

ROMANS

Jet Witherspoon Toole



An OVERSEAS MINISTRIES TRAINING COURSE Publication

In association with

Global Association of Theological Studies

GATS Edition

© 2011 United Pentecostal Church International



Christ Apostolic Church of Albion, Michigan, dedicates this study of the Book of Romans to its founder, Reverend William Starr.

FOREWORD

I first became acquainted with Mrs. Jet Witherspoon Toole when but a young boy. She and her husband were pastoring in a neighboring town and I, with my parents, visited their church many times. In those days I did not appreciate the great love for the gospel she possessed or the great spiritual depths to which she had attained.

Years later our paths again crossed when she was an instructor at the Bible college I chose to attend. Her great knowledge of the Bible made a deep impression upon those of us who were in her classes. Circumstances had caused her to enter the teaching ministry and she was able to pass her deep knowledge of the Scriptures to students in two of our Bible colleges over a period of twenty-five years.

It is a great thrill to realize that her ministry is continuing. Although no longer an active teacher or preacher, she is still imparting what she has gleaned from the Holy Spirit over many years of active ministry. Her books are the result of a deep walk in the Word of God. This book on Romans is an example of that. In it are truths from a Pentecostal for Pentecostals. Reading the book should prove to be a rich and rewarding experience for everyone.

Rev. George M. Sponsler, Th.B., M.Ed.
Member, Board of Christian Education
1986

CONTENTS

| | |
|----------------------------|----|
| Analysis | 9 |
| Introduction | 11 |
| I. The Need of Salvation | 13 |
| II. The Way of Salvation | 25 |
| III. Israel | 41 |
| IV. The Fruit of Salvation | 55 |
| Summary | 69 |

Analysis

Author:

The apostle Paul wrote Romans primarily for the Christians living in Rome, but designed this letter for all Christians everywhere.

Date:

Paul probably wrote this epistle from Corinth about AD 58, near the close of his second visit to that city (Acts 20:1-4; Romans 16:21, 23).

Theme:

The main theme of Romans is the gospel of Jesus Christ: His death, burial, and resurrection (I Corinthians 15:1-4). This is the only means of salvation from sin and death for all men of all time.

Key Thought:

Justification by faith (Romans 1:17).

Divisions:

- I. The Need of Salvation
Romans 1:2-3:20 – Doctrinal
- II. The Way of Salvation
Romans 3:21-8:39 – Doctrinal
- III. Israel
Romans 9-11 – Doctrinal
- IV. The Fruit of Salvation
Romans 12:1-16:27 – Practical

Personal Study Notes

Introduction

Paul introduced himself to the Christians in Rome as a servant of Jesus Christ, called of God to be an apostle and separated (set apart) to preach His gospel (Acts 9:15). He had never been to Rome, but he knew many of their group, some of whom had worked with him in other places.

Although he had desired for some time to go to Rome, the needs of the gospel in Asia Minor, Macedonia, and Greece (Achaia) had occupied him fully. However, he was now planning a trip to Spain after he went to Jerusalem to minister to the saints there and deliver an offering that the Gentile churches had given to help the needy saints of Judea (Romans 15:23-29). He finally went to Rome, but not as he had planned. He went in God's plan, in God's way, and in God's own time.

The Book of Romans is a doctrinal treatise on the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is a profound and systematic study of the whole plan of salvation from sin and sin's penalty of death. Romans is universal in its application and considers man as a member of the human race, not as a Jew or Gentile. In this book, Paul fully expounded God's whole plan of redemption for all men.

When Adam sinned, he lost his inheritance of eternal life, not only for himself, but for all his descendants as well. All humanity have inherited the fallen nature of Adam, and as the result, all have sinned. The history of the human race from the time of Adam proves that men and women are incapable of lifting themselves up to God's standard of righteousness. From Adam to the Flood, they went from bad to worse, until all humanity, except one family, became corrupt. God then destroyed the wicked, saving only Noah and his

family to preserve the race. We would naturally reason that the descendants of Noah would have continued in righteousness, but their history reveals that they soon became as wicked as the people before the Flood.

In the time of Abraham, God again called out one man to preserve the faith in the one and only living God, the Creator of all things. Again, we might reason that the descendants of Abraham would have continued in righteousness, but accounts of their backsliding and failures fill their history.

God then gave the Law to Moses to prepare the people for the coming of Christ (Galatians 3:24). The Law, by revealing God's requirement of righteousness, exposed their sins and brought all men under condemnation, thereby showing their need of a Savior. "For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; by which we draw nigh unto God" (Hebrews 7:19).

Chapter I

THE NEED OF SALVATION

Romans 1

Paul began his letter to the Christians in Rome by introducing himself as the servant of Jesus Christ. Scholars tell us that the original word from which *servant* was translated means “a slave, one who is the entire property of his master” (*Clarke’s Commentary, Volume VI, Romans 1:1*). We know of no other Bible personality whose character and life were so completely changed as were those of Paul. He was changed, almost instantly, from a fanatic religious zealot, persecuting the Christians, to a love slave of the Lord Jesus Christ (Exodus 21:2-6; Deuteronomy 15:16-17).

When Paul met Jesus on the Damascus road and learned that He was the Lord Jehovah, he came to the end of himself in full surrender. The light of the glory of the Lord blinded him and his companions led him to the house of Judas, on Straight Street in Damascus. Ananias found him three days later, prayed for him, and baptized him. The scales fell from Paul’s eyes, and he received the Holy Ghost, which made him a new creature in Jesus Christ (Acts 9:1-22; 22:1-16). From then on Paul was the love slave, the entire property of his Lord and Master. This experience was the background and the foundation of his many years of ministry, serving the Lord even more zealously than he had persecuted the Christians.

Paul's call of God to the ministry of the gospel was very definitely a missionary call, especially to the Gentiles. After meeting Jesus on the Damascus road, he was prepared for this call at the home of Judas in Damascus. Physically blind, Paul had just learned that Jesus of Nazareth, whose followers he had so bitterly opposed, was the Christ. Now, he repented under a heavy burden of remorse for his recent activity against the disciples of Jesus. Paul had thought he was defending the law of Moses, but learned he was persecuting the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Lord sent Ananias to give Saul (Paul) his call, to pray for him, and to baptize him (Acts 9:10-15). Saul must have received his first ray of hope when Ananias addressed him as "Brother Saul" and gave him God's message (Acts 9:17-19). Saul lost no time in obeying the call of God. He immediately began to preach Christ in the synagogues, proclaiming Him to be the Son of God (Acts 9:20-22). Saul, who had studied under Gamaliel (Acts 22:3), was well learned in the Old Testament Scriptures and messianic prophecies. Now that he had become acquainted with Jesus, he was very capable of proving His identity by the Scriptures as well as by the testimony of his recent visitation from the Lord.

Paul was not yet ready, however, to begin his missionary work. The Lord knew he needed further training. Consequently, when the Jews laid a plot to kill him and the disciples helped him to escape over the wall of Damascus (Acts 9:22-25), the Lord led him into the desert of Arabia (Galatians 1:11-24). Galatians 1:11-25 tells the story of Paul's early Christian experience from the time he went into Arabia until he went back to Jerusalem and fills in the gap between Acts 9:25 and verse 26. Paul was in the school of the Holy Ghost in the desert of Arabia for approximately three years. It was there that he received from the Lord the full message of the gospel of Jesus Christ, of salvation by grace and faith alone, without any mixture of the law of Moses. He also received the message of the Lord's Supper just as Jesus had given it to the other apostles before He was crucified (I Corinthians 11:20-26). The revelation of the Lord, as well as by the Old Testament prophecies, made it clear to him that redemption in Jesus was for all nations on the same level. This prepared him for the call he had received in Damascus.

In the course of time, God's time, he was led into the ministry to which God had called him. He began his missionary work in Antioch in Syria along with godly Barnabas (Acts 11:19-26). A year later he and Barnabas were called of the Holy Ghost and ordained by the elders in Antioch for their first missionary journey (Acts 13:1-4), which, over approximately two years, led them as far as Derbe, near Tarsus in Cilicia, the place of Paul's birth and his home town (Acts 14:20-27).

Paul became the leading missionary in the early church. He traveled over most of the territory of the known world at that time, preaching the gospel as God had given it to him. He preached to both Gentiles and Jews.

He trained many young ministers who traveled with him on his missionary journeys. They also ministered, as Paul directed, to the different churches that had been established through the missionary efforts. Paul considered Timothy, who was a great help and comfort to him, his son in the gospel (II Timothy 1:2). When Paul was imprisoned in Rome, he expressed in his letter to the Philippians the confidence with which he relied on Timothy (Philippians 2:19-23). Paul carried a very heavy burden of responsibility for all the churches (II Corinthians 11:28). And with that same burden of concern, he wrote to the saints in Rome concerning the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Paul began his discussion of the gospel by telling the Roman Christians that it concerned the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who was made of the seed of David according to the flesh and who was declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead. When the fullness of God's time had come, God sent His Son, made of a woman, under the Law, and of the lineage of David, according to prophecy (Galatians 4:4).

The miracles of Jesus proved beyond the shadow of a doubt that He was God manifest in flesh (John 10:30-39; 14:5-11), but His resurrection from the dead doubly proved His identity (verse 4). Paul told the Galatians that God referred to the gospel when He told Abraham, "In thee shall all nations be blessed" (Galatians 3:8). He explained that God promised Abraham he would have one

Seed (descendant) in whom all nations of the world should be blessed (Galatians 3:16). That One was Jesus Christ, of the seed of Abraham, who gave His life for the redemption of all people of all nations. He had also called these saints in Rome, both Jews and Gentiles, and saved them by His gospel (verse 6).

Paul then addressed the saints in Rome as God's beloved and pronounced on them His grace and peace (verse 7). He expressed his thanks to God for their faith and acceptance of the Lord Jesus, the news of which had spread through the then-known world (verse 8). He told them how he sincerely prayed unceasingly for them. He also prayed that God would give him a prosperous journey to Rome that he might minister to them spiritual benefits that would help them to become established in Christ. Paul had often purposed to go to Rome but the need of the gospel in so many places had delayed him. His earnest desire to visit Rome was born of a burden and a feeling of indebtedness to carry the gospel to the ends of the earth if possible. He was ready to preach the gospel in Rome as soon as God permitted him to go there (verses 11-16).

He labored untiringly, not only from a feeling of debt to God for his own salvation, but from a loving and willing obedience to the call of God. He was thankful that God had counted him worthy to preach His gospel (I Timothy 1:12-13). He testified:

For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel! For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward: but if against my will, a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me (I Corinthians 9:16-17).

Paul was not only willing, but also thankful and happy to do the will of God. He was never ashamed to stand before any congregation with the message of the gospel of Jesus Christ, for he knew it was God's power of salvation for all men (verse 16). "For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith" (verse 17). Only by faith and obedience to the gospel of Jesus can men escape the wrath of God which will be

revealed from Heaven against the ungodly who hold (hold down or hinder) His truth by their unrighteousness (verse 18).

In verses 19-23 Paul showed that all men are responsible for their sins and are guilty before God. Some have wondered and questioned concerning God's will regarding the heathens who have never heard the gospel of Jesus Christ. The Scripture states that God has never left Himself without a witness (Acts 14:15-17). He has witnessed of Himself through His creation and the many blessings He has provided for men in His creation. He sends the rain on the just and the unjust (Matthew 5:45). "For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse" (verse 20).

The existence of God, the mystery of His omnipotent power, and His great love for the human race are all pictured in Creation. He beautifully and perfectly formed this earth for the abode of men whom He would create and with whom He desired fellowship. His great love of all humanity is shown in the myriad of creatures, vegetation, and products the earth yields for humankind to use. The minute details and clock-like regularity with which everything in His universe operates—the sun, moon, stars, planets in their orbits, our days and nights, and the four seasons of the year—show His omnipotent power. We cannot begin to comprehend with our finite minds the greatness and the love of God. Nevertheless, His greatest show of love for humanity was in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ for our salvation (Romans 5:6-8).

The life of Jesus on earth, His ministry, His miracles, and finally His death, burial, and resurrection from the dead were and are the greatest witnesses and revelation of God the world has ever known. The world today does not recognize the existence of God and His works in Creation, but men and women are trying to find out the workings of the universe by their own finite minds. Although God's Creation reveals His existence and His works, mere belief in this does not save individuals. They can only be saved through the gospel of Jesus Christ that was God's foreordained plan of redemption for humanity before the foundation of the world. It is now the responsibility of the church to preach the gospel to all the world for a witness to all nations before the Lord's return to the

earth to take His church home (Matthew 24:14). It is most important that God's people shoulder their responsibility and do all in their power to take His gospel to every nation and tribe in the world.

Humankind, whom God had so lovingly provided for and created, glorified Him not as God. They became vain in their professed wisdom (verses 21-24). The devil told Eve she would be wise like God when she ate of the forbidden fruit. Her foolish heart, however, was darkened, and consequently she caused Adam to sin. Therefore, all their descendants inherited their fallen nature and went into idolatry, because they did not want to retain knowledge of God. Wanting to live as they pleased after their carnal nature, they created their own gods in their own image and in the image of the things they worshiped. As a result, God gave them up to their own vile corruption. God has never forced anyone to serve Him. He wants only those who will serve Him in love and of their own free will. As we look at our world today, we see the multitudes who have made their choice and have been given up to their own vile practices.

Verses 25-32 reveal the depth of sin that humankind has been led into by the carnal nature. This condition, which has existed since the fall of Adam and which is wrecking and damning so many today, shows the world's need for redemption. Thank God, He has provided salvation for all who will come to the Lord Jesus to be born again and made into new creatures.

It seems that the majority of men and women of all generations have given themselves to obey the sinful desires and appetites of their carnal natures. From Adam to the coming of Christ, humanity was under bondage to the fallen nature. Many, by faith in God and His Word, were restrained from gross sins, but none was able to fulfill the perfect will of God. However, God counted faith for righteousness to all who made a sincere effort to please Him.

- Enoch, in the midst of almost total corruption, pleased God by his faith to the extent that he was translated into Heaven (Genesis 5:24; Hebrews 11:5-6).
- Noah found favor with God and was saved from the Flood to preserve the race.

- Abraham was not perfect, but his faith was counted to him for righteousness (Genesis 15:6; Romans 4:3; Galatians 3:6).
- The faith of Joseph made him submissive to the will of God for the duration of his life (Genesis 50:15-21).
- Moses reached the place in his relationship with God where God talked with him face to face (Exodus 33:11; 34:29, 33).
- David was a man after God's own heart (I Samuel 13:14; Acts 13:22). He committed a great sin, but he repented bitterly (Psalm 51:1-5).
- God anointed, used, and rewarded many other worthy characters in the Old Testament. However, many more did not follow the way of faith but chose rather to obey the lust of their fallen nature.

The Old Testament history of those whom God gave up to their own uncleanness is a far different picture than of those who followed the way of faith. It is of these that Paul spoke in verses 25-32. Some of them were the wicked men of Sodom who brought the wrath of God upon the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities of the Plain (Genesis 19:1-26). Without the restraining power of faith in God, they gave themselves wholly to every sinful lust, for which they brought on themselves the just recompense (judgment) of God. When they refused to retain God in their knowledge, their minds were totally corrupted. In their relationship one to another, they were filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, covetousness, maliciousness, envy, murder, deceit, and backbiting. In their hatred of God, they became possessed of every evil thing. Being without natural affection, they invented evil things. They dishonored and disobeyed their parents. They continued to commit these sins even though they had been warned that the wages of sin is death and that they would reap the judgment of God.

We would like to think that all such conditions were in the past, before the coming of Christ, but the world is plagued with this deplorable condition today. Men and women are practicing the same heinous sins in the societies of this present time. Perhaps the condition today is even worse due to the terrible abuse of drugs among the youth of our land. Their minds, as well as their bodies, are wrecked.

Today, however, deliverance is available for all who will seek salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ. The good news is that Jesus came to earth, died for our sins, and came forth from death with the keys to Hell and death. He then ascended on high to pour out His Spirit on all who will believe and obey Him. Men, women, boys, and girls may start their life anew through the new birth when blood of Jesus erases their past. How thankful God's Spirit-filled saints should be that they have escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust (II Peter 1:4).

Romans 2

Romans 2 deals with the responsibility of the Jews in relation to their greater light and privilege. Having been given God's law, they lived on a higher moral plane than did the Gentiles. Nevertheless, they became more guilty, because they had fallen short of God's standard of holiness as revealed in His law (Romans 7:7-23). They had sinned against light and privilege. They measured themselves by heathens rather than by God's law and sinned by boasting of their holiness over the Gentiles. They considered Gentiles as dogs in comparison of themselves.

Paul told the Jews they were inexcusable for judging in this manner. In condemning the Gentiles, they condemned themselves, for they also sinned. Not the hearers, but only the doers of the Law are justified before God (Romans 2:1-16).

There is no respect of persons with God (verse 11). His standard of righteousness has always been the same for all people. The Jews who had been given the law of Moses were judged by the Law. Nevertheless, since they were never able to obtain total obedience, they were required to offer sin offerings, and the high priest made atonement for them each year. God accepted this on the merits of their faith, looking ahead to the coming of Christ who should make the perfect sacrifice for them (Hebrews 10:1-22; 11:32-40). They looked ahead for the promise of the coming of Christ, while we look back by faith to the finished work of Calvary. It is important to understand the status of the Old Testament saints living under the law of Moses as compared with the New Testament saints in the

new and living way of the Holy Ghost, which was brought to all nations through the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

In Old Testament times, Gentiles were almost wholly idolaters. However, some came to believe in Israel's God and became proselytes to the Jews' religion by accepting their covenant sign of circumcision. Then they too were judged by the law of Moses. Of course, since the coming of Christ, all—both Jews and Gentiles—are saved by faith and obedience to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Acts 2:38 and Romans 6:3-4 explain how one obeys the gospel of Jesus Christ. People of all nations who continue in unrighteousness, refusing to repent, will be judged by the same righteous laws and standards of God. The Jews had never been able to perfectly keep the law of Moses (James 2:10-11). Nevertheless, in verses 14-15, Paul showed that both Jews and Gentiles who come to Jesus and are made new creatures in Christ by the Holy Ghost are enabled to keep the righteousness of the law. This shows the power of God's law of liberty (James 1:25; 2:12), the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:2-4) written in their hearts (Jeremiah 31:31-34).

In verses 17-29 Paul condemned the Jews, especially their religious leaders, for their hypocrisy in outward religion but inner corruption. They professed to obey the Law and required of the people meticulous obedience to the ceremonial law of Moses and traditions of the elders (Matthew 15:1-3). By their hypocrisy in failing to live up to their profession, they brought reproach on the name of God among the Gentiles (verse 24). Jesus told His disciples to obey the words (of the Law) of the scribes and Pharisees who sat in Moses' seat (rulers) but not to follow their works, "For they say, and do not. For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers" (Matthew 23:3-4).

The Mosaic covenant required all male Jewish children to be circumcised. God gave the covenant sign of circumcision to Abraham (Genesis 17:9-13) to set him and his descendants—those who came, through Isaac and Jacob—apart from the idolatrous nations. God intended it to signify true and sincere faith in Jehovah and adherence and obedience to the law of Moses (Deuteronomy 10:12-

20). This sign belonged only to God's Old Testament agreement with the nation of Israel.

It was not a commandment of the new covenant of grace in Jesus Christ. The Jews taught that no Gentile could have a part with God without accepting the Mosaic covenant of circumcision. This agreement became void when Jesus came to offer the whole world salvation by the new covenant, which is His law written in the heart by the Holy Ghost (Hebrews 7:18-19; 8:6-13). Paul revealed that the institution of water baptism in the name of Jesus Christ took the place of the Old Testament sign of circumcision (Philippians 3:1-3; Colossians 2:8-13). It was necessary for the Lord to reveal to the saints of the New Testament church that circumcision was no longer required for salvation (Acts 10:19-48; 11:1-18). In the new covenant of grace by Jesus Christ, God's people are not reckoned by race but by faith unto obedience of His gospel (verses 28-29).

Romans 3:1-20

In verses 1-8 Paul answered two objections the Jews were expected to make to his arguments in chapter 2. They would be expected to say that if they were under the same condemnation as Gentiles, being a Jew had no advantage. He answered that God had given the Jews great advantages in His law and its promises, but these advantages called for greater faithfulness and service that they had not given. However, their failure had proven that men were incapable of making themselves righteous and thereby opened the way for God to show His power to provide for men's righteousness.

The Jews had never expected God to grant His favor to any people except themselves. They evidently had overlooked all Old Testament Scriptures that had foretold that God would accept the Gentiles into His divine favor. The Jews looked for the promised Messiah to free them from foreign rule, as another King David, to establish again their kingdom. They were so engrossed in their own ambitious expectations and desires that they refused to consider other beliefs. Man's ways have never been God's and only His ways are true. A person cannot understand God's methods until God opens his understanding into divine and spiritual things. God is true even if every person is a liar (or wrong).

Again the Jews might have objected that if their failure opened the way for the manifestation of God's plan of salvation, why should they be condemned for the weakness they could not help? Paul answered that although their failure had given occasion for the advent of God's plan of redemption, they were still responsible for their sins and were guilty until they had repented. The Jews' demand for the crucifixion of Jesus was used of God to fulfill His plan of redemption for men, but this did not render them guiltless of their murderous hatred of Jesus Christ (Acts 2:22-24; 3:13-19).

In verses 9-20 Paul showed that the sins of all men, whether little or big, are incited by the fallen carnal nature with which every man is born. An infant is not guilty of sin, but it is born with a nature that will lead it into sin as soon as it is old enough to distinguish between right and wrong. A child should be taught and guided in the way of right as far as possible, but only a new birth in Christ can save him from the bondage of sin. Their religion could not save them.

This passage of Scripture does not teach that every individual since Adam has committed every sin listed here. It simply means that this condition has prevailed among all humanity. Any sin is possible to anyone who puts no restriction on his fallen nature. And every possible wickedness has been enacted in every generation. But even though the law of Moses was a restraint to the sincere, religious Jews, they still were sinners and guilty before God until they came to Jesus in repentance and obedience to His gospel. They could not be justified by the ceremonial works of the Law. The law of Moses had only power to reveal sin.

Psalm 14, from which some of these verses are quoted, shows that the people of David's time looked for the Lord to bring salvation out of Zion (Psalm 14:7). Elsewhere Paul called the sins that are listed in these verses the works of the flesh (Galatians 5:19-21). He said they who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. But he also said, "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh" (Galatians 5:16). God, in His mercy, wrought salvation in Jesus Christ for all who will, by faith and obedience, receive it.

Personal Study Notes

Chapter II

THE WAY OF SALVATION

Romans 3:21-31

We have learned from the study of Romans 1:1-3:20 that all men are sinful and cannot be justified by the works of the law of Moses. The Law required righteousness that could not be produced as it could not take sin out of the heart. Paul wrote to the Galatians, "Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law" (Galatians 3:21). If men are to be justified, then there must be another way. That way is through the redemptive work of Jesus Christ. Under the law of Moses all men were left guilty and under the sentence of death (eternal death). The righteous God of a righteous law (Romans 7:12-14) could not excuse men's sins and still be just. The very nature of God is essentially just. When Moses asked to see God's glory (Exodus 33:17-23), God answered him by declaring His character in His name:

"And the LORD descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD. And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty" (Exodus 34:5-7).

He could not be just if He cleared the guilty without requiring them to become righteous, and we have learned that men cannot make themselves righteous because of their fallen, sinful nature. God's penalty for sin, which is death and Hell, shows His hatred of sin and His wrath against it. But in His love for humanity, He provided Jesus, the son of the virgin Mary, to die in the stead of every sinner who will repent and obey His gospel. Through obedience to the gospel, the sinner will receive God's Holy Spirit and become a partaker of His divine nature (II Peter 1:3, 4). Jesus died to pay the penalty for our sins, was buried to symbolize His going into Hell for us, and, being sinless Himself, came forth in the Resurrection with the keys of Hell and death (Revelation 1:18). He then ascended to Heaven to pour out His Spirit on all who will believe and obey. On the Day of Pentecost, Peter, to whom Jesus had given the keys to the kingdom of Heaven (Matthew 16:19), told the multitude how to obey the gospel: by repenting (dying to the old life of sin) and by being buried with Christ in water baptism in His name, so that they might arise to walk in the new life of His Spirit (Acts 2:38).

“So many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of our Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life” (Romans 6:3-4).

Paul said, “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” (Galatians 2:20).

This glorious experience voids men's boasting in self-righteousness (Verse 27). He who cannot save himself certainly cannot boast in that which is wholly the work of God. Moreover, this righteousness, which is by faith in Jesus Christ, is for the whole world – the Gentile as well as the Jew (verses 29-31).

Romans 4

In chapter 4 Paul enlarged on the statements made in the latter part of chapter 3. Romans 4:1-8 shows that moral works of self-righteousness cannot merit justification, but it comes only by faith in Jesus. Jesus performs the work when we believe Him. The example of Abraham's faith proves this. Paul also referred to David's statement in Psalm 32:1-2 in defense of this truth. The works of the Law generally referred to the ceremonial law of Moses. However, neither can men and women merit God's grace by their own good moral works. "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died, for us" (Romans 5:8).

After we are saved we are enabled by His Spirit to follow after good works in righteousness (Romans 8:12-13). Perhaps we should mention here that James did not contradict Paul's teaching of salvation by faith without works (James 2:14-20). James referred to the good works Christians should follow after they are saved and because they are saved, while Paul referred to men's striving to earn salvation by their own works.

Verses 9-12 show that justification cannot be obtained by religious rites and observances. Again, Paul cited the faith of Abraham as an example of this. Abraham was justified by faith (Genesis 15:6) at least fourteen years before he received the rite of circumcision (Genesis 17:10). Paul also used this to show that justification by faith was not just for Jews, but also for all people of the world. Abraham was not only the father of the Jews, but also of many nations, and is called the father of all of the faithful (verse 11). All who believe in Jesus and obey His gospel are justified apart from any religious rite or ceremony.

Verses 13-24 show that justification was not obtained through the law of Moses. A third time Paul used the experience of Abraham to substantiate this truth. Abraham was justified by faith and given the promise of the Seed (Messiah), the Savior of the world, more than four hundred years before the Mosaic law was given (Galatians 3:16-17). Because Abraham staggered not at the promise of God but was strong in faith, he was given the promise that through his Seed (Christ), who should bruise Satan's head, all families of the earth should

be blessed (Genesis 22:15-18). All people of the world are heirs of this promise if they will believe and obey.

On the occasion of Abraham's obedience in offering Isaac as a sacrifice, God repeated His promise made to Abraham before the birth of Isaac (Genesis 12:1-3) and confirmed it with an oath (Genesis 22:1-18). After the coming of Christ, He inspired the writer of Hebrews to reveal the importance of this promise to all its heirs. Hebrews 6:17-20 states:

Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.

God's promise and God's oath are the two immutable things in which it is impossible for God to lie. By the Word of God and by the Holy Ghost, which is the earnest of our eternal inheritance (Ephesians 1:13-14), we have this strong consolation and an absolute assurance of eternal life in Heaven if we have laid hold on the hope set before us and if we remain faithful to the end of this life.

Verse 15 shows that the Law could only bring men under condemnation since it only revealed the people's sins but could not take them away. It was called the ministration of condemnation and death because its only power was to make men conscious of the fact that they were under the sentence of death (II Corinthians 3:6-11). The letter of the law only kills, but the Spirit of Christ gives life (Galatians 3:21).

The ineffectiveness of the Law to change men from sinners to saints was not in the Law itself, but in the weakness of the carnal nature of men. Only the redemptive work of Christ could produce a new birth by which men's minds and natures are changed (I Corinthians 2:16; Philippians 2:5). Jesus was delivered to

death for our sins and rose again for our justification (verse 25). This is our solid foundation (Matthew 7:24-29).

In Old Testament times God imputed righteousness, which was essential for justification, on the merits of the people's faith. Now in the age of the new covenant men can no more make themselves righteous than the Old Testament saints could. However, whereas their righteousness was imputed (counted to them) based on faith, our righteousness, under the new covenant, is imparted to us in the Holy Ghost (Romans 5:17; II Peter 1:4). "There is none righteous, no, not one" (Romans 3:10). Jesus asked the rich young ruler, "Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is God" (Matthew 19:17). Jesus was good because He was God manifest in the flesh, but men must receive righteousness as a gift from God. He gives righteousness by pouring out His Spirit on all who believe and obey His gospel (Acts 2:38).

Romans 5

Verses 1-11 reveal some of the beauty and blessings of salvation that God wrought for humanity through the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul applied these blessings to those who had been justified by faith and obedience to the gospel of Jesus Christ. One of the very first blessings of salvation is peace. The gospel of Jesus is called the gospel of peace (Romans 10:15; Ephesians 6:15). Paul said, "How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace" (Romans 10:15). Our God is the God of peace (Romans 16:20; II Corinthians 13:11; Philippians 4:9; I Thessalonians 5:23; Hebrews 13:20). In Philippians 4:7 Paul said, "And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." People who have experienced the new birth in the Holy Ghost can never forget the glorious peace that lifted their heart and mind. It indeed passes all understanding. The peace of God will keep the heart and mind of those who put their trust in Him in all circumstances and situations.

Love, joy, and peace are those main firstfruits of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22). Paul—being filled with the love, joy, and peace of God—could glory in tribulation, not because he enjoyed tribulation, but for its spiritual benefit to his soul. When we can realize that the trying of our faith is more precious (valuable to us) than gold (I Peter 1:6-7), we too should be able to glory in tribulation. Paul, an example of dedication to the will of God, said, “For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while 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” (II Corinthians 4:17-18). That which Paul called “light affliction” (II Corinthians 4:8-16; 11:23-28) would probably seem huge to us. God uses the tests and trials for our spiritual development. They will work in us patience and experience, by which we will learn to look with hope to the things eternal.

These blessings have come to us because God loved us when we were yet sinners and gave Christ to die to bring us into this glorious hope. We who were in bondage to sin and enemies of the cross of Christ have been reconciled to God by the death of the Lord Jesus and have been saved by His resurrection life in the Holy Ghost.

Verses 12-21 explain that sin, and as a result, death, came on humanity through the fall of Adam. Verses 13-14 show that the law of Moses was given primarily to make the people conscious of their sins and of the dire results. They were already condemned and under the sentence of death, but the Law was necessary to reveal to them the extent of sin, to warn them of its penalty, and to show them God’s requirement of righteousness. Paul showed the penalty of death did not depend on how much or how little one sinned, but that all have been born with a nature that leads them into sin. Only the saving power of Christ can deliver them from this condition. In John 3:16-21 Jesus taught this same truth. He showed that men now are condemned for their unbelief and unwillingness to come to the light of the gospel, the only remedy for sin. They are willingly ignorant of God’s truth because they do not want to obey it.

Verse 17 shows that righteousness, without which it is impossible to be justified before God, is the gift of God. Jeremiah said, “O Lord, I know that the

way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (Jeremiah 10:23). Again, he said, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" (Jeremiah 17:9). We know that society categorizes the degrees of sin. Many unsaved people live good moral lives, but they still cannot measure up to God's requirement of holiness. Only those who are filled with His Spirit can be justified. He imparts His own righteousness to them in the Holy Ghost. However, we are all still mortal so long as we are in this world and so must contend with the carnal nature. We must continue to seek God and keep filled with His Spirit to have victory over it. Only then will we do those things that are pleasing to Him (I John 3:22). Nevertheless, where sin abounded, grace does much more abound (Romans 5:20-21).

Romans 6

Lest some might reason that since salvation is by grace and not by Law, they could continue in sin, Paul made it clear that one must die to sin before he can live in Christ (verses 1-2). When one dies the natural death, he breaks all ties to the natural life. He leaves family, friends, and possessions here. Moreover, when he dies to the old life of sin, he breaks all ties he had to the life of sin that he may live the new life in Christ. Paul himself had died this death. He said, "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" (Galatians 2:20). Salvation is the gift of God. His gift of life in the Holy Ghost makes men new creatures in Christ (II Corinthians 5:17).

Verses 3-5 show that when men die to sin by repentance, they should symbolize this death by being baptized (buried) into Christ's death in His name (Jesus). One should not be baptized before he repents, no more than one should be buried before he dies. However, after one truly repents (turns completely from the old life of sin) and is buried with Christ in water baptism, he will be raised up to new life in the Holy Ghost. This explains how we obey the gospel of Jesus Christ (I Corinthians 15:1-4) and the meaning of Acts 2:38.

Verses 6-20 teach that when one dies to the old life of sin, is buried with Christ, and receives new life in His Spirit, he is no longer bound by sin (John 8:31-36). The experience of the new birth gives power over the law of sin that works in the members of the mortal body. He who serves sin is bound by it, but when he becomes a new creature in Christ (II Corinthians 5:17) he is delivered from its bondage. He must now use his members to perform works of righteousness unto the Lord.

We must live at Christian life in this mortal body. Our mortal body belongs to .the Lord as well as our spirit and soul.

“What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s” (I Corinthians 6:19-20).

We cannot permit sin to reign in this mortal body, for God will not dwell in an unclean temple (I Corinthians 3:17; II Corinthians 6:17). We must bring this temple under subjection to the Spirit of God. Paul said, “I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway” (I Corinthians 9:27). Paul also wrote to the saints in Rome, “I 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” (Romans 12:1).

We have been made new creatures in Christ, but we still live in mortal bodies and will be tempted through the flesh. The Holy Ghost will give us power to overcome all temptations, but in order to live a victorious life we must give constant vigilance and diligence to holy living. We must fight the good fight of faith (I Timothy 6:12) by daily dedication and prayer.

Verses 21-23 teach of the fruit and the reward of a victorious Christian life. The fruit of the old life is sin and its wages is eternal Hell. The fruit of the new life in Christ is holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord (Hebrews 12:14-15). Its reward is eternal life in the glories of Heaven. A sinner earns

(deserves) eternal Hell by his life of sin, but the redeemed of the Lord are rewarded with God's gift of eternal life. One cannot earn or merit that which is God's free gift. Salvation is not of works but is God's gift.

Romans 7

In verses 1-6 Paul continued with the subject of dying with Christ to the old life of sin. He used the example of the marriage vow being broken by death. A woman is bound to her husband while he lives, but when he dies, she is free to marry another. We, by dying with Christ, are freed from the law of sin. And by being born again we are joined (married) to Christ. Paul here used this only as an illustration, not as a discussion of the divorce problem. He taught on the subject of divorce in I Corinthians 7:1-17.

In verses 7-14 Paul defended the law of Moses as being just, good, and holy. Its shortcoming lay in the fact that it only had power to reveal sin (Galatians 3:21). In verses 7-9 Paul expressed that he had not know he was a sinner until he became acquainted with the Law which showed him what sin was. He said, "I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died" (verse 9). He had no feeling of condemnation until he heard the commandment of God that brought him under condemnation. The fault of the Law was not in God's righteous law itself, but in the carnal nature of the people who could not keep His law (Hebrews 8:7, 8). It was weak through the flesh (Romans 8:3-4).

The law of Moses partially restrained the people from sin but could not take away the desire nor give power to overcome it. By revealing sin, it made sinners conscious of the fact that they were already condemned and under the sentence of death (verse 9). The commandment, which was ordained to show the people the way of righteousness, only brought them under condemnation by revealing the exceeding wickedness of sin. For this reason it came to be called the law of sin and death (Romans 8:2; II Corinthians 3:6-11). The Law was spiritual, but the people were carnal, sold under sin.

In verses 15-23 Paul described the carnal nature of all humanity, including himself, before they find redemption and deliverance in the Lord Jesus. The unregenerated person may know what is right and good and desire to do it. However, in his carnal (natural) nature the desires and appetites of the flesh overpower him and he is unable to do that which he knows to be right. He desires to do good, but the principle of evil (the law of sin that works in his physical body) is stronger than his will power. This principle is emphasized in the lives of those who become addicted to tobacco, alcohol, drugs, or pornography. In the same way all men are naturally addicted to sin before they are delivered by regeneration in Christ. They are captives to the law of sin that works in the members of the physical body.

To be bound by sin is a miserable and wretched condition (verses 24-25). Paul did not realize he was being driven by this principle when he persecuted the church in a fanatic zeal (Acts 7:57-59; 8:1-3; 9:1-20). After he met Jesus on the Damascus road and learned that He was the Lord God, he surrendered completely to Him. He afterward testified that he received mercy and forgiveness from his sin because he had done it ignorantly in unbelief (I Timothy 1:12-13).

The plight of Israel under Egyptian slavery typified the bondage of sin. God, by the hand of His servant Moses, delivered Israel by His miraculous power. Anyone who is willing to surrender wholly to the Lord can be delivered by this same power. Jesus came to earth to preach the gospel to the poor, to heal the broken hearted, and to give deliverance to the captives (Luke 4:18).

The new birth of the Spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ, which makes one a new creature, is the greatest miracle ever performed on humanity. One's ambitions, desires, and outlook on life are completely changed when he receives this more abundant life from the Lord Jesus (John 10:10). Everyone who is born again of His Spirit experiences this miracle. The apostle Paul was one of the greatest biblical examples of one whose life was completely reversed. He testified of the things he once took pride in: circumcision, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, Hebrew of the Hebrews, as touching the Law, blameless

(Philippians 3:4-5). He doubtless referred here to the ceremonial law of Moses, which he had fully kept. He further said:

“But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. 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” (Philippians 3:7-9).

Romans 8

We have just studied in Romans 7 the spiritual defeat of the unregenerated. In chapter 8 we will learn the basis for the victorious life of a born-again Christian. We learn in verses 1-4 that those who have been filled with the Spirit of Christ and walk after His Spirit are no longer under condemnation. This is the Lord’s answer to the question of Romans 7:24, “Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” This deliverance can only come through the Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 7:25). The law of the Spirit of Christ Jesus does for us what the law of Moses, or any other law, could never do. If there had been a law given that could have given life, righteousness should have been by the Law (Galatians 3:21). A law can force people to do what they do not want to do or put them behind bars, but it cannot make them righteous. One may even reform his life to a certain degree, but he can only be made righteous by God’s gift of life in the Holy Ghost (Romans 5:17). For this reason it was essential for Jesus to redeem men from sin and death by His death and give them a portion of His resurrection life (Hebrews 2:14-15).

When one has been filled with the Holy Ghost, he must no longer walk after the flesh to satisfy its desires and appetites. He now has power to walk after the Spirit, by which he fulfills the righteous law of God. Verses 5-10 contrast the walk in the Spirit with the walk in the flesh that is concerned only with the temporal and material things of life. This is to be carnally (naturally) minded,

which will eventually lead to eternal death. To walk after the Spirit means to be wholly concerned with pleasing God and obeying His will. The carnal mind is contrary to the will of God and cannot please Him. But he whose mind has been transformed by the Spirit of God is in harmony with His will and will be led by His Spirit (verse 14). Paul admonished all, "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).

To be in Christ means to be filled with His Spirit (verse 9). Verse 11 teaches that it is essential to have the Holy Ghost abiding within us when we come to the end of this life, or to the second coming of Jesus, in order to come forth in the resurrection. It is the Spirit of Christ that will quicken (give life to) the mortal body or its remains.

Verses 12-13 emphasize that we are indebted to God to walk in His Spirit, by which to mortify the deeds of the body (bring the body into subjection to the Spirit of Christ). Paul said, "But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway" (I Corinthians 9:27). If we should become careless and be tempted to walk after the flesh, we should refresh our minds with these words of Paul to the Corinthians:

"What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's" (I Corinthians 6:19-20).

Even though we live in the flesh and must look after the necessary things of the natural life, through the Spirit we must, mortify any deeds of the body that would displease the Lord. His will and His service must have daily priority in our life.

Verses 14-17 teach the characteristics of those who are filled with the Holy Ghost. We must be led by the Spirit of God if we are to continue to be His children. To be led by His Spirit means to be devotedly surrendered to Him so

that He may quicken our minds and make us desire to do that which is pleasing to Him. The psalmist said, "Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory. (Psalm 73:24). The Lord guides us by His Word and by His Spirit; and the Word and the Spirit will always agree, for they are one (I John 5:7). If we are not led by the Spirit of the Lord, we will go astray and be lost.

The Spirit bears witness with our spirits that we are the children of God. In the comfort of this assurance, we will not feel fear or bondage. As His children, we are heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ suffered for us and then ascended back to glory. As His heirs, after we have partaken of His suffering here, we will be caught up into His glory. As we walk with Him in the glory of His presence in this life, we, like Paul, should feel that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy "to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (verse 18).

Verses 19-25 speak of the great hope we have in the Resurrection. In this mortal body we have burdens, trials, sickness, and sorrow, but in the Holy Ghost we have the earnest of our eternal inheritance (Ephesians 1:13-14). When we come into the fullness of our inheritance in the Resurrection, we will be free from all the ills of this life (Revelation 21:4).

As creatures of this earth, we often feel burdened, but our eternal hope keeps us pressing onward and upward until sometimes we feel joy unspeakable and full of glory (I Peter 1:4-9). We live in a world filled with trouble, suffering, and sorrow under which it groans. We who are filled with God's Spirit in this mortal life must also share in their groaning, but our groaning is in hope. The groaning of the unsaved is hopeless unless they will turn to the Lord Jesus. Our hope is in His promise of eternal life in the resurrection, for which we patiently and faithfully wait. God has given us this hope with an absolute guarantee (Hebrews 6:13-20).

Paul has given God's revelation of the resurrection of the Spirit-filled saints of God:

“Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruption shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put in immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord” (I Corinthians 15:50-58).

Verses 26-27 remind us that we are wholly dependent on the Spirit of God. We cannot pray effectually except His Spirit moves within us. He must put the burden for the need upon our heart and inspire our faith to believe. We cannot look into the hearts of people to know their need, but God does. His Spirit will inspire us to pray for that which is most needful, and that which is in accord with His will and plan.

Verses 28-34 speak of the confidence with which we may trust in God’s over-all plan of salvation. It is a great comfort to know that He will make all things work together for our spiritual welfare, which is His purpose for our lives. The fact that He predestined our salvation before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:4-12) reveals His mercy, justice, and love. God, foreknowing that man would fall, provided for his salvation before his creation. God did not predestinate the destiny of individuals, as some have tried to interpret the Scriptures. He has created man a free moral agent to make his own choice. He predestined the coming of Jesus Christ into the world to die for all, that whosoever will may believe on Him and be saved.

Verse 30 covers the whole scope of salvation from God's foreordained plan for humanity's redemption in Christ to his glorified state in Heaven: God's foreordained plan for humankind's redemption, calling, and justification in Christ, and glorification in Heaven.

God's sovereign will and purpose for all people is that they might be saved (I Timothy 2:4). He creates situations that will be conducive to their acceptance of Christ, and then draws them by His Spirit. After they are saved, He guides them in the way that is best for their spiritual welfare. When God is for someone, no one or any circumstance can successfully work against him so long as he follows the Lord's leading.

The devil is the accuser of God's people (Revelation 12:10) even as he was in Job's time. However, he can lay no claim against those who are in Christ, for Jesus paid our debt of sin. Let us trust implicitly in our all wise and loving Savior whose divine purpose is for our good. He makes all things work together for what He knows to be for our good.

We may not always understand this because we do not always know what is best for our own welfare. We have this comforting assurance that Jesus, who purchased our salvation with His own blood, will ever guide us and protect us from all evil so long as we trust and obey.

Verses 35-39 speak of the great enduring power of the love of God in the hearts of His people when they fully realize what great things He has done for them. But the realization of the greatness of salvation can only come to us in the love that He poured into our hearts in the Holy Ghost (Romans 5:5). While we were yet sinners, He loved us enough to die for us that we might be saved (Romans 5:8). Now we love Him only because He first loved us and gave us His love with which to love Him.

Surely no tribulation in this life should be violent enough to separate us from our Lord if we love Him as we should. Paul suffered for the Lord more than most of us ever will, but his suffering was not retribution for his past sins. It would have been impossible for him to fulfill the calling of the Lord to carry His

gospel to the Gentiles, kings, and the people of Israel without facing great opposition and persecution. We too should be willing to face anything in the line of duty for the service of our wonderful Lord.

Paul accepted his call with a thankful heart and proved to be more than a conqueror. He would have followed Jesus anywhere and faced any situation for the love of his Savior. Those who are bound to the Lord by His great love will freely endure all manner of persecution, even to the death of martyrdom. The opposition of the enemy should only draw us closer to the Lord. The enemies of the gospel cannot put out its flame by fighting against it. Instead of quenching the fire of the Holy Ghost, persecution only helps to spread it (Acts 8:4). Nothing but our own carelessness and indifference can separate us from the love of Christ. The most important thing in our Christian life is to give diligence to maintain our first love (Revelation 2:2-5; II Peter 1:3-10).

Chapter III

ISRAEL'S PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE

Romans 9

Many Jews as well as Gentiles were in Rome, and Paul wrote chapters 9, 10, and 11 especially for the Jews' benefit. In chapter 9 he dealt principally with Israel's history. In verses 1-3 he introduced the subject of Israel by revealing his own feeling for the Jews who were his relatives. He also was a Jew. He felt great sorrow because, as a nation, they had rejected Jesus Christ. He was surely moved by the Spirit of Christ in his statement that he would be willing to be accursed if such a thing could mean their salvation. Of course, no one but Jesus could die for the sins of another.

In verses 4-5 Paul reminded these Israelites of the God-given privileges the people of Israel had enjoyed in their past. God had called Abraham out from his countrymen to make of his descendants a great nation, out of which One should come in whom all nations should be blessed. This One was Jesus Christ (Galatians 3:16). God had delivered Israel from Egyptian bondage, had given them the law of Moses, had made a covenant with them, and had led them into the Promised Land. They did not realize it, but their greatest blessing was the privilege of producing the Christ, the Savior of the world. The gospel of Jesus Christ had taken effect among them (verse 6). Many Jews had accepted Jesus.

Jews comprised practically all of the early church, but their religious leaders had rejected Him.

In verses 7-9 Paul taught of the spiritual significance of the care with which God had chosen the progenitors of the nation of Israel. Just any son of Abraham could not qualify. This nation that was to be so important to the plan of God must come through Isaac, the God-ordained son of promise. Neither could just any son of Isaac qualify to perpetuate this nation, but it must come through Jacob, the son of faith. This signified that God's true children must be those of faith rather than those of mere natural generation (Galatians 4:22-31).

In verses 10-24 Paul taught of the justice of the sovereign acts of God. Although God is sovereign, He is absolutely just and righteous in all His acts. We have no right to question the justice or the righteousness of any of His deeds, even though we do not understand them. God was absolutely just and wise in choosing Jacob rather than Esau before they were born to head the nation of Israel. He foreknew that Jacob would value the birthright while Esau would despise it (Genesis 25:21-34). Nevertheless, He gave both Jacob and Esau opportunity to prove their attitudes.

The same principle was involved in God's dealing with Pharaoh. God did not make Pharaoh harden his heart against the Jews. However, knowing what his attitude would be, He permitted him to become Pharaoh of Egypt at this time that He might use the hardness of his heart to demonstrate His power to deliver His people.

God does not make some people good and others evil. Every man has inherited a tendency to evil from Adam. By faith some choose to be delivered from evil while others choose to follow their own carnal desires. Our omniscient God foreknows what each one will choose. Therefore, His acts in every situation are planned before their time. Eternity is an ever present now with our great eternal God who knows the end from the beginning. He is both just and merciful in accepting into His kingdom all who come to Him in faith.

Verses 25- 26 refer to a prophecy in Hosea 2:23 that evidently referred to Gentiles coming to Christ under the new covenant. Hosea's prophecy was of backslidden Israel being given into Babylonian captivity until they repented. While the people of Israel were in Assyrian and Babylonian captivity, many of them came back to Jehovah and became a testimony to the heathens who ruled over them. Many heathens came to believe in Jehovah God and became proselyte to the Jews' religion. The Jews, after they came under Persian rule, were permitted to return to their homeland (Hosea 2:14-17). Hosea 2:19-22 evidently referred to the Jews coming to Christ under the new covenant, and Hosea 2:23 referred to the Gentiles coming into Christ under the new covenant.

Romans 9:27-29 refer to Esaias's (Isaiah's) prophecy of the remnant of Israel coming to God in Christ (Isaiah 10:21-22). Isaiah also prophesied that there had always been a remnant of faith among the Israelites (Isaiah 1:9). It was this remnant who accepted the Lord Jesus Christ and received the Holy Ghost, but their leaders, the officials of their religious government, rejected Him.

Verses 30-33 explain why the leaders of the Jews rejected Jesus while many Gentiles received Him under the ministry of the apostles and the early church. The Jews were steeped in the belief that they must save themselves by keeping the ceremonial law of Moses. They seemed only to look for the Messiah to deliver them from Gentile rule and give them back their kingdom. Jesus was a stumbling block to them because they were not willing to give up their way of salvation by the law of Moses that was no longer in effect for the new covenant of grace in Jesus Christ.

By the time Christ came to earth, many Gentiles had come to believe in Jehovah by His miracles performed in the lives of the faithful Jews in captivity, such as Daniel, the three Hebrew children, Ezekiel, and others. Later, many came to believe through the miracles of Jesus during His earthly ministry. They were now ready to receive righteousness by faith through the gospel of Jesus Christ. Christ is the end of the law for righteousness. His righteousness is now given to all who will believe in Him (Romans 10:4).

The religious leaders of the Jews fulfilled prophecy in their rejection of Jesus as their Messiah. Isaiah had prophesied:

“And he shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel, for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And many among them shall stumble, and fall, and be broken, and be snared, and be taken” (Isaiah 8:14-15).

Jesus truly became a sanctuary, a holy place and refuge from all harm and evil (Isaiah 32:1-4), to all who received Him. However, to those Jews who refused to part from the traditions of their elders and their present positions of authority and honor in their religion, their “Rock of Ages” became their stumbling stone. They were unwilling to associate Jesus with Jehovah who had saved their ancestors in the wilderness with water from the rock (Deuteronomy 8:15-17). Paul said that rock was Christ (I Corinthians 10:1-4). God was the source of the water that flowed from the rock in the wilderness (Deuteronomy 32:3-4), and Jesus is the source of the living water (John 4:13-14; 7:37-39). To those who believe, He is precious, but to those who, in disobedience, stumble at the word of the Lord, He who is the head cornerstone of the kingdom of God is made a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence (I Peter 2:7-8; Psalm 118:22). The Jews rejected their God because they did not recognize Him in Jesus.

About forty years after the Jews had rejected their Messiah, the Roman General Titus took the city of Jerusalem, destroyed their beautiful Temple, and they were forced to flee for their lives. More than a million Jews were said to have perished in the terrible siege and many thousands were sold into slavery (*Grolier Encyclopedia*, volume 10, page 156). Doubtless Jesus cared for all those who served Him. He had told them this would happen and advised them what they should do (Matthew 24:1-4, 15-22).

Romans 10

Chapter 10 deals principally with Israel's present state in the church age. Paul introduced this chapter by again expressing his heart's desire for Israel's salvation. Many thousands of Jews were already in the church of Jesus Christ, but Paul spoke of those who, like their leaders, had rejected the Lord Jesus (verses 1-3). They had a zeal for God but not according to knowledge. Christ is the wisdom and the power of God (I Corinthians 1:24). Paul said if the princes of this world, including the leaders of the Jews, had known this wisdom, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory (I Corinthians 2:8). In unbelief, they tried to establish their own righteousness by the Law and refused to submit to God's perfect plan of righteousness (Romans 5:17-18).

When Jesus ascended to Heaven and poured out the Holy Ghost on the Day of Pentecost, the Law was fulfilled (finished) (verse 4) and His new covenant of grace came into force (Hebrews 8:6-13; 13:20-21). The only spiritual benefit in the law of Moses was in its attempt to restrain sin. One could only be justified by the Law by keeping all of it to the last jot and tittle (verse 5; James 2:10; Matthew 5:18), and no one ever did. The Law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did, by which we draw nigh unto God (Hebrews 7:19). It was fulfilled in the new covenant by the love of God being poured into the hearts of His people in the Holy Ghost (Romans 5:5; 13:8-10). God's mercy was extended through the ages to Israel in their system of sacrifices that postponed His judgment until the coming of Christ. Thus His abundant mercy was fulfilled in Jesus (Ephesians 2:4-6; I Peter 1:3-4; Hebrews 4:16).

In verses 6-7 Paul spoke of God's plan of redemption for men in Jesus Christ. He probably referred to Deuteronomy 30:12 in which Moses told the people of Israel that the commandment of the Lord was not something beyond their reach or knowledge. He had clearly given them the commandments of God. If they would obey His commandments, they would be blessed with salvation and prosperity. However, if they refused to obey, they would not prolong their days upon the land but would surely perish (Deuteronomy 30:11-20).

This seemed to be the attitude of many of the Jews in Paul's time. They wanted to save themselves by the Law, in their own way. They could not ascend into Heaven to bring Christ to earth, nor into Hell to bring Him up from the dead. God alone could accomplish salvation for men. By overshadowing the virgin Mary, He had already brought Christ to earth to die for men and had brought Him up again from death and Hell (Revelation 1:18). God's plan of redemption, which He wrought in Jesus Christ, is the only means of salvation for humanity. The righteousness of God, which is required for justification, is obtained only by faith in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. This is the gospel of our salvation (Romans 1:16-17).

Verses 8-10 outline God's prescription for saving faith. Saving faith is much more than a mental acceptance of Jesus as the Son of God. He who would come to Jesus for salvation must confess with his mouth and believe in his heart the full truth of the incarnation of Christ in the flesh to die for the sins of men (Hebrews 2:14-18), of His resurrection from the dead and His ascension back to Heaven to give men eternal life. He must believe to the extent of obeying the full gospel of Jesus Christ, which will bring him into the righteousness of God (verse 10). He who comes to God in such faith will never need to be ashamed, for God will never let him down. He will never be disappointed in his hope or ashamed for his confidence (verse 11). Our great omnipotent God has provided this abundant life (John 10:10) for all people of the world, Gentiles as well as Jews. It is for whosoever will call on the name of the Lord in faith (verses 12-13).

Verses 14-17 teach the purpose and the importance of the preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ. To be saved one must call on the name of the Lord, but he will not call on Him until he believes in Him. One cannot believe in Him of whom he has not heard, and he cannot hear until someone brings him the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Paul made it very plain that no one can successfully preach God's message of salvation until he himself has been saved, called, and sent by the power of the Holy Ghost. Paul himself would not attempt to preach the gospel with enticing words of man's wisdom, but only by the anointing of the Holy Spirit and demonstration of the power of God (I Corinthians 2:1-5). This was important so that men's faith should be established in the power of God. Faith comes by hearing the Word of God preached in

sincerity and in the power of the Holy Ghost (I Corinthians 1:17, 18). Paul said, "For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe" (I Corinthians 1:21).

This passage of Scripture emphasizes the responsibility of the ministry and the church to preach the gospel to all the world. Jesus said, "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come" (Matthew 24:14). Every saint of God should feel the burden and a sense of indebtedness to carry the gospel to the world even as did Paul (Romans 1:14-15). We cannot all preach the gospel, but we can all pray and help support those who are called to preach the gospel in the various fields of the world. In many ways we can all help to fulfill this most important responsibility. Every congregation of the church of Jesus Christ should be missionary-minded.

John, on the Island of Patmos, had a very wonderful and important vision of the Lord and His church (Revelation 1:9-18). He saw the Lord in all His shining glory standing in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks. He held in His right hand seven stars and a sharp two-edged sword protruded from His mouth. The value of the significance of this vision is immeasurable.

The seven golden candlesticks (a seven light lamp stand, fed by oil from its bowl) lighted the Holy Place of the Temple. This was a type of the church of Jesus Christ, which is the light of the world (Matthew 5:14-16). Jesus, the light of life (John 1:4), shines in and through His church to the world. The Lord interpreted the meaning of the seven stars and the seven candlesticks; the seven stars were the angels, or messengers, of the seven churches and the seven candlesticks were the seven churches.

The significance of the number seven in the prophetic Scriptures is the whole or completion of something. The seven candlesticks represented the whole church of God. The seven stars typified the complete number of those whom He has called and anointed as His messengers to preach His Word, signified by the sharp sword in His mouth. The message of this vision is: the light of life in the Holy Ghost shining through His church to the world, His ministers or

messengers held in His right hand to proclaim, not their own ideas or the precepts of men, but the Word of God. Their works and their message must be of the Holy Ghost (I Corinthians 2:1-5).

Apostle Paul is an outstanding example to all the saints of God and to all the ministers of His gospel. He gave himself wholly and untiringly to the task of reaching as many with the gospel as possible in his lifetime. He preached the gospel to the extent that he felt if it was hid to any it was because they had closed their minds to the glorious light of its message in unbelief (II Corinthians 4:1-5). The Lord has committed the ministry of reconciliation to every member of the body of Christ. He has called each one to be His ambassador to represent Him in this world (II Corinthians 5:17-20). He has given us this glorious light of life in the Holy Ghost that it may shine out to others (Matthew 5:14).

Israel did not have the excuse of ignorance in their rejection of Jesus as the Christ (verses 18-21). Old Testament prophecies pictured in detail His birth, ministry, death, and resurrection. In the volume of the Book (Bible), it was written of Him who should come to perform the will of God in the salvation of the world (Psalm 40:5-10; Hebrews 10:5-10). If the Jews had sincerely sought for truth, they should have learned from Old Testament prophecy that Jesus fulfilled all the messianic prophecies (John 5:39). They had no excuse for ignorance regarding God's acceptance of the Gentiles. They should have known even from Moses (Deuteronomy 32:21), as well as from the prophets (Isaiah 65:1-5; Acts 13:38-45) that God's plan to save men by Christ included Gentiles. Prophecy also revealed that the Gentiles would accept Him but that the Jews, as a nation, would not.

Romans 11

In verses 1-10 Paul continued the subject of Israel's state during the church age. God had not cast away the Jews but had come to them in Jesus with His new covenant of grace to replace the covenant of law. As a nation, Israel had rejected God in Jesus. Paul could affirm this because he also was an Israelite. He used the example of Elijah's (Elias's) discouragement when he fled

from the threat of Jezebel. He thought he was the only one left in the land that had not worshiped Baal, but God informed the prophet that He had seven thousand in Israel who had retained their faith in Jehovah (I Kings 19:14, 18). Paul knew there were many thousands of Jews at that time who were serving Jesus (verses 2-6), just as we know there are many Jews scattered through the nations of the world today who are serving the Lord Jesus Christ. Israel, as a nation, still considers Him an imposter, but the Scripture shows that they will finally receive Him as their Lord and God.

God's foreordained plan of redemption in Christ for all men had not changed but had progressed through the Old Testament history of the human race. From Adam to Abraham He dealt with the people as individuals, seeking to lead them into faith of the only true and living God. After the Flood, when practically all people had become idolatrous, He called Abram, a man of faith in God, out from his countrymen to preserve through his posterity faith in the only true and living God. The family of Jacob, Abraham's grandson, moved to Egypt after Joseph, who had been sold as a slave by his brothers, became governor of Egypt. During the four hundred years they were in Egypt, they grew into a great multitude and became enslaved by the Egyptians. God then called Moses to deliver them from Egyptian bondage and to give them His covenant of law to govern them as His nation of people. They were called the "Children of Israel" because they had come from the twelve sons of Jacob, whose name God had changed to Israel (Genesis 32:24-30). God created this natural nation to typify and to lead to the coming of His spiritual nation in Jesus Christ. This was God's eternal purpose from before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:3-7).

Perhaps the main deterrent of faith in those Jews who rejected Jesus as their Messiah was their strong desire and expectation for the return of their natural kingdom in all the glory of the kingdom of David. Israel's desire for natural prosperity and glory had blinded them to the spiritual aspect of God's promises. If they could have looked beyond this natural concept, they, like Abraham, could have seen that fair city whose builder and maker is God (Hebrews 11:8-10). All Israel expected their Messiah to return their kingdom to them. Until after the disciples had received the Holy Ghost, even they who were convinced that Jesus was the Christ expected Him to restore their kingdom (Acts

1:4-8). They then understood He had established His spiritual kingdom. Those Jews who rejected Jesus became spiritually blinded by their unbelief and murderous hatred of Jesus (verses 7-10). They have never found what they were seeking: a restoration of their kingdom. Since 1948 the Jews have been in their homeland and recognized as a nation, but they have not found the glory they sought. The veil that was drawn over their minds will remain until they accept Jesus as their Lord and King (II Corinthians 3:14-16). Then they will say, "Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the LORD; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation" (Isaiah 25:9).

Romans 11:11-36

Romans 11:11-36 teach a future regathering of Israel. Verses 11-12 indicate that many Jews rejected the gospel of Jesus Christ because it was preached to Gentiles, many of whom accepted Jesus (Acts 13:42-45). The Jews felt themselves far above the Gentiles and were unwilling to be classed with them in any sense. They turned against Paul, the special apostle to the Gentiles, because he invited the heathens into the kingdom of God.

God did not cast off the Jews. He simply put them on the same level with the Gentiles (Ephesians 2:14-22), a position they refused to accept. The kingdom of God is still open to the Jews as well as to all people of the world, but their minds have been blinded by their pride and stubborn unbelief. However, many Old Testament prophecies, as well as this chapter in the New Testament, foretell of a day when Israel, as a nation, will accept the Lord Jesus Christ as their promised Messiah. Under the new covenant they will then be sealed with the Holy Ghost, just as all who have come to Him have been (Ephesians 1:13-14).

I think verses 13-16 reach back to God's Old Testament saints in the kingdom of Israel. We have only to read the eleventh chapter of Hebrews for a glimpse of the many faithful ones in Israel. They did not have the experience of new life as we do today because Jesus had not yet come to provide it. However, Paul wrote of some who endured great tribulation in their love of God and faithfulness to Him (Hebrews 11:35-37). He said of them, "Of whom the world

was not worthy” (Hebrews 11:38). Their faith was counted to them for righteousness in the same manner as was that of Abraham (Genesis 15:6; Romans 4:3). They received a good report through faith.

However, they did not receive the New Testament promise of the Holy Ghost. It took the coming of Christ to perfect them (Hebrews 11:39-40). These were the firstfruits and the holy lump of God’s natural kingdom that led up to the coming of His spiritual and eternal kingdom. Since it was largely the ruling class of Israel who rejected their God when He was manifested in Jesus, it was the ruling class, representing the nation of Israel, who was cut off from being God’s people. The Day of Pentecost marked the end of God’s natural kingdom and the birth of His spiritual one that embraces those of faith from every race and nation of the world. Many Gentiles over the centuries since then have taken advantage of this great opportunity.

In verses 17-24 Paul used the example of a stump of a tree from which some branches were broken off and other branches from another tree were grafted into the stump. By this he explained the transition from the natural to the spiritual kingdom. He also used this explanation to warn the Gentiles against becoming proud and self-righteous as the Jews had done.

God’s plan of salvation for men, which He foreordained before the foundation of the world, has never changed, but has progressed through the history of the human race. God’s promise to Abraham to make of his descendants a great nation, through which the Christ should come to the world, was the first stage of His plan for a spiritual kingdom that would prepare His people for Heaven.

It began with the natural kingdom as a type of His spiritual kingdom to come. The natural kingdom produced Christ, and Christ, through redemption, created His spiritual kingdom by the new birth of His Spirit. “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” (I Corinthians 12:13).

In their self-righteous pride, the Jews did not recognize their God in Jesus (I Corinthians 2:8). God no longer recognized only their nation as His people, but they could have come into His spiritual kingdom if they had believed. Since Pentecost, Jews of all ages and from all parts of the world have had the same privilege as all other people to hear and accept the gospel of Jesus Christ, and many have done so. The Gentiles, who could have no part in the nation of Israel except by becoming proselytes to their religion, now accepted Jesus and were born of His Spirit into His spiritual kingdom (Luke 17:20-21; John 18:36; Romans 14:17).

In verses 25-32 Paul warned the Gentiles against becoming self-righteous in their blessings. He told the Roman saints that spiritual blindness had come to the nation of Israel. Nevertheless, when the fullness of the Gentiles had come, Israel would also accept Jesus and be saved. The invitation of the gospel has been offered to Jews just as it has to Gentiles, and many have accepted it in every generation since the time of Christ on earth. However, all who have continued to hold to the old covenant of the law of Moses have continued in blindness.

Paul knew by Old Testament prophecy that God had planned a time and a means of convincing Israel of His true identity. Perhaps all Pentecostal Christians know that in the last days there will be the battle of Armageddon. The armies of the nations of the world will have become confederated under the rule of the "man of sin," the Antichrist. They will march against the Jews in Jerusalem with the expectation of completely destroying them. However, God has other plans for the Jews. He will purposely permit this great army to march against them that He may demonstrate His almighty power, both to this army and to the Jews. He will come and miraculously fight against this army in defense of Israel, even as He had fought many victorious battles for them in the days of their Old Testament history (Zechariah 14:1-9). When the Lord delivers the Jews at that time, they will recognize Him as Jesus Christ whom their fathers had rejected.

Isaiah has given us a vision of Israel's capitulation to the Lord at the time of their very great deliverance from their enemies:

"He will swallow up death In victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he

take away from off all the earth: for the Lord hath spoken it. And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the LORD; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation" (Isaiah 25:8-9).

Israel cannot come to God under the old covenant of the law of Moses. Jesus Christ fulfilled and finished it. When they accept Jesus, they will do so under the new covenant of grace. They will be born again by His Spirit, by which they will become a part of the body of Christ, the church (Hebrews 8:6-13; 13:20; Ephesians 1:9-10; 3:3-6). God's gifts and callings are without repentance (verse 29).

God never changes. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Hebrews 13:8). His will never changes and His eternal plan cannot fail. He has given to us, the heirs of His promise, an absolute assurance of its fulfillment in those two immutable (unchangeable) things in which it was impossible for God to lie: His promise and His oath (Hebrews 6:13-20). We, as individuals, may fail, but if we will be faithful to Him, He will be faithful to us.

As the scope of our vision widens to see more of the over-all plan of God, we begin to understand a little of the riches of His great wisdom, knowledge, mercy, and love toward humanity (verses 33-36). We cannot, by human understanding, search out the great wisdom and power of God, or His ways. We cannot merit His wonderful grace. Nevertheless, in the Spirit of Christ, we are transformed by the renewing of our mind that we may understand something of the glorious things He has done for us (Romans 12:1-2; I Corinthians 2:9-16). The natural eye cannot see, the ear cannot hear, neither can the heart understand the things which God has prepared for those who love Him, but He reveals them to us, in part, by His Spirit (I Corinthians 13:12).

Personal Study Notes

Chapter IV

THE FRUIT OF SALVATION

Romans 12

In the first eight chapters of Romans, we have studied the need and the way of salvation. Now in the last five chapters we will study the fruit of salvation in a Christian's life. So long as we are in this world, we are still mortal even though we have been born again of the Spirit of God. God's Spirit within us gives grace and power to overcome the natural tendencies of the carnal nature. Nevertheless, we must cultivate and use what He has given or we will be overcome by the flesh. We must use the gift of God, or lose it (Luke 19:20-24). We must cultivate the gift of God by continued prayer, worship, and consecration.

Apostle Paul, who carried a burden for all the churches (II Corinthians 11:28), earnestly implored the Roman Christians to present their bodies a living sacrifice, holy, and acceptable to God, which was no more than their reasonable service (verse 1). Both the Jewish and Gentile Christians in Rome would have been familiar with the offering of sacrifices. This had been a common practice in the Jews' religion and also among the Gentile worship of idols. The Jews' sincere sacrifices brought them into favor with Jehovah. The Gentiles offered sacrifices to gain the favor of their many gods. These Jewish and Gentile Christians had believed in and accepted the sacrifice Jesus had made for their sins. Now they were learning that there were sacrifices for them to make as well. Jesus had

offered Himself for them to bring them eternal life. Now they must offer themselves to Him for worship and service.

The main duty of the Old Testament Aaronic priests was to offer sacrifices for themselves and for the people. The people brought their animal sacrifices to the priests who offered them to expiate their sins. The Aaronic priests, as mediators, represented the people to God, and God to the people. God promised that if the people of Israel would keep His covenant and obey His word, He would make them His peculiar treasure, a holy nation, and a kingdom of priests, in which all the people would be priests (Exodus 19:5-6). They promised to do so but never really measured up to God's requirement. Consequently, only the descendants of Aaron were promoted to the priesthood.

Now, under the new covenant, the Lord, by the power of the Holy Ghost, has made His people a chosen generation, a royal priesthood—a kingdom of priests—a holy nation, and a peculiar people,—different from the world—that they should show the praises of Him who has called them out of darkness into His marvelous light (I Peter 2:9). God's Spirit-filled saints are His priests to represent Him to the world. They can only do this by presenting their bodies a living and holy sacrifice that they may represent His glory and holiness to the world. The sacrifices which are offered by God's new covenant priests are themselves, their bodies and spirits to glorify Him, the continual sacrifice of praise to Him, and the sacrifice of sharing what we have with others (Hebrew 13:15-16; I Peter 2:5).

God's Spirit-filled saints become His dwelling place (I Corinthians 3:16; 6:19-20; Ephesians 2:19-22). We have been bought with the blood of Jesus and belong to Him, soul, mind, and body. We no longer have the right to go our own way. We are now sanctified unto the Lord to please Him. Christianity is not a sideline of life. It is the main vocation of every Christian (Ephesians 4:1; Colossians 1:10; I Thessalonians 2:10-12).

In verse 2 Paul warned the saints against conforming to the ways of this world. They had been transformed by the renewing of their mind, and they must continue in this spiritual state, by which they would be led into the good,

acceptable, and perfect will of God. To conform to the fashions and practices of the world is to be governed by the carnal mind, which is spiritual death. If we are led by the Spirit of God, we will never have anything to regret.

In verses 3-8 Paul instructed those who minister in some capacity in the church. He dealt first with the spirit of those who minister. They must not think of themselves as being elevated above others because of their position. If one becomes self-centered and takes credit to himself for the work he does, the Lord cannot use him. Jesus said those who are poor in spirit (humble) are blessed (Matthew 5:3). We can do nothing without Him (John 15:3-5). But the humble in spirit can say with Paul, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Philippians 4:13).

Paul used the human body with its many members to illustrate the relationship one member of the body of Christ has to another. It also demonstrates the many different offices of service. We are all members of His body, but we do not all serve in the same office, no more than the members of the human body have the same function. The Lord puts the members in the body as it pleases Him. First Corinthians 12:12-31 shows how beautifully the whole work of the Lord will be performed when each member operates in the specific function of the body to which he has been chosen of the Lord. It shows the beautiful spiritual unity of the body when each member operates by the direction of the Holy Ghost. There is no jealousy, contention, or self-seeking, but each member rejoices with each member who is honored, and sympathizes with each member who suffers. Each member is admonished to regard with double honor those members who have been chosen to positions of leadership and to labor in the Word and doctrine (I Timothy 5:17).

There are several different ministries mentioned in verses 6-8. The first mentioned is prophecy (New Testament prophecy). Old Testament prophets generally revealed future events, but New Testament prophecy is defined as speaking unto men to edification, exhortation, and comfort (I Corinthians 14:3). This is preaching under the anointing power of the Holy Ghost. In speaking in other tongues, the Lord uses the tongue of the Christian to speak that which he himself does not understand. But in prophecy, the Lord anoints the mind of the

preacher to give out His message. This is just as much of a miracle as a message given in tongues and interpreted. Peter spoke of such prophecy. He said, "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" (I Peter 4:11).

Paul said one should prophesy according to the proportion of faith. *Adam Clark's Commentary* gives the meaning of "the proportion of faith" as the "general and consistent plan or scheme of doctrines delivered in the Scriptures." The Spirit of God and His Word agree, for they are one (I John 5:7). God will never give a message through prophecy or tongues with interpretation that is not in harmony with His revealed Word in the Scriptures.

Paul listed those ministries of giving out or teaching the word of God as apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers (Ephesians 4:11). He admonished here that each one should diligently give himself to the call of God. Each calling is important to the overall plan of God's work. Peter gave very timely admonition for pastors, those under shepherds of Christ, the great Shepherd of the sheep (Hebrews 13:20). He taught:

"The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away" (I Peter 5:1-4).

Paul taught the moral qualities required of those who should be called to minister the Word and doctrine of the Lord (I Timothy 3:1-9; Titus 1:5-9). God's ministers are called to be stewards of the mysteries of God (I Corinthians 4:1). The mysteries of God are those miraculous workings of His gospel that cannot be

understood by the natural mind but must be revealed by His Spirit (I Corinthians 2:6-14; Ephesians 6:19-20; Colossians 1:27-28; 4:2-4; I Timothy 3:16).

Other ministries are to be performed in the church, such as giving, ruling (to oversee or supervise), showing mercy or ministering encouragement to the discouraged that should be done with cheerfulness. Using what God has blessed us with to help support those who are ministering the Word and doctrine of God is a most important ministry. Those who do so will surely share in the harvest of souls. Any service for the Lord should be performed with diligence, as unto the Lord and not from a selfish motive. We should never consider any service to the Lord as a sacrifice, but rather as an opportunity to manifest our thanksgiving for His many blessings (II Corinthians 9:6-15).

Verses 9-16 teach of the spirit of Christian love between all the members of the body of Christ. In verse 9 we are told that this love must be real and from the heart, not merely uttered from the lips in hypocrisy. God is love, and we can only be filled with His love as we are filled with His Spirit (I John 4:7-21). John emphasized verse 11, "Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought to love one another." We can only love God and His people with the love that He has put in our hearts by the Holy Ghost.

If we walk in His love, we will hate evil and cleave to that which is good. The brotherly love which God puts in the hearts of His Spirit-filled saints not only makes them kindly affectionate toward one another, but will cause them to prefer one another in honor. Selfishness is a characteristic of the carnal man. We can only be unselfish, like Christ, when His Spirit rules in our lives. These verses are God's measuring line by which to measure our spirituality. If we find ourselves failing the test, we should pray earnestly for a fresh baptism of love.

We should not be slothful in any business in which we are involved, but especially we should be extremely diligent in our responsibilities to the Lord's work. Our zeal will show our fervency in serving the Lord.

Verse 12 shows the true spirit of a Christian. One who loves the Lord with all his heart can rejoice in hope under any situation because he knows the Lord

will take care of the outcome. In this faith, he is patient in tribulation. Of course, such faith demands and is born of continuing diligence in prayer.

Those whose lives are governed by God's love are given to hospitality and distributing to the needs of the saints.

A true Christian does not retaliate when he is persecuted. Jesus said we should rejoice and be exceedingly glad for our hope of reward in Heaven (Matthew 5:10-12).

Because we are bound together in one body by the Spirit of Christ, we will rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep (I Corinthians 12:25-27). The body of Christ is composed of those of all different races, classes, and personalities, so the members of His body must have a humble mind, realizing that, in Christ, we are all on the same level (Acts 10:34-35; Ephesians 6:9; James 2:1-9).

Verses 17-21 teach of a Christian's attitude and responsibility toward people of the world who know not Christ. He must be as honest and upright with people of the world as he is with other Christians. He must do all in his power to live peaceably with all men. He cannot help what a sinner may do to him, but he must refrain from any retaliation (I Peter 4:12-16; 2:19-23). Paul taught the Romans (verses 17-21) what he had received from the Lord. Jesus taught the same lesson in His Sermon on the Mount. He taught the disciples they should not retaliate, but should love their enemies, bless those who cursed them, and pray for those who spitefully used them (Matthew 5:38-48). By such responses, Christians prove themselves the children of God, for no one could respond in this manner without the Spirit of God.

Romans 13

Paul's letter of instruction to the Roman Christians dealt with practically every phase of a Christian's life. In this chapter he gave instruction concerning a

Christian's responsibility toward law and government, both the law of the land in which he lives and the law of God.

Verses 1-5 teach of a Christian's responsibility to law and government of the land. God was the leader of the people of Israel when He gave them the law of Moses to govern them in all situations. Today His spiritual kingdom is composed of His people from all nations of the world, who are taught to obey His righteous law of the new covenant. However, God has ordained human government and law and order in all nations for the benefit of all people. His people must be law-abiding citizens in the country in which they live.

Without law and government there could be only chaos. Since there are wicked and criminal people in every nation, life would be intolerable for decent, upright people and God's Spirit-filled people. Perhaps few rulers, officials, and law enforcing officers are Christians, but they are said to be God's ministers because they are doing that which God has ordained for all people. Christians must obey their laws the same as non-Christians or suffer the penalty of the law. So long as they do right, they have nothing to fear. However, Christians should obey the law, not from fear of its penalty, but because God has so instructed.

Only one circumstance exists that would justify a Christian in not obeying the law of the land. One would be justified of God in disobeying a law that contradicted His command, as in the case of Daniel and the three Hebrews in Babylon (Daniel 3:8-18; 6:2-4) and that of the apostles who refused to obey the command of the Jewish rulers to cease preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ (Acts 4:1-20).

Verses 6-7 teach that Christians should pay the exacted taxes of their governments just as do all other citizens. Christians benefit from the protection of their government and its public services, just as other citizens, and they should willingly contribute their part toward its support.

Verses 8-10 reveal the difference between the worldly governments and God's government of His spiritual kingdom by the law of His new covenant of grace. Christians are not bound by the ceremonial law of Moses, but the

commandments that involve God's standard of righteousness for all His people are just as valid now as when they were spoken from Mount Sinai. However, the love of God and love for His truth and righteousness in their obedience to His word motivate Christians under the new covenant law of grace. God's law of love is a social law that, if obeyed, will solve all the problems of social relationships (verse 10).

Verses 11-14 teach that people have only the present to prepare for the future. No one knows when the Lord may come or the time of his own departure from this life. If Christians fail to walk diligently before the Lord, they may have no future time to redeem wasted and lost opportunities. God's people must put on the Lord Jesus Christ as a garment (verse 14). Jesus said that in the day we receive the Comforter, the Holy Ghost, we will know He is in the Father, we in Him, and He in us (John 14:20, 26). When we are filled with His Spirit, He is not only in us but is all around us as a cloak or a cloud of protection. This is to put on the whole armor of God (Ephesians 6:10-18) as protection against all the temptations and wiles of the devil. To have the Spirit of Christ within to guide us into all truth and righteousness is our protection against our fulfilling the lusts (works) of the flesh (Galatians 5:16-21). If we keep filled with His Spirit, we will bear the fruits of His Spirit (Galatians 5:22-24).

Romans 14

This chapter deals with "doubtful things." Its statements do not refer to transgressions of God's Word, but only to the eating of certain foods and the keeping of certain days that had to do with the ceremonial law of Moses. In apostolic times, many Jews who had accepted Christ were unable to break away suddenly from their traditions and ceremonial practices. Many had zealously taught Gentile Christians that they should keep the ceremonial law. Paul gave this teaching for the benefit of those who were in doubt concerning these things. He showed the true Christian spirit which would make for a peaceful transition from Law to grace. All Christians are free from the Old Testament ceremonial law of the Jews.

Verses 1-4 and 14-23 deal with the eating of meats. Under the ceremonial law, the Jews could not eat pork and certain other meats that they judged unclean. God had reasons for these ordinances dealing with Israel in their wilderness experiences and Old Testament history, which under the new covenant were no longer necessary. However, those whose conscience dictated they should continue to abstain from these things were free to do so. It was no sin. It became sin when those who ate and those who did not eat condemned one another for their different views and their fellowship was broken. Paul taught they should not judge one another, for everyone must stand before God to be judged. Man cannot judge righteously, for he cannot look into the heart and conscience of the one he condemns. However, God, who looks into the heart, judges all by righteous judgment. Those who understood they were no longer under the ceremonial law were right, but Paul taught that they were wrong to condemn those who did not yet understand. He also told them it was wrong to offend their weaker brethren by eating, in self-will, in their presence. He said, "For meat destroy not the work of God" (verse 20). Moreover, for the benefit of all, he said, "For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost" (verse 17).

The Scripture teaches that we should not harshly judge one another for individual views of things that are largely a matter of conscience, but should have a charitable attitude toward one another, giving leeway for conscience. Paul also taught that one should abstain from anything that he cannot do with a clear conscience. To partake of something against one's conscience is to bring himself under a feeling of guilt, which would be sin (verses 22-23).

Verses 5-13 deal with the different views concerning the Old Testament law of keeping certain days. The people of Israel were required to keep each seventh day of the week as a Sabbath and certain other feast days in which they were to perform no labor of any kind. The New Testament teaches that Israel's Sabbaths and feast days were types and shadows of things to come in the new covenant and were fulfilled in Christ (Hebrews 4:3-8; Colossians 2:13-17).

However, as in the eating of certain meats, Paul taught the Christians not to judge one another in the keeping of the Sabbath days. Those who kept the

Sabbaths and those who did not were each doing what they thought to be right before the Lord. Christians should do everything as unto the Lord and seek to please Him in all that they do. Death will be gain to all who live to please the Lord (Philippians 1:21-25). In the matter of these differences of opinions concerning things that are not sinful either way, Christians must be careful not to offend or put a stumbling block in a brother's way (verse 13).

Romans 15

Verses 1-3 seem to be a follow-up of the subject of differences of opinion in chapter 14. In writing to the Christians in Rome, some of whom were Jews and some were Gentiles, Paul showed them the spirit of unity and fellowship with which they should regard one another. He spoke particularly to the Jews who should have been the stronger in faith due to their history under the blessings of God. They should be willing to bear the infirmities of their weaker brethren and make sacrifices to help them become strong in Christ. He told them they should follow the example of Christ in their attitude toward their brethren.

In verses 4-13 Paul taught concerning the relationship between the Jews and the Gentiles. In verse 4 he referred to the comfort and hope to be found in many Old Testament Scriptures that helped to explain and give support to New Testament doctrine (Romans 4:23-24; I Corinthians 9:9-11; 10:1-11). The Old Testament Scriptures taught many things concerning the hope of Gentiles in the coming of the Messiah. Paul, in telling both the Jews and the Gentiles to be like-minded toward one another, very likely meant the same that he had written to the Corinthians, "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (I Corinthians 1:10).

In verse 8 he reminded them that Jesus was born of the Jewish nation and ministered under the Jewish regime until they crucified Him. Jesus did this to confirm and fulfill the promises made to their fathers. Paul then showed in verses 9-12 how Old Testament prophecy had foretold that God would accept

Gentiles into His kingdom under the Messiah when He should come. He quoted from several passages of Old Testament prophecy. In verse 9 he quoted from Psalm 18:49, "Therefore will I give thanks unto thee, O LORD, among the heathen, and sing praises unto thy name." This was David's prophecy concerning the coming of Christ, who would call the Gentiles unto salvation. In verses 10-11 he probably referred to Psalm 117:1-2, "O praise the LORD, all ye nations: praise him, all ye people. For his merciful kindness is great toward us: and the truth of the LORD endureth forever. Praise ye the LORD." In verse 12 he quoted from Isaiah 11:10. He emphasized the unity that should exist between the Jewish and Gentiles Christians.

In verses 14-21 Paul wrote of his calling as an apostle to the Gentiles and of his ministry to them. He expressed a prayer that they would be filled with joy, peace, and hope in the Holy Ghost (verse 13). In verse 14 he expressed his faith in their experience in the Holy Ghost so that now they were able to admonish one another. They evidently had been growing spiritually in the Lord.

In verses 15-21 he spoke of his ministry to the Gentiles. He had preached to them all the way from Jerusalem and round about to Illyricum, which seems to have covered all the territory of his missionary journeys through Asia Minor, Macedonia, and Greece (Achaia). He had reaped a vast harvest of Gentiles and Jews by his anointed ministry in the power and demonstration of the Holy Ghost (I Corinthians 2:1-8). The Lord sent him not to the places where others had gone, but to pioneer in those fields where the people had not heard the gospel message.

In verses 22-29 Paul again expressed his desire and plan to visit Rome. Because of a very full ministry over the period covering his three missionary journeys, he had had no opportunity yet to visit this city. Now, however, he was planning a trip to Spain, by way of Rome, after he had gone to Jerusalem to deliver an offering to the saints of Judea from the Gentile churches of Macedonia and Greece. He was looking forward to his coming in the will and power of God to minister in Rome the fullness of the gospel of Christ.

In verses 30-33 Paul began to close his letter with an earnest request for the prayers of the saints in Rome that God would deliver him from his enemies among the Jews in Judea. Acts 20:2 through Acts 28:31 give the full story of his experiences from the time he left Corinth in Greece for Jerusalem until he finally arrived in Rome. God was glorified in all his experiences.

Romans 16

Romans 16 has been called a portrait gallery in which we see the portraits—not of the physical features but of the characters—of some of Paul’s beloved friends. It has also been referred to as a page from God’s book of records, in which He writes the name of each believer with the record of his or her service. By this rule, what will the Lord have to record after my name and after your name in His book of records?

Paul had not been to Rome, but he had many friends and some relatives living there at this time. In this letter (verses 3-15) he sent personal greetings to a large number, calling each by name and making a special commendation of each one. Some of these friends were Jews and some were Gentiles, some were men and some were women, some were business people and some were slaves or freed men (Philemon 8-21).

In verses 1-2 Paul commended Phebe, a servant of the assembly in Cenchrea, to the saints in Rome. A few miles southeast of Corinth, Cenchrea was the main harbor for Corinth. It was located on the coast of the Saronic Gulf that opened into the Mediterranean and Aegean Seas. Paul exhorted the church in Rome to assist Phebe in whatever business she might have there. He praised her for her service to the Lord’s people, including himself. It is quite probable that he sent this letter by Phebe to the Romans saints.

Paul’s greeting to Priscilla and Aquila (verses 3-4) was very personal and appreciative. He had met them years earlier on his first visit to Corinth. They had taken him into their home and into their hearts. He had made tents with them while he preached the gospel to Jews and Gentiles (Acts 18:1-4, 11). Somewhere

in their service to him, they had risked their lives to save him, for which he was very grateful. They were back in Rome at this time and an assembly was meeting in their home (verse 5).

Paul left no one out but sent a loving greeting and commendation to each one he knew personally. Andronicus and Junia, who were well respected among the apostles, were his relatives. They had come to Christ before Paul (verse 7).

He then asked all the saints in Rome to greet one another with a holy kiss. This greeting was a token of Christian love and fellowship and seems to have been quite common among the early Christians. It was specified a holy kiss and was doubtless used in that spirit among the Spirit-filled Christians. It probably was a common greeting between Jesus and His disciples, since Judas used this act to betray the Lord. Today the common greeting among the Lord's Spirit-filled saints is a handshake with usually a "Praise the Lord, Brother." This can be just as warm and affectionate as the earlier practice of the holy kiss.

Paul then expressed greetings to the church in Rome from the other assemblies to whom he had ministered. Paul's sincere and affectionate greeting to these saints and his commendations for their zealous and faithful service to the Lord was a true picture of real Christian fellowship.

Perhaps we sometimes forget, or take lightly, the importance of true fellowship among God's people. The Bible has much to say concerning the fellowship of the members of the body of Christ. Fellowship has a wide range of meanings among various groups, but to true Christians it means being a member of the body of Christ, and thus a part of every other member of Christ. All of God's Spirit-filled people have been born again into the same family. We have been called into the fellowship of our Lord Jesus Christ (I Corinthians 1:9) by which we have been brought into this fellowship with all others who have this experience.

Immediately after Peter's gospel sermon on the Day of Pentecost, three thousand souls were added to the first 120 who had received the Holy Ghost. "And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in

breaking of bread, and in prayers" (Acts 2:42). They felt the bond of fellowship so strongly that they voluntarily sold their possessions and put the proceeds into a common fund from which they all shared alike. Of course, as the church grew and the people became scattered into other parts of the country, this plan was not practical and did not last. The Lord did not command it, nor did the apostles recommend it, but the bond of fellowship continued. There had never before been and there never will be a bond of unity like that of the church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul's ministry was to unveil the mystery of this bond of fellowship that bound together the members of the body of Christ (Ephesians 3:9). This mystery is Christ in His people, the hope of glory (Colossians 1:27), and this is the mystery of the gospel (Ephesians 6:19). The only way to keep this fellowship alive and working in our midst is for us all to keep filled with His Spirit (I John 1:1-3).

Before closing his letter to the Romans, Paul felt the need to warn these saints against false preachers who would come, as they had elsewhere, with false doctrines to divide and devour God's people for selfish gain (verses 17-19). However, he assured these Roman Christians that they could trust God to protect them. God would bruise Satan under their feet (verse 20). The devil is ever trying to deceive the saints of God, either with false doctrines or with the lure of carnal things. The Galatian church was troubled by some who taught them they must keep the ceremonial law of Moses to be saved. Paul warned them that if anyone came preaching any other gospel than that of Jesus Christ, he should be accursed (Galatians 1:19; 3:1-5, 13-16). It is important that we search the Scriptures and walk after the Spirit.

Paul closed his letter with greetings from his fellow workers to the saints in Rome. Tertius, acting as Paul's secretary, had written this epistle as Paul had dictated it and added his own greeting. Finally, Paul again commended to them the everlasting gospel of Jesus Christ, which the Old Testament prophets had witnessed but was now manifested to all men through Jesus Christ, who would establish them in faith and grace.

SUMMARY

I'm sure you have already studied the account of Paul's arrest in Jerusalem, imprisonment in Caesarea for two years, and then his stormy voyage, as a prisoner, from Caesarea to Rome in the Book of Acts. Nevertheless, I would like to take you to Acts 28:11-16 for a brief glimpse of his entrance and welcome to Rome. He had not come as he had planned, but God had planned his movements every step of the way. He had traveled with a few of his friends and a number of other prisoners under the charge of Julius, a centurion. They left the ship at Puteoli to travel over land to Rome. A congregation of Christians desired Paul to remain with them for seven days at Puteoli.

The centurion, Julius, who had favored Paul in every way possible, seemed favorable to their remaining there while Paul ministered to these saints, after which they went on their way to Rome. The saints in Rome had heard at least that Paul was nearing Rome and a number of the brethren went to meet him on the way. One group went as far as Appii Forum, a village forty-three miles from Rome on the famous Appian Way.

Another group met him at Three Taverns, which was about thirty-three miles from Rome. The loving concern of these brethren who traveled these distances to meet him was heartwarming and encouraging to Paul after his long and turbulent voyage. When they finally arrived in Rome, Julius delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard, but Paul, perhaps on the recommendation of Julius, was given the unusual liberty of dwelling by himself in his own hired (rented) house with only a single soldier to guard him. The soldiers who guarded Paul enjoyed the rare privilege of association with a man who was a personal representative of the Lord Jesus Christ. I'm sure they, as well as all who came to his home, heard the apostle preach the gospel. To those who could not come, Paul wrote letters. These anointed messages have come through the ages to us to bless, minister, exhort, and instruct all saints from then even to this present day.

Missionary Spotlight: Rev. and Mrs. Michael Edge

Reprinted from Foreign Missions Division's *OnSite*, Spring 2006



On December 7, 2005, missionaries Michael J. and Marilyn Parker Edge received a higher call and went to be with the Lord after being involved in an auto accident in Honduras. At the time of their death, he had been serving as president of the United Pentecostal Church of Honduras.

Michael was born May 26, 1961, and Marilyn was born on March 13, 1953. They are survived by two daughters, Christy Edge (Lake Jackson, TX) and Naomi Edge (Tupelo, MS); a grandson, Chris Matthew Jai Edge (Tupelo, MS); their parents, John and Velma Edge (Lake Jackson, TX), Pete and Mary Parker (Normangee, TX), and Evelyn Parker (Brazoria, TX). Before their missionary work, they started a Spanish UPC church in Clute, Texas.

Mike and Marilyn were originally appointed to Mexico in 1983. He served as the vice president of the UPC of Mexico and supervised two districts. He had oversight of thirty-two national works and spent much of his time traveling, preaching revivals, encouraging local pastors, and overseeing the administration of the UPCM.

The Edges labored faithfully in Mexico until a heart attack prompted his resignation. They returned to Houston, Texas, and taught at Texas Bible College. However, with improved health, the Edges applied for reappointment, receiving their appointment to Mexico and Honduras in October 1999. The Edges finished deputation and moved to Torreón, Coahuila, Mexico, in May 2001, where they supervised the newly formed Durango District.

In December 2001, the Edges moved to Honduras to better serve the work there, again spending much of his time traveling, preaching revivals, encouraging local pastors, and overseeing the administration of the national church. As president of the UPC of Honduras, Michael Edge's dream was to complete the development of a campground to house national meetings. In honoring this dream, the family established a memorial fund; donations may be sent to Foreign Missions Division, UPCI.

Following a funeral at First Church UPC, Pearland, Texas, on Wednesday, December 14, 2005, Mike and Marilyn Edge were laid to rest in Center, Texas. . . . Previously two memorial services were held for the Edges in San Pedro Sula and Tegucigalpa, Honduras. Hundreds of Honduran ministers and saints came to honor their leader. Many who spoke commented that the death of Brother and Sister Edge would be a catalyst for even greater revival in Honduras.

The Edges would not want it any other way.