait until they are dead to find out if they are condemned; they are condemned already. This is the gospel according to Paul and the question of sin.

Now, he moves on to the question of salvation. The condemned criminal has no hope except for the mercy of the court. He has no good works, acceptable morality, or influential religion. He is already condemned by a thrice-holy God (Revelation 4). Then comes that marvelous little word "but."

> Romans 3:21, But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested.

Every time you see the word "but" in the Bible, you should stop and look because things will change. The Scripture says that King Uzziah was marvelous and helped until he was strong, but when he was strong... Look at the "but" in Solomon's life. Look at the "but" in the life of the prodigal son. It is a hinge on which a significant door swings.

Paul is now going to write three things about salvation. He writes that it is 1) free, 2) by faith, and finally, 3) factual. It is free—look at the collection of words that Paul employs:

> Romans 3:24, Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

You could teach these words for a month. The word "justified" could be transliterated into our language as "just as if I had never sinned." That is what justified means. There is a significant difference between being justified and being forgiven. I would much rather be justified than forgiven. A forgiven man comes into court, pleads guilty, and asks for mercy. A justified man comes into court and says, "You have nothing

on me." God has nothing on a justified man because of Calvary. If you're justified, God has no record of anything ever having gone wrong in your life.

Paul continues that it is "freely by His grace." This second point is about salvation: it is by faith. Paul now introduces two great names into the discussion: Abraham and David. Abraham was the founder of the Hebrew racial family, and David founded the Hebrew royal family. Abraham is an excellent example of a man who trusted. David is an excellent example of a man who transgressed. Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. David cried, "Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin" (Romans 4:5). Abraham was the chief of saints, and David was the chief of sinners. Yet both learned that salvation is by grace, not by works.

Salvation is free, it is by faith, and it is factual. Five times in Chapter 5, Paul uses the phrase "much more." Of course, Paul was saturated in the Old Testament Scripture. So, when he used the phrase "much more," he may have been thinking, I believe, that the Old Testament trespass offering, if he sinned, Paul would have gone to the priest with an offering. The priest would ask him what kind of offering he was bringing. Was it a burnt offering, a meal offering, a peace offering, a sin offering, or a trespass offering? What did it matter? The priest had to know if the offering was brought because the person had sinned or because they wanted to worship God. It had to be either a sin offering or a trespass offering if it were for a sin. A sin offering had to do with what you are, and a trespass offering had to do with what you do. If you are mindful that you are a sinner, you will bring a sin offering. If you are conscious that you have broken a law of God, trespassed, then you need a trespass offering. If the man said it was a trespass offering because he stole 100 sheep from a man, the priest would refuse the offering until the theft was made right. The sinner would have to give back the sheep or pay for them. The priest would still refuse the offering because the Old Testament law required 20% for the wrong. [That's a good system!] The priest was satisfied if the man returned with a receipt showing he had paid for 100 sheep.

Under the law of the trespass offering, the person who was sinned against became a gainer by the sinner's repentance. When a man got right with God, the people he had wronged were blessed. That is what happens when we get right with God. We need to go back and make things right. But God becomes a gainer. Has it ever occurred to you that God needed Calvary to demonstrate a dimension of Himself that He could not demonstrate in creation? Creation is witness to the wisdom and power of God, but Calvary demonstrates that God is love! [And our salvation should make us a blessing to others!]

So, the fact of salvation is that we get much more because we are not just forgiven; we are justified. God is the gainer because now we see Him as a God of love, and the relationship between the person and God changes. We no longer fear Him but respond to His love with our love.

Having dealt with the questions of sin and salvation, Paul now turns to the question

of sanctification (Chapters 6-8). In Chapter 6, we are confronted with a new life; in Chapter 7, we are confronted with a new law; and in Chapter 8, we are confronted with a new Lord.

In Chapter 6, we receive a new life. Paul likens the believer's old nature to three things in Chapter 6. He introduces it with a baptism and a planting—a biographical and a biological illustration.

The bulk of the chapter revolves around three great truths. First, the old nature in the believer is like an old man:

> Romans 6:6, Knowing this, that our old man [the man I used to be] is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.

The old man is now dead, crucified. All that I was in Adam is now put to death. So closely are we identified with the Lord Jesus in His death, burial, and resurrection that, as far as God is concerned, when He died, we died; when He was buried, we were buried; and when He rose from the dead, we rose from the dead. Every Holy Spirit-filled believer lives on the resurrection side of the Cross. The old man is now dead.

The old man is now dead, and the old monarch is now defeated. The old life had an old monarch.

> Romans 6:12, Let not sin therefore *reign* in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof.

So, the believer's old nature was not only an old man but also an old monarch. When Adam sinned, he surrendered his sovereignty to Satan. When the Devil tempted Jesus in the wilderness, He was shown all the kingdoms of the world, and Satan told him that he would give Jesus all those kingdoms with their power and glory if Jesus would worship him. Jesus never questioned Satan's right to dispose of the kingdoms of this world when and how he chose. Satan accepted that as understood, but God never gave Satan that authority; he got it from Adam. That is why Jesus came as the second Adam, to bring back what the first Adam gave away. So, we were born into the wrong kingdom. We were born into a kingdom in which Satan rules, and we have known the power of that old monarch. But when we receive the Holy Spirit, we are translated from a kingdom of darkness into the marvelous light. So, the old monarch is now defeated and no longer has any authority over us.

Some may then ask, if the old monarch is defeated, what battle do I keep fighting? The old monarch refuses to accept his defeat, so we must keep, by the power of the Spirit, putting down the rebellion of our flesh.

The old man is now dead, the old monarch is now defeated, and the old master is now deposed.

John 8:34, Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin.

Romans 6:17-18, 17Ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. 18Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.

We recognize that the believer is not incapable of sinning, but sin is incompatible with his new life. We are not the old man we used to be. We are not under the reign of the old monarch and have been freed from the old master of sin.

In Chapter 7, Paul carries the whole discussion further and deals with the new law. There are three men in Romans 7. There is the spiritual man, the natural man, and the carnal man. The first six verses of Chapter 7 continue Chapter 6 with new emphasis. Paul is the old man dead, the old monarch defeated, and the old master deposed. Now, he writes that an old marriage has been dissolved. Because of our identification with Christ in His death, the claim of the law, which is marriage to that wicked old man who is the principle of sin, has been dissolved. We are now married to another—Jesus. And it is now to Jesus that we commit our lives in love and follow His guidance, bearing fruit as marriage is ordained to do.

But there is also the natural man. The problem is that although Paul can spell it all out in Romans 6 and explain to us how it is supposed to work—old man dead, old monarch defeated, old master deposed, and we reckon it to be so and now yield ourselves to God—it all looks good, but it is not so in our lives. So, in Romans 7, Paul reveals that while we may know it, we cannot make it work.

Paul reflects on his life before Christ. As a Jew, he tried and tried and tried, but could not overcome the temptation to sin. No matter how hard Paul worked at the Ten Commandments—he worshipped only God; he honored God's name; he kept the Sabbath; he honored his parents; he did not kill; he did not commit adultery; he did not steal; he did not lie—that tenth one caught him. "Thou shalt not covet." Covet talks about evil desire; it asks if you have ever wanted to break one of the others. Paul realized that the harder he tried, the more he failed because he could not control his desires. So, this law that was supposed to make him holy instead condemned him.

No matter how hard we try, we cannot produce a life pleasing to God. We get in trouble when we substitute our efforts for God's energy. And that effort is the best for the natural man who wants to please God.

Paul looked and found that, having received the Holy Spirit, he had fallen back into the old trap of trying to please God through his efforts. That is the carnal man. He tried to please God through his efforts, but could not produce the kind of life God would accept. He was filled with the Holy Spirit and possessed all the facts that should have made a holy life, yet he miserably failed.

Why? Paul introduces four spiritual laws. First, there is the law of God—the law of Sinai, which points him heavenward. Second, counterbalancing the law of Sinai that points him heavenward was the law of sin that points him hellward. Strangely, modern psychiatry teaches every law known to man but the law of sin. Yet, that is the only law that explains human behavior.

There are two more laws. The first two can be called external laws, and the other two internal laws. There is the law of our mind and the law of our members. Paul writes that the law of our mind sides with the law of God. In other words, in my mind, I agree with God that I should be living a holy life. However, the law of my members aligns with the law of sin. So, Paul expresses a raging battle within himself:

> Romans 7:24, O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?

Or, as some have suggested, "this dead body." The Romans had a particularly terrible form of capital punishment for murder. It was reserved for certain criminals. They would take the murdered man and bind him to the back of the murderer and tie him on at the ankles and the wrists. Then, they would expose him to the sun. Then, as the dead body began to rot, it would infest the murderer and take revenge. That is graphic, but some say it is Paul's picture at the end of Romans 7. We are burdened by the old, dead man and unable to get rid of him, yet continuing to carry him will mean our death.

Then, Paul answers his question:

> Romans 7:25, I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.

Notice it is "through Jesus Christ our Lord." Paul finished Chapter 6 by saying that "the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (v. 23). How did we get eternal life? Not by trying, but by trusting! So, how do I get an exultant life? Again, not by trying, but by trusting!

In whom do we trust? That carries us into Romans 8, where Paul declares we have a new Lord. Romans 8 could fill a week of Bible study if we explored it verse by verse—and we will. It starts with no condemnation and ends with no separation. It is one of the most exciting chapters in the New Testament. Paul introduces us to the New Lord, the Holy Ghost, and to the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus that sets us free from the law of sin and death.

That law applies every time we get on an airplane. We watched all the people enter an aircraft with all their luggage and all the cargo. Then there it sits, a dead weight on a runway. How could anyone move the thing, let alone get it off the ground? Finally, the pilot tells the passengers to fasten their seat belts, and the plane moves forward. It goes faster and faster and faster and faster until, at a certain speed, the law of gravity that has held that aircraft on the runway loses its power, and the law of aerodynamics takes

over—a higher law—and it lifts that plane into the sky and holds it there.

That is Paul's subject matter in Romans 8. The law of sin and death that rules in Chapter 7 is overcome by the law of the spirit of life in Christ in Chapter 8, which sets us free. Paul then describes all the remarkable implications of that in Chapter 8. It finally reaches that astounding ending, which he describes in such graphic language that nothing can separate us from God's love. Our trust in Christ is secure!

> Romans 8:35-39, 35Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? 36As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. 37Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. 38For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, 39Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

That is Paul's excellent teaching about the gospel principles – the questions of sin, salvation, and sanctification.

In Chapters 9, 10, and 11, Paul turns to the problems of the gospel. For years, Paul had resisted Christianity, sensing its fundamental challenge to Judaism. The problem was this: Paul was a Jew, and he knew all those great Old Testament promises that God made to the Jews. So, what about those promises? What happened to the Jews since they murdered the Messiah? According to the Acts of the Apostles, the Jews rejected the Son of God and continuously rejected the Spirit of God. And not only the Jews in Palestine but Jews everywhere rejected Jesus, as Paul could testify by his terrible treatment by some. So, what about the Jew and His promises?

Paul surveys the entire question of God's dealings with the Jews in Romans 9-11. In Chapter 9, he covers God's past dealings with the Jews. Paul says the key to God's favor was the sovereignty of God. And that whenever He dealt with the Jews, it was always with a believing remnant, while most of the Jews were unfaithful.

In Chapter 10, Paul turns to God's present dealings with the Jews. The key is the singleness of God. The fact of the matter is that God is presently dealing with the Jews in the same manner He is dealing with the Gentiles. He is offering salvation to the Jews on the same basis as He is offering it to anyone else. If the Jew wants to be saved, he must do what everyone else must do to be saved. That great salvation verse rings through Chapter 10:

> Romans 10:13, For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

In that short verse, Paul states the scope of salvation ("whosoever"), the simplicity of salvation ("shall call upon the name of the Lord"), and the substance of salvation

("shall be saved"). In Chapter 10, Paul approaches salvation through the avenue of Lordship because the Jews rejected Jesus as their Lord. If Jesus is your Lord, you will obey His commands. What did He say?

> John 3:3, 5, 3Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. . . .5Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

How did the followers of Jesus understand His words?

> Acts 2:36-38, 36Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made the same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ. 37Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? 38Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

In Chapter 11, Paul looks at God's promised dealings with the Jews. The key to that is the sincerity of God. He asks:

> Romans 11:1, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid.

Paul himself is a powerful proof of this fact, for he is a full Jew, as much a member of the family of Abraham as anyone with the perfect pedigree of a son of Benjamin (Philippians 3:5). Yet, there is no doubt about his knowing Christ. Paul's conversion (Acts 9) is a pattern for those wanting to know God as Lord and Savior:

1. Revelation - he saw a great light
2. Reversal - he became willing to do what God wanted
3. Repentance - he fasted, prayed, and was baptized
4. Receiving - he was filled with the Holy Ghost

So long as there is a Jew like Paul, there is no such thing as a rejection of Israel.

So, we have the principles of the gospel, its problems, and its practice. In Chapters 12-16, Paul deals with the disciple and his body, the disciple and his behavior, the disciple and his beliefs, the disciple and his burden, and the disciple and his brethren.

Paul showed how the believer relates to life's relationships. In the church, the believer is to exercise his gift humbly. He must be generous, forgiving, kind, honest, considerate, and impartial. He is to obey the law of the land, give honor to dignitaries,

and pay his taxes.

Paul writes first of the disciple's material body:

> Romans 12:1-2, 1I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. 2And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

If God is going to get anything done on this planet, He needs a body. That is why Jesus came and assumed a human body. Now that Jesus has ascended into Heaven, He needs our body. We are asked to present it to Him as a living sacrifice.

Paul goes on to talk about the mystical body:

> Romans 12:15-16, 15Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep. 16Be of the same mind one toward another.

The Holy Spirit creates the mystical body of Christ:

> I Corinthians 12:13, For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.

Every true believer is a member of this body. Christ is the head of it, and we are each other's members. We express our life in the body by rejoicing with those who rejoice and weeping with those who weep. That is what Jesus did. In the Gospel of John, the first recorded miracle of Jesus is when He changed water into wine at a wedding. John records the last public miracle at the funeral of Lazarus, where it is recorded that Jesus wept.

It is like playing a game of dominoes. The whole purpose of the game is to match the other players' pieces. The object is to spend and be spent as fast as possible. That is the church—we get alongside someone and match their needs.

Paul transitions to discussing the disciples' behavior, focusing on their relationship both with the laws of government and the laws of God. As far as the government is concerned, Paul upholds the rights of rulers, as all are to honor and obey them. This is an affirmation that God establishes all governing powers. Paul acknowledges that, in his time, the ruling authority was Nero, regarded as one of history's most tyrannical figures-a monster. Despite this, the power of ordained leadership remains central to his teaching.

So, in Chapter 13, Paul upholds that God ordains the right of rulers and that they are to be given honor. He also endorses capital punishment ("he beareth not the sword in vain" v. 4). The sword of the magistrate was placed in Noah's hands after the flood

because there was no law before the flood, and every man did what was right in his own eyes. That produced a condition on this planet of permissiveness that resulted in such filth that God decided He had to drown the whole thing. The Earth needed a bath before being fit again for human habitation. Then God placed the sword of the magistrate in Noah's hands and said:

> Genesis 9:6, Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man.

God appended the death penalty to several offenses in the Old Testament: murder, kidnapping, witchcraft, breaking the Sabbath, sodomy, a rebellious son, idolatry, necromancy (the occult), and so on.

Then Paul goes through the disciples and the laws of God. Paul takes all the Ten Commandments that apply to man's relationship with a man and sums them up in a single word: love. He writes:

> Romans 13:10, Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

The Jews had 613 commandments in the Mosaic law; the Decalogue reduced it to ten, the Lord Jesus reduced it to two, and Paul reduced it to one: love. Love is the fulfillment of the law.

Now, Paul moves on from the disciple and his body and behavior to the disciple and his beliefs (Chapters 13:11, 15:14). He focuses on two theological issues: eschatology and ecclesiology. As he writes about eschatology, he does not go into all the significant issues about the second coming of Christ; he does that in his letter to the Thessalonians. He assumes that his readers are aware of his writings to the Thessalonians, so he reminds us of the imminent return of the Lord by writing:

> Romans 13:12, The night is far spent, the day is at hand.

Paul's ecclesiology boils down to this: 1) no contending with the weak and 2) no compromising with the Word. You do not turn away or ignore those you disagree with in truth, but teach. In Paul's day, the issues were whether meat offered to idols and whether Gentiles must become Jews before they could become Christians. The meat was a non-salvation issue, and Paul asked for understanding. The Gentiles were a salvation issue, and he confronted Peter openly at Galatia to defend that truth.

Then Paul turns to the disciple and his burden. He writes of his significant burden for missions. Paul gives us his philosophy of missions: I do not build on another's foundation; I go where there is no church and plant one. Of his missionary activity, he writes:

> Romans 15:19, From Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully

preached the gospel of Christ.

Illyricum is in central Eastern Europe, 1,500 miles from Jerusalem. Paul writes that he covered it all—he did without a car or an airplane—and he covered it thoroughly, the job is done. It is time to look for another territory, so he tells the Romans he is stopping by on his way to Spain.

Last of all, Paul writes about the disciple and his brethren. His conclusion reveals his broad interests and the high regard he held for his friends. He mentioned name after name of those he knew in Rome (although he had never been there), commending some, commenting on the service of others, and sending greetings to groups of Christians here and there all over Rome.

- Priscilla and Aquila encouraged Paul after his disappointments in Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, and Athens.

- Epaenetus, his first convert in Greece

- Rufus was chosen in the Lord, and his mother and mine; the mother of Rufus was the mother of Paul, one of his 10,000 mothers in Christ. Long ago, his own family rejected him; he suffered the loss of all things, but he found 10,000 mothers in Christ. Everywhere he went, he found a mother, a brother, and a sister, a house to stay in.

Paul describes them all as his kinsmen and fellow prisoners, who are of note among the apostles who were in Christ before him.

Were these names out of Paul's prayer book? Paul was always writing new names into his prayer book, adding them as fast as they could be written down in Heaven. He never forgot them but was always praying for them.

In the end, he remembers his reason for writing. "I commend unto you, Phebe," he writes. Phebe was going to Rome from Corinth, and he offered to write her a letter of introduction to the believers in Rome. She said she would wait for it, and he started to dictate. When he uttered his first words, "Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God," he forgot Phebe. When he said gospel, off he went. The gospel, according to Paul, has sixteen chapters. All the while, Phebe is waiting for her letter. Phebe? That's right. So, he gave it to her and said, "Don't lose it." Thank God she did not!

Chapter One: Meeting Paul

Lesson in Review

A. Writing assignment: Write 750 words on "The City and Culture of Rome during the time of Paul."

B. Read the question carefully and respond in 2-3 sentences with a clear and concise answer. Your response should directly address the question and provide relevant details from the text.

1. Why was Paul so determined to see Rome, and how did God ultimately lead him there?

2. What is Paul's final verdict on humanity about sin?

3. Why does Paul say that no one is righteous before God?

4. What is the significance of the word "but" in Romans 3:21, and how does it mark a turning point in Paul's message about salvation?

C. Answer these questions from Romans 1:1-7. Use verses where the answer comes from.

5.How did Paul describe his relationship with Jesus Christ?

6.What role was Paul called to fulfill?

7.How did Paul describe his separation?

8.What did Paul receive from God (2 answers)?

9.Who is the intended recipient of this letter?

D. According to D. Bernard's *The Message of Romans (p. 21),* the Greek word "pisteuo" carries deep significance.

10. How does this concept of belief influence and shape the transformative experience of faith?

Chapter Two

Our Calling in Christ

Romans 1:1-7

"But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood." Galatians 1:15-16

The Book of Romans is Paul's first and most comprehensive epistle. Whereas the four Gospels give the facts about Christ's earthly life and death, Acts reveals the difference Christ's life makes in people, and Romans explains its meaning. It has been called "the Gospel according to Paul" or good news for guilty men. For generations, it has been considered one of God's Word's "mountain peaks." Romans 1:1-7 establishes Paul's divine calling and mission, aligning with Galatians 1:15-16, focusing on God's sovereign separation and appointment of Paul as an apostle. These passages emphasize the purpose of Paul's ministry. Through Romans, Paul unveils the pinnacle of Scripture, showing how God's plan for salvation extends beyond Israel to all who believe.

The Book of Romans has had a profound impact on the church.

- It converted Augustine from a vile sinner to a "saint."

- It transformed Martin Luther into a spiritual monarch and brought the Reformation. He later wrote, "[Romans] deserves not only to be known word for word by every Christian but to be the subject of his meditation day by day, the daily bread of his soul."

- It warmed the heart of John Wesley to a pure flame of evangelical preaching and brought worldwide revival

Romans is the epistle written for every man. It is the Gospel of God (1:1). It is a book for the world (1:4-2:16), a book for the church (1:1-7), a book for theologians (3:1-5:21), a book for philosophers (1:1-2, 16); a book for immature believers (6:1-8:30), a book for mature believers (8:12-14), a book for sufferers (7:1-8; 8:39); a book for unbelievers (1:1-2; 16), a book for religionists (2:17-5:21). Romans is the truth desperately needed by every man, whoever or wherever they may be.

But do not assume that reading Romans will be simple because it is significant. Perhaps Peter was thinking of Romans when he said that some of Paul's writings were hard to understand!

2 Peter 3:15-16, 15Even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; 16As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.

But Romans was relatively easy and theological for the Holy Ghost to instruct Paul to send it to the Christians in Rome. These Christians were often from the lower classes of Roman society. Some were slaves; perhaps some could neither read nor write. But they could—and did—study the letter Paul sent them.

I The Period

Paul wrote from Corinth (he recommended Phoebe to the Romans, a deaconess from Cenchrea, the eastern seaport of Corinth) near the end of the third missionary journey—about 58 AD. We know this because he mentions the offering for Jerusalem.

Romans 15:25-26, 25But now I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints. 26For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem.

When Paul arrived in Jerusalem with this offering, he was arrested, and he was taken to Rome. This letter was written before the Gospels.

II. The Purpose

Jerusalem and Rome are in Paul's thoughts. As he writes, Paul's mind is filled with social unrest and the need for a Savior. In response to this great need, Paul's divine scheme of redemption takes shape. Paul recalls the spiritual anguish of his own crises (Chapters 7 and 8).

The letter finds its formal occasion in the approach of Paul's long-expected opportunity to visit Rome. It is primarily a letter of self-introduction to an unvisited church to prepare its members for his arrival. Paul already knows some church members and is eager to meet the others. He has heard much of them: their faith, their obedience, their divisions, their difficulties, and their temptations.

Romans 1:8 says, First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.

Romans 1:12-16, 12That is, that I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me. 13Now I would not have you ignorant, breth ren, that oftentimes I purposed to come unto you, (but was let hitherto,) that I might have some fruit among you also, even as among other Gentiles. 14I am

debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise. 15So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the Gospel to you that are at Rome also. 16For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

He may also be writing because they, like others, had received an evil report of his teaching. In any case, he does not mean to live with them for long but to make Rome his base for further evangelization in the West, his work being presently ended in the East. They will strengthen him, as he hopes to establish them "in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ" (15:29).

Paul's central theme, as Romans unfolds, is imparting God's righteousness to the saint. Woven into this theme are such truths as:

- All are sinners.
- Sin brings eternal death.
- There is only one way of salvation.
- God is no respecter of persons.
- Salvation is a gift of God.
- The power of God is the source of all living.

The keywords of Romans are:

Romans 1:16-17, 16For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. 17For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.

The Bible shows man's utter failure to live righteously up to the Book of Romans. When Adam was tempted in the Garden of Eden, he proved to be a failure under temptation. He also demonstrated all mankind's inability to withstand temptation.

Romans 3:23, For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.

Romans 3:10, As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one.

From Adam to Abraham, God patiently dealt with the sons of men, wooing them to His compassionate heart and offering them repeated opportunities to choose him and his way and so find His favor. But humanity rejected him and, as a result, was an utter failure so great that God "gave them up" and allowed them to go on their own wicked ways

(1:24, 26, 28).

Then God tested the nation of Israel—the Jews. Everything was given to them to afford a perfect opportunity to choose the righteous ways of God:

- Spiritual privileges
- Perfect instruction
- Marvelous revelations
- Miraculous protection, and
- Matchless covenants and promises

But here again, we see utter and complete failure—a failure so great that they crucified the Lord Jesus and refused to listen to the voice of the Holy Ghost through the apostles.

The message of Romans is as applicable today as it was when Paul wrote the letter. The message is that the human heart has not changed; its needs are the same, and God has not changed; His Gospel is the same.

III. The Place — Rome (v. 7)

Due to its influence, Paul desired to travel to Rome, the capital of the empire. An inscription uncovered at Ostia in 1941 contains statistics indicating that in 14 A.D., it had a population of four million. It was the first city of the empire and the largest and most splendid city of the day. He knew that a route so extensively traveled, and cities so actively engaged in commerce, would assure the spread of the Gospel. A Rome conquered for Christ could mean a world conquered for Christ!

There were at least 11 synagogues and many churches in homes. Rome was plagued by constant chaos due to its numerous leaders at this time. There was an even flow of authority to the new rulers, generally by assassination. The rulers were noted as especially cruel, and one group of people who suffered at the hands of these rulers was the Christians, but even all the rulers could not stamp out the Christians.

How did the church start? That is unknown. The Catholic Church claims that Peter founded the church in Rome, but no historical evidence supports this claim. However, if Peter had started the church, Paul would not have come to Rome because he did not build on the foundations of the other apostles ("I strived to preach the Gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation" 15:20).

It is possible that converts from the Day of Pentecost returned home and told others ("strangers of Rome" Acts 2:10).

The rulership of Rome helped spread the Gospel by four significant contributions:

- The triumph of Roman armies established the "Roman peace."
- Roman roads spanned the empire, making travel, trade, and communication easy.
- Roman ships sailed back and forth, keeping the various people in constant touch with each other.
- The Roman government gave order and protection to its citizens.

IV. The People — To all that be in Rome (v. 7)

Paul describes the Christians in Rome as the "beloved of God, called to be saints." Are they Jews or Gentiles? If it is for all Christians, the presumption is that both are included.

The many names mentioned in the salutations of the last chapter indicate how many friends Paul had and knew in this city. They had gone from him—now he longs to go to them.

V. The Penman — Paul (vv. 1-5)

The Book of Acts tells us what we know about Paul's life. Paul's eyes had long been fixed in Rome. Paul was a Roman citizen and greatly respected the law and order that the Roman government had applied to the world. He was personally blessed in his ministry of the Gospel by the protection of the Roman authorities as he traveled long distances on missionary work. His use of the name "Paul," a Roman name, shows his use of the Roman world to promote his work. His name was Saul, but he changed it to Paul to give him a pathway in a Gentile world. This universal empire indirectly influenced Paul's planning to conquer the universal Gospel.

I heard a tape of humor by U.S. President Lyndon Johnson in which he thanked a person for the introduction and said that it was the best introduction he had ever received, except for when the introducer did not show up and had to introduce himself.

This is Paul's most complete self-introduction. He writes to the Romans because he has not been there before, and they do not know him. He could have introduced himself in many ways.

> Philippians 3:4-7, 4Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more:
> 5Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; 6Concerning zeal,

persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. 7But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.

II Corinthians 11:21-30, 21 I speak as concerning reproach, as though we had been weak. Howbeit whereinsoever any is bold, (I speak foolishly,) I am bold also. 22 Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? So am I. 23 Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. 24 Of the Jews, five times received I forty stripes save one. 25 Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; 26 In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; 27 In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. 28 Besides those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches. 29 Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is offended, and I burn not? 30 If I must needs glory, I will glory in the things which concern mine infirmities.

Galatians 1:1, Paul, an apostle, (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead;)

In these scriptures, his carefully chosen words reveal:

A. His Attitude — A Servant of Jesus Christ (v. 1)

Paul introduced himself to the Romans first as "a servant of Jesus Christ." There were one million slaves in Rome; they understood what he meant and would appreciate this opening phrase. Nobody was more conscious of his freedom than Paul, a free-born Roman citizen. Yet he counted it a privilege to be a servant of Jesus Christ. Paul *doulos*, meaning "bondslave." Of some five different words that relate to various degrees of servanthood, *doulos* is the most abject or servile.

Paul probably had in mind here the Hebrew servant of old who so loved his master that he chose a lifetime of bondage rather than the freedom of independent action. Like him, Paul could say:

Exodus 21:5, I love my master . . . I will not go out free.

As that Old Testament servant's ear was pierced in token of his irrevocable surrender, so Paul could say:

Galatians 6:17, I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.

Paul felt obligated to serve Jesus Christ without concern for his personal rights

because Christ had brought him from slavery to sin. Everyone is a slave; Christians have just chosen their master!

B. His Authority — Called to be an apostle (v. 1)

He had to establish his authority for what he would write. "Called" meant selected and commissioned by God.

> Galatians 1:1, 15-16, 15Paul, an apostle, (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead;) . . . But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, 16 To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood.

The meaning of the word "called" here shows that Paul was not merely invited but appointed by God, as the other Apostles (John 15:16, 19; Matthew 10:1; Luke 6:13).

"Apostle" (Greek *Apostolos*) was often a king's delegate representing full power of attorney to act in the place of another. In this case, the Apostle was sent to do what Christ would do if He went Himself. He needed this to deal with problems and counter errors.

Do not overlook Paul's balance—he is a "servant/apostle." He uses his authority for the cause of Christ, not himself. So must we all.

C. His Awareness — Separated unto the gospel of God (v. 1)

Usually, we think of separation negatively—" separation from." But Paul uses it positively— "separated to." Paul considered himself separated from his mother's womb.

> Galatians 1:15, It pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace.

This Scripture meant he saw his heritage, education, personality, and gifts as part of God's plan. He never forgot his abuse of them to persecute the church, but he even saw lessons in it. He felt living under Roman rule, Greek culture, and Jewish training was God's plan for him.

D. His Approach — Received grace and apostleship (v. 5).

Paul realized he had a great job, but at almost 60, he was not considering retirement. Why? God gave grace, which is the divine enabling to fulfill his responsibility. When Jesus calls someone, He makes him what He calls him.

Paul's call was made clear when Ananias came to him in Damascus.

> Acts 9:10-20, 10And there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias;

and to him said the Lord in a vision, Ananias. And he said, Behold, I am here, Lord. 11And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and enquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth, 12And hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in, and putting his hand on him, that he might receive his sight. 13Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem: 14And here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name. 15But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: 16For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake. 17And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost. 18And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized. 19And when he had received meat, he was strengthened. Then was Saul certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus. 20And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God.

To Paul, this meant everywhere, "among all nations." He aimed to bring all people to "obedience to the faith." Paul felt faith produced obedience to God's commands.

We are all "called" (v. 7) and must look at it as Paul did. The compensation for those willing to be slaves to Christ is that the Master becomes responsible for them.

The Queen of Sheba exclaimed to Solomon's servants that they should be happy because of Solomon's goodness.

I Kings 10:8, Happy are thy men, happy are these thy servants, which stand

continually before thee, and that hear thy wisdom.

So will be our Master!

Winston Churchill cabled Franklin Roosevelt during World War II, "Give us the tools and we'll finish the job." God cabled Paul and He cables us, "I have given you the tools (grace). Now finish the job."

Too many Christians are guilty of the "Bonura Theory of Chance." Henry J. Bonura, "Zeke," played first base for the old Washington Senators in the 1930s. Zeke was the worst-fielding first baseman in baseball. But he had the best fielding average in the major leagues every year. How? He was no intellectual giant, but he understood one rule in baseball better than anyone before or since: You can't be charged with an error unless

you touch the ball. So, Zeke Bonura assiduously avoided touching anything that looked difficult.

Too many people have an identity crisis. We know who we are. God has called us! God enabled us! Let's do it!

Chapter Two
Our Calling in Christ
Romans 1:1-7

Lesson in Review

A. Complete the following sentences using the correct words from the reading, notes, and class lecture.

1. This book is put _____in order of the epistles and is the _____ plus most _____ of Paul's writings.

2. The Book of Romans is primarily a letter of _____ to an unvisited church to prepare its members for his arrival.

3. Romans was written from _____ near the end of the _____ missionary journey

4. As Romans unfolds, Paul's central theme is imparting God's _____ to the saints.

5. The critical words of Romans are _____.

6. The message of Romans is as applicable today as it was when Paul wrote the letter. This is because the human heart has not _____; its needs are the _____, and _____ has not changed; His Gospel is the same.

7. Paul introduced himself to the Romans first as "a _____ of Jesus Christ."

B. Answer these questions from Romans 1:1-7. Use verses where the answer comes from.

8. With what was Jesus declared to be the Son of God?

9. What is the purpose of receiving grace and apostleship in relation to faith among all nations?

10. What was Paul's salutation to the Romans?

C. Select the best answer for each multiple-choice question.

11. According to Romans 15:18, what was Paul's goal in preaching to the Gentiles?

a. To make them obedient by word and deed
b. To establish a new political system
c. To increase his personal influence
d. To remove Roman rule

12. Why does Paul emphasize obedience in the Christian life?

a. To bring honor to Jesus' name
b. To avoid suffering
c. To gain personal fame
d. To adhere to Roman customs

13. What does Paul say about being "called to be saints"/

a. It is reserved only for church leaders
b. It means being consecrated for God's service
c. It is based on personal achievements
d. It is irrelevant to Christian life

D. Read the question carefully and respond in 2-3 sentences with a clear and concise answer. Your response should directly address the question and provide relevant details from the text.

14. How does Paul see himself according to the scriptures?

Chapter Three

This Glorious Gospel

Romans 1:1-7

Galatians 1:6-9, "6I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: 7Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. 8But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. 9As we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed."

We have all met salespeople who enthusiastically endorse their product as superior to all others, only to meet them later, now selling for their former competitor just as enthusiastically. Their commitment was more to their percentage than to their product. Paul could never be accused of that. He was unshakably loyal to the Gospel. He desires to communicate and convince, which prompts this letter. Notice three lesser reasons for writing this letter before considering his introduction to the Gospel.

I. The Introduction

Paul wanted them to know him before he came. (This was the subject of the first lesson, and we will not repeat it but mention it as one of his reasons for writing.)

II. The Itinerary

Paul wrote to alert the Romans of his plans to travel to Jerusalem and Spain, with a stop in Rome.

Romans 1:11-13, "11For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established; 12That is, that I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me. 13Now I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that oftentimes I purposed to come unto you, (but was let hitherto,) that I might have some fruit among you also, even as among other Gentiles."

Romans 15:22-28, 22For which cause also I have been much hindered from coming to you. 23But now having no more place in these parts, and having a great desire these many years to come unto you; 24Whensoever I take my journey into Spain, I will come to you: for I trust to see you in my journey, and to be brought on my way thitherward by you, if first I be somewhat filled with your company. 25But now I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints. 26For it

hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem. 27It 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. 28When therefore I have performed this, and have sealed to them this fruit, I will come by you into Spain.

III. Their Involvement

Paul knew that to carry this message, he would need their assistance. How?

- Financially

Romans 15:24, Whensoever I take my journey into Spain, I will come to you: for I trust to see you in my journey, and to be brought on my way thitherward by you, if first I be somewhat filled with your company.

- Prayerfully

Romans 15:30, 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.

His primary reason for visiting Rome was to solicit their help in his trip to Spain.

IV. The Information

Paul must have felt that the strategic nature of Rome demanded that the church be particularly well-equipped to understand the truth. Therefore, he thought it necessary to set out a reasoned presentation of the Gospel. Let's look at his opening statement in detail.

A. The Expression—The gospel of God (v. 1)

The Greek word *Evangelion* tries to capture the excitement and the thrill of the announcement of good news. The Septuagint describes the announcement that the Babylonian captives are free to return home. Our good news is even more significant and grander freedom from sinful bondage and liberty to be with God! Everywhere Paul went, he saw himself as his messenger and was not ashamed.

Romans 1:16, For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

We should never be apologetic about good news; if you are, you must be convinced it is as good as it says.

B. The Embryo— "The gospel of God" (v. 1)

Notice it is God's idea, not man's idea. Paul, already knowledgeable of Scripture, spent three years with the Lord in the desert after his conversion in Damascus. He studied and understood the Gospel there, later confirming it with Peter—wouldn't that be a study to overhear?

> Galatians 1:11-19,11But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. 12For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ. 13For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it: 14And profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers. 15But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, 16To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood: 17Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus. 18Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days. 19But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother.

What were the results of Paul's encounter with the Gospel?

> Acts 9:20-25, 20And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God. 21But all that heard him were amazed, and said; Is not this he that destroyed them which called on this name in Jerusalem, and came hither for that intent, that he might bring them bound unto the chief priests? 22But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ. 23And after that many days were fulfilled, the Jews took counsel to kill him: 24But their laying await was known of Saul. And they watched the gates day and night to kill him. 25Then the disciples took him by night, and let him down by the wall in a basket.

Notice that it is uniquely the "gospel of God," not the Gospel of Jesus, the Gospel of Christ, or the Gospel of Messiah. This is an essential item that should be noted. Paul is reminding them that the Gospel originated in God, not Christ. This is Paul's attempt to maintain the correct concept of salvation as men understand it. As Paul wrote the Corinthians, "To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself" (II Corinthians 5:19). Notice the order: God in Christ reconciling back to God. For this reason, then, it is God's Gospel.

C. The Expectation—Promised afore (v. 2)

Paul's message was constantly criticized, particularly by fellow Jews scattered throughout the Empire. Therefore, Paul took great care in presenting his doctrine in the Old Testament.

> Deuteronomy 18:15, "The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken."
>
> Isaiah 7:14, "Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel."

Jesus did the same thing:

> Luke 24:27, And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.

Paul did not replace the Old Testament with Jesus but preached its fulfillment in Jesus. Though Paul's teaching to some might appear new, he regarded them entirely consistent with all that had been declared in the Old Testament—not only consistent but promised there. It was Paul's unique calling to take the things of Christ latent in the Old Testament and explain them, considering Calvary. He affirms:

> **1. It was Promised.** No small part of this epistle is employed to show this.
>
> **2. It was Passed.** By no less authority than holy and inspired men who wrote the Old Testament.
>
> **3. It was Published.** It was not dependent on vague and loose tradition but was recorded so that men might examine it for themselves.

D. The Emmanuel— "Concerning... Jesus" (v. 3). The central point of the Gospel is Jesus; there is no Gospel without Him!

When Paul mentions Jesus, notice how he heaps up His name and titles. He takes great pleasure in speaking of Jesus. And, once having mentioned Him, he cannot go on in his discourse without some expression of love and honor, as here, wherein one person, he shows us His two natures. Paul gives us a full description:

- Jesus = Savior
- Christ = Special anointed One
- Lord = Master
- Seed of David = A man of royal status eligible to fulfill the prophecy that

the seed of David would sit on the throne forever.

The New Testament begins and ends with a reference to Jesus as the son of David (Matthew 1:1 and Revelation 22:16). The Messianic line was exhausted in Him. Using various Old Testament genealogies, Matthew and Luke trace His rightful claim to the throne of David. It is significant that at Calvary, no one cared to accept Isaiah's challenge and "declare his generation" (Isaiah 53:8). To have done so would have been to proclaim His sole right to the throne of David publicly. He was, in very fact, "the King of the Jews."

Son of God = Yet more than a man, God in the flesh

A. **The Exhibit—Power . . . spirit . . . resurrection (v. 4)**

Paul showed the grounds for believing that Jesus is God in the flesh. The word "declared" means not only to announce but also to prove. How?

- His power to conquer sin, death, disease, natural elements, spiritual forces, and Satan.
- The Holy Ghost, which overshadowed Him at baptism, empowers His followers.
- The resurrection is the most significant proof that Jesus is God in the flesh.

Paul told the Corinthians that this is the weak link ("And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain" I Corinthians 15:14). Jesus was the Son of God before the resurrection and after the resurrection. The resurrection did not make Him the Son of God. It proved His Sonship and earned Him His rightful place as power of attorney with the Father. It placed Him in the position of Lord and Christ. ("Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made the same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ," Acts 2:36). We believe it because of the written record, witnesses, and it has withstood all tests.

The resurrection proved Jesus to be beyond the ordinary. His death for all would have been no more than any other martyr's except for the resurrection. It was the crowning proof of a work well done and accepted by the Father; thus, the resurrection. While He was on earth, He was declared the Son of God through the Holy Ghost.

> John 10:18, "No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father."

Based on this, Paul preaches power in the Christian life because of the mighty Savior who lives in the Christian.

B. **The Evidence—Obedience to the faith (v. 5)**

The current proof is the people who have believed and have been changed. The purpose of the gospel is to induce men to obey God. There is no true faith that does not produce obedience. It does not consist of knowledge or agreement but of obedience.

> Romans 15:18, "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."

The effect of the gospel is "among all nations." This was Jesus' original commission to the Church (Matthew 28:18-19; Mark 16:15-16). He also received Paul's special commission when he was filled with the Holy Ghost (Acts 9:15).

The reason we are obedient is "for his name." The gospel produces obedience so that Jesus' name is honored. The Christian's work is not one in which he seeks to honor himself, but is solely for the honor and glory of Jesus Christ. For Jesus, Christians toiled, encountered perils, and laid down their lives because by so doing, they might bring others to the Gospel, and thus, Jesus might be lifted higher.

In **verse 6, "ye also the called of Jesus Christ."** Paul is talking to the church, not the ministers. God calls everyone to do something. What are you doing?

G. The End—Called to be saints (v. 7) A saint is someone God separates. It means those who are holy, devoted, or consecrated to God. In the Old Testament, it was applied to anything set apart from the service of God, the temple, the sacrifices, the utensils, the garments of the priests, and the priests themselves. For Christians, it is one who is separated from other people, objects, and pursuits to be consecrated to the service of God.

There are only two kinds of people—saints and not saints!

Paul concludes with his apostolic blessing, "Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ" (v. 7). The priests under the Law were to bless the people, and so are the ministers today. Paul wishes them grace and peace. Grace is God's favor toward us, and peace with God, within yourself, and all who are in Christ.

Chapter Three
This Glorious Gospel
Romans 1:1-7

Lesson in Review

A. Complete the following sentences using the correct words from the reading, notes, and class lecture.

1. To solicit their help during his trip to _____ was Paul's primary reason for visiting Rome.

2. We should never be _____ about good news.

3. Paul did not _____ the Old Testament with Jesus but preached its _____ in Jesus.

4. The central point of the Gospel is _____.

5. The most significant proof that Jesus is God in the flesh is the _____.

6. There is no true faith that does not produce _____.

7. The gospel produces obedience so that Jesus' name is _____.

8. A saint is someone who God _____.

B. Read the question carefully and respond in 2-3 sentences with a clear and concise answer. Your response should directly address the question and provide relevant details from the text.

9. How does Paul use the resurrection as the ultimate proof of Jesus' divine nature and authority?

10. According to Paul, why is obedience to the faith essential in the Christian life?

Chapter Four

The Importance of Others

Romans 1:8-12

" For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers; **10** *Making request, if by any means now at length I might have a prosperous journey by the will of God to come unto you."* Romans 9:9-10

Paul's heart for people is evident throughout his writings, and Romans 1:8-12 and Romans 9:9-10 offer a glimpse into his concern for others. It is common for goal-oriented people like Paul to isolate themselves from everyone except those who share their motivation or contribute to their goals. However, this commonality is not to be the case in the church. Paul was not cast in a jealous mold. Instead, he showed great love to people. Without his unceasing prayers and genuine love for the lost, the journey to visit Roman believers would not have happened. His commitment to serving in the gospel reflects Paul's interest in salvation, to see people saved. Notice four aspects of Paul's interest in others that we must also acquire.

I Paul's Appreciation (v. 8)

Paul thanked God for them "First" (v8). He wanted to show appreciation, not first in importance, but before writing about other things. He was positive rather than negative. When he wrote about love, it is clear and challenging that we must choose how we think of others.

> I Corinthians 13:4-7, 4Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, 5Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; 6Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; 7Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.

And remember, Christians are known for their love.

I John 3:23, And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment.

It is easy to find faults. "Any fool can find fault, and most fools do!" Paul saw something good in their reputation for faith. God is not finished with any of us—let's look for improvements. Paul, the missionary and evangelist, loved hearing of churches actively proclaiming the Gospel.

He exhibited the same spirit years later when, in a Roman jail, he wrote to the Philippians about his joy in hearing Christ preached by his opponents.

> Philippians 1:14-18, 14Many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear. 15Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will: 16The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds: 17But the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel. 18What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice.

Notice that Paul thanked God for them *ALL*! We can not choose who we are thankful for because we need all. Age brings stability, youth vision, children's excitement, maturity direction, and novice challenge, and those who are set in their ways keep us on our toes and knees. We need it all!

Paul was specific in his appreciation, "that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world" (v. 8). Too much of our thankfulness is shallow and superficial—we need to take enough interest in people to know what we appreciate. Paul describes their faith, which he has heard of repeatedly, as he travels among the churches. This church had the same reputation as the saints of old who "[by faith] obtained a good report" (Hebrews 11:20).

It is proper to commend Christians, remind them of their influences, and especially call to their minds the incredible power they may have on other churches and people. Nor is it improper that great displays of divine mercy should be celebrated everywhere and excited in the churches' praise of God.

II. Paul's Activity (v. 9)

For Paul, caring meant involvement. Paul "served with his spirit," indicating a willingness to serve rather than a sense of obligation or desire for glory. Paul's service was in his heart as well as in his hands. And he served "in the gospel," showing a commitment to getting the good news out.

He specifically mentions the activity of prayer. Despite their good reputation, they still needed prayer. Prayer is the real battleground for the Christian. From Paul's example, we learn:

A. Constancy in Prayer.

His prayer for the Romans is "without ceasing," in other words, consistently and persistently. Paul prayed for them repeatedly, not just once. It was his burden, carried out through prayer. He tells other churches he prayed for them, too.

I Thessalonians 1:3, Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father.

I Thessalonians 2:13, For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.

B. Charity in Prayer.

Though Paul had no acquaintance with them, he "mentioned them." He called the names of those he knew not to remind God but to engage himself; this made his prayers personal. We are more likely to pray for those we know and those with whom we have a personal connection.

C. Commitment in Prayer.

Prayer is a weighty matter. Paul calls God the witness of his effort for them. Paul calls God as his witness to express his deep interest in their welfare to the Romans. We must be faithful in our commitments to others.

Paul is this active for people he still needs to meet! What are we doing? Why? Does it meet spiritual needs?

III. Paul's Availability (v. 10)

Paul wanted to work among them and was "always in my prayers, making request," or intensely asking God to let him. [The end of verse 9 should be with verse 10.] Why? Paul was ready for retirement, but did not want to retire. He was restless because of his commitment to giving others the Gospel he received.

He told God, "By any means," presumably meaning he was open to all possibilities. It was a blank check, so to speak, signed and offered to God. God took him at his word. He had a perilous journey and arrived in Rome as a prisoner and a preacher. Paul was never ashamed of those chains, never regarded himself as the prisoner of Nero, always as the prisoner of Christ.

Paul had purposed to come for a long time, "now at length," but was hindered. The expressions in the Greek imply an earnest wish that this long-cherished purpose might be accomplished soon.

It is intriguing to realize that a "prosperous journey" with Paul didn't mean certain luxuries. He could be bound in chains under constant guard and still consider it a prosperous situation. His objective was met, which was simple and had nothing to do with outward circumstances.

Paul clarified that it is available by any means "by the will of God." Sometimes, out of zeal or frustration, we manipulate our circumstances. That can lead us into situations inferior to God's best and sometimes harmful to us.

Jesus taught us to pray for God's will ("And he said unto them, when ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth," Luke 11:2); as He did ("And he went a little farther, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt," Matthew 26:39). James taught us to plan contingent on the will of God ("For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that," James 4:15).

IV. Paul's Association (vv. 11-12)

Like a family reunion, Paul "longed to see them." He desired to see them to bless them and "impart unto you some spiritual gift." The reason for this was to "establish" and strengthen them. Spiritual gifts are never to entertain but to establish. When the Spirit operates, people should become stronger.

He was right! Writing later, during his first captivity in Rome, to his friends in Philippi, Paul could say:

> Philippians 1:12-14, 12But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel; 13So that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places; 14And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.

Paul told them he was not coming just for their benefit, but so they would also bless him; "that I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith." Christian fellowship is a two-way street. Paul felt he could learn something from even the youngest Christian. Faith grows when Christians share, revealing Paul's humility.

Christianity is a relationship with Jesus Christ. It is best seen in the relationship of believers.

As John asked:

> I John 4:20-21, 20If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? 21And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.

Chapter Four
The Importance of Others
Romans 1:8-12

Lesson in Review

A. Complete the following sentences using the correct words from the reading, notes, and class lecture.

1. Before writing about other things, Paul wanted to show _____.
2. Paul thanked God for them _____.
3. Paul was specific in his _____.
4. For Paul, caring meant _____.
5. Paul explicitly mentions the activity of _____.
6. Paul told God, "By any _____."
7. Spiritual gifts are never to entertain but to _____.
8. Paul told them he was not coming just for their benefit but so they would also _____ him.

A. Answer these questions from Romans 1:8-12. Use verses where the answer comes from.

9. Paul was thankful that the Roman faith was spoken about. Where was it spoken of? _____
10. How often did Paul mention the Romans in his prayers? _____

    _____
11. What might Paul long to impart to them? _____

C. Read the question carefully and respond in 2-3 sentences with a clear and concise answer. Your response should directly address the question and provide relevant details from the text.

12. How did Paul's willingness to arrive in Rome "by any means" reflect his commitment to sharing the gospel?

12. What was Paul's purpose in imparting a spiritual gift to the believers in Rome?

Chapter Five

The Word to the World

Romans 1:13-17

"Now I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that oftentimes I purposed to come unto you, (but was let hitherto,) that I might have some fruit among you also, even as among other Gentiles." Romans 1:13

Paul started this letter with a self-introduction, a summary of the Gospel, and an expression of gratitude for fellow believers. As he progresses, his commitment to the gospel is clear. Why was Paul so committed to spreading the Good News? In Romans 1:13-17, Paul emphasizes his dedication by declaring three times in this passage, "I am." His desire to visit Rome was not merely personal but rooted in his longing to bear spiritual fruit among the Gentiles. Paul's boldness, obligation, and eagerness reveal his deep passion for sharing Christ with the world.

I Paul's Contract (v. 14)

Paul labored under an outstanding obligation, seeing himself as a debtor. The intensity of his commitment is almost frightening. It is as if he felt God had revealed the Gospel to him alone, for others, like an estate trustee. He never felt his work was done.

It's hard to imagine how Paul lived with such a feeling of responsibility, yet it is hard to grasp how many believers live complacently without any sense of obligation.

Every time there is a privilege, there is also a responsibility. We are like those lepers of old who, having stumbled on vast resources when their fellows were starving in a besieged city, must say, "We do not well: this day is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace" (II Kings 7:9). That is the spirit exactly. Those who have found the treasure of the gospel must share it with all mankind. It is debt.

If I am a debtor, then I must make payments. It is not a witness if you feel like it or if the opportunity presents itself. If you're waiting for the opportunity, it will not come. How can God trust an eternal soul to someone only willing to speak if asked? Besides, most lost souls do not know what they seek; we must help.

Paul was willing to go to all. He was not just the apostle to a particular group of people. It made little difference to Paul whether a man was cultured or crude, an intellectual or an ignoramus. He would proclaim Christ with equal passion to a runaway slave like Onesimus or a proud monarch like King Agrippa. The extreme range of his duty is found in his comparison:

- The Greeks—the educated. These are not Greek-speaking Jews, but Greeks

from Greece who were the most intellectual people of Paul's time.

- The barbarians—the uncultured. Like the Greeks, the barbarians were Gentiles. However, they were miles apart in knowledge and wisdom. Barbarians were the heathens of Paul's day.

- The wise—the sophisticated. These are those who think they are wise or who boast of wisdom.

- The unwise—in the Greek "morons." Another contrast is that there are people who consider themselves unlearned.

These people lived in Rome, and Paul emphasizes Rome because that is where this letter is being sent. Paul was an intellectual, but he was indebted to everyone.

Do not be afraid of the specialist (those who know more and more about less and less). You are a Gospel specialist!

II. Paul's Choice (v. 15)

In addition to his sense of obligation, Paul was eager to go to Rome. Paul's "ready" is not just prepared, as in Acts 21:13 ("I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus"), but "eager."

Paul's statement is not an idle boast. When Paul finally got to Rome, he was under house arrest with guards (Acts 28:16, "And when we came to Rome, the centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard: but Paul was suffered to dwell by himself with a soldier that kept him.") where he witnessed to the Palace Guards (Philippians 1:13, "So that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace and in all other places.")

Paul was ready to preach the gospel in Rome. He was mobbed when he preached in Jerusalem, the world's religious center. He was mocked when he preached it at Athens, the intellectual center. When he preached it in Rome, the legislative center of the world, he was eventually martyred. He was ready for that.

Today, we seem more interested in living in the blessing than in sharing the blessing. One estimate is that 95% of all church members have never introduced anyone to Jesus Christ. We need to look for places to discharge our debt.

Paul had determined to come before but was hindered ("Now I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that oftentimes I purposed to come unto you, but was let hitherto, that I might have some fruit among you also, even as among other Gentiles.") The word "let" means hindered or to obstruct. We do not know how this was done, but he probably refers to the various openings for preaching the gospel where he had been and to the obstructions of different kinds of enemies of the gospel.

We do not know how often Paul traveled to Rome, but he strongly desired to see and work with them.

Notice how our plans can be changed. God can change our plans.

> Romans 15:19-23, 19Through 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. 20Yea, so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation: 21But as it is written, To whom he was not spoken of, they shall see: and they that have not heard shall understand. 22For which cause also I have been much hindered from coming to you. 23But now having no more place in these parts, and having a great desire these many years to come unto you.

> Acts 16:6-8, 6Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia, and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia, 7After they were come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not. 8And they passing by Mysia came down to Troas.

Satan can also change our plans.

> I Thessalonians 2:18, Wherefore we would have come unto you, even I Paul, once and again; but Satan hindered us.

This time, God hindered him because he had much to do in Asia Minor and Greece. His purpose for coming was not fun or fellowship but "fruit." He wanted to go because of the strategic influence of Rome. It was not curiosity to see the capital or a love for travel, but for the expressed purpose of bringing people to Jesus Christ.

This is what we are chosen and called by God to do.

> John 15:16, Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain.

Look at what Paul meant.

A. To the Dirty Place.

If we have low morals today, theirs were off the chart. Immortality was rampant, homosexuality was publicly practiced, and politics and intrigue were part of the business. Foreign relations were conquest and conquered. Yet Paul wanted to go to them.

B. To the Dangerous Place.

Tradition tells us that Paul was eventually beheaded in Rome. He may have felt the

danger of Rome, but he was willing to go.

C. To the Distant Place.

> Romans 15:23-24, "But now having no more place in these parts, and having a great desire these many years to come unto you; Whensoever I take my journey into Spain, I will come to you: for I trust to see you in my journey, and to be brought on my way thitherward by you, if first I be somewhat filled with your company."

Spain was at the end of the map.

If we are not willing to go to dirty, dangerous, and distant places, odds are we are not willing to go anywhere. You must be willing to go anywhere.

III. Paul's Confidence (v. 16)

Paul was so eager because he was confident of the message he preached, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth" (v. 16). Why would anyone be ashamed?

- It had nothing in it to commend it to the scholars.
- It was identified with a despised Jew.
- It was identified with a common carpenter.
- It was identified as a crucified criminal.
- Many of its followers were unlearned and despised.
- It was spoken against everywhere.

But despite that, it was Good News! Paul understood its truth and value. He had experienced its consolations. He had seen its power of deliverance. That is why he is not ashamed. Rather than be ashamed, he gloried in it as the power of God unto salvation.

It is a Christian indeed who is neither ashamed of the gospel nor shamed by it. If we are ashamed of the Good News, it is time to move from theory to experience.

Look at it.

A. Its Origin.

It is the "gospel of Christ." Paul understood it was not a system but a Savior. It was not a principle but a Person. It was this that gave Paul such authority.

B. Its Operation.

There is "power" (Greek *Dunamis*). Paul saw it work, in operation, in every city he preached in with every conceivable type of person. Further, he had felt it; it transformed his life. The power was still working—not just conversion but changing temperament and attitudes and freeing vices. We are called to live in this daily power, not by habit. What does it say if we are defeated and let our lives witness instead? Defeated!

C. Its Outcome.

It is for "salvation" (Greek *Soteria*). It is relevant. The world does not need a better education system, social reform, or new religious ideas. It requires the gospel! This is the greatest need of humanity. It is freedom from power and the penalty of sin. A release from the chains of sin. It grips the mind, stabs the conscience, warms the heart, saves the soul, and sanctifies life. It can make the drunkard sober, the crooked straight, and the promiscuous pure.

D. It is Outreach.

This Gospel is for "everyone that believeth." This is not an exclusive message. (Mark 16:15, "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.") By order, not preference, it went to the Jew first because he could understand the Gospel since he did not have to cleanse himself of idols first. Then to the Gentiles. Jews and Gentiles now stand on level ground before the gospel—both equally miserable without a Savior, and both equally welcome to the Savior.

It applies not to all who behave but all who "believe," in the present tense, indicating not a one-time persuasion or profession of faith but a continual relationship of faith.

How do I know if I am not believing? There will be:

- Disobedience
- Doubt
- Fear
- Half-heartedness
- No witness
-

Paul continues this by quoting Habakkuk 2:4, "the just shall live by his faith." This is the theme of Romans and our next topic.

Chapter Five
The Word to the World
Romans 1:13-17

Lesson in Review

A. Complete the following sentences using the correct words from the reading, notes, and class lecture.

1. Paul labored under a remarkable obligation, seeing himself as a _____.
2. Paul was willing to go to _____.
3. The "Greeks" were the _____.
4. The "barbarians" were the _____.
5. The "wise" were the _____.
6. The "unwise" were the _____.
7. On top of his sense of obligation rested a great _____to go to Rome.
8. Paul was hindered in going to Rome by _____ because he had much to do in Asia Minor and Greece.
9. Paul's purpose for going to Rome was not _____ or _____ but "_____" (v13).
10. If we're not willing to go to _____, _____and _____places, odds are we're not willing to go anywhere.
11. It is a Christian indeed who is neither _____of the gospel nor _____ of it.
12. As believers, we are either _____, _____, or _____.

B. Answer these questions from Romans 1:13-17. Use verses where the answer comes from.

13. What reason did Paul propose to go to Rome?

14. What was Paul ready to do?

15. Who receives salvation through the power of God in the Gospel?

16. Who was the gospel first preached to?

17. What does the gospel reveal?

C. Read the question carefully and respond in 2-3 sentences with a clear and concise answer. Your response should directly address the question and provide relevant details from the text.

18. What were some of the challenges that hindered Paul from traveling to Rome earlier?

19. What did Paul mean when he said he was a debtor?

20. How does Paul's view of debt relate to believers today?

21. Why did Paul preach to all people, regardless of status?

Chapter Six

The Way We Live

Romans 1:16-17

"For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith." Romans 1:17

God is righteous; man is unrighteous. Romans 1:16-17 stands as a foundational declaration of the gospel's power, revealing the righteousness of God that is bestowed upon sinful humanity. The keywords "righteousness" and similar words occur fifty times in Romans. The phrase "from faith to faith" signifies the reception and reproduction of righteousness. In other words, the righteousness of God is received by faith and reproduced by faith. Paul's central message is that salvation is not earned but given by grace and upheld through unwavering faith.

In verse 17, Paul quotes Habakkuk 2:4 as his text for this letter and life. The prophet Habakkuk was a contemporary of King Josiah (II Kings 22 & 23) in the seventh century before Christ. Josiah came to the throne of Judah at age 8. At 16, he began to seek the Lord and, at 20, purged idolatry from Jerusalem. The priest discovered a copy of the Law when repairing the temple of Hilkiah. Shaphan, the scribe, read it to the King, who was terror-stricken by the judgment of God's people forsook Him. No one living could remember the Law; it had been lost so long that Josiah immediately humbled himself and prayed for mercy. He then published the Law throughout the land and reinstated the feasts.

As Habakkuk studied it, he understood God's perfect holiness and became concerned about society's imperfections and sins. While idolatry was gone, Judah's revival and worship were only superficial. Habakkuk observed that simply knowing the Law did not produce holiness. God showed the prophet that He would bring the Babylonians down on His people as punishment. Isaiah also foretold this (Isaiah 39).

But Habakkuk raised another question: How can the holy God use wicked people as a tool? God showed how the success of the wicked can never tarnish His glory:

- Their frustration is because of their passion, which leads to self-enslavement (2:4-5).
- Their finality is hostility and eventually harm from those they hurt (2:6-8, 15-17).
- They fear no peace or security because of guilt (2:9-11).
- Their futility as everything they build will one day fall to ruin (2:12-14).

Habakkuk began to understand that the wicked always make choices that guarantee their downfall and misery. God then reminded Habakkuk of a series of judgments in the past as proof (Habakkuk 3).

Amid all this, Habakkuk is offered a better way—a life of faith that makes men right before God (2:4) and walk on heights above others while knowing they are only one step from disaster (3:18-19).

Paul takes Habakkuk's words and sees them as the foundational truth of the gospel. Indeed, we can see all of Romans as an elaboration of this verse: The (Chapters 1-3) by faith (Chapters 3-5) shall live (Chapters 6-16).

This is the actual order of the words in this Greek phrase. Quoted two other places in the New Testament, this order is our study outline. Romans 1:17 stresses "the just" compared to the unjust or unrighteous. Galatians 3:11 stresses "by faith" in comparison to by works. Hebrews 10:38-39 stresses "shall live" in contrast to death.

I. Our Position— Just

> Romans 1:17, For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.

Justification is the New Testament version of the Old Testament word righteous or righteousness, with a minor difference. Justification is the initial act of God's grace; sanctification is the continuing work of His grace.

It is demonstrated in the life of Paul in his conversion from persecutor of Christ to prisoner of Christ, and he never escaped the feeling of being a prisoner. The words justified and righteousness are used over 60 times in Romans.

This is revealed in the Gospel at Calvary, where God punishes sin and makes salvation available to all through the resurrection. God is both just and Justifier.

> Romans 3:26, "God hath set forth... at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." And our right standing is the result of God's grace.
>
> II Corinthians 5:21, For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.
>
> Philippians 3:8-9, 8Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, 9And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.

II. Our Persistence—Faith

Galatians 3:11, But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith.

The Law demands perfect obedience that brings a curse to man.

Deuteronomy 27:26, Cursed be he that confirmeth not all the words of this law to do them.

It is not a religious cafeteria where you can pick and choose.

James 2:10-11, 10For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. 11For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law.

The Judaizers wanted to seduce the Galatians into a religion or legal works (that they could not keep), while Paul wanted them to enjoy a relationship of love and life by faith in Christ.

Faith here is specifically steadfast. Faith is not blind optimism, a manufactured "hope-so" feeling, or an intellectual assent to a doctrine. True Bible faith is confident obedience to God's Word despite circumstances and consequences.

This faith operates; God speaks, and we hear His Word. We trust His Word and act on it no matter what the circumstances are or what the consequences may be. The circumstances may be impossible, and the consequences frightening and unknown, but we obey God's Word just the same and believe Him to do what is right and best.

III. Our Performance—Live

Hebrews 10:38-39, 38Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. 39But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.

To the Jew, life and salvation were synonymous, and it is in living that we work out our salvation.

Philippians 2:12-13, 12Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. 13For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

This working out is done in the Spirit (Romans 7:6, "But now we are delivered from

the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter.") from which comes our power (Acts 1:8, "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."). The Spirit (Hebrew *ruarch* meaning wind or vigor) produces a life of purpose and zest that leads to perfection (Hebrews 6:1, "Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God.").

But the believer who lives by sight is headed for perdition.

> Hebrews 10:39, But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.

Faith can be translated in several ways. The word means to perish, die, destroy, and waste. A believer who does not walk by faith returns to the old ways and wastes his life.

Therefore, not only does faith maintain the earthly existence of the righteous, as Habakkuk emphasized, but faith in God also brings eternal life. The righteous man, through faith—the only way anyone can be righteous—will have life, both now and for eternity.

Chapter Six
The Way We Live
Romans 1:16-17

Lesson in Review

A. Complete the following sentences using the correct words from the reading, notes, and class lecture.

1. God is_____, man is _____.

2. Habakkuk observed that simply knowing the Law did not produce _____.

3. All of Romans is an elaboration of this 1:16-17: The _____(Chapters 1-3) by _____(Chapters 3-5) shall _____(Chapters 6-16).

4. _____ is the initial act of God's grace, and_____is the continuing work of His grace.

5. True Bible _____ is confident obedience to God's Word despite circumstances and consequences.

6. To the Jew, _____and _____were synonymous, and it is in living that we work out our salvation.

7. The believer who lives by _____ is headed for perdition.

B. Respond to the following questions based on Romans 1:16-17. Use verses where the answer comes from.

8. Romans 1:16, "For I am not _____ of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto _____ to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek."

9. Romans 1:17, "For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The _____ shall live by _____."

C. Read the question carefully and respond in 2-3 sentences with a clear and concise answer. Your response should directly address the question and provide relevant details from the text.

10. How does Habakkuk 2:4 relate to Paul's message in Romans about righteousness and faith?

Chapter Seven

Humanity on Trial

Romans 1:18-23

"*The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his Hands.*"
Psalm 19:1, NIV

Humanity and sin are Paul's prosecuting attorney's argument, a fact upon fact concerning man's sin and knowledge of sin. Romans 1:18-23 presents Paul's powerful argument concerning human sin and accountability before God. He lays out undeniable truths and facts to establish that mankind is not just guilty of individual sins but is, by nature, sinful. The evidence is clear. God's existence and righteousness are revealed, yet people reject Him. Paul's words are a reminder that spiritual blindness stems from suppressing God's revealed truth, making the need for redemption more urgent. Until man knows he is a sinner, not just has sinned, he cannot recognize or appreciate the gracious salvation God offers.

Paul begins the epistle argument, designed to establish his text in verse 17, "The just shall live by faith." He maintains that God's plan of justification is revealed in the gospel. To prove this, he must first demonstrate that all other plans have failed. This is now his theme through the end of Chapter 3. He sets out to prove that all men are sinners. He must show that all men were under the Law to do this. This was clear to the Jews; Paul also intended to prove it to the Gentiles. Once this is clear, Paul must state that there can be only two means of justification—the Law or Grace. If men have failed under the Law, then Paul can argue for grace alone as the means of justification.

I. God Provides Cleansing (v. 17)

The righteousness of God is Paul's theme. The word "righteousness" is used in three ways in the Bible:

1. The characteristic of God by which He always does what is right, just, and proper. There is no unfairness, dishonesty, or error in God.

2. The standard of perfection God demands.

Romans 10:3, For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.

3. The perfect standing God provides to those who believe.

II Corinthians 5:21, For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin;

that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

This is a challenge and comfort. The challenge is the understanding that we are not judged by man's changing standards but by God's unchanging revelation of wrong. The comfort is the promise that if we live in Christ, He will overshadow us with His righteousness.

II. God Pronounces Condemnation (v. 18)

Paul links the righteousness of God with the wrath of God. In showing this, Paul had to link God's actions with a human feeling. However, that does not mean that when the term "wrath" is applied to God, it is precisely like men's wrath, which is an enraged vengeance. When Jesus was said to have looked at the crowd with "anger" (*Orge* is the same Greek word here translated as "wrath") in Mark 3:5 because they were ready to criticize Him for healing a man with a withered hand on the Sabbath, it is not to infer that He was enraged. Instead, Mark clarifies that He was grieved because they put their ceremonial law above the needs of a man in need. The character of the person must judge the nature of the feeling. So, in this place, the word "wrath" denotes divine displeasure or indignation against sin. It is His opposition to sin and its effect on the lives of humanity.

Bible students cannot avoid the subject of the wrath of God—it is everywhere in Scripture. It is demonstrated against God's people in:

- Numbers 16:44-45 (Kora's rebellion)
- Noah
- Sodom and Gomorrah
- Adam and Eve
- It is exercised against others in Jeremiah 50:13 (Babylon).

In Romans, wrath is mentioned several times:

> 1:18, For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness.
>
> 2:5, But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.
>
> 2:8, But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath.
>
> 3:5, But if our unrighteousness commend the righteousness of God, what shall we say? Is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance?

4:15, Because the law worketh wrath: for where no law is, there is no transgression.

5:8-9, But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.

9:22, What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction.

12:19, Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.

13:4-5, For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake.

Why does it matter? If God has no wrath, people's actions do not matter; therefore, man, left to judge himself, always goes downhill.

What is God's wrath? It is more than history records that the bad are punished and the good are rewarded. It is more than reaping what you sow. It is a characteristic of God, what we might better call "righteous anger." The basis is that if God loves, then He must hate that which would destroy the object of His love.

Isaiah 1:24, Therefore saith the Lord, the LORD of hosts, the mighty One of Israel, Ah, I will ease me of mine adversaries, and avenge me of mine enemies.

Exodus 34:14, For thou shalt worship no other god: for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God.

Deuteronomy 29:18-20, 18Lest there should be among you man, or woman, or family, or tribe, whose heart turneth away this day from the LORD our God, to go and serve the gods of these nations; lest there should be among you a root that beareth gall and wormwood; 19And it come to pass, when he heareth the words of this curse, that he bless himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine heart, to add drunkenness to thirst: 20The LORD will not spare him, but then the anger of the LORD and his jealousy shall smoke against that man, and all the curses that are written in this book shall lie upon him, and the LORD shall blot out his name from under heaven.

There are three areas that God hates:

A. Human Ungodliness.

Ungodliness is chiefly a sin against God, an irreligious person who has no reverence

for God or religious things.

B. Human Unrighteousness.

This is mainly a sin against man. A condition of not being in the right relationship with God or man. Man's first sin in the Garden of Eden separated man from God; his second recorded sin (Cain's murder of Abel) separated man from man (Genesis 3 and 4). God is as indignant at man's wrong treatment of his neighbor as He is at man's bad treatment of his Creator.

C. Human Unbelief.

This is an essential key to the rest of the Book of Romans. To "hold the truth in unrighteousness" is to suppress, bridle, imprison, or hold down the truth. The truth here is not, as you and I know it to be in relation to certain doctrines, but rather a fundamental truth that is deliberately rejected. The Jews deliberately rejected truth, and as a result, it became the topic of discussion expanded in this epistle.

III. God's Presented Charges

Paul presents God's charges against men that bring His wrath:

A. Man's Resistance of God—hold the truth in unrighteousness (v. 18)

Paul asserts that truth is knowable, but men are intentionally ignorant.

Just as Pilot missed Jesus when asking about truth, men have chosen to seek truth within themselves rather than in God.

B. Man's Rejection of God (vv. 21-22)

Nature, as we know, abhors a vacuum. The same is true of the human spirit. Man's resistance left a vacuum that cried to be filled. Man rejected God and has filled it with many things. In Paul's day, they turned to mythology or a search for wisdom. Paul writes that the result was foolishness. The same is true today. People try philosophy. professions, possessions, pleasure, etc. - but end up foolish.

C. Man's Replacement of God (v. 23)

Vain imaginations lead to vain images. We are not concerned with shapes or semblance. Bird or beast makes no difference. All are idols representing nothing. The tragedy is seeing how far humanity can warp the concepts of God when it attempts to reason God rather than reason with God.

The contrast between the true God and idols is seen vividly in Psalm 115:1-8:

1Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy,

and for thy truth's sake. 2Wherefore should the heathen say, Where is now their God? 3But our God is in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased. 4Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men's hands. 5They have mouths, but they speak not: eyes have they, but they see not: 6They have ears, but they hear not: noses have they, but they smell not: 7They have hands, but they handle not: feet have they, but they walk not: neither speak they through their throat. 8They that make them are like unto them; so is every one that trusteth in them..

There is more than subtle irony here. The Psalmist reminds his readers of the losses they will incur if they do not serve the true and living God.

1. No Promises. "They have mouths, but they speak not" (v. 5).

The God of Israel spoke to them through Moses, Joshua, Samuel, David, and the prophets. He gave them covenants and promises never shared with the Gentle nations.

Ephesians 2:11-12, Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world.

Imagine what it would be like to have to live without God's promises!

2. No Protection. "Eyes have they, but they see not" (v. 5).

Psalm 32:8, I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye.

Psalm 34:15, The eyes of the LORD are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry.

Peter quoted that promise in his first letter (1 Peter 3:12), and if any man knew what it meant to have God's protection, it was Peter!

3. No Prayer. "They have ears, but they hear not" (v. 6). Our God hears us when we pray. He encourages us to come to Him and pour out our hearts before Him.

Moses prayed on the mountain, and Joshua in the valley of Amalek (Exodus 17:8-16). When Israel sinned, Moses made his way to the top of Mount Sinai and interceded for the people there. What would it be like to live for or to serve God without the privilege of prayer?

4. No Praise. "Noses they have, but they smell not" (v. 6).

In Genesis 8:21, "And the LORD smelled a sweet savor," coming from the burnt offerings that Noah had laid on the altar. This is a human illustration of a divine truth—the theologians call this anthropomorphism—but the truth is obvious: God delights to have His people worship and praise Him and bring Him their best.

When Paul received the missionary offering from the church at Philippi, he did not see food, money, or warm clothing. He saw "an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well pleasing to God" (Philippians 4:18).

What would it be like to serve a dead idol and know that your best was never recognized or received?

5. No Power. "They have hands, but they handle not" (v. 7).

Jeremiah said of the false gods, "They are upright as the palm tree, but speak not: they must needs be borne, because they cannot go. Be not afraid of them; for they cannot do evil, neither also is it in them to do good" (10:5). Then he asked, "Are there any among the vanities of the Gentiles that can cause rain?" (14:22).

Elijah's ridicule of Baal only exposed the impotence of this false god: "Cry aloud: for he is a god; either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked" (I Kings 18:27).

6. No Presence. "Feet they have, but they walk not" (v. 7).

Isaiah contrasted Jehovah, who carried Israel, with Bel and Nebo, who had to be carried by their worshippers (Isaiah 46:1-7)! One of the names of our Savior is "Immanuel . . . God with us" (Matthew 1:23). Our Lord's farewell promise was, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world" (Matthew 28:20). Even in the darkest valley, our God is with us (Psalm 23:4).

7. No Progress. "They that make them are like unto them, so is every one that trusteth in them" (v. 8). Idolatry is worshipping and serving the "creature more than the Creator" (Romans 1:25), and only the Creator can transform us to be like Himself.

If the Psalmist is correct, and I think he is, then those who worship false gods eventually become blind, deaf, dumb, weak, and immobile—spiritually speaking. If we become like the god we worship—material or imaginary—we can never rise above the god we manufacture for ourselves. It is a vicious circle that only redemption can break! It is a dangerous thing to serve false gods. Instead of transformation, you experience retrogression, the deadening effects of false service.

IV. God Patiently Convicts

When the charges are listed, man asks, "How does man know?" Paul responds:

A. Conscience— manifest in them (v. 19)

The smoldering past of a once divine fullness rests in every person.

It is tough not to believe in God. Even in man's spiritual depravity, the

sparks of divine influence easily bring him back to life. God has so impregnated man with His Being that it becomes challenging indeed to work out a godless concept for himself as well as all society.

The story is told that in communist Russia, a young woman applied for a job with the government. On the application, it asked what was written on a wall in Moscow, specifically on a building opposite the shrine of Our Lady of Iberia. She answered, "Religion is the opiate of the people." Not sure she had answered the question correctly; she walked seven miles to the wall of Moscow. When she arrived, she read on the wall, "Religion is the opiate of the people." Grateful that she had answered the question correctly, she fell on her knees and said, "Thank God!"

God has placed in man a knowledge of His being, as shown in man's desire to worship something. Jesus told the woman at the well, "Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship" (John 4:24). It is not a choice of whether man will worship or not, but only what he will worship. It is man's obligation to make sure that what he worships he knows to be right.

God has also given man knowledge of His being, as shown in man's sense of morality (fairness). This innate sense of right and wrong reflects a divine moral order by guiding human actions beyond mere instinct or societal rules. People experience guilt when acting unjustly, and seeking fairness in their dealings reinforces that man's sense of morality is deeply embedded in the human conscience. Moral awareness points to a higher power who has instilled in humanity the knowledge of His nature and righteousness.

B. Creation—from the creation of the world (v. 20)

God unmistakably reveals Himself through creation, making His power and divine nature evident. Paul acknowledged this truth when speaking at Mars Hill in Acts 17:24-28, declaring that God (His Godhead), the Creator of all things, does not dwell in temples made by human hands. What is revealed? He pointed to God's authority over creation as proof of His sovereignty and urged people to seek Him: "In Him we live and move and have our being." God's majesty is displayed through creation; therefore, humanity should recognize His divine presence and rule.

> Acts 17:24-28, "[24]God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; [25]Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to

all life, and breath, and all things; 26And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; 27That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us: 28For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring."

Therefore, God has revealed Himself to all humanity, not in the terms of the doctrine as we know Him, but through creation. Thus, even when man has not heard the gospel, he is without excuse. Man is not condemned for failing to live up to a revelation he does not possess, but because he has failed to live up to the light he does have.

C. Conclusion (v. 20)

Man is "without excuse." Everyone is convicted. The jury verdict—guilty!

Man, through his conscience and from creation, has been made aware of God so that he could grasp the concept of God by understanding the things within him and around him. This leaves man without an excuse! So, whether one denies the truth and becomes an atheist or distorts the truth and becomes idolatrous, one will be held utterly responsible for one's actions.

Chapter Seven
Humanity on Trial
Romans 1:18-23

Lesson in Review

A. Complete the following sentences using the correct words from the reading, notes, and class lecture.

1. Paul now sets out to prove that all men are_____.
2. In what three ways is the word "righteousness" used in the Bible?
3. Paul links the _____of God with the _____of God.
4. "Wrath" denotes the divine _____ or _____ against sin.
5. If there is no wrath of God, then the _____ of people do not matter.
6. What is the wrath of God?
7. If God_____, then He must _____that which would destroy the object of His love.
8. What is God's three charges against men that bring His wrath?
9. Paul asserts that truth is _____, but men are _____ignorant.
10. Vain imaginations lead one to vain _____.
11. Paul writes that every man knows he is a sinner because of his _____ and creation.
12. Even when man has not heard the gospel, he is without _____.

B. Answer these questions from Romans 1:18-23. Use verses where the answer comes from.

13. The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against whom?

14. Since the invisible things of God are seen, what is man's standing before God?

15. When man thought himself wise, he was a what?

C. Read the question carefully and respond in 2-3 sentences with a clear and concise answer. Your response should directly address the question and provide relevant details from the text.

16. How does Paul explain that both conscience and creation reveal God's existence to mankind?

17. According to D. Bernard's *The Message of Romans (pp. 25-27)*, answer the following questions.

18. <u>Indifference</u> to God was humanity's first step in falling away from God. How did indifference lead to idolatry?

19. What is one significant consequence of rejecting God's truth, according to Romans 1?

Chapter Eight

From Grace to Disgrace

Romans 1:22-32

"Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools,
23 And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into
an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and
four-footed beasts, and creeping things." Romans 1:22-23

Man's nature remains an undeniable truth, consistently revealed through human behavior, history, and conscience. Romans 1:22-32 presents a sobering picture of humanity's tendency to reject God despite knowing His truth. Regardless of knowing God, people still reject Him and replace His glory with false idols. Their rejection of divine truth leads man into foolishness. He may deny, defy, or deride it, but it remains a fact that God's revelation about man's nature is absolute and unalterable. Man's rejection of God is not ignorance, but defiance. The consequences are evident in the depths of depravity described in this passage.

I Man's Changes

A. His Adoration—God into an image (v. 23)

God created man in His image and likeness, making him distinct from the rest of creation in his ability to invent and be superior to the rest of creation. Man's response? Rather than glorifying God, man takes the glory and remakes God in his image and likeness. Then, to add insult to injury, man makes God in the form of animals. Instead of man, worshipping the one true God, people have turned to false representations of Him.

B. His Absolutes—Truth of God into a lie (v. 25)

Verse 25 echoes a warning, showing the result of rejecting God's order. The lie began in Genesis 3 when the serpent deceived Eve. The lie is that man can control his destiny. Satan's lie was that man could control his own destiny without God's authority, with no restrictions and no consequences.

C. His Affection—Leaving the natural (vv. 26-27)

In these two verses, Paul warns that those who reject God fall into immoral behaviors, echoing the sins of Sodom and Gomorrah, which led to divine judgment. These verses are examples of shameful horrors and unnatural vices. God caused a rain of fire and brimstone from Heaven in the days of Lot (Genesis 19). These sins always accompany apostasy.

II Peter 2:6, And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly.

Jude 7, Even as Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.

They are with us today and becoming blatant, aggressive, and evident.

II. Man's Choices

Every action leads to a consequence. In response to humanity's choices, God allowed man's free will to take its course - "God gave them up/over." The problem was that man degenerated rather than improved.

A. Lust—To uncleanness through lust (v. 24)

Separated from God, man sought his satisfaction and fulfillment. He was led by his lust and desires rather than God. This pattern throughout history has illustrated mankind's continual struggle over temptation and spiritual truth.

Many wealthy people built their fortune and future on the fact that humanity, following its own will and fulfilling its desire, is never satisfied. Commercials tap into that desire for more. As the iconic song for the 80s and 90s by The Rolling Stones proclaims, "I Can't Get No Satisfaction."

Genesis 6:1-8 lists the conditions that led to the flood.

1And it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born unto them, 2That the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose. 3And the LORD said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years. 4There were giants in the earth in those days; and also after that, when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, and they bare children to them, the same became mighty men which were of old, men of renown. 5 And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continuously. 6And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. 7And the LORD said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them. 8But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD.

Genesis 11:1-9 describes man's actions at the Tower of Babel.

1And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech. 2And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they dwelt there. 3And they said one to another, Go to, let us make brick, and burn them thoroughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for morter. 4And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth. 5And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded. 6And the LORD said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do. 7Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech. 8So the LORD scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city. 9Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the LORD did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the LORD scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth.

Isaiah 1:2-6, 2Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the LORD hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. 3The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider. 4Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the LORD, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward. 5Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more: the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. 6From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment.

Galatians 5:19-21, 19Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, 20Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, 21Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

B. Liberty—Unto vile affections (v. 26)

In pursuit of fulfillment, man follows his desires without restraint. This passage speaks of the issue of homosexuality. The wife of Caesar Agrippa practiced prostitution, and 14 of the 15 Caesars were known to have practiced homosexuality. Throughout history, this search for satisfaction has led individuals to embrace behaviors shaped by

personal cravings.

What is the problem with liberty? When you remove the fence, people go further and further to find green grass.

C. Lawlessness—Reprobate mind (v. 28)

When man found God worthless, God gave him over to his worthless mind. The root of the word "reprobate" can mean counterfeit. Therefore, a reprobate is someone with a counterfeit mind. They thought they had a mind but were deceived about right and wrong, so there was no mind.

> Judges 21:25, In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes.

What is the result?

> Ecclesiastes 2:4-11, 4I made me great works; I builded me houses; I planted me vineyards: 5I made me gardens and orchards, and I planted trees in them of all kind of fruits: 6I made me pools of water, to water therewith the wood that bringeth forth trees: 7I got me servants and maidens, and had servants born in my house; also I had great possessions of great and small cattle above all that were in Jerusalem before me: 8I gathered me also silver and gold, and the peculiar treasure of kings and of the provinces: I gat me men singers and women singers, and the delights of the sons of men, as musical instruments, and that of all sorts. 9So I was great, and increased more than all that were before me in Jerusalem: also my wisdom remained with me. 10And whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them, I withheld not my heart from any joy; for my heart rejoiced in all my labour: and this was my portion of all my labour. 11Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do: and, behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun.

III. Man's Consequences (vv. 28-31)

African driver ants (*Dorylus* genus) live in tunnels many feet into the Earth, where the young are protected and the queen lives. The workers travel great distances to bring food to the colony. The workers rely heavily on their queen for colony stability. Ants communicate primarily through pheromones (chemical substances secreted by animals), which help them coordinate tasks and maintain order. If the queen is molested or dies, the far-away worker continues to work, but the colony will gradually decline if a new queen is not born or found. The workers are thought to be constantly oriented to the queen by some radar-like device. This can be seen as a parable for humanity's relationship with God. Just as the ant colony depends on its queen for stability, direction, and survival, mankind depends on God for purpose, guidance, and moral clarity.

Paul piles up one word after another to show that man's wickedness knows no bounds when unrestrained. That he makes this list without offering proof indicates that these sins were well-known in his day.

The sins described fall into five categories:

A. Debased Human Character. Men become "unrighteousness (injustice), . . . wickedness (a desire to injure others), covetousness (the desire to take what belongs to another), maliciousness (the act, as opposed to the desire, of evil in general); full of envy (hatred of another for some success) . . . deceit (fraud), malignity (slander—painting the worst picture of another with your words); . . . haters of God (to rise against God, His principles and His salvation of others), despiteful (to abuse another through unkindness); proud (an unreasonable self-esteem of one's superiority in talents, beauty, wealth, accomplishments, etc.), . . . without natural affection (the unconcern for children), implacable (those who will not be reconciled when there is a quarrel), unmerciful (absence of compassion)."

B. Debased Human Conduct. Men become guilty of "fornication (illicit intercourse), . . . murder (the intentional taking of human life), . . . disobedient to parents (not to show the honor, respect, and attention which is due your parents), . . . covenant breakers (false to their contracts)."

C. Debased Human Conversation. Men become involved in "debate (stirring up contention and strife) . . . whisperers (gossip—to in a sly manner using hints and innuendoes, detract from another), backbiters (to do openly what whispers do quietly, but while the person is absent), . . . boasters (those who claim for themselves that which they do not possess, and glory in it.)."

D. Debased Human Concepts. Men become "inventors of evil things (those seeking new practices to gratify their lusts and passions),... without understanding (inconsiderate or foolish)."

E. Debased Human Companionships. Who, says Paul, "knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same but have pleasure in them that do them."

This list of 24 sins results from man's changes and choices. The worst is the last: they encouraged others to their sin. There was no embarrassment over their sin or attempt to cover up their sin.

This, then, is God's case against man. As John has written, man is "condemned already" (John 3:18). His case is hopeless apart from the intervention of sovereign grace.

Chapter Eight
From Grace to Disgrace
Romans 1:22-32

Lesson in Review

A. Complete the following sentences using the correct words from the reading, notes, and class lecture.

1. The problem with man's free will is that man _____ rather than _____.
2. When man found God worthless, God gave him over to his _____ mind.
3. A reprobate is someone with a _____ mind.
4. Paul piles up one word after another to show that man's wickedness knows no bounds when_____.
5. Those who judge others do what?

B. Answer these questions from Romans 1:22-32. Use verses where the answer comes from.

6. When man rejected God's leadership, they changed the truth of God into what?

7. Because man worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, God gave them up unto what?

8. Since man did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a what?

C. Read this open-ended question carefully and reflect on Paul's message about free will, moral decline, and God's response**.** In 3-5 sentences, express your opinion on whether his insights remain relevant today. Support your response with historical, personal, or societal examples that illustrate your viewpoint.

9. Considering the themes of man's choices, consequences, and God's response, how do you interpret Paul's message about free will and moral decline? Do you think his observations about human nature still apply today, and if so, in what ways?

Name:_____ Date:_____

Romans — Chapter 1

Test #1

True or False:

_____ 1. This book is put first, in order, of the epistles and is the largest plus most comprehensive of Paul's writings.

_____ 2. Paul's primary reason for writing was to correct the false doctrine that had started in Rome after his previous visit.

_____ 3. Paul's central theme as Romans unfolds is imparting God's righteousness to the saint who becomes saved.

_____ 4. The key words of Romans are 1:16-17.

_____ 5. Paul commended the Romans for their faith, which was spoken of throughout the whole world.

_____ 6. Paul introduced himself to the Romans first as "a servant of Jesus Christ."

_____ 7. Paul taught the Old Testament was replaced by Jesus Christ.

_____ 8. True faith usually produces obedience.

_____ 9. One way Paul showed his appreciation for the saints in Rome was by praying for them.

_____ 10. Spiritual gifts are given to the church to entertain and establish.

_____ 11. Paul told the Romans he was coming for their benefit, so they might bless him.

_____ 12. Paul labored under great obligation, seeing himself as a debtor.

_____ 13. God's wrath demonstrates that the actions of people matter to God.

_____ 14. If God loves, then He must hate that which would destroy the object of his love.

_____ 15. Vain imaginations lead one to vain images (idols).

_____ 16. Paul's argument of man's guilt allows man an excuse one day when he

is judged before God.

_____ 17. Apart from God and following his desires, man usually improves himself and his world.

Multiple Choice (select the most correct answer):

_____ 18. Paul wrote a letter to Rome near the end of his:
A. first missionary journey
B. trip to the Jerusalem Council
C. second missionary journey
D. third missionary journey
E. arrest in Jerusalem

_____ 19. The letter to Rome is believed to have been written from:
A. Athens
B. Berea
C. Corinth
D. Damascus
E. Ephesus

_____ 20. Paul's primary reason for planning a visit to Rome was:
A. to visit his many friends
B. to have their help on his way to Spain
C. to hide from his enemies
D. to take a vacation
E. to retire

_____ 21. The message of Romans is applicable today because:
A. man has not changed
B. man's need has not changed
C. God has not changed
D. all the above
E. none of the above

_____ 22. The central point of the gospel is:
A. conviction
B. freedom
C. Jesus
D. man
E. love

____ 23.Paul writes that Jesus was declared to be the Son of God:
A. with power
B. according to the spirit of holiness
C. by the resurrection from the dead
D. all the above
E. none of the above

_____ 24. Paul's appreciation for the church in Rome was:
A. shallow
B. specific
C. superficial
D. all the above
E. none of the above

_____ 25. Paul was available to be used by the will of God:
A. by any means
B. at his convenience
C. when it was comfortable
D. all the above
E. none of the above

____ __ 26. Paul was eager to preach the gospel in Rome but was delayed by:
A. God
B. Satan
C. himself
D. all the above
E. none of the above

_____ 27. Paul links the righteousness of God with God's:
A. awesomeness
B. creativity
C. knowledge
D. power
E. wrath

____ _ 28. Paul writes that every man knows he is a sinner because of creation and:
A. commandments
B. community standards
C. conscience
D. contrition
E. convictions

Match the word, as used in Romans 1, to the definition:

A. Barbarians	D. reprobate	G. unwise
B. Greeks	E. righteousness	H. wise
C. justification	F. unrighteousness	I. wrath

_____ 29. The educated person

_____ 30. The uncultured person

_____ 31. The sophisticated person

_____ 32. The unlearned person

_____ 33. The initial act of God's grace giving man perfect standing

_____ 34. The continuing work of God's grace gives man perfect standing

_____ 35. God's righteous anger

_____ 36. A counterfeit mind

Fill in the Blank:

37. Romans 1:16, "For I am not _____ of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto _____ to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek."

38. Romans 1:17, "For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The _____ shall live by _____."

Chapter Nine

The Judgment on Judging

Romans 2:1

"Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest:
for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself;
for thou that judgest doest the same things." Romans 2:1

Respect for others is a key indicator of our self-worth. If we understand life's complexities and limitations, we should be more considerate of others. We understand that acceptance does not necessarily mean approval or agreement; it allows or tolerates certain things in the effort to engage and teach. As Christians, we are called to be discerning about harsh judgment, as Scripture upholds fair and accurate judgment as a mark of wisdom and maturity.

> I Corinthians 2:12-16, Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man. For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.
>
> I Corinthians 10:15, I speak as to wise men; judge ye what I say.
>
> I John 4:1, Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.

I. A Definition

> Matthew 7:1-5, Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.

In this context, "judging" means passing unfair and unwarranted criticism about someone to someone without understanding the facts. This differs from discernment, which aligns with the fruit of the Spirit and operates with wisdom and righteousness.

Concerning this judging, Jesus firmly commanded that such unfair judgment must cease.

Jesus drove His point home with a humorous illustration. In it, He alternated between two words. The term He used for "mote" refers to a dried sliver or splinter of wood. The other term, "beam," designates a huge plank, a rafter in a house. The Lord paints a picture of someone with a magnifying glass looking into people's eyes and criticizing them for splinters when they have logs in their eyes. Jesus' point is how ridiculous it is to judge others and fail to judge ourselves honestly. He commanded that we start plank-pulling first! Only after that will we be prepared to identify accurately the specks in others.

A word of caution: Jesus used "hypocrite" specifically when referring to the judge, while today, we often use it casually. Only Jesus applied this word to a person in the New Testament. Who but He can truly see through someone's actions? Who else knows all the circumstances or can discern the motives?

II. The Draw

If Jesus condemns it, why do people do it? Why does it draw people?

1. A Habit of Society- Societal habits are the most difficult reason to overcome. Society's common practice of judging others deludes us.

2. To Humiliate Someone.

3. To Hurt Someone.

4. To Heighten Self - it is an ego trip. Some feel that pulling someone down builds them up. This is a lie.

5. To Hide Sin—By pointing at one another and criticizing, they hope to hide what they are doing or keep under control what they are tempted to do.

III. The Damage

The adage is, "Do not judge your neighbor until you have walked a mile in his shoes." The Cherokee says it this way, "Never judge another man until you have walked a mile in his moccasins." This is a valid statement. But Jesus extends the statement to say, "Don't judge." Why?

1. Estranges the judged and the judge from others.
2. Encumbers the spirit of fellowship.
3. Elicits a reaction of judgment in return.

IV. The Decision

Luke 6:32-37, For if ye love them which love you, what thank have ye? for sinners

also love those that love them. And if ye do good to them which do good to you, what thank have ye? for sinners also do even the same. And if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? for sinners also lend to sinners, to receive as much again. But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil. Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful. Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven.

We can respond to this strong teaching against self-righteous judging in two ways. Let's make them personal and direct.

A. We Respond in Kind.

Luke 6:32-34, For if ye love them which love you, what thank have ye? for sinners also love those that love them. And if ye do good to them which do good to you, what thank have ye? for sinners also do even the same. And if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? for sinners also lend to sinners, to receive as much again.

If we respond this way, we will only love and help others when they first show us the same kindness. Jesus said this is no better than what a sinner would do.

B. We Respond in Kindness.

Luke 6:35-37, But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil. Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful. Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven.

This is the response God wants us to have. Why? Because it expresses His attitude toward us. Follow this personal advice (four negatives, one positive):

1.Do not Spy. Refrain from being eager to look for others' faults.

2.Do not Suppose. Do not assume the worst meaning or motives for what you see or hear.

3.Do not Slander. Judgmental people often point out perceived faults without considering their impact on others.

4.Do not Spread. If you hear it, stop it.

5.Do Sympathize. "I will treat others as I want to be treated." That includes spying, supposing, slandering, and stopping. Remember, we are often guilty of what we

judge others for; therefore, examine yourself first and pray for yourself and the other.

> Galatians 6:1-2, Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.

How do we help?

> Matthew 7:7 says, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." We are to ask, seek, and knock. We are to pray, search, and be persistent. The promise? Matthew 7:8-11, "For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask, a fish will he give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?

Persistent effort is promised as a means to success in receiving, understanding, and doing good. Notice that God gives good, not necessarily what we think is good.

Matthew 7:6 warns against offering sacred or valuable truths to those who will reject or mock them.

> Matthew 7:6, Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet and turn again and rend you.

When you attempt to mediate based on these values, it may lead to resistance or hostility. Instead of trying to resolve divisions directly, guide individuals toward Jesus and His teachings. This can change hearts, making them more open to reconciliation. It would be better to use your influence to lead them to Jesus; then, you can deal with the problems.

Christians should be the most accepting people on Earth, and the local church should be the world's most winsome, magnetic place. Both can be true if we stop judging others and open our hearts to Christ-centered compassion.

Chapter Nine
The Judgment on Judging
Romans 2:1
Lesson in Review

A. Complete the following sentences using the correct words from the reading, notes, and class lecture.

1. Acceptance does not mean _____ or _____.

2. In Romans 2:1, "judging" means "to pass _____ _____ about someone to someone."

3. If we respond in kind, we will only love and help others when they first do the _____ to us.

4. Refrain from being eager to look for _____.

5. If you hear it, _____ it.

6. We are often _____ of what we judge others for.

B. Answer these questions from Romans 2:1. Use verses where the answer comes from.

7. Romans 2:1, "Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that _____: for wherein thou _____ another, thou _____ thyself; for thou that _____ doest the same things."

C. Read the question carefully and respond in 2-3 sentences with a clear and concise answer. Your response should directly address the question and provide relevant details from the text.

8. Why does Paul warn against judging others in Romans 2:1, and how does he say it leads to self-condemnation?

Chapter Ten

When the Real is Revealed

Romans 2:1-16

"Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?" Romans 2:4

Paul abruptly launches into the subject of divine judgment. He assumes his readers recognize its reality and states it as a fact. Today, people try to explain it away with the statement that a loving God would not condemn anyone. However, love for truth means hatred for sin, and to say God will not judge is to say every man is so insignificant that he does not matter. Romans 2:1-16 presents a direct and undeniable truth about God's righteous judgment. Paul does not hesitate and assumes his audience should understand this fact. Yet, as Romans 2:4 reminds us, God's goodness and patience are meant to lead people to repentance and not excuses. Accepting God's judgment is not a loss, but the gateway to understanding His grace and the true significance of life.

This chapter revolves around the fact that God is shown to be the only infallible source of judgment. Paul explains that the judgment is to be impartial. How else would the principle of God's judgment be correct? In all, man's unrighteousness is a way for God to display His righteousness. The apostle designs this chapter to show that the Jews were no less guilty than the Gentiles, and both needed salvation through Jesus Christ.

I. The Inconsistency of Human Judgment (v. 1)

Paul first contrasts God's judgment with man's judgment and exposes man. Men judge because they will feel better about themselves if they criticize someone else. However, when someone judges, he reveals that he knows right from wrong. When someone judges to justify himself, then he makes both mistakes. By attempting to cover up, he acknowledges his guilt and deserves judgment by God. Such people either misunderstand the height of God's law or the depth of their moral conduct.

The mistake the judge often makes is simple and very common. He measures himself against the wrong standard. God judges men not by a standard they choose but by His own. If people are going to measure themselves by somebody else, then they must choose Jesus, but if they do, then all hypocrisy and smugness will be swept away. Understand that the Bible forbids critical condemnation but encourages honest evaluation.

Paul describes a condition here that is relevant to anyone in the church of this time. At this point, the question often appears, "Who is Paul addressing, the church of Rome made up of Jews and Gentiles, or the unbelieving Jew?" The correct view seems to be that

Paul is addressing the church to increase their understanding of the Hebrews, who so often appeared hypocritical and condemned other Hebrews who came to the faith.

The converted Jew struggles to defend his faith, but Paul makes it clear that those who seem threatening pose no real danger to the church. He will show that they grossly lack salvation and should not be a source of fear to the church. Some differentiate between the hypocrite and the Hebrew, as hypocrisy can apply to anyone. Paul appears to have Hebrew in mind as he begins addressing verse 17, "Behold, thou art called a Jew, and restest in the law, and makest thy boast of God." This man is addressed as one who feels that another's sins are worse than his own.

While indignant about other people's sins, this man indulges in his own. David is the classic example of this—he killed a man by sending him to the frontline of battle but excused it. However, when Nathan the Prophet told him of a man who killed his neighbor's cherished lamb, David "had no pity" (II Samuel 12:5-6). "Thou art thou man," replied Nathan to the king.

II. The Integrity of Divine Judgment (vv. 2-15)

Paul emphasizes that God's judgment is just and fair based on impartiality and individual responsibility. In Romans 2:2-15, Paul now lists the fairness of God's judgment:

A. It is Candid (v. 2). God is faithful and will be unprejudiced, and the evidence will be objective. God is the only One who can judge man without worrying about His life and actions. It is not that man cannot judge, but we often judge according to how it will benefit someone or something we are fond of. God's judgment, however, is according to truth or exacting standards. In God's court, there'll be no misunderstandings, no misrepresentations, no miscarriage of justice, no misdemeanors, and no mistakes!

B. It is Certain (v. 3). One of our justice system's major complaints is that the innocent suffer and the guilty escape. God promises that everyone will get what they deserve. When this promise is made, suddenly, people don't want what they deserve.

It is incredible how much people think they can get away with. Why do people think they can escape God's judgment?

1. We tend to be blind to our faults.
2. When we are wrong, we tend to forget it.
3. We justify it by renaming the wrong when we do it.

How can we escape human/divine judgment?

1. Do the perfect crime; God sees all.
2. Get outside the jurisdiction; God is everywhere.

3. Hire a slick lawyer; God knows all.
4. Escaping from prison, where would we hide?

Paul calls on the hypocrite to remember that he will not escape judgment, "And thinkest thou this." The hypocrite was so involved in his deceptive thinking that he forgot what to consider.

C. It is Cumulative (vv. 4-5). Some people mistake God's long-suffering for forgetfulness. Paul says our sin adds interest while God patiently waits (v. 5). But if we ignore Him, God will judge. When the day comes, our sins of omission will be considered as much as our sins of commission. The hardness of our hearts fools us into thinking that we will not be judged because we do not feel guilt. But as a stone tossed into a pond starts the ripples flowing in ever-expanding circles until they reach the shore, so does our sin set in motion events over which we have no control. All this will be weighed.

In 597 BC, Nebuchadnezzar, the mighty king of Babylon, besieged and carried away the cream of Judean nobility into captivity. He installed a puppet king in Jerusalem and retired from the scene. This deportation was the second of three stages in the deportation of the Jews into exile. Back in Jerusalem, despite the warnings of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, the Jews who were left behind began congratulating themselves. They imagined themselves Heaven's favorite because they escaped the deportation. They failed to see that they were guilty of despising God's goodness, forbearance, and long-suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God was intended to lead them to repentance. They thought they deserved preferential treatment. How mistaken they were! Their persistence in their sinful ways resulted ultimately in full and final judgment. In 586 BC, Nebuchadnezzar returned, enraged by the duplicity of the Jews. He sacked Jerusalem, destroyed the temple, plundered the country, ended the monarchy, and deported the greater part of the population. Divine patience, persistently abused, leads to a particular judgment. It is said that the wheel of God grinds slowly but grinds exceedingly fine.

D. It is Considerate of Man's Actions (vv. 6-10).

> Psalm 62:12, Also unto thee, O Lord, belongeth mercy: for thou renderest to every man according to his work.
>
> Proverbs 24:12, If thou sayest, Behold, we knew it not; doth not he that pondereth the heart consider it? and he that keepeth thy soul, doth not he know it? and shall not he render to every man according to his works?
>
> I Peter 1:17, And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear.
>
> Revelation 20:12, And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books,

according to their works.

Paul is speaking of judgment by works, not salvation by works. The key is obedience: "But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath" (v. 8). In the Bible, judgment is according to works; salvation is by faith. Faith is demonstrated by obedience—that is James' message. But at this point in his letter, Paul is not discussing how a person is saved; that comes later.

- David committed some terrible sins, but the total emphasis of his life was obedience to God.

- Judas confessed his sin and supplied the money to buy a cemetery for strangers, yet his life was mostly disobedience and unbelief.

True saving faith results in obedience and godly living, even though there may be occasional falls.

It's crucial to notice that Paul presents only two alternatives. "To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life: But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath" (vv. 7-8). Man tends to give at least a third alternative. There are no excuses, no exceptions, and no exemptions.

E. It is Culture-Blind (vv. 11-15). We rejoice in this about salvation (Acts 10:34, "Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respector of persons.") But it is also true of judgment (Deuteronomy 10:17, "For the LORD your God is God of gods, and Lord of lords, a great God, a mighty, and a terrible, which regardeth not persons, nor taketh reward." And II Chronicles 19:7, "Wherefore now let the fear of the LORD be upon you; take heed and do it: for there is no iniquity with the LORD our God, nor respect of persons, nor taking of gifts.") It is not the possession of truth but the practice of truth! Neither is it ignorance of truth. The judgment of God is based on the knowledge people have. How, then, are they condemned?

1. Nature, "For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves" (v. 14). Some call this instinct.

2. Conscience, "Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness" (v. 15). Some call these inbred values. The conscience is intended to be a goal, not a guide. The man who says, "Let your conscience be your guide," is mistaken in the function of conscience. Paul uses conscience like an umpire; it does not make rules but decides in the light of existing rules. But by repeatedly saying "No," the conscience will become dulled or callused. It is like shutting off an alarm clock and going back to sleep.

The conscience must be educated and monitored by the Word of God. In the work of conviction, the Holy Ghost seizes upon the conscience and brings God's Word to bear upon it with mighty power. Apart from God's Word, conscience is a very uncertain faculty of the soul. While the ancient pagan would put his children into the red-hot lap of Molech with the hearty endorsement of his conscience, the strict Buddhist would have agonies of remorse over killing a fly. The one extreme is as wrong as the other.

Scripture has much to say about conscience. It speaks of:

- A good conscience in I Timothy 1:5, 19, "Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned . . . Holding faith, and a good conscience, which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck."

- A weak conscience in I Corinthians 8:12, "But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ."

- A convicting conscience in John 8:9, "And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst."

- A defiled conscience in Titus 1:15, "Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled, and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled."

- A seared conscience in I Timothy 4:2, "Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron."

An interesting study is Herod's conscience. First, he had a striving conscience, for he listened readily to John the Baptist. Next, he had a silenced conscience because he imprisoned John. Finally, he had a seared conscience; he murdered John and mocked Jesus.

3. Thought, "And their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another" (v. 15). If, by our thoughts, we accuse or excuse, that means we know what is right.

Why then take the truth to people? Let them do what they know rather than possibly reject the truth. However, everyone is a sinner and needs a Savior. God will lead them into truth if they seek God in all they know.

III. The Inevitability of Divine Judgment (v. 16).

The emphasis is on the word "shall." God shall, not might, judge the world. There is no doubt. What can we expect?

A. Our Secrets Exposed. Our true selves will be the standard by which we are judged.

> Psalm 90:8, Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, our secret sins in the light of thy countenance.
>
> Hebrews 4:13, Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.

He sees everything we do and hears everything we say. You can run, but you cannot hide.

B. Our Savior as Examiner. Jesus, as our divine Examiner, fully understands human nature.

> Acts 17:30-31, And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.
>
> John 2:23-25, Now when he was in Jerusalem at the passover, in the feast day, many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did. But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men, And needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man.

Paul ultimately identifies this as the Gospel-the, the Good News. Its significance lies in the fact that judgment makes salvation necessary. Being forewarned allows us to be prepared, and without the reality of judgment, there would be no need for redemption through Christ if there were no Gospel. The Gospel offers hope, providing a way for humanity to be rescued from condemnation and restored to God's grace.

What do we do?

1. Submit to judgment now at an altar.
2. Repent of our sin.
3. Accept God's forgiveness.
4. Live in obedience to God's power.

Chapter Ten
When the Real is Revealed
Romans 2:1-16
Lesson in Review

A. Complete the following sentences using the correct words from the reading, notes, and class lecture.

1. To say God will not judge is to say every man is so _____that he doesn't matter.

2. The contents of chapter two revolve around the fact that God is shown to be the only _____source of judgment.

3. Man's _____ is a way for God to display His_____.

4. When someone judges, he reveals that he _____ right and wrong.

5. God judges men not by a standard they choose but by _____ own.

6. God's righteousness demands _____ for sinfulness.

7. God's judgment, however, is according to _____or exacting standards.

8. Some people mistake God's long-suffering for _____; Paul says our sin adds _____ while God patiently waits.

9. In the Bible, _____ is according to works; _____ is by faith.

10. The judgment of God is based on the _____ people have.

11. The conscience is intended to be a goad, not a _____.

B. Answer these questions from Romans 2:1-16. Use verses where the answer comes from.

12. Romans 2:2, "But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to _____ against them which commit such things."

13. Romans 2:3, "And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt _____ the judgment of God?"

14. What will God judge every man according to?

C. Read the question carefully and respond in 2-3 sentences with a clear and concise answer. Your response should directly address the question and provide relevant details from the text.

15. How does Paul describe the consequences of sin, even when people do not feel guilty?

16. Why did the Jews who remained in Jerusalem after the first deportation mistakenly believe they were favored by God?

Chapter Eleven

Discipleship is More than Words

Romans 2:17-29

"*Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!"* Matthew 23:27a

Romans 2:17-29 confronts the dangers of religious hypocrisy. Paul also exposes the false security of failing to obey the law. Matthew 23:27-28 aligns with this when Jesus boldly condemns the scribes and Pharisees by calling them hypocrites. Jesus illustrates this in a parable by contrasting two sons who were to work in the vineyard. The first said no, then changed his mind and went to work. The second said yes, but did not. Jesus asked which did the will of the Father. They replied the first, and after that, Jesus praised the publicans and harlots who obeyed and criticized the religious who only said the words. The lesson is clear in that true obedience is measured not by words, but by action.

Paul has demonstrated that the lawless sinner (1:18-32) and the self-righteous individual (2:1-16) are depraved and under God's wrath. Now, he dispels the notion that the religious person is better off. He accomplishes this by zeroing in on the people who were the most religious in his day—the Jews. A heathen is a man with a perverted religion; a hypocrite is a man with a pretended religion; the Hebrew represents a man with a powerless religion. Although it is mainly the Hebrew on trial here, the application fits any religious person.

Probably, the religious person is the hardest to convince that he is also a sinner. There is nobody too bad for Jesus, but millions who think they are too good. It is this group that Paul now focuses on.

Paul is speaking here from experience. Fewer religious people would have existed than the young Saul of Tarsus. He told King Agrippa, "After the most straitest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee" (Acts 26:5). He knew how religious zealousness, even in sincerity, can make a person the enemy of Christ. He is not attacking the Jews because he is anti-Semitic, but because he knows the danger they face.

I. The Calling of the Jew (vv. 17-18)

Initially, the name "Jew" was used to describe a member of the tribe of Judah. When the ten tribes were carried off into captivity, only Judah and Benjamin remained, and Jews came to mean those living in the Promised Land. Benjamin was probably lost within Judah because it was a small tribe with little influence, and the Messiah was promised to come through the tribe of Judah.

Over the centuries, the meaning of "Jew" has broadened considerably to include a specific ethnic, social, and religious identity. Paul was thinking of the people chosen by

God as His special agents for earthly activity. The Old Testament Law, the Messiah, and most of the New Testament came through them.

The Jews took great pride in conveying every appearance of obedience to the Law. Numerous Jews believed the Law would save them.

> John 5:39, Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.

Many thought their good works would win them God's favor. In contrast to pagans, Paul names five privileges of the Jew:

- "Restest in the Law." They possessed the Word of God. The Jews took pride in having the Law among them and reading it in the synagogues. They were mighty puffed up with this privilege and thought it was enough to bring them to heaven, even though they did not live up to the Law.

- "Makest thy boast of God." They worshipped the one revealed God, not idols, as did other nations. By this fact alone, the Jews felt superior to all those around them. Yet, it was not revealed to them to cause them to boast, but to make them humble. Even the most revered truth can be perverted and abused.

- "Knowest his will." They knew God's expectations for human behavior. They received this knowledge from the Law.

- "Approvest the things that are more excellent." The Jew could evaluate what was right and best according to God's standards. He was an expert in making fine, hairline distinctions over trivialities connected with the truth of God that had been revealed to him.

- "Instructed out of the law." As opposed to the ignorance of the people around them.

II. The Confidence of the Jew (vv. 19-20)

Because God gave the Jews the Law, they tended to think that they were its owners and dispensers. This feeling produced an attitude of superiority that led to the Gentiles becoming antagonistic and the Jews becoming unrealistic in their self-evaluation. The Jew believed that he embodied the truth revealed in it simply because he possessed God's Law.

Paul lists the Jew's appraisal of himself:

- "A guide for the blind." This is a figurative expression to denote an instructor of the ignorant.

- "A light of them which are in darkness." This is a figurative expression that denotes a teacher to heathen.

- "An instructor of the foolish"—those ignorant (literally "stupid") of the Law.

- "A teacher of babes"—the immature. "Babes" is a literal translation; it speaks of teaching those as ignorant as children.

- "Hast the form (framework) of knowledge and the truth in the law." Paul is saying they have kept the appearance, the semblance, of the Law. But the implication is that their frame is hollow.

III. The Criticism of the Jew (vv. 21-24)

All of Paul's statements are rhetorical and in question form. He digs deep into the Jew's spiritual insincerity and insensitivity. One of the easiest failures in religious circles is failing to live what you teach and preach. Many Jews had fallen into this trap and were living for God based on head experience and not heart experience.

To avoid the possibility that the seriousness of his statements might be submerged in a sea of generalities, Paul pinpoints:

A. Their Pride (v. 21a) They considered themselves teachers. Their attitude implied they were fine, and the truth was for the lost. This is self-righteousness.

This is a common fault in religious circles. True teaching aims to change behavior; therefore, the teacher must apply his principles to himself before applying them to others.

Isaiah is a good example. This great prophet poured out his vials of judgment on others in Chapter 5. "Woe unto them" is the repeated phrase of judgment. But in Chapter 6, he proclaims, "Woe is me!" He is a wiser man; he taught himself. When he saw things from their true perspective, he did not hesitate to apply them to himself. It is the height of self-righteousness to teach others and not learn the lesson for oneself.

B. Their Performance (vv. 21 b- 22)

Paul lists three sins:

- "Steal." How? By not paying their tithe and offerings—Malachi 3:8, "Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings."

  And by not fulfilling their obligation of love—Romans 13:8, "Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law." If you do not pay what you owe, you are a thief. This deals with their ethical shortfalls.

- "Adultery." How? Spiritual adultery—James 4:4, "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God."

  There is also adultery of the heart—Matthew 5:27-28, "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart."

  The Jewish Talmud accuses some of the most celebrated of their rabbis, by name, of this vice. Josephus also gives the same account of the nation. This deals with their moral shortfalls.

- "Idols." They considered an idol a judgment and "stole" them to "protect" the pagan—Acts 19:37, "For ye have brought hither these men, which are neither robbers of churches, nor yet blasphemers of your goddess." This deals with their spiritual shortfalls.

C. Their Prevention (vv. 23-24) They were dishonoring the intent of the Law by becoming a stumbling block. Paul quotes Isaiah 52:5, "Now therefore, what have I here, saith the LORD, that my people is taken away for nought? they that rule over them make them to howl, saith the LORD; and my name continually every day is blasphemed." In Isaiah's day, it was because of the Jews' misfortune; in Paul's day, it was because of their misconduct. Nothing will turn strangers away from the truth faster than misbehavior by a professed believer. God is judged by His people or those who claim to be His people.

When Abraham denied his wife in Egypt, and Sarai was taken into Pharaoh's harem, Abraham ceased to be a blessing to the Egyptians and became a source of cursing and plague. Eventually, Pharaoh discovered the source of his troubles and demanded an accounting from Abraham. "What is this that thou has done unto me? Why didst thou not tell me that she was thy wife? Why saidst thou, She is my sister?" To none of these indignant questions did the embarrassed Abraham have a reply. Humanly speaking, his testimony for God was finished so far as Pharaoh was concerned (Genesis 12:10-20).

When David sinned with Bathsheba, a similar situation arose. Nathan the prophet, having wrung David's conscience with his masterly parable and its application, charged home to David the full implications of his guilt in the unforgettable words, "Thou hast given great occasion to the Enemies of the LORD to blaspheme" (II Samuel 12:14). It is a remarkable fact, too, that to this day David is held up deridingly by unbelievers as an example of "a man after God's own heart." Probably, Paul had this example of David in mind when he added, "as it is written," after his statement concerning the behavior of the Jews, which made the Gentiles blaspheme God.

So, merely discussing religion does not make one more acceptable to God. Nor does it impress men, for they look for reality in religion and quickly detect a mere pious pose. A person's access to the truth increases their accountability to the truth. As Paul had just finished reminding the hypocrite, "Not the hearers of the law are justified before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified" (v. 13).

IV. The Circumcision of the Jew (vv. 25-29)

The religious person usually feels that they have an exceptional standing before God, not only because they are religious in their intellectual agreement with the truth, but also because they are scrupulous in keeping their religion's ordinances, rites, and rituals. Paul now demonstrates that mere rituals confer no preference on God.

These Scriptures highlight the sign that represents all Jewishness:

Deuteronomy 10:16, Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart.

Jeremiah 4:4, Circumcise yourselves to the LORD, and take away the foreskins of your heart, ye men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem.

Therefore, the circumcision that matters is a circumcision of the heart. What conclusions can we draw?

- Verse 25—Rights without reality only condemn. In other words, a rite or a ritual is meaningful only insofar as it is the outward expression of an inward experience. No outward ceremonial act can have any value if it is not related in some way to a dynamic, personal, scriptural spiritual experience.

And there is the rub! For circumcision to be of any practical value, the Jew must keep the law of God—something humanly impossible, and to break the law is to render the ritual null and void.

- Verse 26—Reality without knowing right is as acceptable to God as doing right for the wrong reason. A man devoid of rituals may be more righteous than a man devoted to them, and a man dedicated to rituals may be more responsible in the sight of God than a man devoid of them.

- Verse 27—Consistent unorthodoxy condemns inconsistent orthodoxy. Paul argues that if a religious person flouts the clear teaching of the Word of God, he cancels everything for which the divinely given ritual stands. On the other hand, a person who has never received an outward ceremonial confirmation of his faith but whose heart is right with God is enjoying all that the ritual stands for.

Paul is not saying that a divinely appointed ritual is without value. He is saying that the value is limited by the condition of a person's heart. There is nothing mechanical, automatic, or superficial about a person's relationship with God, nor can a mere

ceremony make up what is deficient in a person's life.

Perhaps a simple illustration may help make this clear. At thirteen, Hebrew boys go through a ceremony known as Bar Mitzvah. When a boy reaches his thirteenth birthday, he is believed to have attained the age of responsibility and religious duty. (Bar Mitzvah means a Son of the Law.) But performing the ceremony of Bar Mitzvah does not make a boy a man. There is far more to manhood than that. Nor does performing a ceremony make a person a Christian; there is far more to it than that.

• Verses 28 & 29a—Internals are more telling than externals. Paul's announcement that the mere rite of circumcision did not make a man a Jew is not a new thought. It was as old as the Law and the Prophets.

> Deuteronomy 10:16, Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiffnecked.
>
> Ezekiel 44:9, "Thus saith the Lord GOD; No stranger, uncircumcised in heart, nor uncircumcised in flesh, shall enter into my sanctuary, of any stranger that is among the children of Israel.

We are far too prone to be satisfied with trying to keep the letter of the law and to ignore its profound spiritual implications. But God looks on the heart—a lesson even godly Samuel had to learn. When Samuel went to find a king for Israel among the sons of Jesse, he was greatly impressed by Eliab, the tall and striking eldest son. "But," we read, "the LORD said not Samuel, Look out on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart" (I Samuel 16:7). It was not until David came (whom Saul and Goliath later discounted as a mere youth) that God said to Samuel, "Arise, anoint him: for this is he" (I Samuel 16:12; 17:33, 42, 56). David's kingly qualities were inward, not outward.

• Verse 29b—Divine approval holds greater significance than human recognition. God honors those who possess the right spirit, making His praise far more valuable than the approval of man.

How do each of us measure up?

Chapter Eleven
Discipleship is More than Words
Romans 2:17-29
Lesson in Review

A. With a Bible dictionary or commentaries, write 250 words on the terms "Jew" and "Gentile." Define the terms used in the Bible and give their origin and the present definition. Grammar check: Spelling and punctuation. Due Date:

B. Complete the following sentences using the correct words from the reading, notes, and class lecture.

1. The heathen is a man with a _____ religion; the hypocrite is a man with a _____ religion; the Hebrew represents the man with a _____ religion.
2. Originally, the name "Jew" described a member of the tribe of _____.
3. The Jews took great pride in conveying every _____ obedience to the Law.
4. The Jew could evaluate what was right and _____ according to God's absolute standards.
5. Because God gave the Jews the Law, they tended to think that they were its _____ and _____.
6. One of the easiest failures in religious circles is failing to _____ what you _____ and _____.
7. God is _____ by His people or those who claim to be His people.
8. The behavior of the Jews made the Gentiles _____ God.
9. The circumcision that matters is a circumcision of the _____.

C. Answer these questions from Romans 2:17-29. Use verses where the answer comes from.

10. What do the Jews know? _____
11. What had the Jews done with the name of God? _____

_____

12. Who is a Jew? _____

_____

D. Read the question carefully and respond in 2-3 sentences with a clear and concise answer. Your response should directly address the question and provide relevant details from the text.

13. According to Paul, why is circumcision of the heart more important than physical circumcision?

14. How does Paul illustrate the limitations of religious rituals in determining one's standing before God?

E. According to D. Bernard's *The Message of Romans (pp. 38-39)*, answer the following questions.

15. Why does Paul emphasize circumcision of the heart under the New Covenant?

16. What is the significance of baptism in relation to circumcision?

Chapter Twelve

Objections Without Objectivity

Romans 3:1-8

"*Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight – that You may be found just when You speak, and blameless when You judge.*" Psalm 51:4

The first eight verses in Romans 3 emphasize God's justice and righteousness in response to sin. Psalm 51:4 reflects David's deep recognition that sin is ultimately against God, even including the ripple effect with humans. David acknowledges God's righteous judgment, stating that God's judgment is always just.

In Romans 2:17-29, Paul clarifies that no one, not even the most religious person, can achieve righteousness apart from Christ. Even the Jew, who claimed that his heritage, good deeds, and holy law could save him, is lost in his sin. Now, such damaging charges are bound to raise objections. Anticipating objections to such a bold claim, Paul directly addresses those arguments that the Jews proposed, for he states and answers them in the first eight verses of Chapter 3. In doing so, he nails the coffin shut on the religious person who thinks that; Paul proves that faith in Christ alone is the true path to justification.

It is incredible how adept people are at this sort of thing regarding their relationship with God. Take, for example, the woman at the well. When she felt the truth was coming uncomfortably close to home, she raised the irrelevant issue as to which of the two places was the more favored by God as a place where He should be worshiped (John 4:20). She did not mind the discussion centering on the general topic of "religion" so long as the searchlight did not come near her soul.

It is quite clear that the religious objections raised by the Jews, and introduced here by Paul, were shallow and superficial in the extreme.

I. What Advantage is Truth? (vv. 1-2)

The Jews believed they had an advantage, and they did, according to Paul (v. 2). But, if the more I know, the more I am responsible, what is the advantage of knowing the truth? Specifically, Paul mentions three areas: 1) their scripture— "the oracles" (v. 2), 2) their selection— "Jew," and 3) their sign or standard— "circumcision" (v. 1).

But, if all are condemned, what difference do these advantages make? Everything! The unbeliever is condemned already.

> John 3:18, He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

But with the truth, we can come to God's grace. The Jews mistakenly assumed that having the means to salvation was the same as having a monopoly on salvation. They were given the Scriptures, which they diligently cared for, to prepare themselves and the rest of the world for the arrival and announcement of the Messiah.

How are we defining truth? It is the knowledge of man's condition, lost, the salvation offered by God, the knowing and doing of God's will, and especially the knowledge of God's promises related to the purpose of the Messiah's coming. Paul calls these the "oracles of God" (v. 2) or the special revelation of divine truth. The word "oracles" among the heathen meant the pronouncements of a god.

The word translated "oracles" occurs four times in the New Testament:

> Acts 7:38, This is he, that was in the church in the wilderness with the angel which spake to him in the mount Sina, and with our fathers: who received the lively *oracles* to give unto us.
>
> Romans 3:2, Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the *oracles* of God.
>
> Hebrews 5:12, For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the *oracles* of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat.
>
> I Peter 4:11, If any man speak, let him speak as the *oracles* of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

It is used here to denote the Scriptures, or the words of God given to His people.

Paul stated that rights without reality are nothing. Religious people must constantly wrestle with the possibility that they might misunderstand or misapply their privileges by disregarding or exaggerating their importance.

II. What Absolute is Truth? (vv. 3-4)

The second objection to Paul's teaching was this: Does unbelief cancel out the promises of God? Does unbelief void God's faithfulness? Is it truth even if its followers don't obey it? Is truth absolute? The church is often criticized because of "members" who do not live by what they say. Do others' faults excuse me? Is it still truth if no one lives it?

Paul says, "Perish the thought!" (KJV— "God forbid." However, Paul does not mention God—that would be thought so bad that God would never consider it. Rather, he is telling us to stop such thinking. Why? It will not work.)

The truth is established that God's nature does not change when men disobey. It is like receiving a speeding ticket. The fine serves as proof that the speed limit is the law. Violating it does not nullify the law nor provide an excuse for disobedience.

Paul answers with two illustrations. First, if the whole human race disagrees with God, then every person is a liar because God is always true.

Only eight people, Noah's family, obeyed during Noah's time. That did not annul God's promise. God kept His word, and remember, God will judge.

Then Paul quoted David, Psalm 51:4, "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightiest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest." David was overwhelmed with grief; he saw his crime as awful; he feared the displeasure of God and trembled before Him. Yet he held it as a fixed, indisputable principle that God was right! He had sinned against God, God only, and he did not once think of calling in question that God was unjust in reproving him for his sin and in pronouncing against him the sentence of condemnation.

The magnitude of the sin does not hinder God's promises, either. David discovered this after being exposed as an adulterer, murderer, and hypocrite (II Samuel 11 & 12). He knew God would keep His promise to cleanse anyone of sin if they honestly sought His forgiveness. David relied on that promise and found God faithful to His Word (II Samuel 12:13; Psalm 51). This is what David appealed to in his prayer of pardon (Psalm 51:4). God will forgive!

III. What Assurance is Truth? (vv. 5-8)

Is God using my sin to make Himself look better (v. 5)? If so, how can God condemn me for doing what He wants me to do? If sin sets the standard for what is bad, how can God set the standard for what is good, right, or true? Paul's immediate response is, "God forbid" (v. 6). Again, this thought would not come from God.

This objection is so weak and blasphemous that Paul felt compelled to note parenthetically, "I am using a human argument" (NIV). This demonstrates how far a man will go to avoid the blame and guilt of personal sin. The truth is, God does not need me, and especially my sin, to look good. Sin will never glorify God. Paul carries the thought to its logical conclusion: if the glory of God is promoted by sin, and therefore, man is not condemned or judged for it, men everywhere ought to do all the evil they can so that the glory of God will shine its brightest. This result is so shocking that no argument is needed except to state the consequence of such an objection. Besides, the truth shows that we do evil not so that good will come but because of our selfish desires.

Further, if God made men sin, then He would be as guilty as they are, but God does not tempt men to sin.

> James 1:13, Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man.

If our sins glorified God, He could not be an impartial, righteous judge (v. 6). Therefore, God judges fairly, and we must do something about the inward man. To that, God offers His Spirit.

God has used evil for good (v. 7). This does not justify evil. Sin, left to itself, will never lead to good results. Joseph's slavery delivered his family because God intervened. Otherwise, it would have been a disaster, but it did not mitigate his brother's hatred, envy, and greed. God worked despite, not because of, their sin.

The fault in the reasoning is that the objector takes for granted that his sin promotes God's glory. It is just the opposite. God's judgment of the sin promotes his glory, not the sin itself.

Some reported that Paul taught the other side of this argument that would have resulted in the same outcome: God's grace allowed men to sin, which he emphatically denies (v. 8). Those who raise such objections are not only slanderous but are self-condemned because of the illogical nature of their charge. (We must beware of falsely charging men for something we infer from their preaching, too. A man should have to answer only for his speech, not what another may assume it means.) Their reasoning is like an argument that we should cause more physical disasters so that firefighters, paramedics, and physicians have a greater opportunity to display their skills. (That would be like the nurse who was charged with killing babies because she took them to the point of death so she could save them and be a hero to the parents. However, she didn't always save them. We do not regard such a person as a hero but as a danger.) So, is this argument ridiculous?

Today, some distort grace to cover the "believer" who continues to sin automatically. The teaching of situation ethics (standards of morality change according to the circumstances), "easy believism" (salvation by mental faith without genuine repentance and obedience), and "once saved, always saved" (unconditional eternal security in this life regardless of habitual, unrepentant sin) encourages people to stay in sin. By supposedly being saved while continuing to live in sin, they supposedly show the grace and mercy of God. Paul asserts that those who believe in this and accuse him of teaching it deserve condemnation.

Paul taught that no matter how good or bad a person is, the only way to God is by grace through faith. But Paul goes on to teach that we are to walk in the Spirit and make no opportunity for the flesh (Romans 8:1; 13:13-14). Paul knew that a person who honestly meets the grace of God is not interested in what little he must do; he is broken and willing

to do anything God asks.

It is easy to forget the thread of Paul's argument while weaving his epistle. Paul's brutal exposure of man's sinfulness was to show the human race's guilt before God and to introduce them to the only answer to human guilt: the gospel of Jesus Christ!

To show you never exhaust the Bible, notice two other means of outlining these eight verses.

The Six Realities of God:

1. The oracles of God (v. 2) - God has given us His Word.
2. The faith of God (v. 3) - God is faithful.
3. The righteousness of God (v. 5) - God always does right.
4. The judgment of God (v. 6) - God knows everything.
5. The truth of God (v. 7) - God will never lie.
6. The glory of God (v. 7) - Whatever God does is praiseworthy.

You can always depend on these six things!

The Four Responsibilities of Man:

1. We are committed to God's oracles (v. 2). Do I know God's Word?
2. We are allowed to believe (v. 3) - Have I obeyed God's Word?
3. God offers us grace (v. 5) - Am I abusing the grace of God?
4. Sinfulness brings judgment (v. 8) - Do I consider the consequences of my actions before doing them?

Chapter Twelve
Objections Without Objectivity
Romans 3:1-8

Lesson in Review

A. Complete the following sentences using the correct words from the reading, notes, and class lecture.

1. Paul specifically mentions three advantages the Jews had; they are what?

   a). b). c).

2. The Jews mistakenly assumed that having the _____ to salvation was the same as having a _____ on salvation.

3. The "oracles of God" (v1) are the special revelation of divine _____.

4. The truth is that God does not _____ when men disobey.

5. If the whole human race disagreed with God. Then, every person is a _____because God is always true.

6. The magnitude of the sin does not _____ God's promises.

7. _____ will never glorify God.

8. We do _____ not so that good will come but because of our selfish _____.

9. Sin, left to itself, will never lead to _____ _____.

10. Paul knew that a person who honestly meets the _____ of God is not interested in what _____ he has to do; he is broken and willing to do _____ God asks.

B. Answer these questions from Romans 3:1-8. Use verses where the answer comes from.

10. What advantage did the Jews have?

11. Apparently, some were saying, “Let us do evil,” what might come?

C. Read the question carefully and respond in 2-3 sentences with a clear and concise answer. Your response should directly address the question and provide relevant details from the text.

12. According to Paul, why is salvation based on grace through faith rather than human effort?

13. How does Paul emphasize the importance of walking in the Spirit instead of continuing in sin?

Chapter Thirteen

No Not One

Romans 3:9-20

"*The Lord looks down from heaven upon the children of men,*
to see if there are any who understand, who seek God.
They have all turned aside; they have together become corrupt;
there is none who does good, no, not one." Psalm 14:2-3

Humanity now stands before God as the final verdict is proclaimed. The heathen, hypocrite, and Hebrew have each, in turn, been prosecuted and found guilty. No one is exempt; all are subject to God's righteous judgment. Psalm 14:2-3 echoes the truth in Romans 3:9-20. Both Jew and Gentile are under sin, proving humanity's universal guilt before God.

One of the rules of preaching is that you do not use all-inclusive terms because, the moment you do, you will meet an exception. However, the Bible regularly violates this rule, especially in this passage. Notice how often "all" and "none" are used. No member of Adam's ruined race is an exception; the indictment is sweeping, comprehensive, and all-inclusive.

Paul writes that three things are familiar to everyone. Let's take a closer look at these passages.

I. All Under Sin (vv. 9-18)

After painfully showing the differences between Jews and Gentiles, comparing their advantages and disadvantages, Paul says there is no material difference. While a Jew may benefit from his past in God, he is no better than the Gentile in his standing before God. All men are on the same footing before God regarding sin. Jew and Gentile, Oriental and Occidental, red and yellow, black or white—there is no difference. So, Paul concludes his case against the Jew. But, to show that Calvary is for all, Paul must show all humanity at the foot of the Cross as sinners who need God. Therefore, he writes, "All are under sin."

The expression "under sin" needs to be noted. One method of interpreting a word is to see how it is used in other contexts. Notice how the word "under" is used in different places:

> Galatians 3:24-25, 24Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. 25But after that faith is come, we are no longer *under* a schoolmaster.
>
> I Timothy 6:1, Let as many servants as are *under* the yoke count their own

masters worthy of all honour, that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed.

Luke 7:8, For I also am a man set *under* authority, having under me soldiers, and I say unto one, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it.

In all these instances, "under" means "under the authority" or "controlled by."

There is a significant difference between "sin" and "sins." It is like the difference between the disease and its symptoms. Sins are the product of the power of sin. Paul is writing that everyone, without Christ, is under the command of sin and unable to escape.

To say that everyone is a sinner does not mean that everyone is as bad as they can get or that they cannot show love, kindness, honesty, or morality. But all are infected with rebellion against God, and that rebellion has extended itself to some degree in everyone.

Paul now uses a rabbi's method of teaching called "a string of pearls," where they would take verses from various sources and make an argument. He begins with broad generalities about the human character, then deals with specific human conduct, and finally concludes with the human cause.

The following passages are taken from various parts of the Old Testament. This design shows that this characteristic of sin was not confined to any period of Jewish history but pertained to them as a people. Most of the passages are quoted in the language of the Septuagint.

A. The Human Character (vv. 10-12) With scripture proof, Paul shows man's inability to be righteous. This is based on Psalm 14:1-3.

1The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good. 2The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God. 3They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no, not one.

Let's examine it phrase by phrase:

1. "There is none righteous" (v. 10). We tend to exclude ourselves, so Paul adds, "No, not one." Righteous means always being in the right; therefore, always doing the right. If there had been one righteous—only one—God would have found him, but there is none.

One of the most graphic and terrible illustrations of this comes from the judges' days, black with apostasy and foul with glaring immorality. Yet twice in the book of

Judges, we read, "Every man did that which was right in his own eyes" (Judges 17:6; 21:25)—did that which was right, mark you, not that which was wrong. Every man doing that which was right in his own eyes produced one of the darkest eras in Israel's history.

2. "There is none that understandeth" (v. 11). The dominating effect of sin can be seen in the confusion of people and society, for they can't understand God's way. The damage wrought by sin runs deep into the very roots of man's thinking processes. Man thinks God is unreasonable, but he does not understand how abhorrent his sin is to a holy God.

> I Corinthians 2:14, But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

It is incredible what man's distorted thinking has convinced him to accept. A person will tell you it does not matter what a person believes so long as he is sincere, but he would not tolerate that philosophy in a mathematics professor. Or another will proudly state, "From today, I am turning over a new leaf." Yet, he would not accept that reasoning from an individual who owes him $5,000.00. Yet men risk their eternal souls on such thinking.

3. "There is none that seeketh after God" (v. 11). Men may acknowledge God and identify their problem as spiritual, but they lack the determined will that it requires to seek God.

What about pagan worshipers? Pagan worship and worship apart from truth do not constitute worship of God. Paul has already shown that the pagan has turned his back on the truth of his conscience and creation to follow his way.

> I Corinthians 10:20, But I say that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils.

> II Corinthians 4:3-4, 3But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: 4In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

"Seeketh" is *Ekzeteo*, meaning "to seek out, to search for." Men do not seek God, but accept traditional views passed down to them from previous generations.

> Deuteronomy 4:29, But if from thence thou shalt seek the LORD thy God, thou shalt find him, if thou seek him with all thy heart and with all thy soul.

Even the first man, Adam, did not seek God. So, God seeks man.

> Genesis 3:8, And they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden.

> Luke 19:10, For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.

Therefore, except the Spirit draws a man, he cannot be saved.

> John 6:44, No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.

Man's seeking, in conjunction with the drawing of the Holy Ghost, leads him to God. It must be noted that God must take the initiative in salvation for man to be saved. And even though God has given His Son, His Scriptures, and His Spirit, many men will not follow Him.

4. "They are all gone out of the way" (v. 12). This is usually translated as "out of the way," meaning man chooses another way. It is like a car that constantly pulls to one side of the road; a man who is out of line with God will pull away from God.

Men may argue that they are doing their best, but no man has done his best; we can always do a little better. People who claim they are doing their best are condemned by their state government; their ability to measure their efforts testifies to their missing the mark.

5. "They are together become unprofitable" (v. 12). The Hebrew word for unprofitable in Psalm 14 means "turning sour," and the Greek word he uses here means "useless." The corrupting power of sin leaves men unable to do as God planned for them. Even on a scale, man's good deeds do not outweigh his bad.

Paul himself once boasted in his religious "gains" until God showed him how utterly worthless all the things in which he was trusting. Then, he was glad enough to cast them aside in Christ's favor.

> Philippians 3:4-9, 4Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: 5Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; 6Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. 7But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. 8Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, 9And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness,

which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.

6. "There is none that doeth good" (v. 12), again, "no, not one." The expression "doeth good" would be better translated if the word "habitually" were included. God Himself defines the concept of goodness. You might look good in your small circle of friends, but the larger the group you are compared to, the worse it gets, and when you compare yourself to God, everyone is a total failure. Remember, every human being is standing before God for this judgment.

B. The Human Conduct (vv. 13-17) Paul continues to quote from the Old Testament, accumulating evidence. Now, he proves it explicitly. It is as if he is giving us an X-ray.

1. "Their throat is an open sepulcher" (v. 13).

> Psalm 5:9. For there is no faithfulness in their mouth; their inward part is very wickedness; their throat is an open sepulcher; they flatter with their tongue.

Jesus made the connection between words and character.

> Matthew 12:34, O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.

The sinner is spiritually dead by nature.

> Ephesians 2:1-3, 1And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; 2Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: 3Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.

Therefore, only death can come out of his mouth. An open tomb occupied by the dead produces one of the foulest odors known to humankind. It is not the grave that gives off the stench but the rottenness within. This is Paul's way of depicting man's foul reputation.

This does not necessarily mean cursing, but words that can harm others.

2. "With their tongues they have used deceit" (v. 13). This quote is also from Psalm 5:9. Sometimes, we will not lie; we emphasize the truth to deceive.

Saul illustrated this when he offered his daughter to David if David defeated the Philistines, expecting David to die in the battle (I Samuel 18:17-28).

The average articulate person uses thousands of words a day. These daily words would comprise a fair-sized volume and enough volumes in a lifetime to fill a college library. Each of these volumes represents the speaker's thoughts in his own words, and every word is open to God's inspection and judgment. Moreover, neither one of the words can be recalled nor one of the volumes withdrawn. Paul points out here that man's wicked words form an essential part of God's indictment of each of us.

3. "The poison of asps is under their lips" (v. 13).

> Psalm 140:3, They have sharpened their tongues like a serpent; adders' poison is under their lips.

The asp, or Egyptian cobra, had a forked tongue. As the serpent's venom is deadly, so are man's malicious and cutting words. Some people may talk sweet, but poison is just below. They are dangerous. Just as the serpent cannot retract his poison once it is dispensed on its victim, so can no human recall his malicious deeds once he has done them. It is a slow, painful recovery from the bite of such wounds if he ever recovers.

4. "Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness" (v. 14).

> Psalm 10:7, His mouth is full of cursing and deceit and fraud: under his tongue is mischief and vanity.

This is the length some will go to remove all obstacles to their plans. The word "curse" in the New Testament was not so much profanity but the use of words to destroy another.

This describes Shimei's reaction to David when he believes that David is about to lose his throne. As recorded in 2 Samuel 16:5-8, Shimei, a relative of Saul, openly cursed David and hurled insults at him. He assumed that David's downfall was close. In his anger, Shimei accused David of wrongdoing and saw his troubles as divine punishment for taking Saul's throne.

5. "Their feet are swift to shed blood" (v. 15). It is not only what we say that exposes us to judgment but also what we do.

> Proverbs 1:16, For their feet run to evil, and make haste to shed blood.

Link this with Paul's words: "Destruction and misery are in their ways" (v. 16). This quote is also from Proverbs 1:16. Just as the sinner's words are deceitful, so are his paths destructive. He walks in ways to murder ("shed blood") or destruction.

Significantly, the first recorded sin outside Eden was murder (Genesis 4:8). Sin leaped fully-grown into human experience. Man's first sin separated man from God; his second sin separated man from man.

6. "And the way of peace they have not known" (v. 17).

> Isaiah 59:8, The way of peace they know not; and there is no judgment in their goings: they have made them crooked paths: whosoever goeth therein shall not know peace.

This deals with the sinner's mind. He does not want to know God's way.

Romans 1:21, 25, 28, 21Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. . . . 25Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen. . . . 28And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient.

Instead, the sinner prefers Satan's lies.

C. The Human Cause (v. 18). "There is no fear of God before their eyes."

> Psalm 36:1, The transgression of the wicked saith within my heart, that there is no fear of God before his eyes.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Fear in that context means healthy respect.

> Proverbs 1:7, The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction.

This shows man's arrogant pride, which causes his other problems. Just like the defiant thief hanging by Jesus on the cross, his defiance also brought him to the cross.

Men may claim, "But I've never done anything like that!" That is not the point. The human heart is the heir to every imaginable crime. The Lord Jesus traced adultery to the lustful look and murder to the angry thought (Matthew 5:21-22, 27-28). Where the root remains, it is only by God's restraining grace that the full harvest of its fruit is kept from flourishing.

The Apostle has given a very striking view of human depravity. He does not confine it to one faculty of the mind or one set of actions; he specifies each member and each faculty as being perverse and inclined to evil. The depravity extends to all the departments of action. The tongue, the mouth, the feet, and the lips are all involved in it; all are perverted, and all become the occasion of the commission of sin. The entire man is corrupt, and all the painful descriptions extend to every action.

II. All Under a Standard (vv. 19-20)

Remember, the Jews had a unique way of conceiving that everybody had sin problems except themselves. Paul has been quoting the Old Testament in verses 10-18, and the Jew would dismiss that as being the plight of the Gentile. Paul removes that argument by stating that if the Law speaks, it speaks to them for whom it was sent. If the Gentile was condemned, then so is the Jew. Paul is moving ever closer to resting his case and saying that the whole world is guilty before God.

The devastating thing about the Law was that no man could live up to its code. Failure to live up to every law nullified all other efforts. What does the Law reveal?

1. It reveals God's character.

2. It reveals man's sin. If a man is carrying a vase that includes the content of the vase. Man must deal with what is in the vase of his heart.

3. It reveals man's accountability (stops all mouths) v. 19.

4. It cannot justify (no flesh justified) v. 20. It is vain for a person to cling to the hope that his good deeds will somehow outweigh his bad ones.

5. It reveals sin (knowledge of sin) v. 20. The Law's chief function is to condemn. Man's attempts are not only helpless; they are hopeless.

This proves that the Law could not justify any man. The Law was chiefly to condemn man, not to save him. Paul writes that a schoolmaster led us to Christ, who was the end of the Law for righteousness, the very fulfillment of the Law. The Law has no lift, no life, no love! If a man is to be saved, he must be saved by Christ, not the Law.

III. All Under a Sentence (v. 19)

"All the world may become guilty." This may be regarded as the conclusion of his whole argument, and the expressions may refer not only to the Jews but to all the world. Its meaning may be thus expressed: The Gentiles are proved guilty by their deeds and violating the law of nature. They sin against their conscience and have been shown guilty before God (Chapter 1). The Jews have also been shown to be guilty; all their objections have been silenced by an independent train of remark, by appeal to their own Law, and by arguments drawn from the authority that they admit. Thus, the whole world becomes guilty before God.

In this case, the best defense is not a good offense. We must quit looking for the advantage and submit to the truth. We must adopt the attitude of the publican who kneeled and prayed, "Lord be merciful to me a sinner" (Luke 18:13). For those who take this position, mercy is extended, as Paul will prove. Still, to those who continue to argue the point, there will be no mercy when, at last, their mouths are stopped at the Great

White Throne.

> Revelation 6:15-17, 15And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; 16And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: 17For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?
>
> Revelation 20:11-15, 11And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. 12And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. 13And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. 14And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. 15And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

The best way to conclude this passage of scripture is to ask yourself, "Has my mouth been stopped?" If you are making excuses (no, not one!), you must experience God's grace again. We are not accepting God's grace if we defend ourselves and commend ourselves.

Chapter Thirteen
No Not One
Romans 3:9-20

Lesson in Review

A. Complete the following sentences using the correct words from the reading, notes, and class lecture.

1. Paul's indictment is _____, _____ , and _____.
2. Paul writes, "All are under _____. (v9)"
3. The word "under" means "under the "_____" or "_____ by."
4. Paul, with scripture proof, shows the inability of man to be _____.
5. Men may acknowledge God and identify their problem as _____, but they lack the determined _____ to seek God that it requires.
6. Except the Spirit draws a man, he cannot be _____.
7. The sinner is spiritually _____by nature.
8. Paul points out that man's wicked _____ form an important part of God's indictment of each of us.
9. Man's first sin separated man from _____; his second sin separated man from _____.
10. The devastating thing about the Law was the _____ that no man could live up to its code.
11. We must quit looking for the advantage and submit to the _____.

B. Answer these questions from Romans 3:9-20. Use verses where the answer comes from.

12. Romans 3:10-12, "As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that _____, there is none that _____ after God. They are all gone out of the _____, they are together become _____; there is none that doeth _____, no, not one."

13. Romans 3:20, “Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be _____ in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.”

C. Read the question carefully and respond in 2-3 sentences with a clear and concise answer. Your response should directly address the question and provide relevant details from the text.

14. According to Paul, what is the difference between "sin" and "sins"?

15. How does the phrase "a string of pearls" describe Paul's teaching method in this passage?

D. According to D. Bernard's *The Message of Romans (pp. 44-45)*, answer the following questions.

16. Why does the law not save humanity from sin?

Chapter Fourteen

The Divine Dilemma

Romans 3:21-26

"*But He was wounded for our transgressions,*
He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement
for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed." Isaiah 53:5

Romans 3:21-26 reveals God's righteousness through faith in Jesus Christ. This scripture declares that salvation is apart from the law and given freely by grace. This truth is echoed in Isaiah 53:5, which foretells Christ's atoning sacrifice, showing that He was wounded for humanity's transgression to bring peace and healing.

In John 8, Jesus is confronted by a group of religious leaders who want to discredit Him. They presented Him as a woman caught in the act of adultery and asked Him what to do. Knowing His love for people and willingness to forgive, they assumed they would trap Him as a lawbreaker if He did not have them stone her. His dilemma was how to uphold the law's integrity while allowing the woman an opportunity to repent. His solution: Let the one without sin cast the first stone. Even those leaders were sinners, and in embarrassment, each departed.

This incident in the Lord's life illustrates the dilemma on a divine scale. As we have seen, all men are left speechless by the charge. They are sinners (3:19). This places man in a crisis of hopelessness (3:20) because there is no help in knowing and keeping the Law. After all, we can't do it perfectly, but now Paul shows us Jesus Christ—our help!

Always watch for the word "but" when reading the Bible. Just as great doors swing on very ordinary hinges, dramatic changes in Scripture often hinge upon this ubiquitous word. It introduces a new thought, usually contrasting with what it was before. Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones, a Welsh Protestant minister, preacher, and medical doctor, taught verse-by-verse through the Book of Romans. He was stopped for years on this verse as he, week after week, came back with another scriptural illustration of the power of "but God." His exposition of Romans was highly regarded as he sorted through the theology. Note, for example, the but in the lives of:

> Solomon—1 Kings 11:1, But king Solomon loved many strange women, together with the daughter of Pharaoh, women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Zidonians, and Hittites.
>
> Uzziah—II Chronicles 26:16, But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction: for he transgressed against the LORD his God, and went into the temple of the LORD to burn incense upon the altar of incense.

Pharaoh—Exodus 8:15, But when Pharaoh saw that there was respite (from the frogs), he hardened his heart, and hearkened not unto them; as the LORD had said.

Noah—Genesis 6:8, But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD.

Prodigal Son—Luke 15:20, And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.

How does God respond to this divine dilemma?

I. With a Divine Intervention (vv. 21-23)

"But now . . . God" (v. 21) shows God's intervention on behalf of man. Why do we need God? Paul affirms, "all have sinned (past tense) and come short (present tense)" (v. 23).

Our attempts to deal with our sins compared to others' efforts may make us look like Olympic pole jumpers, but compared to God, we would have to jump to the moon.

Sin is falling short of God's standard. Paul's use of the word "sin" refers to man's sinful nature. Not only have we sinned, but our efforts to do better also fall short.

This is where God's plan differs from all other world religions. All differences, no matter their significant differences, affirm that salvation must be earned, and we must beware of this tendency by some in Christianity. In the gospel, "works" do not result in salvation. They result from salvation.

Why must I deal with my sin?

1. Sin is a debt that must be compensated.
2. Sin is a disease that must be cured.
3. Sin is a departure that must be corrected.
4. Sin is a domination that must be conquered.

II. With a Divine Initiative (v. 22)

"The righteousness of God" shows God's initiative to do something about man's sin. God could punish, but instead, He offers hope. It is not the religious person, but the person who believes, who will stand righteous before God.

Who can get right with God? In the previous passage, Paul proves all have sinned (3:9) and that all are judged guilty (3:19); now Paul says salvation—righteousness is available "to all and on all" (3:22).

Notice Paul clarifies it is "by faith... to all... who believe." Your faith is only as good

as the object in which you trust. So, your faith must be "in Jesus Christ." Paul pointedly reminds us that this faith must be in Jesus because the Jews hated Jesus. God justifies only those who believe in Jesus. Everybody believes in something or someone. He was saying that salvation originates from faith in Jesus only.

It is an intelligent, not blind faith; it makes sense to a reasonable man. It is also a personal faith that you must personally decide, and it is in a person rather than a system, formula, or belief.

Two common mistakes are often made about faith.

1. People need to pay more attention to the amount of their faith. They feel that what they have is insufficient for salvation and never know salvation. Such persons seek to have faith in their faith, not God.

2. People misunderstand saving faith. We use faith daily; without question, we accept the words in the newspaper, trust the bank with our money, and the pharmacist with our prescription. However, such faith is not saving faith; it becomes saving only when placed in Jesus Christ.

III. With a Divine Invention (vv. 24-25)

Romans 3:24-25 emphasizes that salvation comes apart from the law, revealing God's divine plan of redemption. This concept angered the Jews, as it challenged their reliance on the law for righteousness and was Paul's original reason for persecuting the church. Paul carefully selects three key words, each accompanied by four vivid illustrations to demonstrate the profound work that God accomplishes.

1. The Appellate (Justification) We are pronounced guilty in a courtroom, and it is time to be sentenced. But here, the judge declares us free, and our record is cleared as if we had never broken the law. The judge shares his righteousness with us.

2. The Accountant (Justification) It is as if we have a large ledger in Heaven, and every time we sin, it is deducted from our account. The problem is that we started with a zero balance, so every sin placed us deeper in debt. Then God suddenly turned to His account and transferred what was needed to clear our account. Then He transferred the balance of His account so that where we were a beggar, now we would become very wealthy.

There is a difference between forgiven and justified. You may be forgiven a debt, but still have a bad credit record. Justification means not only forgiving the debt but also cleaning the credit record.

3. The Auction (Redemption) This is the Greek word used for "kinsman-redeemer" in the Septuagint. Who is the kinsman-redeemer?

> Leviticus 25:47-49, 47And if a sojourner or stranger wax rich by thee, and thy brother that dwelleth by him wax poor, and sell himself unto the stranger or sojourner by thee, or to the stock of the stranger's family: 48After that he is sold he may be redeemed again; one of his brethren may redeem him: 49Either his uncle, or his uncle's son, may redeem him, or any that is nigh of kin unto him of his family may redeem him; or if he be able, he may redeem himself.

There are three progressive definitions of this word. The first is to go to the slave market and buy a slave. The second is to buy the slave and take it out of the miserable, filthy market. The third is to buy the slave, bring it out, and set it free. Paul used the third and fullest definition.

Set free from what? Fear! Guilt! The power of sin!

4. The Altar (Propitiation) In the Septuagint, this word is used for the "mercy seat" in the Tabernacle and translated that way in the one other place used in the New Testament.

> Hebrews 9:5, And over it the cherubims of glory shadowing the mercy seat; of which we cannot now speak particularly.

Its primary role was the spot where the blood was applied on the Day of Atonement to roll Israel's sin ahead for another year.

Jesus Christ removes our sins!

IV. With Divine Integrity (vv. 25-26).

God does this "witnessed by the law and the prophets" (v. 21)—the Old Testament. Paul says that God's intervention conforms to the Law. This is important because God cannot lower His standards or violate His righteous demands.

How did God do it? "Freely by his grace" (v. 24). "Freely" is translated as "without a cause" in John 15:25.

> John 15:25, But this cometh to pass, that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, They hated me without a cause.

"Grace" means "as a gift." In other words, God does it based on His love, not anything we have done. If we do not want the gift, the alternative is simple: We must keep the Law and erase our past. But no one can do that, so we must accept God's gift or keep our sins.

While it is free, it is not cheap. It comes at the cost of "his blood." Not faith in His blood, but His blood and our faith—we must accept it, and accept it is all we can do. Our true response is when we are overcome with sin and turn to God's abundant grace.

Grace also carries the idea of being graceful or beautiful, and what God does in us is beautiful.

God's righteousness is relevant because He is both the Justifier (v. 26) and the Redeemer (v. 27) of those who believe. He is just because He has answered the Law by meeting the demands of sin. The cross is the public declaration that God is handling the question of sin.

The entire sacrificial system of the Old Testament declared God holy, and Calvary reveals how a holy God has righteously dealt with sin. Calvary is eternal in that it reaches into the past and the future. He is a justifier in giving man an opportunity and imparting His righteousness.

Two of the great Old Testament offerings can be taken together to illustrate perfectly the transaction that occurs when a sinner by faith turns to Jesus. These were the sin offering and the burnt offering. To some extent, the ritual was similar in both sacrifices, for in both cases, the offeror brought his lamb and placed his hands upon it to identify himself with the sacrifice. The typical meaning of the two sacrifices, however, was very different. In the sin offering, all the vileness of the sinner was transferred to the substitute, but in the burnt offering, all the virtue of the substitute was transferred to the sinner. The Cross of Calvary allows God to be both just and Justifier.

Now, we can experience forgiveness and fellowship!

Chapter Fourteen
The Divine Dilemma
Romans 3:21-26

Lesson in Review

A. Complete the following sentences using the correct words from the reading, notes, and class lecture.

1. Paul's use of the word _____ means man's sinful nature.

2. In the gospel, _____ do not result in salvation; they result from salvation.

3. It is not the religious person, but the person who _____ and will stand righteous before God.

4. Paul says salvation—righteousness—is available "to all and on all", notice Paul clarifies it is "by _____."

5. Your _____ is only as good as the object you trust.

6. Faith becomes _____ faith only when it is placed in Jesus Christ.

7. _____ is forgiving the debt and cleaning the credit record.

8. Paul says that God's intervention conforms to the _____.

9. God's righteousness is relevant because He is both _____ and a _____ of those who believe.

10. The _____is the public declaration that God is righteous in handling the sin question.

B. Answer these questions from Romans 3:21-26. Use verses where the answer comes from.

11. What is the righteousness of God being witnessed by?

12. The righteousness of God, which is by faith in Jesus Christ, is available to whom?

13. For all have what and come short of what?

C. Read the question carefully and respond in 2-3 sentences with a clear and concise answer. Your response should directly address the question and provide relevant details from the text.

14. According to Paul, who can receive the righteousness of God, and how is it obtained?

15. What are two common misunderstandings about faith that Paul addresses?

Test #2

Romans 2:1-3:26

True or False:

_____ 1. In Romans 2:1-16 God is shown to be one of the infallible sources of judgment.

_____ 2. A person's ability to judge shows they know right from wrong.

_____ 3. God's righteousness demands judgment for sinfulness.

_____ 4. God judges people compared to themselves and the rest of the society in which they live.

_____ 5. Some people mistake God's patience with forgetfulness, but their sin is gaining interest while they wait to repent (Romans 2:5).

_____ 6. Since people are saved by their works, they are judged by them.

_____ 7. God's judgment is based solely upon the possession of the truth.

_____ 8. Because of the actions of the Jews, the name of God was blasphemed among the Gentiles.

_____ 9. The circumcision that matters is a circumcision of the heart.

_____ 10. The "oracles of God" are the special revelation of divine truth.

_____ 11. Paul's use of the word "sin" means man's sinful nature.

_____ 12. Only the religious person will stand righteous before God.

_____ 13. Romans 3:4 says, "Let God be true, but every man a liar."

_____ 14. Except when the Spirit draws a person, they cannot be saved.

_____ 15. Your faith is only as good as it is sincere.

_____ 16. Paul states that God's intervention on our behalf is not known in the law and the prophets.

_____ 17. Christ is both just and Justifier of those who believe (Romans 3:26).

Multiple Choice (select the most correct answer):

_____ 18. To say that God will not _____ is to say that people's actions are insignificant and they don't matter to God.
A. Credit
B. Judge
C. Notice
D. Record
E. None of the above

_____ 19. No one shall _____ the judgment of God.
A. Escape
B. Fight
C. Accept
D. All of the above
E. None of the above

_____ 20. God will, at judgment, render to every man according to his.
A. Hopes
B. Attempts
C. Deeds
D. All the above
E. None of the above

_____ 21. Initially, the name "Jew" described a member of the tribe of__.
A. James
B. John
C. Jude
D. Judah
E. Jacob

_____ 22. According to Romans 3:9, all of humanity is "under _____."
A. Sin
B. Safety
C. Shackles
D. All the above
E. None of the above

_____ 23. According to our outline of Romans 3:1-2, what advantages do the Jews have?
A. Scripture
B. Selection
C. Sign
D. All the above
E. None of the above

_____ 24. What does the word "under" mean in Romans 3:9?
A. Of a lower position
B. Less in power
C. Controlled by
D. All the above
E. None of the above

_____ 25. According to Romans 3:22, God's righteousness is available to all that ___.
A. Witness
B. Support
C. Fast
D. Pray
E. Believe

Fill in the blanks from Romans 2 and 3:

A. appreciates	E. justified	I. understandeth
B. complimentest	F. perfect	J. unprofitable
C. condemnest	G. seeketh	K. way
D. good	H. truth	L. works

_____ 26. Romans 2:1, "Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou _____ thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things."

_____ 27. Romans 2:2, "But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to _____against them which commit such things."

Romans 3:10-12, "[10]As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one:

_____ 28. [11]There is none that _____, there is none that

_____ 29. _____ after God. [12]They are all gone out of

_____ 30. the _____, they are together

_____ 31. become _____; there is none that

_____ 32. doeth _____, no, not one."

_____ 33. Romans 3:20, "Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be _____ in his sight."

Chapter Fifteen

Faith and Works

Romans 3:27-4:5

"*And he believed in the Lord, and He accounted it to him for righteousness.*" Genesis 15:6

Romans 3:27-4:5 explores the fundamental relationship between faith and righteousness. Salvation is not earned by works but received through faith. This truth is illustrated in Genesis 15:6, where Abraham's belief in God was "accounted it to him for righteousness." Paul reinforces this by showing that justification does not come from human effort but through trust in God's promises. Faith and works are significant topics throughout Scripture. This passage examines a more critical exploration into how works serve as a response, rather than a requirement for salvation.

> James 2:14-24, 14What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him? 15If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, 16And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? 17Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. 18Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works. 19Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. 20But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? 21Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? 22Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? 23And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God. 24Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.
>
> Ephesians 2:8-10, 8For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: 9Not of works, lest any man should boast. 10For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

Remember, Paul wrote about his desire to visit Rome and preach the Gospel. He then outlined his gospel: All men have sinned and fallen short of God's glory and come automatically under God's judgment. Man's primary need is knowing how to get right with God. There were two basic ideas in the world—during Paul's day and ours.

1. If you live a high-caliber life, God will forgive and accept you. But suppose God accepted people to Heaven based on their good merit. Human nature, being what it is, would soon have the saved person boasting in Heaven. One person would parade some great deed he had done or some tremendous sacrifice. Another would have all men listen to a list of his virtues. Boasting is the outward, verbal expression of pride, and pride was the original sin, the sin of Satan in the distant past (Isaiah 14:12-17; Ezekiel 28:12-19). The re-emergence in Heaven of pride in the form of boasting would call for action on the part of God like that taken before—the boaster would be cast out.

2. The other says that no matter how hard man tries, he can never undo what he has already done and never merit God's forgiveness. Therefore, any attempt at salvation by works is doomed to failure. All a man can do is trust God's mercy and grace to forgive. God can do this because He is both just and Justifier (3:26).

Based on these two essential ideas, Paul writes, "Man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law (works)" (v. 28). This scripture raises many questions, and Paul pauses to answer them.

I. The Definition of Faith and Works

Faith is a dependent trust in a valid object. For the sinner, trust in Jesus, who is ready to forgive, cleanse, and give a new start. Faith is born of despair in self-effort. It is asking God to do what you cannot do for yourself. Further, it is throwing yourself at the mercy of God and asking Him to give you what you do not deserve and cannot earn. Many people do not like this because it attacks their pride and self-control. Therefore, the person who exercises faith depends on God dealing with him in grace. Notice that faith is always related to grace.

As we discuss faith, remember that Paul is writing to the saints in Rome—there was no need to talk to them about how to be born again. They needed to know the doctrinal significance of their experience. Also, faith always includes obedience. Saving faith will consist of application as well as acceptance. Further, through faith, we repent from sin, obey the command to be baptized in Jesus' name, receive remission of sins at baptism, receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, and live a holy life. Saving faith is, therefore, a continuous relationship, not just a point in time.

What does the Bible mean by works? In this context, it is man's effort to merit salvation. Man has devised many systems to that end:

The Buddhists have the Eight-Fold Path. Its goal is "enlightenment":

1. Right views
   Look at things in purity and with honesty.

2. Right desires
   Motives

3. Right speech
   When to speak, be quiet, what to say, and how to say it.

4. Right conduct
   Behavior

5. Right lifestyle
   Poverty or basic

6. Right effort
   Must try

7. Right awareness
   Not miss anything

8. Right meditation
   Thoughts

The Muslim has the Five Pillars:

1. The creed
   "There is one God, Allah, and Mohammed is his prophet."

2. Pray five times a day
   It must be done publicly facing Mecca at noon, despite any afflictions that praying might bring, and after purifications.

3. Fasting
   No food or drink

4. Alms
   Giving to the poor

5. Pilgrimage to Mecca

The Jews have the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1-17), which the teachers had amplified and multiplied to know no one knows how many. The orthodox Jew feels he must carefully fulfill it all to please God.

What about the "Christian"? Jehovah's Witnesses sell the *Watchtower* and visit homes to "work their passage." Some Catholic orders take certain vows. In comparison, most of Christian society seems half-hearted.

Paul's point? If you trust in works, you should get with it and watch yourself. Of

course, Paul's big point is that no one can do it! Therefore, we must turn to God.

Notice Paul's explanation of how faith works in the Jew instead of the Gentile. To the Jew (circumcision), it is *by* faith (3:30). To the Gentile (uncircumcision), it is *through* faith (3:30). The Jew had some degree of faith already because of the oracles of God given to him, so God used that faith that was already present and brought it to maturity. The Gentile had to be introduced to the whole idea of faith. Through that faith, he is led to Christ, finding justification.

The same principle applies to those raised in the truth compared to those from the world or false religions. While there is no actual difference between "by" and "through" in practice, Jewish believers needed reassurance that their experience would be distinct because of their cultural and religious background. Paul acknowledges this distinction in wording but makes it clear that in terms of salvation**,** there is no difference. We are all justified by faith, regardless of our heritage or past beliefs.

Which is easier? They both have complications. The person raised in the church discovers he needs his relationship with God to overcome his basic morality and see his inherent sinfulness. Someone from a background without truth must overcome a past life marked by indifference, self-focus, or even resistance to God. Both must eventually submit to Christ and follow Him in faith.

Work is usually born of concern—people who honestly want to please God. But some do it with pride and self-sufficiency—arrogance.

The problem? The only hope for the person who tries "work" for total fulfillment, by his definition, is that he will be lost.

II. The Decision about Faith and Works

Based on these definitions, we can reach several conclusions:

1. Salvation cannot be achieved by combining faith and works. Some believe that both belief and actions are necessary. However, faith relies solely on grace, while works operate within a different framework. True salvation is not earned by human effort but is a gift extended through faith alone. The systems can only give you what you deserve—that leaves you in its debt; but grace is receiving what you do not deserve—righteousness by God's grace. Therefore, these two approaches to God are incompatible.

> Romans 4:4-5, Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.

2. Faith does not allow boasting.

The doorway to Bethlehem's Church of the Nativity is usually low, requiring

visitors to stoop as they enter. Jesus and the shepherds had to bow low to enter. So, we must humble ourselves from our ambitions to come to God by faith. But there is no other option.

> Romans 3:27, Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith.

If I can only be saved by grace, which depends on God's mercy, what can I brag?

Well, what then can we brag about?

- Our Hope—Romans 5:2, "By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand and rejoice in hope of the glory of God."
- Our Tribulation—Romans 5:3, "And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience."
- Our God—Romans 5:11, "And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement."
- And Galatians say we can brag on the Cross. Galatians 6:14, "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."

Gratitude, not arrogance, is the language of the redeemed.

3. Faith unites everyone.

> Romans 3:29, Is he the God of the Jews only? is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also.

The same faith applies to everyone. The only way to God is by faith.

4. Faith establishes the Law.

> Romans 3:31, Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law.

Some want to void the Ten Commandments, feeling that our faith voided them, but our faith establishes them. How? The Law we could not keep in ourselves is now maintained by the power of God that comes when we believe and receive the Spirit. Therefore, Paul writes to these thinkers, "God forbid!"—remember, such a thought did not come from God but from carnal men.

The Law is about Jesus, so our faith in Jesus establishes the Law. How? The Law was given to prove to us that we are sinners, and so it did; therefore, we need it. Knowing we are sinners, we believe in Jesus Christ. And Jesus established the Law by enduring the

death penalty for our sins.

III. The Difficulties of Faith and Works

Paul's illustration of faith counting for righteousness is Abraham (4:1-3). As far as the Jews were concerned, any discussion in consideration of an approach to God must consider Abraham. Up to this point, Paul dealt mainly with Moses' Law, but God's call to a people began with Abraham. The Jews fought Paul based on Moses and the Law as the only way to God. But Paul says, "Wait! How did God first deal with man?" It was by grace through faith.

> Genesis 15:6, And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness.

Paul's foundation for teaching faith is the Scripture, "What saith the scripture?" (4:3). It is not what Paul or other great men say, but what God has said. In all our controversies, this must be our question.

Genesis 15:6 is Paul's remarkable proof text. On God's side, there was simply a word announcing the promises of His grace; on the man's side, there was a devout and childlike reliance upon that word. God asked no more, and the man had no more to give. Man's mere trust in God, the Promiser, was held adequate as a ground for that sinful man's acceptance in favor, friendship, and fellowship with the eternal God. So, a man's works might earn him the applause of men but never of God, for God's standards are higher and holier than any conceived by man.

What about James 2:14-24, in which Abraham was justified by his works?

> James 2:14-24, 14What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him? 15If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, 16And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? 17Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. 18Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works. 19Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. 20But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? 21Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? 22Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? 23And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God. 24Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.

The keys to interpreting these Scriptures in agreement with each other are:

1. Understanding the context of the writer.

2. Recognizing that there are 14 years between Paul's illustration from the life of Abraham and James's illustration from the life of Abraham.

ROMANS	**JAMES**
The illustration of Abraham is of faith as opposed to no faith.	Contrasting genuine faith and phony faith.
This relates to Genesis 15, and the key word is "believe."	It draws from Genesis 22 (the offering of Isaac), and the keyword is "obey."
Paul is combating legalism.	James is combating formulas—saying but not doing.
Paul is talking about being justified by faith.	James is talking about justification demonstrated by works.
Paul is talking about dead works, which are opposed to faith.	James is talking about living works, which are the product of faith.
Paul is talking about our relationship to God.	James talks about the conduct of a person who is related to God.
Paul is saying how God can justify the ungodly.	James is saying how the godly are justified before men.

Abraham responded to God in faith that was counted to him for righteousness; then, he lived a life of obedience to God that demonstrated his faith.

We will never be justified by works (Romans), but we cannot expect to be believed by men if our faith does not work (James).

So, where do faith and works meet? Ephesians 2:8-10.

> Ephesians 2:8-10, 8For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: 9Not of works, lest any man should boast. 10For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

Paul concludes with a startling statement: God justifies the ungodly (4:5).

Romans 4:5, But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.

This is startling news to the Old Testament Jew.

- The Law could not justify the wicked.

Exodus 23:7, Keep thee far from a false matter; and the innocent and righteous slay thou not: for I will not justify the wicked.

- A judge in the Old Testament was commanded to justify the righteous and condemn the wicked.

Deuteronomy 25:1, If there be a controversy between men, and they come unto judgment, that the judges may judge them; then they shall justify the righteous, and condemn the wicked.

- When Solomon dedicated the Temple, he asked God to condemn the wicked and justify the righteous.

I Kings 8:31-32, 31If any man trespass against his neighbour, and an oath be laid upon him to cause him to swear, and the oath come before thine altar in this house: 32Then hear thou in heaven, and do, and judge thy servants, condemning the wicked, to bring his way upon his head; and justifying the righteous, to give him according to his righteousness.

Why this change? God justifies the ungodly because there is no godly thing for Him to justify! Abraham was justified by his faith, not as a circumcised man, but as an uncircumcised man. Abraham was a justified man as soon as he was a believer, not as soon as he was circumcised. The design of such an arrangement was to make him the proper type and spiritual forefather of all believers.

It is important to note that God's justification extends to the individual as a sinner, not a saint. A person must plead guilty to obtain a pardon and ask for mercy in court. The man who pleads "not guilty" can hope only for a fair trial, at which all sinners will be found guilty. The man who pleads "guilty" can hope only for mercy; God does not take sinners to heaven because they deserve it, but because of His grace.

How does God do it? God justifies the sinner when "in due time Christ died for the ungodly" (Romans 5:6). That is the Good News we aim for.

Chapter Fifteen
Faith and Works
Romans 3:27-4:5

Lesson in Review

A. Complete the following sentences using the correct words from the reading, notes, and class lecture.

1. What would happen if God accepted people to heaven based on their good merit?
2. Any attempt at salvation by _____is doomed to failure.
3. Paul writes, "Man is justified by _____without the deeds of the law" (v28).
4. Faith is a dependent _____ in a valid _____.
5. Faith is always related to _____.
6. Faith always includes _____.
7. Works is man's effort to merit _____.
8. It is impossible to combine _____ and _____ in salvation.
9. Faith does not allow _____.
10. Faith _____ everyone.
11. Faith establishes the _____.
12. Paul's illustration of faith counting for righteousness is _____.
13. Paul's foundation for teaching faith is the _____.
14. God justifies the _____ because there are no godly for Him to justify.
15. God justifies the sinner when "in due time Christ _____for the ungodly" (Romans 5:6).

B. Answer these questions from Romans 3:27-4:5. Use verses where the answer comes from.

16. Do we make the law void through faith?

17. When Abraham believed God, it was counted unto him for what?

C. Read the question carefully and respond in 2-3 sentences with a clear and concise answer. Your response should directly address the question and provide relevant details from the text.

18. How does faith relate to grace in Paul's teachings?

Chapter Sixteen

The Joy of Forgiveness

Romans 4:6-16

"Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.
Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD
imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit
there is no guile." Psalm 32:1-2

In Romans 4:6-16, Paul changes the illustrations from Abraham to David, reinforcing the theme of righteousness by faith. Quoting Psalm 32:1-2, David highlights thankfulness after forgiving his grievous sin with Bathsheba (2 Samuel 11-12). His sin of adultery led to deception and murder, which Nathan, the prophet, exposed. David, relying only on the grace of God, pleaded for mercy and received forgiveness and restoration. In Psalm 32, David wrote of his agony as a sinner. In those short eleven verses, David describes being overwhelmed with the weight of his sin as he works to conceal it, thereby taking himself deeper into his sin.

The theme is that when you refuse to confess your sins, the Lord must deal with you to bring you to repentance.

> Proverbs 28:13, He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.

The more we delay, the deeper our misery will become, as demonstrated by David's experience. We inevitably face the following consequences when we hesitate to confront our sins.

1. Sin is a debt against us (Psalm 32:1-2). God sees what we do and keeps a record of it. David had covered his sins on Earth, but he could not cover the record in Heaven. When we confess, God wipes the record clean.

> I John 1:9, If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

2. Sin is a pain within us (Psalm 32:3-5). Sin affects the body, and God's disciplines are painful but needful. David felt like an old man carrying a heavy burden.

3. Sin is a flood around us (Psalm 32:6-7). God uses difficult circumstances to bring us back to Himself. In fact, because of His sins, David went through many deep waters with his family.

4. Sin is a road before us (Psalm 32:8-9). David was like a stubborn animal that needed to be broken. When we are out of the will of God, our decisions will often

create problems instead of solving them. The way only gets more challenging.

> Hebrews 12:1-11, 1Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, 2Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. 3For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds. 4Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin. 5And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: 6For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. 7If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? 8But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. 9Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? 10For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. 11Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.

David went from his agony—silence (v. 3) to applause—singing (v. 7) because he finally was honest with God and confessed his sins (vv. 5-6).

Paul uses this as a further illustration that our only hope in coming to a holy God is based on God's grace, not our works.

Writing specifically of God's willingness to forgive as an act of His grace, Paul sums up God's act of forgiveness. Even as God is just and the Justifier to deal with our sins, He is now a forgiver to deal with our past.

What do we learn from Paul about forgiveness?

I. The Blessedness of Forgiveness (vv. 6-8)

David introduced this word in the context of forgiveness. "Blessed" means basically "joyfulness." The Beatitudes begin with "Blessed are..." (Matthew 5). There is joy in knowing our sin has been settled—this is one of the primary activities of justification.

Many people do not feel forgiven and have missed out on the joy. They are too busy condemning themselves to enjoy the feeling of forgiveness. But we must move beyond

the "feeling" and accept the fact! God's grace to justify says God views us as if we had never sinned. That is the reason for the celebration!

FACT	– –	FAITH	– –	FEELING

Christians should be joyful because their "iniquities are forgiven" (v. 7). "Forgiven" means literally "sent away." Leviticus 16 is the story of the scapegoat.

> Leviticus 16:20-22, 20And when he hath made an end of reconciling the holy place, and the tabernacle of the congregation, and the altar, he shall bring the live goat: 21And Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness: 22And the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a land not inhabited: and he shall let go the goat in the wilderness.

They watched their sins carried away. We must accept that by faith—the same faith we use to receive God's grace. God never brings back to us past sins- that is always the devil trying to make us feel defeated.

We find another picture of our forgiveness in the Psalms.

> Psalm 103:8-12. 8The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. 9He will not always chide: neither will he keep his anger for ever. 10He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. 11For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him. 12As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.

Our sin is as far from us as the East is from the West. In other words, my sin and I are headed in opposite directions. We will never see our sins again, and they will never return for a visit! That's a reason to celebrate!

II. The Benefit of Forgiveness (v. 6)

God "imputeth righteousness without works," or credits right standing to the person forgiven. Remember, the word "imputes" means God credits us with His righteousness. God does not just clear our debt; He credits our account with His assets.

Further, He charges any future sin to His account: " The Lord will not impute sin" (v. 8). God does not subtract any future sin from our acquired righteousness. Instead, He subtracts it from His righteousness. But He is total righteousness, so God remains

righteous no matter how much is deducted.

That is not to encourage us to take sin lightly or ignore it; if we sin, we must confess it to God (I John 1:9). God shows the sin and its payment on His ledger, not ours, so we always stand righteous.

This is what Paul did for the runaway slave Onesimus.

> Philemon 17-18, 17If thou count me therefore a partner, receive him as myself. 18If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that on mine account.

Paul tells Philemon, "When Onesimus arrives at the door, look at him as if he is me." Paul imparts to Onesimus his standing before Philemon. But what about the past—that only took care of the present? Paul writes, "What Onesimus owes you, charge to me." From now on, Onesimus will be debt-free to Philemon. That is what God has done for us.

III. The Blindness of Forgiveness (v. 7)

Still quoting David, Paul writes that our "sins are covered." Our sin is made invisible, and God sees us as though it had never occurred. It is as if God covers our sins with His hands when He looks at us.

Look at some examples from the Old Testament.

> Isaiah 44:22, I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee.

God says that He has covered our sins, like laying a thick cloud between them and Him so that they are never seen.

> Micah 7:18-19, 18Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy. 19He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.

The ocean is so deep in some spots that man has never reached the bottom. There are deeper valleys in the oceans than higher mountains on land. That is where our sin is. We can plunge so deep that all light fades, believing our sins will remain hidden in darkness.

IV. The Basis of Forgiveness (vv. 9-16)

Paul uses three critical words in the Book of Romans to explain how sin is dealt with through grace, blood, and faith.

1. Grace (v. 16) means "God's unmerited favor." Paul says Abraham received righteousness because he acted upon God's promise. So, grace works when we act on God's promises.

2. Blood. Paul previously listed blood in Romans 3:25 as an essential part of forgiveness. We do not talk much about blood anymore, but we should. Why?

> Matthew 26:28, For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission (forgiveness) of sins.

This speaks of Christ's blood shed for us at Calvary. The demands of the Law must be met—blood—so Jesus offered Himself as our sacrifice.

> Hebrews 9:22, And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.

> I John 1:6-9, 6If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: 7But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. 8If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. 9If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

3. Faith (used several times). Faith means that we must do something about God's grace and something about God's shed blood, and it means that we must do it personally. In other words, it is not enough for us to believe that God offers grace or sheds His blood, but that He offers that grace to me personally, and He sheds that blood for me! I must believe that Jesus died for MY sins—personally.

V. The Boundaries of Forgiveness (vv. 9-10)

Who qualifies for this forgiveness? To whom is forgiveness available? Once we say it is by faith, the Jews are going to ask, "But, what about circumcision?" That question takes us back to Abraham.

Is it for circumcision only (v. 9)? Paul writes it is for all (v. 10). He proves it with a chronological answer, emphasizing when Abraham was given the rite of circumcision.

Was Abraham counted righteous because he was circumcised, or before he was circumcised? Paul points out that Abraham was called righteous when he believed God's promise (Genesis 15:6) fourteen years before he was circumcised (Genesis 17:9-10), and this was 430 years before the Law was given.

This destroyed the Jewish arrogance that held that all men must come to them to be

saved. Paul shows that Abraham was a common Gentile who received God's grace because he believed. Forgiveness is not earned through works (circumcision or the Law) but by faith. Since belief is the basis for forgiveness, forgiveness is available to everyone.

This is the issue of Acts 15 after Paul and Barnabas finished their first missionary journey. Peter's account of how God first used him to take the gospel to Gentiles settled the issue.

VI. The Badge of Forgiveness (v. 11)

What, then, was the point of circumcision? It never conferred righteousness but confirmed it. It was a sign and a seal. The sign is the outward evidence that one belongs to and believes in God. Seal is an inward witness of God's promises. In other words, the sign of circumcision was simply a public affirmation of God's previous approval of Abraham.

We have the Holy Ghost as our sign and seal today.

> Ephesians 1:13-14, 13In whom (Christ) ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were *sealed* with that holy Spirit of promise, 14Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.

What is the outward sign? Speaking in tongues (Acts 2, 8, and 19).

VII. The Brotherhood of Forgiveness (v. 12)

"Father Abraham" was sealed so that he might be held up as our example or model, earning him the title of our father. The word "father" here is used in a spiritual sense. We are all a family based on faith.

Our acceptance by God makes us all one family. Our family relationship with God is dependent on faith. We have the same father, the same faith, and the same forgiveness! This is for both Jews and Gentiles.

The Jews who opposed Jesus boasted that their father was God. Jesus responded that their father was the devil.

> John 8:33-45, 33They answered him, We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free? 34Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin. 35And the servant abideth not in the house for ever: but the Son abideth ever. 36If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed. 37I know that ye are Abraham's seed; but ye seek to kill me, because my word hath no place in

you. 38I speak that which I have seen with my Father: and ye do that which ye have seen with your father. 39They answered and said unto him, Abraham is our father. Jesus saith unto them, If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham. 40But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God: this did not Abraham. 41Ye do the deeds of your father. Then said they to him, We be not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God. 42Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me. 43Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word. 44Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it. 45And because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not.

The Jews' rejection of Jesus demonstrated their lack of faith.

What is the blessedness of being in the family of God?

- John explained that all who receive Christ become children of God.

John 1:12, But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.

- The Spirit that enables us to cry "Abba Father."

Romans 8:15, For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.

Galatians 4:6, And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.

- As our Spiritual Father, He supervises our training.

Hebrews 12:5-13, 5And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: 6For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. 7If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? 8But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. 9Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? 10For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness.

11Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby. 12Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; 13And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.

- And, since He knows us, He acts compassionately.

Psalm 103:13-14 says, "13Like as a father pitieth (shows compassion) his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him. 14For he knoweth our frame (which means He will challenge us from time to time too); he remembereth that we are dust" (He knows what we can handle, not what we think we can handle—and will not put more on us than we can bare).

VIII. The Burden of Forgiveness

When we speak of God's forgiveness, it is only appropriate to remind ourselves of our obligation to forgive. God's forgiveness of us is our example to forgive others.

Colossians 3:12-13, 12Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; 13Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.

Remember the story of Jesus at the house of Simon the Pharisee.

Luke 7:36-50, 36And one of the Pharisees desired him that he would eat with him. And he went into the Pharisee's house, and sat down to meat. 37And, behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, 38And stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment. 39Now when the Pharisee which had bidden him saw it, he spake within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him: for she is a sinner. 40And Jesus answering said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith, Master, say on. 41There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. 42And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most? 43Simon answered and said, I suppose that he, to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged. 44And he turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gav-

est me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. 45Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet. 46My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment. 47Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little. 48And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven. 49And they that sat at meat with him began to say within themselves, Who is this that forgiveth sins also? 50And he said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace.

The joy of forgiveness always comes in direct proportion to the weight of guilt and depth of repentance.

Paul references both Abraham and David to illustrate a profound truth about salvation. He presents Abraham, the greatest of the patriarchs and one of the most revered Old Testament saints, to demonstrate that no person, regardless of their righteousness, can claim exalted status in matters of salvation. At the same time, he highlights David, the greatest of the kings and a notable sinner**,** to emphasize that no one is beyond redemption**.** Through these two figures, Paul reveals that salvation is not based on human merit or failure**,** but on God's grace**,** making it accessible to all.

Chapter Sixteen
The Joy of Forgiveness
Romans 4:6-16

Lesson in Review

A. Complete the following sentences using the correct words from the reading, notes, and class lecture.

1. When you refuse to confess your sins, the Lord must deal with you to bring you to _____.
2. The Christian should be joyful because his "iniquities are _____."
3. "Forgiven" means literally "_____ _____."
4. We will never see our sins again, and they will never return for a _____!
5. Paul uses what three critical words to explain how our sin is dealt with?
6. Since belief is the basis for forgiveness, then forgiveness is available to _____.
7. Our acceptance by God makes us all one _____.

B. Answer these questions from Romans 4:6-16. Use verses where the answer comes from.

8. David said, "Blessed are those who?" _____

_____

9. Abraham is not only the father of circumcision, but also the father of who? _____

_____

10. Righteousness is of faith, that it might be by what? _____

C. Read the question carefully and respond in 2-3 sentences with a clear and concise answer. Your response should directly address the question and provide relevant details from the text.

11. According to Psalm 32, what happens when someone tries to conceal their sins instead of confessing to them?

12. How does God use difficult circumstances to lead a person back to repentance, as seen in David's experience?

D. According to D. Bernard's *The Message of Romans (pp. 58-59)*, answer the following questions.

13. Why was it shocking for Jews to hear that uncircumcised Gentiles could be saved?

14. How does water baptism relate to circumcision in terms of salvation?

Chapter Seventeen

Faith that Matters

Romans 4:16-25

"*By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac,*
and he who had received the promises offered up
his only begotten son... concluding that God was
able to raise him up, even from the dead." Hebrews 11:17-19

Romans 4:16-25 reinforces the truth that salvation comes by grace through faith, not by works. Paul highlights Abraham as a prime example of justifying faith. Abraham was credited with faith before any work was performed. The reasonable question then is: "What is faith?" Hebrews 11:1 says, "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Hebrews 11:17-19 illustrates Abraham's trust in God, even when asked to offer up Isaac, his promised son. Contrary to the idea that work saves us, Paul has presented that we are saved by grace. It is by grace through faith. Through Abraham's story, Paul presents faith as relying on God's promise, not man's efforts.

Faith: Do you remember how you felt when you were young, and your birthday was coming? You were excited and anxious. You knew you would undoubtedly receive gifts and other special treats, but something would be a surprise. Birthdays combine assurance and anticipation, and so does faith! Faith is the conviction based upon God's promises that God's new and fresh surprises will surely be ours.

In these verses, faith is defined and illustrated. The subject continues to be Abraham. He is the best illustration Paul could ever want to use now. These verses are designed to show how pure faith alone worked for Abraham.

The only One who can forgive sin is God, and the only One who can justify is God; the only One who can impute righteousness is God. The only principle God will do is by faith in God. Abraham illustrates this and challenges us to be people of faith, too. That is what this passage of Romans illustrates (vv. 23-24).

I. It is Confidence in a Power (v. 17)

Your faith must be in a valid object. False worshippers may have as much faith as we do or even more, but their faith is in vain. Therefore, it is not the amount of faith you possess but in what you place your faith. Some people put their faith in themselves, others in the church, and others in the correct teaching.

Our faith needs to be in God because He is our power. The bigger God is in our eyes, the greater our confidence in God.

Therefore, the only way to increase our faith—or confidence in God—is to know God better. For the Christian, ignorance does not bring bliss but anxiety and a faltering faith. We need to know God better; there is no better place to learn about Him than His Word.

What can I expect God to do by faith? He has demonstrated that He can 1) bring life out of death [resurrection] and 2) make something out of nothing [creation]. In other words, when life appears hopeless, God is easiest seen. That should excite us!

Paul uses the word "hope" (v. 18). It is not a muted whimper of despair. It is overwhelming confidence, a certainty in the believer's mind.

II. It is Conversant with the Problems (vv. 17-19)

Faith is not blind. It realistically examines the obstacles but chooses to believe in God. The church does not ignore its people's problems; it handles them under the guidance of the Spirit. An overcoming Christian does not cover up his problems but lives victoriously while solving them. What happened?

Abraham (100 years old) and Sarah (90 years old) were physically incapable of bearing children; they were dead! But God brings life out of death! Another problem: Sarah was barren. There was nothing with which to work. But God made something out of nothing! Abraham could trust God because he knew the Lord. He weighed the human impossibility (of becoming a father) against the divine impossibility (of God being able to break His word). He decided that if God was God, nothing was impossible. Imagine Abraham explaining all this to Sarah.

Even so, God must wait until the sinner is "dead"—that is, until he has concluded that he is unable to save himself—before He can release His power. The Lord also begins to create a brand-new life of everlasting worth in that person.

> II Corinthians 5:17, Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.
>
> Ephesians 4:24, And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.
>
> Colossians 3:9-11, 9Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; 10And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him: 11Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all.

Jesus could reach the harlots, publicans, and sinners—yet not the Pharisees—because the Pharisees felt they did not need Jesus, but the others knew they did (Mark 2).

III. It is Consistent in its Progress (vv. 20-22)

It is not over once you are saved by faith; you have been introduced to faith and are now called to live in it. The word "staggered" is translated as "waiver" by James.

> James 1:6, But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed.

Our life without faith is like a sea crashing on the shore, breaking up, and losing all power. The amount of a person's faith is determined by what He knows about the subject of His faith. Knowledge increases faith.

> Romans 10:17, So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

Our God is One who "who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were" (v. 17).

What difference does this make? We are justified by faith, and Scripture also commands us to live by faith. Therefore, if I'm having a problem in my life, it is because of faith or obedience. That is what the Christian life reduces to—faith and obedience.

How do I live by faith? The Bible says to:

- Walk by faith—that is a step-by-step journey
- Stand by faith—when you hit a wall and
- When you pray by faith, the only prayer God hears is a prayer of faith.

We are then saved (justified) by faith and live by faith, walking by faith, standing by faith, and praying by faith. That life releases the power of God in our lives. It is through this that victory comes, even our faith.

This does not require superhuman strength. We all have faith in alarm clocks, light switches, mirrors, food manufacturers, cars, traffic lights, and other drivers. We already live by faith. Now, we need to apply that to our relationship with God. We do not need more faith. We need to act with what faith we have, and our confidence in God will grow. This is true any time you try something new.

Faith is the product of experience. God does not give it in prayer.

Faith in Christ is not self-perpetuating; evil is. We must discipline in our homes, instruct in our Sunday Schools, and develop through involvement in our churches and seasons. Then, we will save ourselves while trying to save others.

IV. It is Convinced of the Promises (vv. 23-25)

Whatever God promises, He can do. Abraham had confidence—faith—in God's promise. If you need a promise, look at the Book!

Do not tell people only to believe—give them a promise from the Book!

At this point, Paul ties all this discussion to us. We receive justification by our faith in Jesus' resurrection. Just as Abraham had to believe what he could not see, so should we. The whole Christian journey begins with a step of faith.

> Hebrews 11:6, But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

Faith that matters is in God. It is more vital than any problem a Christian may encounter, constantly growing through use, and is concrete in God's promise.

Chapter Seventeen
Faith that Matters
Romans 4:16-25

Lesson in Review

A. Complete the following sentences using the correct words from the reading, notes, and class lecture.

1. The only One who can forgive sin is _____, the only One who can justify is _____, and the only One who can impute righteousness is _____. The only principle God will do it is by _____ in God.

2. The only way to increase our _____ is to know God better.

3. The word "hope" (v18) is an overwhelming _____, a certainty in the believer's mind.

4. Once you are saved by faith, it is not over. You have been introduced to faith and are now called to _____ in it.

5. Faith is the product of _____. God does not give it in prayer.

B. Answer these questions from Romans 4:16-25. Use verses where the answer comes from.

6. Abraham was not weak in what? _____

7. Abraham was fully persuaded that God was able to do what? _____
_____

8. Righteousness was attributed to Abraham; to whom else was this written besides Abraham? _____
_____

C. Read the question carefully and respond in 2-3 sentences with a clear and concise answer. Your response should directly address the question and provide relevant details from the text.

9. According to Hebrews 11:1, how is faith defined, and what does this definition reveal about the nature of faith?

10. Why does Paul use Abraham as the ultimate example of faith, and what lessons can believers learn from Abraham's faith?

Chapter Eighteen

Why Christians Rejoice

Romans 5:1-11

"*But He was wounded for our transgressions,*
He was bruised for our iniquities;
the chastisement for our peace was upon Him,
and by His stripes we are healed." Isaiah 53:5

The "therefore" of Romans 5:1 indicates the idea of summing up precisely what the Apostle Paul does in the first eleven verses. The conclusion of his argument through Chapter 4 is, "We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." This chapter marks a turning point in Paul's letter to the Romans. Most writers agree that Paul's discourse on justification by faith is now argued before his readers. Some feel this is the reason for a change from the argumentative to the confessional style of writing that will appear more strongly through Chapter 8. As we study through Chapter 5, notice the references to divine righteousness, peace with God, joyful hope, assurance of final salvation, and salvation from wrath. Just as Romans 5:1-11 and Isaiah 53:5 fit together beautifully, revealing the depth of Christ's sacrifice and its impact on our salvation, more passages represent the result of justification by faith in Christ Jesus.

Paul concluded Chapter 4 with the life of faith with Abraham as his illustration. Abraham's faith resulted in Isaac, "the sound of laughter." The result is accurate for us; a life of faith is a life of joy. Paul lists four reasons in these eleven verses.

I. Our Present Position (vv. 1-2)

The Christian life of faith is built on fact. Our hearts and heads must come together. So, Paul first points out our spiritual position.

FACT	—	FAITH	—	FEELING

It starts with the head (fact). We are to know:

> Romans 6:3, 6, 9, 16, Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? . . . 6Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. . . . 9Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. . . . 16Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?

We are "justified by faith." This term is a legal term of right standing. The "therefore" of 5:1 refers us back to 4:24-25. There, we learned that Christ is the only source of salvation. Since Christ died and rose from the grave, He became the finished work of salvation and a sure one. We are so sure that we can count on this to be complete as far as our standing with God is concerned.

We are at "peace with God." This peace speaks of our acceptance by the Lord. It is a sin that breeds the quarrel between God and us, creating both a strangeness and an enmity. The Holy righteous God cannot, in honor, be at peace with a sinner while the sinner continues in his sin. Jesus makes a way for the sinner to have peace.

Peace means that the war is over, the arms of rebellion have been laid down, and God's terms of amnesty have been accepted. These characteristics include a person no longer striving to earn salvation and no longer struggling in rebellion and self-will. He is justified. He has something the world cannot give or take away—peace with God. As with justification, it is "by faith."

The old preachers used to ask, "Have you made your peace with God?" That is still a good question.

There exists a kind of peace that is not rooted in faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. It may come from circumstances, personal achievements, or temporary satisfaction, but it lacks the lasting, transformative power that only Christ's peace provides.

- The peace of ignorance. Some men know nothing of the law of God; they do not know anything of the nature of God; they have never been roused to spiritual awareness. Their hopes are of the vaguest kind; they hope that somehow, we will all get back to God in the end, whether we have faith or not.

- The peace of the Pharisees. He lived and died in the conviction of his self-righteousness. He thanked God that he was not like other men. He is going to Heaven, delighted with himself, or perhaps, just trusting a little to Christ to make up the balance he may think is against him.

Therefore, we should ask, "Do you have peace?" and "Upon what is that peace resting?"

The great question that every man must ask is, "How can I be at peace with God?" The answer Paul is quick to provide is only "through our Lord Jesus Christ." (Paul told the Ephesians, "For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us"). There is more to this peace than a cessation of hostilities. There is friendship and fellowship in Jesus Christ. God is either man's worst enemy or man's best friend. Abraham was justified by faith and was then called the friend of God.

James 2:23: And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God,

and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God.

Now, therefore, "we have access." The word rendered "access" (Greek: *prosagoge*) occurs but two other times in the New Testament—Ephesians 2:18 and 3:12. If acceptance brings peace, then access brings position. "Access" means "to bring in, to make an introduction." In other words, we could not get ourselves into God but were led in like the blind, the lame, or the weak. In Romans 5:2, the thought is that our acceptance of God and enjoyment of His grace are because we have been justified.

Paul received this access in his conversion. Barnabas introduced him to the apostles (Acts 9:27), and others led him by the hand into Damascus (Acts 9:8), but Christ introduced him by the hand into grace.

This was not only for the Jews. At Christ's death, the veil that separated the Jews from the Holy of Holies in the Temple was torn (Luke 23:5). Jesus also broke the wall of separation with the Gentiles.

> Ephesians 2:18, For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.

> Hebrews 10:19-27, 19Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, 20By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; 21And having an high priest over the house of God; 22Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. 23Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;) 24And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: 25Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching. 26For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, 27But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.

Now, we can come boldly to His throne!

> Hebrews 4:16, Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

Now, in "grace... we stand." This word "stand" implies at least five ideas:

- Our Sinlessness—we stand at judgment in the court, but now we stand in grace.

- Our Stirring—to stand implies readiness to move forward because we are not lying down. The Jews ate the first Passover, standing to demonstrate they were ready to move out.

- Our Service—a servant attending to the needs of his master stands by his side; we must be at the beck and call of our Master.

- Our Steadfastness—the ability to stand suggests a soldier who is planted in his position and willing to fight to the death rather than retreat.

- Our Security—To stand in grace means we are surrounded by grace; If we fall, we fall into grace.

Each of these is a reason to rejoice, but all of these are ours!

II. Our Promised Prospects (v. 2)

Besides understanding our position, there is joy in hope.

Predicting the future is big business today. Economists have predicted twenty-five of the last three recessions.

Yet so many conflicting opinions produce anxiety. Paul believes we can be delivered from this apprehension. He has stated that man is constantly coming short of God's glory. Now, we "hope of the glory of God." This is the glory that God will give to the saints in Heaven.

We can look forward with great anticipation to God's eternal purpose.

In this world, "hope" is illusory. The sick hope nothing is wrong, or if so, that it is not severe, or if so, that something can be done, and finally—they say—that if there is life, there is hope. But if we live alone in this life, we have hope, and we, of all men, are most miserable.

Our hope extends beyond this life and the grave!

III. Our Personal Problems (vv. 3-5)

Many believers' faith is like a hammock—secure in the past and the future but sagging in the present.

Paul now comes to the most challenging aspect: "We glory (same word as 'rejoice,' Greek: *kauchaomai*]; in verse 2) in (not despite or because but through) tribulations." The faith of the Christian is for all of the Christian's life. Jesus taught us that we will have tribulations, but we should be of good cheer because He has overcome the world (John 16:33). James told us to count it all joy (1:2).

Why should we gladly accept tribulation? There is a melting process, a mellowing process, a molding process, and a maturing process. These processes testify that God loves us enough to work to make us more valuable to Him constantly.

This was no mere theory with Paul, for he "knew" (v. 3) much about tribulation and its ability, when accepted in the right spirit, to develop Christian character in the believer. Paul wrote the Corinthians (II Corinthians 4:8-10):

> 8We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; 9Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; 10Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body."

"Tribulation" means pressure, and we live in a pressure-cooker world. The Latin root of the word was a timber with spikes through it that dragged across the grain. As the grain was dragged, it separated the grain from the chaff. Paul sees an adequately understood chain of events that leads to thanksgiving. The tribulation proves us and, by so doing, improves us.

"Tribulation worketh patience." Patience means "to abide under" and "to become stronger." It is like a man in a diving suit. The greater the pressure as he descends into the ocean's depths, the greater the pressure in the suit to protect him. It is like developing an immunity to infection by being injected with the antibodies.

The Korean Christians said when the Communists tried to stamp them out, "We are like nails; the harder you hit us, the deeper you drive us." The early church in the book of Acts went everywhere preaching the gospel (gossiping the gospel) when persecution came upon them (Acts).

"Patience, experience." Experience is the idea of successfully completing a trial. It is what David meant about not using Saul's armor or Paul referring to Timothy in Philippians 2:22 ("But ye know the proof of him, that, as a son with the father, he hath served with me in the gospel"). The term was used for refining metal, thereby making it more valuable.

"Experience, hope." The result of experience is confidence. By his life, such a Christian demonstrates that God's power is genuine. Those who succeed look more confident in the future.

This is the confidence that makes us "not ashamed." It is confidence that will not disappoint or deceive. In other words, it is confidence that will be fulfilled.

Where does this come from? The Holy Spirit (v. 5, "because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us"). God wants us to handle the pressure and know greater depths and higher heights.

Speaking of the Holy Spirit, Paul sidetracks for a moment to rejoice (vv. 6-10)—the Holy Spirit is not his theme until Chapter 8.

IV. Our Powerful Protector (v. 11)

There is a sense in which Paul has saved the best kind of rejoicing for the last. God has done so much that we no longer fear Him, but He has become our joy!

It is more than just the favors God gives us. He not only takes us to Heaven, but we enter triumphantly. We sail safely into the harbor and come in at full sail. He is not only our salvation but also our strength and our song.

The sinner is opposed to God—he finds no joy there. He fears and hates God. He has judged God as unqualified to run his life.

But we rejoice in this God. Not in what He does, but in Who He is! We rejoice in His existence, attributes, justice, holiness, mercy, truth, and love. We rejoice that God is as He is and that the universe is under His control.

One characteristic of true faith is that we rejoice in God as He is. We find pleasure in His nature and joy in His revelation of Himself. You can know a man's nature because when he is alone, he talks to God; when he is with others, he speaks of God.

Chapter Eighteen
Why Christians Rejoice
Romans 5:1-11

Lesson in Review

A. Complete the following sentences using the correct words from the reading, notes, and class lecture.

1. A life of faith is a life of _____.
2. The Christian life of faith is built on _____.
3. Being at "peace with God" speaks of our _____ by the Lord.
4. "How can I be at peace with God?" Paul quickly answers that it is only "through our _____ _____ _____."
5. To stand in grace means we are _____by grace. If we fall, we fall into grace.
6. Our hope extends beyond this _____ and the grave!
7. Tribulation, when accepted in the right spirit, develops Christian _____ in the believer.
8. Tribulation means _____.
9. There is a _____ that makes us "not ashamed," a confidence that will not disappoint or deceive.

B. Answer these questions from Romans 5:1-11. Use verses where the answer comes from.

10. Since we are justified by faith, we now have peace with whom and through whom?

11. For whom did Christ die?

C. Read the question carefully and respond in 2-3 sentences with a clear and concise answer. Your response should directly address the question and provide relevant details from the text.

12. According to Paul, why should believers rejoice in tribulations, and how do trials contribute to Christian growth?

13. How does the process described by Paul—tribulation leading to patience, experience, and hope—help believers develop confidence in their faith?

Chapter Nineteen

So Much More

Romans 5:6-11

"*For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son,*
that whoever believes in Him should not perish
but have everlasting life." John 3:16

In Romans 5:6-11, Paul expounds on God's love demonstrated through Christ's sacrifice, echoing the profound truth of John 3:16—that eternal life is granted to all who believe in Him. For the first time in this letter, Paul mentioned the Holy Spirit (v. 5). Any reference to the Holy Spirit was avoided while discussing man's sinfulness and failure. But once Paul talks of man's confidence because of his trials, he must mention the Spirit. But it is not Paul's topic until almost Chapter 8. However, now that Paul has spoken of the Holy Spirit, he sidetracks to talk of how God prepares man to receive it.

This portion of Romans explains what God offers man in the gospel and explains salvation. To adequately understand salvation, we must understand what a person is saved from. When God saves us, it is from so much more than just escaping from hell. Salvation is also freedom from continuing to sin and from the reasons why we sin. In this lesson, some may catch up to the grace of God.

Let us look at what leads up to our release from eternal judgment.

Understand that these three things are interrelated. You cannot pick and choose from these. Salvation will encompass all of this. Salvation only deals with our actions and the reason for our actions. Salvation does not deal with symptoms but with disease.

Therefore, salvation must first deal with where sin is taking me, to hell. But it is not enough to be delivered from the prospect of hell. I must also do something about the actions of sin in my life. Therefore, salvation is victory over the action of sin. But where does that desire to sin come from? That is the nature of sin, and salvation includes the power to subdue that nature. Those are our three points in this text, and we'll examine them.

This is an integral part of the Christian persuasion and promise. It is not enough to believe that God cleanses us from our sins. What prospect would there be for the Christian to be cleansed but still lack the power to overcome the temptation to sin again? And what kind of God would it be who would cleanse us from sin, promise us heaven, and then send us back into the world to sin all over? Salvation is more than cleansing—so much more! God deals with the fruit of what we have done—sins—and the root of why we have done them.

And notice it was done at the right time, "in due time" (v. 6). This is parallel to Paul's words to the Galatians (4:4-5), "But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." Being on time is always how God works—never late or early. His timing may mean:

- It was a fit time (or proper time). Men had tried many things and were finally ready to hear the gospel. It was time for a better way.
- It was a fixed time. A time appointed by God for the Messiah.
- It was a favorable time. The world situation was right for spreading the gospel—the Roman roads, the Greek language, and the training of the Jewish mind added up to a fertile field for the gospel seed.

I. The Power of Sin (v. 10)

First, I am all wrong; this is where sin starts. Paul lists four reasons:

A. We are Weak, "we were yet without strength" (v. 6). The phrase "without strength" is usually used for the sick and diseased. It can be applied to feebleness or inability to undertake for oneself. Paul is not talking here about physical strength or self-control. He speaks of moral and spiritual strength. The Bible says that man cannot fulfill his God-given potential because of his weakness toward sin.

This weakness goes back to Genesis. The Scripture recounts that when God made man, He breathed the breath of life into man, and man became a living soul. What enabled man to operate was the Spirit of God within him. God told man that for this to continue, man would have to live in faith and obedience. Man went into disobedience and thereby forfeited that power. God told man that when he disobeyed, he would die, and he did—not physically or intellectually, emotionally, or morally, but spiritually. So, man became, as Paul says now, without spiritual strength. Man has since been reproducing men who are as incapable as he was.

Some people do not like preaching. They do not want the implication that humans are born lacking something. This attitude explains what is wrong with the world and society- everyone is like us.

I do not mean by this that we are all born with sin, but with a sinful nature. Therefore, when the opportunity to sin presents itself, we become sinners because we cannot resist it. I do not mean that we sin every time we have the chance, but it only takes one sin to make us a sinner.

This should alter our attitude toward others. Rather than being so quick to criticize and condemn, we should be understanding. They are just as they were born. What is needed is not criticism but instruction. We need to get to them and explain why they are

as they are and how they can be changed.

B. We are Worldly, "the ungodly" (v. 6). This characteristic follows logically from the first. Genesis says man was made in God's image. This means that we are made in the likeness of God, but if we lose that likeness, as happened in the Fall, we become unlike God, un-God-like or ungodly, according to Paul's word.

How does man respond? "But I'm only human." Of course, we are only human, but our standards for human conduct are so unbelievably low that we excuse anything, while God's standards are incredibly high. God expects that something in the image of God should be present in every man. Therefore, in every way we fail to reflect God, we demonstrate how we are unlike God.

C. We are Wicked, "we were yet sinners" (v. 8). We are so unlike God that Paul now tells us we are sinners. People find this term offensive, so we are wise to define it. Otherwise, they will explain that they are all right.

A sinner is someone who has fallen short of the target. To sin means "to miss the mark." We might be aimed in the right direction, even have the proper target as our goal, but unless we score a perfect bullseye every time, we have sinned. A sinner is a person who has fallen short of God's very high standard, which is to be like Him. Someone pressed by this explanation will have to admit that he is not perfect, and the degree to which he is not perfect is the degree to which he has missed the mark. With this explanation, people do not become upset. They become more receptive to the gospel.

This is the opposite of the humanist philosophy, which teaches that man is getting better and better and will one day reach perfection. A man once described humanism as "human intelligence gone mad." Those who hold humanism as truth try to make a man out of the Creator and a creator out of man. Their faith is in man alone. Yet, the Bible says that man is not only not improving; he is getting worse. This is reflected in our society.

D. We are Warriors, "we were enemies" (v. 10). Paul brings us to a different degree—we are at war with God. Some are passive warriors; others are active. This argument is stupid. If you choose a fight, you should pick one more to your advantage than with God. Yet, that is precisely what man has done. Why? We do not know any better.

The root of man's trouble with God is his lack of trust in God. We fear what God will expect of us if we turn to Him. Yet, He repeatedly tells us that His burden is easy, His load is light, and His laws are good.

A short study of God's law in the Old Testament reveals that each one is in our interest if we do it. You obey God's law of hygiene, diet, or morality, and will discover that you live better and longer by practicing them. I am not trying to reinstate the Old Testament Law; it is not a matter of command but of common sense. Doctors who have studied the effects of different foods on man are returning to the book of Leviticus. Yet

the Jews fought God over them when it was in their own best interest. The principle is that God's laws are always for our benefit.

II. The Practice of Sin (v. 9)

This subject naturally leads to the second aspect. If I am all wrong, then what I've done is wrong. What would we expect such a person to do? There are two things such a person can do:

A. Commit Sins of Commission. This is the action of sin itself—doing what God has told us not to do. The action of sin is a sin of commission.

B. Commit Sins of Omission. The sin of omission is the failure to do what we ought to, and far more of our sins are in this category than the others. Every time we fail to act or react in any situation as Christ would act or react, we have sinned by omission.

This failure is expected of someone who is "without strength." There is no reason to devalue your self-worth; rather, deal with the problem: your sinful nature.

The only person who is excited about salvation is the person who is concerned with what they have done wrong. People raised in the church often do not experience the joy of salvation because they usually do not know the depth of guilt that someone newly introduced to Christ experiences. They come to Christ often because of their surroundings and an awareness that they need to—and they have a legitimate experience with God, but they miss both the depth of conviction and the height of forgiveness. Jesus expressed this thought by saying that the one who has forgiven much loves much, implying that the one who does not know he is forgiven much does not love as much.

III. The Penalty of Sin (v. 9)

This subject leads naturally to our third point: if what I am doing is all wrong, then, of course, where I am headed is all wrong. How do we expect God to respond to a person who has been a rebel? Somehow, God will work it out, and everyone will be all right. This is the vague thinking that appears and is known as universalism—that somehow, every man will be saved.

Sadly, too many people in the pulpits are declaring a wishy-washy gospel. But people come to church expecting to hear an authoritative voice preach from an authoritative Book about what an authoritative God says. We must preach the truth boldly, plainly, and without compromise to them.

We must inform people that they are condemned already, their actions bring them under even greater condemnation, and they are destined to meet God on a day of judgment. Anyone who, in their heart, knows they are wrong will be interested in hearing our message. If we tell people they are fine now but try a little harder, we give them a

false sense of security and hope. What does God do?

> Romans 5:6-8, 6For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. 7For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. 8But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

God did what no one else would do. He saved us when we could not save ourselves. God found us in our miserable condition and commended His love toward us.

Paul now expresses God's love in contrast to man's love. We give medals and monuments to those who risk their lives for someone else—the soldier, police officer, firefighter, or stranger. Why? It is not like us; by giving them special honor, we lower the standard of human conduct for the rest of us.

But God takes the initiative by coming and dying for us, seeking and convicting us so He can forgive us, and finally, by filling us with His Spirit and empowering us to live a new life. This is why we can never get away from the love of God. It is at the heart of the gospel! We fail as preachers if we neglect to preach of Christ's death on the cross. Why? The cross is the greatest demonstration we can produce of the love of God.

The message is so much more. Paul says we are also "saved from wrath through him" (v. 9). That talks about where we are going. We are saved not only by Christ's death but also by His life. The gospel's message is that Christ died for our sins and our eternal destiny.

There is still so much more. "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life" (v. 10). We are not only saved by Christ's death but also by His life. Christ offers us His life through His Spirit.

> Colossians 1:27, To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

Now, we who are weak, worldly, wicked, and at war are given the power of the Spirit to become what we could not. If God's love reached us before, when we were in our sins, how much more now shall it be given to us since we are filled with His Spirit? Our union with Him guarantees continuing involvement and an ultimate arrival at glory.

This gives us the three tenses of salvation. The past tense deals with our sin, which is justification. The future tense deals with our eternity, which is intervention. The present tense deals with our humanity, which is our sanctification. It is a process; our friends can point out where we must continue.

We have emphasized Paul's phrase "much more," which occurs repeatedly in this great chapter. The work of Christ did more than restore what Adam lost. This fact is illustrated by the trespass offering required under the Mosaic law. It was mandatory that the trespasser not only restore the actual loss he had inflicted on his victim but also add a fifth to it through restitution. The injured party thus became a gainer. Christ's work at Calvary has brought infinite glory to God and significant gain to the believing sinner. It would have been possible for a man to have remained innocent in the Garden of Eden indefinitely and remain a son of Adam only. Because of Calvary, however, we become the sons of God and enjoy a relationship with God far closer than that enjoyed by Adam.

Hallelujah, God thought of everything!

Chapter Nineteen
So Much More
Romans 5:6-11

Lesson in Review

A. Complete the following sentences using the correct words from the reading, notes, and class lecture.

1. Salvation is dealing with our actions and the _____ for our actions.
2. The phrase "without strength" is usually used for the _____ and _____.
3. To sin means to miss the _____.
4. Those who hold humanism as truth try to make a _____ out of the Creator and a _____ out of man.
5. The root of man's trouble with God is that man doesn't _____ God.
6. The action of sin is a sin of _____.
7. Every time we fail to act or react, in any situation, as Christ would act or react, we have committed a sin of _____.
8. God found us in our miserable condition and commended His _____ toward us.
9. We are saved not only by Christ's death but also by His _____.

B. Answer these questions from Romans 5:6-11. Use verses where the answer comes from.

10. How did God commend His love toward us?

11. We were reconciled to God by His what and saved by His what?

C. Read the question carefully and respond in 2-3 sentences with a clear and concise answer. Your response should directly address the question and provide relevant details from the text.

12. How does Paul describe humanity's weakness towards sin, and what implications does this have for our understanding of human nature and the need for salvation?

12. In what ways does Paul contrast human standards of righteousness with God's expectations, and how does this contrast challenge believers to reflect God's image in their lives?

Chapter Twenty

Who Reigns in Your Life?

Romans 5:12-21

"*For since by man came death, by man also came*
the resurrection of the dead.
For as in Adam all die, even so in
Christ shall all be made alive." I Corinthians 15:21-22

In the final section of Romans 5, Paul weaves together two great themes he has been developing: The condemnation of all because of sin and the justification offered through Christ. Paul accomplishes this by highlighting the cosmic struggle between sin, death, grace, and the redeemed life (vv. 17 & 21). Paul refers to believers reigning in life through Jesus Christ (v. 17). Just as 1 Corinthians 15:21-22 declares that death entered through Adam, so does life and resurrection come through Christ. That is a remarkable fact—that I, by... Jesus Christ can reign in this life. How does all that happen?

It is through the overwhelming grace of God, which not only rescues but also elevates those, allowing those once bound by sin to live victoriously in righteousness. He begins by highlighting Adam's sin and its dire consequences.

I. The Reign of Sin (v. 21)

Paul takes a three-step approach to helping us understand the control sin exerts today: "sin entered" (v. 12), "sin abounded" (v. 20), and "sin hath reigned" (v. 21).

A. Sin Entered. "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so, death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned" (v. 12). There is a subtle transition at this point in Romans. Paul wrote of "sins," which are our actions. Now, he writes of "sin" (a different Greek word, *Hamartia*), which is the nature of sin. Think of it this way: Sin is character; sins are conduct.

Or sin is the fountain; sins are the overflow. Or sin is the root; sins are the fruit. God came to deal with our nature, which, as a byproduct, addresses our sins.

How did sin come into the world? Some say that if God created all things and sin is in the world, then God created sin. Their destination is: If God created it, why is He so upset about it? The answer is that God created man with free will, and man chose to sin; thereby, sin entered the world: "by one man sin entered the world" (v. 12). Why did God give man free will, knowing he would sin? God created man entirely, which means he can choose for himself. What kind of creation would it have been if man were simply a puppet on God's string? His praise and obedience would mean nothing. So, God created man with the freedom to follow Him or himself, which is always the choice of sin.

Remember, Adam was created in the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1:26-27). However, when Adam's family began to arrive after the Fall, we are expressly told that "Adam... begat a son in his own likeness" (Genesis 5:3). Adam's descendants do not bear the image and likeness of God but the image and likeness of fallen Adam. Therefore, God did not create sin; man produced it. Sin came from man's disobedience (v. 19) and is a form of defense (v. 17) against God.

What happened? When Albert Einstein published his theory of relativity ($E=MC^2$), only about a dozen men understood it. Forty years later, the number is in the millions because of Hiroshima. When a man introduces something new into the human experience, humanity lives by its consequences. Adam introduced sin—the nature of rebellion—and we live by its consequences. One man's actions can and will affect others—Adam's actions affect us all.

Man's attempt to discredit Adam's story has dire consequences. If a man can disprove that we all came from Adam, he thereby annuls the argument that sin entered the world by one man. So what? If sin did not enter through one man, then salvation could not have entered through one man—Jesus Christ. Therefore, the belief in the creation account of Genesis is not just a matter of faith in Scripture but the basis for believing that man can be saved.

B. Sin Excelled. Sin increased in scope, depth, and influence. "Moreover the law entered, that the offense might abound. But where *sin abounded*, grace did much more abound" (v. 20). We have never met a man who has not sinned. No one is exempt ("all have sinned" v. 12). It is not man's environment that makes him a sinner; it is his inherited nature. Throughout history and in the present, sin has taken many forms, manifesting in numerous ways. Sin grew in number, manner, and wickedness. Look at our world, and you see the extent of sin.

> II Timothy 3:13, But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived.

What does Paul mean by the "law" helping it abound (v. 20)? The Law made men aware of sin in more detail, and some, in blatant rebellion, set out to break it.

C. Sin Enslaved. "That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so, might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord" (v. 21). Paul's selection of the powerful word "reigned" is to show the control in exercises. Sin's power in our world today is so strong that people do not even realize they are subjected to it.

Sins' laws are the lust of man's own heart. One of the saddest things about sin is that we can say all its subjects are voluntary. They are willing captives. Sin does not hold them with a grip against their wish. Sin's reign is cruel, for sin reigns "unto death."

> Romans 6:16, Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his

servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?

II. The Reign of Separation (v. 17)

Paul uses the same progression of thought to write about death. Death is used in three ways in Scripture: physical death, spiritual death, and eternal death, and all three meanings may be used simultaneously. The second and third death speak of separation from God.

A. Death Came. "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so, death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned" (v. 12). When sin entered the world, death came with it. God made it plain to Adam that disobedience spells death.

> Genesis 2:17, But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.

What has been called a new religion by some is as old as Eden because Satan said they would be like God and not die. Despite Eve eating first, Paul blames Adam because he was not deceived.

> I Timothy 2:14, And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression.

On that day, Adam and Eve spiritually died, as demonstrated when they hid from God.

> Genesis 3:8, And they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden.

Men today are still separated from God.

> Ephesians 4:17-19, 17This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, 18Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: 19Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.

B. Death Covered. Death spread across humanity through one man's sin. "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so, death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned" (v. 12). Graveyards testify to the spread of death. It is said that the only certainty in life is death, reinforcing the truth that sin's consequence is universal, affecting every generation.

C. Death Claimed. "For if by one man's offense *death reigned* by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ" (v. 17). This speaks of death's authority. No one can stop death. Look at the funeral homes and graveyards. Death can say what no monarch can say, "I reign overall." The wealthy are not able to bribe death. Those who live the longest lives must succumb to it at last.

III. The Reign of Salvation (v. 21)

"That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might *grace reign* through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord" (v. 21). Paul's topic gets encouraging. Grace is the goodness of God. Now it reigns, but where? Grace reigns amid sin and death!

Paul uses the teaching tools of contrast and comparison—grace to sin and death, as sin entered by one man—Adam—so grace entered by one man—Jesus Christ. While Adam represents humanity in its ruined state, Jesus represents humanity in its redeemed state.

In Adam, all men are sinners; in Christ, they are all saints. In Adam's family, death reigns; in Christ's family, deliverance reigns. In the case of Adam, God emphasizes his offense; in the case of Jesus, the emphasis is on His obedience. Paul gave them to us, so we chose which one we wanted to follow. If we like sin, suffering, wickedness, and death, we do not have to do anything but go on as we are. However, if we want something better—grace, mercy, and life- then we choose Jesus.

Alexander Fleming, who discovered penicillin, lived during the same era as Albert Einstein. His groundbreaking discovery has brought healing to countless lives, transforming medicine for the better. Just as Adam's sin led humanity into death, Christ's sacrifice offers restoration and eternal life, reversing the brokenness brought by sin.

A. Grace's Magnitude. "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous" (v. 19). There is enough grace from God to meet the needs of every human being.

"Moreover the law entered, that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, *grace did much more abound*" (v. 20). The word "abound" is the Greek word *Huper,* meaning "to superabound." We have all heard of or seen a hyperactive child; they have an abundance of energy, which can be extreme. Paul later uses it again to describe the Christian as someone who is "more than a conqueror" (8:37).

If a basketball team wins on the buzzer by a miracle throw, they are conquerors, but if they win 250 to 2, they are more than conquerors. This reflects David, who defeated Goliath yet still had four stones remaining, symbolizing abundant provision beyond immediate need. In the same way, grace is never scarce; there is always more than enough to meet the world's deepest struggles. Paul's life stands as a testament to this truth,

showing how God's grace sustains, restores, and empowers beyond what we expect.

> I Corinthians 15:8-10, 8Last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time. 9For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. 10But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.

Paul, because he persecuted the church, first describes himself as "one born out of due season, crimson" or an abortion—that is, low self-esteem. But then he describes himself as an "apostle"—that is, a person with high self-esteem. Is Paul schizophrenic? No! He is a product of grace!! So, Paul testifies to Timothy:

> II Timothy 1:12-14, 12And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; 13Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. 14And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.

Some people look at this world and see all its wickedness, but a hyper-grace is also available in it. If the world turns to Him, God can clean it up. The provision of grace is as broad as the problem of sin. Jesus has not only lifted us and loved us, but He has also freed us from our sins and does so freely, entirely, and forever, without money or price.

B. Grace's Mission. "That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord" (v. 21). This grace is not only adequate for all. It needs to be shared with everyone. We must take it to the world!

IV. The Reign of the Saint (v. 17)

"For if by one man's offense death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ" (v. 17). There are many ways to describe the Christian life, but few are more exciting than the words of a Christian reigning in life. How does a believer begin to reign in life? There are two things required.

A. Our Position—Righteousness. Righteousness is right standing. How do we become capable of rightly standing before God? By having Christ in us. But, while righteousness deals with our position, grace deals with our condition. Grace is the gifts of God that equip us to fulfill our new position.

B. Our Power—Christ. We reign by one—Jesus Christ. What does that mean? It means we now live by the power of the Holy Ghost within us. Just as we live by eating, drinking, and breathing, we live the Christian life by Jesus. He must become our

strength for life itself.

Paul is talking about our quality of life. Jesus said, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (John 10:10).

The story of Adonibezek is recorded in Judges 1:1-7:

> Now after the death of Joshua it came to pass, that the children of Israel asked the LORD, saying, Who shall go up for us against the Canaanites first, to fight against them? And the LORD said, Judah shall go up: behold, I have delivered the land into his hand. And Judah said unto Simeon his brother, Come up with me into my lot, that we may fight against the Canaanites; and I likewise will go with thee into thy lot. So Simeon went with him. And Judah went up; and the LORD delivered the Canaanites and the Perizzites into their hand: and they slew of them in Bezek ten thousand men. And they found Adonibezek in Bezek: and they fought against him, and they slew the Canaanites and the Perizzites. But Adonibezek fled; and they pursued after him, and caught him, and cut off his thumbs and his great toes. And Adonibezek said, Threescore and ten kings, having their thumbs and their great toes cut off, gathered their meat under my table: as I have done, so God hath requited me. And they brought him to Jerusalem, and there he died.

The tribe of Judah was sent to confront the Canaanites, defeating ten thousand men before capturing Adonibezek. In judgment, they cut off his thumbs and big toes, mirroring his actions against the seventy kings he had conquered. This punishment rendered him incapable of wielding a weapon or marching into battle. This stripped him of his ability to fight. Just as Adonibezek was weakened, we must guard against anything that diminishes our strength and readiness for battle. We must not allow this to happen to us!

Chapter Twenty
Who Reigns in Your Life?
Romans 5:12-21

Lesson in Review

A. Write 750 words on "Walking in the Spirit" that must include your testimony on learning to submit to God and walk in the power of the Spirit. Grammar check: Spelling, punctuation, and capitalization. Date due:

B. Complete the following sentences using the correct words from the reading, notes, and class lecture.

1. Paul's use of the word "sins" means our _____, and the word "sin" means our _____.
2. God created man with _____ will, and man chose to _____; thereby, sin _____ the world.
3. The belief in the _____ account of Genesis is not just a matter of faith in Scripture, but the basis for believing man can be _____.
4. Paul's selection of the powerful word "reigned" shows the _____ in exercises.
5. When sin entered the world, _____ came with it.
6. Adam is the representative of _____ humanity, and Jesus is the representative of _____ humanity.
7. "Where sin abounded, _____ did much more abound" (Romans 5:20).
8. The _____ of grace is as broad as the _____ of sin.
9. There are many ways to describe the Christian life. There are few more exciting than the words of a Christian _____ in life.
10. Righteousness deals with our _____, and grace deals with our _____.

C. Answer these questions from Romans 5:12-21. Use verses where the answer comes from.

11. How did sin enter the world?

12. Many are made righteous by the obedience of how many?

13. Where sin abounded, grace did what?

D. Read the question carefully and respond in 2-3 sentences with a clear and concise answer. Your response should directly address the question and provide relevant details from the text.

14. According to Romans 5:20, how does Paul describe the abundance of God's grace in relation to sin, and what does this reveal about God's willingness to forgive?

15. How does Paul use his own life as an example of the transformative power of grace, and what lesson can believers learn from his testimony?

Chapter Twenty-One

You—New and Improved

Romans 6:1-13

"*I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer*
I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which
I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God,
who loved me and gave Himself for me." Galatians 2:20

Romans 6:1-13 and Galatians 2:20 reveal the transformative power of faith in Christ. This illustrates how believers undergo a profound spiritual journey from apostasy to a state of assurance. Paul outlines this progression, showing that while man falls into sin and separation from God, grace leads to acquittal through Christ's sacrifice. This acquittal is followed by acceptance into God's family, where believers no longer live for themselves, but Christ lives within them. This new reality brings assurance, as faith now governs life by shaping human actions and purpose. The challenge is understanding how this truth is lived out daily by applying the reality of spiritual renewal in practical ways that reflect the transformed identity in Christ.

The repetitions of "know" in Romans 6:3, 6, 9, and 16 indicate that Paul wanted us to understand a fundamental doctrine. Christian living depends on Christian learning; duty is founded on doctrine. If Satan can keep a Christian ignorant, he can keep him impotent. Many people live by their feelings rather than the facts of what the Bible teaches. Our faith is the result of knowing the facts.

Romans 10:17, Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

Paul has just emphasized the scriptural truth about Adam and Christ. This chapter challenges the believer to recognize and live in this unique new relationship, which Paul describes as being dead "yet" alive. So, what is the Christian's relationship to sin and the Savior?

I. Independence from Sin

Paul concludes Romans 5, writing that where sin abounds, grace does much more abound (v. 20). Based on that, some say, "Let's sin so others can see God's great grace." The German theologian, pastor, anti-Nazi dissident, and World War II martyr Dietrich Bonhoeffer played a significant role in resisting Hitler's regime. He is best known for his book *The Cost of Discipleship*, in which he contrasts "cheap grace" with "costly grace."

Bonhoeffer's argument is a repeat of what Paul dealt with in 3:7 ("For if the truth of God hath more abounded through my lie unto his glory; why yet am I also judged as a sinner?"). Men claimed that our sins demonstrated God's grace, so God should be happy

about our sins. Paul abruptly yells, "God forbid!" In other words, God is not the originator of this thought. Why? Now Paul drops a bomb—we died to sin. Paul's point? The Christian is no longer under the influence of sin because he died from sin.

How did we die to sin? The phrase occurs thrice (vv. 2, 10-11), once about Christ. The rule of interpretation is that the meaning of a word must be consistent within a context. So, some say this means we are dead to sin, but to be dead to it, we must first be alive to it, and Jesus was never alive to sin. Moreover, our personal experience testifies that sin is still alive, as we continue to fight against it. Besides, Paul writes that we are not to yield to it (v. 13), so sin itself must still be alive. If we claim that we are dead to sin, then people will either think we are liars, doubt their conversion, or question the Bible.

Our "old man is crucified... the body of sin might be destroyed... we should not serve sin" (v. 6). What does Paul mean? The old man—the desire to sin—is put to death at the altar. This expression is common in the New Testament.

> Galatians 2:19, For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God.
>
> Colossians 3:3, For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.
>
> I Peter 2:24, Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.

As a result, a righteous man is no longer bound by his old nature and habits. Then notice that we are "freed from sin" (v. 7). This means we have a new life by the power of God that frees us from the power of sin. Sin is not impossible, but it is incompatible with this new life.

II. Identification with the Savior

Paul explains the believer's death to sin by reminding him of the historical facts of Christ's earthly experience, namely, His death, burial, and resurrection. But he begins with the fact that salvation is "baptized into Jesus" (v. 3). In Scripture, there is water baptism and Spirit baptism. Here, Paul is speaking of Spirit baptism, which identifies us with the sacrifice at Calvary. The idea is an immersion into the total concept that Jesus came to provide.

Kenneth S. Wuest, a New Testament Greek scholar and former faculty member at Moody Bible Institute, has a helpful comment on this:

> The word 'baptized' is not the translation of the Greek word here, but its transliteration, its spelling in English letters. The word is used in the classics of a smith who dips a piece of hot iron in water, tempering it; also of Greek soldiers placing the points of their swords, and barbarians, the points of the

> spears, in a bowl of blood. . . . The usage of the word as seen in the above examples resolves itself into the following definition of the word *baptizo*, 'the introduction or placing of a person or thing into a new environment or into union with someone else so as to alter its condition or its relationship to its previous environment or condition.' And that is its usage in Romans 6. It refers to the act of God introducing a believing sinner into vital union with Jesus Christ, in order that the believer might have the power of his sinful nature broken and the divine nature implanted through his identification with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection; thus altering the condition and relationship of that sinner with regard to his previous state and environment, bringing him into a new environment, the kingdom of God.

Whenever the Bible speaks of Christ dwelling in the believer, it references the Spirit baptism.

> Romans 8:9, But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.

> Ephesians 3:16-17, 16That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; 17That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love.

Moreover, we know God is really in us by grace because of the gift of the Spirit.

> I John 3:24, And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.

> I John 4:13, Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit.

A Christian is not simply someone forgiven; by baptism, he has entered a vital, personal union with Jesus!

Paul's second illustration of our union with Christ is his phrase "we have been planted together in the likeness of his death" (v. 5). The word "planted" here is literally "united together." It could be used for Siamese twins. The word exactly expresses the process by which a graft comes united with the life of a tree. So, we become "grafted into" Christ. We become vitally united to Him. We share His very life.

III. Implications of Our Standing

Now, Paul breaks down what Spirit baptism includes. We are "buried with him" in

water baptism and "raised up from the dead" in emerging from the water, thereby walking in the newness of life. Having established our identification, Paul proceeds to show the significance of our new position.

In the same way, Christ did not stay dead but was resurrected. We are raised, too. Paul uses the fact that death has no more dominion over Christ as the basis for his argument that sin has no more dominion over us (vv. 9-11). Now, we concentrate on what we have and who we are in Christ and, accordingly, live new lives.

> Galatians 2:20, I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

Paul, who was never less than practical even when at his most theological, outlined three specific results of this divine transaction for us.

A. Free from the Past. "Our old man is crucified" (v. 6). Because Paul writes about "old nature" in other places, it is naturally assumed that the "old man" is that "old nature."

> Ephesians 4:22, That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts.
>
> Colossians 3:9, Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds.

But we are then confronted with the obvious that it may be dead, but it will not lie down. We should not assume that the "old man" is anything more than the "man of old" or the pre-regenerate person. John Stott was a British Anglican pastor, theologian, and author who wrote that the redeemed man's life is in two volumes. The first volume is locked and discarded when we are saved. Then life begins anew, in the sight of God, as in volume two. Therefore, when the "old man is crucified," we have freedom from our past.

B. Free from Power. "The body of sin might be destroyed" (v. 6). Destroyed does not mean annihilated but rendered inactive, made of no effect, put out of use. The power of sin that reigned over it is now broken. The believer is to regard his body as dead, as being an instrument through which sin can work.

Of course, the body does not feel dead to sin, but that is beside the point; God said it is. A sinner seeking salvation must learn that salvation does not depend upon feelings, but specific facts related to the work of Christ and the Word of God. These facts must be believed. Then, on the authority of God's Word, the saint can know his position in Christ no matter how he may feel.

C. Free to Progress. "We should not serve sin" (v. 6). Since we are no longer

at the mercy of sin, we can grow in Christ. This is demonstrated in the resurrection of Lazarus. Through the power of Christ, he came out of the grave but was still bound by grave clothes, so Jesus told others to release him. In the next chapter, Lazarus sits at the table with Jesus in fellowship.

Too many Christians are "betweeners": they live between Egypt and Canaan, saved but never satisfied, or they live between Good Friday and Easter, believing in the cross but not entering into the power and glory of the resurrection.

If I believe these facts, how do I make them real daily?

IV. Instructions to Subdue

A. Reckon. "Likewise *reckon* ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (v11). It is one thing "to know" (v. 9); it is something else "to reckon." The word "reckon" (Greek *logizomai*) means "to take an inventory." It is to believe that what God says in His Word is true in your life. When we receive the Spirit, we are freed from the power of sin. This is our position—now we must make it our practice. It is not a feeling but a fact, and it is a matter of faith, like endorsing a check.

B. Refuse. "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof" (v. 12). To let sin reign is to let sin rule. This means saying, "No!" The Puritans were a religious reform movement that emerged in England during the late 16th and 17th centuries. They sought to purify the Church of England from practices they believed were too similar to those of the Roman Catholic Church. Puritans used to say, "God does not take away our ability to sin; He gives us the power not to sin." Sin is incompatible with the new us.

C. Replace. "Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God" (v. 13). We are not to yield to sin but to yield to God. When it comes to having power over sin, the best defense is a good offense, and what better defense is there against sin than a godly lifestyle?

It is only as we give in to God that we have the victory. Think for a moment of a much-misquoted verse from the book of James, "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (4:7). Quoted this way, this verse is not true. The devil will not flee from us; he is not the least afraid of us; he is more than a match for us. What the verse says is this: "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." That is quite different. As we yield and submit to God, we swing wide the door for the outpouring of His power. Christ's Spirit is resident in every believer, but only as we submit to Him does He liberate us from the shackles of sin.

This is a very important principle. We are so made that we must give in when tempted, but notice this. We do not have to give in to the temptation. Instead, we can give

in to God, and in yielding, we know complete victory over all the power of sin.

When we die, it is over. We do not die in stages.

Write out your death certificate. Begin your new life. This happened when you were saved.

Chapter Twenty-One
You—New and Improved
Romans 6:1-13

Lesson in Review

A. Complete the following sentences using the correct words from the reading, notes, and class lecture.

1. Christian living depends on Christian _____; duty is founded on _____.
2. The Christian is no longer under the influence of sin because he _____ to sin.
3. The old man—the _____ to sin—is put to death at the altar.
4. It is not that sin is impossible, but it is _____ in this new life.
5. When Paul writes, "we have been planted together in the likeness of his death" (Romans 6:5), "planted" means literally "_____ _____."
6. When the "old man is crucified" we have freedom from our _____.
7. The believer is to regard his body as dead so far as being an _____ through which sin can work.
8. Freed from the power of sin is our position—now we must make it our _____ .
9. When it comes to having power over sin the best defense is a good _____.

B. Answer these questions from Romans 6:1-13. Use verses where the answer comes from.

10. Paul asks that if we are dead to sin, how shall we then what?

11. If we are baptized into Jesus Christ, we are baptized into His what?

12. Our old man is crucified with Jesus Christ so that the body of sin might be what, and we should not be what?

13. We should reckon ourselves to be what?

14. We should yield ourselves unto whom and our members as what?

C. Read the question carefully and respond in 2-3 sentences with a clear and concise answer. Your response should directly address the question and provide relevant details from the text.

15.How does Paul use the concept of baptism to illustrate the believer's new life in Christ, and what does this signify about their spiritual transformation?

16 What is the significance of Paul's statement that the "old man is crucified," and how does this understanding influence a believer's relationship with sin?

D. According to D. Bernard's *The Message of Romans (pp. 83-84)*, answer the following question(s).

17. How can a believer ensure that sin does not rule over them?

Chapter Twenty-Two

Whose Slave Are You?

Romans 6:14-23

"Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you,
Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin.
35And the servant abideth not in the house for ever:
but the Son abideth ever. 36If the Son therefore
shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." John 8:34-36,

Romans 6:14-23 presents a profound truth about freedom, while all people seek it, true liberty comes only through Christ. Paul does not ask whether we will serve, but rather who we will serve, either sin, leading to death, or God, leading to righteousness. He declares that believers are dead to sin, no longer under dominion (v. 14). This aligns with Jon 8:34-36, where Jesus states that sin enslaves, but He alone provides true, lasting freedom. From the beginning, God intended man to have dominion (Genesis 1:26), but Adam surrendered that sovereignty, enslaving humanity to sin. Through Jesus' sacrifice on the Cross, however, our dominion is restored, granting believers victory over sin and the ability to live in righteousness and grace. Since the Cross, the Lord Jesus has invaded the arena of human affairs, come to grips with our old enemy at the Cross, and restored our lost dominion—we now rule!

We need to get hold of this clear word of God, "Sin shall not have dominion over you." Sin, the old monarch, is now disposed of. There is one more step to the realization of this truth. We must go in God's way. "For ye are not under the law, but under grace" (v. 14). In other words, continuing victory for the emancipated believer depends not on his efforts but on the abundant supply of God's grace, sufficient for every need.

I. Our Past Condition (servants of sin, vv. 17, 20)

Before we become Christians, Paul reminds us again that we are "servants of sin." We were enslaved to sin involuntarily because we were born with a bent to sin, and we were enslaved to it voluntarily because we freely chose to submit to our sinful nature.

II. Our Power to Choose (v. 16)

The law demands total obedience, rewards total obedience, and punishes disobedience. Paul adds that since no one can obey it, the result is shame (v. 21). Now, the result of this shame is despair about our condition and disgust with ourselves. The conclusion? We quit trying to do right, and the power of sin grows. The good news is that that is the purpose of the law.

Romans 5:20, Moreover the law entered, that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.

Once we give up on ourselves, we embrace God's deliverance when we hear it. (Those who do not embrace have not come to grips with their spiritual condition.) God's deliverance is grace, forgiveness, favor, and fortification. Grace is an act of God's love that persuades men to submit to God. Love does what rules cannot. So, someone will rule. Jesus is the Lord of Lords.

I Timothy 6:15, Which in his times he shall shew, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords.

He is *the* Master. This means Jesus can rule over sin.

III. Our Present Confusion (vv. 14-15)

Some respond, "If there is no law, there are no rules. I am in grace, so I am free to do as I wish." The attitude of "Grace sets me free to do as I wish" shows that such a person is still in bondage to his sinful nature—sin. Grace is love, and to become the recipient of grace is to fall in love with the Giver. God's grace does not excuse our sins, but is the reason to obey God. Our submission to God's grace robs sin of its strength.

No one can expect victory who does not want victory. No one can expect victory who has a soft attitude toward sin. God expects sincerity as much today as He did when He said to rebellious Israel, "And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart" (Jeremiah 29:13). God is not going to bring us into the blessedness of this new liberty unless we want it. The attitude that grace gives us a license to sin makes deliverance from sin's power impossible. So long as that attitude is indulged, sin will remain the master, and we shall stay the slave.

Our desire should be to be as good a saint as we were a sinner. The scriptural comparisons introduced by the expression "as... even so" should always be noted. For example:

- The parallel drawn by the Lord Jesus in His conversation with Nicodemus: "*As* Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, *even so* must the Son of man be lifted up" (John 3:14).

- Or of the parallel He drew in His great Olivet Discourse, "*As* the days of Noe were, *so* shall also the coming of the Son of man be" (Matthew 24:37).

- "*As*" writes Paul, "ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanliness and to iniquity unto iniquity; *even so* now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness" (v. 19).

We used to sin by receiving a tempting thought, entertaining it, visualizing the sin,

yielding our bodies to it, and eventually developing a habit of sin. When we receive biblical teachings or spiritual promptings, we should be careful to entertain them, visualize God's will, yield ourselves to them, and develop godly habits.

Relate this to Paul's illustration of us as a slave. Servants in Paul's day were property owned by the master. A slave is seven days a week, 24 hours a day service.

What or whom do we serve? We serve that which we obey. If it is God, we are like the Old Testament bond slave (Exodus 21:1-6). That means we serve willfully and joyfully.

IV. Our Perpetual Consequences (vv. 21-23)

Paul wraps up his instruction by showing the contrast in benefits between serving sin and serving God.

Those under sin often excuse their lifestyle because of human nature. Their sinfulness made them slaves to "uncleanness" (v. 19)—immorality. This refers to the impurity of life in any form, to the degrading passions common among the heathen. This brought "iniquity unto iniquity" (v. 19)—their lawlessness produced further lawlessness. It implies that they had sinned to an excessive degree. Finally, there is freedom from "righteousness" (v. 20)—amoral, no standards, and no guilt. In their previous condition, they were not under the influence of righteousness but entirely devoted to sin. It proves they had no native goodness. What is the lesson?

A. It was an Unfruitful Service. "What fruit had ye then in those things" (v. 21)? Paul asks if we got anything from it. When we consider the result, what was there?

B. It was an Unbecoming Service. "Whereof ye are now ashamed" (v. 21)? Sin does not bear fruit, but acts of which we are now ashamed. We should be ashamed of the past folly, filth, and failure. Shame came into the world by sin, and it is still the product of it.

C. It was an Unappreciative Service. "For the end of those things is death" (v. 21). And "the wages of sin is death." Though the way may seem pleasant and inviting, the end is dismal; at the last, it bites. It won't be very pleasant in the end. This death is the wages of man's sinfulness; in other words, no man will receive it unfairly but has earned the judgment of death, eternal separation from God.

Then Paul informs them that what they become by responding to God in loving obedience (v. 19) is servants of righteousness. Righteousness here means giving to God and man their due. My response is aspirations of new fruit unto holiness (v. 22). Righteousness bears the fruit of holiness. The result? Everlasting life (vv. 22-23). How? Through Jesus Christ our Lord (v. 23). Christ purchased it, prepared it, prepared us for it, and preserved us for it.

The old master shamed us and paid us the wages of death. The new Master makes us holy and gives us life forevermore.

V. Our Personal Caveat

Two things we must be aware of in this area:

1. It is possible to be free yet live as if enslaved. It is possible to know we are free but live powerless. God gives both freedom and power.

2. It is possible to be enslaved but think we are free. We are enslaved until we change masters, not habits. What do we do? The path of change starts at the head (v. 16 "know"), travels to the heart (v. 17 "ye have obeyed from the heart"), and finally to your hands (v. 19 "yield your members to righteousness").

How do you change masters? Acts 2:36-38. Whose slave are you?

Chapter Twenty-Two
Whose Slave Are You?
Romans 6:14-23

Lesson in Review

A. Complete the following sentences using the correct words from the reading, notes, and class lecture.

1. Paul's question is not will we serve, but _____ is best to serve?
2. Victory for the emancipated believer depends not on his own _____ but on the abundant supply of God's _____.
3. God's deliverance is grace—_____, _____and _____.
4. The attitude of "Grace sets me free to do as I wish" shows that such a person is still in _____ to his sinful nature.
5. Our _____ to God's grace robs sin of its strength.
6. Our desire should be to be as good a saint as we were _____.
7. Sin does not bear fruit, but acts of which we are now _____.
8. Righteousness bears the fruit of _____.

B. Answer these questions from Romans 6:14-23. Use verses where the answer comes from.

9. To whom we yield yourselves, we are what?

10. When we are made free from sin, we become what?

11. Romans 6:23, "For the _____ of sin is death; but the _____ of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

C. Read the question carefully and respond in 2-3 sentences with a clear and concise answer. Your response should directly address the question and provide relevant details from the text.

12. According to Paul, what are the consequences of serving sin, and how does this contrast with serving God?

13. How does Paul describe the transformation process from being enslaved to sin to becoming servants of righteousness?

Test #3

Romans 3:27-6:23 (Assignments 15-22)

True or False:

_____ 1. Any attempt at salvation by works is doomed to failure.

_____ 2. Faith always includes obedience.

_____ 3. God justifies only the godly.

_____ 4. Forgiven means literally "sent away".

_____ 5. Work is the basis for forgiveness; therefore, forgiveness is available to everyone.

_____ 6. The cure for faltering faith is getting to know God better.

_____ 7. Faith is the product of experience.

_____ 8. Our hope extends to the end of this life only.

_____ 9. "We glory in tribulations" (Romans 5:3).

_____ 10. The two categories of sin are sins of commission and sins of omission.

_____ 11. God showed His love to us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

_____ 12. Paul's use of the word "sin" means our action.

_____ 13. "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound" (Romans 5:20).

_____ 14. Sin is not only impossible to the Christian; it is incompatible with his new life.

_____ 15. Our submission to God robs sin of its strength.

_____ 16. Our desire should be to be as good a saint as we were sinners.

_____ 17. Righteousness bears the fruit of holiness (Romans 6:22).

Multiple Choice (select the most correct answer according to the study notes):

_____ 18. Paul's illustration of faith counting for righteousness is _____.

A. Adam
B. Abraham
C. Moses
D. David

_____ 19. The Christian life of faith is built on _____.

A. Fact
B. Feeling
C. Fear
D. Frustration

_____ 20. Tribulation means _____.

A. Power
B. Pressure
C. Progress
D. Provision

_____ 21. The final outcome of tribulation is we are "not _____" (Romans 5:5).

A. Ashamed
B. Confused
C. Destroyed
D. Forsaken

_____ 22. A sinner is someone who has missed the _____.

A. Answer
B. Lord
C. Mark
D. Power

_____ 23. The action of sin is a sin of _____.

A. Commission
B. Transgression
C. Omission
D. Remission

_____ 24. Failure to do what is right is a sin of _____.

A. Commission
B. Transgression
C. Omission
D. Remission

_____ 25. The Christian is no longer under the influence of sin because he _____ sin (Romans 6:2, 10, 11).

A. Conquered
B. Defeated
C. Died to
D. Surrendered to

Chapter Twenty-Three

A Marriage Proposal

Romans 7:1-6

"*But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.*"
Galatians 5:18

Romans 7:1-6, supported by Galatians 5:18, presents a crucial truth: believers are not under the law but under grace and liberated through Christ. While the law is not sinful, it cannot grant peace or righteousness. It serves as a schoolmaster, revealing humanity's inability to fulfill it and pointing toward the need for Christ. Romans 6:14 reinforces that sin no longer has dominion over those in Christ. This emphasizes that grace does not lead to indifference toward sin but rather strengthens believers to overcome it. Through Christ's grace and truth, the believer is set free, gaining the strength to walk in an overcoming life beyond the law's limitations.

In these verses, Paul uses the image of marriage to illustrate our former relationship with the Law and our present relationship with the Lord. Paul is writing to those who know the meaning of his illustration well. "Know ye not" (v. 1) literally means, "Don't you know, brethren?" They did know, for he followed it with, "I speak to them that know the law."

I. We are Dominated by the Law (vv. 1-3)

What kind of spouse is the Law? Romans 7:12, "Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good"—he's perfect! The problem? We are not, and he demands perfection.

> Galatians 3:10, For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.

Further, he is never flexible; Paul says he "hath dominion" (v. 1). The word "dominion" (Greek *kurieuo*) means "to rule." So, every morning, we are faced with his list of dos and don'ts, knowing he will keep them. At the end of each day, he examines us for what he expects. What does he want?

- Compliance in all tasks; "do them" (Galatians 3:10).
- Compliance always "continueth" (Galatians 3:10).
- Compliance in all things—attitudes and actions, "all things" (Galatians 3:10).

It is not a matter of our good outweighing our bad or that we get everything right for the first half of the day, mechanically doing it, or knowing what is expected. The Law

demands perfection!

If you are less than perfect, the Law judges you as if you were in a court of law. Your guilt is not measured in relation to your past innocence but by the single act of which you are charged. If you are accused of speeding, the jury is not interested in your normal driving speed but your speed when the officer stops you.

II. We Died to the Law (vv. 4-5)

The illustration is graphic but straightforward. The truth is the Law's power ends at death. Just as the death of a mate frees the partner to remarry, those who have experienced the redeeming grace of Christ are free from the law of sin.

It is not the Law but the believer that has been put to death. Instead of seeking outward conformity to the letter (the external rules of conduct prescribed by the Law), the believer fulfills the spirit of the Law by the Holy Ghost.

How do we die to the Law? Paul writes it is "by the body of Christ" (v. 4). In other words, we die to sin the same way. We identify with Jesus's death, burial, and resurrection. Because of our identification with Christ in His death, the claims of the law are broken.

> Romans 6:3-4, 3Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? 4Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

The objective of our death is not liberty. It is for marriage to another (v. 4). That means to be joined to another.

All of us can remember the day the Spirit came and pointed us to Jesus Christ, urging us to link our lives with His. "Will you take this Man to be your Savior?" He asked. "Will you take Him for richer or poorer, for sickness or health, for better or worse, for time and eternity?" "I will!" was the glad reply. In that holy moment, our death dissolved the old marriage to sin and the Law, and the believer married another. Now, the believer is Christ; life and loyalty belong to Him. But all Christ's love, life, and loyalty now belong to the believer. What a thrilling way to victory!

To whom are we married? Too many are associated with a denomination, organization, system, or church. All they talk about is their religious affiliation, their church, or what guides their life. Paul writes that our marriage is to be to "him who is raised from the dead" (v. 4)—Jesus!

III. We Are Delivered by Love

This love is a beautiful picture of the Christian life and marriage. A proper marriage

is not domination but mutual submission by love, trust, and respect guided by concern for each other. The motive of love changes our perspective. We are not compelled but delighted to demonstrate our love. Notice I said mutual. That means God also loves me, as shown by His trust, respect, and concern.

When someone quits, it often indicates a misunderstanding of the relationship. Being mad at someone in the church or something at the church and quitting says either the person was married to the wrong thing or did not love the Lord. It would be like being upset at your pet, child, or something in the house and leaving your spouse. It does not fit.

IV. We are Different by Love

Paul writes that the Law only produced "fruit unto death" (v. 5). But now, "we should bring forth fruit unto God" (v. 4). What difference does marriage make?

A. **Character**. We change our actions and reactions when we are in love.

B. **Children**. Children are the natural result of marriage. You produce new lives.

The fruit is twofold. How is this done? "In newness of spirit" (v. 6). Note that "spirit" should be capitalized as God's Spirit. We are energized and enabled.

This little portion of the book of Romans is the New Testament book of Ruth. Boaz, a mighty man of wealth, looks upon Ruth, a Moabitess, and loves her. He had a great name. She had none. His possessions were many. Ruth was ruined. He was lord of the harvest; she was a gleaner. But in his love, he redeemed her. But to have her to himself, he had to meet the demands of the Law. Boaz met the elders of the city to claim Ruth. The result was that she gave birth to a son.

Which marriage proposal you accept determines if you have a dynamic relationship with Jesus Christ or a demanding religion of dos and don'ts.

Chapter Twenty-Three
A Marriage Proposal
Romans 7:1-6

Review Questions

A. Complete the following sentences using the correct words from the reading, notes, and class lecture.

1. Romans seven is virtually a rebuttal of the theory that to be under grace is to be indifferent toward _____.

2. The Law brings man to the _____ of sin.

3. What kind of spouse is the Law? He is _____!

4. The Law's power ends at _____.

5. It is not the Law but the _____ that has been put to death.

6. The objective of our death is not liberty; it is for _____ to another.

7. A proper marriage is not _____ but mutual submission by love.

8. Paul writes that the Law only produced "fruit unto _____" (v5). But now "we should bring forth _____ unto God" (v4).

B. Answer these questions from Romans 7:1-6. Use verses where the answer comes from.

9. The law has dominion over a man only as long as he is what?

10. How are we dead to the Law?

11. How should we serve now that we are delivered by the law?

C. Read the question carefully and respond in 2-3 sentences with a clear and concise answer. Your response should directly address the question and provide relevant details from the text.

12. How does Paul use the marriage analogy to illustrate the believer's relationship with Christ, and what does this signify about their freedom from the law of sin?

13. According to Romans 7:4-6, what is the difference between living under the Law and living in "newness of spirit," and how does this transformation impact the believer's life?

Chapter Twenty-Four

Indwelling Sin

Romans 7:7-25

"Therefore, the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith." Galatians 3:24

Paul addresses a crucial question in Romans 7:7-25. Is the Law of God sinful, or does it make man worse? Paul responds with wisdom, clarifying that the Law itself is holy, good, and pure; it reveals the sinfulness within man. Rather than causing sin, the Law exposes it, showing humanity its deep need for grace and redemption. This aligns with Galatians 3:24, which explains that the Law serves as a tutor, leading people to Christ so they might be justified by faith. Paul's argument demonstrates that while knowledge of the Law may make man's struggles with sin more evident, it is not the Law that corrupts, but man's own nature. The Law was good and pure.

Paul uses lust as an example to illustrate that the Law brought the knowledge of sin. The Law said explicitly, "Thou shalt not covet." The Law is not sinful in demanding such. It serves to make me know what sin is.

I. Indwelling Sin is Revealed by Divine Law (vv. 7-13)

"Is the Law sin?" is the question in verse 7. Paul answers, "No," but the Law is given to reveal the presence of indwelling sin in a person.

The Law is like a mirror, showing us what we are really like.

The function of the Law was to give sin its proper name and expose it for what it is. Before the Law, sin was not active. As soon as the commandment came, sin came to life, and man found himself helpless in its clutches. Sin used the coming of the commandment as an occasion to assert its control.

What does the Law reveal?

A. The Phenomenon of Sin (v. 7). The Law points out what sin is in our lives. The Law defines sin by stating absolutes. Men try to cover sin, excuse it, and camouflage it. But the Law named and exposed it for what it is. The Law had the power to reveal but not remove sin.

Paul specifically mentions the sin of covetousness. Probably in his unconverted days as a conscientious Pharisee, Paul had little trouble with the first nine commandments. He could say, "All these have I kept from my youth up." But the tenth commandment dealt with inward desire, and Paul knew very well that his inward desires were often wrong.

In desire, if not indeed, Paul had become a sinner and exposed to the curse of the Law.

B. The Presence of Sin (v. 8). Paul writes that sin "taking occasion (militarily taking the high ground)... wrought in me all manner of concupiscence (evil desires)." In other words, once the sin is noticed, it immediately jumps up and wants action. The Law's straight edge reveals man's crooked nature. Just as seeing a "wet paint" sign causes people to want to touch, the Law exposes man's hidden nature. When we say no to sin, we are urged to do it.

C. The Power of Sin (v. 9). When I think I am doing good, the Law accuses me, and I die. I understand that I am inadequate and defeated all over again.

D. The Prescription of Sin (v. 10). Moses pointed out that obedience to the Law is life. therefore, disobedience must be death.

> Leviticus 18:5, Ye shall therefore keep my statutes, and my judgments: which if a man do, he shall live in them: I am the LORD.

The Law contained punishments as well as precepts. It does not reward us for keeping the commands; it only punishes us for breaking them. How serious is it in God's sight? It carries a death penalty in this life and eternal judgment in the next.

Suppose a hot-tempered soldier smote a fellow soldier in the barracks. The punishment for thus breaking the peace would be a few days' detention. If he were to hit a sergeant, however, his punishment would more likely be three weeks' detention, while for assaulting an officer, he would get three months. If, however, he were to attempt to strike the visiting President of the United States, he could be executed on the spot as the President's bodyguards defended him. The act would be the same in each case—striking a fellow man. But as the dignity and the rank of the person assaulted rose, the seriousness of the offense increased in proportion. Now, all sin is against God.

> Psalm 51:4, Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest.

> Luke 15:18, 21, 18I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, . . . 21And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.

Therefore, sin is such an act of seriousness that it earns eternal damnation. To reveal this is one of the great functions of the Law.

E. The Perfidy of Sin (v. 11). [Perfidy means betrayal.] Sin can twist your reasoning process so that you can convince yourself that wrong is all right and right is not even required or wrong.

F. The Plethora of Sin (v. 13). [Plethora means overabundance.] Sin is never satisfied. There are at least fifteen Hebrew words in the Old Testament for sin, covering all possible wrong attitudes to God and man. There are about as many words in the Greek New Testament, covering such ideas as sin, wickedness, evil, ungodliness, disobedience, transgression, iniquity, error, and fault. Such a rich vocabulary in both Testaments reveals the extent of sin in all its forms.

The real problem lay in our inability not to sin when the Law taught us what sin was. Therefore, as seen through the Law, sin appeared quite differently after the Law. The commandment did something that had never been done before; it made humanity aware of sin. Therefore, by the commandment, sin became exceedingly sinful.

II. Indwelling Sin is Reflected by Defeated Living (vv. 14-24)

This portion of the book of Romans has been a topic of much discussion. The question has been, "Is Paul describing himself before his conversion or afterward?" I view it as a man's state after receiving the Holy Ghost. Here are my reasons:

1. It is the most obvious interpretation. It is the natural meaning of someone who has no theory to support and who interprets the Scripture first in its literal sense.

2. It agrees with Paul's teaching up to this point that the Law was not intended to produce sanctification and peace. He has already proved this to the unconverted man and would repeat himself if that were his point again. If he was repeating himself, then he ignores the relationship of the Law to the converted man—would it be possible for a man who has the Spirit to fulfill now, and therefore find justification, by keeping the Law? The Apostle thoroughly demonstrates that the Law's work is the same—to reveal sin.

3. The sinner cannot understand Paul's expressions except by the saint.

4. It parallels the Bible's other passages regarding the state of the Christian's mind.

5. The present tense is changed from the past to the present tense here. You see the past tense in verse 7 and the shift to the present tense in verse 14. This change has no explanation apart from Paul's shift to the believer's life.

6. It relates to the experience of the saint and not the sinner. An honest saint (is there another?) has expressed the same feelings. I admit this is not a conclusive point, but if it did not relate to the Christian, it would hinder this approach to the passage.

J. P. Wilson, historian, makes this observation when studying this chapter: "In the fourth verse, he (Paul) changes to the first-person plural because he intended to speak of the former experience of Christians, who had been Jews. In the seventh verse, he uses the first-person singular but speaks in the past tense because he describes his experience as an unconverted Pharisee. In the fourteenth verse, and unto the end of the chapter, he uses

the first-person singular and the present tense because he exhibits his own experience since he became a Christian and an apostle."

Therefore, in Romans 7:14-24, Paul describes himself after he received the Holy Ghost. Verses 14 through 24 are a transition from the past tense to the present tense. Paul, a mature believer, is writing about the ongoing difficulties of sin in the believer's life. Practical experience tells us that, regardless of how long we have been disciples of Jesus Christ, we still struggle with temptation and sin. That makes many Christians feel, act, and live as though they are defeated.

Paul makes three statements about this:

A. A Statement of Discovery (vv. 14-17). "We know (we admit) that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal" (v. 14). Carnal (Greek "*Sarkikos*") means "fleshly," and Paul is saying that by his flesh, he is "sold under sin" (v. 14), or a slave of sin, taken from the practice of selling captives as slaves.

The Bible uses the word "flesh" in many ways. We must allow the context to interpret it for us. Here, the flesh is a power opposing the Spirit (Romans 8, Galatians 5:19-21). What we have is God's holy Law on the one hand and, on the other hand, man's horrible life. Paul's discovery? Even after years of dedication to Christ, he is controlled by a power antagonistic to God. When that power controls him, then he is a slave to sin.

Now Paul proves it: "For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I" (v. 15). Paul writes, "I do things of which I disapprove. And, I want to do things, but can't." Paul writes these verses like a New Year's resolution, but is more determined. Paul disapproved of his behavior, but he had no choice since he was a slave to sin.

Paul continues, "There are things in my life I hate, but I cannot stop doing them." This statement illustrates the power of sin.

> Romans 7:16-17, If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.

Paul writes, "I constantly struggle between wanting to do good but seeing sin in my life." The Law accomplished its purpose. In its nature, there is good that comes because of revealing to man his condition so he might seek the grace of God. Man discovers his inability to rise above sin. Why? Sin dwells in him (v. 17), meaning that sin took up residence and established a permanent abode. Sin moves into men's lives, sets up a house, and lives unharmed until challenged by the Spirit of Christ. This verse is where the phrase "indwelling sin" comes from.

B. A Statement of Disillusionment (vv. 18-20). We have many good characteristics, but the flesh, the power in us in opposition to God, is not good. That

means if the flesh desires to do good, the result will still be evil because it cannot fulfill the good, or it often does so for selfish motives. Paul's proof? He writes that he wants to (that's his will) but can't (he has no power). As Jesus said in the Garden of Gethsemane, "The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."

Sin, therefore, leaves one helpless and hopeless. As Samson trod the mill with his eyes gouged out, sin led one in circles of nowhere.

Even worse, Paul's spirit needs more will. The problem is that Paul attempts to do good work in his self-effort, but his flesh naturally will not cooperate. He writes verse 19, "For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do." Paul can't do good but continues to do wrong. Paul is like the demonic legion of Gadara, who ran to the feet of Jesus and then cried out, "Leave me alone!"

Therefore, Paul writes verse 20, "Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me." Paul admits that after years in Christ, he still struggles with sin because his sinful nature dwells in him. Remember, "sins" are our actions (conduct), and "sin" is our nature (character). Paul is writing about sinfulness, but his battle is with the nature of sin.

Our schools and universities teach every law known to science except the law of sin. Any science of human behavior that ignores the law of sin must ultimately wander hopelessly astray from the truth. The fact is that it is the law of sin that explains why people do what they do. It is the very root of all behavioral problems. It acts in the moral realm precisely as the law of gravity operates in the physical realm. It exerts a downward pull. Counselors who approach helping people from the understanding of man's sinful nature call this approach "Spirituotherapy."

C. A Statement of Desire (vv. 21-24). Paul concludes that no matter how hard he tries, he must always fight the ability to sin. He sees himself as an unwilling slave. He desires and delights in God's words but cannot to perform it.

Every true believer knows what Paul is talking about. We read the Sermon on the Mount and desire to live according to its teachings. We study the life of Christ and want to be like Him. Yet, we are unable to. "To be like Jesus" is a position we must all eventually reach, the admission that we cannot eradicate the presence of sin.

After attempting to overcome sin in his strength, Paul concludes, "O wretched man that I am!" (v. 24). Why must we reach this place in our Christian journey? We can hear Paul's cry for help and the answer he received.

Do not miss Paul's cry, "Who shall deliver me from the body of this death" (v. 24). Some believe Paul is drawing an analogy here. The Romans executed certain types of criminals with special brutality. Sometimes, if the man had committed a murder, he was bound hand to hand and head-to-head with the corpse of his victim and then thrown out into the heat of the Mediterranean sun. As the corpse decayed, it ate death into the living

man and became death to him, in the strictest literal sense, "a body of death." Paul sees the carnal believer as bound to the old nature and, indeed, a wretched man.

III. Indwelling Sin is Repulsed by the Dynamic Lord (v. 25)

"I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (v. 25); our answer to indwelling sin is Jesus Christ! This basic principle is a fundamental aspect of Christian life. Jesus Christ paid for our sins and now conquers the nature of sin in our lives. On the cross, the Lord Jesus dealt effectively not only with the problem of sin and with the problem of Satan but with the problem of self as well. Overcoming flesh is not a once-for-all conquering of sin but a continual overcoming of the sinful nature as I yield to Him.

So, our mind serves God, but we must yield to Christ's power for our flesh to join it.

Chapter Twenty-Four
Indwelling Sin
Romans 7:7-25

Lesson in Review

A. Complete the following sentences using the correct words from the reading, notes, and class lecture.

1. The Law is given to reveal the presence of indwelling _____ in a person.

2. The Law points out what in our life is _____.

3. The Law's straight edge reveals man's _____ nature.

4. The Law contained _____as well as _____.

5. Sin is such an act of seriousness that it earns eternal _____.

6. The commandment did something that had never been done before; it made humanity _____ of sin.

7. In Romans 7:14-24, Paul describes himself _____receiving the Holy Ghost.

8. "We know that the law is _____: but I am _____" (Romans 7:14).

9. There are many good things in us, but the _____—the power in us in opposition to God—is not good.

10. Paul's conclusion after he attempts to overcome sin in his strength: "O _____ _____man that I am!" (Romans 7:24).

11. Jesus Christ paid for our sins. He now conquers the _____of sin in our lives.

B. Answer these questions from Romans 7:7-25. Use verses where the answer comes from.

12. Is the law a sin?

13. The law is what, and the commandment is what?

14. What law did Paul find?

15. With the mind, Paul served what, but with the flesh what?

C. Read the question carefully and respond in 2-3 sentences with a clear and concise answer. Your response should directly address the question and provide relevant details from the text.

16. What does Paul mean when he says, "O wretched man that I am!" in Romans 7:24, and how does this statement reflect the believer's struggle with sin?

17. According to Romans 7:25, what is the solution to overcoming the power of indwelling sin, and how does Paul contrast the roles of the mind and the flesh?

Chapter Twenty-Five

No Condemnation

Romans 8:1-4

"He who believes in Him is not condemned;
but he who does not believe is condemned already,
because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten
Son of God." John 3:18

"It's always darkest before the dawn." Romans 8:1-4 marks a dramatic shift from despair to divine hope. While Romans 7 wrestles with the weight of human sin, culminating in Paul's agonized cry. "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (V. 24). Romans 8 opens with a powerful declaration of freedom: "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus: (v 1.) This chapter shines with assurance and victory, reminding believers that God has not abandoned his people but has provided the grace and strength to overcome. Linked to John 3:18, the affirmation that faith in Christ removes condemnation. This passage is an invitation to step into a new life, ruled not by sin and despair, but by Christ's love and grace.

The first three chapters of Romans took up the study of condemnation. In Chapter 1, the Gentile is under condemnation and without excuse since God made known the purpose of His redemption through creation. In Chapter 2, the Jew is without reason and condemned since God had revealed His purpose in redemption by His Word. In Chapter 3, both Jew and Gentile are condemned, every mouth is closed, and the whole of the world is guilty before God because of the universality of sin.

Therefore, in Adam, we are condemned. But in Christ—those who believe in Him, live in Him, and have Him abiding in them—there is no condemnation! "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (v. 1). This phrase "in Christ" is found 35 times in the New Testament from Acts through I Peter.

This verse does not say "no mistakes," "no failures," or even "no sins." The righteous do fail and make mistakes, and they do sin. Abraham lied about his wife; David committed adultery; Peter tried to kill a man with his sword. They suffered consequences for their sins but did not suffer condemnation. The Christian should not let Satan, other people, or his conscience condemn him for sins of the past. Of course, if he is still living in sin, he should feel a sense of condemnation, motivating him to repent and receive forgiveness.

The Law condemns, but the believer has a new relationship to the Law, and

therefore, he cannot be condemned. Paul made three statements about the believer and the Law, adding up to no condemnation.

I. The Law Cannot Claim You

"For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death" (v. 2). We are made free from the law of sin and death because we now have life in the Spirit.

> II Corinthians 3:17, Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.
>
> Galatians 5:13, For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another,

We have moved into a whole new sphere of life when we are in Christ. "The law of sin and death" is described in Romans 7:7-25. "For the law of the Spirit of life" is described in Romans 8. The law of the Spirit supersedes the Law of sin and death.

It is like throwing a rock into the air; the law of gravity takes over, and the rock falls back to the Earth. If you throw a bird into the air, the law of life supersedes the law of gravity, and the bird flies away. We cannot be held by sin and death because we have life.

II. The Law Cannot Condemn You

Why cannot the law condemn us? Christ has already suffered that condemnation for us on the cross. "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh" (v. 3).

The Law could not save; it could only condemn. But God came in the flesh to save us and do what the Law could not do. Jesus did not come as an angel; He came as a man. He did not come in "sinful flesh," for that would have made Him a sinner. He came "in the likeness of sinful flesh," as a man, yet He knew no sin (II Corinthians 5:21, "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him"). He has the likeness of sinful flesh, but there was a significant difference: He was born of God. For this reason, He had power over sin and the devil.

The "law of double jeopardy" states that a man cannot be tried twice for the same crime. Since Jesus Christ paid the price for our sins and we are "in Christ," God will not condemn us. He bore our sins in His body on the cross. The cross sentence was passed and executed on sin in Christ's "flesh" and thereby in human nature. Paul emphasizes that the power of sin was broken at one point.

III. The Law Cannot Control You

The believer now lives a righteous life, not in the power of the Law, but in the power of the Holy Ghost. "That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (v. 4).

The Law does not have the power to produce holiness; it can only reveal and condemn sin. But the indwelling Holy Ghost enables us to walk according to God's will. The Spirit does what we cannot do for ourselves, and He fulfills all that God desires in us. This point does not negate that we will walk through some dark valleys. Neither does it deny that we must actively submit to the Spirit's work by seeking to obey God's Word. However, in the Holy Ghost, we have life, liberty (Romans 8:2), and the pursuit of happiness (Romans 8:4).

God does not give us inherent power over sin so that we can overcome sin alone. Instead, God Himself becomes the power dwelling in us that overcomes sin. We overcome sin not by our struggles but by relying on His Spirit. We depend upon Spirit's daily leadership, control, and power. Righteousness is always based on an intimate relationship with the Spirit of God.

To run and work the law commands,
Yet gives me neither feet nor hands,
But better news the gospel brings:
It bids me fly and gives me wings.

This well-known verse is often attributed to John Bunyan, the author of *The Pilgrim's Progress*. The lines beautifully contrast with the law, which commands obedience but lacks the power to enable it. The legalist attempts to obey God in their strength and fails to meet the righteousness that God demands. As he yields to the Lord, the Spirit-led Christian experiences the sanctifying righteousness which empowers them through the Spirit in their life.

Paul told the Philippians to "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" (Philippians 2:12). That sounds dangerous unless you read how that is done; "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (v. 13). We work it out in the world as God works it into us.

There is no condemnation from the Law. None because of inherent sinfulness, none from any source or for any cause, because the work of Jesus Christ is so perfect and satisfactory. But those who would make the "now" temporal miss the shining point. No condemnation means there is none possible—none forever. And this happy condition belongs only to those in Christ Jesus. It all came about by His doing and His dying.

Look where we have come from:

- From all condemned to no condemnation.
- From justly accused to perfect justification.
- From the place of a victim to that of a victor.
- From a place of bondage to a place of blessing.
- From a mouth closed in humiliation to a mouth opened in exultation!

Chapter Twenty-Five
No Condemnation
Romans 8:1-4

Lesson in Review

A. Complete the following sentences using the correct words from the reading, notes, and class lecture.

1. The Law condemns, but the believer has a new _____ to the Law, so he cannot be condemned.

2. We are made free from the law of sin and death because we now have _____ _____ in the Spirit.

3. The law of the Spirit _____ the Law of sin and death.

4. The Law could not save; it could only _____.

5. We overcome sin not by our _____, but by relying on His _____.

6. As he yields to the Lord, the Spirit-led Christian experiences the _____ work of the Spirit in his life.

7. We've come from the place of a victim to that of a _____.

B. Answer these questions from Romans 8:1-4. Use verses where the answer comes from.

8. There is no condemnation to those who walk how (two-part answer)?

9. The law could not be done because it was weak. Through what?

10. Who fulfills the righteousness of the law?

C. Read the question carefully and respond in 2-3 sentences with a clear and concise answer. Your response should directly address the question and provide relevant details from the text.

13. What does Paul mean by "the law of sin and death," and how does Christ's sacrifice free believers from it?

14. How does Paul contrast the carnal mind with the spiritual mind, and how does this impact a believer's life?

Chapter Twenty-Six

Three Options for Living

Romans 8:1-13

"Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill
the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts
against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh;
and these are contrary to one another...
But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law."
Galatians 15:16-18

Romans 8:1-13 presents a profound truth not only does God justify sinners, but He also calls them to a victorious life in the Spirit. Paul makes it clear that redemption is more than freedom from guilt; it is an invitation to an abundant life. By God's grace, the believer is no longer bound by sin and condemnation but is called to walk in the Spirit, overcoming the flesh through divine strength. Linked to Galatians 5:16-18, this passage reinforces that when led by the Spirit, believers are no longer under the law but live by God's redeeming power. Romans 8 is a declaration, beginning with "no condemnation" and ending in in "no separation."

I. The Enslaved Life (vv. 3-8)

"The law of sin and death" (v. 2). To understand what Paul means by "the law of sin and death" (v. 2), we need to note the link between "the flesh" and "sin" in his thinking. He concluded Chapter 7 with the dismissal words, "with the flesh (I serve) the law of sin" (7:25). The flesh, then, is how sin operates in men.

Even a casual reading of Romans 8:3-8 reveals the significance of the flesh. The law is said to be "weak through the flesh" (v. 3); those who live "after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh" (v. 5) which we are told is "death" (v. 6); the fleshly mind is "enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" (v. 7); furthermore "they that are in the flesh cannot please God" (v. 8). These verses describe our sinful human nature.

How did God deal with our sinful nature? First, God dealt with that sinful nature by the Law—but while the Law was perfect, it was weak in that obedience depended on men; therefore, it was "weak through the flesh" (v. 3).

Second, God sent "his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh" (v. 3). Christ was unique in that while human, He was without sin. His sinlessness while in the flesh condemned sinfulness in our lives.

Third, Christ came "for sin" (v. 3). The Septuagint uses this expression in Psalm 40:6 and translates it as "sin offering."

> Psalm 40:6, Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened: burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required.

Therefore, Jesus, having condemned sinfulness by His flawless life, then assumed our sin on the cross and, in dying for sin, ended the power of sin in the lives of believers.

Fourth, this sets those who are "in Christ Jesus . . . free from the law of sin and death" (v. 2). Being "in Christ" identifies with His death and condemnation of sin.

Freedom does not come by excusing it, blaming it on heredity, condoning it, or explaining it as only being human. Freedom is possible when we recognize, as did Paul, our sinfulness and utter helplessness and cry for God's deliverance.

II. The Exchanged Life -The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" (v. 2)

Until this point in Romans, Paul's painstakingly systematic gospel presentation is conspicuous by the absence of the Holy Ghost. It was briefly mentioned in Chapters 1 and 5; now, in Chapter 8, Paul writes over and over of the Spirit. Chapter 7 is filled with disappointment, despair, disillusionment, and despondency, and the Spirit is not mentioned. But, in Chapter 8, the Spirit appears repeatedly, and there is no disappointment, despair, disillusionment, or despondency.

The expression "in Christ" is one of Paul's favorites. It occurs in all his epistles and denotes a new sphere into which the believer is brought at conversion. The concept of being "in Christ" is not easy to grasp apart from an illustration; here, the Old Testament is helpful, for one of the great functions of the Old Testament is to cast light illustratively upon the New Testament. Every New Testament central teaching or concept can be in the Old Testament. This concept of being "in Christ" is no exception.

Take, for instance, the case of Noah. When the ark was finished, and a perfect way of escape from divine wrath was provided, the invitation went forth, "Come thou and all thy house into the ark; for thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation" (Genesis 7:1). Now, the ark was pitched "within and without with pitch" and the Hebrew word for "pitch" is the identical word used elsewhere for "atonement." Between the saved in the ark and the waters of judgment without were the hewn wood and pitch. Once Noah and his family were safely in the ark, we read, "And they that went in, went in male and female of all flesh, as God had commanded him: and the LORD shut him in" (Genesis 7:16). Here was complete security. God did not say to Noah, once the ark was finished, "Now, Noah, I want you to take eight spikes and drive them into the outside timbers of the ark. So long as you and your family hang on, you will be saved, but if you once let go, you will be lost." No! God shut him in. What it meant for Noah to be "in the ark," it means for us to be "in Christ." In Him, God has placed us in a sphere where His wrath can never reach us, and we are as secure as Christ can make us. There is no more

condemnation for sin. Once we are "in Christ," we are to obtain the mind of Christ.

> Romans 8:5-7, 5For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. 6 For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. 7 Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.

A great example of the carnal mind operating in the life of a believer is found in the story of Isaac. The exercise of the carnal mind is seen in Isaac's love of venison. In Genesis 27, the words "venison," "savory meat," or "eat" occur about twenty times. The clue to this is in a preceding chapter where we are told that, "And Isaac loved Esau because he did eat of his venison" (Genesis 25:28). We do not read that Isaac loved Esau because Esau was a holy man of God. That would have been something else. But no such statement is found. Esau was not a man of God. He ruled over his father by catering to his appetite and an inordinate love for food.

The errors of the carnal mind are illustrated in Isaac's successive mistakes recorded in Genesis 27. In the first place, he thought he would die (Genesis 27:2), whereas he lived for at least another forty years. His senses failed him one by one. He was blind, or nearly so. His sense of taste deceived him, for he mistook stewed goat for dressed venison. Feeling the goat skin, Jacob presented to him, his hands wrongly told him he was feeling Esau's hairy hands. He smelled the smell of the field on Jacob and thought it was Esau. His hearing did not deceive him, and he could not trust that.

The enmity of the carnal mind is illustrated in Isaac's determination to give the patriarchal blessing to Esau when he knew it was God's will to be given to Jacob (Genesis 25:23-26; 27:1-4, 24-33). "The carnal mind is enmity with God. "There are countless examples in Scripture of the working and enmity of the carnal mind. Consider Abraham marrying Hagar, Lot choosing Sodom, Moses smiting the Egyptians, Joshua making a deal with the Gibeonites, Saul spared the Amalekite cattle, Solomon's political marriages, and Jonah fleeing to Tarshish. These and many others illustrate this principle. There is only one way to avoid the mistakes made by the carnal mind: to have "the mind of Christ" (Philippians 2:5; I Corinthians 2:16).

The only way to have the mind of Christ is to allow the Spirit of Christ to control the mind.

III. The Enhanced Life-The righteousness of the Law (v. 4)

Where are we going?

- Are we going into the promised land or back into the wilderness?
- Joshua faced them again after his book. "Choose you this day whom you will serve."

- David faced his generation (Psalm 95).
- The Hebrew writer faced the Christians who considered returning to Judaism (Hebrews 3:7-4; 11).

Paul writes that we are going onward and eventually upward!

> Romans 8:10-13, 10And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. 11But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you. 12Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. 13For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.

The words "mortal" and "immortal" always refer to the body. "This mortal" will put on immortality at the resurrection.

> I Corinthians 15:53-54, 53For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, 54Death is swallowed up in victory.

Because of sin, the body is still subject to death in the ordinary course of events. The Holy Spirit made the spirit alive at the time of regeneration. At the time of the resurrection, our bodies will also be clothed with immortal life.

The name "Jesus" (v. 11) is of interest here; the only other place in the epistle where this single title is used is 3:26.

> Romans 3:26, To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.

Of course, the name "Jesus" was Christ's given name at birth. Paul wants to call attention to the fact that Jesus was once in a place of weakness while lying in a tomb, but the Spirit raised Him. The Spirit will raise us also.

While these verses primarily refer to the coming resurrection, they also imply that the Spirit can give us victory over the law of our members even now. Later in the epistle, Paul demands that the believer hand over his body to God as a living sacrifice (Romans 12:1). This surrender is one of the most critical steps to a life of victory. The believer's body is the temple of the Holy Spirit (I Corinthians 3:16-17; 6:19-20), and He desires complete sovereignty over His temple. Once God has control of the believer's body, the Spirit of God can then impart victory over sins that involve the use of the body's members.

Chapter Twenty-Six
Three Options for Living
Romans 8:1-13

Lesson in Review

A. Complete the following sentences using the correct words from the reading, notes, and class lecture.

1. The flesh is how _____ _____ in men.

2. Therefore, Jesus, having _____ sinfulness by His _____ life, then _____ our sin on the cross and in dying for sin brought an end to the power of _____in the lives of believers.

3. Although it was briefly mentioned in chapters one and five, in Chapter 8, Paul writes repeatedly about the _____.

4. The only way to have the _____ of Christ is to allow the Spirit of Christ to control the _____.

5. Once God has control of the believer's body, the Spirit of Gad can then impart _____ over sins that involve the use of the bodies' members.

6. What are the three options for living (three-part answer)?

B. Answer these questions from Romans 8:1-13. Use verses where the answer comes from.

7. Romans 8:1, "There is therefore now no _____ to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the _____, but after the _____.

8. Those who live according to the flesh set their minds where?

9. To be spiritually minded is what (two-part answer)?

10. Those who are in the flesh cannot do what?

11. How do you know you are in the Spirit?

12. If we, by the Spirit, put the deeds of the body to death, what will happen?

C. Read the question carefully and respond in 2-3 sentences with a clear and concise answer. Your response should directly address the question and provide relevant details from the text.

15. What does Paul mean by "the law of sin and death" in Romans 8:2, and how does Christ provide freedom from it?

16. What is the difference between a carnal mind and a spiritual mind according to Romans 8:5-7?

17. What does Paul mean in Romans 8:11 when he speaks of the Spirit "quickening" our mortal bodies, and how does this relate to both resurrection and victorious living?

Chapter Twenty-Seven

What's Living in the Spirit?

Romans 8:14-17

"*And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, 'Abba, Father!' Therefore, you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.*" Galatians 4:6-7

Romans 8:14-17 reveals the privileged identity of believers who are no longer slaves to sin but the sons and heirs of God through Christ. This passage is echoed in Galatians 4:6-7, which emphasizes that the Spirit within us enables a deep personal relationship with God. We can now call Him "Abba, Father." Paul outlines three options—the enslaved life ("law of sin and death," 8:2), the exchanged life ("Spirit of life in Christ," 8:2), and the enhanced life ("the righteousness of the law," 8:4). However, if we want to live a life that is pleasing to God there is only one option for living—the enhanced life or living in the Spirit. "Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. . .. but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live" (8:12,13). It is not an option; it is an obligation because we are debtors, not to the flesh (v. 12), implying we are debtors to the Spirit. Through daily dependence on the Spirit, we mortify sinful deeds and truly live in the fulness of God's grace.

This way of thinking alters our entire life and perspective. If we are in debt to the Spirit, we can no longer think about our time, house, and money because they are not ours. Our sole obligation is to follow the Spirit.

Through our study of Romans, we realize that many of us have been taught incorrectly. Instead of being instructed to claim the divine power we possess and to live above the bondage of our sinful nature, we are merely told what to do after we sin. Our mindset has been nurtured by corrective theology rather than preventive theology. Thus, we have come to expect failure, disobedience, and resistance in our lives, and we have learned to focus our attention on sin instead of on righteousness. This teaching has led many to adopt a defeatist attitude, viewing life as a matter of endurance rather than enjoyment. The good news is that God did not save us so that we could suffer through a miserable existence. He plans for us to live on a much higher plane. In these four verses, Paul offers six phrases that present a completely new perspective on the Christian life—living in the Spirit.

I. Leading by the Spirit

"For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God" (v. 14).

The word "led" has been misused and worries some people. Sin leads, and we are encouraged to mortify it. The Spirit also leads, and we are encouraged to follow it. Some have used the "leading of the Spirit" as an excuse to do things for which they cannot find Bible support. Too often, the Spirit gets blamed for impulsive behavior, careless preparation, and bizarre decisions.

However, being misled does not excuse us from seeking the Spirit's direction. Paul writes that being led by the Spirit is evidence of being a child of God. Salvation is not based solely on a one-time experience but a lifelong submission to the Spirit. What is being led by the Spirit? It is an intelligent response of obedience to a deep conviction from Scripture. The Spirit and Scripture will always agree. The verb here means "willingly led." We yield to the Spirit, and He guides us by His Word daily.

There is no doubt that God delights to guide His children. In Old Testament times, He gave Israel a fiery, cloudy pillar to lead them through the trackless wilderness. Their leading was clear, continuous, and conspicuous, for even the smallest child could see when and where the cloudy pillar moved. The principles of guidance for the believer today are different, but they are nonetheless clear. Many believers need a clearer sense of divine leading in their lives.

A lack of daily quiet time with God greatly hinders a continual sense of the divine. How can God speak to us if we meditate on His Word? The second major hindrance is the refusal to follow once the Spirit's leading is revealed. We must cooperate with the Spirit's leading to be shown more.

How does the Spirit lead us?

1. We must submit our will to God's sage.

2. We must submit our weakness to God's strength.

The Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness (Luke 4:1, "And Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost returned from Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness"). Notice this is predicated on "being full of the Holy Ghost." What happened? It was a long journey; He fasted and prayed there, and in the end, he had to battle with the devil.

The Spirit can stop as well as lead. Paul knew this from his own experiences.

> Acts 16:6-10, 6Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia, and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia, 7After they were come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not. 8And they passing by Mysia came down to Troas. And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; 9There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us. 10And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavoured to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that

the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them.

When Paul and Silas finished the first half of their missionary journey, he wanted to go to Asia, but the Spirit said no. Then he looked toward Bithynia, and again, the Spirit said no. They did not quit but worked and prayed. Then Paul had a dream of a man in Macedonia calling them there.

We must submit our life to the Spirit and recognize His leading. "Led" (the Greek ago word to lead, bring, drive, go, induce) suggests a willingness to obtain maturity resulting in sonship. This sonship points to our present relationship. Even when we live in the Spirit, we will face many decisions. Once we know what the Spirit wants, we must obey gladly.

II. Liberty through the Spirit

"For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear" (v. 15).

Paul wants us to understand that following the Spirit's lead does enslave us. We were called out of slavery—especially the slavery to selfishness—and are free to live in harmony with God.

Freedom from selfishness brings freedom from fear. We fear what will hurt us physically, emotionally, and financially. We are not so concerned about ourselves and our well-being when we place Christ first.

Paul tells Timothy the same thing.

> II Timothy 1:7, For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.

Timothy's fears were timidity, reluctance to share the gospel, and embarrassment of associating with some church members, especially Paul, in prison. The Spirit longed to release him from these fears and use him mightily.

We also must decide whether we will be ruled by our fears or led by the Spirit.

III. Loving by the Spirit

> "But ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father" (v. 15).

Now, in total opposition to the spirit of bondage, Paul tells us we are sons. In the first century, adoption, far from suggesting a position of inferiority, placed one not naturally born into the family into a position of great status and privilege. Realizing you owed your position to the choice of your new parent should make you feel deeply privileged instead of feeling inferior.

The gospel's fundamental truth is that a person must be born again before being viewed as a child of God.

> John 1:11-13, 11He came unto his own, and his own received him not. 12But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: 13Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.
>
> John 3:3-8, 3Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. 4Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? 5Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. 6That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. 7Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. 8The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.
>
> I Peter 1:23-25, 23Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. 24For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: 25But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.
>
> I John 3:9, Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.
>
> I John 4:7, Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.
>
> I John 5:1, 4, 18, 1Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him. . . . 4For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. . . . 18We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not.

However, it is one thing to be born into God's family through the miracle of regeneration; it is something else to become an adult son. Paul does not speak much about conversion regarding a new birth but talks at length about spiritual sonship and maturity.

"Adoption" in the New Testament means "being placed as an adult son." We come into God's family by birth. But the instant we are born into the family, God adopts us and

gives us the position of an adult son. A baby cannot walk, speak, make decisions, or draw on family wealth. But the believer can do all these things the instant he is born again.

The relationship is so close and trustful that we address God as "Abba." Abba is an affectionate expression like our "papa," yet a term limited to meaning "my papa." While the Jews would not pray using this word, Jesus often did. It became common for the early Christians to pray this way, also expressing their endearment to God.

IV. Learning by the Spirit

"The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God" (v. 16).

Notice that he does not say the Spirit witnesses to our spirit but with our spirit. This learning experience is related to the interaction of our will with the indwelling Spirit in our lives. It is like yoking a young ox to an experienced ox to teach it to plow. As we follow the Spirit, the Spirit guides us through obedience.

How does the Spirit bear witness with our spirit?

1. Witness by words—the initial sign that we are filled with the Spirit and begin our leading by the Spirit is when we speak in tongues.

2. Works—the continuing witness that the Spirit leads us are the works that flow naturally from the working of the Spirit in our lives. Paul refers to them in Galatians 5 as the fruit of the Spirit.

3. Wisdom—as we grow in the Spirit and are immersed in the Scripture, we gain the "mind of Christ." When we handle life through God's wisdom, we demonstrate the way of the Spirit to those around us

When we consider the remarkable capacity of the human spirit without the Holy Spirit, as seen in the lives of the refugees struggling against all odds for survival, or the extraordinary creativity of the human spirit in works of beauty and grandeur, we see the glorious potential of the spirits of the sons of God. Our spirit fused with the Spirit results in tremendous and magnificent acts and activities that will bring great glory to God.

V. Luxuriating in the Spirit

"And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ" (v. 17).

In his analogy, Paul moves from sons to heirs—the "if" here is not doubt but an assumption of fact. Having settled one point, Paul writes that it naturally leads to this conclusion: if we are sons with Christ, then we are heirs with Christ.

When we receive good news, it gives us a warm, secure feeling. That is what this is supposed to do. We are filled with the knowledge that God has great things in store for

us.

We know that God will never die, so it is not something that becomes ours at God's death. Instead, what Peter defines as "an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you" (I Peter 1:4). These are things stored for us in Heaven, but that is not all that Paul means.

Paul defines "joint heirs with Christ" or "heirs together." As heirs, we will receive what Christ received. What is it? It would be impossible to list all the good things that he provides for us and has planned to give us when we are ready. Why? Jesus has been appointed the heir of all things.

> Hebrews 1:2, God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds.

Much can be said regarding this critical concept. In a broad sense, we are sons of God as Jesus was and is the Son of God. The difference exists primarily in the role each plays. We are sons of God because of the work of salvation. Being joint heirs does not suggest we are exactly like Him. If so, then Jesus would need a savior, too. We are joint in the sense then that we both share similar terms of description, ours because of adoption (removing us from the sinful nature) and His because of birth (meaning He had no sinful nature).

Sadly, we do not live as if we are heirs; we live as paupers. Let's bask in God's goodness!

VI. Liabilities of the Spirit

> "If so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together" (v. 17).

For all its blessings, living in the Spirit includes the basic liability of suffering, from which there is no escape. Paul takes for granted that this principle is accepted. Many people want Christ in "the power of his resurrection." Still, few are willing to know Him in "the fellowship of his sufferings" (Philippians 3:10). If we want to inherit the good things of Christ, we must also be prepared to receive His suffering.

Significantly, the only other place in the New Testament where the expression "suffer with" is found is in I Corinthians 12:26.

> I Corinthians 12:26, And whether one member suffer, all the members *suffer with* it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.

The context in I Corinthians concerns the oneness of the body of Christ. Suffering in the body is not a matter of choice but something necessitated by one member's relationship with every other member. Since Christ is the head of the body, it follows that

the things that pain the head will pain the members. Adoption into the family of God involves Christ's sufferings and His glory, heartache and heritage, cross, and crown.

Ananias was commissioned to teach this lesson to the Apostle Paul on the day of his conversion. The Lord determined to show "him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake" (Acts 9:16).

Jesus gave the principle that life is the result of death.

> John 12:24, 25, 24Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. 25He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.

This brings us back to the beginning: only as we are willing to die in the flesh can we live in the Spirit.

Chapter Twenty-Seven
What's Living in the Spirit?
Romans 8:14-17

Lesson in Review

A. Complete the following sentences using the correct words from the reading, notes, and class lecture.

1. If we want to live a life that is pleasing to God, what is the only option for living?
2. Our mindset has been nurtured by _____ theology rather than _____ theology.
3. What is being led by the Spirit?
4. We must decide whether we will be ruled by our _____ or led by the _____.
5. The fundamental truth of the gospel is that a person must be _____ _____before being viewed as a child of God.
6. Abba is an affectionate expression like our _____.
7. As we follow the Spirit, the Spirit is there to _____ us through obedience.
8. As heirs, we will receive what _____ received.
9. Living in the Spirit, for all its blessings, includes the basic liability of _____.

B. Answer these questions from Romans 8:14-17. Use verses where the answer comes from.

10. As many as are led by the Spirit of God are what? _____
11. Because of the Spirit of adoption, we can cry what? _____
12. What bears witness to our spirit that we are the children of God? _____

    _____
13. If we are children of God, then we are also what (two-part answer)? _____

    _____

C. Read the question carefully and respond in 2-3 sentences with a clear and concise answer. Your response should directly address the question and provide relevant details from the text.

14. According to Romans 8:12-13, why is living in the Spirit described as an obligation rather than an option for believers?

Chapter Twenty-Eight

Spiritual Groaning

Romans 8:18-27

"*For our light affliction, which is but for a moment,*
is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory,
while we do not look at the things which are seen,
but at the things which are not seen.
For the things which are seen are temporary,
but the things which are not seen are eternal."
2 Corinthians 4:17-18

Romans 8:18-27 confronts the reality of suffering and pain, offering a profound perspective on how believers endure trials with the hope of future glory. Paul introduces this theme after describing life in the Spirit. He demonstrates how the gospel sustains the soul even in adversity. Linked to 2 Corinthians 4:17-18, this passage emphasizes the earthly affliction and that they are temporary. But these afflictions produce an eternal weight of glory beyond what can be seen. In this section, Paul deals with the genuine problem of suffering and pain. Its design shows the gospel's power in sustaining the soul in trials. This is illustrated as partially noticed in Romans 5:3-5, but its full power to support the soul in the prospect of glorious immortality still needs to be fully discussed. Perhaps the best way to understand this passage is to note the three "groans:" the groaning of creation (v. 22), the groaning of believers longing for redemption (v. 23), and groaning of the Spirit interceding on our behalf (v. 26).

I. The Creation Groans (vv. 18-22)

When God finished His creation, it was good.

> Genesis 1:31, And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good.

But today, it is groaning. Note the words that Paul used to describe the plight:

> •Sufferings (v. 18), Greek "*pathema*," meaning "something undergone." It is the afflictions that every believer must endure.
>
> •Vanity (v. 20) Greek "*mataiotes*" meaning disappointing misery. It is used only three times in the New Testament:
>
> Romans 8:20, For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope.

Ephesians 4:17, This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind.

II Peter 2:18, For when they speak great swelling words of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error.

The same Greek word is used frequently in the Septuagint to translate the Hebrew word "vanity" in Ecclesiastes. It describes something that does not measure up to that for which it was intended.

- Bondage (v. 21), Greek "*douleia*" meaning slavery. That the creation has not chosen this misery.

- Corruption (v. 21), Greek "*phthora*" meaning decay or ruin. The world is imperfect and in a perishing condition.

- Pain (v. 22): this speaks of intense pain because of its continual suffering. There is never a rest from the pain of its corruption.

This is not the fault of creation. It is the result of Adam's sin. The fall of man involved all creation, at least so far as this planet is concerned. The vegetable world was involved since the temptation revolved around a tree. Animal creation is involved since a serpent introduces temptation. The human creation was involved since the temptation was presented to man. The curse that followed the fall involved all. Man continues to abuse creation. Environmentalists have documented countless examples of man's irresponsible actions that have caused crises.

However, this groaning is not useless; Paul compared it to a woman in travail (v. 22). There is pain, but the pain will end when the child is delivered. One day, creation will be delivered, and the groaning creation will become a glorious creation.

Isaiah 65:17, For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind.

Revelation 21:1, And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.

The believer does not focus on today's suffering; he looks forward to tomorrow's glory (v. 18).

II Corinthians 4:15-18, 15For all things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God. 16For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. 17For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight

of glory; 18While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.

Today's groaning in bondage will be exchanged for tomorrow's glorious liberty!

From this magnificent picture of the future, we can gain a proper perspective of our present sufferings:

A. Groaning is Temporary (v. 19). Looking around, we see numerous indications that the world is decaying and dying. But the Scriptures proclaim that creation's groans will not last forever.

B. Groaning is a Therefore (v. 20a). In other words, it is a consequence. The creation did not ask to be "subjected to vanity." Instead, it was an act of God in response to man's sin.

Genesis 3:17-18, 17And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; 18Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field.

God caused the Earth to become a victim of corruption because of man's disobedience. God originally placed creation under man's auspices and, in doing so, subjected it to the consequences of human sin.

C. Groaning is a Tool (vv. 20b-21). The world was placed under the curse of sin to awaken man to his depraved state and the opportunity that God offers.

D. Groaning is a Trait of Life (v. 22). This verse states that nothing in the universe is exempt from the effects of sin.

II. The Christian Groans (vv. 23-25)

Christian groaning should not be confused with childish moaning and selfish grumbling, which Paul condemns by his positive attitude toward his sufferings. The Christian's groaning is related to his new insight into man's fallenness and as much sorrow after what man has lost in terms of God-ordained potential as sorrow from a sense of personal deprivation.

We groan because we have experienced "the first fruits of the Spirit," a foretaste of the glory to come just as the nation of Israel tasted the first fruits of Canaan when the spies returned.

Numbers 13:23-27, 23And they came unto the brook of Eshcol, and cut down from

thence a branch with one cluster of grapes, and they bare it between two upon a staff; and they brought of the pomegranates, and of the figs. 24The place was called the brook Eshcol, because of the cluster of grapes which the children of Israel cut down from thence. 25And they returned from searching of the land after forty days. 26And they went and came to Moses, and to Aaron, and to all the congregation of the children of Israel, unto the wilderness of Paran, to Kadesh; and brought back word unto them, and unto all the congregation, and shewed them the fruit of the land. 27And they told him, and said, We came unto the land whither thou sentest us, and surely it floweth with milk and honey; and this is the fruit of it.

Through the ministry of the Spirit, we have tasted the blessings of Heaven. In Bible times, the first fruits always represented a pledge of a full crop to come. This makes us want to see the Lord, receive a new body, live with Him, and serve Him forever.

The physical limitations so many believers suffer are also a cause of groaning. This is not a disappointment with the human body ("we are fearfully and wonderfully made," Psalm 139:14) but from the perspective that we will have a new body. The Scripture says nothing about it except that we will be like Him.

I John 3:2, Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.

However, we know it will be perfect—could God create anything less? —and immortal. Then, as believers, we have all struggled with tiredness, aching limbs, and arthritic joints. With delight, we can imagine a time without pain, doctor's bills, and parts needing replacing.

We also groan because we have not yet received the final salvation (vv. 24-25). We still struggle with our sinful nature. We are still awaiting our final inheritance, the completion of our adoption as sons, which is the redemption of the body. We enjoy salvation now and are already God's sons, but we have not yet received all the benefits of salvation. At Christ's coming, the nature of sin will be destroyed, and our mortal bodies will become immortal.

Meanwhile, we wait and hope. "For we are saved by *that* hope" is the literal translation of Romans 8:24. We tend to link "hope" with uncertainty and regard it, therefore, as a somewhat anemic word. When we ask someone for a commitment, we do not want them to answer what they hope to do. We want something more definite. Then, what hope is Paul writing?

Titus 2:13, Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ.

Hope is used here as a positive expectation of the future, like the child waiting for the parent to return from a trip, hoping that a gift will be brought to him.

The best is yet to come! The believer is not treated as he sees and experiences suffering and pain. He knows that the temporary suffering will one day give way to eternal glory.

Think of a caterpillar slowly advancing over the weavings of a tapestry. It can only see occasional changes in the color and size of the threads, but they would have no apparent meaning even if it could understand. Yet when the caterpillar emerges from its cocoon into a butterfly that can fly above the tapestry and see the beautiful design of the whole, the experiences it had walking over the weavings will be transformed.

III. The Comforter Groans (vv. 26-27)

God is concerned about His people's trials. When He was ministering on Earth, Jesus groaned when He saw what sin was doing to mankind.

> Mark 7:31-35, 31Departing from the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, he came unto the sea of Galilee, through the midst of the coasts of Decapolis. 32And they bring unto him one that was deaf, and had an impediment in his speech; and they beseech him to put his hand upon him. 33And he took him aside from the multitude, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spit, and touched his tongue; 34And looking up to heaven, *he sighed*, and saith unto him, Ephphatha, that is, Be opened. 35And straightway his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spake plain.

> John 11:33-38, 33When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, *he groaned* in the spirit, and was troubled. 34And said, Where have ye laid him? They said unto him, Lord, come and see. 35Jesus wept. 36Then said the Jews, Behold how he loved him! 37And some of them said, Could not this man, which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died? 38Jesus therefore *again groaning* in himself cometh to the grave. It was a cave, and a stone lay upon it.

So, not only does God promise future deliverance, but He also provides present help by His Spirit. One of the most popular abiding benefits of the Spirit is that He is a Comforter. John uses that word three times in Chapter 14 of his gospel. It means "one who is called alongside to help." Paul's thoughts here are to show us that the Spirit assists us now as it resides in us. That is why Paul uses the phrase, "Likewise the Spirit." Today, the Spirit groans with us and feels the burdens of our weaknesses and suffering.

The word "helpeth" (v. 26) is a Greek compound word (*Sunantilambanomai*) meaning "to help, to assist, to take part with." The word conveys the idea of actively

joining in to help, cooperating, or sharing a burden. Verse 26 notes where the Spirit helps believers in their weakness. A. T. Robertson, a renowned New Testament Greek scholar, suggests it means that the Spirit grabs our weaknesses along with us and helps carry them, much like two men carrying a log, one at each end. The only other place this word is used in the New Testament is in Martha's plea to Jesus to tell Mary to get into the kitchen and help her.

> Luke 10:40, But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she *help* me.

That is the very idea behind Romans 8—what we need in prayer is the practical, down-to-earth, everyday help Martha needed in the kitchen.

What are our "weaknesses"? Our main weakness is spiritual; that is, our struggle to allow the new life of the Spirit to have freedom in us as we live in a body corrupted with sin and in an environment scented with death.

But the Spirit does more than groan. Our problem is not ignorance of how to pray. Jesus taught the disciples how to pray (Matthew 6:5-15, the disciple's prayer). Our difficulty is in knowing what to pray. We do not know what to ask for, especially in suffering, that will meet our needs and at the same time fulfill God's will. He prays for us in His groaning so that we might be led into the will of God. The Spirit "shares the burden."

Before our girls could write, they would still send "notes" to their grandparents. Their notes were usually lines, circles, squiggles, and zig-zag marks. Then, we would write on the side what it meant and who it was from. So, the Spirit interprets our feelings and groans into prayers.

Even greater, at times, the Spirit prays for us with tongues. Not all prayers are on this level, but occasionally, we must reach this depth of prayer. Sometimes, we know what we need but do not know how to pray. In such cases, the Spirit intercedes.

> I Corinthians 14:14-15, For if I pray in an unknown tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful. What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also.

This gives confidence that the prayer is in God's will.

From this, we learn that the Lord never abandons us, regardless of the intensity of our struggle. The weaker our spirit, the stronger His support! One of these days, our groaning will be turned to glory! This should provide comfort and strength through even the darkest valley.

Chapter Twenty-Eight
Spiritual Groaning
Romans 8:18-27

Lesson in Review

A. Complete the following sentences using the correct words from the reading, notes, and class lecture.

1. In this section, Paul deals with a genuine problem of _____ and _____.
2. This groaning is not a useless thing; Paul compared it to what?
3. God caused the Earth to become a victim of corruption because of man's what?
4. The Christian groans as much as sorrows over what man has lost in terms of God-ordained _____.
5. A. T. Robertson, a great Greek scholar, suggests that "helpeth" means what?
6. One of these days, our groaning will be turned to _____!

B. Answer these questions from Romans 8:18-27. Use verses where the answer comes from.

7. The sufferings of this present time are not worthy compared to what?
8. Creation will be delivered from what?
9. We who have the first fruits of the Spirit do what?
10. The Spirit helps in our what?
11. How does the Spirit make intercession for us (two-part answer)?

C. Read the question carefully and respond in 2-3 sentences with a clear and concise answer. Your response should directly address the question and provide relevant details from the text.

12. According to Romans 8:26, how does the Spirit help believers in their weaknesses, especially in prayer?

Chapter Twenty-Nine

Our Good and God's Glory

Romans 8:28-30

"*Being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.*" Philippians 1:6

Romans 8:28-30 offers a powerful reassurance that God is actively working in the lives of believers, turning every circumstance toward His divine purpose. Following the groaning described in Romans 8:16-27, Paul shifts the focus from human weakness of troubled hearts and minds (v. 28) to God's sovereign plan. This affirms that all things work together for good for those who love Him. This aligns with Philippians 1:5, which assures believers that the work God begins will be completed. Rather than concentrate on man's imperfect condition, Paul provides hope by telling us that God is using our circumstances for our good and His glory.

I. The Wrestling with God's Providence

Knowing God's providence can alleviate the pain we feel because of our groanings. The Bible teaches that all happenings are under divine control.

> Psalm 33:6-11, 6By the word of the LORD were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth. 7He gathereth the waters of the sea together as an heap: he layeth up the depth in storehouses. 8Let all the earth fear the LORD: let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him. 9For he spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast. 10The LORD bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought: he maketh the devices of the people of none effect. 11The counsel of the LORD standeth for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations.
>
> Psalm 103:19, The LORD hath prepared his throne in the heavens; and his kingdom ruleth over all.
>
> Isaiah 14:24-27, 24The LORD of hosts hath sworn, saying, Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass; and as I have purposed, so shall it stand: 25That I will break the Assyrian in my land, and upon my mountains tread him under foot: then shall his yoke depart from off them, and his burden depart from off their shoulders. 26This is the purpose that is purposed upon the whole earth: and this is the hand that is stretched out upon all the nations. 27For the LORD of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it? and his hand is stretched out, and who shall

turn it back?

Matthew 6:25-34, 25Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? 26Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? 27Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? 28And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: 29And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. 30Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? 31Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? 32(For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. 33But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. 34Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

Ephesians 1:11, In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.

Sometimes, we find solace in that truth. Often, however, we tend to wrestle with divine providence and its consequences. In Romans 8, Paul suggests our attitude is the reason for our struggle, and because of our assumptions, we tend to wrestle with God's sovereignty.

A. Our Attitude:

1.We are Ambitious. The first one is revealed in 8:7, "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." In other words, in the flesh, we are selfish. Our flesh craves control and recognition. Yet the Bible teaches that the way up is down, and the way to lead is to serve. We want our way, not anyone else's—especially not God's. This sets us against Him and His plan for our lives.

2.We are Afraid. We fear losing control over our lives and being subject to a plan of His design. We do not mind reaping the ever-lasting benefits of God's sovereign control, but we often lack the courage to face the groans that must precede those glorious benefits.

Romans 8:23-25, 23And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body. 24For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? 25But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.

3. **We are Arrogant.** The Lord knows we are weak and dependent on Him, but we have difficulty admitting this to ourselves and others.

Romans 8:26-27, 26Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. 27And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.

B. Our Assumptions:

When we consider God's control over our lives and are tempted to question it, we often overlook two assumptions that will cause us problems.

1. We Respect the Day. We tend to want enjoyment now and resist anything unpleasant or inconvenient. Therefore, we can become frustrated and confused when life differs from what we planned. This is because we need to see how life experiences fit together. Since we are limited in knowledge and perspective, we do not even know what God is accomplishing in our lives. God, on the other hand, infallibly sees our life as complete. So, what may seem out of place and uncalled for by us is not so from the Lord's perspective. God is more interested in our eternal good rather than our temporal good.

2. We are Ready to Direct. After much research and reflection, we can gain a fair knowledge of the past and the present. Our knowledge, however, will always be subject to growth and correction. This situation is not so with God; His knowledge is complete and perfect. He not only knows every detail of the past and present with total accuracy, but He also knows everything about the future. Nothing can take Him by surprise.

Hebrews 4:13, Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.

II. The Way of God's Providence

As we probe further into divine providence, we must understand that we cannot fully comprehend what God is doing. The only way we could ever wholly grasp God's will is if we were as infinite as He is, but that is impossible. Therefore, we must be content with a partial understanding of this infinitely vast topic. Paul's words in verse 28 convey five prominent thoughts.

A. The Promise is to be Claimed. In this context, the Greek word for "know" refers to "the possession of absolute, unshakeable confidence." The promise is not something we wish for or guess at, but it is a truth in which we can have total assurance because the Lord gives it. Therefore, we should embrace it and make it a vital part of our daily lives.

B. The Project is Christ's. The passage says that "God causes all things to work together." Notice it does not say, "God causes all things to occur." We know from other passages of Scripture that the Lord is not the cause of sin and evil.

> Habbakuk 1:13, Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity: wherefore lookest thou upon them that deal treacherously, and holdest thy tongue when the wicked devoureth the man that is more righteous than he?
>
> James 1:13, Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man.
>
> I John 1:5, This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.
>
> I John 2:16, For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.

Scripture also clearly states that God is not the only cause of good motives or actions; people are also.

> Exodus 1:15-21, 15And the king of Egypt spake to the Hebrew midwives, of which the name of the one was Shiphrah, and the name of the other Puah: 16And he said, When ye do the office of a midwife to the Hebrew women, and see them upon the stools; if it be a son, then ye shall kill him: but if it be a daughter, then she shall live. 17But the midwives feared God, and did not as the king of Egypt commanded them, but saved the men children alive. 18And the king of Egypt called for the midwives, and said unto them, Why have ye done this thing, and have saved the men children alive? 19And the midwives said unto Pharaoh, Because the Hebrew women are not as the Egyptian women; for they are lively, and are delivered ere the midwives come in unto them. 20Therefore God dealt well with the midwives: and the people multiplied, and waxed very mighty. 21And it came to pass, because the midwives feared God, that he made them houses.
>
> Joshua 2:1-14, 1And Joshua the son of Nun sent out of Shittim two men to spy secretly, saying, Go view the land, even Jericho. And they went, and came into an harlot's house, named Rahab, and lodged there. 2And it was told the king of Jericho, saying, Behold, there came men in hither to night of the children of Israel to search out the country. 3And the king of Jericho sent unto Rahab, saying, Bring

forth the men that are come to thee, which are entered into thine house: for they be come to search out all the country. 4And the woman took the two men, and hid them, and said thus, There came men unto me, but I wist not whence they were: 5And it came to pass about the time of shutting of the gate, when it was dark, that the men went out: whither the men went I wot not: pursue after them quickly; for ye shall overtake them. 6But she had brought them up to the roof of the house, and hid them with the stalks of flax, which she had laid in order upon the roof. 7And the men pursued after them the way to Jordan unto the fords: and as soon as they which pursued after them were gone out, they shut the gate. 8And before they were laid down, she came up unto them upon the roof; 9And she said unto the men, I know that the LORD hath given you the land, and that your terror is fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land faint because of you. 10For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red sea for you, when ye came out of Egypt; and what ye did unto the two kings of the Amorites, that were on the other side Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom ye utterly destroyed. 11And as soon as we had heard these things, our hearts did melt, neither did there remain any more courage in any man, because of you: for the LORD your God, he is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath. 12Now therefore, I pray you, swear unto me by the LORD, since I have shewed you kindness, that ye will also shew kindness unto my father's house, and give me a true token: 13And that ye will save alive my father, and my mother, and my brethren, and my sisters, and all that they have, and deliver our lives from death. 14And the men answered her, Our life for yours, if ye utter not this our business. And it shall be, when the LORD hath given us the land, that we will deal kindly and truly with thee.

Matthew 7:9-11, 9Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? 10Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? 11If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?

Luke 7:36-50, 36And one of the Pharisees desired him that he would eat with him. And he went into the Pharisee's house, and sat down to meat. 37And, behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, 38And stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment. 39Now when the Pharisee which had bidden him saw it, he spake within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him: for she is a sinner. 40And Jesus answering said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith, Master, say on. 41There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one

owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. 42And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most? 43Simon answered and said, I suppose that he, to whom he forgave most. 44And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged. And he turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. 45Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet. 46My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment. 47Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little. 48And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven. 49And they that sat at meat with him began to say within themselves, Who is this that forgiveth sins also? 50And he said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace.

Luke 10:38-42, 38Now it came to pass, as they went, that he entered into a certain village: and a certain woman named Martha received him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus' feet, and heard his word. 39But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me. 40And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.

What does verse 28 teach? It informs us that the Lord uses everything that enters our lives to work together for our best interests. He is the master Potter, and we are His clay. He uses whatever means are necessary to form us into vessels of the utmost grace and beauty. Furthermore, as the Potter, He has every right to design and shape us into whatever He desires.

Jeremiah 18:1-11, 1The word which came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, 2Arise, and go down to the potter's house, and there I will cause thee to hear my words. 3Then I went down to the potter's house, and, behold, he wrought a work on the wheels. 4And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter: so he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it. 5Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying, 6O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the LORD. Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in mine hand, O house of Israel. 7At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it; 8If that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them. 9And at what instant

I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it; 10If it do evil in my sight, that it obey not my voice, then I will repent of the good, wherewith I said I would benefit them. 11Now therefore go to, speak to the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, saying, Thus saith the LORD; Behold, I frame evil against you, and devise a device against you: return ye now every one from his evil way, and make your ways and your doings good.

But we can rest assured that He will always do what is best for us because He is all good.

C. The Plan is Complete. The Lord causes "all things (everything) to work together for good." We often do not see, even retrospectively, how some events could be for our good. But simply because we may be unable to figure out all the "whys and the hows" does not imply that God is without good reason or that He has lost control.

After all, He sees everything clearly and knows all things thoroughly. We, on the other hand, "see in a glass darkly" and only "know in part" (I Corinthians 13:12). So, it only stands to reason that we who do not even fully know ourselves will not always understand the all-good plan of the omniscient God.

We may not, therefore, always be able to identify positive results from every trial and tragedy. All things work "together" to bring ultimate good. The individual ingredients of a cake may be very distasteful when eaten separately. Still, the result is delicious when mixed in the right proportions and baked correctly. Creating a beautiful tapestry or painting is a metaphor for how diverse elements such as colors, textures, and individual threads or brushstrokes come together to form something harmonious and meaningful. All life experiences combine to mold our character, make us what we are, and bring us to where we are.

D. The People are Conditional. All of this is promised only to those who "love God." The unrepentant sinner fights against God and does not benefit from the toils of life. The believer submits to the activities of life and allows God to use them for the believer's good and God's glory.

E. The Purpose is Commendable. The Lord will not cause or permit anything to cross our paths to our detriment. Every circumstance is designed for our ultimate good. Present distresses or reversals can never be viewed as destructive. Each fits into a pattern. In some manner, they prepare us for our good and God's glory.

The Lord is for us, not against us. Too often, we live as if the opposite were true. And when we do, we miss out on some of the richest benefits God is waiting to give us.

III. The Working of God's Providence

Among the many truths conveyed in these verses, two are prominent.

A. The Model (v. 29). Jesus Christ is the model for God's sovereign activity in our lives. God has determined that we are "to become conformed to the image of his son." In other words, God wants to reproduce in us the character qualities of Jesus. Even before He created us, He was committed to the task and would only quit once until He finished it in every Christian.

B. The Manner (vv. 29-30). The foundational process by which God causes this Christlikeness in believers is described in five steps: "For whom he foreknew, he also predestined . . .; and whom he predestined, these he also called; and whom he called, these he also justified; and whom he also justified, these he also glorified." Because God can see the beginning and the end, He speaks of our perfect conformity to Christ's image as if it has already been completed (justified and glorified). Indeed, since the entire project is His, we can be sure the Lord will finish the work He has begun in our lives. Let's define these terms:

- Foreknew: All knowledge is based on a point—the argument runs—the fact is not based on knowledge. A fact must be established before it can be known. Human knowledge is an after-knowledge, yet God is not restricted to after-knowledge. He is omniscient and, therefore, has foreknowledge, but His knowledge is based on fact. But the fact may not yet happen for days, weeks, months, or even years. God knows in advance who will obey Him.

- Predestined: "to pre-horizon" or "to define in advance the limits." God determined in advance that the redeemed were to be like Jesus. This definition is not a predestination for salvation, but a predestination of what God has in mind for those who get saved. Therefore, predestination refers to God's plan, not to the fate of everyone. "Whom" is plural in this verse, indicating the group is predestined, not the individual.

It is like deciding to invite a friend to a fried chicken dinner. The friend is free to reject your invitation, but if he accepts, he knows he will eat chicken. He will not be offered steak or fish.

- Called: When God calls, it is a summons, first to salvation, then to those who respond, a leading of the Spirit. God fashions us in the image of Jesus by calling (leading) us into paths that refine us and prepare us so that more and more we reflect Jesus.

- Justified: He declares us innocent, just as if we had never sinned. God sees us as holy as He molds us into His image.

- Glorified: Our life gives God glory. Glorification involves receiving Jesus' full humanity in a redeemed body adapted to the full expression of the Spirit. The point is that the believer's salvation is not just a wish or a mere possibility. It is a certain event if the believer will only remain in God's plan.

Even though the whole section points to the future, Paul speaks of glorification in the past tense. This shows that, in the mind of God, glorification is as good as done. It is

certain.

IV. The Willing of God's Providence

When confronted with the biblical teaching of God's providence, believers often experience three stages of response.

A. We Reject. Our selfishness, fear, and pride help to keep us from embracing the truth of God's sovereignty. But this reaction works toward our detriment, not our benefit.

B. We Receive. As we mature in our faith, our concept of God enlarges, and our experience of His providence confirms His goodness. This is the maturity of faith, as demonstrated by trust.

C. We Realize. We finally rest in God's perfect plan for our lives and cooperate with Him as He brings about its perfect result—complete conformity to the character of Jesus Christ.

What is your response today?

Chapter Twenty-Nine
Our Good and God's Glory
Romans 8:28-30

Lesson in Review

A. Complete the following sentences using the correct words from the reading, notes, and class lecture.

1. The Bible teaches that all happenings are under what?
2. In Romans 8, Paul suggests our _____ is the reason for our struggle.
3. Our flesh craves _____ and _____.
4. God is more interested in our _____ good rather than our _____ good.
5. The Lord uses _____ that enters our lives to _____ together for our best interests.
6. The believer _____ to the activities of life and allows God to use them for the believer's good and God's glory.
7. The Lord will not cause or permit _____ to cross our paths that will be to our detriment.
8. God wants to reproduce in us the _____ _____ of Jesus.
9. In the mind of God, _____ is as good as done.

B. Answer these questions from Romans 8:28-30. Use verses where the answer comes from.

10. All things work together, so what to them that love God?

11. Them that love God are called according to His what?

12. Those whom God foreknew He has predestined to be what?

13. Those whom God did predestinate, he also what?

14. Those whom God called he also what?

15. Those whom God justified he also what?

C. Read the question carefully and respond in 2-3 sentences with a clear and concise answer. Your response should directly address the question and provide relevant details from the text.

18. What does Paul mean by "glorified" in Romans 8:30, and why does he speak of it in the past tense?

19. What does Paul mean by "predestined" in Romans 8:29-30, and how does it relate to believers?

D. According to D. Bernard's *The Message of Romans (p. 105)*, answer the following questions.

20. Does Romans 8:28 mean that we can always see the good in every situation and why?

Chapter Thirty

What Shall We Say?

Romans 8:31-39

"*The LORD is on my side; I will not fear.*
What can man do to me?" Psalm 118:6

Romans 8:31-39 is a triumphant declaration of assurance in God's unfailing love and salvation. Paul, reflecting on all he has previously stated, confidently challenges any force that might try to stand against those who are Christ's. Echoing Psalm 118:6, this passage reassures believers that they have no reason to fear, for God is on their side. God's provision of salvation will stand regardless of circumstances and all opposition. This is not a doctrine of unconditional eternal security, but rather a call to faithfulness and perseverance. If we remain in Christ, salvation is secure, and not external power can take it away. Paul's passionate argument leaves no doubt.

This is not the doctrine of unconditional eternal security but the doctrine of assurance. If we want to be saved, we can be. Nothing can take away our salvation if we remain in Christ and keep our faith in Him.

At this stage of the epistle, Paul emerges in a new light. So far, we have sat at the feet of the learned teacher and been spectators as he presented his diatribes. His brilliance has dazzled us, and his grasp of truth and its orderly presentation have led us along the train of his thought. The preacher takes the podium and is looking for a response. What are we going to say? What is our attitude going to be? With the rapidity of a machine gun, he fires his questions at us, and we find ourselves being challenged to face the implications of what has been taught.

I. What Shall We Say to the Scoffer? We are More than Confident! (vv. 31-34)

If Paul asked, "Who is against us?" there would have been many replies. We have formidable enemies arrayed against us. Unbelievers oppose us. Indwelling sin is a powerful force that assaults us. Death is an enemy. So is he who has the power of death, the devil. The world, the flesh, and the devil are all too strong for us. But Paul did not ask the simple question, "Who is against us?" His question is: "If God is for us"—the God who called, justified, and glorified us, that God— "who is against us?"

Again, if the Apostle had asked, "Will God not give us all things?" we might have hummed and hawed and given an equivocal answer. We need so many great and difficult things; how can we be sure that God will supply all our needs? But the way the Apostle Paul expresses his question banishes our lingering doubts. If God was willing to assume human life and lay down that life for us, surely He would freely give us anything else we

need to endure to the end (v. 32).

> Matthew 6:33, But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

The cross proves the generosity of God.

Paul doesn't ask, "Who can accuse us?" Our conscience accuses us. The devil never ceases to bring charges against us. The devil is called "the accuser of the brethren," and his name means slander. The devil would like to accuse us.

A good Old Testament illustration is the silence of Satan, chief prosecutor in the heavenly court, when God declares his acceptance of Joshua, the high priest (Zechariah 3:1-7). Joshua was arrayed in filthy garments, a figure of his unfitness for the presence of God. We are not told what Satan's arguments were, but the context implies disgrace. Satan did not have to make anything up; there is plenty in all our lives for him to tell the truth. Joshua had no words for his defense. But, before he could speak, God took up his case.

> Zechariah 3:1-7, 1He shewed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him. 2And the LORD said unto Satan, The LORD rebuke thee, O Satan; even the LORD that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: is not this a brand plucked out of the fire? 3Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and stood before the angel. 4And he answered and spake unto those that stood before him, saying, Take away the filthy garments from him. And unto him he said, Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment. 5And I said, Let them set a fair mitre upon his head. So they set a fair mitre upon his head, and clothed him with garments. And the angel of the LORD stood by. 6And the angel of the LORD protested unto Joshua, saying, 7Thus saith the LORD of hosts; If thou wilt walk in my ways, and if thou wilt keep my charge, then thou shalt also judge my house, and shalt also keep my courts, and I will give thee places to walk among these that stand by
>
> Revelation 12:10, And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night.

The devil's accusations fall to the ground; they do not hurt us; they glance off us like arrows off a shield. Why? The One before whom we are guilty has pronounced us not guilty. Only God could accuse us, but He will not because He justified us.

It is not, "Who can condemn us?" Again, many seek to condemn us. Sometimes, our

heart condemns us or tries.

> I John 3:20-21, 20For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. 21Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God.

So do our critics and our enemies. Yes, and all the demons of hell. But their condemnations are idle nonsense. Why? Because Jesus died for the very sin for which we're being condemned. And Jesus rose from the dead to prove the efficacy of His death.

When Jesus talked to the woman accused of adultery and gave her accusers the privilege of stoning her, provided they were without sin, she remained unstoned. Her adversaries quickly left the scene, and Jesus, with rare irony, asked, "Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee?" (John 8:10). If Christ, the Judge, refuses to condemn us, who can be against us? He does not condemn those He died to forgive.

Now, He is our heavenly Advocate interceding for us. Peter sinned against the Lord but was forgiven and restored to fellowship because Jesus interceded through prayer.

> Luke 22:31-32, 31And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: 32But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.

With such a Savior—crucified, raised, exalted, interceding for us—we can convincingly say, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1).

II. What Shall We Say to the Saboteur? We are More than Conquerors! (vv. 35-37)

In the first section of this passage, Paul proves that God cannot fail us, but must we fail Him? What about trails or temptations? Paul now deals with that question.

With Paul's last question, he does what we have tried to do; he looks for possible answers. "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" He brings forth all the adversities that might separate us. These are real adversities indeed. They are real sufferings, painful and perilous, hard to bear. But can they separate us from the love of Christ Jesus? No (v. 37)! Far from separating us from Christ's love through the experience and endurance of them, we are more than conquerors!

Notice Paul's list:

- "Tribulation" (trouble) is pressure.
- "Distress" (hardship) translates as a Greek word related to the "narrow" of

the famous, "broad way," and "narrow gate" of which Christ spoke. The word developed the sense of compression and graphically speaks of the inner constriction felt by those who come under external tribulation.

- "Persecution" is something with which the early Christians were familiar; in fact, there was a sense in which persecution contributed to the spread of the gospel.

- Paul continues that "famine (hunger), or nakedness (loss of possessions), or peril (danger)" could not separate a believer from God.

- His reference to the "sword" (violent death) reminds us that not even death can separate; whether it be by martyrdom, as was Paul's, or natural causes—the Christian life goes on beyond what we can see. Paul quoted Psalm 44 to remind his readers that there is nothing new about the persecution of the righteous.

Because of his brilliance as a military strategist and tactician, Napoleon was dubbed by his troops "Wee One Hundred Thousand Men." In battle, they would ask one another, "Is Wee One Hundred Thousand Men in the army today?" Napoleon was considered worthy by many men. As Christians, in our daily struggles against Satan and his hosts of demons and wicked men, we have better odds than the French army with Napoleon. As the adage states, "You and God are a majority."

Psalm 118:6, The LORD is on my side; I will not fear: what can man do unto me?

The Bible is replete with examples of this fact.

- God gave David victory over the giant Goliath (I Samuel 17:32-51).

- God enabled Jonathan and his armor-bearer to rout the camp of the Philistines (I Samuel 14:6-15).

- The Spirit of the Lord empowered Samson in his victories over the Philistines (Judges 14:19; 15:3-17).

- God whittled Gideon's army down from 32,000 to 300 to recognize the victory over the Midianites as the Lord's (Judges 7:2-23).

- Joshua told the Israelites, "One man of you shall chase a thousand: for the LORD your God, he it is that fighteth for you, as he hath promised you." (Joshua 23:10).

Paul asserts, "In all these things, we are more than conquerors through him that loved us" (v. 37). Paul uses a rare Greek word in Scripture to describe the experience. We are "super-conquerors"!

Paul feels there are many conquerors and innumerable exploits, but he sets the

believers apart from these men and their courageous actions. We will not eke out a victory over the foe at the last second, just before slumping in exhaustion. We will barely drag through the pearly gates. On the contrary, we are super-conquerors. We have more than enough power in the Spirit to defeat all enemies. Through Christ, we will crush Satan underfoot.

> Romans 16:20, And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.

Every miracle of Christ was done overflowingly. The lame man not only walked but leaped. The wine Jesus made for the wedding feast was more than almost any company could have consumed. The very fragments of His feeding are twelve basketfuls. He will not skimp on His investment in us!

At the same time, we must remember Jesus' warning to His disciples, "Without me, ye can do nothing." (John 15:5). As someone said, "The important question is not whether God is on our side, but whether we are on God's side. Then victory is assured."

Paul does not talk about God aiding those who wish to escape so they can be delivered from all these things. Instead, he is concerned that we should triumph in these things. God has a reason for working in this way. He does not shelter us from life's difficulties because we need them for spiritual growth.

> Romans 5:3-5, 3And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; 4And patience, experience; and experience, hope: 5And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.

Paul also explained:

> I Corinthians 1:27-29, 27God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; 28And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to naught things that are: 29That no flesh should glory in his presence.

The purpose is that God should be magnified. As Paul exhorted, "He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord" (I Corinthians 1:31).

III. What Shall We Say to the Skeptic? We are More than Convinced! (vv. 38-39)

Having challenged sin, sword, and society to do their worst, Paul reaches his peak. "For I am persuaded," this is Paul's fixed, unshakable conviction. He is confident that nothing can separate him from God's love. The word "separate" is also translated as "put

asunder" in Christ's famous statement about the permanence of the marriage bond and man's responsibility not to separate husband and wife.

- "Death nor life" cannot rob the believer because to be "absent from the body" is to be "present with the Lord." For this reason, Paul showed little regard for his safety because living to him was Christ, and death was gain.

- The "angels, nor principalities, nor powers" refers to spiritual beings. Whoever they are and whatever they do, they cannot affect the love of Christ.

- Broadening the scope of his thought, he adds, "Things present, nor things to come." In a grand sweep, Paul brings together everything present and everything to come, which covers everything not covered!

- Paul's inclusion of "height, nor depth" is interesting. Height is more than measurement. It contains the idea of loftiness and eminence, hence, power and authority. Similarly, "depth" referred to deep places and things and included the concept of profundity and mystery.

- Finally, Paul adds, "nor any other creature." The Apostle affirms that no real or imaginary power can touch our relationship to Christ. The scope of this phrase is boundless. If there is anything that we do not know about, do not worry; it can't separate us from God's love, either.

Chrysostom, a fifth-century Christian, illustrates Paul's jubilation. The Roman Emperor threatened Chrysostom with banishment if he remained a Christian. Chrysostom replied, "You cannot banish me from my Father's house." "Then I will slay you," said the Emperor. "You can't, my life is hidden in Christ." "I will take away your treasurers." "My treasurer is in heaven with my heart." "I will drive you from men so you have no friends." "I have a friend in heaven from whom I can never be separated. You cannot hurt me."

We arrive at the grand conclusion of Paul's systematic treatment of the gospel and note that it appropriately finishes with the words "our Lord." The reigning and ruling Lordship of Jesus Christ is fundamental to our salvation. Still, the personal aspect of His Lordship, making Him "ours," brings salvation from the realm of theological possibility into the hearts of men and women in life-transforming power. What these verses teach is meant for us to claim and apply, not just study. It was this message that Paul preached and that our world still needs to hear.

The foundation of our confidence is the grace of God and the gift of God. "If God be for us, who can be against us?" (v. 31). The "if' in no way implies doubt. There is no question whether God is for us. The word means, "Since God is for us, who can be against us?" The strength of any possible adversary is utter weakness compared with the omnipotence of God.

Chapter Thirty
What Shall We Say?
Romans 8:31-39

Lesson in Review

A. Complete the following sentences using the correct words from the reading, notes, and class lecture.

1. If God were willing to assume _____ life and lay down that life for us, surely, He would freely give us _____ else we need to endure to the end.

2. Why does God not shelter us from the difficulties of life?

3. The foundation of our confidence is the _____ of God and the _____ of God.

B. Select the most accurate answer and mark it with a circle.

4. According to Paul, what proves the generosity of God?

   a. The miracles of Jesus
   b. The teachings of the prophets
   c. The sacrifice of Christ on the cross
   d. The obedience of believers

5. In Zechariah 3:1-7, what do Joshua's filthy garments represent?
   a. His wealth and status
   b. His unfitness for the presence of God
   c. His commitment to holiness
   d. His ability to resist Satan's accusations

6. What is the primary theme of the final section of Romans 8?
   a. The doctrine of unconditional eternal security
   b. The assurance of salvation through faith in Christ
   c. The inevitability of sin and condemnation
   d. The uncertainty of God's provision

C. Answer these questions from Romans 8:31-39. Use verses where the answer comes from.

7. If God be for us, who can be _____ us?

8. Who is it that justifies?

9. How are we more than conquerors?

10. I am persuaded that nothing outside us can separate us from what?

D. Read the question carefully and respond in 2-3 sentences with a clear and concise answer. Your response should directly address the question and provide relevant details from the text.

11. Paul lists various adversities believers may face, such as tribulation, distress, persecution, and even death. According to Romans 8:37, how should Christians view these hardships, and what does this teach about their relationship with Christ?

Chapter Thirty-One

A Burden for His Brethren

Romans 9:1-5

"*Yet now, if You will forgive their sin,*
but if not, I pray, blot me out of Your book which
You have written." Exodus 32:32

Romans 9:1-5 marks a dramatic shift in tone from the triumphant joy of Romans 8 to Paul's deep sorrow for Israel**.** Paul pauses to address the spiritual condition of the Jews**,** dedicating three chapters to their role in God's redemptive plan. Echoing Exodus 32:32**,** where Moses pleaded for Israel's forgiveness, Paul expresses his heartfelt burden**,** even willing to be cut off from Christ if it meant their salvation. This passage sets the stage for a discussion on Israel's rejection and God's sovereignty. His unwavering faithfulness making it a crucial part of Paul's theological argument.

Romans 9-11 begins the second main section of the book. Romans 8 closes with the Apostle in a state of great joy. He is exalting God. Some feel that Paul should have gone from his case of man's sin and God's grace right into Chapter 12, "I beseech you therefore," which is the practical application based on God's grace. Instead, Paul now diverts for three chapters to talk about the Jews.

Paul's discussion of Israel is not an interruption but an illustration of his theme. He explains Israel's past election (Chapter 9), present rejection (Chapter 10), and future reception (Chapter 11). Further, he proves that God has been righteous in his dealings with Israel. God has not failed to work out His divine purposes for the Jews, nor will He fail to work out His purposes for His church.

We refer to this as parentheses in Apostle Paul's argument. A parenthesis is supposed to be an inclusion that does not create confusion. Grammatically, a sentence should be complete without it. Paul's treatment of the Jews may be parenthetical to us today, but it was relevant to the church of Paul's day. Why?

The gospel Paul taught was under severe attack from the Jewish people. This attack affected the church because it sprang from the Jews and contained many Jews. The church in Rome was primarily Jewish. The church began on the Day of Pentecost when visitors from Rome were filled with the Holy Ghost (Acts 2:10). The Jews kept many of their customs within the church. These Jews felt that Paul's teachings downgraded the Jews, and he was considered a traitor to the Jewish nation. He ministered to Gentiles and taught freedom from the Law of Moses. Remember, Paul is on his way to Rome and asks them to support his trip to Spain (Romans 1:10; 15:24), so he answers the question before he arrives.

What were their reasons for feeling that the gospel downgraded the Jews? First, Paul taught that a man was justified by faith and not by keeping the Law. The Jews had spent centuries explaining, training, and keeping the Law, and resisted his teaching. Now, Paul said it was not the Law; faith in the Lawgiver made the difference.

Second, they felt Paul opened the door to the Gentiles. The Jews felt God was just for them, and people must become Jews first.

Third, Paul's gospel bypassed the Jews as the channel through whom God speaks. They were accustomed to hearing from God through God's representatives. Now, people could come to God for themselves.

Fourth, Paul's gospel insisted that the Messiah was the One their leaders rejected. He was plainly saying they goofed, which naturally went against their pride.

Fifth, they realized that if Paul's gospel was true, they, as a people, were set aside. Paul argues that God came to them in many ways, and they rejected Him.

> Matthew 23:37-38, 37O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! 38Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.

So, they felt that Paul's message dragged them into the dirt. Paul realized this. His gospel not only infuriated the Jews but seemed to contradict the history of which the Jews were so proud. They were God's chosen people. These people God chose rejected Him. Paul must deal with this before he can go on. Paul must explain how God could elect the Jews and then reject them.

As Paul deals with this rejection, he also gives us his feelings toward the Jews and a brief history of God's work with the Jewish nation.

I. Paul's Innocence of Feeling (v. 1)

"I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost," (v. 1). Paul insists he is telling the truth, adds that he is not lying, appeals to his conscience, and adds the testimony of the Holy Ghost.

The Jews had beaten Paul, imprisoned him, cursed him, and castigated him. Despite the emancipating verdict of the Jerusalem Conference (Acts 15), even Christian Jews added to his burdens by subverting his converts to a lower form of Christianity in which Judaistic rules and rituals undermined the gospel. Paul perhaps expected that his avowal of love would be denied, so he states it in language hedged about with solemn affirmations.

Such love is not of nature; it is supernatural and a fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22).

This love today sends missionaries to foreign lands away from families and home. Hence, they become missionaries in areas, so they are full-time pastors, full-time employees, full-time fathers, and evangelists in the mission field to live out of a suitcase.

II. Paul's Intensity of Feeling (vv. 2-3)

> Romans 9:2-3, That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh."

There is a striking intensity in the Apostle's words as he tries to impress his readers with how genuinely he feels about the condition of his own people. It is remarkable how Paul moved from joy when he looked at Christ to the sorrow and burden he felt when he looked at the lost people of Israel. The degree of sorrow he expresses is so extreme that if it had not been introduced in verse one, it would probably have been dismissed as ridiculous. He says that he would gladly be *anathema*—that is, "cut off" or cursed from Christ—if it would help the Jews. It appears that Paul, like Moses (Exodus 32:30-35), would gladly suffer the ultimate sacrifice if it were possible and if it would do any good. This sacrifice, as one commentary on Romans 9:3 describes is "a spark from the fire of Christ's substitutionary love."

Paul knew he could not add anything to Christ's atoning work, but he was willing to make any sacrifice necessary to reach the Jews with the gospel. Our lesson: while we can influence others, ultimately, the decision to serve God or reject God is a personal decision. However, that does not excuse us from making every effort to inform others of the gospel. From Paul and Moses, we can learn much about an intercessory burden and a love for sinners.

This is Paul's burden; it comes from his heart. The burden is heavy, painful ("sorrow"), and weighs upon him continually. This is Paul in a new light—a broken-hearted man.

Paul told the Philippians that he was willing to stay out of heaven for the sake of the saved. Now, he is also willing to go to hell for the sake of the lost.

> Philippians 1:21-24, 21For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. 22But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot not. 23For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: 24Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you.

This attitude demonstrates how Paul could suffer the hardships listed in II Corinthians 11:23-30 and never quit.

II Corinthians 11:23-30, 23Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. 24Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. 25Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; 26In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; 27In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. 28Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches. 29Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not? 30If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things which concern mine infirmities.

The souls of people motivated him!

III. Paul's Impetus of Feeling (vv. 4-5)

"Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen" (vv. 4-5). Why did Paul have this burden?

A. It was His Cousins, "Kinsmen" (v. 3). Nothing is said about Paul's family. Maybe, part of the reason for this great feeling is his family's doubt. In a broader sense, to be Jewish was to be a part of the "adoption," literally the "placing of sons," or the special invitation by God to be His family. God chose the Israelites first to bless them and use them, especially in His plan.

Exodus 4:22, And thou shalt say unto Pharaoh, Thus saith the LORD, Israel is my son, even my firstborn.

B. It was His Country, "Israelites" (v. 4). While Paul was justifiably proud of his Greek culture and Roman citizenship, his Jewish heritage was dearest to him. To be a member of the people of God was, to him, the most magnificent privilege, for the name Israelite was itself a reminder of God's special intervention in the life of Jacob, leading to the identification of his descendants as unique people. The Jews alone had seen His "glory," or as the rabbis called it, the Shekinah—or literally "visible glory cloud," referring to God's presence with them in the cloud and the fire during the wilderness wanderings.

Only with the Israelites had the Lord entered "covenants" such as those to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, and David. Only with the Jews did God "give the Law" that revealed Himself and His ways to a people. The Law was God's highest revelation of His Word and His will up to that time. To them alone, the "service of God," or the order of worship

in both the Tabernacle and the Temple, was revealed. They were able to serve God more completely than any other people. Only to them and through them had promises for mankind been made, such as those that promised lands to Abraham and a dynasty to David.

In the next verse, Paul continues about the long line of "fathers" that stretched back through their remarkable history. Other nations were illustrious and great, but not like Israel. But, more than anything, Christ (Greek for the Hebrew word *Messiah*) came from eternity into the turmoil of human history through Israel.

Romans 9:5 affirms that Jesus Christ is God, "Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen."

C. It was His Compassion. Despite the blessings, Israel failed. When the Messiah appeared, Israel rejected Him and crucified Him. No one knew this better than Paul because he persecuted the church in his early days. Paul also knew judgment was coming for those who rejected Jesus.

> Romans 6:23, For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

D. It was His Concern. He knew their religious inconsistencies, that they were more outwardly than inwardly. Jesus' greatest criticisms were leveled against the Pharisees, of whom Paul was a member before his conversion. He called them whited sepulchers full of dead men's bones and of their father, the devil. Paul had to reach past their feelings of being right with God to expose their hypocrisy.

So what? This is the heart of the Christian, a burden for those who do not know Christ. How does your attitude toward the lost compare to Paul's burden for his people?

This burden causes churches to grow and families and communities to be saved. The simple message of this passage is that when we measure ourselves by the Apostle Paul, we are playing games.

What do we do? Honest answers to these questions will tell us if we also have a burden.

1. Do we believe that people are as lost as we say they are?

2. What have we done with the truth we have?

3. Do we care more about their lost condition or our comfort?

Romans 9:1-5 reveals that we really do not know much about a burden for people.

Chapter Thirty-One
A Burden for His Brethren
Romans 9:1-5

Lesson in Review

A. Complete the following sentences using the correct words from the reading, notes, and class lecture.

1. Paul's treatment of the Jews may be parenthetical to us today, but it was what to the church of Paul's day and why (two-part answer).

2. Paul must explain how God could do what to the Jews in this section (two-part answer).

3. Paul knew he could not add anything to Christ's atoning work, but he was willing to do what?

4. What motivated the Apostle Paul?

5. The Jews alone had seen God's what?

B. Answer these questions from Romans 9:1-5. Use verses where the answer comes from.

6. With whom was Paul's conscience witnessed?

7. Paul would wish himself cursed if it would benefit whom?

8. To the Israelites pertain what (six-part answer)?

C. Read the question carefully and respond in 2-3 sentences with a clear and concise answer. Your response should directly address the question and provide relevant details from the text.

9. Why did some Jewish believers feel that Paul's gospel downgraded them, and how did Paul address their concerns?

10. What does Paul's parenthetical discussion about Israel in Romans 9-11 teach about God's faithfulness?

D. According to D. Bernard's *The Message of Romans (pp. 110-111)*, answer the following questions.

11. Why does Paul shift his focus to Israel in Romans 9-11?

12. What is the significance of Israel's rejection in Romans 11?

13. How did Romans 9-11 refute the idea of predestination?

Chapter Thirty-Two

The Sovereign God

Romans 9:6-24

"*I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.*" Exodus 33:19

Romans 9:6-24 explores the sovereignty of God in election**,** highlighting that His promises are fulfilled not by human effort but by His divine will**.** Just as Exodus 33:19 declares that God has mercy and compassion on whom He wills, Paul emphasizes that not all descendants of Israel are truly Israel. Salvation is based on God's choice, not ancestry or works**.** This concept of divine selection, or God's sovereign choice, parallels the foundational principles of human liberty, where the right to choose is rooted in being made in God's image**.** Yet, while humans exercise free will, God's choices serve as the ultimate example of how we should use our ability to choose—aligning our lives with His sovereign purpose.

The United States of America's government is known as a republic. A democracy's liberties are derived from the people, but a republic's liberties are derived from God. For this reason, the Declaration of Independence includes the words that all men are created equal and afforded the rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

This idea of liberty, the right to choose for yourself, comes from our creation in God's image. God also chooses, and His choices show how we should use the power to choose.

I. God's Choosing (vv. 6-13)

Romans 9:6-13, 6Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel: 7Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called. 8That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed. 9For this is the word of promise, At this time will I come, and Sarah shall have a son. 10And not only this; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac; 11(For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;) 12It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. 13As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.

The Word of God speaks powerfully about God's complete freedom to act as He chooses. His general dealings with Israel and the lineage of Christ through Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Judah, and David clearly illustrated his freedom. He decided that Isaac, rather than Ishmael, would be the progenitor of Messiah, the child born of promise rather than natural consideration. Then, before the twins in Rebecca's womb came to birth, He chose Jacob rather than Esau, although Esau was the firstborn, and neither could be responsible for either good or evil actions. Clearly, He was chosen as He saw fit, and His considerations were based on considerations quite different from those that might have been expected.

This famous rhyme is often attributed to William Norman Ewer (1885-1976) a British journalist and poet. This phrase reflects the unique selection of the Jewish people as God's chosen nation. Some have interpreted it as playful, ironic, or even controversial.

"How odd
Of God
To choose
The Jews."

The result of all this was that there were two kinds of children of Israel—those who were "children of the flesh" and those who were "children of the promise" (Romans 9:8). The rejection by God by most of the Jews does not mean that God's promises failed because, in the wisdom of God, the rejected Jews were never included in the promises at all. Paul sees this distinction as still operative in the sense that some of the people of Israel had gladly acknowledged Jesus as Christ while others had rejected Him. There had always been two Israels, and the situation he was dealing with was not new.

What does this tell us about God's choosing?

A. God's Plan. God's choosing demonstrates that He has a plan. Paul takes his Roman readers through ancient history, starting with Abraham, to demonstrate God's power to choose. God decided on His own will to make Abraham the father of blessing. More than one son of the old man was born, but only one could be part of the succession, and God decided it would be Isaac. Remember, Abraham tried to persuade God to remember Ishmael, but God insisted it would be the son of Abraham and Sarah.

Rebecca, Isaac's wife, became pregnant with twins, and it was clear that only one could be chosen as the line of blessing. God chose Jacob rather than Esau.

By the time Jacob's sons began establishing their families, there were people in many places who had the right, if they wished, to call themselves children of Abraham, but they were far from the mainstream of God's plan. As a river creates a delta, the children of Abraham branched in many directions. But God had finally committed Himself to pursuing His purposes down the channel of Isaac, Jacob, and Judah, through David, until Christ was born. In so doing, He had no more taken away the status of the other channels

than a stern-wheeler captain by choosing a specific channel in the delta makes the other channels something less than part of the river. They just do not fit into His plan.

B. God's Pattern. The illustration of God choosing Jacob before the birth of the twins demonstrates that God works by a pattern. He chose Jeremiah to be a prophet in his mother's womb (Jeremiah 1:5). God did not base His choice of Isaac or Jeremiah on the physical or their character or conduct. What was it?

God demonstrated His pattern of choice when He chose David over his brothers to be king of Israel. He looks at the heart. He knows our heart.

> I Samuel 16:7, But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart.

Remember Jesus told the disciples, "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain" (John 15:16).

II. God's Compassion (vv. 14-18)

> Romans 9:14-18, 14What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid. 15For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. 16So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy. 17For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. 18Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth.

In extreme Jewish thought, the fact of their election to be the chosen people was tantamount to an eternal guarantee of blessedness, and the corresponding choice of God not to make the Gentiles the chosen people was a guarantee of their inevitable rejection. The Jews saw their salvation not in their individual faith but in the acts of God in their past. For the Jews, therefore, to be told by Paul that Gentiles were being accepted while Jews were being rejected because of their attitudes to Christ was unacceptable.

A. God's Mercy (vv. 14-16). Paul recounts the profound exchange between God and Moses in Exodus 33:12-23, revealing God's sovereign freedom in dealing with individuals, even someone as faithful as Moses. Amid overwhelming challenges and relentless trials, Moses sought assurance of God's presence, pleading, "Show me Your glory."

In His infinite wisdom and boundless grace, the Lord responded: *You have been more willing than any man to do My will, running where others would have faltered. If any man could dictate terms to God, it would be you – but such a man has never existed. My blessings are not granted on merit but according to My divine wisdom. I choose graciously and mercifully what I give, and your request is not granted.*

Romans 9:15 is the first time the word "mercy" occurs. We need to define it. Justice is receiving what you deserve. Mercy is not receiving what you deserve. Grace is receiving what you do not deserve. You can have justice and grace or mercy and grace, but you cannot have both. God's morality demands justice (Genesis 18:25), and His nature imparts grace, but His choice allows mercy.

B. God's Method (vv. 17-19). Paul moves quickly to another illustration of the divine freedom to act in mercy, but also through hardening. The dramatic story of God's dealings with Pharaoh through Moses is replete with references to "hardening." Twenty times in Exodus, the expression "hardening" occurs in connection with Pharaoh. Although in English only the word "harden" is used, in Hebrew, three different terms are employed: one means to make hard or insensible (Exodus 7:3); the other means to make heavy, that is, unimpressionable (Exodus 10:1); and the third means to make firm or stiff, to be immovable (Exodus 14:4). Now it is remarkable that of the twenty passages that speak of Pharaoh's "hardening" exactly ten ascribe it to Pharaoh himself, ten to God, and in both cases the same three terms are used. Thus, the making "hard," "heavy," and "firm" of the heart is exactly as often and in precisely the same terms traced to the agency of Pharaoh himself as to that of God.

Proceeding further, we find that, except for the two passages in which the divine agency in hardening is announced to Moses for his instruction, the hardening process is during the outworking of the actual history, in the first place, traced to Pharaoh himself. Thus, before the ten plagues, and when Aaron first proved his divine mission by converting the rod into a serpent, "the heart of Pharaoh was hardened," that is, by himself (Exodus 7:13-14). Similarly, after each of the first five plagues (Exodus 7:22; 8:15, 19, 32; 9:7), the hardening is also expressly attributed to Pharaoh himself. Only when still resisting after the sixth plague do we read for the first time that "the Lord made firm the heart of Pharaoh" (Exodus 9:12). But even so, space for repentance must have been left, for after the seventh plague, we read again that "Pharaoh made heavy his heart" (Exodus 9:34), and that is only after the eighth plague that the agency is exclusively ascribed to God.

Moreover, we must consider the progress of his hardening on the part of Pharaoh, by which, at last, his sin became ripe for judgment. Pharaoh resisted the demand of Moses, even given God's miraculous signs. God's mission attested to step by step, and the hand of God became more clearly manifest, till at last, he was, by Pharaoh's confession, "inexcusable." The first sign of converting the rod into a serpent could, in a certain manner, be counterfeited by the Egyptian magicians. Yet, Aaron's rod swallowed up theirs (Exodus 7:12). But after the third plague, the magicians themselves confessed

their inability to carry on the contest, declaring, "This is the finger of God" (Exodus 8:19). If any doubt had still been in his mind, it must have been removed by the evidence presented after the fifth plague (Exodus 9:7), when "Pharaoh sent, and behold, there was not one of the cattle of the Israelites dead." Some of the Egyptians, at least, had profited from this lesson and, on the announcement of the seventh plague, housed their cattle from the predicted hail and fire (Exodus 9:20-21).

Lastly, after the seventh plague, Pharaoh himself acknowledged his sin and wrong (Exodus 9:27) and promised to let Israel go (Exodus 9:28). Yet, after all, on the thunder and hail removal, he once more hardened his heart (Exodus 9:35). Can we wonder that such high-handed and inexcusable rebellion should have been ripe for the judgment that appeared in the divine hardening of his heart? Assuredly, in such a contest between the pride and daring of the creature and the might of the Lord God, the truth of this divine declaration had to be publicly manifested: "Even for this purpose have I raised thee up, that I might show My power in thee, and that My name might be declared throughout all the earth" (Exodus 9:16).

The history of Pharaoh's heart-hardening should be noted carefully, as should the Lord's explanation of His actions. The fault lay not with God but with Pharaoh. God claims to have "raised up" this man so that His power might be made known.

It would be easy to assume by this statement that God had used Pharaoh as a pawn in a cosmic chess game, but neither our knowledge of God nor the study of Scripture warrants such an interpretation. The word "raise up" (Greek, *exegeirein*) and related words can convey many meanings. It describes Christ's resurrection (I Corinthians 6:14); it can mean "to cure" (James 5:15) or "to establish a position" as in the case of John the Baptist, the prophet (John 7:52). It would appear in Pharaoh's case that God placed this man in his position of global visibility so that when his own hard-heartedness came into conflict with God's purpose, he would become an international illustration of the futility of arrogantly opposing the purposes of God. If Pharaoh, with the same natural, sinful, egotistical attitude, had been born in a cabin and lived in seclusion, his sin would have been neither lesser nor greater. But in God's economy, He placed this arrogant man in a position where his adamant refusal to accede to God's would not only lead to his downfall but also as broad a demonstration of divine power as possible. The freedom to do this is incontrovertibly God's.

This lesson shows us God's method of compassion. He reaches out to us, but our hearts are hardened if we refuse. Therefore, to reach us again, He must reach by something heavier. The method of continual heaviness, responded to by continual hardening, finally results in God completely hardening the heart. It is reaching the point where the heart is callused to God no matter what is done.

III. God's Conforming (vv. 19-24)

Romans 9:19-24, [19]Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For

who hath resisted his will? 20Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? 21Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour? 22What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: 23And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory, 24Even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?

In verse 19, Paul anticipates their response: "If God is sovereign, then who can resist Him? And if one does resist Him, what right does He have to judge?"

The most natural way to look at the relationship between God and man is from the human perspective, but the most necessary is from the divine perspective (vv. 20-21). In the following verses, Paul proceeds to do this so exclusively that he leaves out entirely the balancing aspects of human response and responsibility. Paul's objective is to deal with the nature of God's dealings with mankind rather than the nature of man's involvement in such dealings.

The potter and the clay analogy powerfully speak to God's sovereignty. In His glorious power, God is free to act in men's affairs. When considering such authority, people know they have no grounds for questioning His wisdom and integrity.

It would be a mistake to apply all the qualities of clay to mankind in this context, as can be seen from the fact that Paul speaks of clay that talks! He is not saying that man is a powerless lump of clay that God can mold whichever way He pleases, for to say that would contradict what he has outlined in the early portions of Romans, namely, that man is responsible. He is stating the unquestioned sovereignty of God to take a rebellious Egyptian and make him Pharaoh, let Pharaoh live with the consequences of his own arrogance, and be a warning not only to his contemporaries but to all posterity.

The same applied to Israel. They had the truth and rejected it. They live with the consequences and cannot fault God for making them stick.

Paul illustrates his point with a remarkable "What if...?" (vv. 22-24). If God, says Paul, is prepared to go on tolerating the attitudes and actions of the Pharaohs of this world so that through their own hardness in the end, they have come to the place of being hardened by God into "vessels of wrath," that is unquestionable well within His rights. If Israel acts toward the gospel in much the same way that Pharaoh behaved toward the people of Israel, then they must be prepared to accept that if it was right for Pharaoh, it is right for them, too.

Similarly, God is free to take those who respond to His message and make them "vessels of mercy" even though they come from the ranks of the despised Gentiles.

The lessons:

1. I must submit my will to God's choices. Look at Paul's attitude of submission to God's will in the Book of Acts 18:21. Paul leaves Ephesus when some of his friends urge him to stay. Paul insists he must leave but says, "I will come back if it is God's will." An attitude acknowledging God's sovereignty was basic to Paul's ministry.

We can make our own decisions but are never free from God. We must submit to His sovereign will.

It was Napoleon Bonaparte, French military leader and emperor, who, early in his life, said, "God is on the side of the biggest artillery." Years later, when exiled to an island, he reversed his opinion and conceded, "Man proposes, but God disposes." Napoleon learned the attitude of "If it is the Lord's will" the hard way. May we learn it now!

> James 4:13-16, 13Go to now, ye that say, To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: 14Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. 15For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that. 16But now ye rejoice in your boastings; all such rejoicing is evil.

It is dangerous to exclude God from our planning. We do not know what tomorrow holds, and indeed, we do not know about next year. Our knowledge is limited.

> Proverbs 27:1, Boast not thyself of to morrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.

2. My choices should be made according to my ultimate objective—to be like Christ.

> Romans 8:29, For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.

3. My choices must be made from a heart of compassion.

> Galatians 5:13, For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.

4. My choices must be to conform others to the image of God.

Chapter Thirty-Two
The Sovereign God
Romans 9:6-24

Lesson in Review

A. Complete the following sentences using the correct words from the reading, notes, and class lecture.

1. God's choosing demonstrates that He has a what?
2. In extreme Jewish thought, the fact of their election to be the chosen people was tantamount to what?
3. God's morality demands _____ and His nature imparts _____,

   but His choice allows _____.
4. How does Pharaoh show us God's method of compassion?
5. We are free to make our decisions, but we are never free from who?
6. We must make our decisions in _____ to His sovereign will.

B. Answer these questions from Romans 9:6-24. Use verses where the answer comes from.

7. Which children of Abraham are counted for the seed?
8. Is there unrighteousness with God?
9. God has mercy on whom?
10. Why might God endure with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction?

C. Read the question carefully and respond in 2-3 sentences with a clear and concise answer. Your response should directly address the question and provide relevant details from the text

11. Read at the beginning of the chapter and answer the concluding question: "What does this tell us about God's choosing?"

12. Regarding question 10, how do you see this principle playing out today?

Chapter Thirty-Three

God's Consistency

Romans 9:25-33

"*I will say to those called 'Not my people,'*
'You are my people'; and they will say,
'You are my God.'" Hosea 2:23

The Jews argued that the Gentiles couldn't trust God. Romans 9:25-33 reveals God's unwavering faithfulness in fulfilling His promises, countering the argument that He is inconsistent in His dealings with Jews and Gentiles. Some Jews questioned whether Gentiles could truly trust God, fearing that if He had shifted His focus away from Israel, He might also abandon them one day. Paul dismantles this concern by turning to the Old Testament**,** specifically Hosea 2:23, where God declares that He will call those "not My people" to become His own. This passage affirms that God's plan has always included mercy toward outsiders, proving that His covenant is built on grace and faith, rather than ethnicity or lineage.

Paul's response is to take them back to the Old Testament.

I. God's Consistent Promises

In verses 25 and 26, Paul refers them to the minor prophet Hosea. God instructed Hosea to marry the daughter of a prostitute and have a family with her. His life with the prostitute became a living sermon of Israel's relationship with God. He obeyed God, married Gomer, and three children were born to them. The names of three children summarize the spiritual history of Israel.

> Hosea 1:3-4, "So he went and took Gomer the daughter of Diblaim; which conceived, and bare him a son. And the LORD said unto him, call his name Jezreel; for yet a little while, and I will avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu, and will cause to cease the kingdom of the house of Israel.

Jezreel means "God will sow" or "God plants" and refers to Jehu's slaughter of his enemies at Jezreel (II Kings 9-10). He went too far in his zeal, and his descendants would suffer for it when Assyria took the land. God's judgments come—no matter how long He seems to wait.

> Hosea 1:6, And she conceived again, and bare a daughter. And God said unto him, Call her name Loruhamah: for I will no more have mercy upon the house of Israel; but I will utterly take them away

Lo-Ruhamah means "nothing to do with me" or "no mercy. " Evidently, Hosea knew at

this time that Gomer was unfaithful to him and announced it in the name of her daughter. God was saying that Israel's actions had nothing to do with Him either. Just as Gomer had found another lover, so Israel was worshiping other gods.

> Hosea 1:8-9, Now when she had weaned Loruhamah, she conceived, and bare a son. Then said God, Call his name Loammi: for ye are not my people, and I will not be your God

Lo-Ammi means "not my people" and speaks of God's rejection of the nation because of their sins.

As a result, God announced that he would turn to other people. "I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy; and I will say to them which were not my people, Thou art my people; and they shall say, Thou art my God," (Hosea 2:23).

No Gentile people were ever called the people of God. The Lord Himself once called the Gentiles "dogs" (Mark 7:27-28). (The Greek word used means "little" or "domestic dogs." It occurs only in Mark 7:27-28 and Matthew 15:26-27. These were not pariah dogs of the street but domestic pets.) But now, both Jews and Gentiles in Christ are lifted far higher than anything the nation of Israel will ever know. We are sons of the living God!

Peter directly connects Hosea's prophecy to the Gentiles.

> I Peter 2:9-10. But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light; Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.

Paul argues that God predicted He would reject Israel if they rejected His plan and turned to other people who were not His people, and God was consistent with His prediction.

II. God's Consistent People

The same Old Testament that predicted God's ultimate blessing on Gentiles also spoke clearly of God's blessing on a small Jewish remnant. In verse 27, Paul takes his readers to the prophet Isaiah. Isaiah was a prophet to the two southern tribes of Judah, warning them of judgment for their sin but promising that God would fulfill His word. How would God do this if the people were carried off into captivity? God would preserve a remnant of faithful people.

> Isaiah 10:22, For though thy people Israel be as the sand of the sea, yet a remnant of them shall return: the consumption decreed shall overflow with righteousness,

God's ways are perfectly consistent. Historically, not all the descendants of the

patriarchs were counted as Israelites. God's faithful people have never been a mere remnant, and for the rest, sooner or later, God acts toward them in righteous judgment.

The Old Testament abounds with examples of God's remnant:

- After Cain slew Able, God had Seth.

- Noah and his family are all that survived the flood.

- Elijah, moaning in the cave, was told by God there were 700 more faithful followers, and he was not alone.

- During the Babylonian captivity, there were still Ezekiel, Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

- At the end of the 400 silent years between the testaments, John the Baptist calls Israel to repentance.

- Paul himself was a remnant of the New Testament. When most Jews had rejected Jesus, Paul accepted Him.

III. God's Consistent Payday

In verses 28 and 29, Paul quotes Isaiah to remind his readers that God keeps His word of judgment. A study of the Old Testament reveals God's ways with men. He waits in long-suffering patience; then suddenly, He acts, making a short work of judgment.

Isaiah said that God's word would not return void. Paul points this out through two quotes. The first, verse 28, shows God's determination, "he will finish the work," and that when He moves, He moves quickly, "a short work." It is easy to be surprised by how quickly God works when it is time. When the rapture happens, it will take place in the twinkling of an eye.

Paul then quotes Isaiah 1:9, which was Isaiah's illustration that God acted with judgment and mercy.

> Isaiah 1:9, Except the LORD of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah.

While the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed for their terrible sins, God also rescued Lot in His mercy. This demonstrates all three points: God keeps His promises, protects His people, and has a definite payday.

Paul could remind them of God's patience and swift judgment during the Old Testament. After Calvary, God waited for forty years (70 AD), and then suddenly, the armies of Roman rulers, Vespasian and Titus, swept through the land like a flood,

bringing to an awful end the nationhood of Israel.

But Paul has one more point—God is patient.

IV. God's Consistent Patience

Verses 30-33 Paul returns to the primary theme of the book of Romans: "The just shall live by faith" (Romans 1:17).

The Jews complained that God was not fair because He turned from people who were searching for Him to people who were not (vv. 30-31). But the Jews, instead of permitting their religious privileges (Romans 9:1-5) to lead them to Christ, used their privileges as a substitute for Christ. Paul said God is consistent because He always turned from those who tried to earn their righteousness, the "law of righteousness" (v. 31), and to those who accepted those who came in "faith," (v. 30).

Paul concludes his argument with a reference to the Old Testament stumbling block (Isaiah 28:17).

> Isaiah 28:17 states, Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste.

What or who is this stumbling block? The stone became the cornerstone; "The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner," (Psalm 118:22). So, the next question is, what or who is the cornerstone?

> Ephesians 2:19-22, Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.

The cornerstone is Jesus Christ! To everyone, He is either a stumbling stone or a stepping stone. Some reject Him, and others build upon Him. Why?

- He is the only way to life (John 14:6).
- He is the only true love (I John 4:8).
- He is the only true liberty (Luke 4:18).
- He will only be Lord.

Many fine restaurants have a dress code. A sign at the entrance reads: "Coat and tie required." Some restaurants provide coats and ties to help patrons who must meet the code. A biblical example of this principle is found in the experience of Adam and Eve. When they realized their nakedness after eating the forbidden fruit, "they sewed fig

leaves together, and made themselves aprons" (Genesis 3:7). These makeshift clothes may have satisfied them, but they were unacceptable to God. In His mercy, therefore, after stating the punishment for their sin, God slew animals and "make coats of skins, and clothed them" (v21). This incident at the beginning of human history illustrates a principle of God's gracious dealing with the human family. Based on the redemptive sacrifice of Jesus Christ, God will give a garment of righteousness to any individual who acts on the Good News of salvation.

God's righteousness is the only righteousness acceptable to God. He provides righteousness. Our own human righteousness may appear satisfactory when compared to other human beings. In fact, like some of the Pharisees in Jesus' day (Luke 18:9-12), we may be proud of our moral and ethical attainments. In the sight of God, however, "all our righteousness are as filthy rags" (Isaiah 64:6). Therefore, the only way to stand before God and be accepted by Him is to cast aside our righteousness and receive the righteousness provided through Jesus Christ.

Paul's final words of translation are that those who build on Jesus "shall not be ashamed" (v. 33). Isaiah says they "shall not make haste." The meaning of both is the same. If you commit your life to Jesus, there will never be a reason to run anywhere else or fear being left with nothing. God is everything we need!

Paul shows in this passage that God is consistent with all He has done through the ages and will be consistent with us. Is Jesus Christ a stumbling stone or a stepping stone to you? Your answer determines whether you receive God's judgment or mercy. One day, it will be payday. Until then, God is patiently waiting. What will you do?

Chapter Thirty-Three
God's Consistency
Romans 9:25-33

Lesson in Review

A. Complete the following sentences using the correct words from the reading, notes, and class lecture.

1. Paul argues that God predicted He would reject Israel if they rejected His what?

2. How would God do this if the people were carried off into captivity?

3. The Jews, instead of permitting their religious privileges to lead them to Christ, used their privileges as a _____ for Christ.

4. Jesus Christ is to everyone either a _____stone or a _____ stone.

B. Answer these questions from Romans 9:25-33. Use verses where the answer comes from.

6. Who will God call His people?

7. The Gentiles have attained unto what righteousness?

8. Israel sought righteousness not by faith but by what?

C. Read the question carefully and respond in 2-3 sentences with a clear and concise answer. Your response should directly address the question and provide relevant details from the text.

9. How did Hosea's prophecy relate to Gentiles?

10. How does the idea of a remnant apply to believers today?

11. What is the significance of Paul's statement in Romans 9:33 that those who believe in Jesus "Shall not be ashamed"?

Chapter Thirty-Four

Common Mistakes

Romans 10:1-4

"*And be found in Him, not having my own righteousness,*
which is from the law,
but that which is through faith in Christ,
the righteousness which is from God by
faith." Philippians 3:9

"Brethren," Paul writes. That tender word softens both what has preceded and what follows. Paul may use a gentle tone of voice, but will not for one moment water down the truth. Romans 10:1-4 presents Paul's heartfelt desire for Israel's salvation, emphasizing that righteousness cannot be achieved through the law, but only through faith in Christ. His opening word, **"**Brethren**,"** conveys compassion, yet he does not soften the truth—Israel must correct its understanding of righteousness. Linked to Philippians 3:9, this passage highlights the contrast between self-righteousness through works and true righteousness from God by faith. Paul's mission is clear: to guide people toward truth, showing them the path to salvation while exposing the dangers of relying on the law. His urgency reflects the depth of his concern and the importance of embracing faith over human effort.

Because most people have an intense distaste for being told they are wrong, great care should be taken when pointing out errors. Paul exhibits three helpful characteristics in this regard:

1. His Compassion for those in error is "my heart's desire" (v. 1). Paul does not see them as statistics or a group but as individuals whose eternal salvation is in question.

2. His Concern for those in error is "my…prayer" (v. 1). His remarks about their error do not suggest superiority but a humble reliance on God. He prays for them and looks for God to bless them.

This is particularly powerful when we remember it was the Jews who caused Paul his problems. One of the difficult times of prayer is to pray for your enemies, but that is what we are instructed to do.

3. His Condition of understanding those in error, "I bear them record" (v. 2). Because of Paul's unique position, he can "speak on their behalf." This position is because many of the errors he recorded were once also his errors.

Gloating over someone's error is a terrible thing. We need to love (I Corinthians 13:5). Paul is not boasting that he made it when they didn't. His desire is for their salvation.

Notice Israel's errors, which we can learn from and warn others about.

I. Mistaken Enthusiasm

"They have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge" (v. 2). Ever since Israel returned from Babylonian Captivity, the nation has been cured of idolatry. Only the true God was worshipped and served in the temple and the local synagogues and only the true Law was taught. So zealous were the Jews that they even "improved the Law" and added their own traditions, making them equal to the Law.

Paul himself had been zealous about the Law and their traditions. Speaking to King Agrippa in later years, he could testify:

> Acts 26:9-11, 9I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. 10Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them. 11And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities.

Then, too, when he was imprisoned in Rome for the cause of Christ, he could write to his friends at Philippi and reminisce about his unconverted days.

> Philippians 3:4-7, 4Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: 5Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; 6Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. 7But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.

Enthusiasm is applauded in belief in God, but misplaced enthusiasm is dangerous. It is like the power of a train, controlled by the train tracks and an amazing means of transportation, but if it jumps the tracks, that amazing power causes tremendous damage.

It is like the high school American football player who played an offensive line position. He recovered a fumble once, only to run in the wrong direction and score for the other side.

> Proverbs 14:12, There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.

Paul knew what he was writing about here. The verse states the same error of being sincere and being sincerely wrong. It is not enough to be enthusiastic; we must be enthusiastic about truth!

II. Mistaken Education

"For they being ignorant of God's righteousness," (v. 2). Israel's ignorance was not because they had never been told but because they refused to learn.

There is ignorance because of the lack of opportunity, but Israel had many opportunities. Their ignorance was a willful, stubborn resistance to the truth. They would not submit to God. They were proud of their good works and religious self-righteousness and would not admit their sins and trust the Savior.

Paul had made the same mistake before he met the Lord.

> Philippians 3:1-11, 1Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe. 2Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision. 3For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh. 4Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: 5Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; 6Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. 7But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. 8Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, 9And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: 10That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; 11If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.

Israel's ignorance was their failure to understand God's righteousness. The gospel brings men into a right relationship (righteousness) with God. But some thought they could prepare themselves, thereby demonstrating their ignorance of God's righteousness because no matter what man does, he cannot prepare himself worthy to stand before God.

The Old Testament recognizes that all men are sinful, need forgiveness, and cannot rely upon themselves for salvation (I Kings 8:46; II Chronicles 6:36; Psalm 14:1-3; 51:3; Proverbs 20:9; Isaiah 64:6 and Jeremiah 17:9). Old Testament believers presented sin and trespass offerings to atone for their failures. Therefore, even the Old Testament believers

realized they had to depend upon God's mercy and grace and thus had to walk by faith.

III. Mistaken Effort

"Going about to establish their own righteousness," (v. 3). The Jews tried to fix themselves, which resulted in self-righteousness. Such a reaction is spiritual pride that God hates (Matthew 5:13-37). This action completely denies a need for God.

Notice that the Jews were not atheists (did not believe in God) or agnostics (did not care about God), but they were arrogant. They said they believed in God but then lived a life that said they didn't need God.

IV. Mistaken Exemption

"Have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God" (v. 3). The key word here is "submit." To submit to God's righteousness means to lay aside one's own "righteousness" and acknowledge complete failure. But the Jews would not submit to God's plan but tried their own. They thought they were exempt because of their unique calling as His children.

There is no way for a man to attain God's righteousness, but he may obtain it. Attaining is self-effort, and obtaining is accepting what is offered. Attaining is works to earn righteousness, while obtaining is works as the result of righteousness.

The same verse that says we are saved by grace through faith includes the phrase "unto good works" (Ephesians 2:8-10). This simple distinction between "attain" and "obtain" is the difference between truth and error.

V. Mistaken Expectation

"For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth," (v. 4). The Jews rejected Jesus and thereby missed "the end of the law." Not end as finish, but end as the purpose, goal, or fulfillment of the Law (Matthew 5:17).

Paul told the Galatians (3:24) that the Law was the schoolmaster who escorted the children to school and back to lead them to Jesus Christ. The Law was provided to show people they could not meet the righteous standards of God in their own strength so that, when God offered righteousness by faith in Christ, they would respond and believe. A simple examination of our lives compared to the Ten Commandments demonstrates our failure to meet the requirements of the Law. Removing every possibility to please God by our merit should make us thankful that our faith in Jesus is "the end of the Law."

However, the Jews became more interested in the process than the product. They expected the keeping of the Law to result in their righteousness rather than trusting in the only Law Keeper.

How is Christ the end of the Law?

1. He perfectly kept the Law, so it did not condemn Him (John 8:46 and Hebrews 4:15).

2. Then He was the perfect sacrifice, the punishment bearer. So, He fulfilled the Law and took its judgment to intercede for others.

3. Therefore, He is now the perfect justifier of the Law. The purpose of the Law was not to save but to lead people to a Savior.

The Jew's (and all moralists) fundamental mistake, according to Paul, is not that they fail to take the Law seriously but that they fail to take it seriously enough. Moralists count on two illusions:

1. They believe, on the one hand, that on the ledger of life, specific good works in the credit column will, in the long run, cancel out many of the debit marks in the other column and ultimately put them in the black before God.

2. On the other hand, they also hold to the false belief that God's indulgence will overlook whatever does not balance out.

But God does not keep any good versus bad credit books because He has an entirely different way of balancing the debit column.

Righteousness is to be found not on Sinai but at Calvary. It lies not in accepting a precept but in a Person, not in servitude to commandments but in submission to Christ. Righteousness comes only through faith in Jesus!

Chapter Thirty-Four
Common Mistakes
Romans 10:1-4

Lesson in Review

A. Complete the following sentences using the correct words from the reading, notes, and class lecture.

1. Paul's task is to point out to people the right way to go and explain what.

2. It is not enough to be enthusiastic; we must be enthusiastic …

3. They said they believed in God, but then what?

4. Who was the schoolmaster?

B. Answer these questions from Romans 10:1-4. Use verses where the answer comes from.

5. What was Paul's heart's desire, and he prayed to God for Israel?

6. What were the Jews missing with their zeal for God?

7. Since Israel was ignorant of God's righteousness, what were they trying to establish?

8. Christ is the end of the law of righteousness to whom?

C. Read the question carefully and respond in 2-3 sentences with a clear and concise answer. Your response should directly address the question and provide relevant details from the text.

9. What was the mistaken enthusiasm, and why did it occur?

10. What was the mistaken education, and why did it occur?

11. What was the mistaken expectation, and why did it occur?

Chapter Thirty-Five

Total Salvation

Romans 10:5-11

"*It is not in heaven, that you should say,*
'Who will ascend into heaven for us and bring it to us,
that we may hear it and do it?' Nor is it beyond the sea,
that you should say, 'Who will go over the sea for us
and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?'
But the word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart,
that you may do it." Deuteronomy 30:12-14

Romans 10:5-11 highlights the contrast between righteousness by the law and righteousness by faith, echoing the words of Deuteronomy 30:12-14, which emphasize that God's word is not distant or unreachable but near to the heart. Everything about the Jewish religion pointed to the coming Messiah—their sacrifices, priesthood, temple services, religious festivals, and covenants. However, instead of allowing the Law to lead them to Christ, they worshipped the Law itself, missing the fulfillment it was meant to bring. Paul reminds his readers that true righteousness does not come from human effort but through faith in Christ, the only one who can truly give righteousness and salvation.

I. Condemnation

"For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, That the man which *doeth* those things shall live by them" (v. 5). The Law demands perfect obedience. Obedience must be done. Therefore, the first message of salvation is condemnation by the Law. We must be brought to the point of admitting our failure. The Law does that by defining what is sin.

Jesus told of two men praying outside the temple one day. The Pharisee prayed with himself, thanking God that he was not like others. But a publican asked God to be merciful to him, a sinner. Jesus praised the publican because he understood that approaching God began with the admittance that we are all sinners (Luke 18:9-14).

We should not despair or depart when we hear the gospel convict us of sin. We should thank God. The Word is doing its work, bringing conviction so that we will seek a Savior.

II. Consolation

"But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (That is, to bring Christ down from above:) Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (That is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.)" (vv. 6-7). Here,

Paul quotes the last words of Moses to the children of Israel, which are recorded in Deuteronomy 30:11-14.

Some naturally wondered, after hearing the demands of the Law, "What hope is there?" So, Paul answers that question. There is no hope in ourselves, but we do not trust our ability. Instead, we trust God, and He has already come to us.

Some said, "Must I go to heaven to find God?" Paul says, "No. God already came down to us." Others asked, "Must I go down in the grave to find God?" Paul again answers, "No. God already went into the grave and came back victorious."

These questions underline that while the Law says, "Do!" the gospel says, "Done!"

III. Convenience

"But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach" (v. 8). Paul is still quoting Deuteronomy 30. He says we fail to understand how close salvation is to each of us. Why? We need to make the point that it is already done.

The "word of faith" includes the whole message of the gospel, with its glorious tidings that Christ has come from heaven and ascended from the regions of the dead. The two greatest miracles of the Christian faith are the incarnation, which tells us that Christ has come down from heaven, and the resurrection, which tells us that He has come up from the grave.

Jesus' last words from Calvary were, "It is finished" (John 19:30). He could go to the cross because, as He prayed, "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do" (John 17:4). The word "finished" means complete. He came into the world to seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10), and He was done.

What does this mean? Salvation is available and accessible. Christ has made it simple. Nothing is difficult; we must trust, believe, and have faith.

IV. Confession

"That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart" (v. 9a). Paul says two aspects work together in our salvation—the mouth and the heart.

Notice what we confess: Jesus is Lord. The emphasis is on Jesus as Lord, that is His deity. The whole purpose of Scripture is to bring people under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Too many feel that all they must do is accept the death of Jesus at Calvary, and nothing else is demanded or expected of them. We cannot be saved apart from a willingness to have Jesus as the Lord of our lives. That would be like saying, "Jesus, we will let your death be payment for our sins, but we do not want you in our lives."

This stand is why the Roman government persecuted the early church. They did not care if you rejoiced that your sins were forgiven or that you were going to heaven. They resisted when you said that Jesus ruled your life, not Rome.

The uprising in Thessalonica (Book of Acts 17) was because they preached "another king."

V. Conviction

"That God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved" (v. 9b). Here is the distinction of the Christian faith: the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The resurrection of Jesus from the dead is one of the best-proven facts in history. No theory ever propounded can explain it away. It was the mighty shout of the infant church, and the fact was so well attested that no one could deny it. "He was seen! He was seen!" cried the early Christians, and everyone knew it was so (I Corinthians 15:5-8).

We try to divide heart and head belief—the Bible does not. We must believe in Jesus with our mind, heart, and will—the whole man. You must be able to answer yes to three questions to be saved:

1 Do you need to be saved, mind?

2 Do you want to be saved, heart?

3 Are you willing to submit—will?

VI. Completion

"For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation," (v. 10). Full salvation is heart and mouth.

There is a change in the order of "heart" and "mouth" here because in verse 9, Paul is following Moses' order, and in verse 10, the order of experience. Believing comes before confessing. The confession here is a natural consequence of true faith. Jesus said:

> Matthew 12:34 states, Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.

Confessing Jesus as Lord is the obedience of faith.

> Luke 6:46 states, And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?

It occurs initially when we repent from sin, are baptized in Jesus' name, and receive His Spirit. At baptism, we call on the name of the Lord to wash away our sins (Acts 22:16). Only by the Spirit can we truly confess Jesus as Lord (I Corinthians 12:3). Then we must

believe specifically in the resurrection of Jesus. Christ's resurrection is the culmination of the gospel (I Corinthians 15:1-4). His resurrection makes His death and burial unique and demonstrates His power. Belief in the resurrection is shorthand for believing in the gospel.

Many people use verses 9 and 10 as a mechanical formula for salvation and deny that repentance, water baptism, and the baptism of the Holy Spirit are in any way part of New Testament salvation. We should instead see belief and confession as the basics of salvation, which encompasses everything the New Testament commands man to fulfill. Several points show that belief and confession are not different from or exclusive of the message of Acts 2:38.

1. First, as we begin this section, we must remember the hermeneutical principle of the first record. This rule states that the first recording of a doctrine or event will be its most complete description. When did the New Testament church begin? How were the first believers born into the New Testament church? It started in Acts 2. After the first record, all details are listed every time the event is repeated.

2. Paul was writing to born-again people; he was not explaining how to be born again to unbelievers. He knew he could briefly summarize the gospel's message by referring to these fundamental principles without being too vague or misunderstood.

3. In this context, Romans explains that God rejected Israel due to its unbelief. For Israel to be saved, the fundamental issue was confession of and belief in Jesus. Paul did not confront the Jews over water baptism or Holy Spirit baptism. They first had to resolve a more basic issue: accepting Jesus as Messiah, Lord, and Savior.

4. Romans does not discount the necessity of obedience to God's Word. The Old Testament text used Deuteronomy 30:11-14, which strongly emphasizes obedience. God's Word is available to us precisely so that we can obey it.

5. Properly understood, belief and confession include obedience to Acts 2:38 message. Belief and confession certainly mean more than mental and verbal acknowledgment, for even demons believe and confess Christ to that extent (Matthew 8:29; James 2:19).

6. The emphasis in verses 6-10 is on the availability of the message Paul preached. We must understand the exhortation to believe and confess in that light. Namely, we must believe and confess what Paul, and the other apostles preached. Paul taught "believers" to be baptized in the name of Jesus and receive the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in tongues (Acts 19:1-6).

VII. Conquest

"For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed" (v. 11). True salvation is not ashamed. As with the conclusion of Chapter 9, Paul quotes Isaiah

28:16.

This scripture does not mean that the believer will not be ashamed of confessing Christ before men, but rather that the believer will not be disappointed in Christ Jesus.

Paul says that true salvation conquerors fear. Fear is the detection of an area that is not submitted to God.

Now, we see the total work of salvation.

Chapter Thirty-Five
Total Salvation
Romans 10:5-11

Lesson in Review

A. Complete the following sentences using the correct words from the reading, notes, and class lecture.

1. How does the Law condemn us?

2. While the Law says, "_____!" The gospel says, "_____!"

3. What is the whole purpose of Scripture?

4. What is the distinction of the Christian faith?

5. What is confession a natural consequence of?

6. Fear is the detection of what?

B. Answer these questions from Romans 10:5-11. Use verses where the answer comes from.

7. What is the righteousness of the law?

8. What word is nigh you, even in your mouth and heart?

9. With what are we to confess the Lord Jesus?

10. In what way are we to believe that God raised Jesus from the dead?

11. Whosoever believeth on Jesus shall not be what?

C. Read the question carefully and respond in 2-3 sentences with a clear and concise answer. Your response should directly address the question and provide relevant details from the text.

12. What contrast does Paul draw between the Law and the gospel?

13. What are the three questions that define sincere faith in Jesus?

14. Why is belief in the resurrection central to salvation?

15. How does Acts 2:38 relate to belief and confession?

Chapter Thirty-Six

Whose Responsibility Is It?

Romans 10:12-21

"*How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him*
who brings good news, who proclaims peace,
who brings glad tidings of good things, who
proclaims salvation, who says to Zion, '
Your God reigns!'" Isaiah 52:7

Romans 10:12-21 emphasizes the universal accessibility of salvation, declaring that whoever believes in Christ will not be ashamed (v. 11). Paul builds on this truth, affirming that faith is the key to salvation, and since all people have been given the ability to exercise faith **(**Romans 12**:3**), salvation is available to everyone, Jew and Gentile alike. This aligns with Isaiah 52:7, which praises those who bring the message **of** salvation, proclaiming peace and the reign of God. The passage highlights the importance of spreading the gospel, as faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. Paul's message is clear: salvation is not limited by nationality or heritage but is extended to all who believe and respond to the call.

Paul demonstrates in Chapter 3 that sin knows no distinction. Now, he declares God's mercy has no distinction. Paul means there is no distinction "between the Jew and the Greek" (v. 12). The Jews resisted this even though the prophet Joel had announced it (2:23), which Paul quotes in verse 13, "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." This is God's plan to all. "For the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him" (v. 12).

What is so good about the gospel? It is the message of salvation. It is the message that God can liberate people from anything that stops them from being what God created them to be. It is the message of sureness. Paul promised that those who call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.

This good news is from God. It is not the result of man seeking something to make him feel better about the past by cleaning it and hopeful about the future. It is not man's attempt to face death bravely by believing that life goes on beyond death. It is because God is "rich unto all." God cares about us and provides a means of living life as He intended man to live it--to the fullest!

> John 10:10 states, I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.

If God sent the gospel to all, why is not everyone saved? God chose to work through men to reach men, so whose responsibility is it?

I. The Christian is Responsible to Speak (vv. 14–15)

> Romans 10:14-15. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they are sent? As it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!

Paul first points out that for someone to be saved, they must believe, and to believe, they must be told. That is the Christian's responsibility. Many excuse themselves by saying, "Paul says preacher, not Christian." The word here is messenger, not preacher, and proclaim, not preach.

Remember Acts 11:19-21?

> Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen travelled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only. And some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, which, when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord.

The saints, not the preachers, evangelized the world. Why did they do it? Scattered by persecution, they shared the gospel with their new neighbors.

What is the process? If we are saved, it is because we see (believe). If we see it is because we were spoken to. If we are spoken to, it is because someone was sent.

Have you been sent? If not, hear these words from Jesus.

> Matthew 28:19-20, Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

> Mark 16:15-18, And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.

> Luke 24:46-49, And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things. And, behold, I send the promise

of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.

Acts 1:7-8, And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

Jesus Himself sent you. It was important enough that it was the one message from Jesus to His followers after the resurrection. A sent person is convinced that Jesus meant what He said and that this is the only way to be saved. You can get people to witness for many reasons, but this is the best. What are you going to do about it? It is your responsibility.

What is our message? Again, Paul draws from the Old Testament. Verse 15 is a quotation of Isaiah 52:7 and Nahum 1:15. He sees the messenger as the announcer of good news. The picture from Isaiah is that of a watchman on the gates, seeing the returning soldier on the mountain tops silhouetted in the rising sun as he makes haste to return home to share the news of great victories won on far-off fields of battle.

The gospel of peace is the peace of God we have now that we are justified by faith.

Romans 5:1, Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

II. The Confronted is Responsible to Submit (vv. 16-21)

Remember Paul's argument in Chapters 9-11 is that the gospel fulfills the Old Testament message of salvation, even to the Jews who rejected it. Paul addresses the excuses of why people are not saved in verses 16-21 and leaves us with only one reason why a person who hears the truth is lost—they would not submit. Let us look at the excuses:

1. People will not believe, "But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report?" (v. 16). Paul responds that the problem is not that people will not believe but that they haven't heard. "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (v. 17). Again, the message is one of faith, which comes from hearing God's word.

The first step in a Dale Carnegie class is establishing a list of rules on the blackboard. It is done by asking participants what they expect from the instructor. If any key rules are overlooked, they are suggested. Once the list is complete, the agreement is made to uphold the expectations, and then they are asked to follow the same rules. Listing the rules up front ensures shared responsibility. Even so, we cannot condemn people for being lost if we do not tell them the gospel. However, we do not blame people—God

does. He is just in doing so because He has provided a way for all to hear the truth through His church.

2. We cannot reach them all, "But I say, Have they not heard?" (v. 18a). Paul replies that they have indeed heard, but we must follow up to explain, "Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world" (v. 18b). Paul here quotes Psalm 19:4 but has already made these points in Romans 2. The word of condemnation has gone out by God's creation and man's conscience. People know there is a God. We must present His gospel.

Some excuse the task by saying it is too large, so what does it matter? That is best answered by the story of the man tossing starfish back into the ocean after the tide had washed them on the beach. Asked if it mattered, he paused, looked at the one in his hand, and tossed it toward the water, said, "It matters to this one."

3. They will not understand, or the gospel is too complicated, "But I say, Did not Israel know?" (v. 19a). Paul responds with two answers. The first quote from Deuteronomy 32:21, "First Moses saith, I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are no people, and by a foolish nation I will anger you" (v. 19b). In other words, their anger when they hear the message proves that they understand it, but do not want to accept it. Some people react with hostility when confronted with the gospel, not because they fail to grasp its meaning, but because they comprehend it too well. Many claim they avoid reading the Bible due to a lack of understanding, but they steer clear of it precisely because its truth is unmistakable.

Then Paul quotes Isaiah 65:1 for his second answer, "But Esaias is very bold, and saith, I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me" (v. 20). Not only is anger a demonstration that is understood, but the church is full of people we thought could never understand it. This shows that we have complicated the gospel and underestimated people.

4. We have waited too long, some must have said because then Paul quotes Isaiah 65:2, "But to Israel he saith, All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people" (v. 21). Paul says God is saying, "I am standing with my arms outstretched to all who believe."

Jesus wanted to gather Jerusalem to His arms, but they had rejected Him. So, He stretched His arms at the cross to everyone. "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." (II Peter 3:9).

The only thing that prevents people from believing is that they either hear and reject it or never can hear it. The first is their responsibility, and the second is ours. We cannot question a wicked world without offering it an alternative.

III. Christ is Responsible to Save

Every time Paul mentions salvation in Chapter 10, it is with a certainty that God will save:

a. "Thou shalt be saved" (v. 9).

b. "Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed" (v. 11).

c. "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" (v. 13).

d. "All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gain-saying people" (v. 21).

e. Paul would not have prayed for Israel's salvation if they could not be saved (v. 1).

Therefore, not only are sinners without excuse when it comes to obeying the gospel, but the church is also without excuse when it comes to proclaiming the gospel.

There is a sense in which the unreached populations of our world are a scandal to the name of Christ and His church. There is no doubt that the principles of speaking, hearing, believing, and saving work because the Lord Himself has promised that they will function as blessings. The only possible flaw in the system must lie in the sending. What will you do?

Chapter Thirty-Six
Whose Responsibility Is It?
Romans 10:12-21

Lesson in Review

1. Complete the following sentences using the correct words from the reading, notes, and class lecture.

1. Paul declares God's mercy has no what?

2. What is the gospel of peace?

3. Sinners _____ without excuse when it comes to the gospel.

4. The church is without excuse when it comes to _____ the gospel.

2. Answer these questions from Romans 10:12-21. Use verses where the answer comes from.

5. There is no difference between whom?

6. How are those who call upon the Lord's name to hear?

7. Describe the feet of them that preach the gospel.

8. Faith comes by hearing what?

9. How would God provoke Israel to jealousy?

10. All day long, God stretched His hand to whom?

3. Read the question carefully and respond in 2-3 sentences with a clear and concise answer. Your response should directly address the question and provide relevant details from the text.

11. What is Paul's main argument in Romans 9-11?

12. Why does Paul argue that the problem is not people's lack of belief?

13. What excuses do people give for not sharing the gospel?

14. Why does Paul argue that Israel's anger toward the gospel demonstrates understanding?

15. What does Isaiah 65:2 reveal about God's desire for people to have faith?

16. According to II Peter 3:9, why does God postpone judgment?

Chapter Thirty-Seven

God's Eternal Plan

Romans 11:1-12

"*I have been very zealous for the LORD God of hosts;*
for the children of Israel have
forsaken Your covenant,
torn down Your altars, and killed
Your prophets with the
sword. I alone am left; and they seek to take my life."
1 Kings 19:10

In Romans 9, we learned that God chose Israel to be the recipient of great blessings. We discovered in Romans 10, that God has since rejected Israel because she refused to accept her Messiah, Jesus Christ. Now, in Chapter 11, we see that God has an eternal plan that still includes the Jews.

Romans 11:1-12 reaffirms God's faithfulness to Israel**,** demonstrating that, despite their rejection of Christ, they are not utterly abandoned. Paul counters the idea that Israel's failure means complete rejection by pointing to God's sovereign plan, which still includes them. Echoing 1 Kings 19:10, where Elijah lamented that he alone remained faithful, Paul reminds his readers that God always preserves a remnant—a group chosen by grace. Just as Elijah was unaware of the 7,000 faithful**,** Israel's rejection is not total, but part of God's unfolding redemption story. This passage reassures that God's promises remain intact and that His plan continues to shape the future of both Jews and Gentiles**.**

I God's Work (vv. 1–10)

The long history of Israel's rejection of God and their trampling underfoot of His grace quite naturally leads to the thought that He may eventually decide that "enough is enough" and terminate His relationship with His people. Paul raises and answers the possibility in verse 1 that there is not the slightest possibility of this termination taking place.

A. God's Work in Paul. Paul is himself a powerful proof of this fact (v. 1), for he is a thoroughgoing Jew, as much a member of the family of Abraham as anyone with the perfect pedigree of a son of Benjamin (Philippians 3:5). Yet, there is no doubt about his knowing the Savior. Paul's conversion (Acts 9) is a pattern for those wanting to know the Savior:

1. Revelation of God: he saw a great light

2. Reversal of attitude: he became willing to do what God wanted

3. Repentance: he fasted, prayed, and was baptized

4. Receiving: he was filled with the Holy Ghost

So, if there is a Jew like Paul, there is no such thing as a rejection of Israel.

Furthermore, the principle "which he foreknew" (v. 2) applies. Knowing everything in advance, God has the advantage of seeing the end from the beginning. Therefore, God knew how the Jews would respond to Jesus, and there was no intent to cast them away.

B. God's Work in the Prophet. Paul then turns to Elijah (vv. 2-4) as an example of God's continuing commitment to the Jews when most of them had rejected Him (I Kings 19). At a time of national apostasy, the prophet Elijah became discouraged and engaged in a pity party. He thought he was the only believer left, and, having seen what happened to the other prophets, he didn't hold out much hope for his survival. God pointed out that he was not alone; seven thousand others had not betrayed the Lord.

Elijah's complaint against Israel was wrung from his lips in the darkest hour of personal depression. The worship of Baal was dealt with a devastating blow but was not destroyed on Mt. Carmel; the wily Jezebel had kept 400 prophets of the groves in reserve. She responded in fury toward Elijah, and he fled. When he finally stopped, exhausted, he threw himself down. Then tenderly, the voice of God came to the prophet: "What doest thou here, Elijah?"

In reply, the prophet charged Israel. Then came the tempest, the earthquake, and the fire, each suited to the prophet's mood, the very weapons he would have liked to have at his command in his anger against Israel. But God was in none of these. Instead, there came the still, small voice. It was a lesson of grace. But Elijah did not want to hear it; instead, he showed his anger at Israel for standing with him.

God gave Elijah a new command. He was to go back and anoint Hazael as king in Syria, Jehu king in Israel, and Elisha prophet in his place. Why did God do this rather than give him the power over the tempest, earthquake, and fire that he desired and send him back against the prophets of the groves? Answer: Elijah's anger was against Israel rather than the prophets of Baal. Elijah could not be trusted with such mighty weapons. And, in destroying Israel, he would also have attacked God's remnant that he did not know about, but God knew. Had he, like Moses, interceded for the people, God could have continued to use him, but his anger was now directed at the people, and God had to remove him.

These people God claimed to have reserved for Himself were part of the unfailing remnant that runs like a thread through the bewildering tapestry of Israel's history. They were always in the minority but always there. At times, they were highly visible as the children of faith; at others, they were practically lost from sight in the nation's apostasy but always survived.

C. God's Work in the Present. This remnant is saved by grace through faith (vv. 5-10). Some seek justification through their works rather than God's grace. The more they resist God's grace, the harder their hearts become, like Pharaoh's.

In the same way that there has always been a faithful remnant, there have always been those whose hearts have been hardened or "blinded" (v. 7). The word "blinded" is "hardened" or "calloused." It is used in the Gospels to describe Pharisees who were angered at the Lord Jesus for healing a man in the synagogue on the Sabbath day (Mark 3:5). It is used later by Paul to describe unconverted Gentiles who "walk in the vanity of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart" (Ephesians 4:17-18).

This hardness is seen in the Old Testament, a record of God's dealings with His people. Paul refers to the writings of Mosses—Deuteronomy 29:4 in verse 8—as proof. Moses struggled with the rebellious wilderness wanderers who died in the wilderness, never entering the Promised Land.

Paul then recorded the warning of David—Psalm 69:22-23 (vv. 9-10). Hardening is a divine judgment against unbelief. David said, "their table be made a snare, and a trap, and a stumbling block, and a recompence unto them" (v. 9) or, what was a blessing—their feasts with the Lord—have become a burden by substituting their faith in it rather than in God which brings judgment. Notice the result: the hardening of the heart leads to insensitivity (v. 8), which leads to bondage ("bow down their back" v. 10), which ends in social discord.

The great business of the Jewish nation was its search for righteousness. The passion of the Greeks was for knowledge, the passion of the Romans was for power, but the passion of the Jews was for righteousness. By missing Christ, they missed their national goal and so were hardened, except for the elect remnant. The situation on Paul's day differed only in detail from the days when his great predecessors lived. Then, as now, there was a believing remnant with open eyes and unstopped ears that accepted God's grace.

God works through the individual by His grace. That has always been His pattern. He rejects no one who turns to Him. Paul argues that God has not rejected Israel but is disciplining her.

II. God's Wonder (vv. 11-12)

Paul pictures Israel as a stumbling nation that has not entirely fallen. Or, to use boxing parlance, they were "down but not out," and God did not intend to let them be counted out, "God forbid" (v. 11). In other words—and this is the wonder—God doesn't give up when someone falls.

But there's more! God used their failure to bring in the Gentiles ("through their fall

salvation is come unto the Gentiles," v. 11). The Old Testament abounds with promises that include the Gentiles, but the Jews resisted it. Their failure to boldly proclaim Jesus as the Messiah opened the door wider for the Gentiles and moved them into a position of prominence.

That is not all! Paul continues that God is using the Gentiles to make Israel jealous (v. 11) by offering them what Israel refused. Paul knew this from his experience of evangelism in places like Corinth. After he had ministered in the synagogue for some time, the people there opposed him and became abusive, so he "shook his raiment" and told them, "Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean; from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles" (Acts 18:6).

It seems God must deal with His children as children on occasion. Most parents can remember when they offered something to a child only to have him refuse. However, when the offer was made to a sibling, the original child became very upset and deeply regretted that he passed up the first opportunity. Paul hopes that his highly visible and highly beneficial ministry to the Gentiles will be so striking to his kinsmen that they will be attracted to what is going on in the purposes of God and be saved with the Gentile believers.

Finally, Paul tells us not to give up on those who have turned back. Without warning, he says, "If their failure brought us this much riches, think of what we will receive by their obedience!" If God doesn't quit, neither should we. Who knows what talent for the church is waiting to be used in God's kingdom because someone refuses to give up?

III. God's Word

What this boils down to for each of us is that God keeps His word! We may fail Him, but He will never fail us. There are no special favors for special people. We can:

1. Claim His promises
2. Call on His power
3. Continue in His presence!

Everyone who comes sincerely to God will be received. Anyone who approaches God with their ideas or efforts will be turned away. This is God's eternal plan. We can count on it!

Chapter Thirty-Seven
God's Eternal Plan
Romans 11:1-12

Lesson in Review

A. Complete the following sentences using the correct words from the reading, notes, and class lecture.

1. If there is a Jew like Paul, there is no such thing as what?

2. What has always been God's pattern?

3. What should our attitude be if God doesn't quit on people?

4. Everyone who comes to God sincerely will be what?

D. Answer these questions from Romans 11:1-12. Use verses where the answer comes from.

5. What proof does Paul offer that God does not cast away His people?

6. At Paul's time, according to the election of grace, there was a what?

7. Grace is no longer grace if it is of what? Why has Israel stumbled?

8. Why has Israel stumbled? <u>That through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them (Israel) to jealousy (v. 11)</u>

E. Read the question carefully and respond in 1-2 sentences with a clear and concise answer. Your response should directly address the question and provide relevant details from the text.

9. Why could Elijah not be trusted with the power he desired?

10. What lesson did Elijah learn from the still, small voice?

11. Why was Elijah removed from his prophetic role?

Chapter Thirty-Eight

God's Garden

Romans 11:13-29

"*The LORD has appeared of old to me, saying:*
'Yes, I have loved you with an
everlasting love; therefore with lovingkindness
I have drawn you.'" Jeremiah 31:3

Romans 11:13-29 marks a significant shift in focus, as Paul turns from addressing Israel's condition to warning the Gentiles about their role in God's redemptive plan. While the Jews had historically been the chosen people, their rejection of Christ led to the inclusion of the Gentiles, but Paul cautions against arrogance, reminding them that they stand by faith, not by their own merit. Echoing Jeremiah 31:3, Paul emphasizes that God's love is everlasting, and His calling remains irrevocable. Even though Israel has stumbled, God's purpose is unfolding, and His plan for redemption includes both Jew and Gentile in His unchanging love.

Paul, who has been writing to the Jews since the beginning of Chapter 9, turns to the Gentiles. He warns them about their position in Christ.

I God's Purpose in His Garden (vv. 13–15)

Paul reminds the church that God called him to be the apostle to the Gentiles (v. 13; Acts 9:15), but he hopes his work among the Gentiles will provoke the Jews to jealousy so they will come to Christ. If an unsaved Jew visited the average church service, would he be provoked to jealousy or just provoked?

Warming to this theme, Paul wonders, "If their casting away brought reconciliation to God, what would happen when they return?" He responds that it will be like comparing life to death.

God is always interested in challenging and using the church to its most effective ability. That is why, service after service and year after year, we feel the Spirit of God convict us of our shortcomings and burden us with greater work.

II. God's Power in His Garden (vv. 16-25)

Realizing his words may offend the Jews and encourage the Gentiles to arrogance, Paul selects two illustrations to show that both are needed in God's Garden. First, Paul reminds them to present the first cake from the harvest to the Lord (Numbers 15:17-21). The thought was that giving God the first fruit symbolized that all they possessed belonged to God. God accepted and blessed the cake, so He blessed the flour and cakes

they would eat in the future. Paul's point is that God's original blessing on the Jew meant His continued blessing.

Then Paul moves to the garden, which he illustrates over the following nine verses. Israel was called an olive tree in the Old Testament (Jeremiah 11:16-17 and Hosea 14:4-6). Paul begins by reminding them that the root, the source, determines the vine's strength and the fruit's quality.

Abraham seems to be the root since he was the depository of promises. Some see Christ as the root here since He is described in this epistle as "the root of Jesse" (Isaiah 11:10, Romans 15:12) and is ultimately the root of every earthly and heavenly blessing. The tree is the race of Abraham, reminding us of Jeremiah 11:16, where the prophet writes, "The Lord called thy name, A green olive tree." The natural branches are the Jews, who first partook of the tree's roots and fatness. Paul goes on to write that many of the branches (Jews) were broken off from the place of divine blessing in Abraham because of unbelief. The ingrafted branches are the Gentiles, placed upon the root, not the trunk or branches. The Gentile does not become a Jew, nor does he become "of Israel," but enters directly into the blessing promised by God to the Gentiles through Abraham (Genesis 12:3).

This passage is about God's power and garden, and we should pause and notice his gardening principles as they relate to the church.

A. God's Power to Rule ("God is able," v. 23). This is God's Garden, and it is He, not the plants, who determines what will be planted, where it will be planted, by when it will be planted, and how it will be pruned. God selects us and decides where we are needed. This illustration refers to God's sovereignty.

B. God's Power to Remove (v. 17). If God chooses to break off some branches in His sovereignty, that is His right. He does choose to break off those who refuse to submit to Him in humble faith.

C. God's Power to Replace (v. 17). In His sovereignty, God can replace those who were not a part of it through grafting. God shows no reluctance in taking wild branches and grafting them into the old stock, provided that the wild branches would do what the natural branches refused to do—namely, come to Him in faith.

D. God's Power to Return (v. 21). The wild branches must not overlook that when the natural branches refused to believe, God reserved the right to remove them, and He will not hesitate to do the same with the wild branches. So, there is no room for complacency, only humble trust. Therefore, we do not boast (v. 18) but must continue (v. 22).

E. God's Power to Restore (v. 23). God can replace that He originally removed. The key to the branches is the root (v. 17). Holiness (v. 16) results from staying attached to the root, not the fruit on the branch. Therefore, each generation equals a new

crop that must be offered to the Lord. And we offer our life to Christ at conversion, and as He blesses it, it brings His blessings on the rest of our lives.

God, in all His majestic power, is thus seen to be a God of "goodness and severity," the people's behavior determines which aspect of His nature they receive.

III. God's Promise in His Garden (vv. 26-29)

Paul assures his readers that what the Christians enjoy now used to be reserved for the Jews, and the Jews will one day embrace it again (v. 26). Paul is not speaking of God changing His mind and method at some point in the future so that Israel can be saved. Instead, he says Israel's hardness will begin to soften, and many will see Jesus as their Savior.

Therefore, God uses the tragedy of Israel's unbelief to bring about the victory of Gentile evangelization, which, in turn, will lead to Jewish restoration. This will be done without God altering His principles, forsaking the Jews, or ignoring the Gentiles. In fact, Paul has shown that even amid human rebellion, God will use all things to bring about His eternal purposes.

Those whom God claims are safe in Him (v. 29). No one could eradicate the Jews—from Pharaoh to Hitler. The Jews are waterproof (Red Sea) and fireproof (fiery furnace). Both times, their enemies suffered, but they were delivered. Jesus said, concerning His sheep, that no one could take them from His hand (John 10:28-29). We are safe in the arms of Jesus!

Chapter Thirty-Eight
God's Garden
Romans 11:13-29

Lesson in Review

A. Complete the following sentences using the correct words from the reading, notes, and class lecture.

1. In this section, Paul warns the Gentiles about what?

2. The root of a tree, the source, determines what (two-part answer)?

3. In God's Garden, God selects us and decides where and what.

4. Even amid human rebellion, God will use all things to bring about what?

B. Answer these questions from Romans 11:30-36. Use verses where the answer comes from.

5. The Gentiles who, in times past, had not believed in God have now obtained mercy. How?

6. Paul praises the depth of the riches of what and what of God (two-part answer).

7. Glory should be given to God for how long?

C. Read the question carefully and respond in 1-2 sentences with a clear and concise answer. Your response should directly address the question and provide relevant details from the text.

8. Why did God call Paul to be an apostle to the Gentiles?

9. What does the olive tree represent in Paul's illustration?

10. What does Paul say happens to the branches that do not believe?

Chapter Thirty-Nine

A Pause to Praise

Romans 11:30-36

"*But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved).*" Ephesians 2:4-5

The loftiest mountain peaks of biblical truth declare God's praises. In the last section of Romans 11, we find just such a mountain summit. The apostle Paul pauses to praise the Lord. Romans 11:30-36 stands as a glorious crescendo in Paul's theological masterpiece, directing attention to God's boundless mercy and wisdom. Throughout Romans, Paul has carefully outlined God's plan for both Jews and Gentiles**,** revealing His sovereignty and grace. In these final verses, Paul pauses to praise the Lord**,** acknowledging that salvation is a gift of mercy, not human effort—echoing Ephesians 2:4-5**,** which declares that we are made alive together with Christ by grace. This passage reminds believers that, even during challenges, the best response is to worship God, for His ways are higher than ours and His plan is perfect beyond comprehension**.**

When we find ourselves amid a difficult task, as Paul's writing of this letter must have been, the best relief is to pause and praise the Lord. When we remember how great God is, we remember that no matter what the task, we can do it through Christ (Philippians 4:13). So, we approach these verses with the reverence and humility they deserve.

I. The Mercy of God: How Unfathomable! (vv. 30–32)

In these verses, Paul presents a succinct summary of the Jew-Gentile issue he has been discussing. Here, we find him focusing on the points to remember:

A. There are No Different Men. Paul, in these verses, shows that there are no special privileges with God because of your heritage. Both Jews and Gentiles show their need for God. The early church struggled with this for many years. Peter preached on the Day of Pentecost that "the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call" (Acts 2:39). Yet they didn't get the message. When the church was scattered by persecution, some went to Samaria. Many obeyed in response to Philip's preaching, and miracles happened there. When the apostles heard about it but still needed to receive the Holy Ghost, they sent Peter and John, the two leaders, to pray for the Samaritans. Why? They were not sure about Samaritans, but when they also received the Holy Ghost, they assumed it was okay since they were half-Jew (Acts 8).

Then, eleven years after the church's birthday, Peter is in Joppa when servants arrive

from Cornelius, an Italian. Cornelius was praying to God when God told him to send for Peter. Peter was unsure what to do, so he took some men with him as witnesses. I feel he wasn't even sure about giving an altar call, so God interrupted his preaching by pouring the Holy Ghost on the listeners. Then Peter asked if anyone could refuse baptism after receiving the Holy Ghost (Acts 10). There was controversy because, in Chapter 11, Peter must explain his actions to the Jews in Jerusalem.

Next, the word came back that a predominantly Gentile church was meeting in Antioch. In response, the leaders from Jerusalem sent Barnabas. Barnabas brought Paul to help him. From there, they were commissioned as the first missionary team to the Gentiles.

B. There is No Different Manner. Paul refers to Gentiles and Jews as those who have "not obeyed." We learn that "God hath concluded them all in unbelief," (v. 32). The Greek word translated "concluded" means "to shut up on all sides." The word often describes fish caught in a net or animals stuck in a trap. The text teaches that all human beings have been caught in the trap of sin.

This is God's manner of reaching people. As they become aware of their sinfulness, they become aware of the need for a Savior. This intent was the giving of the Law. It was not designed to give people the rules to prove their goodness; it was intended to show people their sins so they would turn to God. Every time we try to show our goodness in our ability, we regretfully learn how depraved we are. But that always leads us back to Jesus.

C. There is No Different Message. Sin is a miserable and wretched state for both Jews and Gentiles. There is only one key to its trap—the mercy of God. The Lord has impartially exercised His abundant compassion by dying for all sinners. All we need to do is reach out to Him with our empty hands and grasp His unfathomable mercy!

In the early church, the question of what to do with the Gentiles did not cease with the church in Antioch and the missionary trips of Paul and Barnabas. It resurfaced again at the Jerusalem Council. Some maintained that Gentiles must become Jews before they could become part of the church. Peter, who introduced the gospel to the Gentiles, urged, "Put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith...but we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they" (Acts 15:9, 11). Paul then spoke of what God was doing among the Gentiles. Finally, James declared, "My sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God," (v. 19).

II. The Mind of God: How Unsearchable! (vv. 33-35)

Beginning in verse 33, Paul breaks into a praise that exalts the infinite mind of God. It's as though he has reached the highest mountain peak and, in the throes of its unspeakable magnificence, attempted to express the deep awe he is experiencing

verbally. Unable to describe the mind of God, Paul instead informs what it is not. This is the same as describing darkness as the absence of light.

A. We Cannot Confine It. In a burst of praise, Paul claims the boundless extent of the Lord's understanding (v. 33). His wisdom and knowledge are immeasurable. He knows everything about what was, is, and will be. He knows what is both possible and impossible. And He can apply His infinite knowledge with perfect skill and precision. No wonder Paul declares that God's ways are "unsearchable"—incapable of being tracked by anyone but the Lord. His activities defy our complete understanding.

B. We Cannot Comprehend It. Flowing from Paul's exclamation are three questions—all of which assume a negative answer. First, "For who hath known the mind of the Lord?" (v34). Since He is so infinite, no creature could ever comprehend His mind.

C. We Cannot Counsel It. Second, "Who hath been his counsellor?" (v. 34). No creature could ever act as His consultant because God knows all things, including how to apply His knowledge wisely,

D. We Cannot Claim It. Third, "Who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again?" (v. 35). Since He is the boundless Creator, Sustainer, Redeemer, and Provider of all, no creature could ever give Him anything that would put Him in debt.

Man is a great thinker! The world's libraries attest to that. His restless intellect probes the heights above and the depths beneath as it investigates the universe's nature and seeks why. But God's ways and dealings are beyond all human inferences.

> Isaiah 55:8-9, 8For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. 9For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.

When those ways are revealed to us, all we can do is bow and worship!

III. The Majesty of God: How Unmatched! (36)

Paul closes his pause for praise with a declaration of God's incomparable majesty.

A. God is the Source. "For of him...are all things."

> James 1:16-17, Do not err, my beloved brethren. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning,"

B. God is the Sustainer. "And through him...are all things."

> Romans 8:28, And we know that all things work together for good to them that

love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

C. God is the Significance. "And to him, are all things."

Revelation 4:11, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.

This encompasses every aspect of our lives, including our mates, families, jobs, church, and daily occurrences. God is in control, and we need to live in accordance with that fact.

Paul's praise concludes with a proclamation of God's ultimate honor, central focus, and radiant magnificence: "To whom be glory for ever. Amen."

If we are not careful, I am afraid that God's magnificence will not move us; rather, we will accept it as ordinary. We will be like the rancher who lived by the Grand Canyon. When asked if he would see it, he replied, "Yea, I saw it once. Terrible place to lose a cow." The more we study God's ways, the more we praise God. The result of all Bible study is worship, and the result of all worship is service to the God we love.

Chapter Thirty-Nine
A Pause to Praise
Romans 11:30-36

Lesson in Review

A. Complete the following sentences using the correct words from the reading, notes, and class lecture.

1. Romans 11:30-36 is a pause by the apostle Paul to do what?

2. When we remember how great God is, what do we remember?

4. Paul shows that there are no special privileges with God because of what?

5. The Law was intended to show people their sin so they would do what?

6. What is God's wisdom and knowledge?

B. Answer these questions from Romans 11:30-36. Use verses where the answer comes from.

7. The Gentiles who, in times past, did not believe in God have now obtained mercy. How?

8. Paul praises the depth of the riches both of what and what of God (two-part answer).

9. How long should glory be given to God?

C. Read the question carefully and respond in 2-3 sentences with a clear and concise answer. Your response should directly address the question and provide relevant details from the text.

10. How does Paul emphasize God's impartial mercy toward both Jews and Gentiles in Romans 11:30-36?

Chapter Forty

What Does God Really Want?

Romans 12:1

"*For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.*" 1 Corinthians 6:20

Romans 12:1 marks a pivotal transition in Paul's letter, shifting from theological doctrine to practical application**.** The call to offer ourselves as living sacrifices reflects the heart of true worship, where faith is not merely acknowledged but actively demonstrated**.** Echoing 1 Corinthians 6:20**,** this verse reminds believers that they are purchased by God's grace, and thus their lives should glorify Him in both body and spirit. Paul emphasizes that Christianity is not just about what we believe, but how we live, faith must translate into action, shaping every aspect of daily life. This passage challenges believers to express God's truth through their conduct, not seeking to impress, but rather to faithfully reflect His character in all they do.

God is looking for people who want to express themselves more than they want to impress. Our efforts can never impress God, but they can express God.

So far, in the letter to the Romans, Paul has discussed the principles of the gospel (doctrine) and the problems of the gospel (Israel), and he now begins to deal with the practice of the gospel. That is his theme throughout the remainder of the epistle. It is typical of the teaching of the epistles that belief is followed by behavior, doctrine, and deeds. We need more than just Paul's doctrinal explanations. We must translate our learning into living and show our daily lives that we trust God's Word.

The challenge to our belief—our doctrine—concerns the believer's body. Paul describes it as the ultimate key to the practice of the victorious Christian life. Knowing the truths of Romans theoretically is of little avail if the body is not surrendered so that the life of Christ can be expressed in everyday life.

I. A Personal Request

"I beseech you." It is not just Paul personally begging the Romans; it is God asking us. He does not corral the believer and bridle him as a horse and force him to obey; he beseeches the believer. God could have used His authority, but He asked. God wants an unbridled sacrifice. God wants people who will willingly obey Him.

"Present your bodies" is to yield or submit yourself. The verb "present" in this verse means "present once and for all." Paul has been talking to our minds—doctrine—now he wants us to do something about it, which calls for our bodies. Too many believers want

it only in their minds. Paul is asking us to submit our will, which is our last stronghold.

It commands a definite commitment of the body to the Lord, just as a bride and groom commit themselves to each other in their wedding service. And when they commit, it is "until death do, we part!"

"Your bodies" means all of you. God wants all of you. Just as Jesus Christ had to take on Himself a body to accomplish God's will on Earth, we must yield our bodies to Christ so He might continue God's work through us. We must yield the members of the body as "instruments of righteousness" (Romans 6:13) for the Holy Ghost to use in doing God's work.

What makes you, you? This would be a good New Year's review and resolution: Make a list of what you are and mark those that are yielded. List the good to use and the bad to remove. We usually yield what we like, but it is more than that. And it is not only yielding the past but also the future.

"A living sacrifice." Paul is not calling us to die for God but to live for God. Christianity is not to prepare people for death but to show them how to live. Jesus speaks of this when He speaks of Himself as the bread of life after feeding the crowd with a boy's lunch. He compared Himself to the manna in the wilderness that was given to sustain life, not prepare for death.

> John 6:43-51, 43Jesus therefore answered and said unto them, Murmur not among yourselves. 44No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. 45It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me. 46Not that any man hath seen the Father, save he which is of God, he hath seen the Father. 47Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life. 48I am that bread of life. 49Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. 50This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. 51I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.

How a living sacrifice? It sounds like a paradox, so we must look a little closer. Under the old covenant economy, the believer brought a live animal—a calf, goat, lamb, or two turtledoves—to be slain. But you could give a donkey if you could not afford that. The donkey was not sacrificed but used at the temple by the priests. God needs someone to do the donkey work.

> Isaiah 1:11, To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the LORD: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I

delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats.

Two men in the Bible illustrate what it means to be a living sacrifice—Isaac (Genesis 22) and Jesus Christ. Isaac was a young man when he went with his father Abraham to Mount Moriah, and he was offered as a sacrifice. Isaac was willing to die so that he and his father might be obedient to the Lord. He did not die, of course, because God's purpose was to test Abraham's love, not take his son. When Isaac was unbound and taken from that altar, it was like a resurrection from the dead (Hebrews 11:17-19). Isaac was, from that moment on, a living sacrifice.

But our Lord died and arose from the dead. No substitute was provided for Him as for Isaac because He was the substitute. When our Lord came from the tomb, He still bore the marks of the nails on His body. He became a living sacrifice and remains a living sacrifice in glory today. His sacrifice for sin was completed; now, He lives to minister to His people and perfect them in holiness.

Note, then, the six characteristics of a person who is a living sacrifice:

- Obedient to the Father
- Willing to yield everything
- No arguing or complaining
- No explanations needed
- Raised to enter a new kind of life
- Ministering to others

"Holy" or wholly. Remember, if He is not Lord of all, He is not Lord at all!

"Acceptable unto God." Is it possible to unacceptably sacrifice to God? Remember Cain and Abel? Acceptable means well-pleasing. It is like getting your children when what was needed but not willingly. Many do it because it must be done or no one else will. God wants it willingly.

Jesus said, "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye *do* them" (John 13:17).

When there is a problem, we should check if it is your faith or your submission (obedience). Does the Spirit bring anything to your mind right now to yield? You must present it to God if you are going to have revival and progress in God.

II. A Personal Reason

God asks when He could command; now He explains why when He does not have to. He wants us to understand, not just obey. Why personally?

"Therefore" is an axiom of Bible study that when we come across the word "therefore," we should pause and see what it's there for! This is the fourth "therefore" in the letter.

- Romans 3:20 is the "therefore" of condemnation, declaring that the whole world is guilty before God.
- Romans 5:1 is the "therefore" of justification.
- Romans 8:1 is the "therefore" of assurance.
- Romans 12:1 is the "therefore" of dedication.

Paul is linking in Romans 12:1 the doctrine of Romans 1-11 to the doings of Romans 12-16. Notice what Paul has just written in Romans.

> Romans 11:36, For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen.

- It is "of Him"—He is our source!
- It is "through Him"—He is our force!
- It is "to Him"—He is our course!

"By the mercies of God." Again, Romans 1-11 covers the mercies of God so thoroughly that it will fill a notebook. (It's taken us 40 lessons.) God is not unreasonable; we are after what He is done.

"Brethren" shows us it is a family matter.

"Which is your reasonable service." Service is translated into other versions for worship. Why? There was no difference to the Jew. Our service is worship, and worship is revealed in our service. The word "reasonable" (Greek: *Logikos*) has roots in the word logical. Jesus explained it to the woman at the well.

> John 4:21-24, 21Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. 22Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. 23But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. 24God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.

When the church gathers to worship, it also gathers to witness. That witness is threefold:

- To Christ (His attributes and acts)
- To the church (one another)
- To the community (world)

In other words, balanced worship includes:

- Elaboration—witness to the Lord

- Edification—witness to one another
- Evangelization—witness to the world

Of these three, the most important is our worship of the Lord. If that is right, we will be unable to edify one another or evangelize the lost.

We do not come to church to worship; worship ought to be every dedicated believer's constant attitude and activity. We come to church to worship publicly and corporately. What we have been doing privately, for the most part, all week long, we do publicly as we gather.

God does not need our worship. He knows all things, so our worship does not surprise Him. He owns all things, so our worship does not enrich Him. He is perfect in all His attributes, so our worship cannot improve Him.

God does not need our worship, but He does seek our worship and invites us into His presence. Why? We must get to know God personally, and worship involves entering a personal relationship with Him and a personal response from Him. God interacts with us as we seek, worship, and serve Him.

III. A Personal Response

There is a genuine sense in which to present our body to God is the most strategic thing we can do as believers. It is possible for us, as believers, to live lives on one of three levels. We can live lives that are sensual, soulish, or spiritual. A person, for example, who is ruled by the physical is sensual. To be sensual does not necessarily mean that we live in constant indulgence of the worst forms of carnality. It simply means that the senses rule us.

We live in a world today where people see with their ears and think with their hearts. Think of each expression: “I do not like the smell.” “It is too hot.” “I am too tired.” “Does it taste good?” “What does it feel like?” “Do not do that, it hurts.”

“Is not it ugly?” “Let me tell you what Betty said.” Each one of these statements reflects a physical reaction. People who are ruled by such considerations are ruled by the senses—by what they see, feel, hear, taste, or smell. The motivation from this source may be very subtle, very well disguised, and very genteel. Nevertheless, people motivated by such considerations are sensual. They will not go to prayer meetings because it is too hot. They will not work with the little children because they are too smelly. They do not like John Jones because he uses bad grammar. In other words, they are a sensual Christian. They may be saved, but they are living life on the lowest level.

On the other hand, it is possible for us to be soulish in our expression of faith, to be ruled by intellect, emotions, or the will. This is a far more subtle possibility. A life so lived can come so close to genuine spirituality that it can be difficult to detect the flaw. For example, a believer may commit to intellectual pursuits in practicing Christianity. He

studies his Bible and becomes a walking Bible encyclopedia. He becomes a great theologian, a great apologist for the faith. People admire and respect him for his extraordinary grasp of the truth. He is not necessarily spiritual, however. This grasp of the truth is all too often merely intellectual. It may be soulish.

Or he may be strongly given to emotion. At the Lord's Supper, the thought of Calvary brings tears to his eyes, and he weeps. He gets so worked up at the prayer meeting that he shouts his hallelujahs. He is so deeply moved by the thought of the poverty of Haiti orphans or the masses of India that he will empty his pocketbook into the offering when an appeal is made. He is not necessarily spiritual, however. All too often, such displays are mere excesses of emotion. An unsaved man might do as much.

On the other hand, a believer might have an iron will. When he is saved, he learns he should give up smoking, so he immediately throws his cigarettes into the fire and never smokes again. That may not be a spiritual victory; it may simply be the assertion of a strong will. Indeed, there may be a combination of two or even all three factors—intellect, emotions, and will- that make a person appear exemplary Christian without being truly spiritual. It is a very subtle trap.

Of course, this is not to say that intellect and emotions will play no part in the life of a spiritual believer because they do. But just being intellectual, emotional, or determined does not constitute the essence of spirituality. If a soulish man controls a man's sensual side, the person is a fine specimen of humanity. But he is not spiritual and may not even be saved at all.

To be spiritual, the Holy Spirit must have complete control of the believer, and the key to this lies in surrendering his body. For it is through the body's members that all impressions are received and all impulses expressed. If, therefore, the Holy Ghost has control of the body, He can control the whole person. To be truly spiritual, a believer needs to hand over his body to God for Him to fill and use. Then, not only are the senses controlled, but the intellect, emotions, and will are controlled, and the person is a spiritual believer expressing in all his ways the beauty of the Lord Jesus.

How, then, can we decide whether a given act is to be traced back to the soul or spirit? Indeed, the line drawn here is very fine. Only one instrument can cleave between the two: God's Word.

> Hebrews 4:12, For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

Only in our daily waiting upon God can we allow Him to bring His Word to bear upon our motives so that we can discern the true reasons for our conduct and conversation through the Spirit's enlightenment. The word translated as "discerner" is especially significant. It is the word *kritikos*. It is only used once in all Scripture and means

a "critic." It is only as; Therefore, the Word of God can not only differentiate between the flesh and that which is of the Spirit; it also differentiates between the natural man and the spiritual man.

Notice that Paul applies this to the individual. Paul's beseeching is to "you," not the church. Therefore, presenting your body can only be a personal decision.

Am I submitted to God's will and purpose for my life?

Chapter Forty
What Does God Really Want?
Romans 12:1

Lesson in Review

A. Complete the following sentences using the correct words from the reading, notes, and class lecture.

1. We must translate our learning into what?

2. God wants people who will obey Him. How?

3. We must yield the members of our body as what?

4. Paul is not calling us to die for God, but to what?

5. On what three levels can we live life (three-part answer)?

6. Presenting your body can only be what kind of decision?

B. Answer these questions from Romans 12:1. Use verses where the answer comes from.

6. By what does Paul beseech us?

7. What does Paul want us to present to God?

9. Why does Paul want us to present our bodies to God?

C. Read the question carefully and respond in 2-3 sentences with a clear and concise answer. Your response should directly address the question and provide relevant details from the text.

10. What is the significance of presenting oneself as a "living sacrifice" in Romans 12:1, and how does it shape a believer's relationship with God?

11. What does Hebrews 4:12 reveal about the difference between soulish and spiritual living, and why is God's Word essential in making this distinction?

Chapter Forty-One

It's All in Your Head

Romans 12:2

"And be not conformed to this world:
but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind,
that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable,
and perfect, will of God." Romans 12:2

In 12:1, Paul beseeches us to present our bodies. The presentation of the body results in a transformed life. The believer's body is the vehicle through which the new life is expressed. We do not cultivate the body like the ancient Greeks, who worshipped its beauty and strength and glorified their worship in sculptured works of art and in their Olympic games, which were more than mere athletic contests, partaking in sacred celebration. We do not crucify the body like the ascetics who considered it evil and starved and mutilated it. Simon Stylites, for example, is said to have sat for thirty years on top of a column. Others wore hair skirts and scourged themselves with cruel whips. (This is not to be confused with crucifying the flesh, which Paul says he did daily.) Instead, we are to consecrate the body so that the Holy Spirit, who has made it His temple, might have free access to all its courts and control over all its activities. The believer who thus presents his body will be changed.

This verse continues the beseeching, "and be not conformed, ... but be ye transformed." How? "By the renewing of your mind." First, Paul talks about presenting our bodies; now, He speaks of renewing our minds.

I. The Pressure to Conform

"Be not conformed to this world."

The word "conform" is *suschematizzo*, which "refers to the act of an individual assuming an outward expression that does not come from within him, nor is it representative of his inner heart life." Conforming lays stress on that which is external. Paul is commanding us not to be fashioned by the world. J. B. Phillips expressively renders the sentence:

"Do not let the world around you squeeze you into its mold."

The problem is not conforming—but that to which we conform. We all conform.

Romans 8:28-29, And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate *to be conformed to the image of his Son*, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.

Philippians 3:8-10, Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, *being made conformable unto his death*.

We need to be conformed, meaning "pressed into the mold of"—like a rubber stamp—Christ.

However, if the world molds us, that is wrong! Why? The Christian's witness is that He is different. When we conform, we lose that testimony. We must be able to show a difference.

The next question is: Where do we draw the line of conformation? It begins with the understanding that our measurement is not how far from we are from the world but how close we are to God. If we work at maintaining our distance from the world, we drift with it as the world drifts further from God. But, if our measurement is our closeness to God, then it doesn't matter how far the world is from God; we remain close to Him. At this point, there is a liberty of conscience under the guidance of the Spirit.

Why do people conform to the world?

E. Laziness — they do not want to try to be different from the world.

F. Fear — they fear what those in the world will say about their difference.

G. Weakness — they are unconvinced that God wants a difference in their conforming area.

The crucial phrase here is "world." What does Paul mean by that? The word is "age" (*Eon* Greek).

Matthew 28:18-20, And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, *even unto the end of the world*. Amen.

We live in this age but look to the age to come. What's wrong with this age?

> II Corinthians 4:1-4, Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not; But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom *the god of this world hath blinded the minds* of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

There is a god of this age who is blinding people to God. We must be eye-openers. They do not know they're blind. If we conform—listen to them—we will be blinded. The world is the devil's lair for sinners and his lure for saints.

How much time do we spend hearing God compared to the world? We must be careful because the age has learned how to present it, so it slips up on us.

> Galatians 1:3-5, Grace be to you and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ, Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from *this present evil world*, according to the will of God and our Father: To whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

This present age is evil. If we are not careful, that's all we'll feed on.

> II Timothy 4:9-10, Do thy diligence to come shortly unto me: For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica.

Demas was busy in God's work but loved this age. When this happens, that person leaves God.

How do I obey this command?

- We must refuse to let this world Claim our Attention.
- If the world claims our attention, it will Capture our Affection next.
- Finally, the world will Control our Actions.

Therefore, we must be completely in love with Jesus! He must claim our attention, capture our affection, and control our actions.

II. The Power to Change

"Be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind."

The word "transformed" means changed from within. It is used only four times in the New Testament—twice to describe Jesus at the Mount of Transfiguration (Matthew

17:2 and Mark 9:2), here in Romans 12:2 to describe our mental change, and to describe the glorious change wrought in the believer when he steadfastly contemplates the Lord Jesus:

> II Corinthians 3:16-18, Nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord, the vail shall be taken away. Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

Paul in II Corinthians 3:16-18 teaches how we are changed. The change happens when we meditate on the Word and memorize the Word (remember Psalm 119:11, "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee," which is the best publication, in the best place, for the best purpose) and make the Word part of us.

How do we change? By using our minds. The world works by "claiming our attention." We must, therefore, give our minds to the things of God. The word "renewing" carries the idea of remolding.

> Joshua 1:8, This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.

First, there is an initial change when we receive the Holy Ghost and are born again. You become a new creation and receive a new mind that is sensitive to Christ:

> I Peter 1:18-25, Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God. Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently: Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.
>
> II Corinthians 5:17, Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

Then there is the intentional change, what we continue to do once we've been changed. There must be an intentional change for this to matter. What do we do?

A. We must Remember Eternal Truth. We must read and meditate (listen, talk about, pray, worship) on the Scriptures so that when we are faced with a choice, we know the truth to choose it.

B We must Remember the Examination Time. Because this age is so seductive, we must turn from it from time to time to examine ourselves. We must ask ourselves what we are being influenced by and what we're thinking.

C We must Remember to Exercise Turning. It is not enough to know what is right; we must also do right.

The Greek word for "transformed" is *metamorphoomai*, from which our word "metamorphosis" is derived. The dictionary defines metamorphosis as a "change of form or change of character." An example is the caterpillar that undergoes metamorphosis in its chrysalis and emerges a glorious butterfly. The same creature that enters the filmy tomb eventually emerges, but the change is so remarkable that it cannot be recognized as the same. It is this kind of change the Holy Ghost wishes to work in the believer's life but to do it; He must have control of the body and free access to the mind.

On two notable occasions recorded in Scripture, the metamorphosis in the life of a believer was so complete as to be evident to all to see. It left its imprint on the face.

- When Moses came down from the mount after forty days and nights alone with God, he "wist not that the skin of his face shone" (Exodus 34:29).

- Likewise, Stephen, filled with the Holy Ghost, faced his enemies in the Sanhedrin, and they "looking stedfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel" (Acts 6:15).

The Holy Ghost does not apply a mere cosmetic to the skin to bring about this nobility of countenance. He works within. He renews the mind and transforms the soul.

The face, after all, is "the index of the soul." When asked to appoint a certain man to a high post in his government, Abraham Lincoln once said, "I do not like his face!" "But surly," said the petitioner, "the man is not responsible for his face." Said Lincoln, "Every man over forty is responsible for his face."

What does your face say about you? Will you allow the Holy Spirit to transform it starting from within?

III. The Pleasure of the Conduct

"That ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God."

The result is God's will, which Paul describes with three words (one will—three adjectives): a good will (think how God uses the word "good" in creation), acceptable, and perfect.

A tourist watched a beautiful young lady working hard at work, treating some of the worst cases of leprosy in a leper colony. "Ugh!" He said, "I wouldn't do what you're doing for a million dollars!" Her cheerful reply, "Neither would I!" Why was she involved in a task money couldn't pay her to do? She knew it was God's will and found it fulfilling.

For some reason, many of us feel that God's will is somehow second-rate—that He doesn't want us to find real happiness in our work. How wrong we are.

He probably thought he had it made before Paul yielded himself to God's will for his life. Instead, after he launched into a life of sacrifice and danger that God had in mind for him, he discovered true contentment in God's will for him.

Philippians 4:11, I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content

Paul insists that presenting our body and mind is done with such relish that it will prove good, acceptable, and perfect. He does not promise that the careless, the casual, or the uncommitted will somehow find it by accident. The demand may cut right across our opinions, ambitions, and tastes, as Peter did when God commanded him to go to the house of the Gentile Cornelius (Acts 10). God plans for us will be the very best that omniscient wisdom and divine love can conceive. Those who do God's will discover a sweet experience.

It will be:

- Good for us. "God meant it unto good" was Joseph's testimony when the dark clouds of uncertainty had finally rolled away, and he could look back and see how marvelous God's leading and providential overruling in his life were (Genesis 50:20). It is Satan who suggests that God is not to be trusted; that He plans for us some unpleasant experience; that He will let us down and leads us into anguish, pain, and loss. Satan never seeks to frighten us into a lack of trust in God. But God's will is good.

- Acceptable or pleasing to God. Sometimes, the will of God is in direct opposition to the wisdom and way of the world. When Daniel and his three friends were taken to Babylon as part of the refugees from the Israel Campaign, their ability was noted. Soon, they were added to the schoolhouse of Babylon's wise men and became wise men in training (Daniel 1). As special students of the king, they enjoyed the same food prepared for the king. However, Daniel did not know where the food came from, if it had first been an offering to an idol God, how it was prepared (kosher), and sometimes—as with a strange dish—what it was (clean and unclean). So, he and his friends became vegetarians. This, while strange

to the Babylonians, was acceptable to God. The result, since Daniel and the others followed the will of God, was that they were healthier than the others. God's will is always for our good.

- Perfect in every way! No plan of ours can improve on the plan of God. We only see pits and pieces; He sees the whole. We see only fragments of the past. We measure things by the narrow horizon of our present vision. He sees the past, present, and future in their total context as related to eternity. He sees when, where, and why we touch the lives of others. He weighs all actions. He controls all circumstances. His will is perfect.

So, the Christian is both challenged and changed as a believer. He presents his body to God and takes on a new, higher, greater dimension of living. How this new quality of life affects all other human relationships is the subject of the rest of the Book of Romans.

Chapter Forty-One
It's All in Your Head
Romans 12:2

Lesson in Review

A. Complete the following sentences using the correct words from the reading, notes, and class lecture.

1. Conforming lays stress on what?

2. The problem is not conforming, but what?

3. Why is it wrong if the world molds us?

4. Our measurement is not how far we are from the world, but rather what?

5. How are we changed (three-part answer)?

6. God's plans for us will be the _____ that omniscient wisdom and divine love can _____.

7. The Christian is both _____ as a believer.

B. Answer these questions from Romans 12:2. Use verses where the answer comes from.

8. We are not to be conformed to what?

9. How is the believer transformed?

10. A transformed, renewed mind proves what?

C. Read the question carefully and respond in 2-3 sentences with a clear and concise answer. Your response should directly address the question and provide relevant details from the text.

11. Why does Paul warn against being conformed to this world in Romans 12:2, and what does it mean for a believer to be transformed instead?

12. How does Paul describe God's will in Romans 12:2, and why must believers embrace it fully?

Chapter Forty-Two

Knowing You and Your Place

Romans 12:3-8

"*There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.*
There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord.
And there are diversities of activities,
but it is the same God who works all in all."
1 Corinthians 12:4-6

Romans 12:3-8 and 1 Corinthians 12:4-6 highlight the diverse gifts, ministries, and activities. Paul transitions from the gospel's foundational truths to their practical application, urging believers to apply their faith in an implicit manner. He urges believers to submit themselves completely to God as a living sacrifice with wholehearted devotion. He begins by calling them to submit themselves entirely to God, offering their bodies as a living sacrifice. Transformation follows submission, as believers renew their minds through God's truth rather than conforming to the world's patterns. This change is essential for understanding and carrying out God's will, enabling Christians to serve effectively in their divinely appointed roles

In his teachings, Paul emphasizes our individual responsibility to understand our positions in the body of Christ and our proper relationship with fellow believers. As individual believers, it is our personal responsibility to present our bodies to God as a living sacrifice so that the life of Jesus may be expressed in daily living. As brothers related to other believers in the Lord Jesus, we are to express our abundant life in all the varying relationships and responsibilities of the local church. If we want God to use us to our potential, we must take responsibility to pay close attention to what these verses say.

Paul, speaking with authority as an apostle, begins with "For I say," which is a much stronger word than "beseech." He is now speaking with the authority. What authority? "Through the grace given unto me" refers to his apostolic status, God's gift to him for the church. There is a note of authority in his words as he reminds the Christians in Rome, and by extension, us, to carefully evaluate their lives and understand their roles and responsibilities within the church community.

I. Evaluating Your Capacity (v. 3)

> Romans 12:3, For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.

Our evaluation, as Paul points out, comes from a renewed mind. We tend to judge

ourselves wrongly, so Paul warns us to look at ourselves "soberly." There are two dangers here. We may either overestimate our own importance or go to the other extreme and depreciate ourselves to the point of false humility. This evaluation aims to guide us in understanding our true capacity and how we can best serve within the church. To practice the right way to measure our capacity, we need first to examine the two wrong ways:

A. Not too Highly. No one is to "think of himself more highly than he ought." This self-focus comes from pride that assumes, or desires more than God has given us. It is an exaggerated self-esteem. It is taking credit for something that belongs only to God. Remembering what Paul wrote in the previous eleven Roman chapters will help us be realistic. Paul wrote we are:

1. **A Sinner.** We have missed the mark.

2. **Saved.** That means we need a Savior. We need another to fix our fundamental problems, sin. This is God's grace! George Whitfield, seeing a man on his way to be hanged, said, "There but for the grace of God, go I."

3. **Shaky.** We are weak, and even when we know right, we find it difficult to do right.

4. **Second Chance.** Now, we are starting over under the guidance of God, who saved us.

B. Not too Humbly. Paul wrote that we "ought to think" and must estimate ourselves. Some feel that Christians quit thinking when they come to God. Where did that come from? Someone thought of it!

We are speaking here of false humility. False humility tends to assume a lesser role than the Lord has assigned. It is the thought that humility consists of trying to believe the talents God has given us are less valuable than we believe them to be. This introduces an element of dishonesty and make-believe into the heart of what otherwise is a virtue. All virtues are diminished once we know we have them; this is especially true of humility.

What has Paul written in the previous eleven chapters?

1. **We are Created.** God made us, and God does not make junk. We are not God, the highest form in creation.

2. **We are Called.** God calls everyone. At the beginning of the epistle, Paul states that he is writing to those called to be saints. God thought enough of you to call you for something.

3. **We are Conformed.** God thinks enough of us that He is shaping us into His

image.

4. We are Commissioned. Then God thinks enough of us to deliver His gospel into our care so that we can take it to the world.

The following verses explain Moses' mistake when God called him to the burning bush.

> Exodus 4:1-13, 1And Moses answered and said, But, behold, they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice: for they will say, The LORD hath not appeared unto thee. 2And the LORD said unto him, What is that in thine hand? And he said, A rod. 3And he said, Cast it on the ground. And he cast it on the ground, and it became a serpent; and Moses fled from before it. 4And the LORD said unto Moses, Put forth thine hand, and take it by the tail. And he put forth his hand, and caught it, and it became a rod in his hand: 5That they may believe that the LORD God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath appeared unto thee. 6And the LORD said furthermore unto him, Put now thine hand into thy bosom. And he put his hand into his bosom: and when he took it out, behold, his hand was leprous as snow. 7And he said, Put thine hand into thy bosom again. And he put his hand into his bosom again; and plucked it out of his bosom, and, behold, it was turned again as his other flesh. 8And it shall come to pass, if they will not believe thee, neither hearken to the voice of the first sign, that they will believe the voice of the latter sign. 9And it shall come to pass, if they will not believe also these two signs, neither hearken unto thy voice, that thou shalt take of the water of the river, and pour it upon the dry land: and the water which thou takest out of the river shall become blood upon the dry land. 10And Moses said unto the Lord, O my LORD, I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken unto thy servant: but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue. 11And the LORD said unto him, Who hath made man's mouth? or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? have not I the LORD? 12Now therefore go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say. 13And he said, O my Lord, send, I pray thee, by the hand of him whom thou wilt send.

C. Now, Honestly. Paul wrote that we are to evaluate ourselves "soberly." This attitude and action take a serious look at where we best fit into the whole of God's work, as God has determined by His gifts to us. This protects us from aspiring to be more than God intends or settling for less than God intends.

Do not say, "I honestly can do nothing." Paul said, "God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith." You are capable of service in God's work.

We must look at ourselves and see what God has suited us. Then, we humbly begin

using what God has shown us and ask God to work on the areas where we are weak. The principle is that God adds more to us as we use what we have.

We are like Michaelangelo hunting the granite rock that became the statue "David." He saw something special in the rock when others saw only stone. He then started chipping away all the pieces that were not David. God sees something special in each of us, too.

II. Evaluating Your Church (vv. 4-5)

> Romans 12:4-5, 4For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: 5So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.

In the practical outworking of our deeply personal relationship with Christ, we will be confronted immediately with the fact that Christianity involves people. One cannot be Christ-like alone. Every Christian is united inseparably to all Christians in the one body of Christ. Paul loved to use the human body as a striking analogy for the functions of the church.

> I Corinthians 10:17, For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread.

> I Corinthians 12:12-31, 12For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. 13For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. 14For the body is not one member, but many. 15If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? 16And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? 17If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? 18But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him. 19And if they were all one member, where were the body? 20But now are they many members, yet but one body. 21And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. 22Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary: 23And those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness. 24For our comely parts have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked. 25That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. 26And

whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. 27Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular. 28And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues. 29Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles? 30Have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret? 31But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way.

Ephesians 1:23, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.

Ephesians 2:14-18, 14For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; 15Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; 16And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: 17And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh. 18For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.

Ephesians 3:6, "That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel.

Ephesians 4:4, 12-13, 15-16, 4There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling . . . 12For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: 13Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ . . . 15But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: 16From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.

Colossians 1:18, And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.

Colossians 2:19, And not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God.

Colossians 3:15, And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.

The church working together may look like a drum player. Every limb of the body does something different, but it all works together to produce a common beat.

Nothing could be more beautifully coordinated than a body with each member fitted to its proper place and carrying out its rightful function. What, then, is the lesson?

A. Spirituality. A thriving church displays the flow of authentic, Spirit-filled Christianity from its members. There is no rivalry between the members of a body, only mutual respect and harmony. There is also the closest intimacy between body members, each depending on certain things upon every other member. Then, each member is controlled by the head and seeks no independent action.

B. Spontaneity. The health of a local assembly can be measured by the willingness of its members to get involved in service without continuous prodding from the leadership.

C. Sacrifice. A vital community of believers exhibits unhindered giving of themselves and their gifts without regard for personal costs.

III. Evaluating Your Charismata (vv. 6-8)

> Romans 12:6-8, 6Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; 7Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching; 8Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with cheerfulness."diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness.

A. Gifts are Distributed. God's grace (*charis*) that brings salvation through faith also brings gifts (*charismata*) to the saved believer that he must utilize in the context of the body of believers. No one becomes a believer without also receiving one or more God-given talents.

Paul's testimony about his gift is:

> I Corinthians 15:8-10, 8And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time. 9For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. 10But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.

Every believer is responsible before God for finding out his gift, developing it through exercise, and using it in the work of the kingdom.

B. Gifts are Different. That these gifts differ from each other is as fascinating as it is challenging. The fascination comes from the understanding that in a normal, healthy group of believers, we can reasonably expect to discover a variety of capabilities, especially when parted by the Holy Ghost for the good of the body and the ongoing work of the Lord. The challenge for us individually comes from the necessity to respect and encourage those whose gifts may threaten our position or draw attention away from our ministry because of their differences.

C. Gifts are a Duty. Paul demonstrated this point by referring to seven gifts that break naturally into two groups (this is not meant to be an exhaustive list; he uses the same word for gifts in I Corinthians 12:4-11):

1. Gifts to Expound the Word of God (vv. 6-8a). There are four specific gifts mentioned here.

a. The Inspiration of Truth—the gift of prophecy. Prophecy is both foretelling and forth telling; it proclaims a message from God to the church. It is to be done "according to the proportion of faith"; in other words, do not get ahead of God or allow personal feelings to interfere, but do it in agreement with faith—without fear or favor but by faith.

b. The Incarnation of Truth—the gift of ministry. Ministry is a service of all kinds. It is the practical application of the Word of God to daily life. In contrast to bond service, it is a voluntary service.

In Mark 10:45, we are told that "the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." This verse not only sets the twofold division of that gospel (the Son of a man giving His life in service and the Son of a man giving in His life in sacrifice), but it perfectly illustrates what is meant by ministering. Just as the Lord Jesus incarnated His teaching in daily living for others, so should we. This is one gift within the reach of every believer.

c. The Interpretation of Truth — the gift of teaching. The teacher is the one who studies the Bible diligently, comparing scripture with scripture, using sound methods of exegesis, hermeneutics, homiletics, analysis, and synthesis, and who edifies others with the fruit of his efforts (in other words, you ain't teaching if they ain't learning!). The teacher's task is to set forth the fundamental truths of the Bible for the building up and edification of the saints. It differs from prophecy in that it proclaims what is in the Word instead of a particular emphasis directed by God.

d. The Intention of Truth — the gift of exhorting. Exhortation is most frequently addressed to the conscience and the heart, whereas teaching is often addressed to the mind and is intended to encourage. We visited several homes while pastoring in Kentucky; a wood-burning stove heated the rooms. Standard equipment with such a fireplace is a poker, a piece of metal used occasionally to stir up the smoldering embers

so that they burst back into flame. This is the work of the exhorter. He must stir up the consciences of God's people so that truth does not become merely abstract theology but is worked out in practical, down-to-earth living.

2. Gifts to Expand the Work of God (v. 8b). The three gifts mentioned here relate to the forward outreach of the gospel and the work of God.

a. Through Our Giving — the gift of giving (offerings). Giving must be done liberally, generously, and with singleness of heart, not from mixed or doubtful motives, as happened in the case of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5). The true Christian attitude toward material goods is not "How much of my money shall I give to God?" but rather, "How much of God's money shall I keep for myself."

> I Corinthians 6:20, For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.
>
> I Corinthians 7:23, Ye are bought with a price; be not ye the servants of men.

Love is measured by its gift.

> John 3:16, For God so loved the world, that he *gave* his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.
>
> Ephesians 5:25, Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and *gave* himself for it.
>
> Galatians 2:20, I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and *gave* himself for me.
>
> I Samuel 18: 1, 4, 1And it came to pass, when he had made an end of speaking unto Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul....4And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was upon him, and *gave* it to David, and his garments, even to his sword, and to his bow, and to his girdle.

b. Through Our Guiding — the gift of ruling (leadership). Some have special gifts of leadership, which can oversee God's work and be an example. God's work needs well-taught elders who can preside over the work in each church and guide it into scriptural and fruitful paths.

In Old Testament times, the men of Issachar were said to have "had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do" (I Chronicles 12:32). There is a great need for such men in the church today.

The elders of Antioch understood the Spirit's leading and of the times in which they

lived when they laid hands on Barnabas and Saul and sent them forth to evangelize the Western world for God.

> Acts 13:1-3, 1Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. 2As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. 3And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.

c. Through Our Going — the gift of showing mercy. Some have a special gift for going after those in distress and showing them the kindness of God. David did this for Mephibosheth in his day (II Samuel 9), and the Good Samaritan did it for the man who fell among thieves (Luke 10:30-37). Some feel that this gift is given especially to those called by God to do visitation work among the sick and the afflicted. It is not to be done with a long face but with "cheerfulness" or, as some have rendered it, with "hilarity!" Solomon well said, "A merry heart doeth good like a medicine" (Proverbs 17:22).

It is noteworthy that Paul does not spend time describing the functions of the different gifts and their corresponding responsibilities but concentrates on the spirit in which the gifts are exercised. His overriding concern is that believers utilize their gifts fully. Paul suggests that believers may abuse their gifts by simply not using them.

Spiritual gifts are tools to build with, not toys to play with or weapons to fight with. In the church in Corinth, the believers were tearing down the ministry because they abused their gifts. They used their gifts as ends in themselves and not as a means towards the end of building the church. They so emphasized their spiritual gifts that they lost their spiritual graces! They had the gifts of the Spirit but needed more in the fruit of the Spirit.

> Galatians 5:22-23, 22But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, 23Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

Once we discover the gifts God has given us, we know in which areas He expects us to make major contributions.

Chapter Forty-Two
Knowing You and Your Place
Romans 12:3-8

Lesson in Review

A. Complete the following sentences using the correct words from the reading, notes, and class lecture.

1. What is the purpose of submitting and transforming?

2. Pride is taking credit for what?

3. Humility consists in trying to believe what?

4. How do we evaluate ourselves "soberly"?

5. How can we measure the health of a local assembly?

6. No one becomes a believer without also receiving what?

7. Prophecy is proclaiming what kind of message?

8. Exhortation is most frequently addressed to what (two-part answer)?

9. Paul appears to suggest that believers may abuse their gifts. How?

B. Answer these questions from Romans 12:3-8. Use verses where the answer comes from.

10. How should we avoid thinking about ourselves?

11. The gifts in the church differ according to what?

12. How do we show mercy?

C. Read the question carefully and respond in 2-3 sentences with a clear and concise answer. Your response should directly address the question and provide relevant details from the text.

13. What does Romans 12:3 teach about self-evaluation, and how does it influence a believer's role in God's work?

14. What does Romans 12:6-8 teach about the diversity of spiritual gifts, and how should believers use them in the church?

Chapter Forty-Three

Living in Love

Romans 12:9-13

"*Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers*
over a multitude of sins. Offer hospitality to
one another without grumbling.
Each of you should use whatever gift you have received
to serve others, as faithful stewards of
God's grace in its various forms." 1 Peter 4:8-10

In I Corinthians 13, another Pauline epistle, the superiority of love is expressed as, "Now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity" (v. 13). Romans 12:9-13 calls believers to live out love with sincerity, devotion, and action**,** emphasizing that true love is a sacrificial involvement in the lives of others. Paul challenges us to move beyond mere words or passive affection and instead engage deeply and reject superficial love. This echoes 1 Peter 4:8-10**,** which highlights the power of love to cover sins, hospitality without complaint, and using God-given gifts to serve. These verses urge believers to commit fully to love as God designed, making it the cornerstone of daily life and interactions.

I. Where Love Starts

Authentic love cannot flow on a horizontal plane until its vertical relationship with God has been established. Among other things, this involves our dedication to God. Love can pour forth from our lives once we place ourselves at God's disposal. This worshipful act of consecration will usher in the process of transformation.

> Romans 12:1-2, 1I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. 2And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

In this act of dedication to God, our attitudes, feelings, and actions change as the Holy Ghost reshapes our mindset. He turns our focus off the world and onto God. Without this divine work, we could not begin to love others as we should.

As we are mentally transformed, we become able to evaluate ourselves properly. In doing so, we learn that we are worthy, purposeful people whom God has gifted in various ways so that we may contribute to the lives of others.

Romans 12:3, For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.

This love begins with God because man is incapable of the love that Paul calls us to exercise. It is a unique love by which people will know we are Jesus' disciples. So, this is a challenging passage of Scripture.

II. Where Love Shows

The proper exercise of our spiritual gifts in the body of Christ cannot be attained apart from an other-oriented love. That may be why Paul follows his exhortation about serving through our gifts (Romans 12:4-8) with directives that concern ministering out of love.

A. Love Explained. In verse 9, we find several commands that reveal two key traits of Christian love.

1. Love is Real. "Let love be without dissimulation." Without dissimulation, the Greek word *hypocritos* has an *a* in front of it; in other words, it is the opposite of a hypocrite. For that reason, Paul chooses the supreme word for love, agape, which is the love God demonstrated at the Cross. Its best definition is John 3:16, "For God so loved . . . that he gave."

A person who verbally elevates an individual while internally churning with hatred toward the same person is not expressing genuine love. The love that disciples are to share is an outward expression of what lies deep inside. Honesty tempered by humility, grace, and tact is its hallmark. But it must, above all, be genuine! You cannot fake this love.

2. Love is Rational. "Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good." This is shrinking from evil and clinging to good. In other words, genuine love rejects the many faces of evil and stands against them at every turn. Real love bonds itself to all that is good and supports the virtuous in every possible way. Love is not harmful but purposely doing good.

Notice what Paul says: There is the reality of evil, and the Christian is to recognize evil; he must then reject evil, refuse evil in every way, and finally replace evil with good. The problem is we tend toward evil, and the world has so hardened us to do evil that we engage in it without thinking. The point is that love is not only shown in what we choose but in what we refuse.

Cleave is to be glued to. It is choosing the right. Daniel's life demonstrated this. He refused the king's meat and glued himself to God by praying three times a day. We must look for the things that encourage us to show love.

B. Love Expressed. With this idea of what characterizes love, we must be aware of some specific ways love expresses itself. In verses 10-13, Paul provides eight examples of love at work. Each illustration is in the form of a directive. We are exhorted to put our beliefs about Christian love into practice—especially in our relationships with other believers. So, as we probe further into Paul's words, let us contemplate how we can better achieve God's standard of love.

1. By Our Character. "Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love" (v. 10a). This passage calls us to be devoted to each other with brotherly love. "Kindly affectioned" means full of tenderness. It conveys the idea of the deep affection felt and abiding commitment made between natural family members, such as parents and children. The Greek term *philadelphia* means brother love. Paul's use of these two terms shows that the love Christians express in their spiritual family should exhibit the same loving qualities often shared in their physical family.

How do we do that? We concentrate on the things that bind us together. Families have spats, but their common bond holds them together. It should be the same in the church.

Therefore, while love for the brethren is proof of spiritual life (I John 3:14, "We know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren"), to be kindly affectioned to the brethren is a rare grace. This quote is a well-known saying that humorously contrasts the joy of heaven with the challenges of earthly relations.

To dwell above, with saints we love,
O that will be glory;
But, to dwell below with saints we know,
Well, that's a different story!

2. By Our Contacts. "In honour preferring one another" (v. 10b). The word "prefer" literally means to take the lead, specifically in giving honor to others. When we love as we should, we will esteem others more highly than ourselves and readily give them the honor they deserve.

This must be understood considering the previous passage, where we honestly evaluate our ability and gifts before God. We are compelled to practice our gifts under God, but we must, at the same time, support and call attention to the gifts of others. This is not an excuse to do nothing by suggesting another; it calls for helping others with their gifts while exercising their own.

It can be done. When it became apparent to Jonathan that David was preferred before him and that David, not Jonathan, was God's heir apparent to the throne, Jonathan showed brotherly love to David and, in honor, preferred him. He was glad for David's sake. Then, when David came to the throne, he forgot and forgave for Jonathan's sake the bitter hatred of the house of Saul, sought Jonathan's unfortunate son Mephibosheth, and

showed him the very kindness of God (II Samuel 9).

3 By Our Conduct. "Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord" (v. 11). Sincere love involves possessing a fervency in spirit as the Lord is served. Paul here writes about how our conduct is looked upon. "Not slothful in business" that's the outward look; "fervent in spirit" that's the inward look; "serving the Lord" that's the upward look.

The word "business" in King James' Day did not mean work but general busyness. In verse 8, the word "business" is translated as "diligence." Paul is thinking of spiritual activity rather than secular activity. As the context reveals, it has to do with exercising the gifts God has given for the furtherance of His works. We must be active in our Christian service.

Fervent is the Greek word for boil, red-hot. The Spirit must fire the inner springs of the believer's life so that he continually boils over with enthusiasm in his service for the Lord. Jesus condemned the church at Laodicea for being lukewarm; He said they made Him sick. He also warned that the love of many would wax cold in the last days. To many, churches are a big wood pile that needs the spark of love and activity to set it aflame.

Paul continues explaining that this service is to the Lord. There is some confusion about the word Lord. The Greek word for Lord is *karios,* and the Greek word for times is *kairos*; they were abbreviated by *kars* with a line over them. But they go together, for you cannot serve the Lord apart from the time you live in. Instead, we should engage in the work of love with enthusiasm and delight.

4. By Our Confidence. "Rejoicing in hope" (v. 12a). As believers, our horizons should never be bound by the visible and the temporal or the past and the present. Our hope lies in the glory of God.

> Romans 5:2, By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

We will one day experience that hope when we are fully renewed in the image of Christ:

> Colossians 3:10-11, 10And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him: 11Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all.
>
> I John 3:2, Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.

Indeed, so great will be our enjoyment of God's glory that the event is referred to as

our glorification:

> Romans 8:17, 21, 29-30, 17And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together....21Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God....29For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. 30Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.

No wonder we can rejoice! God is in the process of remaking us, and He will not stop until we are as much like Him as possible.

> Philippians 1:6, Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.

With love, we submit ourselves to God's making. This is not sentimental optimism but hope—confidence—as bright as God's promises. We do not rebel in tribulation nor rashly accuse God. We are patient, knowing that God is too wise to make any mistakes, too loving to be unkind, and too powerful to be thwarted in His ultimate aims. And, with love, we help others in this process. too.

5. By Our Convictions. "Patient in tribulation" (v. 12b). Real love also displays the ability to persevere amid adversity and trials. Nowhere in the New Testament is the church promised freedom from tribulation. On the contrary, such freedom is far from the norm.

> John 16:33, These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.

> Acts 14:21-22, 21And when they had preached the gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch, 22Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.

> I Thessalonians 3:4, For verily, when we were with you, we told you before that we should suffer tribulation; even as it came to pass, and ye know.

The church was born in tribulation and endured fire and flood for three hundred years, writing some of its noblest chapters with martyr's blood.

It is going through tribulation today. When people are difficult to get along with—even resistant to the truth—Christian love has the resilience and staying power to keep

building bridges and breaking down walls. We are to be stable no matter how others treat us, and our response to mistreatment is such a love that it is a testimony of our Christian difference,

6. By Our Conversation. "Continuing instant in prayer" (v. 12c). Believers who genuinely love are devoted to prayer. While on their knees before God, they consistently bring the needs of their families, friends, associates, and enemies to Him in intercessory and petitionary prayer.

A beautiful example of one Christian who exemplified this act of love is Stephen. When he was being stoned by the crowd he had preached to, he cried out to God, asking Him not to hold his executioners' sin against them (Acts 7:60). A man who then approved of Stephen's stoning and heard his prayer was Saul. He later became one of the greatest apostles of the church. We know him today as Paul, the human author of many letters in the New Testament, including this one.

7. By Our Concern. "Distributing to the necessity of saints" (v. 13a).

Those who love authentically to express their care. Distributing means having your wealth in common. It means that we are responsible for helping meet fellow believers' needs. This includes assistance in spiritual, psychological, physical, and financial matters. We display our lack of love when we fail to help in such areas.

The Apostle John made this point very clear when he wrote:

> I John 3:17-18, 17But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? 18My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.

During the time of Christ, in the temple court in Jerusalem stood thirteen chests, each with a brazen, trumpet-shaped receiver into which the worshippers dropped their offerings. Nine chests were marked "for Jehovah," and four were marked "for the poor." The Lord saw a widow approaching the chests with her offering and desired to show her love to the Lord and her neighbor. If she cast her mite into His chest, it was known in heaven that one who loved the Lord had added to the treasury that day; but if she cast her mite into the box marked "for the poor," it would show her care for her fellows and might be interpreted as one who placed human need above divine worship. The solution she adopted was both simple and costly; she balanced the claims of heaven and earth and dropped two mites into separate chests. With eager joy, the Lord called the attention of the twelve to her actions and offered them an example of sincere love. She loved God and her neighbor.

Nobody can lose who follows God's pattern of giving. A farmer, known for his prosperity and his lavish giving to the cause of Christ, explained it this way: "I keep

shoveling into God's bin, and God keeps shoveling back into mine, and God has the bigger shovel.

8. By Our Compassion. "Given to hospitality" (v. 13b). Christians are called to express their love to others by practicing hospitality. The Greek term for "hospitality" means affection for strangers. "Given" here means to pursue, press, or even persecute. It means to kill with kindness. The thought here is to pursue opportunities for hospitality, not just passively waiting for them to come.

Abraham extended his hospitality to the wayfarers journeying past his door (Genesis 18) and thereby entertained angels unawares (Hebrews 13:2), not to mention the One whom the angels worship! Just because we may not know or name certain people among our friends does not allow us to ignore or slight them. On the contrary, we should openly invite them into our lives and express the sincere kindness of divine love.

"Ye took me in" will be the Lord's commendation to the righteous in that coming day. "I was hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in....Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, When...when...when...? And the king shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me" (Matthew 25:35-40).

III. Why Love Stops

It would certainly be wonderful if the love that Paul wrote for us were exhibited more abundantly and consistently. The Lord has given us all the resources we need for such an outpour, but it still has not happened. Why not? The fault lies with us. We keep love from showing as it should. But why do we not love as we ought? Among the many reasons we could name, three are predominant. Once we recognize and deal with them, we will see love overflowing in our personal and corporate lives.

A. Love Stops when We Are Petrified. We fear being rejected, misunderstood, or ignored, so we keep a safe distance between others and ourselves. This displays a lack of security that can be overcome by realizing our everlasting acceptance and inestimable value in Christ.

B. Love Stops when We are Passive. We like to be told what to do. We naturally look for an acknowledged expert, a set of directions, or an established formula to guide us through our endeavors. This squelches spontaneity and ignores the nature of love. Love is creative and active. Thus, to love others, we need to feel free to vigorously reach out in new and novel ways as well as past and proven ways.

C. Love Stops when We Are Preoccupied. We do not like to be bothered or interrupted, but some of love's greatest opportunities come at the most inconvenient times. Rather than being insensitive during these occasions, we should be alert to their occurrences and stand ready as God's ministers of love.

Chapter Forty-Three
Living in Love
Romans 12:9-13

Lesson in Review

A. Complete the following sentences using the correct words from the reading, notes, and class lecture.

1. What is Paul's central point woven throughout the fabric of his words in this passage?

2. Authentic love cannot flow on a horizontal plane until what?

3. The proper exercise of our spiritual gifts in the body of Christ cannot be attained apart from what?

4. When we love as we should, we will esteem others more highly than ourselves and readily give them what?

5. Define the Greek word for hospitality.

6. Why do we keep a safe distance between others and ourselves (three-part answer)?

B. Answer these questions from Romans 12:9-13. Use verses where the answer comes from.

7. How should love be?

8. We should be fervent in what?

9. We should continue “instant” in what?

10. We should be given to what?

C. Read the question carefully and respond in 2-3 sentences with a clear and concise answer. Your response should directly address the question and provide relevant details from the text.

11. Why is transformation through a renewed mind essential for genuine love, according to Romans 12:1-3?

12. How does Paul describe the practical expression of Christian love in Romans 12:10-13, and why is it essential for believers?

Chapter Forty-Four

Changing Conflict to Convert

Romans 12:14-21

"*But I say to you, love your enemies,*
bless those who curse you, do good to those
who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully
use you and persecute you." Matthew 5:44

Romans 12:14-21 presents a radical approach to human relationships, calling believers to love, bless, and pursue peace, even with their enemies. Paul's instructions are practical yet deeply challenging, urging Christians to overcome evil with good and trust in God's justice rather than seeking revenge. This teaching echoes Matthew 5:44, where Jesus commands His followers to love their enemies and pray for those who persecute them—a principle rooted in the transformative work God does in the hearts of His people. The ability to live out this kind of grace-filled love is not based on human strength but on the spiritual renewal God provides, reshaping believers into true reflections of His mercy and righteousness**.** Remember that these instructions on Christian behavior come from understanding what God does for us and how He changes us. Notice Paul's progression:

1. Our relationship with Christ (12:1-2)
2. Our relationship with the church (12:3-8)
3. Our relationship with other Christians (12:9-13)
4. Our relationship with the community (unbelievers) (12:14-21)
5. Our relationship with civil authority (13)

The principles of the Christian life deal not only with the believer's spiritual life but also with his social life. The believer sustains a relationship with the world and with the church. Paul has much to say about our daily contact with those outside of Christ. We are to show the unbeliever sympathy and understanding, take good heed to our attitude, and live unimpeachable and exemplary lives before men.

Author's personal testimony: I have had two encounters with the topic "*How to Handle Difficult People*." The first is with the book by that name. I was working at a bank early in my ministry when I met Ron, who just ran over everyone as a minister, which was rare for me. At that time, I saw the book *How to Handle Difficult People* and bought it. I read about the different temperament styles and how to respond to each without making enemies. I was able to determine Ron's temperament and used the suggestions. It worked, and we became friends.

The second time was a few years into my first pastorate when I attended a seminar

titled *How to Handle Difficult People*. I received the brochure in the mail, checked the price and date, and decided to attend. The seminar began with the facilitator introducing himself, having us introduce ourselves to our neighbors, and then writing down who sent us to the seminar. I thought no one had sent me here, and I came by my own choice. Then the facilitator said, someone sent you here, some difficult person you need to better relate to. Immediately, I thought of two people who had sent me there

I. The Context

The key to this passage is verse 21, "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good." This verse tells us three things:

A. Christians Recognize Evil. We should know what is right and what is wrong. What do Christians often do when they encounter evil?

1. We often ignore it. We have learned to be quiet and not get involved because, invariably, that will make someone mad.

2. We condone it.

3. We excuse it. Or,

4. We enjoy it.

But, as Christians, what should we do?

B. Christians Resist Evil. We are not to allow evil to overcome us. But it is not enough to say "No!" We must also do the right thing.

C. Christians Replace Evil. We are to overcome evil with good. Overcoming evil is not our natural tendency; usually, we want to respond to evil with evil. However, many Christians are not overcomers. If we accept evil's domination, it is because we have surrendered to it. It is time for the Christians to renew the conflict, regain lost ground, and assume command.

This will be an ongoing battle. Do not expect the devil to surrender. He changes tactics or opens a new front when you defeat him in one area. And remember, in this Christian army, there are no recesses, retreats, or retirements!

Many believers, consciously or unconsciously, assume a superiority and graces that are highly objectionable to their unsaved neighbors. The believer must be careful that, while maintaining absolute loyalty to the Lord Jesus, he does nothing to antagonize his non-Christian associates unnecessarily. This cannot be done merely by being negative. We must seek points of contact with unbelievers and form "redemptive friendships" with them.

We are all amused by the Simple Simon, who sets up his barrel, drops in his little

line, and is saddened because he doesn't catch any fish. And we think, "How stupid can you be? Fish do not come and jump in barrels: you must go where fish are." But what do we do to evangelize? We set up barrels and invited the fish to come and jump in, and we were sad when they bypassed us in droves. The Holy Ghost cannot save saints or seats; some non-Christians must be present.

There is a place for evangelistic meetings to which we invite people, of course, but the method of evangelism that our Lord taught us was to go where the people are. Now, this has several implications. We must realize that separation from the world is not like isolation. People have come up to me with pride in their voices to tell me, waiting to be congratulated, that they had not one non-Christian friend. I have had to shake my head in amazement as to how they could have missed the plain teaching of the New Testament.

There is a second implication. Sometimes, in all good faith and generosity, the non-Christian says, "Come with me to do such and such," or "Here, have such and such." And we respond almost instinctively, "No thanks; I do not do such and such. I am a Christian." Bang, you can hear the iron curtain clang down. Some think, "My, I had a tremendous opportunity to witness." But in my opinion, we have condemned the person out of hand as a pagan in a way he does not understand.

With non-Christians, we must look for that which we can honestly commend, and if we are alert, we can find it. Then, when a person invites us to do something, we might say, "No thanks, but let me know when you are going to do such and such." We immediately make an alternative suggestion so that we do not reject him or his friendship. We do not need to be apologetic about it. If we invite a non-Christian to play chess, he does not talk around about it and say, "Well, no thanks, I do not play chess. I am a non-Christian." He says, "No thanks, chess leaves me cold, but when you are going to play ping-pong, let me know

II. The Conduct

Now, Paul gives us some specific actions we can take with certain types of people to convert conflicts to convert conflicts.

A. The Persecutor. "Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not" (v. 14). These people make life difficult. Our natural reaction is to curse them and wish them bad in return. When we engage in witnessing, we will have people make life difficult for us. Even if we did not want them to be bad, we would be tempted to let them go ahead in their sin that will condemn them to hell. When we engage in witnessing, we will have people make life difficult for us. But Paul says to do them good-bless them.

"Bless" is the same word we get "eulogize." When we eulogize a person, we speak well of him. Paul commands that this should be our habitual response toward those who ill-treat us. Blessing is more than words; it must come from the heart and be followed by action.

Luke 6:28, Bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you.

Imagine Jesus, after His resurrection, giving these directions to Peter. "Go, find the man," He says, "who thrust his spear into My side and tell him there is a much quicker way to My heart. Find the man who crowned Me with thorns and tell him I would like to give him the crown of life." It is a dramatic way of depicting the true Christian spirit.

Did not Jesus practice what He preached? On the cross, He prayed for those who despitefully used Him. He opened the gates of paradise for that thief who had been pouring curses on His head moments before. It was this that won completely the centurion in charge of the crucifixion. "This was the Son of God," he cried (Matthew 27:54). Thus, we see the challenge of disarming opposition exemplified and gloriously successful on that skull-shaped hill of shame. Christ's policy of blessing those that cursed Him won to Himself that day a Gentile and a Jew, blessed first fruits of His cross.

B. The Preoccupied. "Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep" (v. 15). When people ignore you, their natural reaction is anger or envy. To ignore a person is the worst form of demeaning another is to act as if they do not exist. At least hatred admits they are there. But rather than respond to their callousness with anger or envy, we should take the initiative and get involved. They may notice us through criticism when we do that, but respect will often follow. This is biblical meekness—strength in kindness. Moses was described as meek

It is significant, surely, that the Lord performed the first of John's "signs" in his gospel at a wedding and the last at a funeral. The one was performed in life's gladdest hour, the other in life's saddest hour. In the one, Jesus rejoiced with those who rejoiced; in the other, He wept with those who wept.

The game of dominoes illustrates this principle. Its highest art lies in matching your companion's pieces. Is he glad? It is a great thing to be able to rejoice with those who rejoice. Is he sad? It is great to be able to weep with those who weep. Your pieces will soon be gone if you answer the challenge every time. But, as against that, it is worth remembering that victory lies not in accumulation but in exhaustion. The player who is left with empty hands wins everything.

The beauty is that anyone can play the game. You have but to grasp two essentials. You must clearly understand first that, at every turn, you must match your companion's play, laying six beside his six, a three beside his three, and so on. And you must clearly understand in the second place that success lies not in hoarding but in spending. Victory lies in playing out the little ivory tablets with as prodigal a hand as possible. It is better in dominoes to give than to keep. It is better to play a domino with twelve dots than a domino with only two. Dominoes teaches me to measure my life by loss instead of gain.

And what about Paul? Was Paul not a past master at both the principles that govern

a game of dominoes? He knew that the secret of success was not to save your pieces but to get rid of them. "Most gladly, therefore," says he, "will I spend and be spent for you." And was there ever one as clever at matching his companion's play? "I made myself a slave," he says, "that I might win slaves; unto the Jews, I became a Jew, that I might gain Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; to them that are without the law, I became as without the law, that I might gain them that are without the law. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak; I am made all things to all men, that I might by any means save some." That was the greatest game of dominoes ever played.

C. The Partial. "Be of the same mind one toward another" (v. 16a). Those who are strongly opinionated often claim that our views hold no significance. Therefore, we often fight back by fighting for our ideas. Paul says our reaction should be understanding. We should seek to understand them first, and then we can express our opinion. Then, even if we disagree, we must be agreeable.

Paul is not asking for uniformity but for unanimity. We are to make allowances for the other. The Lord Jesus treated the woman at the well (John 4) with the same consideration, courtesy, and compassion as He treated the knightly and polished Nicodemus (John 3). He was as charitable to the dying thief as His own mother. He was as patient with Judas as He was with John.

D. The Proud. "Mind not high things but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits" (v. 16b). Further, Paul warns that we should not mind high things—think that we are above others or not be wise in our own conceits—believe that the opinions of others do not matter because we are smarter. In other words, we should be humble in our approach. We have in the New Testament the example of Diotrephes, "who loveth to have the preeminence" (II John 9). Such a spirit is foreign to true Christianity.

The word "condescends" in modern English bears the stigma of patronage. Nothing could be further from Paul's mind. We are not to court humble people with a patronizing air; on the contrary, we are to get "carried away" with them, as the original suggests.

Notice the word in the only other places it is used in the New Testament:

> Galatians 2:13, And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was *carried away* with their dissimulation.
>
> II Peter 3:17, Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being *led away* with the error of the wicked, fall from your own stedfastness.

It is unclear whether Paul means we will be carried away with humble men or lowly things. Whichever is the case, he is advocating the opposite of pride. In a world where everyone is scrambling for position, prominence, and recognition, it is rare, even in the

ranks of the redeemed, to find those who are deliberately courting the lowly and the meek.

The way to learn this grace is to sit at the feet of Jesus. He said, "Learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart" (Matthew 11:29). The life and death of Jesus are a standing rebuke to every form of pride to which men are liable:

- Pride of birth and rank: "Is not this the carpenter's son" (Matthew 13:55).
- Pride of wealth: "The Son of Man hath not where to lay his head" (Luke 9:58).
- Pride of respectability: "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" (John 1:46).
- Pride of personal appearance: "He hath no form nor comeliness" (Isaiah 53:2).
- Pride of reputation: "A friend of publicans and sinners" (Luke 7:34).
- Pride of learning: "How knoweth this man letters, having never learned" (John 7:15).
- Pride of superiority: "I am among you as he that serveth" (Luke 22:27).
- Pride of success: "He is despised and rejected of men" (Isaiah 53:3).
- Pride of ability: "I can of my own self do nothing" (John 5:30).
- Pride of self-will: "I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me" (John 5:30).
- Pride of intellect: "As my Father hath taught me, I speak" (John 8:28).

So then, the Christian is to shun pride. "Be not wise in your own conceits," writes Paul. This expression occurs seven times in Scripture: Romans 11:25; 12:16; Proverbs 3:7; 26:5, 12, 16; 28:11. Solomon says there is more hope for a fool than for such a man. He says such a man is a sluggard. This sin is a snare for the rich. Only green corn stands upright, ripe corn bends low.

E. The Prejudice. "Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men" (v. 17). Paul's statement takes for granted that some will do evil to the believers. He even indicates that a desire to retaliate is natural. To turn the other cheek and to go further and reward evil for good is divine.

However, when we are prejudged, we are to react without resentment or uncooperating. We want to return evil for evil or at least do no good. However, we must think through ("provide") to be honest—fair—with them. Not everyone will agree with what is right, but all men know what is fair. Society's highest standards of conduct should

be the Christian's lowest.

The Golden Rule states this:

> Matthew 7:12, Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.

It is not due to others. Run or do to others first but do to others as you want done.

This is the example of Joseph and how he treated his brothers. They persecuted him, ridiculed him, and sold him into slavery. He provided for them, protected them, pardoned them, and promoted them.

This was David's attitude toward Saul and his house. Saul, murder-bent, persistently sought to corner David and assassinate him. David held back his hand from Saul, even when he was in his power, and then sought out refugees from Saul's fallen house to show "the kindness of God" to them.

Thus, Paul himself treated his own people well. They sought to slay him, did their best to undermine his work, sowed discord and heresy in the churches he had planted, and never ceased to turn even his converts against him. He prayed passionately for their conversion and never ceased trying to win them to Christ.

F. The Persistent.

> Romans 12: 18-20, If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore, if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.

Paul was a realist and knew from personal experience that the gospel would be resisted with great violence wherever it was preached with power. He was looked upon as a disturber of peace. Indeed, some have argued that Luke's reason for writing the book of Acts was to provide Paul with a brief to prove his innocence when he appeared before Caesar. Whether or not this is true, the apologetic motive in the Book of Acts is very evident. Luke takes pain to establish the law-abiding character of Christianity and to demonstrate the fact that its enemies instigated all disturbances. He shows repeatedly how Roman officials discharged cases brought before them in which Paul was accused of disorderly conduct.

Does not this conduct encourage evil doers to continue? No! When we recognize the potential for evil, we are charged—with all our might—to work for a peaceful solution. However, we cannot accept peace at any price. If conflict arises, it should be because of our stand for truth, not our offenses. Paul recognizes that living peaceably with all men is impossible, but the initiative in disturbing the peace should never lie with the Christian.

He does not expect the impossible, just the possible.

We should not seek peace by making a list and taking revenge when our patience expires. Even if that person, after all our good, chooses to remain an enemy, we continue to do good. This is active love.

Paul refers to Proverbs 25:21-22 in that our good heaps of coals of fire on their heads. This does not refer to greater judgment (another way of getting even) but the fires of shame (which makes a red, hot face) and remorse. The hope is that this burns the offender's conscience and brings about repentance and reconciliation. The best way to eliminate an enemy is to turn him into a friend.

By following this unnatural but loving course of action, the Christian will not be conquered by evil men. He will instead conquer evil by good (acts of love) (v. 21). It was in this very way that God reacted to Calvary. The cross represents the highest manifestation of the love in the heart of God toward man. That spear pierced the Savior's side and drew forth the blood that saves. Thus, evil is more effectively addressed when the heart of the wrongdoer is transformed and their resentment resolved, rather than simply subjecting them to judgment.

III. The Challenge

Let's conclude with two impressions from this passage:

A. It is Possible. God did not direct Paul to write these words to condemn us. If it is in the Bible, God says that we can do it.

Peter also writes of our conduct to unbelievers:

> I Peter 2:19-23, 19For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. 20For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. 21For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: 22Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: 23Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.

B. It is Personal. This verse is for the individual. Paul knew what it meant to change conflict to convert. He later demonstrated it as a Roman prisoner chained to guards that he converted to Jesus:

> Philippians 4:22, All the saints salute you, chiefly they that are of Caesar's household.

Our task is to disarm the opposition by opposing his black piece on the chessboard of life with our white piece. Hatred is to be countered with love. Some maintain that Christianity has failed. It would be more correct to say that it has rarely been tried.

Chapter Forty-Four
Changing Conflict to Convert
Romans 12:14-21

Lesson in Review

A. Complete the following sentences using the correct words from the reading, notes, and class lecture.

1. What is Paul dealing with in Romans 12 and 13?

2. If we accept domination by evil, it is because we have what?

3. Not everyone will agree with what is right, but all men understand what?

4. Luke takes pains in the book of Acts to prove Christianity and demonstrate what (two-part answer).

5. The best way to eliminate an enemy is to turn him into a what?

B. Answer these questions from Romans 12:14-21. Use verses where the answer comes from.

6. How should we respond to those who curse us (two-part answer)?

7. In what should we not be wise?

8. If possible, how should we live?

9. Rather than seek vengeance, we should ask whom to repay.

10. By showing kindness to our enemies, what do we do?

11. How do we overcome evil?

C. Read the question carefully and respond in 2-3 sentences with a clear and concise answer. Your response should directly address the question and provide relevant details from the text.

12. How does Romans 12-13 emphasize the importance of relationships in the Christian life, and what is Paul's approach to handling interaction challenges?

13. How do Romans 12:14-16 teach believers to respond to different types of people, and why is humility essential in these interactions?

Chapter Forty-Five

Christian Citizenship

Romans 13:1-7

"*Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake:*
whether it be to the king, as supreme;
or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him
for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise
of them that do well." 1 Peter 2:13-17

In Romans 13:1-7**,** Paul shifts focus to the believer's role in secular society, emphasizing the importance of submission to governing authorities as part of Christian obedience. Recognizing that God establishes all institutions**,** including the home (Genesis 2:18-25), government (Genesis 9:1-17), and church (Acts 2), Paul teaches that respect for authority is not simply a civic duty but a matter of Christian conscience. Writing to believers at the center of the Roman Empire, he acknowledges the looming persecution but insists that followers of Christ must uphold order and righteousness**,** living as responsible citizens while maintaining their faith. This principle aligns with 1 Peter 2:13-17, reinforcing that submission to earthly rulers is ultimately done for the Lord's sake, demonstrating trust in God's sovereignty over human affairs.

I The Principles of Authority (vv. 1–2)

Throughout this Epistle, Paul has described God in authoritative terms. It was His authoritative word that created nonexistent things; it is through the obedience of nature to His laws that the visible things portray something of the invisible God; His dealings with His chosen people demonstrate that He is their God and demands their allegiance; and His freedom to deal with them and others as He chooses is defended vigorously, as is His absolute right to judge the world in righteousness. That ultimate authority rests with God are beyond question, but it should be noted that God exercises His authority on Earth and Heaven through delegation. But Paul surprises his readers by adding that God also delegates His authority to man and appoints "higher powers" to whom mankind must submit as they submit to Him.

Failure to do this is seen as resistance to God's principles and merits divine judgment. Paul does not specifically identify with the appointed ones, and this omission has led some commentators to assume, with some justification, that the Apostle had in mind those heavenly powers specifically commissioned to oversee the affairs of the Earth. However, the context does not support this interpretation because Paul goes on to show that respect for authority, among other things, means paying taxes, something which, fortunately, only earthly powers can impose. Therefore, the authority to rule comes originally from God. It was the lesson that Nebuchadnezzar had to learn the hard way

(Daniel 4).

God inaugurated human government after the flood when He placed into Noah's hand the sword of the magistrate.

> Genesis 9:6, Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man.

These words launched man on the road to self-government under God. The highest function of government is the judicial taking of life, the one thing emphasized in the divine decree. All other functions of government are implied in that.

Like everything else entrusted to man, human government soon failed. The sword of the magistrate became the sword of the conqueror. The right to legislate and govern man proved to be a heady wine for a fallen race. The story of the tower of Babel shows how man used his newfound authority to plan an organized rebellion against the very throne of God itself. Until this time, the rebellion had been on an individual basis; now, it had become federated. The world's first "united nations" with headquarters in Babylon symbolize the last one. Genesis 11 and 12 foreshadow Revelation 13, 17-18.

Despite the abuses of governmental authority, human government is still a divine institution. Evil men may be elected to power or may seize power. They may have no thought of God at all, but the very fact that He permits them to seize the reins of government means He has a purpose to fulfill even through their misrule. It is a saying well worth considering that "people get the kind of government that they deserve." God balances one nation against another. He uses one nation to chastise another. Nations come and go, kingdoms rise and fall, and empires wax and wane, but behind them, all is God, overruling in the men's affairs.

The Apostle's view of the privileged position and responsibility of the secular authorities is illustrated by the fact that Paul also used the word "ordained" when he described his encounter with the Risen Lord on the Damascus Road. "Arise," the Lord said, "and go into Damascus; and there it shall be told thee of all things which are *appointed* for thee to do" (Acts 22:10). For Paul, the ordaining of the magistrates by God merited the same word as the appointing of apostolic duties by the same God.

Furthermore, the designation "minister" (v. 4) translates the word he uses in the same Epistle to describe the word of Christ on behalf of the "circumcision" (15:8) and that of Phoebe, the deaconess in the church of Cenchreae. In addition, the description of the governmental authorities as "God's ministers" (v. 6) is perhaps even more striking as *leitourgoi,* Greek plural form, is a word usually served for those serving a priestly service.

In the light of the exalted position of divinely appointed secular authority, the Christian should "be subject" to such authority. And the extent to which his submission is shown will indicate the extent to which his mind has been renewed, for only the mind enlightened by the Spirit of God would see secular powers in such a light.

On the other hand, the word "powers" means "delegated authorities." Those government positions must recognize the fact their authority is derived from God. They are there to represent God's rule on Earth. Therefore, they must acknowledge God in the administration of affairs. They must uphold divine principles of righteousness and refrain from legislation undermining the individual's right to worship God according to the dictates of his conscience. Significantly, the divine ideal of an Old Testament king was a shepherd.

In his writings, Paul teaches that God has delegated His authority to parents, employers, elders, and husbands. He instructs that there are channels of authority. (As demonstrated to me in my short adventure in sales.) But his emphasis here is on the government's role in administering divine authority.

II. The Purpose of Authority (vv. 3-7)

Man cannot survive on his own and must, therefore, establish a community in which to live. His involvement in the community provides certain things that individualized living would not furnish. Still, this provision requires responsible cooperation, particularly with the necessary powers appointed to administer the community. That Christians do not cease to be members of the secular community when they are born into the Kingdom of Heaven needs to be reinforced because, throughout the history of the church, there have been those who have failed to recognize the benefits the state has provided them and the reasonable expectations the state has of them.

The Preamble of the Constitution of the United States outlines some of those privileges, "In order to form a perfect Union, establish justice, ensure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty...." Paul uses a different language to spell similar concepts in more general terms.

God's concern for individuals is seen in His concern that society should operate so that man may be free to live as He intended. Authority is necessary if such an environment is to be provided and preserved so it follows God-ordained order. It is interesting to note that the role human authority is called to play is linked to a realistic appraisal of man's sinfulness. Society will be spoiled where sinful man is allowed to engage in all manner of evil, and society will never flourish for the common good where a man can squander his life on himself and relentlessly pursue his self-centered course. Accordingly, God requires the authorities to punish the evildoer and reward the one who does right. Both actions provide incentives for proper societal behavior, without which man would destroy his environment and pollute his community.

The extent to which punishment is to be meted out to the evildoer can be seen from Paul's use of the phrase, "he beareth not the sword in vain" (v. 4). In Paul's day, provincial Roman magistrates wore a sword. This sword was borne before the magistrate in public processions as a symbol of his right to punish by death. God delegated capital

punishment to the government because of the sacredness of human life.

God established human government because man is a sinner and must have some authority over him. At least, this indicates that the Apostle saw the necessity for using some force as a deterrent to those intent on evil. There is little doubt that he envisioned occasions when the authorities would act as "a revenger to execute wrath" (v. 4). It should be born in mind that, while Paul expressly forbids the individual's taking matters into their own hands as far as retribution for evil is concerned, quoting, "'Vengeance is mine' says the Lord," he does see the need for the administration of punishment by the state authorities. Clearly, he sees such punishment as part of God's administration of wrath.

Paul concludes that Christians must respond to God's institution of civil authority to work out His purposes in society (vv. 5-7). Fear is a great motivator, but while Christians are not exempt from either the possibility of doing wrong or bearing wrong or bearing the consequences of wrongdoing, they should be motivated to have responsible respect for authority as a matter of conscience. They, of all people, should have the highest view of the authority structures of society because they understand better than others how the purposes of God for society require the institution of authority.

Many people pay their taxes for reasons other than that they are terrified of an audit by the Internal Revenue Service. The Christian has no such fear because he knows that he has declared his income properly, taken his legitimate deduction, and acted well within the law as a matter of conscience. He knows the collector of taxes is doing what is necessary to provide the funding for that, which will make his society the place it should be, and he accepts his responsibility to bear his share of the burden. Some people sweat their way through Customs because of the game they are playing with the Immigration Service. Still, as a matter of principle, the Christian declares his purchases, shows his receipts, pays what is necessary, and may even stuff his clothes back in the bag and zip the zipper with a smile on his face!

It may be that the Christian will not appreciate the politics of a person holding high office, and he may even deplore the official's private life, but this does not exempt him from the responsibility to show respect and honor. The man is a mere mortal, but God and the good of society ordain the office he holds. Because he knows this, the Christian will always be on his guard concerning how he expresses his disapproval and voices his dissent. As a matter of conscience, his behavior will never take anything away from the person who is God's minister.

III. The Problems of Authority

The Romans had little time for the Jews, whom they regarded as troublesome zealots, religious oddities, and thoroughly difficult subjects. But this did not stop them from treating their unwilling subjects fairly and respectfully. For instance, the Romans enforced the Jewish law that forbade a Gentile to enter certain parts of the Temple on pain of death to the extent that they would execute a Roman citizen for such a

contravention. Paul had many reasons to be thankful for the Roman treatment of the Jewish people. On more than one occasion, Roman soldiers rescued him from the mobs, he was given the freedom to speak by Roman proconsuls, and he even got a free ticket to Rome from the government!

Some people have suggested that this benevolent treatment led Paul to adopt a position against secular authority, which was understandable under his circumstances but which he could not lay down as a rule for all people under all circumstances. There is no doubt that in later years, when the fury of the Roman emperors was unleashed on defenseless Christian heads, Christian writers described Rome in the most uncomplimentary terms. But it is worth noting that, even through the persecution, the Christians were encouraged to have respect for their persecutors and to see even in their extremity that God was still in control.

The significant difficulty that Christians encountered was related to the dilemma they faced when the divinely appointed Government acted in ways that directly contravened divine law. The rule of thumb enunciated by Peter before the Council— "We ought to obey God rather than man"—applied in those early days and still applies today.

In an era when respect for authority is at a low ebb, it is necessary to point out that Christians must be very careful to ensure that any act of civil disobedience is a matter of conscience inspired by divine principle because there is an unfortunate tendency for Peter's dictum to be applied in a manner far removed from the original intent. Further, when the Christian must disobey the civil authority as clear-cut as he would normally have an obligation to obey, his disobedience should be a striking act of conscience because it is so different from his normal attitude of compliance, cooperation, and support. The habitual troublemaker is easily recognized as troubled even when he may have a valid point. The consistent Christian whose regular law-abiding stance is suddenly shattered by a conscience-inspired action is bound to cause a stir and get his message across. The refusal of the early Christians to worship Caesar was striking not only because of its inherent bravery but also because of its remarkable contrast to their regular position of "rendering to Caesar what was Caesar's."

Paul's distinctive message concerning the Christian's response to secular authority is to be seen as a call to Christians to demonstrate their renewed lives through responsible behavior. By honoring authority structures because they are divinely established and challenging corrupt systems because they are aberrations of the divine intention, Christians living in secular society are uniquely equipped to glorify God and enrich society.

Chapter Forty-Five
Christian Citizenship
Romans 13:1-7

Lesson in Review

A. Complete the following sentences using the correct words from the reading, notes, and class lecture.

1. How does God exercise His authority on Earth and in heaven?

2. Those in positions of government must recognize what?

3. Man cannot survive on his own and must establish a _____ in which to live.

4. God requires authorities to _____ the evildoer and _____ the one who does right.

5. Christians must be very careful to ensure that any act of civil disobedience is a matter of _____ inspired by divine principles.

B. Answer these questions from Romans 13:1-7. Use verses where the answer comes from.

6. Whom are the powers that be ordained of?

7. Rulers are not a terror to good works, but to what?

8. We are not subject to earthly power because of the possibility of wrath, but what?

9. We should render to all their what?

C. Read the question carefully and respond in 2-3 sentences with a clear and concise answer. Your response should directly address the question and provide relevant details from the text.

10. How does Romans 13 emphasize a believer's responsibility toward civil authority, and why is obedience a matter of conscience rather than fear?

11. How does Paul balance respect for civil authority with obedience to God in Romans and what does this teach about Christian conduct in society?

Chapter Forty-Six

Always in Debt

Romans 13:8-10

"*Jesus replied: 'Love the Lord your God with*
all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.'
This is the first and greatest commandment.
And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'
All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."
Matthew 22:37-40

In Romans 13:8-10, Paul shifts focus to the supreme law of love, emphasizing that love fulfills all commandments. He underscores that genuine love governs every aspect of a believer's life, shaping interactions with others and guiding moral decisions. This truth mirrors Matthew 22:37-40**,** where Jesus identifies love for God and neighbor as the foundation of all biblical law. Paul's message serves as a culmination of his teachings on Christian conduct, reinforcing that love is not just an obligation, but the common denominator of Christians' relationships is love.

I. The Debt of Love (v. 8a)

In verse 7, Paul told us to pay our dues to civil government. Now, he bridges that to say we must pay our dues to everyone because we have an obligation of love. This debt is love's moral conscience. Love makes the conscience far more tender than the law could ever do.

Paul's topic is not money but how Christians relate to those around them. However, that often includes money. Some have used this verse when discussing personal finances to forbid any debt. Therefore, it would be wise to notice some biblical money-related principles quickly.

1. Exodus 22:25—Christians are not to lend to one another, charging interest. However, lending and borrowing must be permitted. Matthew 25:27 and Luke 19:23 indicate that banking and investing for gain is not wrong.

2. Psalm 37:23, 26—A good man understands and lends to another in need. Being merciful implies doing what is right and not right when lending people money for some things and situations.

3. Matthew 5:42—Lending is a Christian witness.

4. Luke 6:35—A Christian should lend without expecting it returned.

5. Romans 13:8—When a Christian borrows, he must repay; "anything" would undoubtedly include money.

6. Psalm 37:21—The failure to repay a loan harms your testimony.

While Paul does not forbid a Christian from entering into a contractual agreement whereby, he obtains a properly bonded loan, he does forbid the Christian to borrow money beyond his ability to repay. Today, it is easy to accumulate debts that strain the income to the breaking point. Nothing will ruin a Christian testimony faster than chronic indebtedness.

Love touches the Christian's conscience and makes him eager to live beyond reproach in this matter of money. The story of Zacchaeus illustrates this. No sooner had this dishonest tax collector come face to face with the Lord Jesus than he exclaimed, "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I will restore him fourfold." Said Jesus to him, "This day is salvation come to this house" (Luke 19:8-9). Zacchaeus was not saved because he wanted to put his financial affairs in order. He wanted to put his financial affairs in order because he was saved. His personal contact with the Lord Jesus won his heart and quickened his conscience.

This instruction has two sides, like a coin. Paul writes that we are not to owe anything but love. Love is not an option but an obligation for the Christian. The Christian is not just concerned with not doing wrong but also with doing right. Love is one debt we can never fully repay, but we must keep paying. Why? Love is the genius of Christianity. It is our magnet. It is our message.

While other debts may be discharged, the debt of love is always owed. Any payment made on this debt does not release us from continued indebtedness.

Why should we love? God gives us His love through the Holy Ghost; now, we must give it to others.

> Romans 5:5, And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.

Our problem is not the lack of love but that we have clogged its flow. Some Christians need a good spiritual drain cleaning!

When did we receive that Love? We experienced His love when He saved us; now, we can love.

> 1 John 4:19, We love him, because he first loved us.

How do we express love? Answer: As Jesus loved sacrificially.

John 13:34, A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.

Christian love (*Agape*) is indiscriminate. We cannot choose who we will love. Jesus loved all kinds of people and was criticized for it. Christian love splatters onto everything it contacts.

"Owe no man any thing." The injunction goes beyond the interests of the creditor and embraces every obligation. Any pledge or promise should be regarded as sacred and kept no matter how irksome or inconvenient it may later become.

Psalm 15:1, 4, 1LORD, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill?...4In whose eyes a vile person is contemned; but he honoureth them that fear the LORD. He that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not.

Ecclesiastes 5:4-5, 4When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for he hath no pleasure in fools: pay that which thou hast vowed. 5Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay.

II. The Discharge of Love (vv. 9-10a)

Paul now illustrates that love. Pick any Old Testament law, and it is covered by love. Paul chose some from the Ten Commandments of the Decalogue (Exodus 20:1-9) since they are the pinnacle of the Law.

1. Adultery—True love is more than sex. Adultery shows a total lack of concern for the married partner, no respect for the sexual partner, and a complete lack of restraint and discipline. Adultery does not include commitment, which love requires. Adultery has no union of a goal, outlook, or purpose, only bodies. That's not love, it's lust.

2. Murder—Love protects life.

3. Theft—Love gives, not takes.

4. Lies—Love does not cover up or hide.

5. Evil desires ("covet)- —Love purifies the heart. It doesn't want evil.

Sadly, many today are excusing these actions in the name of love. Adultery is allowed if you love/care for the person. Murder is all right if the baby is unborn or the person is dying (mercy killing). The act of theft must be considered in the context of an item taken out of love for another. Lying is acceptable to protect another from hurt or embarrassment. Covet is known as greed, and greed makes a person work harder. Michael Milliken was a key figure in the 1980s junk bond market, revolutionizing

corporate finance but later facing legal troubles for securities fraud. The phrase "greed is good' is often mistakenly attributed to him but comes from a fictional move *Wall Street*. Love is not an excuse to do wrong.

How do I love? "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." The two main questions related to loving our neighbor have to do with defining what love is and discovering who our neighbor is. The biblical statement answers the first—we are to love as we love ourselves. We love others as wholly and carefully as we should love ourselves. Remember, Paul has already written that we are to think highly of ourselves (Romans 12:3). Why? Everyone is a winner in the conception race. This race means that, minimally, we are to have the same concern for our neighbors' preservation, protection, and respect as we have for ourselves. An average, healthy person loves himself enough to be concerned about his own safety, security, and station in life. Normal love for the neighbor has at least some concerns.

The Lord answered the second question conclusively in the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10): My neighbor is any man in the sphere of my influence whose needs I can alleviate. To love him is to act and do something, understanding that God in Christ loved me first and did something about me.

The Christian keeps the commandments not because they are commandments of the law but because they are commandments of the Lord. Love for the Lord accomplishes what fear of the law could never achieve.

III. The Design of Love (vv. 8b-10b)

Paul writes twice: Love is the fulfillment of the Law. Love's desire is for the well-being of man and the well-pleasing of God. In his great classic on love, Paul explains love's attitude.

> I Corinthians 13:4-8, 4Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, 5Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; 6Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; 7Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. 8Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.

Why was the Law given to men? The law leads them to God. What happens when a Christian loves? He leads others to God.

The only way to show that we value God's love is by giving it to others. What are we doing with God's love?

Chapter Forty-Six
Always in Debt
Romans 13:8-10

Lesson in Review

A. Complete the following sentences using the correct words from the reading, notes, and class lecture.

1. What is the common denominator of Christian relationships?

2. Love makes the conscience far more tender than what could ever be.

3. How do we express love?

4. Why does the Christian keep the commandments?

5. What happens when a Christian loves?

B. Answer these questions from Romans 13:8-10. Use verses where the answer comes from.

5. What is the one thing we owe men?

6. The commandments are briefly comprehended by what saying?

8. What is the fulfillment of the law?

C. Read the question carefully and respond in 2 to 3 sentences with a clear, concise answer. Your response should directly address the question and include relevant details from the text.

9. How does Romans 13:8 define love as an ongoing debt, and why is it central to Christian responsibility?

10. How does Paul define love in 1 Corinthians 13, and why is it essential in fulfilling the Law?

Chapter Forty-Seven

Time for Action

Romans 13:11-14

"Wake up, sleeper, rise from the dead,
and Christ will shine on you. Be very careful,
then, how you live – not as unwise but as wise,
making the most of every opportunity,
because the days are evil." Ephesians 5:14-16

Some of us have little difficulty waking up in the morning after a good night's rest. Others struggle with getting their eyes to focus and their minds function in the first hours of the morning. What is true physically also applies in the spiritual realm. Romans 13:11-14 urges believers to wake up spiritually, recognizing the urgency of the times and embracing a transformed life in Christ. Paul calls for a shift from spiritual complacency, encouraging Christians to cast off the works of darkness and live in the light. This message echoes Ephesians 5:14-16, where Paul instructs believers to rise from spiritual slumber and live wisely, making the most of every opportunity in a world filled with challenges. The imagery of waking up is both a call to action and a warning, reminding us that faith requires vigilance, readiness, and a commitment to God's righteousness. Let us pay special regard to what he says, for it has a crucial bearing on how we should live in a world that has gone awry.

The first eleven chapters of Romans are a doctrine, and the final five are the practical application of that doctrine. The key to these verses is that Paul writes what to do and when to do it. In his writing, you swiftly detect that Paul introduces a sense of urgency. This urgency was necessary because he thought his readers might have dozed off during the public reading or, more likely. After all, the believers in Rome had fallen into spiritual lethargy and ineffectiveness. Paul was haunted by the shortness of time.

There is more in Paul's mind than the shortness of his time. He was aware that Christ could return at any moment. There is a world—a community—to reach before Jesus returns. What are we going to do? We act as if we have forever.

Too many expect to do things for God someday. We talk about the sweet by-and-by while we live in the nasty now and now. We have great plans. Paul knows how we are, so he says not to put this off—get started now!

Paul wants us to remember three things.

I. Our Alarm Sounds (vv. 11-12a)

Paul conveys his instruction through the sights and sounds of an early morning

awakening. The bit of imagery he draws on in verse 11 is what we could refer to as an alarm. However, he is referring not to a physical alarm but to a spiritual one sounded by God.

"And that" means, and indeed, everything leads up to this. You "know the time"; it is "high time," so you are "awake"! Paul tells us the time is late. Sleeping Christians can be pictured as the soldier in the prophet's story of King Ahab (I Kings 20:39-40). Told to guard a prisoner or his own life would be taken if the man escaped, the guard explained, "As thy servant was busy here and there, he was gone." We have allowed trivial to replace the important. We are majoring in small things.

Why? "Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed." What does that mean? We were saved from the penalty of sin in the past tense at Calvary and conversion. The Spirit keeps us from the power of sin in the present, but we will be saved from sin in the future by the rapture. Complete salvation includes all three aspects. And that salvation is closer than urgency. Of course, this is obvious—but what are we doing because of it? (If you are going to wake someone up, you must yell!)

Jesus constantly criticized the religious leaders for not knowing the time (Matthew 16:1-3). They missed Him because they did not know the time. How many will miss His second coming for the same reason?

"The night is far spent." It has been night since the Light—Jesus—left. One day soon, He will turn the light switch back on.

"The day is at hand." That is the split second before something occurs. The remainder of the certainty of Christ's return and the resultant consummation of Earth's history acts as a constant stimulus to the believer.

II. Our Action Starts (vv. 12b-13)

As our eyes open and our minds begin to function, we become more aware that the night is almost over and the morning is about to dawn. At that juncture, face reality and start dressing appropriately for the day. This familiar picture is what Paul uses to continue his exhortation.

Paul now warns us about how to live. Once we awake to the reality that Christ's return is imminent, we need to "lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light." In other words, take off your pajamas and wear your fighting suit. We are to rise and engage the foe.

What do we do? "Cast off the works of darkness." Do not look like the world, you will confuse your friends and foes. It would help if you discarded the world's ways. It is inappropriate and immoral for children of light to clothe themselves with a lifestyle that befits the world of darkness. Do a "shake awake."

"Put on the armor of light." God's people should wear the protective garments of a holy lifestyle, not the fashionable yet destructive clothing of a sinful manner of life. Now get dressed so the world will know who you are. Get ready for action.

Imagine a young man reporting for duty at the army headquarters. He is wearing his civilian clothes. He signs the papers that make him officially a member of the armed services and is issued a complete uniform. The next morning, the recruits assemble on the parade ground, standing in formation for their first inspection. All the other soldiers are in full uniform, but our friend has on his khaki pants. Otherwise, he is dressed in a sports jacket, a white shirt, and a green tie! The sergeant major would make short work of him! Once in the army, he is to be through with the old dress, radically, completely, and once and for all. In a decisive and complete act, he discards his civilian clothes and puts on his uniform. From henceforth, he is to be identified by his clothes.

It is just this very thing that Paul has in mind here. Because he is saved, the believer is to put off deliberately and decisively, through the power of the Holy Spirit, the "works of darkness"—all those habits that once marked him out as an unbeliever. In their place, he is to put on the "armor of light" and thus arrayed go forth to battle against "the rulers of this world's darkness" (Ephesians 6:12-17).

"Walk honestly (becomingly, properly) as in the day." The key word is "as." We are not in the day—when Christ comes—but we live now as if we were. The word "walk," incidentally, has to do with a Christian's outward life, which others see. Christ's coming should not make a change in our life. Paul contrasts the right way with the wrong way and breaks it down:

1. "Not in rioting and drunkenness." Do not party.

2. "Not in chambering (bed-hopping) and wantonness (shame)." Not in shameful immorality.

3. "Not in strife and envy." Strife is the desire and work for place, power, and prestige; envy hates those in your way.

These sins were once common in the lives of many of Paul's pagan converts, saved as they were out of lives of deep sin. They were to ensure that these sins did not creep back into their lives now that they were saved. Paul was a realist. He knew only too well what dark strongholds the old nature maintains within any believer's heart, what abominable lust lurks in the shadows of the soul awaiting a favorable moment to leap forth in dreadful force. To be forewarned is to be forearmed. The believer is to walk virtuously, slaying with the Spirit's shining sword the very thought of sin.

He sums it all up at the end of verse 14, "Make not provision for the flesh." It's not a matter of right or wrong but good and better and sometimes better and best. Some people make things much harder for themselves by failing to take suitable steps to avoid problems. Remember, the flesh grows; it's better to fight it now. Please do not put it off.

III. Our Able Source (v. 14a)

"Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ (the title is important)" refers to living the Christian life inseparable from Jesus; in other words, to live so that we conform to Jesus' mind and will. We are to arm ourselves with the resources of Christ Himself. It is constantly being in the presence of Christ and being controlled by Him. It is like Elisha picking up Elijah's mantle, representing the prophet's power.

In one sentence, we can wrap up the many thoughts presented here: "We are not alone; Christ is with us, and He will never leave us." We can begin each day secure that He sees, hears, and knows what we do. So, let us wake up and leave here as soldiers marching to battle.

Chapter Forty-Seven
Time for Action
Romans 13:11-14

Lesson in Review

A. Complete the following sentences using the correct words from the reading, notes, and class lecture.

1. Paul was haunted by what?

3. Paul conveys his instruction through what?

4. How long has it been night?

4. Who will you confuse if you look like the world? (two-part answer)?

B. Answer these questions from Romans 13:11-14. Use verses where the answer comes from.

5. It is high time now for what?

6. What must we cast off and then put on (two-part answer)?

7. How must we walk?

8. We should not make provision for what?

C. Read the question carefully and respond in 2 to 3 sentences with a clear, concise answer. Your response should directly address the question and include relevant details from the text.

9. Why does Paul emphasize urgency in Romans 13:11-14, and how should believers respond to his call?

10. What does Romans 13:11-14 teach about spiritual vigilance, and why is urgency necessary in Christian living?

Chapter Forty-Eight

Taboo or Not Taboo

Romans 14:1-12

"*But take care that this liberty of yours*
does not somehow become a stumbling block
to the weak." 1 Corinthians 8:9

Various people are offended by different things. The New Testament records several situations where Christians adopted opposite stances on certain practices. Unfortunately, too often, these differences resulted in selfish feuds rather than selfless understanding and acceptance. How should believers who strongly disagree on nonessential issues relate to one another? The answer is found in this text.

Romans 14:1-12 addresses the importance of grace and unity within the body of Christ, urging believers to accept one another without judgment on nonessential matters. Paul highlights those differences in personal convictions—such as dietary choices or sacred observances—should not divide the church but instead be approached with understanding and love. This principle aligns with 1 Corinthians 8:9, which warns that spiritual freedom should never become a stumbling block to those with weaker faith. Instead of allowing disagreements to foster division, believers are called to prioritize harmony, recognizing that the church's unity—both locally and globally—depends on mutual respect and a spirit of Christlike humility.

In Chapters 12 and 13, Paul has given direct commands. Now, he shifts gears and delivers principles of Christian liberty. He provides three general and timeless principles in this chapter and the beginning of Chapter 15. They are:

1. There is Christian liberty (14:1-12)
2. Your liberty does not cause confusion for others (14:13-21)
3. Have a clear conscience (14:22-15:3)

I. The Weak Defined

That some are weak and others are strong is not Paul's point. Paul's issue is how the weak and the strong relate to each other. Look at three definitions of the word "weak" from I Corinthians to see how this word may be used:

1.I Corinthians 1:26-27.

> 26For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: 27But God hath chosen

the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty

God generally works through people the world calls foolish, weak, and average. He does that so that He alone receives the glory for what the church does. By this definition, we are all weak.

2. I Corinthians 4:9-10.

9For I think that God hath set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death: for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men. 10We are fools for Christ's sake, but ye are wise in Christ; we are weak, but ye are strong; ye are honourable, but we are despised.

Paul speaks of the Roman games when the last contest between two gladiators was a fight to the death. Here, the weak person is killed and despised by the onlookers. But we are all lacking in some way and can be despised by others. Christians are the people who admit they are lacking and turn to Jesus Christ.

3. I Corinthians 11:28-30.

28But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. 29For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. 30For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.

The weak person here is the person who lacks spiritual power because of their misunderstanding or mistreatment of Scripture. We have all been guilty of this at one time or another, although usually not by communion since this is in relationship to communion.

Paul's point? We all can be labeled weak at some time.

However, when Paul uses the word "weak" in Romans 14, it has a different meaning. Here, the weak are the people who, when left without rules, do not know what to do, so they do nothing but condemn those who do. Again, by this definition, we are all weak at some time or other. We may be weak and strong, simultaneously weak in some areas and strong in others.

What causes the weak person to be weak? The Bible is silent in some areas. Paul points out that the Bible does not say what to do about meat offered to idols or special days; there are many other areas that the Bible is silent about, too. (Today, we have issues with Christmas trees, wedding rings, short sleeves, television, video, the internet, and so on.)

A. The Problem of Diets. What was happening? Some Christians came out of idol worship, and because the meat for sale may have been first offered to an idol, they refused meat. Paul deals with this specifically in I Corinthians 8 and 10. Then, there were former Jews who had lived under strict dietary laws (Leviticus 21, kosher) and feared breaking them (Daniel 1). Then, others saw nothing wrong with meat and ate it all without wondering where it came from (Peter in Acts 10 and Galatians 2). What happened? Those who were condemned for meat became vegetarians. Others ate all kinds of meat. The weak were the ones who ate no meat.

What is the problem? Liberty. Where the Bible is silent, there is liberty. This problem scares some Christians. They are afraid to decide what Paul asks them to do in verse 5. When the Bible is silent or has more than one reasonable interpretation, we must practice liberty.

Christian liberty does not refer to matters where the Bible explicitly commands or condemns something. The principle of Christian liberty applies only when the Bible allows the conduct or, at the most, is silent on the subject. If the Word of God addresses an issue, specifically or in principle, the Christians do not have the "liberty" to disobey. An appeal to the clear teaching of the Bible must resolve essential truths. To do otherwise brings detrimental consequences to the person.

The exercise of liberty means deciding. That means you must search for the facts, weigh their meaning, pray for enlightenment, and make a conclusion. Why is that scary?

1. I might get it wrong. Everything essential is evident in the Bible.

2. I might disagree with others. Again, do not worry if you feel you are right, you honestly searched for the answer by reading scripture, cross-referencing, other books, sermons, conversations, and prayer—you did what Scripture says.

3. Others might misunderstand me. Again, if your attitude is correct, do not worry about it. If you do not want to be misunderstood and nothing harmful to how others see it, join them.

B. The Problem of Days. Who is the weak brother? In Romans 14, he is the man who will not eat meat. Paul then brings up another point—honoring special days (v. 5). These days are probably the Sabbath and other holy days. The weak brother continued to observe these special days. Again, it was because of past training. Today, we call Sunday the Lord's Day because it is the day of the resurrection, and society expects the church to be on that day. But we could just as easily meet on another day because they are all the same to the Christian in that each should be lived to the glory of God.

What a wide variety of beliefs in Christendom about what days ought to be observed! Some observe the Sabbath, and others regard it as the first day of the week. (Seventh Day Adventists and others who insist on Sabbath observance raise many questions that are much more severe than whether we should keep the Sabbath. The

whole question of keeping the law is raised, an issue on which there can be no compromise. By Sabbath, we speak of those who will not buy or work on Saturday or Sunday as a personal conviction.) Some pay special attention to days such as Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost; others pay little or no attention. Some observe feast days and fast days and divide the calendar into special days about which they revolve all their religious duties. Others regard any such system as legalistic and savoring of Judaism rather than Christianity.

In a nutshell, the weak brother is the one who may be threatened by liberty and troubled by scripture silence. The problem is aggravated by the fact that the weaker brother often thinks he is the stronger brother!

II. The Weak Demonstrated

What does the weak brother do?

A. He Sets Limits. He places limits on himself that the Bible doesn't place. This is not necessarily wrong. The two mentioned by Paul were vegetarians and kept special days holy to the Lord. We are not forbidden from either of these, but we cannot scripturally command others to join us.

B. He Secures Locks. He cannot cope with the tension. Since he could not decide, he took the most conservative position, maybe for protection. Therefore, he placed himself under bondage.

C. He Signs Laws. When you set your limits, they eventually become laws for you.

We have observed the progression by which men's convictions are lifted to the level of the commands of God. Some people would like to regiment the church and make all men conform to their ideas about church truth. They are quick to condemn those who will not mouth their "Shibboleths" (Judges 12:6). But where no vital issue of revealed New Testament truth is involved, there is vast room for difference of opinion. One man was accused of being so narrow-minded that you could stand on the bridge of his nose and take out both eyes with a single arrow.

III. The Weak Directed

What must the weak brother do?

A. Do not be Critical or "judgmental" (v. 3). Why? The other is also received by God (end of verse 3). The strong brother is not to despise the weak one as superstitious and narrow-minded, nor is the weaker brother to adopt a judgmental attitude toward the stronger brother and label him worldly and unscrupulous. Paul writes that Christians should not quarrel in areas of liberty. Uniformity is not essential since the tie that binds is love, not law. We should be as committed to the weaker or the stronger brother as the

Lord is.

It is presumptuous for one believer to judge another (v. 10). Seven judgments are mentioned in the Scripture and must be distinct. These are the judgment of sin at the cross (John 12:31); the self-judgment of the believer (I Corinthians 11:31); the judgment seat of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:10); the judgment of the nations at Christ's return (Matthew 25:32); the judgment of Israel (Ezekiel 20:37); the judgment of the angels (Jude 6); and the judgment of the wicked dead at the Great White Throne of judgment (Revelation 20:12.). The judgment mentioned here is of the believer's works, not of his sins. His sins have been judged at Calvary and are remembered no more forever (Hebrews 10:17). However, every work must be brought into judgment (Matthew 12:36; II Corinthians 5:10; Colossians 3:24-25). The result of this judgment, which takes place at the return of Christ (Matthew 16:27; Luke 14:14; I Corinthians 4:5; II Timothy 4:8; Revelation 22:12), will be either reward or loss for the believer. Paul solemnly reminds us that criticizing another brother will be called into account at the judgment seat of Christ. If we turn the searchlight within our hearts, we will find plenty to keep us humble before the Lord without being occupied with other people. We shall have enough to do at the judgment seat of Christ, answering for our behavior without worrying about the actions of our brethren who, for all we know, since we cannot judge motives, were conscientiously following the Lord.

Not only that, but the other person is God's servant (v. 4). Therefore, God must correct him, not ours.

B. Do Be Convinced (v. 5). The mind must do the convincing. Paul used the phrase "fully persuaded" in Romans 4:21 to describe Abraham's relationship with God. This is an intellectual exercise—not following tradition or following the crowd. The Bible does not advocate ignorance or indifference but thoughtful consideration and firm conclusions.

IV. The Weak Dealt With

How must the weaker brother be treated? Do we respond with laws or love? Do we work by rules or relationships?

A. He must be Received (v, 1). The Greek word used for "receive" indicates that it is to be done warmly. Christ's lordship and grace will enable us to tolerate differences of opinion within the church—but not disobedience to God's Word.

There is a great deal of difference between uniformity and true unity. One is cold and lifeless; the other is vibrant, living, and warm. But how can unity be obtained between believers who differ on several things, even if they are not vital to true belief? Paul's answer is the Lordship of Jesus Christ (vv. 6-7).

The significance of a person's conduct is not so much what other people think about it as what the Lord thinks about it. Consider the spokes of a wheel. Take a movable point

on any two spokes. The closer the two points get to the hub, the closer they get to each other, and the further they get from the hub, the further they get from each other. The Lord Jesus is the hub of the wheel of Christian fellowship. The important thing is for each to move closer to Him, acknowledging His centrality and sovereignty. The matter of unity will then take care of itself.

B. He must be Respected (v. 1). "Not to doubtful disputations" means we do not accept someone for the sole purpose of correcting them or changing them. We are not to argue, but we should discuss.

The Christian church must learn that we can be brothers without being identical twins. We do not all have to believe exactly alike, nor do we all have to behave exactly alike. God does not make all people on the same lathe nor pour them into the same mold.

C. He must be Regarded (v. 3). If you are strong, do not flaunt your liberty, but regard the feelings of your brothers. We should avoid doing anything hindering a brother in exercising his faith.

Later in the chapter, Paul warns us that we should not be a stumbling block (v. 13). In dealing with our relationship with other believers, Jesus said,

> Matthew 18:3-6, 3Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. 4Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven. 5And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me. 6But whoso shall offend [literally, cause to stumble] one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.

How solemn it is to be responsible for causing someone else to stumble. We are either stepping stones or stumbling blocks.

D. He must be Released. We must allow others to have their convictions. Interestingly, Paul doesn't offer his opinion about meat or special days. The rights and wrongs of diets and days are not discussed. It remains an open question.

V. The Way Developed

How do you decide on an area of liberty?

A. Everyone is a Saint (v. 6). Appreciate that others are in Christ also. Ask yourself if your attitude considers the feelings of others in faith and if you have fully considered their opinion.

B. Everything is Service (v. 6). Whatever we do, we are to do unto God (Colossians 3:17). If you engage in this, will it honor God?

C. Everything is Surrendered (v. 8). We must acknowledge the Lordship of Christ. The word "Lord" is used eight times in verses 5-9. Ask yourself if it will hinder the Lord's leadership in your life. Will you be more sensitive or less sensitive to the Spirit because you participate in an activity of liberty? Will it affect your sensitivity at all?

D. Everybody is Sentenced (v. 10). Christ will judge us all in the end. This judgment should inspire us to make thoughtful decisions. Ask yourself if you feel condemned when you take this liberty.

E. Everyone is Solo (v. 12). I can only answer for myself and must leave you alone in matters of liberty. After the resurrection and recall by Christ, Peter asked Jesus what about John. Jesus told Peter it was not his business (John 21:15-25). The motive for what we do is not social pressure but personal conviction before the Lord. Ask yourself if you are comfortable and confident with your decision.

Archbishop Marco Antonio de Dominis, a Dalmatian ecclesiastic, was known for his controversial writing Perhaps he put the matter best: "In essentials, unity; in nonessentials, liberty; in all things, charity."

Chapter Forty-Eight
Taboo or Not Taboo
Romans 14:1-12

Lesson in Review

A. Complete the following sentences using the correct words from the reading, notes, and class lecture.

1. In Romans 12 and 13, Paul changes from direct commands to what?

2. We all can be labeled what at some time?

3. In a nutshell, who is the weak brother?

4. What is it for one believer to judge another?

5. The Bible does not advocate ignorance or indifference, but what (two-part answer)?

6. We should avoid at all costs doing what?

7. How does St. Augustine put the matter?

B. Answer these questions from Romans 14:1-12. Use verses where the answer comes from.

8. What should we do with one who is weak in faith?

9. The one who may eat all things should not what him that eateth not; and he that eateth not should not what the one who eats all things (two-part answer)?

9. Every man must be fully persuaded where?

10. Whether we live or die, we are whose?

12. To whom should everyone give an account of ourselves?

C. Read the question carefully and respond in 2 to 3 sentences with a clear, concise answer. Your response should directly address the question and include relevant details from the text.

13. How does Romans 14:3-5 encourage believers to approach differences in faith, and why is personal conviction necessary?

14. How does Romans 14 guide believers in handling differences in conviction, and why is unity prioritized over uniformity?

Chapter Forty-Nine

The Christian Balancing Act

Romans 14:13-23

"All things are lawful for me,
but not all things are helpful. All things are lawful
for me, but not all things edify.
Let no one seek his own, but each one
the other's well-being." 1 Corinthians 10:23-24

Having asserted plainly the freedom of a Christian, Paul now goes on to show on the occasion that freedom may, and should, be limited—but limited voluntarily. In Romans 14:13-23, Paul emphasizes that while believers have freedom in Christ, they must exercise that freedom with wisdom and love, ensuring that their actions do not cause others to stumble in faith. He urges Christians to prioritize peace and mutual edification, recognizing that personal liberty is not an excuse for harming the spiritual well-being of fellow believers. This principle aligns with 1 Corinthians 10:23-24, where Paul acknowledges that while all things may be lawful, not everything is beneficial, highlighting the importance of selflessness over personal rights. A mature Christian does not simply seek what is permissible but chooses what is truly constructive for others and glorifying to God.

Balance, that is the name of the game. We learn the principle of balance as babies learn to walk. A high school physical education instructor stresses the importance of balance in wrestling. We need help finding the right balance between our priorities in life. How much work time and free time do we have? How much family time and time alone are there to relax? How much personal preparation and public ministry? The list goes on. And, when we lean too far in one direction, we are like a tire out of balance-we bump along on a rough ride, dissatisfied with our poor progress and wasting energy.

One of our enemies in the Christian contest is the expert of extremes. Satan will do anything he can to move us off-center and into an imbalanced lifestyle. Take Christian liberty as an example. God desires that we fully enjoy our freedom in Christ. And yet, without self-imposed limits, we risk becoming selfish islands and careless rebels with little regard for others. Romans 14 takes us to the heart of this issue and exposes our motives—the tender nerves that prompt our actions. We will learn that we must exercise our freedom with the discretion that flows from genuine love. We must learn to live in liberty under love.

Why should we be concerned about balance? Note the possible ways we can affect each other. We can cause others to stumble (v. 13), grieve others (v. 15), destroy others (v. 15), edify others (v. 19), offend others (v. 21), and make them weak (v. 21). Paul dealt with

a similar problem in I Corinthians 8-9. There, he pointed out that "knowledge" (maturity) and "charity" (love) must work together because otherwise, knowledge brings arrogance, whereas love helps others (I Corinthians 8:1).

I. The Belief

As believers in Christ, we are in a balancing act of liberty. On either side of us lie two extremes: legalism and license.

A. Legalism. The first one threatens to place us under a strict, narrow set of rules and regulations.

B. License. The second urges us toward the bondage of self-centeredness and immorality.

C. Love. Somehow, we need to avoid these extremes. How can we do it? The answer is found in these words, "Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling block or an occasion to fall in his brother's way" (v. 13).

Paul exhorts us not to judge others but to assess ourselves. He also calls on us to exercise freedom with our brother's welfare in mind. Put another away. We can successfully balance legalism and license when we seek a proper balance between self-control and love for others.

This passage focuses on how stronger Christians ought to treat weaker brothers. Believers who are weak in faith, although they may be open to growth, are spiritual babies. Legalists, on the other hand, are also spiritual babies, but they stubbornly refuse to mature in Christian liberty. This type of Christian was challenged theologically in the Book of Galatians. There, Paul exhorted believers to remain free from the shackles of legalism (Galatians 5:1). Yet, in the same letter, he urged Christians not to turn their "liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another" (v. 13b).

In summary, the key to a balanced Christian life lies neither in legalism, which destroys freedom, nor in license, which abuses freedom. Instead, balance in one's life and unity in Christ's church can only be achieved through the responsible exercise of one's liberty.

The weak are not to criticize, and the strong are not to convert—both are to love!

II. The Behavior

In a family where the older children have greater liberty but also greater responsibility, the stronger brother (remember, all of us are weak in some areas and strong in some areas) has greater responsibility.

In Romans 14:14-20, we discover some guidelines that provide the direction we need to use our Christian freedom properly. Let us seek to grasp each one as it appears in the text.

A. The Good Creation (vv. 14-16). With full confidence, Paul states, "I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself" (v. 14a). Nothing is intrinsically unclean. When God created the universe, He declared that all He made was "very good" (Genesis 1:31). And though the fall of man brought God's creation under a curse (Genesis 3, Romans 8:19-23), it has not altered the essential goodness of what God made. This truth is affirmed by Paul in these words, "For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving," (I Timothy 4:4).

Therefore, there is no biblical basis regarding some aspects of creation as evil. All things were created good, and they are still good in themselves. On this foundational truth rests Christian freedom. However, not every Christian has accepted that fact. Some believers think that certain things are "unclean." Whatever they regard as unclean is so in their minds, even though it is good (Romans 14:14b).

No foods are unclean, no days are unclean, and no people are unclean. (Read Acts 10 to see how Peter learned this lesson.) What something does to a person determines its quality. But the issue is not, "How does it affect me?" so much as, "If I do this, how will it affect my brother?" Will it make him stumble? Will it grieve him or even destroy him by encouraging him to sin? Is it worth it? No!

Thus, when a Christian engages in an essentially good activity before other Christians who perceive it as wrong, he is running the risk of seriously hurting their walk with God. Because of this, believers should limit the expressions of their liberty out of love for their weaker brethren (v. 15). Such a love act does not deny the principle that everything in creation is intrinsically good. Instead, it flows from recognizing that a fellow believer's growth in Christ is more important than fully exercising one's freedom.

We must realize that when we exercise our liberty, it has the potential to "destroy" our brother. The cry, "Am I my brother's keeper?" came from the lips of a murderer. The word Paul uses here for "destroy" means "ruin" or "reduce to uselessness." Every believer is his brother's keeper and must refrain from anything that would lead him astray. To have a free conscience in what we allow is one thing; to exercise that freedom to the peril of another man's soul is something else. No believer should exercise privilege without regard to responsibility.

If a person exercises his stronger faith to the detriment of a weak brother and in a way that prejudices the cause of Christ, then he gives a wrong impression about the Christian life. He gives unbelievers grounds for speaking against the gospel (v. 16). It is too easy for liberty to degenerate into carnality and worldliness. We do not want to lose our liberty as Christians, but on the other hand, we do not want to abuse it either.

B. The Good Concern (vv. 17-19). We must not only guard against giving a wrong impression about the Christian life; we must guard against getting a wrong impression about the Christian life. This second principle of liberty is manifested quite clearly in Paul's words: "For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost" (v. 17). Therefore, the essence of Christianity is not found in externals.

Not the externals, but the internals must be first in our lives: righteousness, peace, and joy. These are the result of the Spirit working in our lives (Romans 5:1-2). If each believer yielded to the Spirit and majored in a godly life, we would not have Christians fighting with each other over minor matters. Spiritual priorities are essential to harmony in the church.

Whatever we do, we should promote these traits in others. If our actions before certain individuals will not encourage such qualities, we should refrain from performing them around those people. When our Christian freedom is exercised with this level of maturity and wisdom, we will find our behavior "acceptable to God, and approved of men," (v. 18). "Let us," Paul concludes, "therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another" (v. 19).

But should not the Christian show his freedom to the world and thereby show his faith? Paul says that the faith the strong have is kept between them and God (v. 22). And it is not the display of our freedom that commends our faith to the world but our practice of responsible love (John 13:35). We are God's representatives to the world, not in matters of freedom over food and drink, but in matters of the kingdom of God. The kingdom is God's rule over us. What are the issues of this kingdom? Righteousness, peace, and joy in the Spirit (v. 17). When your life then emphasizes God's grace to you, your peace with others, and constant joy, you have found the essence of discipleship (v. 18).

C. Good Control (v. 20). When the exercise of Christian liberty threatens to hinder God's work, it should be restrained. As Paul says, "For meat destroy not the work of God. All things indeed are pure; but it is evil for that man who eateth with offence," (v. 20).

Because God's creation is essentially good, we can enjoy it fully. However, we should keep our rights from becoming a stumbling block to those less mature in the faith. Love commands that we limit our liberty, when necessary, for the sake of others. The guide for liberty is: does it make for peace? Does it edify?

Christ paid the ultimate price—His life—to save our brother; we must not destroy him for the sake of temporal pleasure. We must not insist on our Christian liberty to the point that it becomes an instrument of devastation to the weaker brother.

III. The Bewares

What steps can we take to help prevent other believers from stumbling over us? Paul gives three practical applications.

A. Be Considerate (v. 21). When we are in the company of another Christian who regards certain good things as evil, we should care enough to avoid those things. How am I considerate of the weak?

1. Do not make them. 2. Do not shame them. 3. Do not tempt them.

4. Do not flaunt it. 5. Do not be inconvenienced.

B. Be Convinced (v. 22a). If we are engaged in certain activities not prohibited by the teaching of Scripture, then we should be confident that they are right. If we entertain any doubts about the goodness of these actions, then we should give them up.

"Faith," in this sense, is a firm and intelligent conviction before God that one is doing right. It is the opposite of feeling condemned for allowing yourself to do something. Paul's "persuasion in the Lord" (v. 14) is his conviction as a member of Christ, considering the life and welfare of the other members.

C. Be Consistent (v. 22b). When we conclude that something is right, we should only waver in our conviction if we receive solid confirmation to the contrary. We yield internal condemnation for doubts concerning our beliefs, but consistency in belief will bring us happiness.

During World War II, Allied convoys crossing the Atlantic Ocean had to adjust their speed to match the slowest vessel in the group. This was necessary to maintain formation and protection from the German U-boat menace. This is the idea Paul is driving home here. The stronger brother could stride ahead, but love will not permit it. The shepherd must pace the flock to accommodate the weakest lamb. The Christian must regulate his freedom to consider the feeble conscience of the weakest. To do otherwise is to "loosen down" God's work and to endanger the spiritual well-being of the weak, who, indeed, should be the special concern of the strong.

In summary, Paul teaches the Roman believers that they must allow for differences but avoid division. Both strong believers and weak believers need to grow. The strong believer needs to grow in love, the weak in knowledge. The weak must learn from the strong, and the strong must love the weak. Believers may hold different convictions about many matters but must hold them in love. The result will be peace and maturity in the glory of God.

Chapter Forty-Nine
The Christian Balancing Act
Romans 14:13-23

Lesson in Review

A. Complete the following sentences using the correct words from the reading, notes, and class lecture.

1. We must exercise our freedom with the discretion that flows from what?

2. We are to exercise freedom with what in mind?

3. Should believers limit their liberty of expression out of love for whom?

4. What are the essentials to harmony in church?

5. When the exercise of Christian liberty threatens to hinder God's work, what should it be?

6. Paul teaches the Roman believers that they must allow for what, but they must avoid what (two-part answer).

B. Answer these questions from Romans 14:13-23. Use verses where the answer comes from.

7. Paul writes that we should judge what?

8. What makes something unclean?

9. Your good should not be what?

10. What is the kingdom of God (three-part answer)?

11. What things should we follow (two-part answer)?

12. Whatsoever is not of faith is what?

C. Read the question carefully and respond in 2 to 3 sentences with a clear, concise answer. Your response should directly address the question and include relevant details from the text.

13. How does Romans 14 emphasize the balance between Christian liberty and love, and why must believers sometimes limit their freedom?

14. How does Romans 14:21-22 guide believers in preventing others from stumbling, and why must love regulate Christian freedom?

Chapter Fifty

The Main Thing

Romans 15:1-7

"*Bear one another's burdens, and*
so fulfill the law of Christ." Galatians 6:2

In Romans 15:1-7, Paul calls believers to selfless support and unity, urging the strong to bear the burdens of the weak rather than pursue personal satisfaction. This aligns with Galatians 6:2, which emphasizes that carrying one another's burdens fulfills the law of Christ, centered on love and service. Both passages encourage patience, understanding, and sacrificial love, highlighting that true Christian maturity is demonstrated through building others up, fostering harmony, and living in a way that reflects Christ's example. The strength of the church is found not in individual success but in collective encouragement and unwavering unity.

These seven verses conclude Paul's teaching on the relationship between the weaker and the stronger brother. Notably, Paul finishes this instruction as he began – by encouraging believers to receive one another (15:7; 14:1). This reinforces his broader message, which has been unfolding since Romans 12:1: doctrine is demonstrated through action, belief shapes behavior, and faith is revealed in relationships.

Paul navigates attitudes and perceptions, balancing the needs and perspectives of both the weak and the strong to foster harmony. Paul brings up another aspect: we "glorify God" (v. 6). Treating a weaker brother in the spirit of charity is great. It is far better to treat him in the spirit of Christ. That is the ultimate purpose of the church. We are involved in many activities- education, evangelizing, encouragement, economy, emancipation, enabling, establishing, example, and energizing- but are they all to exalt Jesus? Remember, "The main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing." Paul does not want us to forget that after spending so much time writing about liberty, license, and love.

To bring glory to God is to bring honor to God. To cause God to receive praise because of how we live. Such thinking changes our approach to Christian living. It is no longer my thoughts or my treatment of the weak and strong, but how do my thoughts and treatments reflect on God?

I. The Mature Attitude of the Strong (vv. 1-2)

A. Social Responsibility— "ought" (v. 1). "Ought" is the same word translated as "duty" in verse 27. The root of the words is the two words "owe to." Look at other places:

John 13:13-14, 13Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. 14If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also *ought* to wash one another's feet.

It is often used in the application of spiritual truth.

Ephesians. 5:28 says, So *ought* men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself.

I John 2:6, He that saith he abideth in him *ought* himself also so to walk, even as he walked.

I John 3:16, Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we *ought* to lay down our lives for the brethren.

I John 4:11, Beloved, if God so loved us, we *ought* also to love one another.

The more truth you know, the more moral responsibility you bear. Paul's point in Romans 15 is that the believer has a moral responsibility not to hurt, ignore, or frustrate his brother but to "bear his infirmity (lack of strength)." I must undergird his weakness and help him. To "bear" is to get alongside. This would be to the glory of God.

Paul is not contending here that we continually give in to a weak brother's desires. Instead, we are to act in a way that will be to his lasting benefit. We help him carry the cross of his weakness.

B. Selfless Restraint— "not to please ourselves" (v. 1). We all expect the right to please ourselves; Paul says we must willingly surrender that right. Selfishness has no part in the believer's life. Why should I restrain myself?

1. Pleasure is not our highest aim, but love for God is demonstrated in my treatment of others. The wonderful mix is when you find pleasure in your love for God.

2. I am not the most important person. I must think more of others than myself. "We" is more important than "me!"

3. Indulgence does not produce the best, but instead becomes greedy.

4. Self-gratification is a temporary sensation. To live for oneself is unscriptural, unspiritual, and unsatisfactory.

C. Spiritual Relationship (v. 2). My natural bent is to think of myself, but Paul says I must consider my neighbor. Notice it is for "his good to edification." That means that when it does not matter, I exercise restraint. When it does, I teach. His discernment reveals a person's spiritual maturity. He is willing to give up his rights so that others might be helped. He does this not as a burden but as a blessing. As loving parents make sacrifices for their children, mature believers make sacrifices to help younger Christians

grow in the faith.

II. The Mighty Aids to the Strong (vv. 3-5)

That is so demanding. What if I am constantly looking out for and helping the other person? We learn the most and grow the fastest when we are busy helping others. But I do not know how to help others. Paul gives us some help here.

A. The Example of the Savior (v. 3). The Lord Jesus lived to please God and to serve and help people. He died not just for the strong, the steadfast, and the scholarly but for the feeble and the faltering. He always went out of His way to bear someone else's burden. He always went the second mile. It was the maimed and halt and blind, the palsied and the deaf, who were most obviously the recipients of His grace. He was patient with Peter when he blundered, with James and John when they wanted to call down fire on Samaria, with Thomas when he doubted, and even with Judas when the blood money jingled in his purse. How paltry is any inconvenience we may suffer because of the weak brother in the church compared to what Christ suffered? The spirit of Christ will make any burden light.

While Jesus is more than our example, He should never be less than our example. Jesus is not just our example but also our enabler.

Who was stronger than Jesus? Yet, who was more careful to bear the weaknesses of others? Christ's way was to consider others first, to consult their interests, and to help them in every possible way. Christ did not please Himself; He put the interests of others before His own.

> Philippians 2:5-8, 5Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: 6Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: 7But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: 8And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

Paul suggests, by quoting Psalm 69:9, that Christ put the will of God first.

Dr. Luke records (Luke 9:10-17) that after the disciples returned from ministry, Jesus took them to the desert for a few days to rest, and 5,000 men, women, and children showed up. Again, refusing to please Himself, He taught, healed, and fed them. Jesus demonstrated "pleasing not himself" at Gethsemane.

B. The Exposition of Scripture (v. 4). The Bible repeatedly says our spiritual life directly relates to our biblical understanding. If you struggle in some area, find out what the Scripture says. Remain rooted in the Scripture, for it will strengthen your patience and uplift your spirit with encouragement. That is why we should always want more of the Word of God. By studying examples of godly men in Scripture, we learn to

be patient in trials, comforted by knowing that God will help us, and hold onto hope for salvation.

C. The Experience of the Spirit (v. 5). The Spirit ("God of ... consolation," which is comfort) will "grant" or guide to be "like-minded." Paul is praying for grace to do what he has taught. We need grace to keep the main thing the main thing. We need grace to love despite differences. The Spirit always works for unity—let it work!

III. The Many Actions of the Strong (vv. 6-7)

A. One Mind (v. 6). Start opening your mind to the opinions and feelings of others.

B. One Mouth (v. 6). You do not have to say everything you know. You will quit saying some things. My mother always told me, "If you don't have anything good to say about someone, then don't say anything."

C. One Membership (v. 7). We all became one family. That means we are more dedicated to each other than to areas of liberty.

Of course, the result is glory to God (v. 7). Disunity and disagreement do not glorify God; they rob Him of glory.

Abraham's words to Lot are applicable today.

> Genesis 13:8, And Abram said unto Lot, Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; *for we be brethren*.

The world is watching! Abraham desired that he and Lot stand apart, demonstrating their faith in the one true God through their actions and unity.

Chapter Fifty
The Main Thing
Romans 15:1-7

Lesson in Review

A. Complete the following sentences using the correct words from the reading, notes, and class lecture.

1. Religion is shown in what? _

2. To bring glory to God is to bring what to God?

3. The more truth you know, the more what you bear.

4. What has no part in the believer's life?

5. Jesus is not just our example but also our what?

6. What is our spiritual life directly related to?

7. Disunity and disagreement do not glorify God; they do what to Him?

B. Answer these questions from Romans 15:1-7. Use verses where the answer comes from.

7. The strong ought to do what for the weak and not what for themselves (two-part answer).

8. Who should we please to edify?

9. What were the things written in the aforetime written for?

11. We are to glorify God with what (two-part answer)?

C. Read the question carefully and respond in 2 to 3 sentences with a clear, concise answer. Your response should directly address the question and include relevant details from the text.

12. How does Paul's teaching in Romans 14-15 emphasize receiving one another, and why is glorifying God central to Christian relationships?

13. How does Romans 15:3-5 instruct believers on serving others, and why is Christ the ultimate example?

Chapter Fifty-One

All Together Now

Romans 15:8-13

"*In that day the Root of Jesse will stand*
as a banner for the peoples; the nations
will rally to him, and his resting place
will be glorious." Isaiah 11:10

In Romans 15:8-13, Paul highlights that Jesus Christ, the Root of Jesse, is the fulfillment of God's promise to bring salvation to all nations. By quoting Isaiah 11:10, he reinforces the truth that Christ's mission extends beyond Israel, offering hope to the Gentiles and proving the boundless nature of God's grace. This passage reveals the harmony between Old Testament prophecy and New Testament fulfillment, assuring believers that their faith is grounded in God's unwavering plan. Through Christ, both Jews and Gentiles are invited into a shared salvation, united by the joy and peace found in trusting Him.

Paul concludes his teaching on welcoming one another, whether weak or strong, by urging believers to follow Christ's example. Just as He embraced us without distinction, we are called to extend the same grace, making space for one another without partiality or exclusion.

"This is what I mean," he continues. "Christ came not to receive service but to give it—first, and directly, to the Jews, to fulfill the promises which God made to their forefathers, and then also to the Gentiles, that they might rejoice in God's uncovenanted mercy." But if the bringing of the gospel to the Jews fulfilled the promises to the patriarchs, the evangelization and conversion of the Gentiles were also foretold in the Old Testament. Paul quotes the Old Testament, in which the Gentiles are presented as praising the God of Israel and placing their hope in Israel's Messiah.

The manner and extent of God's blessing for believing Gentiles—their incorporation along with believing Jews into the community of the people of God—might have been a mystery concealed from earlier generations until it became a reality through Paul's ministry.

> Ephesians 3:2-6, 2If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: 3How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, 4Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) 5Which 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; 6That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel

Colossians 1:25-27, 25Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God; 26Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints: 27To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

Paul sees the gospel's blessing of the Gentiles as predicted in the Old Testament.

Galatians 3:8, And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed.

This meant that Paul viewed his ministry as God's means of fulfilling His promise to the Gentiles.

I. Christ's Ministry (v. 8)

Jesus Christ is the supreme example of ministry. "I am among you as he that serveth" (Luke 22:27). He came first to minister to the Jews so that through Israel, He might be able to minister to the Gentiles. "To the Jew first" is a principle that was followed in Christ's earthly ministry and the early ministry of the church.

For example, John the Baptist came to minister to the nation of Israel, preparing them for their Messiah. When Jesus began His ministry, it was only to the people of Israel. When He sent out the Apostles on their first evangelistic mission, He ordered them, "Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel," (Matthew 10:5-6). After His resurrection, He commanded the Apostles to remain in Jerusalem and begin their ministry there (Luke 24:44-49).

This does not mean He ignored individual Gentiles because He did minister to a few (The Centurion's daughter—Matthew 8:5-13 and the Canaanite woman—Matthew 15:21-28). Still, Christ's major emphasis was on Israel.

However, Jesus anticipated the inclusion of Gentiles even before He went to Calvary.

John 12:20-24, 20And there were certain Greeks among them that came up to worship at the feast: 21The same came therefore to Philip, which was of Bethsaida of Galilee, and desired him, saying, Sir, we would see Jesus. 22Philip cometh and telleth Andrew: and again Andrew and Philip tell Jesus. 23And Jesus answered

them, saying, The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified. 24Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.

The bringing in of the Gentiles was the topic of His conversation just before His ascension.

Luke 24:46-47, 46And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: 47And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

Jesus' last recorded words before the cloud hid Him were to go "to the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

Moreover, Jesus's first recorded words after His ascension concerned bringing the Gentiles into the church's fellowship.

Acts 9:6-15, 6And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do. 7And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man. 8And Saul arose from the earth; and when his eyes were opened, he saw no man: but they led him by the hand, and brought him into Damascus. 9And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink. 10And there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias; and to him said the Lord in a vision, Ananias. And he said, Behold, I am here, Lord. 11And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and enquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth, 12And hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in, and putting his hand on him, that he might receive his sight. 13Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem: 14And here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name. 15But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel.

And so were His second words.

Acts 10:13-14, 13And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter; kill, and eat. 14Peter said, Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean.

It is almost as if the Lord Jesus wanted to speed up the early church's mission to the Gentile world.

The period covered by Acts 1-7 is characterized by a ministry only to Jews or Jewish proselytes. It was not until Acts 8 that the gospel reached the Samaritans; in Acts 10, it extended to the Gentiles. Then, through Paul's ministry, it went throughout the Roman Empire (Acts 13:1-3).

II. Christ's Mission (vv. 9-12)

Was it selfish of God to emphasize the Jews? No, because through the Jews, He would send the Good News of salvation to the Gentiles. The first Christians were Jewish believers! "Salvation is of the Jews" (John 4:22). In the Old Testament period, God chose Israel to be a minister to the Gentiles, but instead, Israel copied the idolatrous ways of the Gentiles and had to be chastened. In the New Testament period, God chose Jewish believers to carry the Good News to the Gentiles, and they obeyed Him.

There is a beautiful progression in the promises that Paul quoted in Romans 15:9-12. Romans 15:8 covers the period of the gospels and Acts 1-7.

A. Association. The Jews glorify ("shape another's opinion") God among the Gentiles (Romans 15:9, quoting Psalm 18:49). This period (Acts 11-14) describes the ministry of Paul as he witnessed among the Gentiles. Paul quotes where David, having incorporated non-Israelite nations in his empire, counts them as now belonging to the heritage of the God of Israel.

B. Adulation. The Gentiles rejoice with the Jews (Romans 15:10, quoting Deuteronomy 32:43). This passage can be applied to the church council in Acts 15, where the Gentiles were given equal status.

C. Alignment. All the Jews and Gentiles together praise God (Romans 15:11, quoting Psalm 117:1). Today, Jews and Gentiles in the church praise God together. Paul quotes a Psalm of David, in which the whole world is called upon to praise the God of Israel for His steadfast love and faithfulness.

D. Allegiance. Christ shall reign over Jews and Gentiles (Romans 15:12, quoting Isaiah 11:10). Paul finds a witness to the Gentile mission in the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms.

The word "trust" at the end of Romans 15:12 is "hope." Hope, a feeling that what one desires will happen, is native to human experience. Without hope, all desire to live departs. Hope, in a spiritual sense, however, is different. It is found only through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. The hope of acceptance by God, apart from faith in Christ, is just wishful thinking. Paul describes the Gentiles as "separate from Christ" and "without hope" (Ephesians 2:12), but now in Christ, they have hope.

Paul has quoted from the Psalms twice, as well as from the writings of Moses, specifically Deuteronomy and Isaiah. Thus, he has appealed to the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms—the three major divisions of the Old Testament—to establish the place

of Gentiles in the church.

III. Christ's Miracle (v. 13)

Just as he has urged the strong brother and the weak brother to care for one another, so now he prays that the Jews and the Gentiles will get along despite differences. The longest chapter in Romans is Chapter 8, with 39 verses. Paul has now spent 36 verses teaching about getting along with our brothers and sisters, whether they are strong or weak, Jews or Gentiles. It is a prayer that the Romans may abound in joy, peace, faith, and hope that concludes this division of the letter in which Paul has presented the way of Christian life.

Not only do believers have hope, but they also have joy and peace (Romans 15:13). What mighty cords these are to bind believers to believers in love, mutual understanding, and consideration. Because we have our hope in God, we may enjoy these blessings now.

The way to happiness and harmony in the assembly of God's people is not easy. People are different. They are saved from racial, religious, social, and educational backgrounds. Inevitably, people of different ages and temperaments, abilities and drives, concepts and natures should have trouble adjusting to one another within the fellowship of a local church. But it can be done. It cannot be done by nature, but it can be done through grace. The things that unite us are far more potent than those that divide us. We are united in Christ by a common birth, precious blood, and one belief.

> Ephesians 4:4-7, 4There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; 5One Lord, one faith, one baptism, 6One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. 7But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.

When there was strife between the herdsmen of Abram's cattle and the herdsmen of Lot's cattle, Abram's plea to Lot was, "We be brethren" (Genesis 13:8). That was what bound them. The petty things that divided them were scarcely worth a thought. At least, that was Abraham's conviction, one that he was prepared to carry through with remarkable selflessness and thoroughness.

Once more, the Spirit enables believers to experience the blessings of life to come in this life. The Holy Spirit of God shares these blessings as believers yield to Him. The grand object of their hope is God's glory.

> Romans 5:2, By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

Because the Jewish Christians were faithful in spreading the gospel to the Gentiles, today's nations can trust Christ as Savior.

Chapter Fifty-One
All Together Now
Romans 15:8-13

Lesson in Review

A. Complete the following sentences using the correct words from the reading, notes, and class lecture.

1. Believing Gentiles might be a mystery concealed from earlier generations until it became a reality through what?

2. Jesus Christ is the supreme example of what?

3. Through the ministry of Paul, what did the gospel go through?

4. Was it selfish of God to emphasize the Jews? Why?

5. Hope of acceptance by God apart from faith in Christ is just what?

6. What is the grand object of the believer's hope?

B. Answer these questions from Romans 15:8-13. Use verses where the answer comes from.

7. Jesus Christ was a minister to confirm what?

8. Isaiah prophesied that the "root of Jesse" (Jesus) would have what relationship with the Gentiles?

9. How may we abound in hope?

C. Read the question carefully and respond in 2 to 3 sentences with a clear, concise answer. Your response should directly address the question and include relevant details from the text.

10. How does Jesus' ministry reflect His initial focus on Israel and His ultimate plan for including the Gentiles?

11. How does Romans 15:13 emphasize unity among believers, and why is hope in God essential for church harmony?

Chapter Fifty-Two

Attitudes for Accomplishment

Romans 15:14-21

"*So shall He sprinkle many nations; kings shall shut their mouths at Him; for what had not been told them they shall see, and what they had not heard they shall consider.*" Isaiah 52:15

Isaiah 52:15 reflects Paul's mission, emphasizing his desire to share the gospel with those who have never heard it. His urgency in preaching to all nations underscores the universal call of salvation. In Romans 15:14-21, Paul expresses his deep commitment to spreading the gospel to those who have never heard it, reinforcing the universal call of salvation. He references Isaiah 52:15, highlighting that God's truth will reach nations previously unaware of His message. As Paul transitions from doctrine and practical Christian living to discussing his ministry, he offers a self-introduction—an opportunity for the believers in Rome to understand his mission and heart for evangelism. His unwavering urgency in preaching demonstrates that faith is meant to be shared, extending beyond boundaries and bringing new understanding to those who have not yet heard**.**

Paul's self-introduction is because he wrote bluntly to them (v. 15). Yet Paul wants them to like him even after writing as he did. He wants them to understand who He is and the nature of his calling. By doing this, we get a look at Paul—the man. One of our great mistakes is that we put the people of the Bible on pedestals. By comparison, then, we can excuse ourselves from their achievements. They were ordinary people God used in extraordinary ways. Jesus wants to do the same with us.

The difference often is attitude. We have all seen people with less ability achieve more than highly talented people. So, what was the Apostle's attitude that added to such a great accomplishment?

I. Determination (vv. 14-15)

Paul never lost sight of the fact that the church in Rome had not been founded by him, so before he plunged into an account of his missionary philosophy, he tactfully congratulated his brethren in Rome on their accomplishments. Paul compliments the Romans for:

A. Their Consecration. "Goodness" (v. 14), which is maturity. To be a good man is to be the very best kind of man that can be. This was no mere theoretical goodness, no goodness of abstaining from evil. This was practical goodness manifested in helpfulness to others, in bearing the burdens of the weaker brother.

B. Their Comprehension. "Knowledge" (v. 14) is the insight gained by learning, effort, or experience. The Roman believers were diligent students. We are not told how they came to learn the New Testament truth. No doubt Paul's epistle would add to what they already knew and put into concrete and permanent form some of the truths already imparted by inspired utterance. Perhaps Priscilla and Aquila had taught them "the way of God more perfectly" as once they had Apollos (Acts 18:26 and Romans 16:3). Certainly, Rome was strategically placed for the church there to be well informed as to what "the apostles' doctrine" was, both as taught at Jerusalem (Acts 2:10, 42) and in major Gentile centers of Christianity. Paul commends their grasp of the truth. Just as the Roman church made itself familiar with the great doctrines of faith, all believers must master apostolic truth.

C. Their Capability. "Admonish" (v. 14) is the ability to teach and confront. The church in Rome contained several qualified brethren eminently equipped to stir up the saints to their responsibilities. The tendency to settle down is natural and must be fought continuously. That is why the ministry of admonishment is vital to virile Christianity.

The Immortal jellyfish (*Turritopsis dohrnii*) is a powerful symbol of resilience and transformation. When faced with adversity, it exhibits a unique ability to revert to its juvenile form and restart its life cycle. Instead of succumbing to challenges, it adapts and presses forward. Rather than succumbing to hardship, it adapts and continues its journey. Like the Christian life, which is a race to be run and a battle to be fought, this jellyfish demonstrates perseverance, renewal, and endurance. Faith calls for discipline and determination, which are reflected in the way this creature refuses to remain weakened but instead transforms and presses forward.

Still ("Nevertheless" v. 15), Paul shows great determination by boldly reminding them of the doctrine and duty (belief and behavior) of the Christian life. He does not claim to teach anything new but to remind them of what they already know. Why? Paul knows our tendency to forget. Moses constantly instructed the parents to teach the children (Deuteronomy 6:1-13).

> Deuteronomy 6:1-13, 1Now these are the commandments, the statutes, and the judgments, which the LORD your God commanded to teach you, that ye might do them in the land whither ye go to possess it: 2That thou mightest fear the LORD thy God, to keep all his statutes and his commandments, which I command thee, thou, and thy son, and thy son's son, all the days of thy life; and that thy days may be prolonged. 3Hear therefore, O Israel, and observe to do it; that it may be well with thee, and that ye may increase mightily, as the LORD God of thy fathers hath promised thee, in the land that floweth with milk and honey. 4Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD: 5And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. 6And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: 7And thou shalt teach them

> diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. 8And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. 9And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates. 10And it shall be, when the LORD thy God shall have brought thee into the land which he sware unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give thee great and goodly cities, which thou buildedst not, 11And houses full of all good things, which thou filledst not, and wells digged, which thou diggedst not, vineyards and olive trees, which thou plantedst not; when thou shalt have eaten and be full; 12Then beware lest thou forget the LORD, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage. 13Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God, and serve him, and shalt swear by his name.

Isaiah records the Lord telling the people that the fear of the Lord is "taught by the precept of men" (Isaiah 29:13). Jesus knew our forgetfulness and, for that reason, instituted the Last Supper (I Corinthians 11:23-26). Peter admits he also used this repetition method to establish believers (2 Peter 1:12).

> II Peter 1:12, Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth.

Repetition is one of the best teaching methods.

Paul does not nag or rebuke in this letter. Instead, understanding how easily we can become passive, he confidently and boldly urges us to stay attentive and engaged. Since Satan never stops, the Christian cannot either. And Paul knows that none of us is all we are capable of being, and there is more to do. Those who are determined must be willing to repeat the truths of Scripture constantly.

Notice Paul's use of the word "boldly" (v. 15). From the beginning of this letter (1:7-12) and its end (16:1-24), we know that Paul cared about others. Often in his other letters, as in this one, he mentions his thankfulness to God and prayers for those He is writing to. So, while he considers the feelings of others, he puts the integrity of the Scripture first.

II. Direction (vv. 15-16)

In this section, Paul explains his missionary philosophy. Only some, if there are any, can speak with such authority about world missions as Paul. The verses that follow get to the very heart of global evangelism.

Paul's attitude toward his work is that it is given as a service to God. He even views the Gentiles as his offering to God (v. 16). We may be busy for God for many reasons. There are many reasons, but only one legitimate reason: as a service to God. Some are driven by personal glory; others see a job that must be done, so they do it out of

obligation, and others work to ease their guilt. However, we should view our service as an act of worship.

Look at the progression of Paul's view of his service:

A. His Calling. He sees himself as called to work by God's grace (v. 15). He sees God's grace as preparing and equipping him. This is the first and foremost aspect of any missionary philosophy—personal accountability for one's gift, sphere of influence, and opportunities.

Paul writes a lot about God's grace. To him, God's grace is everything (1 Corinthians 15:10).

> I Corinthians 15:10, But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.

Paul writes to us:

- Stand in Grace

  Romans 5:2, By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

- Elected by Grace

  Romans 11:5, Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace.

- Reign in eternal life by grace

  Romans 5:21, That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.

- Called to Salvation by Grace

  Galatians 1:15, But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace.

- Saved by Grace

  Ephesians 2:8, For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.

- Justified by Grace

  Titus 3:7, That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to

the hope of eternal life.

- Forgiveness of sins by Grace

  Ephesians 1:7, In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.

- Hope through Grace

  II Thessalonians 2:16, 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.

- Strength in Grace

  II Timothy 2:1, Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

B. His Commission. Paul writes that his calling is to serve ("minister," v. 16) Jesus to the Gentiles. God intended Paul to work for the benefit of others. God had laid Israel on the heart of Moses, so He had laid the Gentiles on the heart of Paul. He dedicated himself wholeheartedly to the task before him. His greatest joy was to see Gentiles saved and then "offered up" as a living sacrifice to God.

C. His Communication. Paul is told to serve by declaring "the gospel of God" (v. 16). He must let the Gentiles know they are included in God's plan of redemption.

Paul has a clear sense of direction. God calls him to serve by preaching the gospel to the Gentiles. Do you understand God's direction for your life?

III. Dependence (vv. 17-19)

Paul recognized that the Holy Spirit empowered and enabled him to perform mighty signs and wonders. Accomplishing great things for God means trusting in Him.

Look at Paul's spirit of dependence.

A. Credit (v. 18a). Paul would not claim the achievements of others, and what he did, he gave the glory to God. Paul was not a boastful man. On the other hand, he was not afflicted with self-deprecating false modesty. He speaks freely and frankly about what has been wrought through his missionary zeal.

Therefore, when Paul writes, his glory was not in himself but in what the Lord had done through him. He had a wealth of information that he could write about. A long trail of converts and churches marked the lines of his ministry. Telling the story to God's glory—what God had wrought through him—could keep him busy enough. He had no

need or desire to trespass on other people's laborers to pad out his report or to make it more interesting and impressive. Paul knew that others were working among the Gentiles besides himself. Let them tell their own story; he would tell his. He would only recount what God had been pleased to accomplish through him, realizing that he was only a part of the story of world evangelism, and then in the future. Missionaries' telling of their work should emulate Paul's.

B. Consistent (v. 18b). The Spirit empowered Paul to share the Word, and the purpose was to "make the Gentiles obedient." It was "by word and deed" that Paul shared the Good News.

C. Confirmed (v. 19a). Paul's complete dependence on God resulted in spiritual power. Everywhere Paul went, he saw results. Some were saved even in Athens, where they scoffed at his message. His preaching was clothed with such irresistible authority, such demonstrations of the Spirit, such miracle-working power that souls were saved in countless numbers.

The Spirit empowered Paul for ministry, equipping him to perform mighty signs and wonders. The miracles God gave Paul to do were "signs" in that they came from God and revealed Him to others. They were "wonders" in that they aroused the people's wonder. Their purpose was always to open the way for the preaching of the gospel.

> I Corinthians 2:4, And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power.

There were hindrances and obstacles. Paul's enemies stirred the opposition. There were times when he was depressed and in doubt. But with it all, there was victory and revival.

D. Completeness (v. 19b). Paul showed his dependence by preaching all the gospel–he changed nothing, added nothing, and left nothing out. He went everywhere.

> Acts 20:27, For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.

Why was Paul so busy? For God's glory (v. 17). He did not serve and suffer to make a name for himself but to bring glory to God.

> Colossians 1:18, And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.

IV. Desire

Paul's precise definition of goals resulted in specific plans. He knew his basic objective—the unreached! He was constantly seeking new territory and people to proclaim the gospel. Paul was always on the go.

Paul desired to go where no one else had been. He quotes Isaiah 52:15 (v. 21) as his command. Why go and poach someone else's field of labor? The field is vast; it is the world; it is the regions beyond. He was obsessed with his vision of the unreached millions still untold. It was that which governed his missionary planning.

How did he do this? He "strived" (v. 20) to preach the gospel. This word is used only three times in the New Testament, each time by Paul and translated differently. It is translated as "labor" in II Corinthians 5:9 and "study" in I Thessalonians 4:11.

> II Corinthians 5:9, Wherefore we *labour*, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him.
>
> I Thessalonians 4:11, And that ye *study* to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you.

Philotimeomai means "love of honor," referring to a person's motive or ambition. Scripturally, we should have three desires:

1. To take the gospel somewhere new (Romans 15:20).

> Romans 15:20, Yea, so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation.

2. To please God (II Corinthians 5:9).

> II Corinthians 5:9, Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him.

3. To be personally busy (1 Thessalonians 4:11).

> I Thessalonians 4:11, And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you.

Sadly, too many Christians are ambitious for other things or have no ambition at all. The church's problem today is to get people busy—God has a purpose for everyone.

That is why Paul, with all his talent, prefers to go to new places and meet new people rather than stay somewhere with a lot of prestige and luxury. This does not mean going overseas. It may mean visiting a new neighborhood or meeting someone at work.

Paul's great desire was to spread the gospel. He wanted to give those who had never heard the gospel an opportunity for new life. Thus, his ambition was as big as the world he knew. Indeed, as he went on to write, he wanted to take the good news to the farthest corner of the then-known world—Spain.

Unlike many of us, Paul wasn't guilty of dreaming too small. He knew he served a great God who would do great things through him if he would be at God's disposal.

Chapter Fifty-Two
Attitudes for Accomplishment
Romans 15:14-21

Lesson in Review

A. Complete the following sentences using the correct words from the reading, notes, and class lecture.

1. Bible people were ordinary people. In what ways does God use them?

2. All believers need to master apostolic truth, as did those who?

3. Why is the ministry of admonishment vital to virile Christianity?

4. While Paul considers the feelings of others, he puts what first?

5. What is Paul's attitude toward his work?

6. Paul sees God's grace as doing what (two-part answer)?

7. Paul was not a boastful man. On the other hand, he was not afflicted with what?

8. Paul's complete dependence on God resulted in what?

9. Why was Paul so busy?

10. What was Paul's primary objective?

11. Sadly, too many Christians are ambitious for other things or have what?

B. Answer these questions from Romans 15:14-21. Use verses where the answer comes from.

12. Paul is persuaded of what concerns the Roman brethren (three-part answer).\

13. Paul was the minister of Jesus Christ to whom?

14. The offering of the Gentiles is acceptable to God because it is sanctified by whom?

15. From Jerusalem and round about unto Illyricum, Paul fully did what?

16. Paul did not preach the gospel where Christ was named, so he did not do what?

C. Read the question carefully and respond in 2 to 3 sentences with a clear, concise answer. Your response should directly address the question and include relevant details from the text.

17. How does Romans 15:18-19 illustrate Paul's dependence on God, and why was giving God the glory central to his ministry?

18. How does Romans 15:20-21 illustrate Paul's passion for reaching the unreached, and what lesson can believers learn from his missionary approach?

Chapter Fifty-Three

Administration for Accomplishment

Romans 15:22-33

"*I thank my God upon every remembrance of you,*
always in every prayer of mine making request
for you all with joy, for your fellowship in the gospel
from the first day until now." Philippians 1:3-5

Paul never rested on his oars, never sat back to rest. Time was too short, the task was too great, the laborers were too few, and the issues were too grave. To his underlying viewpoint, he added an underlying vision. He saw a lost world, a world that, in his day, was focused on Rome. Although it was not part of his plan to reside in Rome, it was part of his plan to reach Rome.

In Romans 15:22-33, Paul expresses his unwavering dedication to spreading the gospel, recognizing the urgency of his mission and the vast need for laborers in God's work. Though his journey had prevented him from visiting Rome, his vision remained clear—to reach the heart of the empire with the message of Christ. His words reflect a tireless commitment, fueled by faith and an understanding of the gravity of his calling. This echoes Philippians 1:3-5, where Paul expresses deep gratitude for fellow believers who partner in the gospel, highlighting the power of unity and perseverance in fulfilling God's mission.

Paul outlines his travel plans, including a missionary journey to Spain in keeping with his commitment to the unreached people, a brief stop in Rome, which is as much for his benefit as theirs, and, first, a trip to Jerusalem to attend to some business there. In addition to all the traveling he was contemplating, he had several different things on his mind. First, he had to complete his work in Corinth; then he had to personally deliver the collection he had organized for the impoverished church in Jerusalem; then he had to make plans for the evangelization of Spain, bearing in mind the necessity of visiting the established church in Rome. The collection necessitated a considerable amount of organization with the churches of Macedonia and Achaia, involving extensive correspondence, encouragement, and personnel administration.

The spiritual aspects of Paul's ministry are easy to identify. Still, we must recognize the administrative expertise he demonstrated in the various ministries he participated in. The balance of the Apostle is particularly welcome when we are confronted with the tensions that exist in the contemporary Western church. The tension between organization and inspiration, and the balance in seeing the church as an organism and an organization. Those who think of the church as a business whose problems can all be solved by better organization must remember that the church is an organism whose secret

is life. However, those who eschew organization because a church is a living body should remember that every organism is organized. The Apostle could never be accused of overlooking the fact that the churches were the body in which the Spirit moved, but this did not affect his careful attention to matters of detail in a responsible and organized way. His balance is further seen in his recognition of the absolute necessity for everything to be under the will of God and his ministry to be exercised in the fullness of the blessing of the gospel.

Look at five things on Paul's mind:

I Paul's Plans (vv. 22-24)

Paul desired to go to Rome and then to Spain. Consider that we are here as the result of a missionary. He wanted to go as far as he could. Remember, this is not a young man but someone we would understand thinking of retirement. Instead, he eagerly ("great desire" v. 23) plans his new work. We should never retire from Christian service. What are your plans? Notice how Paul plans.

First, his plans relate to the world's needs. In verse 21, he tells them he desires to go where no one else has been. He identifies the need and devises plans to address it.

Second, his plans are open to revision (v. 22). God does not give us a complete, detailed plan for our lives. Instead, he gives us a big picture and fills in the details as we obey Him. Often, that revelation comes one step at a time. Therefore, we cannot wait for a detailed plan and then run off. We must closely follow God in obedience as He leads us and be aware that God's plan may involve changes to our original plans. Paul planned with care but never became a slave to his plans; he always allowed the Holy Spirit to set them aside for better ones.

The Book of Acts gives several outstanding examples of this combination of strategic planning and divine leading in Paul's ventures. Take, for example, Paul's original plan to go through Asia and perhaps on to Ephesus after visiting the churches of Galatia on his second missionary journey. However, under a strange restraint and compulsion of the Holy Spirit ("forbidden of the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia" Acts 16:6), he journeyed on until he came to Troas, where he received his "Macedonian call" into Europe. Ephesus had looked so obvious a place on the map—strategic, important, and vital. The Holy Spirit postponed Paul's plan, but it was not canceled. Before evangelizing Ephesus, he was directed across the Aegean to Europe, where he planted churches in important centers such as Philippi, Thessalonica, and Corinth. Then, the Spirit directed him back to Ephesus. Thus, a circle was drawn around Ephesus, and strategic points on that circle evangelized first—Macedonia, Greece, and South Galatia. Finally, Paul completed his work in that area by evangelizing Ephesus at the center. The Spirit's leading did not spoil Paul's original plans but improved them.

Third, his plans were restricted by the work he had first undertaken (v. 23). God

intends us to finish what He calls us to do. That may not mean the completion of it, just the completion of your part. We should be just as convinced that our responsibility is done as we were convinced to take up the responsibility in the beginning. Some people can handle several projects at once, doing them all successfully, but only start something new if it means quitting something they have yet to finish.

God also restricted Paul from hanging around the church—he was commissioned to go to the lost. So, Paul is now ready to go to Spain, as his work in Asia Minor is complete. Fifteen years in Asia Minor does not mean everyone was reached with the gospel, but Paul's part was done. Others would continue that he had trained. As stated, Paul says do not rush to move on from what God has called you, and do not insist on staying when God is trying to move you.

Fourth, God's plan recognized personal needs (v. 24). Paul is coming to Rome on the way to Spain because he knows the church in Rome can help him. Personal considerations are a part of God's plan. Paul told them at the beginning of the letter (1:9-12) that he wanted to come and help them and be helped by them. Did Paul make it to Spain? There is no record of what he ever did. Tradition suggests that he may have traveled to Spain and possibly Britain after being released from jail. However, church tradition is not always trusted. Effectiveness is planned and prepared.

II. Paul's Project (vv. 25-28)

The church in Jerusalem was being discriminated against for being a Christian church. They lost their jobs and were in poverty. So, Paul wants to bring an offering to them, partly because he was asked to do so at the first church council (Galatians 2:10), but he also says it was something he had wanted to do. Details of this collection are recorded in 2 Corinthians 8 and 9. Paul always remembered the needs back in Jerusalem.

Paul's missionary philosophy of giving was strangely different from what is currently in the church today. The thought underlying the modern missionary movement has been that home churches should send money to the mission field to support infant churches in foreign lands. Paul put things the other way around! Paul was not looking to get, but to give! The new churches in Gentile lands ought to recognize their spiritual debt to the saints who sent them the gospel and send money to them to relieve their poor!

Paul, of course, had a special concern for the poor saints in the Jerusalem church. Many had been made poor by him when, in his unconverted days, he had so vigorously persecuted that church. Remember, Paul started the persecution. There were widows in the Jerusalem fellowship with whom Paul had to sit down and break bread when he was in their city, widows whose husbands had been slain through him. There were brethren in that church who could hardly lift their heads for shame because once they had denied Christ through the activities of Saul of Tarsus. Paul left no stone unturned to do what he could to repay that fearful debt.

It surprises some people that the church, while charged with the lofty goal of carrying the gospel to the whole world, must also become involved with such down-to-earth concerns as collecting money, but Paul was interested in both. The Christian is a person who, about the evangelism of the world, gets down to nitty-gritty projects.

For Paul to complete this project, he must first be alert to the need in Jerusalem—are we open to needs or blind to practical involvement? Therefore, he must convince others of the need and enlist their support. In this case, Paul had to overcome the animosity between Jews and Gentiles. He did this by reminding the churches that the gospel came through the Jews—without the Jews, they would be lost. Since they received spiritual, they should be supported practically. (This was always God's plan.) Spiritual blessing breeds material obligation. If someone has aided us in our walk with God, then we should serve that individual by giving our material possessions when they are in need. Of course, this is not the only way to express our appreciation to others, but it is certainly a biblical expectation.

We need people like this today. We cannot wait for the pastor for everything. The pastor cannot do it all and is often reluctant to mention his needs. Briefly, again, here is what is required:

1. Alert to the situation
2. Arrive at a solution
3. Add others' support
4. Act until settled— "sealed to them this fruit" (v28).

III. Paul's Power (v. 29)

Paul tells them he is coming to Rome but needs to know when, by what means, or any details. But, he says, one thing I do know is that I am coming in the fullness of the blessing of Christ. That is quite a statement. So many things can detour us from staying in the fullness of God's blessings. So, what does this say about Paul?

First, he speaks with confidence in God. He is aware that things can go wrong, or he can get distracted. He knows God cares, will call him back, and (if Paul is faithful) will bless him.

Second, he speaks of his commitment. Paul knows that God's blessings come because of obedience. So, Paul says that he is committed to obeying God, whatever lies ahead.

Third, he speaks of the completeness of God's power. He uses the word "fullness"—one of his favorite words. Paul is not satisfied with anything less than spiritual fullness. That is why we find such a consistent overflow of God's power in Paul's life. There is

always something for others from Paul because he's living such a full life.

IV. Paul's Problems (vv. 30-32)

Here is an honest recital of Paul's problems. He does not ignore them, deny them, or worship them.

It is part of the genius of Christianity that any believer can become a warrior in battle at any time and place and make his influence count to the ends of the Earth and high in heavenly places simply by engaging in prayer. By praying for missionaries, a believer can place himself in a canoe in the Amazon, an igloo in the Arctic, a tent in the Sahara, a submarine at the bottom of the ocean, or a plane high in the stratosphere. He can ward off the dangers of the mission in the jungle, diseases in the city slum, and disasters in the deep. He can arm the missionary witness with supernatural power, lift him from the slough of despondency, rout the unseen foes that lurk in the spirit world, and strengthen his hand in God. By praying in the Spirit, the exercised believer can conquer time and space and have a share in the battle.

A. Pray Intentionally. Paul suggested to his friends in Rome that they pray intentionally for him. He wanted them to add him to their prayer lists and make it a particular point to pray for him. Missionaries constantly urge people to pray for them. They know perfectly well that God is pleased to act in answer to prayer for some mysterious reason that is not fully explained. It is one of the laws of the universe, as fundamental as the laws of gravity and electricity. Paul's request that the believers pray intentionally for him is practical, for prayer must be a deliberate exercise for the soul by its very nature. It is not something we tend to do naturally.

B. Pray Intelligently. Paul believed in being specific in prayer. Look at Paul's strong language (v. 30): "Beseech...for Lord's sake...for love of Spirit...strive with me...to God...for me.' Paul is open and seriously honest. However, the Bible teaches that when we have a problem, we should honestly express it to others we trust and ask for their help in seeking God's solution and strength to overcome the problem. What were his problems? (There are three):

1. For His Safety. People were frightened for Paul because of the unbelieving Jews (v. 31). Paul was aware of the dangers that awaited him in Jerusalem. The unbelieving Jews were thirsting for his blood, and he knew it.

2. For His Service. He was concerned about the believing Jews in Jerusalem (v. 31). The believing Jews were cool toward his views on the relationship between Judaism and Christianity, and he was unsure how they would receive him. Why? They might feel too high to accept an offering from Gentiles. Or they might only accept Paul if he went to the Gentiles.

3. For His Steps. He desired that everything would go well during his trip to Rome (v. 32). He was warned of trouble (Acts 20:22-23). He wanted the dangers in

Jerusalem to suit his plans for coming to Rome.

From the Book of Acts, we know how God answered this prayer. Perils mounted against Paul until he was finally arrested in Jerusalem. His forebodings had been well-founded. His enemies attacked, but God delivered; his offering was accepted, and he made it to Rome as a prisoner.

Thus, all his prayer requests were answered, perhaps not in the way Paul expected, but he responded just the same. It must have been a source of satisfaction to those in the Roman church when, finally, they went out to meet Paul on the Appian Way (Acts 28:14-15) to know that their prayers for Paul's safety, his service, and his steps had all been answered by God.

Paul even planned his prayer life. We need people who can earnestly pray for the problems of others. And remember, God may not answer our prayers the way we expect. But Paul got what he wanted—the will of God (v. 32).

V. Paul's Prayer (v. 33)

Paul concludes with his brief prayer of blessing for them. Those who share the battles shall share the blessings. Doing God's will in challenging circumstances will give us peace. Paul knew that through experience and prayer, they would come to know it too.

Chapter Fifty-Three
Administration for Accomplishment
Romans 15:22-33

Lesson in Review

A. Complete the following sentences using the correct words from the reading, notes, and class lecture.

1. Paul's travel plans included what three locations?

2. We should never expect what from Christian service?

3. God does not give us a detailed plan for our lives. Instead, he gives us what?

4. God intends that you finish what?

5. Personal considerations are a part of whose plan?

6. Paul always remembered his own needs.

7. How should those who receive spiritual nourishment give back in support of others?

8. God's blessings come because of what?

9. Why was there always something for others from Paul?

10. Paul believed in being what in prayer?

11. Those who share the battles shall share what?

B. Answer these questions from Romans 15:22-33. Use verses where the answer comes from.

12. Paul planned to stop in Rome on his journey to where?

13. Before Paul can go to Rome, where and why is he going (two-part answer)?

14. Paul is carrying what to Jerusalem from the churches of Macedonia and Achaia?

15. Since the Gentiles partook of what from the Jews, their duty is what (two-part answer)?

16. For what did Paul ask the Romans to join him in prayer (four-part answer)?

C. Read the question carefully and respond in 2 to 3 sentences with a clear, concise answer. Your response should directly address the question and include relevant details from the text.

17. How does Paul's request for prayer in Romans 15:30-32 demonstrate the importance of intercession, and what can believers learn from his experience?

Chapter Fifty-Four

The Church is People

Romans 16:1-16

"*Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit.*
Rather, in humility value others above yourselves,
not looking to your own interests but each of you
to the interests of the others." Philippians 2:3-4

The Apostle Paul is full of surprises. After the soaring theology of the early chapters and the striking and challenging practicality of the later section of the Epistle, he concludes with a delightfully personal and intimate series of greetings that show several things about the church.

In Romans 16:1-16, Paul takes a warm and personal approach, listing the names of fellow believers and expressing deep gratitude for their faithfulness. This closing section highlights the diversity and unity within the early church, demonstrating how individual contributions strengthen the body of Christ. The passage aligns with Philippians 2:3-4, which encourages humility and selflessness, emphasizing the importance of valuing others above ourselves. Paul's heartfelt greetings reveal that Christianity is not just about doctrine—it thrives through genuine relationships, mutual support, and shared devotion to the gospel.

I. The Importance of People

When Lord Louis Mountbatten, a British statesman, traveled to Toronto, he requested a list of all the drivers, waiters, and others who would serve him during his stay, along with a few details about each individual. He had an aide read the list of names and information slowly. During his entire stay, Admiral Mountbatten called each person by name who served him and chatted with them knowledgeably. Likewise, the Apostle Paul demonstrated remarkable recall and personal connection in his letters, often mentioning individuals by name and acknowledging their contributions.

Paul must have valued friendships. Although he had never visited Rome, he sent greetings to twenty-eight individuals, plus several households and groups of saints. For most of those mentioned, Paul had a specific word of commendation. Paul kept up with these individuals and knew that they were in Rome.

What is the significance of this? It shows that Paul was both a friend-maker and a soul-winner. He did not try to live isolated; he had friends in the Lord and appreciated them. They helped him personally and in his ministry.

The affection Paul displays is not a new manifestation in the letter. We can see several instances of its occurrence in the previous four chapters:

1. Genuine love is unhypocritical and displays itself in family-like devotion.

> Romans 12:9-10, 9Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good. 10Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another.

2. Authentic love does not wrong a person but, as such, is "the fulfillment of the law."

> Romans 13:10, Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

3. A biblical expression of love will lead to the sacrificing of personal rights for the sake of preserving another believer.

> Romans 14:15, But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably. Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died.

4. Christian love forms part of the basis and motivation for corporate prayer.

> Romans 15:30, 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.

II. The Individuality of People (vv. 1-15)

We must remember the uniqueness of each person in the church. These are ordinary people doing uncommon deeds. A quote commonly attributed to Abraham Lincoln said, "God must love common people. He made so many of them." Look at those Paul lists.

1. Phebe (vv. 1-2). She is bringing this letter from Paul to Rome so He can introduce her. It was a wise custom in the early church, and one still widely practiced today, to furnish believers, leaving one locality for another with letters of commendation to the church in the new vicinity.

> II Corinthians 3:1, Do we begin again to commend ourselves? or need we, as some others, epistles of commendation to you or letters of commendation from you?

Such a letter ensured the traveler's friendly reception in the strange city and helped the church receive believers from other places.

Paul says four things about Phebe:

- Sister—there are 10 or 11 women mentioned in Paul's list, elevated by God because of their service

- Servant (deaconess)—she taught other women

- Saint— "set apart," receive her as one and act like one

- Succourer—helper, literally patron; Paul asks the Romans to help her because she has helped him and others

2. Priscilla ("Old, wise woman") and Aquila ("Eagle") (vv. 3- 5a). This couple is mentioned six times in the Bible; Priscilla is listed first four times. It is believed that this is because she was a woman of high standing who came to Christ and married a man of a humble position—a tentmaker. Paul met them in Corinth after Macedonia and Athens. Notice her name could be first because:

- They were a team, which a marriage should be (This is the only couple we can study in the New Testament; Joseph and Mary, Joseph is missing from Scripture, and Annais and Sapphire didn't last long in Scripture).

- They both ("necks" v. 4) risked their lives. Paul lived with them in Corinth

- They were highly regarded ("all the churches" v. 4),

- They helped Paul, who was the apostle to the Gentiles

- They opened their home (v. 5)—for a house church; your home is Christ's home

The practice of holding services in private homes is illustrated in a passage from the Acts of the Martyrdom of St. Justin. "The answer of Justyn Martyr to the question of the perfect (Rusticus), 'Where do you assemble?' exactly corresponds to the genuine Christian spirit on this point. The answer was, Where each one can and will. You believe, no doubt, that we all meet in one place, but it is not so. For the God of the Christians is not shut up in a room, but being invisible, He fills both heaven and earth and is honored everywhere by the faithful.

3. Epaenetus (v. 5). Paul's first convert in Asia. Though his people were once conquered by Rome, he now stands in the heart of the empire, proclaiming the gospel. Notice the multicultural nature of the Roman Church. Paul remembers people over the years.

4. Mary (v. 6). If this is a Mary recorded elsewhere or another Mary, we do not know. Mary is the most common woman's name in the New Testament. She worked for Paul. What kind of work do we need to know? But apparently, she wore herself out in service for others. The word "labor" is the same as that used for the Lord when "wearied with his journey." He sat down by the well (John 4:6). She is an example of those

who have yet to grow weary in well-doing.

5. Andronicus and Junia (v. 7). Probably a man and wife.

- Jewish names
- Fellow prisoners—with Paul in jail somewhere, they stood with him.
- "Noted among the Apostles"—literally, noted Apostles = Missionaries.
- In Christ before Paul—takes them back to Jerusalem and Paul's persecution. Their trip to Rome may have led to the founding of this church. Maybe they prayed for Paul before his conversion.

6. Ampilas (v. 8), Urbane (v. 9). "helper in Christ," and Stachys (v. 9). "my beloved." These are slave names. There were 60 million slaves in the Roman Empire, and Paul recognized them. One even has a letter in the New Testament—Philemon.

Ampilas was prominent in Rome. An intricately decorated tomb in Rome's catacombs is believed to be his. This is a reminder that God uses you no matter where you have come or what you have been.

> I Corinthians 1:26-29, 26For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: 27But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; 28And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: 29That no flesh should glory in his presence.

7. Apelles (v. 10). "Approved" means he was tested and came through it stronger than when he started. He is believed to be one of Paul's fellow laborers. We all need three people: a mentor like Paul, a mentoree like Timothy, and a partner like Barnabas.

8. Aristobulus (v. 10). The grandson of Herod the Great, who killed his rivals for the throne and wanted to kill the baby Jesus. He, his family, and his servants are now Christians.

9. Herodion (v. 11). Another relative of Herod. Possibly, this brother was a member of the Herodian political party, Israel's most liberal party. Paul, before Christ, was a Pharisee, the most conservative party. The Pharisees were irritated by the rule of Rome, while the Herodians encouraged people to accept it and get along. Paul here refers to Herodian as "my kinsman," a term reminiscent of Supreme Court Justices becoming friends with an adversary. That's how the gospel works in the lives of believers.

10. Narcissus (v. 11). Narcissism is self-love (A man who falls in love with his reflection). God can save us from what our name implies. There was a Narcissus who was the secretary to Caesar, who made ten million dollars from bribes from people who wanted to see Caesar. Yet, God could save him.

11. Tryphena and Tryphosa (v. 12). Twin, single sisters whose names mean "dainty and delicate." Paul shows his humor by saying they worked to utter exhaustion. Everyone has a job.

12. Persis (v. 12). Could have been named after the region she came from, Persia. Again, we see the multicultural variety of the early church.

> Galatians 3:28, There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.

Notice that Paul wrote "the beloved" to a woman, "my beloved" of Stachys (v. 9). How careful Paul was to shun all appearances of evil!

13. Rufus (v. 13). Rufus is the son of the man who carried Jesus' cross; it is believed that Simon, an inhabitant of Cyrene, became a believer and raised his children to love and work for God. Paul's reference to Rufus' mother and his mother indicates that Paul stayed in Rufus' home and was cared for as a son by his mother.

> Mark 15:21, And they compel one Simon a Cyrenian, who passed by, coming out of the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to bear his cross.

14. Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermas, Patrobas, Hermes (v. 14). Here is another group that met at home.

15. Philologus, Julia, Nereus, his sister, Olympus (v. 15). It is suggested that this is a family: Philologus (father), Julia (mother), Nereus (son), his sister, and Olympus (another sister). The church should be a family affair. It is a sobering thought that when we plan for heaven, we must remember that the only things we can take to heaven are our families and our friends. What are we doing to take them with us?

Did Paul forget one name? All Christians comprise the church, but this profound oneness does not disparage their differences. For instance, in Romans 16, we find men and women, couples and singles, as well as spiritually young and mature Christians mentioned.

This list is notable. There is something strangely attractive about it and about these shadowy names that appear for a flash upon the pages of Scripture and then are gone back into the black night of obscurity. They flare up before our gaze like bursts of flame and then burn down to a little handful of white ashes. And there they are, names forever immortalized by the pen of Paul, names that represent people who lived and loved long ago and live forever in the power of an endless life.

III. The Involvement of People (v. 16)

During the Middle Ages, the doctrine of sacerdotalism was introduced to the church. Sacerdotalism is a theological belief that emphasizes the role of ordained ministers or priests as mediators between God and humanity. The common man did not read his Bible because he was told he could not understand it. Instead, he was told that the priest would read the Bible, and the common man would come to the church to be told what it said. The common man could not touch communion elements because they were holy. The priest administered communion to the people who placed it in their mouths, and a small tray was held under the mouth to collect any crumbs that might fall. In the 1500s, William Tyndale was martyred for translating the Bible into everyday English, so that anyone who could read could access the Bible. The church also tried to murder Martin Luther, who believed in the opposite of sacerdotalism —the priesthood of the believer—who, when told that if he translated the Bible into everyday German, then every plowboy in Germany would read it, replied that then every plowboy in Germany would become a minister.

Every Christian is called to be a minister, but that differs from being a pastor. The clergy may be paid for their service, but the actual impact of faith comes from the saints who serve selflessly without expectation. This makes church members even more effective in spreading the gospel. People often relate more easily to fellow believers than to pastors. It is like a boy excitedly recounting how he caught and defeated a rat, only for the pastor to calmly say, "The Lord called him home." Personal, relatable testimony carries weight in ways that formal ministry sometimes cannot.

As we can see, love is person-oriented, service-centered, self-sacrificing, and action-prone. All these facets of genuine affection pervade the first half of Romans 16.

We learned from the Book of Romans 12:6-8 that believers are given different gifts. However, such diversity is to be used for edification.

> I Corinthians 12:5-31, 5And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. 6And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. 7But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. 8For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; 9To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; 10To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues: 11But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will. 12For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. 13For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and

have been all made to drink into one Spirit. 14For the body is not one member, but many. 15If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? 16And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? 17If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? 18But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him. 19And if they were all one member, where were the body? 20But now are they many members, yet but one body. 21And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. 22Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary: 23And those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness. 24For our comely parts have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked. 25That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. 26And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. 27Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular. 28And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues. 29Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles? 30Have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret? 31But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way.

Ephesians 4:11-16, 11And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; 12For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: 13Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: 14That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; 15But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: 16From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.

Many Christians diligently minister without ever seeking the limelight. Several are listed here, but some of whom we could not find a reason for the name. We would never know they existed, much less what they did, if Paul had failed to mention them.

Paul expresses his appreciation for their work in a straightforward manner. He waves no banners, offers no bouquets, and hands out no trophies. Instead, he honors them in very concise, modest terms. Notice some of the words he uses: "I commend," "greet," "I give thanks," "has worked hard," "approved in Christ," "workers in the Lord," and "a choice man in the Lord" (vv. 1,3,4,6,10,12,13).

IV. The Inclusion of People

Some churches and some people have a reputation for being cold and unfriendly. Hopefully, it is a case of thoughtlessness that people's minds are distracted, or members who know one another tend to chat together and forget to welcome those they do not know. The answer, however, might be in this thought-provoking verse: This quote is often attributed to Zig Ziglar, a well-known motivational speaker and author. *"If you go looking for friends, you're going to find they are very scarce. If you go out to be a friend, you'll find them everywhere."*

I went out to find a friend.
But could not find one there.
I went out to be friends.
And friends were everywhere!

We are sheep, and sheep flock together. Paul greeted all kinds of people. There were some whose honor and courage were renowned, like Priscilla and Aquila. Then, some who had been rascals—as Narcissus. Of all these, Paul tells us to "greet with a holy kiss" (v. 16). This direction is repeated five times in the New Testament (1 Corinthians 16:20; 2 Corinthians 13:12; 1 Thessalonians 5:26, and 1 Peter 5:14). This was an Eastern custom, not a biblical command.

This kiss in the East was and is a sign of respect and affection. When Christians first practiced it, they usually kissed each other on the cheek or forehead. As time passed, this overexpression of Christian love subsided. Greeting one another with a hearty handshake would convey the same idea in our culture. A warm handclasp conveys love, respect, fellowship, and warmth. It is just this that Paul had in mind.

What is the appropriate way to kiss the Bride? What can we do to express our love to other Christians? Here's an A-B-C suggestion:

1. Accept the uniqueness of others.
2. Become a servant of others.
3. Cultivate expressions of esteem for others.

These, and those in Romans 16, are those with whom we will spend eternity. We need to include them now.

Chapter Fifty-Four
The Church is People
Romans 16:1-16

Lesson in Review

A. Complete the following sentences using the correct words from the reading, notes, and class lecture.

1. Paul was a friend-maker as well as a what?

2. Who is bringing this letter from Paul to Rome?

3. Where did Paul meet Priscilla and Aquila?

4. Who is an example of those who have yet to grow weary in doing well?

5. Who is a reminder that God uses you no matter where you've come or what you've been?

6. Who is Rufus thought to be?

7. What can we take with us to heaven (two-part answer)?

8. To be a Christian is a decision to be a what?

9. A kiss in the East was and is a sign of what (two-part answer)?

B. Answer these questions from Romans 16:1-16. Use verses where the answer comes from.

10. Phebe was a member of what church?

11. Paul described Priscilla and Aquila as his what?

12. Who was the first fruit of Achaia unto Christ?

13. Who does Paul describe as his "fellow prisoners"?

14. Rufus shared what with Paul.

15. How were they to salute one another?

C. Read the question carefully and respond in 2 to 3 sentences with a clear, concise answer. Your response should directly address the question and include relevant details from the text.

16. How does the contrast between sacerdotalism and the priesthood of all believers influence Christian ministry today?

Chapter Fifty-Five

Do Not Forget

Romans 16:17-24

"*Reject a divisive person after the first and second admonition, knowing that such a person is warped and sinning, being self-condemned.*" Titus 3:10-11

In Romans 16:17-24, Paul issues a final warning, urging believers to guard against division and deception within the church. Though he is closing his letter, he feels compelled to emphasize the importance of avoiding those who stir conflict and rejecting divisive influences. This message aligns with Titus 3:10-11, where Paul advises believers to warn a divisive person twice before distancing themselves, recognizing that persistent divisiveness leads to spiritual corruption. Just as advertisers understand that a postscript is often the most memorable part of a letter, Paul ensures that his readers remember this crucial instruction—protecting unity is not optional, but essential for the church's strength and integrity.

As Paul nears the conclusion of his letter, marking it with "Amen" four times (15:33; 16:20, 24, 27), he pauses, compelled to add something meaningful for their encouragement and benefit before he finishes. So, what is so important? Paul's words are uttered like a parent to a parting child who says as they leave, "Do not forget...".

I Do Not Forget Doctrine (v. 17)

God reveals truth and remains true no matter how times, cultures, conditions, or circumstances change. This truth is what Paul calls doctrine. Truth is God's revealed mind and will, which directs our actions, attitudes, appearance, and affections. If God has revealed it, men must learn it and obey it.

We are only sometimes aware of doctrine, as we should be. Far too many "Bible-believing" Christians do not know the Bible as they should. Some attest they would die for the Bible, yet do not know it. Paul is here emphasizing the importance of doctrine.

There is a movement to negate the doctrine in the church today. Some want to ignore the essentials to open the door for a larger fellowship. While we cannot shut ourselves off from the world, how else will we win them? We must project our doctrine.

We must explain Bible doctrine and experientially live it. Doctrine is expressed in the believers' lives. It is practical. We must not only know it but also how it directs our lives.

How do I know if doctrine is as important to me as it should be? How much time do I spend studying it? Eternal truth does not always come easily. (Example: Understanding the concept of the Godhead.)

- Do I desire my life to be based on truth? If not, my life may be going in any direction.

- Do I meditate on it?

- Do I memorize it? It can come through constant exposure. (When I accidentally discovered I was memorizing.)

- Do I share it with others? No one wants to display their ignorance. If I avoid the subject of doctrine, that is a clue that I am uncertain of my knowledge.

I strive to incorporate doctrine into every Bible study and sermon, making it practical. It is essential to know why we feel convicted, why cleansing is possible, and why conversion is attainable.

II. Do Not Forget Discipline (vv. 17-18)

Paul builds on the importance by telling us to "mark" (Greek *scopad,* meaning examine) and "avoid" those who cause problems because of false doctrine—those who insist on false doctrine and confuse us. We must exercise discipline—self-discipline—toward those who mislead us or refuse to obey sound doctrine. Heresy is always stealthy. It is like water that presses against a dike. It probes for a weak spot through which it can enter, in a trickle at first but later like a flood.

From the earliest times, the church has been plagued by heresy. From the beginning, men were willing to take a bribe to say that the disciples stole the body of Jesus. Paul's letters take up the fight against unscriptural doctrines. The church at Galatia was plagued by legalism, the church at Colossae by Gnosticism, and the church at Thessalonica by false eschatological teachings. Peter, John, and Jude stood shoulder to shoulder with Paul in combating teachings that were subversive of the truth. It is, therefore, not surprising to find that in Rome, the great magnet of the world, false teachers were prowling to corrupt.

If there is truth, then there must be errors. It is amazing how many Christians ignore this. They need to guard, or at least proceed cautiously, what they read or to whom they listen. We must be able to detect truth from error. That is best accomplished by studying the truth, not the error. (How banks train tellers to detect counterfeit bills- it is the paper.) Error constantly changes its appearance to continue fooling, but truth never changes.

Paul is not speaking of total agreement. We will never agree with anyone on everything, but among the essentials, we defend and discipline.

Paul confronted antinomian tendencies in the early church, which misunderstood grace as a license to live without discipline, believing that only the spirit mattered while the body could indulge in any behavior. Paul strongly opposed this view, emphasizing that faith in Christ calls for righteous living and self-control. They arrived in Rome. Therefore, Paul addressed antinomians. He dealt with them in this letter because they said we should sin so grace may abound (Chapter 6). Paul said grace is not shown in liberty to sin but in overcoming sin. Paul consistently taught that grace does not eliminate moral responsibility.

Paul describes these people in verse 18. He points out rather bluntly that their god is their belly, a description he used again when he wrote to the Philippians (3:18-19). The reference to the belly is a contemptuous way of drawing attention to their low motives, real god, and self-seeking spirit. He points out that they were teaching this error with "good words" and "fair speeches." Be careful not to mistake eloquence and enthusiasm for God's approval.

How do we prevent false doctrines from taking root and spreading in our church?

1. Expository preaching and teaching.

2. Church leadership that knows, believes, and is committed to the truth.

3. An attitude that says anyone is welcome to attend our church, no matter how we may differ, if they are comfortable that we will teach our doctrine in our classes and services.

4. When a false doctrine arises, deal with it quickly. We are open to all questions as a church, but we will defend the truth.

What happens when false doctrine is allowed within a church?

1. It causes division (v. 17) as people begin to take sides and peace disappears.

2. The young are deceived (v. 18). By young, I mean in the Lord, not in age. By "good words," like Absalom at the gate of Jerusalem, with slick words, they deceive the young and disgruntled.

3. The church loses discernment (v. 19). That is our next point.

How do we react to false doctrine? Do we practice pluralism and accept everyone no matter what they believe? Do we have an inquisition? No. We must follow Paul's directive—to "mark" and "avoid" or to turn away from. That means we must know doctrine. Paul's instruction does not mean Christians should have no contact with non-Christians. Jesus spent a good deal of His time with unbelievers. One of the most explicit passages in this regard is 1 Corinthians 5:9-11.

I Corinthians 5:9-11, 9I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators: 10Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world. 11But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat.

Christians should not isolate themselves from non-Christians—everyone, including reformed axe murderers, is to be welcomed (though without the axe). However, they are called to separate from fellow believers who live in persistent disobedience, conforming to the world's ways. Recognizing falsehood depends entirely on how well one understands the truth.

III. Do Not Forget Discernment (v. 19)

Paul praises their good record (was he trying to stop again?) when he warns them about detecting good and evil. Paul urges us to spend our time with good, not evil. And, as you grow in Christ, the issues change from good vs. evil to good vs. better and better vs. best.

Is there a church or group so strong that it cannot fall? No. According to studies, unless a church or group purposely defends its beliefs, it typically takes about 40 years for it to start compromising. Harvard began as a preacher's college out of the revival of the Great Awakening. The same is true of Yale and Princeton. The Presbyterians began in the 1770s; in the 1920s, they stripped their leader of his office for failing to adapt to the times. The Methodists started as a holiness group.

Here is a principle to help in this area: When we discover something good, we get busy and learn all we can about it. When we find out something that is evil, we have learned enough and move on to something else. You will notice I do not spend a lot of time teaching about false doctrine because we want to know the truth.

Before the 1960s, Coke dominated the cola market as the leading and most widely consumed brand. Seeking to expand its presence, Pepsi launched the "Pepsi Generation" campaign, targeting younger consumers and reshaping its brand identity. In response, Coke introduced the iconic "I'd Like to Teach the World to Sing" advertisements, reinforcing its image as a timeless, universally beloved brand. This advertising rivalry helped shape the modern soda industry and consumer brand loyalty.

Then, in the 1970s, Pepsi returned with the Pepsi Challenge. Since Coke was losing ground, it chose to take drastic action that many considered the dumbest or smartest ad idea ever. Coke launched New Coke, which tasted oddly like Pepsi. The result was an uproar from millions of "old" Coke drinkers. Coke apologized to its consumers, stating that it did not have the right to change what is a classic. Neither do we have the right to change what is classic, regardless of who the new generation may be!

Remember this: If it is true—it ain't new, and if it is new—it ain't true!

IV. Do Not Forget Dependence (v. 20)

Who is behind all this trouble? Satan. Paul tells us that God will deal with Satan "shortly," which does not mean soon, but abruptly. When God does it, it will be quick work. What does Paul have in mind? Paul is saying that one day, God will deal with the false doctrine and the teaching because it all comes from Satan.

We understand Paul's terms: "God of peace," "bruise Satan," and "shortly." The fantastic thing is that Satan will be put "under [the believer's] feet." In other words, God is going to bruise Satan with the believer's feet. Will we let God use our feet? How? We can do this by depending on God, who will use us. Are we depending on God in life's trying, tempting times? If so, our actions bruise Satan's head.

> Genesis 3:15, "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel."

As always, Paul strikes a delicate balance as he warns Christians not to ignore Satan but, at the same time, not to be paranoid about him. That he is real and dangerous goes without saying, but that he is defeated, and his days are numbered, is equally valid. The devil is like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour, but he is on a short leash, and the hand that holds it is the hand of God. Careless ignoring of satanic infiltration is foolish, but chronic oppression by satanic influence does no justice to the victory that is ours in Christ.

Here is another surprise: the God of Peace stomps on Satan. That does not sound compatible—peace and stomping. Notice that sometimes, the God of peace gets tough. Just as a doctor must sometimes harm the body to heal it, God must take aggressive action for our benefit.

So, Paul's prayer is that they may be constantly aware that God is with them in grace.

V. Do Not Forget to Distinguish (vv. 21-24)

The church at Corinth, where this epistle was written, had given Paul much trouble. Yet it was a gifted church with a host of very capable brethren. Some of them are mentioned here in Paul's final salutation to Rome. Remember, the church is people, and here is a list of those who helped Paul:

1. Timotheus—One of Paul's most remarkable companions, whose mother was a Jew, but his father was a Gentile. Paul found him in Lystra on his first missionary journey and converted him. When Paul came through on his second missionary journey, he recognized him again, took him in, and mentored him. When Paul was forced out of Philippi, he left young Timothy behind to care for the infant church. He then sent Timothy

to Berea to help Silas and next to Thessalonica to encourage and strengthen the church. Timothy then joined Paul in Corinth. We are not told what happened over the next five years, but when Paul returned to Corinth at the end of those five years, Timothy was with him and sent greetings to Rome. Later, Paul wrote two pastoral epistles to Timothy.

2. Lucius, Jason, and Sosipater—These are countrymen and contemporaries of Paul.

3. Tertius—Many scholars suggest that Paul was afflicted with an Oriental eye disease, *ophthalmia*, that he contracted in the lowlands of Panphilia on his first missionary journey, bringing almost complete blindness (Galatians 4:13-15). Because of this, the apostle found it necessary to dictate his letters to a secretary. It was characteristic of Paul's courtesy that he allowed his penman to insert his greeting to the Roman Christians. If you memorize this verse, you can tell people that you memorized all the words of Tertius in the New Testament!

4. Gaius—is believed to be the Gaius who was a Roman citizen and the same one mentioned in I Corinthians 1:14 as one of the few Corinthians converts whom Paul baptized with his own hands. Paul notes that he hosted a church in his house.

5. Erastus—a city chamberlain or what we would term either a city treasurer or city manager. Erastus was a man of considerable importance in Corinth. Everyone would be wise to have a friend who is a wealthy banker.

6. Quartus—all we know is what Paul writes: he is a brother. This is a scant description, but it includes a wealth of warmth. How dear those become to us to whom we are linked by faith! Indeed, we often have more in common with our brothers and sisters in Christ than we have with those who are our kin by nature.

While visiting a hospital, a conversation unfolded with a man who recognized an apostolic pastor. He shared that his uncle was the pastor of an apostolic, oneness church, yet he himself did not attend any church at the time. His hesitation stemmed from witnessing practices that, in his view, contradicted biblical teachings. When asked for specifics, he explained that his uncle had appointed a worship leader—his grandson—who had been divorced without biblical grounds and had remarried.

A deep respect for his commitment to Scripture was evident. However, the need to discern essential doctrine and differences of opinion became clear, as complete agreement with every individual in a church setting is rarely possible. Another crucial factor was the balance between doctrinal conviction and the value of fellowship, which Scripture also upholds as vital. Ultimately, the truth remains—believers need one another!

Chapter Fifty-Five
Do Not Forget
Romans 16:17-24

Lesson in Review

A. Complete the following sentences using the correct words from the reading, notes, and class lecture.

1. Truth is what?

2. Truth directs our what (four-part answer)?

3. If there is truth, then what must be?

4. What must we be careful not to mistake for God's approval? (two-part answer).

5. We can only detect errors to the same degree we know what?

6. As you grow in Christ, the issues change from good vs. evil to what (two-part answer)?

7. God is going to bruise Satan with whose feet.

8. Sometimes, the God of peace gets what?

9. Paul met Timothy where?

B. Answer these questions from Romans 16:17-24. Use verses where the answer comes from.

10. To whom does Paul command the church to mark?

11. What are they to do with those they mark?

12. How do those who serve their belly deceive the hearts of the simple (two-part answer)?

13. What has everyone heard about the Romans?

14. The God of peace shall shortly do what?

15. Who "wrote" the Epistle to the Romans?

16. What is Paul's prayer for them all?

C. Read the question carefully and respond in 2 to 3 sentences with a clear, concise answer. Your response should directly address the question and include relevant details from the text.

17. How does Paul's final salutation in Romans 16 highlight the importance of community in ministry, and what lessons believers can learn from his relationships?

Chapter Fifty-Six

From Theology to Doxology

Romans 16:25-27

"And to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery,
which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden
in God who created all things through Jesus Christ;
to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of
God might be made known by the church to the
principalities and powers in the heavenly places,
according to the eternal purpose which He
accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord." Ephesians 3:9-11

In Romans 16:25-27, Paul concludes his letter with a powerful doxology, exalting God as the source of wisdom, revelation, and salvation. He highlights the mystery of the gospel**,** once hidden but now revealed through Christ—a truth that aligns with Ephesians 3:9-11, where Paul emphasizes God's eternal plan and the role of the church in making His wisdom known. This final tribute serves as both encouragement and reassurance, reminding believers that their strength, hope, and purpose rest solely in the hands of their divine Creator. In ending with this declaration, Paul reinforces that Christianity's foundation is not human effort, but the sovereign power and grace of God**.**

Woven into the tapestry of Romans are three doxologies. The first one occurs in the final verse of Chapter 11. The next one appears at 15:33. The last and longest one is appropriately found at the end of the letter. This doxology is the longest one Paul ever wrote. Each of these benedictions raises our eyes to God by emphasizing one or more of His numerous attributes. The final doxology in this epistle unveils some of the most significant truths about God present anywhere in the Bible. Those who study Paul's writing discover that when Paul picks up his pen, he is a thoughtful theologian, but when Paul puts down his pen, he discovers something to shout about. Here is a one-sentence doxology of Paul.

I. God's Omnipotence (v. 25)

The verse opens, "Now to him that is of power to stablish you." The Greek term translated *stablish* means "to prop up, make firm, make stable." It conveys the idea of something holding up or supporting something else. In this context, the thought is that God is the One who has the power to stabilize us. Much earlier in the letter, Paul said that he longed to see the Roman Christians establish them (1:11). However, Paul realizes that if that will ever be, it will be through God's power. Other believers can be God's instruments of stabilizing power. They help us stand up during difficult times. How does Paul see God stabilizing the believers?

A. Through Preaching. Here, Paul informs us that God establishes Christians "according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ." The Greek equivalent of the English word is *Kai*. In some instances, such as this one, it is better rendered "that is." Thus, Paul is saying that the gospel is the teaching of Jesus Christ. Paul wrote nothing that Jesus did not first teach.

Paul did not live in a day of preaching prominence. Judaism was primarily a religion of ceremony. Judaism, in its expressions of worship, was a religion of rite and ritual. Even though prophets prophesied and claimed and proclaimed, Israel did not specialize in, had no interest in, or made no investment in preaching. But if Paul says anything, he says there is something about the power of preaching to establish us!

B. Through Partnership. In addition to this, Paul says that the Lord established believers "according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God," (vv. 25-26).

The Greek term for mystery is akin to the English word "secret." It denotes the idea of something previously unknown that is now being understood. The mystery Paul refers to here is spelled out in his letter to the Ephesians,

> Ephesians 1:6, For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, if ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) 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; that the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel.

What God kept secret from man until the first century was the church and its indiscriminate uniting of Jews and Gentiles into one spiritual community. It was proclaimed in the Old Testament, yet its whole meaning required deeper understanding. It is like reading a mystery novel where, in the end, all the clues are revealed. Preachers sometimes need help understanding everything they are inspired to say. This unification was to be done through the same means—by grace through faith in Jesus Christ.

Now, the strength of such variety is to establish believers.

C. Through Proclamation. The gracious Lord initiated His plan of salvation not just for a select few but for the entire world (John 3:16). Therefore, He makes it "known to all nations" (v. 26).

This proclamation does not mean everyone has heard the gospel, but we must proclaim it everywhere. Since the Savior focuses on the world, our focus should also be on global matters. His mandate is that we proclaim the message of salvation to "all the

world" (Matthew 28:19). Some will believe, and others will not. Our job is to avoid picking and choosing with whom we will share. Instead, God calls on us to faithfully declare the good news and consistently apply it wherever we are.

D. Through Practice. Paul ends this section of the doxology by noting that this is "for the obedience of faith" (v. 26). Paul announced at the beginning of this letter that we are "justified by faith" (1:17). It is as we obey (faith is an action verb) what we know that we become stronger and learn more.

This explains why Paul wrote this letter: to describe God's plan of salvation to Christians, so they would be established and could share the truth with the lost. After all, we cannot share with others something we do not have ourselves.

This means that our study of Romans should strengthen our faith and excite us to share Christ with others. The result: "To God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ for ever" (v. 27).

II. God's Omniscience (v. 27)

Since God is unlimited, no finite creature can fully comprehend Him. Thus, we cannot form a mental or material image that portrays His inexhaustible being. When we try to construct a picture of Him, all we end up with is a dead idol, not the living Lord. This truth is manifested in the first part of verse 27. There, we learn four critical facts about God.

A. His Uniqueness. The Word only expresses the truth that the all-powerful King of the Bible is God alone. He makes the point quite evident through the prophet Isaiah, "I am the LORD, and there is none else, there is no God beside me: I girded thee, though thou hast not known me: That they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none beside me. I am the LORD, and there is none else" (45:5-6).

The affirmation that there is just one God also declares His uniqueness. There is no other being like Him. He is one of a kind, incomparable, unrivaled, matchless, and unsurpassed. We cannot reduce Him to anything in creation, for He far exceeds anything we know now or ever could know.

B. His Understanding. The one God is infinitely "wise." This means He is supremely intelligent, knows all things, and is unfathomably perceptive and accurate in His purposes and plans.

No wonder Paul could exclaim:

> Romans 11:33-34, O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? Or who hath been his counselor?

C. His Unveiling. The primary revelatory link between the infinite God and finite man is Jesus, God in flesh. Without Him, there would be no visible manifestation of God that we could even partially comprehend.

> John 1:14, 14And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth…18No man hath seen God at any time, the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.
>
> John 6:46, Not that any man hath seen the Father, save he which is of God, he hath seen the Father.
>
> I Timothy 3:16, And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.
>
> I Timothy 6:16, Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen.

Similarly, we would not be able to come before God free from condemnation without Jesus' redemptive work. There is no other path that leads to Him. That is why Paul gives his benediction, "Be glory through Jesus Christ" (v. 27).

D. His Limitlessness. The doxology closes by ascribing glory to God "for ever" (v. 27). The glory of God is eternal, not just everlasting. Theologically speaking, the term everlasting describes something with a beginning but no end, while the Word eternal denotes something with neither a beginning nor an end. The Lord of the universe is eternal, not everlasting. Therefore, His glory is beginningless and endless, not simply endless.

III. God's Opportunity (v. 27)

The last word in the book of Romans is "Amen." It does not convey the idea of "I hope, I wish, or I think this is true." Instead, it expresses conviction that "I believe it is true!" Paul sees God's promises and power as God's opportunity to fulfill His will in Paul's life—and our life.

That is what brings Paul from theology to doxology! Paul, the Jew, looks back over the history of Israel. Paul, the man, looks back over his spiritual growth and development. Paul, the man, looks at what he becomes. Paul, the man, looks at his sins and shortcomings. Paul, the man, confesses he is a "wretched man," always able to do evil but never able to do good. But, when it is all said and done, Paul, the preacher, declares, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28).

That is what it does! That is what brings us from theology to doxology!! Unto Him be glory!!!

Make no mistake about it: our theology is essential. But unless God gets the glory. It will have no effect. All authentic theology must ultimately bring us to a doxology of praise.

Chapter Fifty-Six
From Theology to Doxology
Romans 16:25-27

Lesson in Review

A. Complete the following sentences using the correct words from the reading, notes, and class lecture.

1. Paul, the inspired human writer, encourages and assures them that God is their what (three-part answer)?

2. Paul realizes it will be through what if they are established.

3. Our job is not to pick and choose to whom we will share the gospel. Instead, God calls on us to declare the good news faithfully and consistently apply it. Where?

4. God far exceeds what (two-part answer)?

5. Who is the primary, revelatory link between the infinite God and finite man?

6. Theologically speaking, what is the difference between everlasting and eternal?

B. Answer these questions from Romans 16:25-27. Use verses where the answer comes from.

7. God establishes us according to His what (three-part answer)?

8. What was kept secret since the world began?

9. Now, the mystery is made known to whom?

10. God is the only what?

C. Read the question carefully and respond in 2 to 3 sentences with a clear, concise answer. Your response should directly address the question and include relevant details from the text.

11. How does Paul's closing doxology in Romans 16:25-27 emphasize the stability of believers in Christ, and why does he highlight the global proclamation of the gospel?