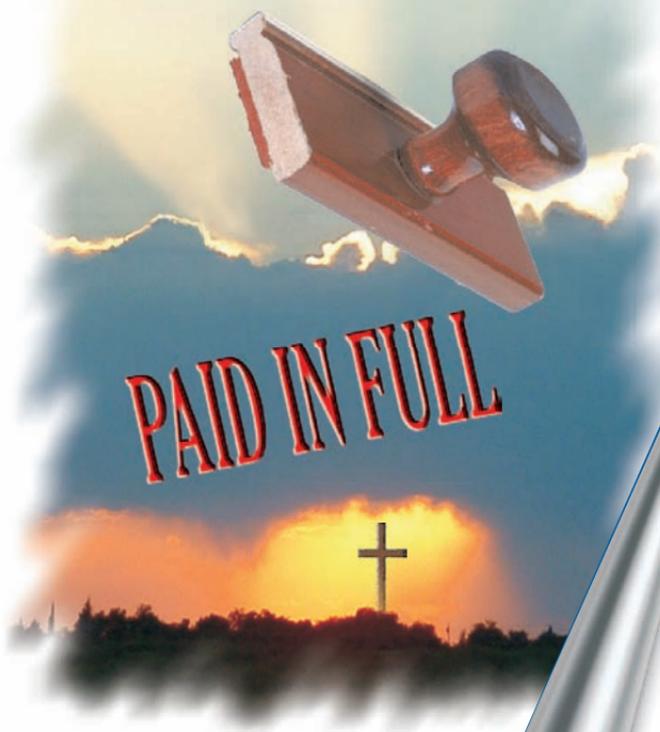


# Paid in Full

A Commentary on Romans



*by Richard Rogers*

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# Paid in Full

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A Commentary on Romans

By Richard Rogers

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**Romans, Paid In Full**

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Dedicated in loving memory of  
Richard Rogers  
a long-time instructor of  
Sunset International Bible Institute.



A companion workbook on the study of Romans by Richard Rogers is available for purchase through Sunset International Bible Institute External Studies, 1(800) 687-2121.



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# Preface to the Sunset Bible Study Library

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Since 1962 Sunset International Bible Institute has been a leader in teaching God's Word, training local church leaders and preparing preachers and missionaries for effective ministry. Developed in the laboratory of preacher training and proven in the crucible of practical ministry, the Sunset curriculum has grown to forty core courses used both in our resident school and distance learning applications. In 1989 the Sunset Video Studio was inaugurated to record each course of study in a professional format. Those courses, each with a companion study guide, have been used to teach thousands of individual students and develop a world-wide network of video satellite schools in local congregations and mission fields.

Now in printed form that same library of trusted Bible study material is available through Sunset Institute Press for an even wider circle of Bible students, thanks to a benevolent God, an excellent editorial staff and a number of faithful supporters who believed in the project.

This book is the result of a multi-step process which began with a videotaped course. The voice track of the videotape was first transcribed then formatted and edited from spoken to written style. The goal of the editorial process has been to produce a readable document while protecting the course content and the style and personality of the teacher. We believe the goal has been achieved and that each of the forty books planned for the Sunset Bible Study Library will likewise achieve that goal.

Special gratitude must be expressed to Cline Paden and Truman Scott who began the video course series in 1989, to Bob Martin, who directed Sunset Video Studio, to Virgil Yocham and the staff of Sunset External Studies Division who

wrote the study guides, and to the staff of Sunset Translation Center who edited the manuscripts and to each faculty member of Sunset International Bible Institute who took extra time to prepare and present these courses in the studio.

In addition to the English version, this book and its companion volumes are being translated into the major languages of the world to produce a Bible study library which can be used on the mission fields of the world to mature Christians, train church leaders and grow churches that plant other churches.



A companion workbook on this study is available for purchase through Sunset International Bible Institute External Studies, 1(800) 687-2121.

# INTRODUCTION

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I first studied the book of Romans with Richard Rogers in 1966 as a student at (then) Sunset School of Preaching. That study, decades ago, revolutionized my thinking and remains one of the foundations upon which my faith, my approach to ministry and my relationship with God and His church have been built.

Richard Rogers was arguably one of the great Bible expositors of the latter half of the twentieth century. His folksy style, passionate delivery and practical application growing out of a genius mind, extensive reading and a photographic memory, combined to make his studies scholarly, Biblical and inspiring.

Romans was one of Richard's favorite and when he taught it, he was perhaps at his best. The material in this book was produced in the last decade of Richard's life, after years of study, after having taught Romans dozens of times to thousands of students and after having returned from a personal odyssey which only deepened his appreciation for the grace of God.

*Paid In Full* has something for every reader. For the serious Bible student there is a depth of insight to challenge the mind. For the preacher there is a wealth of sermon material inherent in the homiletical style in which our dear brother approached every course he taught. For the Bible class teacher there is a thorough explanation of the text along with practical applications. For the devotional reader, there is the story of a Spirit God calling hungry souls to a closer walk with Him. For the evangelist, there is a systematic presentation of God's gospel plan of salvation, the explosive power to save lost humanity. For the church leader there is an abundance of relational body-life information.

The Book of Romans is really the story of every Christian's relationship with God through Christ. It is full of assurance, encouragement, admonition, and when necessary, rebuke. A spiritual blessing is waiting within the pages of *Paid In Full* for those whose hearts are open to receive it.

Truitt Adair  
Executive Director  
Sunset International Bible Institute

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# OUTLINES AND KEY TERMS

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## **Welcome**

Welcome to a study of the book of Romans. The book of Romans has had more books and commentaries written about it than any single book of the Bible. In these writings there is a near universal agreement that in the book of Romans, scripture reaches its high water mark.

## **Overview**

In Romans Paul discusses the love of God that reaches down in Christ to justify man. As Paul does this he comes nearer to understanding the heart of God than he ever has before and probably ever will again.

Life, abundant and eternal, is seen in the book of Romans. This life comes about as a result of faith, not the result of labor. An inward peace with God that is real peace is secured not by man's unfinished work, but by the finished work of Christ at Calvary. The blessed assurance that you and I have found, or can find, in Christ, cannot be threatened by any circumstance. In Romans we are seen to be more than conquerors. Romans tells us that we are able to live the life that God intends for us to live. Because of this, the only conclusion and response that we need to make is, "To God be all of the glory."

## **Key Terms Defined**

This chapter will deal with some introductory matters. While not in the outline that will be followed throughout this study, it will be good for us to study a few words that are used in the book of Romans.

### 1. *Righteousness*

One word that Romans discusses is righteousness. There are several aspects of righteousness that are seen in Romans that need to be noted. **Number one**, righteousness is needed by all mankind because all mankind is sinful (Romans 1-3:20). **Number two**, this righteousness is provided for us by a loving God (Romans 3:21-26). We do not obtain this righteousness through our own pursuit, but rather, we obtain it by God's provision. **Number three**, righteousness is received by men who believe (Romans 3:27-4:25). The single requirement to receiving righteousness is belief. Man reaches out by faith to receive the gift of God. **Number four**, righteousness is experienced in the soul, in other words, in the inner man. It is not experienced in the activities of a man but in the real man that dwells inside (Romans 5:1-8:17). **Number five**, this righteousness is guaranteed by God's eternal purpose (Romans 8:18-39). This righteousness is not temporary or conceived on the spur of the moment. It is guaranteed because God purposed it before time eternal. **Number six**, this righteousness was rejected by the Jewish nation (Romans 9-11). They rejected it because they wanted a righteousness that could be earned through works. They wanted to feel that they had contributed to it, purchased it, and earned it. And finally, **number seven**, this righteousness is manifested through righteous living. By the life that we live we are making known that God was right in doing what He did. This righteousness is what is needed, provided, received, experienced, and guaranteed; it was rejected and is manifested.

There are some other words and terms in the study of Romans that might be a little difficult to understand. In this study we want to be able to properly understand these words so that we will know how Paul used them and so that we will also know how to use them.

## 2. *Law*

How does Paul use the word “law”? In the original language (Greek) the definite article “the” may be in front of the word law. In this case the reference will almost always be to the law of Moses. If the definite article is missing then the law being described may be generic.

The definition of law is “a legal system of regulations demanding obedience or demanding observance, where one violation condemns.” This is easy to see in a human law system. Consider this example: *The speed limit is 30 miles per hour or 40 kilometers an hour. I exceed that speed limit and a representative of the law catches me and issues me a citation. He gives me a ticket, and I am now declared to be a violator of the law. I must now appear before a judge of the law. If he declares also that I am a violator of the law then I must pay the penalty that the law system demands.*

The same principle applies to spiritual law. In Galatians 3:10 Paul quotes from Deuteronomy 27:26 which states that the law of God demanded absolute observance and pronounced a curse on the first violation. A man is cursed if he doesn’t observe everything that is written in the book of the law. Law is a system that demands observance and condemns the violator at the first offense.

In Romans 10:5 Paul states that the law only promises life based on the keeping of its regulations. In Galatians 3:13 Paul writes, “*Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: ‘Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree.’*” In Galatians 3:14 Paul states, “*He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit.*” Galatians 3:13-14 and Romans 10 say the same thing that Paul is saying in Galatians 3:10, that being, that law is a system that demands total obedience and punishes immediately any disobedience to it.

In Galatians 2:15-16 Paul repeats the same phrase three

times to emphasize that because the law condemns at the first offense, no one can be justified by observing the law. Paul writes, “*We who are Jews by birth and not ‘Gentile sinners’ know that a man is not justified (first use of the phrase) by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified (second use) by faith in Christ and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified (third use).*” This is exactly what Paul will say in Romans chapter three as we will see in our study of Romans.

In Romans 3:19-20 Paul writes that no one is justified by the works of the law because the law only makes people aware of their sin. In Romans 3:23 he says, “. . . *for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, . . .*” “*Fall short*” is in the perfect tense (Greek) and literally means that all “stand short of.” Why do all “stand short of”? It is because all have sinned. They have violated the law. Just one sin causes one to fall short of God’s glory. Without Jesus, they will always “stand short” of God’s glory. Without faith in Christ they will always “stand short of” God’s glory.

So, whenever the word “law” is used, the attempt will be made to use it the way Paul used it, as a legal system where one violation condemned the offender.

### 3. *Legalism*

Legalism is a word not found in the Bible, but it comes out of the concept of law. In the New Testament the word used instead is Judaiser.

The definition of legalism is, “a code of deeds and observances as a means of justification.” In other words, legalism is not just trying to be right, it is believing that because I am right, I am justified. Because of what I do, I am justified before God. However, throughout the Bible, God never declared that this is the way that a person is justified.

Turn back to the Old Testament prophets, particularly to the

book of Micah. In Micah 6:6 we read, *“With what shall I come before the LORD and bow down before the exalted God?”* The legalist will not stop with this question. Further questions will be asked as is seen in the rest of the verse and with these questions we see that the people didn’t think that God would be pleased with small offerings.

In Micah 6:8a God tells what it is that He requires: *“He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you?”* This is a great question. If we can get the answer to this question then we are well on the road to understanding God. So, *“What does the Lord require of you?”* Three things: *“To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.”* (Micah 6:8b) In regard to myself, I am to live according to the word of God. In regard to others, I am to live according to mercy. In regard to God, I am to walk according to humility.

This is all that God requires. God does not require a multitude of sacrifices. All He wants is for man to live righteously, to act mercifully, and to walk with humility.

### **The Example of David**

In Psalm 51 David was confronted with his sin, the sin that the prophet Nathan had convicted him of in regard to his actions with Bathsheba and Uriah. The sin was two-fold. David had committed adultery with Bathsheba and then had Uriah murdered. David may have been thinking that his actions were unknown to anyone but himself. But God had seen David’s ungodly actions. When confronted with his sins David cried out over and over again for one thing: for God’s acceptance of him again.

Notice David’s request in Psalm 51:1: *“Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; . . . blot out my transgressions.”* In 51:2 David pleaded, *“Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.”* In 51:3 David stated, *“For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me.”*

He didn't have an answer for all that he had done. All he could say was that he needed wisdom. And then in 51:7 David said, "*Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean.*" In 51:8a David said, "*Let me hear joy and gladness; . . .*" In 51:9 he said, "*Hide your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquity.*" In 51:10, "*Create in me a pure heart, O God, . . .*" In 51:11, "*Do not cast me from your presence . . .*" In 51:12, "*Restore to me the joy of your salvation . . .*" In 51:15 he said, "*O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise.*" In 51:16 David acknowledged that God does not delight in sacrifices. If God did delight in those things then David would have brought them to Him. The answer to what God wanted is found in verse seventeen. God really wants a broken spirit and a broken and contrite heart.

In 51:18 David said that the answer is found in God's actions. David tells God that He should do good in Zion, that He should build up the walls in Jerusalem. If God will allow these things to happen then the people will bring to God offerings, whole burnt offerings, and bulls to offer upon the altar. David is saying that the sacrifices will come after the forgiveness of God. In essence David is saying that he can see that all of his works and sacrifices will not satisfy God. The only thing that will satisfy God is a broken spirit and broken heart.

### *An Example from Jeremiah*

In Jeremiah 7:21-24 we read that while God was asking for animal sacrifices, what He really wanted was observance **and** obedience. If that happens then all will be fine with God.

### *An Example from Amos*

In Amos 5:21-23 we see that God really wasn't after the people's sacrifices. What He really wanted from them was their righteousness. God was not going to pay any attention to all of the things that the people were doing, because He, quite simply,

had no use for them. Instead, God describes what needed to be done in Amos 5:24: “*But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!*” Isn’t that a beautiful thought? This is the idea behind the discussion of legalism.

#### **4. Justification**

The word justification simply means “to vindicate.” Paul will use this word over and over again in the book of Romans to state that we are justified by faith, not by law. Paul writes in Romans 3:21-22 there now exists from God a righteousness that is completely separate from the Law. This righteousness was discussed in the Law and by the prophets and is achieved by the believer through faith in Jesus. This faith in Christ results in the justification of the believer (cf. Romans 3:22-25b).

These words tell us not only that *we are* vindicated but *how we are* vindicated. All of this came about through God’s grace. There was a cause for what God did, but there was a cost involved as well. But neither the cause nor cost was ours. In Romans 3:25 Paul writes that God paid the price for our sins as well as for the sins of previous generations. He did this by presenting Christ as the sacrifice of atonement with the purpose of showing His justice. This atonement comes about through faith in the blood of Jesus. Again, it is God who has paid the price. He is the one who caused all of this to come about.

#### **5. Grace**

Grace is a misunderstood and misused word. Grace basically means “a free gift.” However, in the Bible, grace is described as God’s system of salvation by faith in Christ. It is a free gift, just as we read in Romans 3:24a. This justification is free because it is a free perfect gift from God. It is grace. In Romans 6:23 we read that because of sin, death is what we have earned, but life is what we have received because of the grace (free gift) of God.

In Ephesians 2:8 Paul writes that it is by grace through faith that a person is saved. And this grace is a gift from God, it is not something that man can provide for himself. This verse and many other verses in the Bible make it very plain that man is not the cause of this gift and did not pay the price for it. It is all God's part. There are conditions to receiving this gift, but the conditions do not cancel the freeness of the gift. When He says that I am saved by grace through faith, faith is the condition on my part. But when I believe, that does not contribute to my salvation, and it does not cancel out the fact that the gift is still free (read also Titus 3:4-7).

We notice in Ephesians 2:8 that we were saved by grace through faith. In Titus 3:4 we notice that it is by grace through the washing of a new birth and the renewal of the Holy Spirit that we are saved. But the conditions do not cancel the freeness of the gift. It is still salvation by grace.

## **6. *Faith and Belief***

The two words literally mean "to trust, to rely, to commit." Faith and belief are the means by which the grace of God is obtained. It is because I believe in what Jesus did at Calvary that I am justified by faith. I am saved by faith, and I am saved unto faith. We see this in Paul's statement in Romans 1:16. It is faith in the cross that gives the cross its power for me. It is the basis and the outcome of my salvation.

## **7. *Freedom/Liberty***

Freedom, or liberty, in the book of Romans finds a relationship to three things: law, sin, and death. In Romans 6:15 we read about freedom from the law. Paul writes that I cannot continue in sin. The reason is because sin is no longer my master due to the fact that I am no longer under law, but under grace. As long as I am under law where one offense condemns me, then I am under the mastery of sin. But because I am under grace to Christ, I am not condemned by sin. This does not mean

that I am allowed to sin freely, but it does mean that I am free from a system where one violation condemns.

In Romans 6:18 we read about the freedom from sin. This tells me that not only am I free from the law, I am also free from sin along with its penalties and practices. I am free from its propensities and availability. Sin is no longer welcome in my life, and the reason is because I am now a slave to righteousness.

In Romans 8:1-3 Paul writes that because we are free in Christ there is nothing that can condemn us. We are free from the Law, the Law having been fulfilled in Christ. Now we live by the power of the Spirit. These verses tell me that I am alive. I am alive because I have been freed from the law and from sin. God has delivered us from the condemnation of the law.

### Concluding Remarks

In conclusion there are ten words that are discussed in the book of Romans. **Sin, guilt, and condemnation** are discussed in Romans 1:18-3:20. This is man's condition. He is lost. **Atonement, grace, faith, and justification** are God's activity. **Sanctification** is man's separate state. **Glorification** is man's present glory. **Vindication** shows that God has proven to be righteous in all of His acts.

Man's moral responsibility is the practical application. The book of Romans covers the entire gamut. Romans finds man deep in sin but brings us to a revelation of God's saving grace that we receive through faith. This results in a life that is free from sin and alive to righteousness. It is a righteousness that is right toward God, that is right inwardly, and that is right toward man. This is truly the greatest revelation that God has ever brought to man. Jesus came that we might have life and have it more abundantly. This is what Paul discusses in the great book of Romans.

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# INTRODUCTORY MATTERS

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## **Romans 1:1-13**

### **The Writer - Paul**

The book of Romans was written by Paul, who was the great apostle to the Gentiles. Paul was an unusually qualified man to bridge the gap between the two worlds of the first century: the Jewish world and the Roman world. He was of Jewish birth. He spoke very adequate and fluent Hebrew, which was something that not every Jew in the first century could do. Many of the Jews in the first century only spoke the universal language of Greek.

Paul was born in the city of Tarsus, a free city, which made him a Roman citizen. Roman citizenship was greatly desired and greatly advantageous in the first century. He was trained by the rabbis early in his life which means he was intended to be a religious worker. His main teacher was Gamaliel who was the chief teacher in all of the Jewish religion. Paul's culture was basically Greek. He would appeal to the Grecian games, the Grecian language, and the Grecian culture, so he was deeply rooted in that intellectual basis. But perhaps the greatest thing he had going for him was a simple sort of native intelligence. I would like to have known what his I.Q. was, for instance, because it seemed easy for him to be at home in anybody's environment. He could be a Jew to the Jews, a Greek to the Greeks, a Roman to the Romans. To those that honored the law he could honor the law. To those that were not under the law, he could be as though he were not under the law. He had that quick wit and quick intelligence that enabled him to be at home in every scene of life (cf. 1 Corinthians 9:22).

### **The Date and Location**

The book of Romans was written somewhere between 55 and 57 A.D., nearly 30 years after Jesus' death. It was written from the city of Corinth, the most wicked city in the first century. We know that Corinth is where Romans was written because of the people that are mentioned. Phoebe is mentioned in Romans 16:1-2 where she is called a woman servant of the church at Cenchrea which was the port city of Corinth. Gaius is mentioned in Romans 16:23. Gaius is also mentioned in 1 Corinthians 1:14 and Acts 20:3. Erastus is named in Romans 16:24 and also in Acts 20:3 and 1 Corinthians 1:14. This book was written during one of Paul's great periods of activity when he was evangelizing the wicked city of Corinth.

### **The Occasion and Circumstances**

The occasion or the circumstances of this writing are easy to see because Rome had a natural fascination for Paul both as a Roman citizen and as an apostle to the Gentiles. He had long purposed to visit the city of Rome. In Romans 1:9-11 Paul writes about his desire to come and them. He had been praying to God for some time that he be able to come and see them, and one of the reasons he wanted to come was that he would be able to give the Roman brethren some spiritual gifts so that they would be stronger.

Paul is saying, "I have tried to come over and over again." In Romans 15:20-22, he says that he had always been hindered from coming to them because his purpose was to preach where Christ had never been named. He writes this epistle to explain his absence, knowing that he will not be able to come immediately. This epistle will pave the way for his future coming, and it will supply, in the meantime, the personal teaching that he would like for them to have.

### **Character of Writing**

What is the character of the book of Romans? Romans is a

personal letter, but it is more than a personal letter. It is also a theological treatise. It is an essay about God and God's way of saving man. Paul had very early in his ministry grasped the importance of the Roman empire as a vehicle for the dissemination of the gospel. He knew that if the gospel was going to reach the whole world it had to reach Rome because in that day all roads led to Rome. People measured distance according to how far they lived from the center of the city of Rome.

### **The Purpose**

As Paul writes this letter it is not hard to grasp his purpose. While our purpose might be something else as we study the book, Paul's purpose in writing was to present three things. **First**, Paul presented *his* gospel in Romans chapters one and two. This gospel, which is what Paul himself had received, possessed, and which belonged to him, is what he wanted to share with these Roman brethren. **Second**, Paul presented the power of God which results in salvation. He not only wanted to talk about the good news of God, but he also wanted to talk about the power of that good news. **Third**, Paul presented the righteousness of God. This is not God's character that Paul is talking about here. He does talk about the character of God as being righteous, but here it is the righteousness that God has to offer. Paul talks about the gospel, his gospel. He talks about power, God's power. He talks about the way that God makes a man righteous, and that way is by faith. Paul is not at all ashamed about any of that.

### **General Outline**

It might be good if we looked briefly at a general outline of the book. **First**, there is the introduction in Romans 1:1-15. **Second**, because this is sort of an essay or treatise, there is a thesis statement in Romans 1:16-17. **Third**, the thesis statement says that God's power to save man is in the gospel, is based on faith, and will issue in faith. Paul will discuss these

doctrines in the book. We have **number one**, the introduction; **number two**, the thesis statement; **number three**, a discussion of the doctrine of sin in Romans 1:18- 3:20. Sin is a snake. It is a terrible and destructive thing. It is a universal thing. Although Paul doesn't need to prove this, he is going to present the fact that the whole world is under sin. He is going to talk about what sin is; he is going to talk about what sin does, and he is going to talk about who it is that sins.

Then **number four** is the doctrine of justification. How does God do away with sin, and how does He make man as if he has never sinned? That is the discussion of Romans 3:21-5:21. Two words cover it: by faith. That is how God does it. God does it by grace on His part, but He also does it because men trust Him to do it and because men want Him to do it. **Number five** is the doctrine of sanctification. Justification is being made right. Sanctification is being set apart by having been made right. We are not only saved; we are sanctified. We are not only justified; we are set apart from sin. That is the discussion of Romans 6, 7, and 8. We are sanctified by the same thing that justified us: faith in God. In Romans 9 -11 we have point **number six**, the doctrine of vindication. How can Paul explain that God is righteous in saving man when the Jews, who were those to whom God had promised salvation, have been lost and damned, having rejected Christ? That is the key. They don't have the one thing that God requires, that is, being faithful with that faith being the presentation of a broken life.

The **seventh part** of this outline is the practical application, that is, the "so-what" section. I am a sinner, but I am justified by grace through faith. I am set apart from my sins. I am not one who has rejected Christ. I vindicate God, not in my rejection of Christ, but in my acceptance of Him. So what does that mean to my life? This is what Romans 12-15:3 discusses. What does it mean to me personally? What does it mean to me

in a brotherhood of believers? What does it mean to me in a world of unbelievers? What does it mean to me in relationship to the Roman government? What does it mean to me in relationship to the brothers with whom I disagree, those who I would count as weaker brothers? How am I to relate to them? I do it by faith, because of God's grace in loving acceptance. Then there is the conclusion which is the **eighth point** of the outline. In Romans 15:14-16:27 Paul has some concluding remarks about the grace of God, about the people that are with him, and about the loving people that he knows in Rome.

### **Paul's Introduction**

Let us start our study of the book itself. Paul's introductory remarks are necessary to prepare for what he will say in the book. Let us simply remember that this book is written by Paul the apostle to the Gentiles, to the chief city of the Gentiles in order to explain to them about a Jewish Savior. As Paul begins his book, he first of all has a word to say about himself in Romans 1:1: *"Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God – the gospel he promised beforehand through his prophets. . ."*

### **Paul, A Servant**

The first 15 verses serve as an introduction for Paul. Notice some things that Paul says in this introduction. First of all, notice what Paul says about himself: as Paul talks about his character he says that he is a servant and that he is an apostle. Notice which one came first. With Paul, being a slave of Christ was of primary importance, and being an apostle was of secondary importance. A servant here was a bond slave who was the property of another and who existed for only one reason, that being, to serve the one to whom he belonged. In 1 Corinthians 6:20 Paul said, *". . . you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body."* Paul was totally loyal. A slave owed his master his loyalty. The slave owned nothing,

but he owed loyalty and obedience to his master. He had no significance without the master that he served. The significance of the slave was not determined by the degree of his service, where he served, or how he served. The significance of the slave was determined by whom he served. Paul served the Lord.

Paul then says that he was called to be an apostle. Being an apostle is his commission; it is his labor. He had no human merit in being an apostle because an apostle was no mere human position. Again, the secret of Paul's significance as an apostle was not his "going," but who he "went" for. The word "apostle" means "one sent from" or "one going from." Who was Paul sent from? Jesus. Who did he go from? Jesus. Who did he go for? Jesus. To do what? He went to represent Jesus. What was his significance? Jesus. *"For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain."* (Philippians 1:21) Notice, then, two words that discuss his career and his character: servant and apostle. In Paul's career he is called and separated. "Called" is his credential. He was called from birth. In Galatians 1:15 Paul says that he was chosen to be an apostle from the womb. He was literally called at his conversion. In Acts 9:15 Paul says that he was called to suffer. But he was also called to his work. In Acts 13:2b the Holy Spirit said from heaven, *"Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."* The secret of Paul's success was in his credentials, and his credentials were in the fact that he had been called, called to salvation, called to service, and called to suffering. But Paul had not only said he was called, he also said he was separated.

### **Paul's Message**

Then there is concentration. If the rays of the sun are taken and spread out over a large pasture, they simply warm and they feel real good. But if those rays shine down through a magnifying glass and are concentrated on one single point, before long that spot is burning because the rays have been concentrated.

All of Paul's abilities and all of his gifts from God are concentrated on his separation to the gospel of God. This is where Paul concentrated his labor. He concentrated his labor in proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ. That was his message. In the next five verses, Romans 1:2-6, he discusses that message, and he says first of all that his message is a prophesied and promised message from the Old Testament. The gospel is seen in all the prophecies of the Old Testament, in all the types of the Old Testament, in the history of the Old Testament, and in all the failures of the Old Testament. The Old Testament simply cries out, "You cannot find justification in yourself." Justification is to be found in that coming seed of the woman who is the seed of Abraham of the family of David. That one person is going to be the one that fulfills all the promises of God."

Paul says that his message is a promised and prophesied message. But Paul also says that it is personified. It comes down and focuses on one individual, Christ Jesus our Lord. His humanity is declared to be royal. He is from the seed of David according to the flesh. But the primary thing we need to know is that He is declared to be the Son of God. He is declared to be the Son of God with power. He is declared to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead. It would be good for us to discuss the power of the resurrection of Christ which we will do when we get to chapter six and some other sections of this book. However, the chief thing that Paul said was that because Christ is both human and divine, He is available. Paul declares that this Jewish Savior is available for all of the Gentiles if they will just have the obedience that comes through faith. That is what the Gentiles want to know. They want to know that God's plan is not just for those Old Testament people, the Jews, but that God has always intended to bring salvation to all men.

### **Paul's Audience**

When Paul gets to this point, he has to discuss his audience. In Romans 1:7-9, what does he say about those who will hear the book for the first time? He says, first of all, in verse seven, that they are called to be saints. They are loved by God, and that's refreshing to know. It is comforting to know that they are called to be saints. That is their character. The word saint simply means "a separated one." It has nothing to do with having a super abundance of good works. It simply means that one has been called out of the world into God, and that he has been separated from dumb idols to serve the true and living God. That is the true character of these brethren in Rome; they are saints of God. Paul says in verse eight that their faith is being reported in all the world. That is the true character of these Christians. They are believers in God. Then in verse nine they are said to be servants of God, and that is the true practice of Christians.

We need to note here that the message of God was not sent to the emperor because the agency for Rome's salvation was not in the government. It was not sent to the magistrates or the senate because the agency for Rome's salvation was not in the courts. This book was not sent to their teachers, for the agency for Rome's salvation was not in its schools. This message was not sent to the philosophers, for the agency for Rome's salvation was not in man's wisdom. This book was addressed to a bunch of poor saints huddling in fear in catacombs and caves. They were the people that ruled the world, and they were the people that could bring salvation even to Caesar's household. Paul will discuss this.

### **Paul's Purposes**

Notice what Paul says about his purposes. What drove Paul? What turned Paul to God and to write this epistle? First of all, in verse ten, we see a divine direction in his life. He said, "I have wanted to come to you over and over again, but I have

been hindered up until this time.” So he tells them that he has been praying for God to make it possible for him to come to them. Providence is the key thought here. Paul did not make his own decisions. He tried to make decisions based on the will of God and what God wanted done. He opened his life and his activity to the direction and the guidance of God. In Proverbs 3:5-6 it is written, “*Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.*” Paul was motivated. He was inspired by a sense that every step he took was chosen and directed by God. We need to have that same concept.

Paul also discusses in 1:11-13 a second motivation or purpose in his life, that being, an unselfish interest in others. Brotherliness is the thought here, his relationship to them as brothers. The first thing Paul talks about in this section is the desire to have fellowship with them. He is telling them that the fellowship that are to have is a fellowship based on the mutual encouragement of faith. They believed together, and so Paul could give them the spiritual strength of viewing his belief. A numerical increase was also Paul’s desire. He did not want to come to Rome on a tourist trip. He did not want to come to Rome only to be personally benefitted by them. He wanted to come to Rome to express this unselfish interest of their increase in faith and their increase numerically by his coming.

Perhaps the primary reason and the primary motivation for Paul’s life, in addition to his desire to see these brethren, is expressed in verses 14 and 15. This could simply be a compulsion to meet life’s responsibilities. He was motivated by the fact that he was divinely directed in life. He was also motivated by the fact that he had an unselfish interest in them. He was also primarily compelled by the debt that he had, the need that he had to meet life’s responsibilities. In Romans 1:14 the New International Version does not put it as strongly as the original language does. In the New International translation it reads, “*I*

*am obligated both to Greeks and non-Greeks, both to the wise and the foolish.*” The original language (Greek) says, “I am in debt.” “Debt” is a stronger word than “obligation.” I may have an obligation to be kind. I may have an obligation to be gracious. I may even have an obligation to be faithful. But sometimes I do not view these obligations as fully as I would if I thought I had a debt to do all of those things.

When I owe somebody something, there is a compulsion to see that they are paid so that I can be free from that debt and, as Paul will say in chapter thirteen of this book, owe no man anything, except to love him. Regardless of any national status, Jew or Greek, regardless of any social class, whether educated or non-educated, Paul felt an indebtedness to these people. This verse could be read as if Paul were saying, “I am indebted to God.” That is true. Paul is indebted to God, but that is not what he says in this verse. It’s true, I am indebted to God for salvation, but I also owe all men a presentation of the gospel of Christ, and that is why Paul said he was eager. His eagerness was to preach the gospel in Rome. Read again Romans 1:14-15 as it should be translated. “I am a debtor, both to Greeks and non-Greeks. I am a debtor, both to the wise and to the foolish. That is why I am so eager to preach the gospel also to you that are in Rome.” Paul is thinking, “If I could just get to Rome and proclaim the gospel of Christ, then from that city the gospel would spread to all the world.” For there the gospel met its greatest religious test in the paganism that pervaded that city. There the gospel reached its greatest political test in the imperial Roman system that was there. There the gospel reached its greatest social test in the city’s diverse population. And it reaches its greatest moral test in the vast criminality that existed there.

Paul was a pioneer, and pioneers want to go where the greatest test is found. They want to blaze new trails. They want to conquer new foes. Paul felt that if he could ever get to Rome, his gospel would be tested against the strongest tools and the

strongest enemies that the devil had against God. And he was confident of victory. That is why this book is loved so much. Romans is God at His best against Satan at his worst. In chapter eight we end up with God totally victorious. In chapter eight we will end up with no condemnation and no separation and no victory of the devil over us.

### **Conclusion**

It is easy to understand why Paul wanted to say these words before he got into the book itself, before he got into the reason he was writing the book, and before he got into the discussion of salvation by faith. He wanted these brethren to know that he would be there if he could. But since he could not be there he wanted to provide for them the attitude and the ammunition for the battle. He wanted them to know that Christianity is a battleground and not a playground. That is why he writes this book, to provide them with all of the testimony of God's love for them, of Jesus' gift for them, and of the Spirit's help for them, that they might learn that they are more than conquerors through Jesus who loved them and that they might live the life of purity in that great city of impurity. That same message is needed today as men strive to live pure and honorable lives before God. May God give all of us the peace and the grace in believing in Him.

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# The Thesis Statement

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## Romans 1:14-17

### Review and Introduction

We are finished with the introduction in which we saw that this book is highly respected by the religious world and that there have been more commentaries and books written about it than any single book in the Bible. We have seen that Paul is particularly proud of the brethren in the city of Rome. “. . . *your faith is being reported . . .*” he said, “. . . *all over the world*” (Romans 1:8b). They are a shining example of what God can do in the midst of a wicked city. Rome was a very proud city, proud of its place and its power. The gospel had come from Jerusalem, the capitol city of one of the small nations Rome had conquered. The Christians in that day were not among the elite of society. They were common people, often slaves. Rome had known many great philosophers and philosophies, so why pay any attention to a “fable” about a Jew who arose from the dead? Christians looked on each other as brothers and sisters, all one, all equal in Christ. That went against the very grain of Roman pride and dignity. To think of a little Jewish tentmaker going to Rome to preach a message about a crucified Jewish Messiah is almost humorous. Paul had reasons, humanly speaking, therefore, to be ashamed, ashamed of his position and ashamed of his message. However, Paul was not ashamed of the gospel. He had confidence in his message, and he has given us several reasons that explain why he was not ashamed.

In order to introduce this chapter let us go back to Romans 1:14-17 and see Paul make three beautiful claims about what he

is. He says, I am a debtor. I am eager. I am unashamed. What bold claims!

### **Two Reasons Why Paul Was Not Ashamed of the Gospel**

Paul stated two reasons why he was not ashamed of the gospel: **number one**, the power of the gospel; and **number two**, the righteousness of the gospel.

The word “power” in Romans 1:16 is from the Greek word “*dunamis*,” from which we derive the English word dynamite, dynamo, or dynamic. All of these English words are rooted in this Greek word *dunamis*. You might want to get out your concordance or read through your Bible and check the times that the word “power” is found. This word has already been used in Romans 1:4 where it says that Jesus was raised with power or declared by the resurrection to be the Son of God with power. So the word “power” as used here speaks of Jesus’ resurrection. In Romans 1:20 it speaks of the eternal power of God. In Romans 15:13 it speaks of the power of the Holy Spirit. In 1 Corinthians 1:18 it speaks of the message of the cross being God’s power. In 1 Corinthians 1:24 Jesus is called the power of God. In 1 Corinthians 2:4 Paul states that the word of God did not come with weakness but came with a demonstration of the Spirit’s power. In Ephesians 1:19-20 Paul prayed that I might know the exceeding great power that raised Jesus from the dead that works in me. In Ephesians 3:20 Paul says, “*Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, . . .*” In Philippians 3:10 Paul wanted to know the power of the resurrection of Christ. In 1 Thessalonians 1:5 Paul says that when the word of God came, it did not come in word only but also in power. In 2 Timothy 1:7 Paul says to Timothy, who was a timid young evangelist, that God did not give us a spirit of fear, but of power and of a sound mind. So Paul was not ashamed of the gospel because it was the dynamic of God. It

was God's dynamo to bring life and power into people's life. It was also God's dynamite to explode all of the evil thoughts and all of the wickedness of the world and defeat the devil himself. No wonder Paul was eager to come to the city of Rome, for Rome was a city that deified power, and he wanted to come with the only power that can change man. As was seen in the last lesson, the power to change Rome is not in the emperor; it is not in the courts; it is not in the classroom; it is not in the philosophers, and it is not in the senate. The only power to change the life of man is found in the gospel of Jesus Christ, and that is why Paul wants to come. That is why he is not ashamed of the gospel. Why in the world would anyone be ashamed of the most powerful thing in all the world?

### **The Righteousness of the Gospel**

There is a second reason why Paul said that he was not ashamed of the gospel, that being that this righteousness is not God's character of righteousness (1:17a). This righteousness is the way that God makes man righteous. God's character is revealed, but Paul is particularly interested in the way that the righteous God makes man righteous. The word "righteousness" is used in some form over 60 times in the book of Romans. It is translated "just," "righteousness," or "justification." He was not ashamed of the gospel because it reveals not only God's righteous character but also the way this righteous character of God is shared with man. God's righteousness is seen in the punishment of sin, in the death of Christ, in the resurrection of Christ, but primarily in making salvation possible to the believing sinner.

Another reason Paul was eager to come to Rome was because Rome was the cesspool of the world. Even its own writers said that. Seneca, among others, wrote about the wickedness of Rome. One man wrote that Rome was the vile sewer into which all the trash of the Roman empire was flooded. He said that it overflowed with wicked people with fat

eyes or eyes sunk deep into fat who were just trying to think of their next meal or their next sexual experience. This was the city to which Paul was so eager to come because nothing could bring salvation except the message that he had. That was why he was so grateful for the church that was there, and that was why he was so anxious to go there himself.

### **The Seven Elements of Paul's Gospel**

Romans 1:16-17 are the two most important verses in the book of Romans. In these verses, notice seven elements of Paul's gospel that made him unashamed of the gospel of Christ. This is the thesis statement because these words form the discussion for the rest of the book.

**Number one**, he talks about the **source of the gospel**. He says, *"I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God . . ."* (Romans 1:16) The source of this gospel is not in Paul's study in Arabia. The source of this gospel is not in Paul's reflection of what the world needs. He is not here to give good advice. He is here to tell the very word of God. Paul could not be ashamed of anything that came from God. That is why Paul is not ashamed. That is why he is proud of the gospel, because its source is found in God, God's deep knowledge, God's deep love, God's deep kindness. The fountain of the gospel wells up from an all powerful God.

**Number two**, Paul talks about the **nature of the gospel**. He says that it is the power of God unto salvation. It has already been discussed that the Greek word *dunamis* is the word from which we have the word dynamo or dynamic. The Jews were ashamed of the gospel; it was a stumbling block to them because of their religious pride. They thought that their power was in the law and in their observance of the law. That was why they were constantly ashamed. The source of their power was in their religious observance. Paul will discuss this fully starting in Romans 2:17. The gospel, the power of God, was to the Greeks foolishness because of their human wisdom. They

thought that power was in their intellect. They thought power was in their learning and in their education. Paul will discuss that fully beginning in Romans 1:18. The gospel was considered by the Romans to be a weakness. The Romans deified imperial might. They deified the power that was found in the Caesars and in the Roman Legion. However, even when they were at their most powerful, Seneca and Juvenal, along with some other people, would write of the dread moral weakness that they found in the city of Rome. Their strength was actually their weakness, and what they counted weakness was actually God's strength. So Paul was not ashamed of the gospel because its power would never wane. Its power would be triumphant over all of man's religion, over all of man's morality, and over all of man's military might.

**Number three**, Paul preached the **purpose of the gospel**. The purpose of the gospel is salvation. Paul says that the gospel is the power of God unto salvation. What a beautiful word! It was a word well known in Rome because the basic meaning of this word "salvation" is deliverance. The Romans had always applied the word to national deliverance by their great military heroes. When one of those heroes would come home from having delivered Rome from some enemy, he would ride on a beautiful white charger (horse), and behind him would be his army, riding on all different colors of horses and behind them, the foot soldiers, and behind them, the captives that they were bringing back. They would shout praises for the deliverance, the salvation, that had been brought to the Roman empire. Our Savior came riding on a donkey, the foal of a donkey, and they spread palm branches in his path. And what did they cry? Save now! (cf. Matthew 21:9-11; Mark 11:9-10; Luke 19:37-40; John 12:12-15; Psalm 118:25-26). Their thought was the same as the Romans. Deliver us from our enemies! Paul is not ashamed of the gospel because it delivers sinners from the penalty, the power, and the inclination to sin. If men and women are to be

saved, it must be through faith in Christ as it is proclaimed in the gospel that Paul preached.

**Number four**, Paul was not ashamed of the gospel due to the **scope of the gospel**. It was for everyone. This is the power of God unto salvation to everyone. The word which is translated “everyone” might also be translated “each one.” Everyone is an inclusive word. Anyone is a stronger inclusive word. There is no one outside of the power of this gospel. This is no exclusive message as the law had been. The law was given only to the Jew. The gospel is given to all men. The reason for this is simple. All men need to be saved. Romans 3:23 will state, “. . . *for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, . . .*” Jesus said, “. . . *‘Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.’*” (Mark 16:15-16) This is what the book of Romans is going to say. Paul says that this gospel is God’s power to save everyone in all the world or anyone in all the world. He says that this is a gospel that will save, that it is for salvation to the Jew first and also to the Gentile. The Jew receiving the gospel first does not suggest that they are any better than the Gentiles. This simply states historical fact, that the gospel went first to the Jew, and then it went to the Gentile.

It is interesting, as we will study in another chapter, that this book, the Bible, is a Jewish book. All of the Old Testament was written by Jews, and all the New Testament, with the exception of two books, was written by Jews. The Old Testament concerned itself with a Jewish Savior, and for a period of time the church was primarily composed of Jews. So the Jews might think they were again specially privileged. However, Paul is simply saying, “No, it just came to you first.” That is just the way it happened historically. There is no national or racial distinction in Christianity. Galatians 3:26-28 says, “*You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.*”

*There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.*” In Ephesians 2 Paul talks about breaking down the middle wall or partition that he might make in himself of the two, Jew and Gentile, one new man, so making peace. Anybody that brings any nationalistic pride, any racial prejudice, or any kind of dividing wall into Christianity goes against the very purpose of Jesus. In Ephesians 2:14-15a we read, *“For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations.”* No one must bring any kind of prejudice into the kingdom of Christ.

Element **number five** of this remarkable gospel is the **requirement of the gospel**. It is God’s power unto salvation to everyone who believes. Here is the magic word: believe. The word that is translated faith or belief in the Bible literally means to totally trust, to rely, and to commit ones self to something. A whole lot more is involved here than mere knowledge and mental ascent. There is a determined stance that is taken. It is here that man stands. Man cannot do otherwise. The evidence is beyond dispute. Man must believe. Isn’t it interesting that God does not ask men to behave in order to be saved, but to believe and then promises that they will be able to behave? If men will just believe in Jesus, then that belief will begin to change their life. Paul will develop this theme. As he develops the book of Romans, he will end in chapters 12:1 through 15:13 with a grand statement of the life that results from this righteousness.

The **sixth element** is to notice the **efficiency of the gospel**. It reveals the righteousness of God. This phrase is found seven times in the book. It would be good to write these down. In 3:5, 3:21, 3:22, 3:23, 3:26, it is seen that chapter three must be about the righteousness of God. Then in 10:3 it is found twice. Seven other times this phrase is found in this book. A study of these texts will reveal that this phrase is practically equivalent

to saying that this is God's way of justifying the ungodly. God's method for liberating His love while He magnifies His law is what is being discussed. It is not a translation of God's righteousness, but an explanation of it. God's righteousness is found in God's justification. We know more about the righteousness of God in His justification of the sinner than we do in any other act He completes.

**The seventh and last element** of this gospel that caused Paul not to be ashamed is the **outcome of the gospel**. This is the most important thing. The bottom line is: what is the outcome of the gospel? What is the result of all of this? The answer is life! Paul says the righteous shall live by faith. Or, the righteous by faith shall live. This phrase is a quotation of Habakkuk 2:4. This Old Testament text is quoted three times in the New Testament: here in Romans 1:17, in Galatians 3:11, and in Hebrews 10:38. The phrase simply means that people are given what God has. God has life. He is life. People are given what God has because of the gospel of Christ, and they are given it, this text says, on the basis of faith from first to last.

### **The Outcome of the Gospel: Life**

This way of making man righteous is "from faith" and "unto faith." The word translated "from" is the Greek word "*ek*," which you see in the sign that says "exit." This is the way out. On this basis it is used of the cause by which the act expressed is aided, sustained, and perfected. So how has this salvation and this life that we have come to be? By faith. How is it aided? By faith. How is it sustained? By faith. How is it carried on forever? By faith.

What is the goal of all of this? That is the word "unto" which is from the Greek word "*eis*." It is also found in Acts 2:38 where it says, "*Repent and be baptized . . . for (unto, to reach this end), the forgiveness of your sins.*" The word literally means "with this end in view." It denotes the limit reached implying the purpose of the action that is being performed.

What is the purpose of life? It is to create faith. It is like a perpetual motion machine or like a continual action. Because one sees the evidence in the gospel of Christ, their faith brings about life within them. This life that God has now caused within me, has generated within me, which stirs within me, and that causes to grow within me, creates faith. My salvation begins in faith. It continues in faith. It grows in faith. It is perfected in faith. It ends in faith. What a remarkable discussion this is!

### **Development of the Thesis**

This thesis will be developed in the book. When one studies Romans, it is as if they walk into a courtroom. Jesus is on trial; the gospel of Jesus is on trial, but more than that, the world is on trial. The gospel is going to win, and the world is going to lose. Paul will call, in Romans 1:18-3:20, Jews and Gentiles both to the stand. And he will find them guilty before God. They will be guilty in spite of all of their education. They will be guilty in spite of all of their morality, and they will be guilty in spite of all of their religion. When man is lost and he looks to what he knows or what he can know, he looks to the intellectual pursuit of man, and he learns all that he can learn. Education simply cries out, "I can't help. There is no help in me. I cannot relieve you of that lost state." So he then turns to morality and begins to be good because it is right to be good and because it is just to be good. He then becomes a righteous and just person. He does everything that is right, and nothing that he can find that is wrong will he willingly do. But finally morality cries, "There is no help in me. I cannot save you either. All the good works you do simply magnify the fact that you have done bad in the past." So he turns to religion, and he starts offering sacrifices, and he starts doing the good deeds of God, and he starts partaking of communion, and he starts preaching, and he starts teaching, and he sings, and he prays, and he does everything that religion teaches. And finally

religion says, “There is no help in me either! I can’t help you! I can’t bring salvation to you!” For neither what man knows, nor the morality that man practices, nor the religion that man professes will save him eternally, apart from faith in Christ.

After that, Paul explains God’s marvelous way of salvation, justification by faith. He says that what God requires is that people quit trusting in themselves and begin trusting in Him. That is hard to believe, isn’t it? That is nearly too good to be true. All that God wants from me is a broken and a contrite spirit that believes and trusts in Him and really wants to do His will. So at this point, Paul answers his accusers and defends God’s way of salvation. His accusers say, however, “This plan of salvation will encourage people to sin.” They cry, “It is against the very law of God. You are making the law an unholy thing.” In response Paul says, “No, I am not at all.” He simply explains how the Christian can experience liberty and victory and security in chapters six through eight.

Chapters 9 through 11 are not merely a parenthesis where Paul discusses the state of the Jewish nation. These chapters simply justify, illustrate, and vindicate the activity of God’s grace through the centuries. There were Jewish believers in the Roman assemblies who would naturally ask, “Well, what about Israel? How does God’s righteousness relate to them in this new age of the church?” In these three chapters Paul justifies God’s ability to save the sinner in any age by the faith that he would have in Christ.

### **Conclusion**

Paul then concludes with a practical outworking of God’s righteousness in the life of the believer. This conclusion begins with a dedication to God in Romans 12:1-2. It continues with ministry in the church and the world in Romans 12:3-21. Paul then talks about obedience to the government in chapter 13. In the beautiful section of Romans 14:1-15:13, he told Jews and Gentiles, strong and weak, how they are to live together in harmony and in joy. The weak are to be supported by the

strong, and the weak are not to judge the strong because of their strength. Paul explains his plans and greets his friends by name in the last part of Romans 15 and 16. This is a fabulous discussion about a fabulous grace in a fabulous book. The next chapter will begin the discussion of the doctrines that are in the background of God's great work of saving man. God give you great peace in believing in Jesus.

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# THE SINFUL STATE OF THE INTELLECTUAL AND MORALIST

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## **Romans 1:18-2:16**

### **Review and Introduction**

Paul could have entered this part of the book by simply saying, “Court is now in session.” He could begin this way because at this point in the letter the message is going to be the sinfulness of man. The theme of the book is the righteousness of God. But Paul had to begin with the unrighteousness of man because until the time comes that man realizes that he is a sinner, he will not appreciate the gracious salvation that God offers in Jesus Christ. Paul follows the basic Biblical pattern in writing this book. He will first talk about law and the condemnation of men under it. Then he will talk about grace and the salvation that grace brings.

### **The Doctrine of Sin**

Our study now focuses on the doctrine of sin. This doctrine is discussed in Romans 1:18-3:20. It has three points and a conclusion, the conclusion being a “therefore.” Paul talks first of all about the intellectual and the fact that he lives in a state of sin. In chapter 1:18-32 we read that education cannot allow us or cannot cause us to avoid sin. Paul then talks about the moralist, the man that does right, and his state of sin. In chapter 2:1-16 morals cannot relieve us from sin. He talks about the religionist, particularly the Jew, and his state of sin. In 2:17-3:8 religious observance cannot remove sin. Paul then has a

“therefore,” a conclusion: “all are under sin.” The intellectual, the moralist, and the religionist are all under sin.

### **The Intellectual State of Sin The Inexcusableness of Sin**

In Romans 1:18-20 we notice the intellectual state of sin and the inexcusable character of unbelief.

### **The Revelation of God**

Notice from these verses God’s three-fold revelation of Himself. **First**, He revealed His wrath. The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and all unrighteousness of men. That is revealed in the judgments that God brings upon the earth. Whether a person believes in Jehovah or not, whether he has ever read the Bible or not, when great judgments of nature or war come upon man, man looks up. Man thinks about a creator. Man thinks about a god that is angry. That’s why Isaiah said in Isaiah 26:9b, *“When your judgments come upon the earth, the people of the world learn righteousness.”* So God has revealed His wrath and His judgments.

**Second**, there is an innate knowledge, according to verse 19, a natural knowledge revealed in the inner consciousness of man. Paul said that which is known about God is plain *in* them because God made it plain *to* them. Because God revealed originally His character to man, there is inside of man an insatiable need for God. If he does not know the true God, he will create false gods. He will begin with himself and work down until finally he worships the insects and the bugs of the world. Man will worship. Solomon said in the book of Ecclesiastes that God has put eternity into the heart of man (Ecclesiastes 3:11). We may not understand that; we may not have to understand it. It is God’s word, not may not understand how God did it. We just know that wherever we go in this world, people believe in something other than themselves. They

have to have a god because God has revealed Himself within the heart of man.

**Third**, God's eternal power and divine nature, His divinity, is revealed in the creation. It is revealed in those things of the creation. There is enlightenment. It is apparent because God has enlightened them. What is revealed? God's divine power and intelligence, His order, and His wisdom have been revealed. When have they been revealed? From the creation of the world. How are they revealed? In His works. So it is inexcusable not to believe because God has revealed Himself.

### **The Consequence of Unbelief**

In Romans 1:21-23 notice the inevitable consequences of that unbelief. In verse 21 Paul discusses the degradation of their religion. They knew God, but they did not glorify Him as God. They didn't give thanks to God. Their hearts became futile, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Man did not begin as a polytheist and ascend to be a monotheist, a worshiper of one God. He started out a worshiper of one God and developed into a worshiper of many, a polytheist. This is the law of reversion to type. Evolution is not taught here. It is not that man started low and climbed high. It is that man started high and fell low.

In verses 22-23 Paul talks about the corruption of man's intelligence. For example, Adam was so smart that he was able to give all the animals their biological names. He was a co-worker with God. But when he ate of the fruit and started the life of sin that his knowledge brought to him, he had to run from God. Before long man began to debase the deity, as verse 23 says. They exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles. You can see that in the history of the pagan religions. They worshiped men like the Pharaoh of Egypt, or in the day that Romans was written, the Caesar of Rome or Apollo of Greece. They worshiped birds, the eagle of Rome; animals, the bull of India; crawling things, the serpents of Assyria; down to

the chief god of the Egyptian panoply which was the scarabaeus or scarab, the little beetle, the insect. Can you imagine man finally falling to the place that he worshiped bugs? Today men worship their cars or their houses or their jobs, the dope that they take or the cigarettes that they smoke. We have descended from a great belief in God to an unbelief in God to the point that we will believe nearly anything.

### **The Divine Forsaking Because of Unbelief**

When man has reached this state there is only one thing that can happen, and that is the forsaking of the divine because of unbelief as Paul states in Romans 1:24-25. In these verses we see that God gave them up to idolatry, to loving the wrong things. They exchanged the truth of God for a lie; they worshiped and they served created things rather than the Creator. They forgot who they were supposed to praise. It is a tragic thing, but God gave them over. When you give yourself up to something God will give you over to that thing. It isn't because He is mad, although He may be. It is because He is loving, which He must be. God wants man to repent, and sometimes the only way that man will repent is to get to the bottom of himself where finally he has to trust in God. So God is in love as well as in judgment. But God in love has given these Gentiles over to their intellectual pursuits, and that has resulted in the fact that they have changed the glory of God into the likeness of sinful things. He gave them up to loving the wrong things.

In 1:26-27 we see that God gave them over to sensuality and wrong living. What you love finally affects how you live. Because they love the wrong things, by living in idolatry, they began to live the wrong way, in sensuality. Their loving the wrong things brought about all kinds of wrong living. But Paul centers on the worst of these things to show the depth to which man, when left alone, will sink. If all I have is what man can teach me, if all I can find out is what I can learn in the

universities and among the philosophers of the day, then I will love the wrong thing and I will live the wrong way.

In 1:28-32 Paul will talk about the fact that God gave them over to depravity, that is, He gave them over to wrong thinking. When you think wrongly, that is the end of the deal. Wrong loving followed by wrong living leads to wrong thinking. Because they refused to have God in their knowledge and did not think it worthwhile to remember this, God gave them over to a reprobate mind to do those things that are not fitting. Paul lists approximately 21 of those things in this text. Other listings can be found in passages like Galatians 5 and James 1 along with many other passages that discuss all the individual sins of man.

But the point is that God gave them over to the kind of mind that cannot make sound moral judgments. Today when someone is asked why they have let their life become exceedingly wicked or why their life gets in disarray, the answer often times is, “I don’t know. I don’t understand why I did that.” They are telling you the truth, because God has given them over to a depraved mind and they are not able to make those good moral judgments. That’s the state of anyone who strives to be right by intellectual pursuit.

### **The Moralist’s State of Sin**

#### **Ten Principles of God’s Moral Judgment**

However, there are people that are not immoral, both among the Jews and the Gentiles, and they boast, or depend, upon their moral practices. These are the people that Romans 2:1-16 discusses. This is not an easy section to teach because it is so repulsive to think about the fallen state of man. It even appears that since Paul says so much so quickly that he is anxious to get by this section in order to get to the good news. This section is the bad news, that being, that the intellectual man is lost. The bad news is that the moralist is lost also. The bad news is that the religionist is lost, and Paul, just like us,

does not like to dwell on the bad news. So he is saying all of this very quickly.

In these 16 verses Paul lists ten principles of God's moral judgment for those who want to be righteous and for those who strive to be righteous because of what they do, because of their morality, and because of their moral rightness and correctness. **Number one**, if I stand in judgment without Christ, trying to get by on my moral observance, then judgment will consider my personal guilt. In Romans 2:1 Paul says, "*You, therefore, have no excuse . . .*" The intellectual has no excuse. Whoever this is, they have no excuse. ". . . *you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge the other, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgment do the same things.*" The moralist is condemned more often because he is doing to some degree the very thing he condemns in others.

**Number two**, this judgment will be according to reality. Romans 2:2 says, "*Now we know that God's judgment against those who do such things is based on truth.*" This would be better translated, "It is based upon reality." In condemning others, the moralist declares, "I am without sin," and thus condemns himself to be a liar because John said, "*If we claim that we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives.*" (1 John 1:10)

**Number three**, Romans 2:3 says that if I stand without Jesus in judgment, judgment will be inescapable in its effect. "*So when you, a mere man, pass judgment on them and yet do the same things, do you think you will escape God's judgment?*" I cannot escape the judgment of God. That day cannot be averted. Hebrews 9:27 says, "*Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, . . .*" Without Jesus as our righteousness, judgment day is just that; it is judgment.

**Number four**, if I stand in judgment without Jesus, judgment will consider the fact that God's goodness has always been available. Romans 2:4 says, "*Or do you show contempt*

*for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness leads you toward repentance?"*

The greatest test is not in the fact that I have violated righteousness, but that I have despised mercy. When I stand before God without the faith in Christ that was available, I stand there saying to God, "I care nothing for your kindness; I care nothing for your love; I care nothing for your mercy. I stand here demanding what I deserve." And the truth is that I will get exactly what I deserve.

**Number five**, the principle of judgment is seen. Not only is there a future judgment but also a present judgment. Romans 2:5 says, "*But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed.*" Judgment is a continuing process. It is going on right now, but it will reach its climax in eternity. I am cast out because I stood here without Jesus as my righteousness, without faith as my possession. I am cast into an eternal hell. That is the future that awaits the moralist.

**Number six** shows another principle of judgment. Romans 2:6 states that the principle of judgment is based upon divine justice. If I stand in judgment without Jesus who is my justice and without faith as my possession then God will give to me according to what I have done. If we go to judgment without Jesus, we will be judged by our works. That means we will be judged eternally to the degree that our works deserve. There is a great deal of debate and dispute about this, but we know it is true because it is stated here. If we go to judgment without Jesus as our righteousness and without faith as our possession, then we will get exactly the punishment that our works deserve.

Principle **number seven** is seen in Romans 2:7-10. The principle is that this judgment will have both rewards and regrets. There will be many rewards for those who have sought God. Those rewards are received by faith. Is that not the only way that God can really be sought? We found out He cannot be

sought by intellectualism. We are finding out that He cannot be sought by morality. We are going to find out in Romans 2:17 that He cannot be sought by religion, by works, or by law. If we seek God by faith, we will receive from God glory, honor, incorruption, peace, and eternal life. What great rewards these are. But if we are self-seeking, if we seek our own things rather than the things of God, if we reject the truth, if we follow evil, if we pursue our own desires, lusts and pleasures, then judgment will bring indignation (God's), wrath (God's), tribulation (ours), and anguish (ours). God's indignation and wrath will be expressed toward us in the tribulation and the anguish that we bear eternally.

In Romans 2:11 we see in principle **number eight** that this judgment is impartial in its scrutiny. Paul says, "*For God does not show favoritism.*" This judgment, or these rewards, will come first for the Jew and then for the Gentile. The reason for this is because God has no favorites. God does not show favoritism. He does not show partiality. This judgment will be impartial in its scrutiny. It will not matter who you are. It will not matter where you came from. It will not matter what religion you are. None of those things will matter. The only thing that will matter in that day is what you have done if you stand there without Jesus as your righteousness.

In Romans 2:12-15 we find principle **number nine** which states that judgment is universal in its scope. This is a difficult section to follow. Paul says simply that there is condemnation to those that are without the law because they sin, and to those that are under the law because it is sin that condemns, not the law. Speaking to, or of, the Gentile he said that if the Gentile does the things that the law says without ever having read the law, that simply proves he has the law written in his heart. And he stands also, not only judged, but in judgment with the Jew who had the law revealed and did not do any better than the Gentile in following it. The world is lost. It is absolutely lost. Anybody who does not possess Jesus as his righteousness and

faith as his motive and his reality of life, that person is judged. It is not that he is not under the law of God. Everybody in all the world is under the law of God. There is no one in this world who does not have something wrong in their life. They may not have the Biblical definition of stealing or adultery, and yet, everyone knows that these things are wrong. There is a universal recognition of right and wrong in the world.

Principle **number ten** is seen in Romans 2:16; the standard of judgment is the gospel of Christ. Judgment will take place on the day when God will judge men's secrets through Jesus Christ as the gospel declares. When judgment comes it will not simply be the sin question that is stated in this verse. It will also be the Son question. How have we treated Jesus? We have a new life founded upon a new Lord, Jesus Christ.

### Conclusion

What was the tone we heard in these verses? The apostle deals with some tremendous certainties. The first of these certainties is the *certainty of judgment* itself. You can count on it. It is coming. Second is the *universality of this judgment*. It is going to absolutely judge all mankind. Then there are the *principles of that judgment*, that they go all of the way to the judging of man by their own realities, with the *result of that judgment* being a final reward with Jesus or judgment in hell. These truths should be pressed home on every man's conscience. They show that there is no possibility of self-deception in the matter of the ultimate issues of right and wrong. They are intended to lead, and if properly applied will undoubtedly lead to the conviction of sin and to repentance before God. That is what Romans 2:4 declared. This is a hurried lesson, but it must be remembered that the book was written to be read in somewhat of a hurry so that we can catch the tenor and the flow of what Paul has to say. Look further into chapters 1:18-2:16 for some further detail, and see the individual sins for which man is condemned and the utter

inescapable character of it by anything in man's knowledge or in man's character. How about religion? Surely religion can relieve us from that. This will be the burden of the next chapter. May you find release from sin and peace with Jesus.

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# THE SINFUL STATE OF THE RELIGIONIST

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## Romans 2:17-29

### Review and Introduction

After laying down the principles of divine judgment in Romans 1:18-2:16, the apostle Paul, in chapter 2:17, makes a direct appeal to the Jews to prove to them the significance of their unrighteousness. The Jew is clearly taught that special privileges cannot shield him from the judgment of God if he continues to obey unrighteousness.

In Romans 1:18-32 Paul has shown that the Gentiles are subject to judgment because of their unrighteousness. In Romans 2:1-16 the self-righteous moralist, whether Jew or Gentile, is taught the same lesson. This section, 2:17-29, proves beyond all question that the Jew had failed to keep the law. The Jew represents in our study all those who trust in their religious position or their religious performance. Such a person as the Jew did have greater insight, but his pride and his self-sufficiency are useless. Not only are they useless, they are positively dangerous. They heighten his condemnation and finally lead to God's name being dishonored among the Gentiles.

### The Claims of Jewish Privileges

In Romans 2:17-18 we see six claims of privilege made by the Jews.

**Claim number one was the name Jew.** Paul says, “. . . if you call yourself a Jew.” That was both a nationalistic and a

racial claim, but they thought that being a Jew made them better than the Gentiles, that it made them superior and gave them the advantage of acceptability to God. They had forgotten what Ezekiel had taught them over and over again, particularly what was stated in Ezekiel 18:20. That verse discusses the fact that righteousness is not hereditary. The son does not inherit the righteousness nor the sin of his father. So being a Jew, being an American, being a Chinese, or being a Russian does not bring any privileges before God's court. It may bring some privileges in physical life because of the environment the richness, or the natural resources of an area, but it brings no eternal nor religious privilege to be of some particular nation or social caste.

**The second claim was the document.** This claim by the Jews stated that they rested upon, relied upon, leaned upon, and were supported by the law. It is true that the law was given to support them, but not by making them righteous. It will be seen again and again, just as it has already been seen, that righteousness cannot be obtained by law. The law was to support them by making them aware of their sin, or of what sin was, and therefore causing them to shun sin. For a lawbreaker to lean upon the law for support is folly. You cannot lean upon what you have violated. You cannot lean upon what you have broken. The Jews had broken the law, so for them to lean upon the very law they had broken was ridiculous.

**The third claim was a deity.** The Jews bragged about their relationship to God. They assumed that Jehovah was theirs alone. It is true that they did have a particular relationship to Jehovah. Jehovah had chosen them as the nation through whom the seed, Jesus Christ, was to come. Because of this, God gave them a law that He did not give anyone else. He sent them prophets which He did not send to anyone else. And He gave them blessings that He did not give anyone else. Because of this they assumed that God was being partial to them, that they were the favorite of God, and that God was theirs and theirs

alone. That is the way some people feel today. They boast about God being their particular and peculiar God. These are normally the people who deny the knowledge of Him to countless numbers of souls. That is the way it was with the Jew. He claimed that God was his alone, and because of that, he did not feel any necessity of sharing God.

All of these claims are basically true. Every one of these things they do have. They are privileged. In Romans 3:1 the question will be asked, *“What advantage, then, is there in being a Jew, . . .”* Paul will answer, *“Much in every way! First of all, they have been entrusted with the very words of God.”* (Romans 3:2) So the Jews did have privileges, and their claims were true. However, we are going to find out that their failure to live up to those claims caused them to be more deserving of blame.

**Their fourth claim was knowledge.** In Romans 2:18a we have Paul saying that what is important is knowing not only the facts, but knowing the will of God. Was that true? It could be, because as you read the Old Testament, you do not simply read historical facts, but you watch God’s reaction to what Israel did, and you learn His will. If they did know His will and if this claim is true, that would only bring greater condemnation upon them in their failure to do His will.

**The fifth claim was discernment** as seen in the latter part of 3:18 where it says that the Jews were able to distinguish between the right and the wrong in the will of God. It says that they were fully instructed. They could approve of what was superior. This would be the ability to distinguish between shades of right and wrong. Again, that claim could be true because the law did talk about some crimes for which a person would be punished simply by having to replace something, or for other crimes for which they had to give their life, or for some sins for which they simply had to go through some ceremonial washing. God makes it very plain that not all wrongs are equal in His sight. All wrongs are wrong, but they

are not equally wrong. If they were equally wrong, the person that touched a dead body would be stoned to death just like the person who killed that person would be stoned to death. So in the law they did have the ability to discern between shades of right and wrong. Would that not bring even greater condemnation? If a person was able to distinguish not only the right from the wrong, but the good from the better, and the better from the best, would he not then be obligated to do the best that he knew how?

**Their sixth claim was possession of special knowledge** as seen in the latter portion of 3:18. They claimed this because they were instructed from the law. The word translated “instructed” is the source of the English word “catechism.” A catechism is a list of do’s and don’ts. It is a list of laws, rules and regulations, a list of things that make you a part of a particular religion or a particular group. The Jew knew his catechism well, but he had forgotten that a high standard of instruction calls for a high standard of life. Again, there is no argument that the Jews had these very special privileges. These six things were theirs because of their relationship to God’s law. But the point is that their relationship gave them no claim to God’s acceptability or favor. Something else is demanded before they can have the favor of God.

### **Jewish Claim of Superiority**

In Romans 2:19-21 Paul talks about the Jewish claims of superiority. They not only claimed they were privileged, but they thought that because of that privilege they were superior to other people.

There was, **first of all, the claim of leadership** in verse 19. The Jews claimed that they were a guide to the blind. That word “guide” indicates their claim in that they could show the way through what they taught. They had received the word of God, so they were not like these “blind Gentiles.” They saw the way, and since they saw the way, they claimed to be a guide to

those that were also in the way. But they really weren't guides. They knew the way. Even Jesus says that they taught the way, but they didn't walk in the way. They told what was right, and they bound upon other people what was right, but they themselves would not follow that way. It is not enough to point the way. One must walk in the way. A shepherd does not point where he wants the sheep to go. He walks in the direction he wants the sheep to walk. He does not point the sheep to the water he wants them to drink. He gets down and drinks it himself. He does not point the sheep to the pasture where he wants them to rest. He goes and lays down there himself. When Peter was asked what he was to do in John 21:19, Jesus told him one thing: "*Follow me.*" He didn't point and say, "Go there, Peter." He said, "You walk where you have seen me walk. You go where you have seen me go." So the Jews claimed to be leaders, which they ought to have been, because they had all of the equipment necessary to be shepherds. Instead, they were feeding off of the sheep rather than leading the sheep.

The Jews then **claimed in the second part of 2:19 that they were light givers**. They claimed not only to be a guide to the blind, but also a light for those who are in the dark. Again, this claim is true to a degree. Who was it that gave us the prophets? The Jews did. Who gave us the Psalms? The Jews did. Who gave us all the Old Testament? The Jews did. From whom was Christ? He was from the Jews. What about all of the New Testament books but two? They were written by the Jews. So in a real way, we are thankful for the Jews because they did bring light into the world. But the Jewish people to whom Paul is speaking did not shine the light. They did not reflect it to others. So their claim to superiority was not true. They had a right to claim to be a light giver. They had a right to claim to be a leader. But they ought to be leading, and they ought to be shining the light, yet they are not.

In the first part of 2:20 we see the **Jewish claim to be an**

**educator.** Paul says they were “. . . *an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of infants, . . .*” The word translated “instructor” literally means a corrector or a discipliner of boys. The idea is one who takes youngsters through a series of teaching and training that will not only teach them but discipline them. The word translated “teacher” indicates the claim to be a master teacher or a rabbi. Both of these claims, as all of their claims have been, are true to a large degree. They do have at their disposal, in the Old Testament and in the works of Jesus that they could reflect upon, the ability to be a discipliner of boys and a teacher of boys. However, they needed to realize that boys need example much more than they need mere instruction. It is like a poet who wrote that he would rather see a sermon than hear one any day. He would rather have someone walk beside him than merely point the way. That is the Jewish problem. The Jewish problem is they want to sit above other men because they think themselves above other men. They want to sit above and simply point and say, “Over there is where you need to go.” “Here is how you need to live.” All the while they continue to consider themselves the masters of other men’s souls.

Their biggest problem, however, is the claim in the latter part of 2:20 where they **claimed that they were mature because of the law.** Verse 20 says that they were making all these claims because they had in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth. They thought the law contained all the truth there was. They thought it contained the total embodiment of all knowledge and all truth. What they did not realize was what Paul declared in 2 Timothy 3:5, that is, that the law was only a form. They did not even understand what Paul said in 2 Timothy 3:14-17, that the law was only a part of the revelation of God. We know Jesus not only by what was written, but by the life He lived.

Many times today we hold Christianity as a form for too long. This results in legalism as was discussed in the first

lesson. We hold Christianity as a form in order to repeat it, to visualize it, to sing it, to memorize it, and to quote it. It needs to become a form that will transform us and transform our materialistic civilization so that we can be more like Jesus. There are the claims. Those claims are not false at all. Every one of those claims is true. They did have great privileges. They had been given the right to be guides and light givers and teachers. They had in the law at least the form of truth and godliness. If they had simply believed and waited for further revelation from God, it would have brought them into belief in Jesus the Messiah, and they would have had the salvation this book offers.

### **The Claims Refuted by God's Counterclaim of Responsibility**

In Romans 2:21-24 are found God's counter-claims. When I claim superiority, God listens, and I need to remember that. Sometimes I forget that God hears, and so I say a lot of things I ought not to say. These Jews have made some claims they ought not to have made because the claims are true, and now God is going to call for the counter-claim of *responsibility*. In other words, since you know this, here are some things you ought to do.

God puts forth the *counter-claim of practice* by accusing these Jews of being ethically wrong. There is not much difference between what he told them and what he told the Gentiles in chapter 1:28-32. The Gentile's mind-set had been wrong. The Jew's mind-set is also wrong, because they think that simply knowing God is sufficient. Paul says that while they were teaching someone else that they should not steal, were they themselves not stealing? The teaching of right only increases the responsibility of the teacher. Remember what James says when he writes, "*Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly.*" (James 3:1) Now why does

the teacher receive greater condemnation? Because he has greater knowledge. Jesus said in Luke 12:48, “. . . *and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked.*”

Paul then makes the ***counter-claim of purity*** in Romans 2:22a. He accuses them of sensuality, the same wrong living that he had accused the Gentiles of in 1:26-27. He is telling the Jews that in spite of all of their claims they are no better than the Gentile because they are practicing to some degree the very thing for which they condemned them. Now, they might hold up their hands and say, “Now, wait a minute. We are not the terrible sinners that they are. We are not doing the gross things they did.” But to sin against deep and sufficient knowledge is an even greater sin. The greatest evidence of a true religion is the pure life that proceeds from it. If a religion does not bring purity of life, it is not the religion of God.

Then, in Romans 2:22b, God makes the ***counter-claim of sanctity***. This can be hard to understand, but the accusation this time is idolatry, or loving the wrong things. Abhorring idols is not enough. God must be honored in the heart. It is not even known how they robbed temples. Perhaps they profited from the selling of idols to people. Perhaps they went into the temples that had been deserted and stole the gold. Whatever it was, the point is that while abhorring idolatry, they were actually profiting from it. We must honor God not simply with our practice but with our heart.

In Romans 2:23 there is the ***counter-claim of honest praise***. God accuses them of hypocrisy. He accuses them of saying one thing and doing another. God is honored by an honest life and is dishonored by the opposite.

Notice the result of religious sin. When the pagan idolater sinned, that didn't cause God's name to be dishonored. When the pagan moralist sinned, that didn't cause God's name to be dishonored. But when the person with all of these privileges that made him feel superior sinned, what was the result? “*As it*

is written: 'God's name is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you.' (Romans 2:24) Their sin caused even greater harm to come upon the earth because it caused the world not to respect God, but to blaspheme Him.

### **Outward Marks Are Not a Proof of Righteousness**

In Romans 2:25-29 there is a contrast between outward and inward marks of righteousness. These verses show that outward marks are not a proof of righteousness nor a proof of acceptability with God. In 2:25-27 we see *obligation without obedience*.

Circumcision is used here as synonymous with being pleasing to God. Paul makes the statement that keeping the law is more important than any of the outward signs. If the Jew transgresses the law, he will become as the uncircumcised Gentile, lost and ungodly. The Gentiles without the knowledge the Jews had, but who lived a life at least equal to the Jews, would judge the Jews. Even though the Gentiles did not have the law and did not have the same relationship with God that the Jews had, they were still living the life that God wants the Jew to live.

Jesus uses a similar argument in Matthew 11:20-24 as He judges the cities where God's great work has been most abundantly seen: Capernaum, Chorazin, and Bethsaida. He says to them that if Sodom had seen what they had seen, if the cities of the Gentiles had seen what they had seen, that they would have repented long ago in sack cloth and ashes. Jesus said that they would be their judge. We really need that lesson in today's society where so much value is put upon a person's relationship with a group of people, with a certain religion, or with a certain congregation of people. That really does not bring anything but stronger judgment. If I am among those that have been greatly blessed by God and I am living like the rest of the world lives, then I am really in deeper trouble than if I had never known God.

### **Inward and Outward Circumcision**

In Romans 2:28-29 Paul talks about *religion without reality*. He says that a man is not a Jew if he is only one outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. No, a man is a Jew if he is one inwardly. Circumcision is circumcision of the heart and by the Spirit, not by the written code. Such a man's praise is not from men but from God. As Paul says, a man is a Jew or is not a Jew at this point. The challenge is to find a true Jew, a real Jew, one that is really acceptable to God. Remember their claim? They called themselves Jews. Paul did not say, "If you are a Jew. . ." He said, "If you call yourself a Jew. . ." There are so-called Jews under the Old Testament code, and there are real Jews. There are true Israelites, Israelites who are really circumcised. Look up in a concordance the word "circumcision" and find how many different parts of a man's body are said to be circumcised in the Old Testament. They are said to need circumcised eyes, ears, feet, hearts, and hands. This means that circumcision comes to stand for the totality of a person's relationship to God. There is real and there is phony circumcision. Circumcision that is only of the flesh, just the cutting away of the foreskin, is not real circumcision. Circumcision is to be a sign and a token of what has taken place or will take place on the inside.

Then there is a spiritual code and a written code that they are to accept. Look again at Romans 2:29. Paul says very simply that this circumcision is not just of the flesh, but of the heart by the Spirit, and not by the written code. The Spirit of God circumcises people inwardly. In Colossians 2:11-12 Paul says that my heart has been circumcised because I have been washed in the waters of baptism. When one is baptized, the Spirit of God circumcises the entire being. The old heart is cut off and purified before God. The true Jew under the Old Testament dispensation was the one who was circumcised not simply in the flesh but also in the heart. Paul will go into a further discussion of this in Romans 3:1-8.

### Conclusion

In concluding this chapter there are two dangers that are involved with religious profession. Everybody ought to be saved. That is why Jesus died. *“He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.”* This is the statement of Peter (2 Peter 3:9b). God is wanting more than simply a profession. He is wanting Christianity to be a confession. He is wanting Christianity to be an obsession with these people and not just a profession. If our relationship with Jesus is just based on a religious profession, there are two perils involved.

**The first is the danger of presumption**, presuming that I am right with God because of this religious standing, this religious profession that I have made. The greater the knowledge, the greater the danger is of being satisfied with merely nominal Christianity. Read Jesus’ teaching to the Jews in Matthew 7:22-23 and Luke 13:26-27, and find that much more is demanded than simply going through some form or some ritual.

**The second is the danger of formalism.** There is a constant danger of identifying the outward sign with the inward spiritual meaning. Baptism is a beautiful New Testament teaching; it is the birth of the child of God into fellowship with Jesus. But to put all of the emphasis on the outward act and not on what happens in the soul would be the same mistake with regard to circumcision. Someone has said, “The ritual seal and the spiritual reality are separable.” They are. We can separate them. We can separate the act from the actuality, the reality. But they should not be. We must not only be religious in our actions but also on the inside. In the inner being Christ strengthens our heart through the Holy Spirit. In the next chapter we will see some objections raised to the way God is making man righteous. May God give you all peace and grace in believing in Him.

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# THE FINAL VERDICT

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## **Romans 3:1-20**

### **Review and Introduction**

In Romans 1:18 Paul brought all of the world to a courtroom that they might stand before the Judge. In 1:18 to the end of the chapter, he discussed the fact that the intellectual Gentile, those who sought their acceptability with their god and with mankind through their knowledge and philosophy, were found to be sinful, lost, and without excuse. In Romans 2:1-16 Paul talks about the moralist, not the reprobate or the renegade as he had in chapter one, but the person who tried to be right because it was right to be right. This person could be a Jew or a Gentile. Paul presented ten principles of judgment proving that this person had no hope when he stood before God in judgment based upon what he had done. He was lost and damned without excuse. Then in Romans 2:17-29 he turned to the religionist, particularly the Jew who had a revelation from God. Paul convicted him in spite of his circumcision, in spite of his relationship with God, and in spite of his attempt to keep the law. He was lost and without excuse.

We are now ready for the final verdict that is stated in Romans 3:1-20. The whole chapter has one main thrust and makes one important deviation from the main argument to present a biblical indictment of the Jew. This will be accomplished particularly in 3:1-9. Paul will acknowledge a right of protest. He will give them their cross-examination. In 3:1-8 he will acknowledge all of their protests and objections against what he has said. He will then go back to the fact that they are lost. Their protests involved the seeming unfaithfulness

of God. This material will be fully developed and discussed in chapters 9 through 11. Paul is known for introducing something in his epistles that later he will discuss more fully. But let us look first of all at the objections in chapter 3:1-8. These objections can be viewed simply as the defense that the Jews would make against Paul's accusation in 2:17ff. that they are undone and lost.

### The Objections

The **first objection** of the Jews is that according to Paul there *is no advantage* in being a Jew. Paul, however, states the opposite in 3:1-2. To them their accusation is very logical. God had promised in the Old Testament that the Jews would receive the great blessings of Abraham, that they would come to inherit the earth, that they would bless all mankind, and that they would bruise the serpent's head. They would have a faithful King in a faithful city, and they would have an empire that would extend worldwide. So the Jews are saying, "If what you are saying about the Jew is true, if the Jew is as lost as the Gentile, and if the Jew is looked at by God as the Gentiles are, then explain all of these Old Testament blessings. What you are saying is, 'The Jews have no blessings, no advantages, no privileges at all.'" However, Paul says, "Not at all. I think they have many advantages. I think they have advantages in every way."

In Romans 9:1-5 Paul discusses the advantages that the Jews have. He wants them to consider all of the privileges that they have. They are adopted. They have glory. They have the covenants and the law. They have the worship and the promises. They had the patriarchs, and from them came the Christ. Those are great blessings.

Primarily though, Paul says, that they are blessed by the trust God has bestowed upon them by making them the receivers and the dispensers of His very word. He says to them that their objection is really not valid because God has blessed

Israel and will continue to bless Israel. The problem is that they have sinned in spite of all those blessings. They have not followed God.

**The second objection** of the Jews is seen in 3:3-4 where they claim that Paul is saying that *the unblessed Jews would prove God faithless*. If God does not bless the Jews, is God then not a faithless God? Paul asks the Jews in verse 3 if they are saying that God is going to be unfaithful to His promise. He goes ahead and answers the question for them in 3:4. The unblessed Jews do not prove God faithless, for God's aim was that the Jew be blessed (vs.1-2), but God must remain true to Himself even if He has to curse the people that He really wants to bless. The intent of God and the desire of God was that the Jews be blessed, and because He has not blessed them is simply a proof of their unfaithfulness. If God doesn't judge the Jew for his unfaithfulness, then He cannot judge anybody for their unfaithfulness. God must remain able to judge those who are unlike Him. God wants to bless them, but God must remain true to Himself.

**Their third objection** is this: *God is wrong to be angry if sin fulfills His will, is He not?* If man's sin fulfills the will of God, isn't God wrong to be angry? This does not make much sense to us, but it really did to these Jews because their concept was that the end justified the means. If God's will is done, why should He be angry at them for doing His will (3:5-6)? If our unrighteousness brings out God's righteousness more clearly, what shall we say? God would be unjust in bringing His wrath upon us. Paul says that he is using a human argument because this is the way humans would reason. Paul's answer to all of this is, "*Certainly not! If that were so, how could God judge the world?*" (Romans 3:6) Paul is saying very simply, with the background of this objection being the crucifixion of Christ, "If our crucifying Christ brought salvation to the world, how can you judge us for crucifying Jesus?" The answer is that their objection would make it wrong for God to judge anything, since

in the final analysis all things will ultimately glorify God. The most wicked person, the most wicked demon, even the devil himself, one day will say, "Jesus is Christ." That will be to the glory of God. So everything will ultimately glorify God. If God cannot judge that which glorifies Him, then He cannot judge anything.

**Their fourth, and last, objection** is seen in 3:7-8. Since sin brings God glory, should people sin even more and more? Should we not be more concerned with God having the most glory He can? Since sin would glorify God, let us sin more and more. This is a scandalous objection, as Paul soon points out. Their objection would make it impossible for them to judge Paul a sinner because Paul is causing people to glorify God. If causing people to glorify God makes you unable to be judged, then they should not be judging Paul because countless people are glorifying God because of his ministry. Also, their objection would identify them with the lawless Gentiles who taught, "Let us do evil that good may come." Paul said, "Anyone who teaches that, his condemnation is deserved."

### **Things to Be Remembered About God**

Note in this text several things about God that need to be remembered. **First**, Paul in 3:2 spoke of the very words of God, which were the oracles of God that had been committed to the Jews. The Jews needed to pay attention to them so that they would not make such foolish human objections. **Second**, the faithfulness of God is alluded to in 3:3 in that God will remain faithful to Himself and to His character no matter what man does. **Third**, in 3:5 the righteousness of God is discussed, and God will remain righteous. If every man in the world is found evil, God intends to save those men that will accept His righteousness and His way of making men right. **Fourth**, the judgment of God is mentioned in 3:6. We must all be aware, and stay aware, of the fact that we will meet God one day in

judgment. **Fifth** is the truthfulness of God as mentioned in 3:7. God will never lie. He will never turn from the truth of His own character. Then, **sixth**, there is the glory of God in 3:7. God will be glorified no matter what man does or what man thinks. These things must be kept in view before we make any objections to the way that God is dealing with man.

### **The Responsibility of Man**

There are also some human responsibilities that need to be learned in these verses. **First**, just as the Jews were entrusted with the oracles of God, so are we. The faith has been once for all delivered to the saints (Jude 3). We are the trustees of the word of God. The church is the pillar and the support of the truth (1 Timothy 3:15). **Second**, not only are we entrusted with the oracles of God, but we are in constant danger of unbelief. We need to take heed, as the writer of Hebrews said (Hebrews 3:12), that there not be the slightest root of bitterness that can spring up and cause unbelief to fill our heart and our life. **Third**, we find out that we can abuse God's mercy. Romans 3:8 states that very clearly. We can claim, as some are claiming, that we should do evil that good may come. God is not really looking; God is not really concerned. We need to remember what Paul said in Romans 2:4, that God will be true to Himself, to His word, and to His will. Then, **fourth**, we can be certain of God's judgment. Paul covers this in 3:6, 8. God will come in judgment (Hebrews 9:27).

The Jewish objections are logical to them, but Paul says that they would simply make it impossible for God to remain God. Their problem is that their concept of the law has perverted their concept of God. They think that the law is the most important thing to God. Ultimately, however, the most important thing to God is people. "The law was made for man," Jesus said. "Man was not made for the law." (cf. Mark 2:27) That is a very important principle that we must remember. Man was not created so that he could keep the law. Man was created

so that he could have abundant life in imitation of the loving Father. The law simply protects him against his sin and against the sin of others. The objections have been answered. As a matter of fact, the judge said about each one of them, "Objection overruled." He did not sustain one single objection from the defense attorney.

### **The Final Verdict**

For the final verdict the judge will speak. The jury has handed him a slip of paper, and he is now ready to read the final verdict for the Gentile intellectual, for the moralist, and for the religionist. The verdict is seen in Romans 3:9 as Paul asks the question, are we, the Jews, better than they, the Gentiles, or are we, whoever we are, better than they, whoever they are? Paul continues on by telling the Jews that in no way are they better. The verdict is stated; the verdict is read. All are under sin. All are lost. All are condemned.

The character of the verdict is seen in the word "sin." In English you can hear the hiss of the serpent. Of course, the Bible was not written in English, but every time I say "sin," I think of that serpent in the garden who corrupted the fellowship that man and woman had with God. That is what sin does. It corrupts. To sin is to miss the mark. It is to fail to measure up. It is to transgress the law. It is to fail to do what is right. It is not to be all that we should be. What sin does is corrupt. The verdict is that the whole world is corrupted.

The *dominion* of the verdict is that all are under sin. That speaks of captivity. That speaks of imprisonment. That speaks of being unable to do what you want to do. When you are not what you ought to be, then that is sin. You are not able to do what you ought to do under sin. Just as surely as the Jews had been captive to the Egyptians, they are now captive to their sin. That is why Jesus came. Jesus came to say, "*Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.*" (John 8:32) The Jew would think immediately of physical freedom, and so Jesus

told them that anybody who commits sin is the bond servant of sin (John 8:34). So the verdict is not only that they are corrupt. The verdict is that they are captive to sin. That is the dominion of the verdict.

What is the *extent* of the verdict? That is seen in the first word. *All* are under sin. All? You mean everyone? That is just what Paul means. Everyone is under sin except the One who died so that we might not be under sin. Everybody but Jesus has sinned (Romans 3:23). In this indictment that all are under sin, Paul alludes to scripture. The scriptures would appeal primarily to the Jew because the Gentile has never argued that man is lost. The moralist, when he really looks at his life in comparison with the law that he wants to follow, never admits that he is lost. However, the religionist, because he sings psalms, prays prayers, offers sacrifices, attends worship, and fulfills rituals, thinks that makes him better than anybody else. So Paul will quote several scriptures to show that the Jews were indeed lost. Therefore, the whole world is lost.

First of all, Paul describes sin in human character in 3:10-12. The Old Testament scriptures that Paul alludes to here are found in Psalm 14:1-3, Psalm 53:1-3 and Ecclesiastes 7:20. Paul says that the scriptures show that there is none righteous. Notice the “none’s” here. There is none righteous, none who understands, none who seeks after God or seeks for God, and none who does good. There is none, not one, not any, when viewed by the invariable law of God and when viewed by the character of God. Sin is found in the human character, and not a single person has fulfilled the laws they claim to love.

In Romans 3:13-18 Paul talks about sin and human conduct. Paul goes from head to foot and back to head in these things. He says, “What about their throats? They are open graves.” That simply means that there is vile talk coming out of their throats, as if the ghosts of past sins are arising from their mouths. “With their tongues,” he says, “they speak lies. They practice deceit. With their lips they poison as vipers poison.”

That would be the slander and the gossip that kills people. When we gossip about somebody and take away their reputation it would be better to just take a gun and kill them, because to destroy a man's reputation makes him live the rest of his life under the slander of your lie, unless he is able to prove differently. So with their lips they are slandering and gossiping. With their mouths they are full of blasphemy. They are blaspheming God. Their talk is vile; their speech is lying; their lips are slandering; their mouth is blaspheming, and their feet are swift to shed blood. They are quick to run to the place where they can find an opportunity to destroy. "Their ways," he says, "are the ways of destruction and misery. They do not have any peace in any way that they walk. They do not know what peace is, and the source of that lack of peace is that they have no fear of God."

### **The Relationship Between Sin and Law**

Paul is now back to the point where he first started. The Gentiles had no fear of God, and you will remember, as we read in chapter one, that they did not count it worthwhile to retain God in their knowledge. They not only did what was wrong, they even clapped and gave their approval to those that practiced those wrong things. In 1:32 the Jew could very well have been saying, "Well, that is absolutely right. I am glad you are getting to that point. Lay it on those Gentiles." However, Paul is saying, "You are the same way. There is no fear of God in your eyes either." Paul quotes another Old Testament passage to prove the point, Psalm 36:1b. Imagine people holding the law of God in their hands, speaking the law of God with their lips, and having no fear of God in their mind. That is absolutely the way it was with the Jews. And they cannot argue with him. They have no legitimate reason to argue with him because Paul has proven the point by their practice. He has proven it by answering their objections, and he has proven it by quoting their scriptures. The very things that they said they

relied upon were the things that Paul used to condemn them. Their practice, their logic, and their scriptures—Paul has used them all to show that the Jew is under sin.

The Gentile pagan and intellectual has no problem in knowing that he is not keeping his law correctly. The moralist, when he really looks at the rules that he honors, finds out that he is not keeping them either. It is only the religionist who has a relationship to God that he thinks has saved him. What he really needs to realize is that it is the doer of the law that is justified and not simply the reader. The last two verses in this study are 3:19-20 which will show the relationship between sin and law. These verses are the conclusion to the verdict.

Paul says that the basic purpose of the law is two-fold. Its **first** purpose is to stop boasting. It is to stop people from saying, “I am right because of what I do.” These people were not even keeping the law. How then can a law breaker boast about keeping the law?

**Second**, it is to bring the world under judgment. What was written in the Mosaic law was also written in the heart of the Gentile, as we found in chapter two. In 3:20 Paul talks about the two-fold weakness of the law. The purpose of the law is fulfilled. But the law has a weakness in regard to sin. **Its first weakness** is that it cannot make a man righteous. This is Paul’s teaching from 1:18 to this point. No man will be made righteous by the law, and that is simply because no man can keep it perfectly.

**The second weakness** of the law is that it can only make man aware of his sin. The law can illuminate, but it cannot eliminate. It can make a man see his wrongs, but it cannot remove them. James says that the law is a mirror (James 1:23). When you look in a mirror and you see that your face is dirty, the mirror has done its work. You cannot take the mirror and rub it on your face and expect your face to be clean. The law was simply a mirror. It is by the grace of God that sin is eliminated.

### **Conclusion**

The lesson of this passage can be summed up in one word: conviction. This passage is written to convict the world. It is written to convict man of sin from the experience of human life. It is to convict men of sin from the word of God. It is to convict of the responsibility for sin. It is to convict of guilt before God. It is to convict of human helplessness in regard to righteousness. It is also written to convict of the absolute necessity of a perfect righteousness before God. All of this, the whole section from 1:18 to 3:20, is for one single purpose, that being that man might be convicted. The intellectual, the moralist, and the religionist are brought into the courtroom and placed before the bar and before the judgment of God. Paul presents them in order that they listen. He then presents their life. He presents the evidence, not from someone else, but from the very mirror of their soul. He brings out all of their agonies, all of their wrongs, all of their sins, and portrays them, not only in their own sight, but in the sight of God, in the sight of angels, and in the sight of the world. There is only one conclusion that can be drawn: Intellectual pursuit cannot remove sin. Moral behavior cannot remove sin. Religious observance cannot remove sin. There is only one thing that can remove sin. That will be the point of discussion starting in Romans 3:21. The one thing that can remove sin is the blood of Christ, and there is only one way we can get to the blood of Christ, that is, by faith. All men are under sin, therefore, all men need Christ. Christ came to be, as Paul writes in 1 Timothy 4:10, the Savior of all men, especially them that believe. He desires to save all. He will save those that believe. I believe that. You believe that. Let us find hope and peace in believing just that.

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# JUSTIFIED BUT NOT BOASTFUL

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## Romans 3:21-31

### Review and Introduction

In this chapter Paul turns from the doctrine of sin to the doctrine of justification. It is here that Paul will make the point that we are justified but that we are not to be boastful. A summary of what Paul has said so far is absolutely essential to understanding this section.

In the thesis statement, found in Romans 1:16-17, Paul states that the gospel revealed God's provision for man being made righteous. Righteousness would be obtained by faith. Paul then addressed the facts of human life in 1:18-2:29. In that section Paul showed that there was absolutely no help in Gentile philosophy, in human morals, or in the Jewish religion. Paul destroyed the excuses of those who persisted in being unrighteous and yet thought that they would escape the judgment of God. In 3:1-18 all of the objections of the Jews were overruled. He closed by showing that righteousness was utterly impossible for man to attain by any effort of his own, and that this is true in the light of God's law. Romans 3:19-20 shows that in the light of God's law all men are guilty and are to be condemned. This is the bad news.

Paul is now going to discuss the doctrine of justification (or salvation), and the passage that will be concentrated on is Romans 3:21-31. This passage could very well be called the heart of the epistle. It is the pivotal point in Paul's argument and will begin with the word "but." As we turn from the discussion of sin to the discussion of salvation we will find a

number of essential characteristics dealing with the righteousness of God and of justification, which is the way that God would make a man righteous.

### **The Characteristics of God's Righteousness**

First of all, let us notice the characteristics of righteousness in Romans 3:21-26. This is a rather technical reading and somewhat of a technical argument, so let us take this apart in seven different areas and see exactly what Paul is saying about the righteousness of God. **The first essential characteristic** as noted by Paul is that this is *a righteousness that has been manifested or "made known."* The words "made known" literally mean to be put into public view or to be made known publicly. For example, let us say that you go down to the docks where the ships are, and there you see a slanted table in front of each one of the ships. On that table is a log or a record. That record is called the ship's manifest. There, in public view, is a list of everything that is on board that ship and that is being declared.

So it is with God. He has put His righteousness on public display. You can read and find everything that there is to know about the righteousness of God by looking at, and reading about, the life of the Lord Jesus Christ. In doing this, we find that this righteousness is from God. It is founded on an act of God nearly 2,000 years ago. It is founded on the finished work of Jesus at the cross. This righteousness does not come from man and his wisdom, his intellect, or his philosophy. I also find that this righteousness is apart from the law. It is not based on a man keeping a set of rules. As a matter of fact, the text does not say, "apart from *the* law," but rather it says, "apart from law." This righteousness is not in any way based on law. Now, while it is true that law is still there to regulate the life of man, to let him know what is right and what is wrong, and to keep him safe from evil men, righteousness still does not come out

of that law. Righteousness is not based upon man's performance of anybody's rules, including God's. Righteousness is based on the one time act of Jesus at the cross.

"Made known" is in the perfect tense (Greek). While this is not an English class or a grammar class, we still need to understand some of the tenses and some of the forms of the verbs that are used in the New Testament. The perfect tense is an action that is totally completed but has continuing results in the present. God's righteousness was "made known" where? It was at the cross. But the cross is still viewable. The cross still stands. Paul says, "*For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified*" (1 Corinthians 2:2). 1 Corinthians 2:2 uses the same perfect tense that says, "I preach of Christ who was crucified and of the cross which is still standing." The cross is still available. Man can run to the cross today and look at it as it stands in public view. This is the way that God intended to make man righteous. If you believe that, then righteousness is yours.

In the latter part of 3:21 we see that not only is righteousness manifested, it is also witnessed about. All of us are still in that courtroom, aren't we? And now that we have all men in that courtroom, in what condition do we find them? We find them lacking. We now bring Jesus into the courtroom. We bring the righteousness of God into that courtroom. Who stands to witness for Jesus? Who stands to witness for righteousness by faith? The law and the prophets do. The Law of God and the Old Testament prophets are good witnesses. To what do they witness? First of all, they both say that righteousness is not in them. You will not find righteousness in the law and in the prophets. Read Psalm 51, and you will find that David begged for mercy, for cleansing, for forgiveness, and for fellowship. David then said that sacrifices and offerings are not what God wants. If God wanted those things then David would have given them to Him. What God really wants is a broken and contrite

heart (cf. Micah 6:6-8), so what does the law and what do the prophets witness about righteousness? They witness that it is not found in them.

**The second essential characteristic addresses the prophet's witness about righteousness.** In Jeremiah 23:6 we see that the LORD is called “. . . *The LORD Our Righteousness.*” This agrees with 1 Corinthians 1:30 where Jesus is called the righteousness of God. What does the law witness, and what do the prophets witness about righteousness? They witness what Paul says here, that righteousness comes by faith.

In Genesis 15:5 God took Abraham outside and told him to look up and count the stars of the heavens, that is, if he could count them. When Abraham did look at the stars God told him that just as there many stars in the sky, so would there be as many descendants of Abraham. When he heard this Abraham believed what God said, and his belief caused him to be seen as righteous by God Himself (cf. Habakkuk 2:4b).

To what, then, do the law and the prophets witness? They witness that righteousness comes by confession and that forgiveness of sin comes when sin is confessed. In Psalm 32:3-4 David says that when he refused to acknowledge and confess his sin that his body eroded and his energy was drained. But when he confessed his sin before God, He was forgiven and strengthened (Psalm 32:5). So we have Psalm 32 saying that righteousness is by confession. The law and the prophets witness to exactly what Paul is saying, that righteousness is apart from law, that it is by faith, and that it is by confession.

In 2 Timothy 3:15 Paul, just before his death, speaks to Timothy about the Old Testament witness. The point that he is making is that the only scripture that Timothy could have known from infancy was the Old Testament. When we take the Old Testament prophets and the Old Testament law and add to them the faith of Jesus, we find out that the only way that man can be right is by offering God a broken and contrite heart.

Romans 4 will prove this statement as it looks to Abraham's example and David's psalm.

**The third** essential characteristic shows us that *righteousness is obtainable*. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus to all who believe. What is the demand of God that allows a man to obtain righteousness? There is only one demand. Who can obtain this righteousness? Anyone can obtain it, but the demand is faith. All that God demands is faith, and He makes absolutely no difference among men. Anybody who trusts and relies and commits himself totally to Jesus and does, therefore, what God says to do, that person will obtain the righteousness of God.

In Romans 3:23 we find **the fourth essential characteristic**. This characteristic states that *righteousness is needed*. Paul writes that everyone has sinned, and because of their sin, they fall short of God's glory. The phrase ". . . *all have sinned* . . ." is in a Greek tense that means a one time act. The words ". . . *all . . . fall short* . . ." is in a Greek tense that means continually standing short. All people, at one time in their life, have sinned, and because of that sin they died, and because they died they have stood since that day short of God's glory.

Note then, what we see in this verse. There is a one time act by all men that results in a continuing failure to reach the glory of God. God's intent in all of His creation was that He be glorified. Man's sin makes that glorification impossible. Sin must be dealt with, and it cannot be dealt with by philosophy; it cannot be dealt with by morals, and it cannot be dealt with by religion. So how can sin be dealt with?

In Romans 3:24 we see **the fifth essential characteristic**, that *righteousness is provided*. Verse 24 says that not only have all sinned, but that all are justified freely by His grace through the redemption that came by Jesus Christ. This righteousness is provided historically and not experientially. It is provided

historically in the fact of the cross. One time, which was in time and on time, God made provision for man's righteousness in the old rugged cross. This salvation does not come experientially. It comes to each person by faith in the blood of that cross. We believe not only in God; we also believe in the act of God. We believe that when God acted at Calvary, man was forgiven. Man has to believe that the blood was shed. Man has to come to believe in the benefits of that blood and in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Notice how this forgiveness is achieved. It is achieved without human cause. We are justified freely. The word "freely" literally means "without a cause." There is no human cause to explain our justification. There was, or is, no human cost. This is seen in the phrase, "by grace." Divine cause and cost is seen in the word "redemption." The cause of all of this is God. The cost is the blood of Christ. Justification comes about by the redemption that is found in Jesus.

**The sixth essential characteristic** of righteousness is that it is *a righteousness that is declared*. This is seen in the first part of 3:25. God presented Jesus as a sacrifice of atonement through faith in His blood. God's offering of Jesus declared the righteousness of God. It shouted out loud that God has a way of making man righteous. God has satisfied Himself. He has offered Jesus as a sacrifice of atonement for propitiation. Atonement and propitiation are both religious terms. They simply mean that God has presented Jesus as one who would turn aside His wrath. The moralist offered his deeds, and that did not turn away God's wrath. The Jews offered their religious observances, and that did not turn aside God's wrath. Then God offered Jesus, and that turned away His wrath. That is good news. That is the sweetness of God. God is love. God's righteousness is also declared by making faith the only thing that is demanded. I do not have to satisfy God. He is already satisfied. I do not have to turn aside His wrath. It has already

been turned aside. Faith is all that God demands of me. I just rely. Reliance means obedience as we saw in Romans 1:5 in which Paul speaks of the obedience of faith. No one can claim to believe in a doctor and not take the medicine he prescribes. No one can claim to believe in God and not do what God says. Obedience is wrapped up in faith, although faith may not necessarily be wrapped up in obedience. The Jews proved that.

**The seventh, and last, essential characteristic** that Paul describes regarding this righteousness is seen in Romans 3:25-26. This is *a righteousness that is satisfied*. This way of making man righteous satisfies the righteousness, or justice, of God. Read these verses again. God offered Jesus to be our atonement. He did this in order to demonstrate, to declare, and to prove His justice because in His forbearance He had left the sins that were committed beforehand to go unpunished. God did this in order to demonstrate His justice at the present time so as to be just and the One who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.

God is just whether we know it or not, or whether or not He tells us. God is just; that is His character. His justice is declared. He presented Jesus on the cross in order to declare, to state, to prove, and to satisfy His justice. God will be just. His love is satisfied in the forgiveness of sin in both dispensations. He forgave the sins that were committed beforehand. He told Abraham that he was righteous. He told David that his sin was forgiven. So God is just in both dispensations, and faith is the only demand.

There needs to be a statement made here about God. God is just. If God cannot find a way to forgive man, then man cannot be forgiven because God cannot be unjust. What makes God just in forgiving our sins? It is not in what we know. It is not in what we do. It is not even what we believe. It is, instead, in whom we believe. Jesus makes God just (cf. 2 Timothy 1:12). When God offered Jesus He offered all of the price that was

needed to make Himself just in forgiving sins. If God did not forgive a person who believes and obeys Him, then God would be unjust because God has offered in Jesus a sufficient sacrifice to satisfy His justice.

### **God's Righteousness Excludes Boasting**

Romans 3:27-31 is a beautiful section that makes the point that God's way of justifying man excludes all boasting. This, again, is a technical argument but is a beautiful scripture. It makes these points. **Number one**, how is boasting excluded? Paul asks if boasting is excluded by works. The answer is no. Boasting is excluded by faith. This is addressed primarily to the Jews who boasted in the law, but there were also Gentiles who boasted in their moral observances and in their works. Man is not justified, and boasting is not excluded by works. The law of works creates boastful people who claim to be doing what the law said to do. The law of works points to man; it points to the human rather than to Christ. The law of works stresses merit rather than mercy. The law of works creates futility rather than fulfillment. The law of works brings wrath rather than refuge. The law of works exalts and honors man and man's observances and creates not only boasting, but also boastful people.

**Number two**, the question is asked, "To whom is this righteousness suited?" The law of works cannot exclude boasting, but faith can and does. How does faith exclude boasting? It does so by glorifying. What this means is that if I really trust someone and believe in them, I will be talking about them all of the time. There are doctors that are really great doctors, and anytime anyone is sick these are the doctors that are recommended. Why? Because faith has been placed in them. Faith creates the situation of pointing to someone else and not to self.

Faith also confesses its need for mercy (cf. Lk. 18:13). Faith excludes all human boasting, and faith is God's demand for

justification. There is no boasting in faith except in the one in whom you believe. As Paul wrote, “*But, Let him who boasts boast in the Lord.*” (2 Corinthians 10:17; cf. Jeremiah 9:24; Psalms 34:2; 44:8; 1 Corinthians 1:31) Why is this? Because God is the source and the basis of boasting. To whom is this righteousness suited? In 3:29-30 we find the Jews boasting that God was their’s alone. This was what kept the Jews from being justified and from being sanctified. These qualities are only suited for those who will not boast. Race offers no advantage in regard to righteousness. God is not the God of the Jews only. He is also the God of the Gentiles.

Righteousness demands faith above all other claims. The Jews will be justified by faith, and the Gentiles will be justified by that same faith. Righteousness by faith establishes the law as 3:31 states. Doing the law does not establish the law. It simply proves that the law is right. However, righteousness by faith establishes the law. How does that happen? It happens by teaching that the believer’s life is molded by faith in the direction of fulfilling the thing for which the law existed.

**Number three** is that righteousness by faith establishes the law. The law’s aim was the regulating of people’s lives so as to please God. The believer approves of that aim, pursues that objective, and in so doing establishes the law. Justification by faith establishes the law in the sense that it shows and fulfills what the Old Testament, along with the law and the prophets, had always taught, that righteousness comes by faith.

Teaching justification by faith establishes demands of the law in a way that legalism could not. The believer, not the legalist, put the law on the pedestal of purity. He was not the one who was despising its demand. The legalist was doing that. The legalist said of the law, “Here is the best I can offer you, and that will have to satisfy you, and on that basis I will be acquitted.” That is an insult to God’s holy law. The believer says, “I am sorry. The best that I can offer you of myself is

simply a broken and contrite heart, even though that is not enough to satisfy your righteous and holy demand. I must call in a substitute, Jesus Christ.” And Jesus stands in my place to fulfill the law.

Read Luke 17:10 and find that after we have done all that we have been commanded to do, we are to say that we are unfaithful servants. We have only done what is our duty to do. None of us has kept all of the law. But even if we kept all of the law, and every single commandment, we are still unprofitable servants. There is no way that we can profit our Master by what we do. That is why His Son had to die.

### **Conclusion**

All of our church attendance and church growing, all of the money that we will ever give, all of the people that we will ever teach, all of the sermons that we will ever preach, all of the sacrifices that we will ever make, all of the prayers that we will ever pray, all of the sympathy that we will ever show, and all of the dreams that we will ever dream will not remove one sin. All of these things we owe God, and we owe Him even more. When we have done all those things, we are still unprofitable servants before God.

What does it take then to be profitable to God? It takes Jesus. That is why Paul says, “*For to me, to live is Christ . . .*” (Philippians 1:21). That is why Paul also says, “*I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me.*” (Galatians 2:20) That is why Paul says that the hope of the Gentiles is Christ in them, the hope of glory.

Jesus is the satisfaction of God. He is the righteousness of God. When I possess Him then I am profitable to God. I bear fruit that is profitable to God. I grow in profit to God. I am then sanctified. This will be discussed later, but we need to know that there is a difference between justification and sanctification. Justification is the one act of God that makes me

right. Sanctification is the new place where I live that makes my deeds profitable to God. If we will give ourselves to faith, we and all that we do will be to the profit of the eternal God. Our philosophy cannot make us profitable to God, nor can our morals or our religion. Only our faith can make us profitable to God. Believe in Jesus and have the peace that belief brings to you.



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# SCRIPTURAL PROOF-ABRAHAM

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## **Romans 4:1-25**

### **Review and Introduction**

We saw in the doctrine of sin that all men are sinful and that there is nothing that his philosophy, his morals, or his religion can do about it. In 3:21-31 we saw Paul present great claims about the righteousness that is by faith. In chapter four Paul will present the scriptural proof for those claims, particularly in the person of Abraham. In this section, from Romans 4:1-8, Paul will explain how God's great plan of salvation is in complete harmony with, and is proven by, all of the Old Testament scriptures.

### **Abraham Was Justified By Faith, Not Works**

Throughout the book of Romans, Abraham is called both the friend of God and the father of the faithful. This particular section starts in 4:1 and goes through verse eight, with the statement that Abraham was justified by faith and not by works. Two witnesses from scripture are called to prove that fact: Abraham in Genesis 15 and David in Psalm 32.

In Romans 4:1-8 Paul provides a short review of Abraham and his righteousness before God. In Genesis 14 Abraham had just defeated the Mesopotamian kings, and he was privately wondering if they would return sometime to fight him again. It was then that God appeared to him and assured him that He, God, was Abraham's shield and also his exceeding reward. Then Abraham said, "If that is true, then what about the son, the

heir, that I was promised?” So God took Abraham, as we saw in our last lesson, and told him to look at the stars. Abraham viewed the vastness of all of the heavens and admitted that he could not count the stars. It was then that God told Abraham that his descendants would also be as numerous as the stars in the heavens (Genesis 15:5). God promised Abraham that his offspring would be as the stars of the heavens, numberless. Then, in that fabulous statement in Genesis 15:6 we read that Abraham believed God’s promise. He already believed *in* God, and because of his belief *in* God, he believed *what* God said to him. He believed a promise that, humanly, was impossible to fulfill.

### Faith Was “Credited” as Righteousness

Abraham’s faith was counted as righteousness (Romans 4:2) The word “*credited*” originally meant “to put to one’s account.” It is an accounting term. It is that which goes not on the debit side, but on the credit side. Abraham’s faith was placed into Abraham’s account and counted toward Abraham’s righteousness.

The word “*credited*” is used 11 times in the fourth chapter. It is the key word in the chapter. When a man works, he earns a salary, and that money can be put into his account. But Abraham did not work for his salvation. He simply trusted in God’s word. It was Jesus Christ who did the work, and His righteousness was credited to Abraham’s account. Paul says that is the way it is with our account. He brings up Abraham because here is a scripture to which he can allude that proves beyond doubt the truthfulness of what he is saying, that man is justified by faith and not by his works.

In Romans 4:5 we read a very remarkable, even startling statement, which is that God justifies the wicked. In 1 Kings eight when Solomon was dedicating the temple, Solomon asked God to justify the innocent and condemn the wicked (1 Kings 8:32), but instead God justifies the wicked because there are no

innocents to justify. The innocent do not need justification. His innocence alone justifies him. That is why Jesus did not need justifying. He was innocent. For this reason, God put our sins on His account, so that He might put Christ's righteousness on our account. Jesus is the only one that has ever been innocent.

### **Abraham's Justification and Ours**

In Romans 4:6 Paul explains what he wants understood about Abraham's justification and ours. When a man works, his wages are not credited to him as a gift, but as an obligation. We like to earn our wages, but we cannot do this spiritually. If we can, then we should. When we receive our pay for the work done, we might say, "Thank you," but that is just courtesy. In reality we earned it.

Many people view salvation this way, and that is why they are constantly in a state of stress and frustration. They are stressed and frustrated because they are trying to earn something that can only come as a gift. However, if one knows that he cannot earn salvation, then the only thing he can do according to 4:5 is to trust God who justifies the wicked. That trust and that faith are then accounted by God as righteousness. One may say to God, "I have tried and died; I have failed; there is absolutely no way I can recover; I claim Jesus' work as my work; I love Him; I believe in Him; I am immersed into Him; I want to be faithful to Him."

### **David's Justification**

David says the same thing about justification. *Before* the law was given, Abraham was justified by faith. David while *under* the law says that man is justified by faith. Paul quotes Psalm 32:1-2 in Romans 4:7-8. In this Psalm we hear David's song of thanksgiving to God for His grace.

This Psalm was written after David had been forgiven of his sin of adultery with Bathsheba and the murder of her husband, Uriah. David makes two remarkable statements based upon

Nathan's revelation to him about the grace of God. **The first statement** is that God forgives sin and imputes righteousness. He does this apart from works. David learned that under the law he was not forgiven and that the law did not impute righteousness to him. All of his works and sacrifices were simply the expression of a forgiven man's love for God.

The **second statement** may be more beautiful than the first one. That statement is that God will not impute our sins. David not only says that a man is blessed because the Lord does not count his sin against him (Romans 4:8), but he also says that a man is blessed because the Lord will impute his sin (4:8 KJV). This means that God will not credit sin. He will not write down an account of sins. This means that once we are justified our record contains Christ's perfect righteousness and can never again contain our sin. We do sin, of course, and those sins do need to be forgiven if we are to have fellowship with God. The good news is that those sins are forgiven (1 John 1:5-7). Our sins are not held against us. Read David's psalms of forgiveness: 31, 32, 103, 116, and many others. In those psalms David praises always the grace, mercy, and kindness of God that brought salvation to him apart from the works of law.

### **Abraham Was Justified By Grace, Not Law**

In Romans 4:9-17a we find that Abraham was justified by grace and not the law. This is one of Paul's long sentences, a discussion of a very simple point, that point being that Abraham was justified by grace and not by law. Righteousness is by faith whether it be Abraham's, ours, the Jews', or anybody else's. That is what verses 9 through 12 are saying.

### **Righteousness By Faith Is Independent of Circumcision**

The question then becomes: Is this blessedness only for the circumcised? The answer, in a very simple yet striking way, is

that Abraham was justified by faith. This is seen in Genesis 15, at least 14 years before he was circumcised in Genesis 17. Therefore, his righteousness came to him not as a circumcised Jew, but as an ordinary individual who expressed and exercised faith in God. The proof of this is that Abraham was circumcised as a sign of the righteousness that he already had before he was circumcised.

We need to think about this for a minute. Abraham was righteous before he was circumcised, but not one of his physical descendants were. They were all circumcised at eight days of age. If they were justified, it happened later on in time when they believed. Habakkuk 2:4 states that the righteous shall live by faith. That is the way it is with Abraham's spiritual children today, who are justified when they are immersed into Jesus and then circumcised in the heart as a sign of God's work of salvation.

In Colossians 2:9-12 Paul discusses the Gentiles and the matter of their justification. Notice the order here. You were baptized; you were buried with Jesus in baptism; you were raised with Jesus through your faith in what God did when He raised Jesus from the dead, and then you were circumcised in the heart. As God's work of salvation was already done in you, your heart was circumcised to cut away the flesh. The purpose of that, as stated in Romans 4:11-12, was to bring the blessing to all classes, to both the Jew and to the Gentile. God's desire was the salvation of the world, not just the Jews, through simply faith. God's desire was to save all, Jew and Gentile, who will walk in the faith of an uncircumcised Abraham. This was a striking turn of events for those who still boasted in the law and in their circumcision.

### **Righteousness By Faith Is Independent of the Law**

In Romans 4:13-17 there was a promise that God made to Abraham. The promise was that Abraham was to bless all of the

nations of the earth. That blessing was the promise, not the law. Therefore, centuries later, God gave a law that in no way affected the promise to bless all mankind. The promise now being discussed is the promise of inheriting the earth, the promise that Abraham and his seed would have universal dominion. It is not the Caesars, but the saints who rule the world. Matthew 5:5 says that the meek will inherit the earth. In 1 Corinthians 6:2 Paul says to the troubled church at Corinth, *“Do you not know that the saints will judge the world?”* God made a promise to Abraham and all of his seed after him that they would not only be saved by faith, but in the service that they would render to God, they would actually rule the world.

The way of that promise was not law, but faith. If the blessing was by law and not by promise, then two things would be true: **First**, faith would have absolutely no value. It would be law that would have value. **Second**, the promise would be worthless. However, the truth is, as stated in verse 15, that this promise does not work wrath, the law does. This principle, this promise, removes the law and does away with transgression.

Here is something that we really need to think about. We dare not trust our law keeping. We dare not trust our deeds. We must fall back on the promise of God that He will be with us and enable us to rule the world. The proof of the promise is that since the law cannot produce anything but wrath, then the promise has to be by faith. Salvation has to be by grace, and it is promised to all believers. Thank God it comes by faith. Thank God it is given by grace. Thank God that when I believe, I am promised salvation by God.

### **Abraham Was Justified By Resurrection Power, Not Human Effort**

The confirmation of that promise is in the quotation of scripture. In Genesis 17:5 God told Abraham that He had made him the father of many nations. Abraham’s justification, and ours, is not dependent upon any ritual (like circumcision), nor

is it dependent upon any law. In Romans 4:17-25 Paul makes the statement that all of his previous writing has been pointing toward. That statement is that Abraham was justified by the resurrection power of God and not by his human effort. He was reckoned righteous by faith. In 4:17 we notice the reckoning of Abraham's faith. These are the steps of Abraham's faith that Paul talked about earlier for those who walk in the steps of Abraham's faith.

**First of all, notice the reckoning of Abraham's faith in the latter part of 4:17.** Abraham's faith was reckoned in the ability and power of God. True faith is always centered in the person of Christ and in nothing else. It is the person and the presence of Jesus that elicits, verifies and guarantees our faith. The emphasis must always be placed on the object of our faith and not upon the fact of our belief.

**Second, Abraham's faith was reckoned because he believed in spite of the improbable circumstances. God calls things that are not as though they were and gives life to the dead.** God had said to Abraham that it was through Isaac that Abraham's descendants would come. (Genesis 21:12; Romans 4:18; cf. Hebrews 11:18) However, Paul notes that Abraham was facing the reality that he was almost one hundred years old and that Sarah was unable to have children due to her old age (Romans 4:19). But God called things that were not as though they were and gave life to the dead. The basis of Abraham's faith is seen in 4:18. The natural probabilities were not there. Everything seemed to be against Abraham and against the promise of God, yet Abraham rested upon the promise of God. His faith was God's spoken word. Faith reasons from God and His word, not from self and our circumstances.

**Third, notice the consideration of Abraham's faith in 4:19-20.** Faith does not hide itself from the facts. Facts do not threaten faith. Abraham's dead body, being about 100 years old, along with Sara h's Abraham's seemingly truly dead womb, were the facts that faith considered. But faith kept looking to

the promise. Faith was strengthened by its troubles and gave glory to God.

**Fourth, look at the persuasion of Abraham's faith in 4:21.** Reason says that God can do only things that are natural. Faith says that God can do supernatural things. Faith calls into action all of the power of God's divine ability. Paul says in Ephesians 3:20-21, "*Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all that we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.*" Paul had the same kind of faith that Abraham had.

**Fifth, notice the effect of this faith in 4:22-25.** What effect does walking with Abraham bring? It brings righteousness (4:22-24); it brings forgiveness (4:25), and it brings justification (4:25). What is the conclusion then? Abraham was justified by faith, not by his works, not by circumcision, not by law, but rather by believing in the power of God that raised the deadness of Sarah's womb to life. The resurrection was the visible proof that God accepted Christ's atoning work. The resurrection is the proof that God's righteousness does indeed rule this universe.

### Conclusion

Paul has claimed that righteousness is by faith. Does Paul have any proof for this claim? Yes, he does. Abraham was accounted righteous by his faith (Genesis 15). David was accounted righteous by his faith, as is seen in Psalm 32. Abraham was justified a long time (14 years), before he was circumcised. Abraham's justification was not based on any law that Moses or anyone else would ever write. Abraham's son was born miraculously and supernaturally. This proves that God looks upon the deadness of things and wants to bring life. He looks on the emptiness of things and wants to bring honor. Proof is seen primarily in the resurrection of Jesus Christ from

the dead. Jesus was raised from the dead to prove that Abraham was made righteous by faith. He was raised from the dead to prove that David was made righteous by faith. He was raised from the dead to prove that anybody and everybody can be justified by faith. We are justified by faith in the resurrected Lord because His tomb is empty. One day, our tomb will be empty. Because He lives, we live. And because He dwells eternally, we will also live eternally. Believe in Jesus. Believe in the power of His resurrection, and as you do, find great peace and faith.

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# THE RESULTS OF JUSTIFICATION

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## **Romans 5:1-21**

### **Review and Introduction**

Previously we discussed the good news that man can be, and in fact many are, justified by faith. It has not only been illustrated, but it has also been proven in the case of Abraham, that God really is able to justify the believer because of, and on the basis of, his faith.

Many questions arise because of this. Will this new method of salvation really last? Will it continue to the end? Does it have a foundation sufficiently strong enough to stand the wear and tear of human needs and human problems? Even if it saves in the beginning, will it continue to save for the future? The answer to these and many other related questions are found in Romans 5.

### **The Security of the Justified**

There are two reasons why the provision and permanence of salvation are seen in Romans 5. First of all, they are seen in the security of those who are justified in 5:1-11. There are four reasons given by Paul in these verses that cause us to feel assured that this righteousness that has come by faith will continue unimpaired to the very end.

**1. The present experiences that we have in salvation assure our hope.** In Romans 5:1-2 Paul begins with the word “therefore.” This word means that a conclusion is being drawn

to everything that has been said previously. In this case Paul would in essence be saying: “Now in conclusion to what I have been saying.” or “Now all that I have been saying leads up to this point.”

Paul is saying that in relation to the past, we have been justified. We have been pardoned. We have been acquitted. We have been regarded as righteous. Our attitude in this is objective, not subjective. This has been done for us by God. Our inward feeling or attitude toward God is because of the fact that He has done this for us. This is not subjective salvation. This is not only about forgiveness. Forgiveness deals with the sins committed. It is sort of a negative thought in meaning, but not in outcome. Forgiveness means that all sins are erased.

### **Righteousness Results in Peace**

We are dealing with righteousness here. Righteousness results from Jesus’ good being attributed to us. That is the positive side of our experience. We are grateful that all of our sins have been erased. But we are more grateful that Jesus’ act on Calvary has become our act, that His righteousness has become our righteousness, His sanctification our sanctification, His redemption our redemption, and His wisdom our wisdom. That is righteousness. This guarantees that the method of salvation will continue until the very end since it is rooted in the completed act of Christ and God. It is not any action on my part that guarantees that this righteousness will continue. I continue to believe. I continue to trust God to carry out His great plan. Since in the past I have been justified by faith, I have peace with God. This is a present experience that makes me know that this way of making man righteous will last until the end. Peace is the cessation of hostility in addition to tranquility.

Many times we think that peace is simply a peaceful situation or a tranquil environment. This is not the case, however. Peace is also the cessation of all hostility. I am no longer hostile to God, and God is no longer hostile to me. The

sins that separated God and me have been removed by the blood of Christ. Because of that fact, we have peace.

In Isaiah 59:1-2 we read, *“Surely the arm of the LORD is not too short to save, nor his ear too dull to hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear.”* This situation has been remedied by God, through Christ, and so I have peace. I have peace of conscience because of the mercy of God. I have peace of heart because of the love of God. I have peace of mind because of the truth of God. And here is the important thing; I have peace in my soul in the presence of God. In relationship to the past, I have forgiveness and justification. In relationship to the present, I have peace.

Because of this peace, we have access into the presence of God. There is entrance. There is the privilege of introduction or presentation, such as one would have at court. There is the introduction into the King’s presence. We have this privilege because we are justified. Because we are justified, we not only have peace with God, we also have access into His throne room. Our consistent need is God’s continual supply.

We have access to stand. Here is the home of our soul. We stand in the presence of God by His mercy, by the blood of Christ, and also because of His justice. His justice has been satisfied as was studied in the last lesson. God’s justice has been satisfied by the blood of Christ and by the cross of Christ. His justice is now my hope. It is the reason I know this will continue until the end. In regard to the past, I have been justified. In regard to the present, I have peace, access, and grace.

### **Future Expectations**

However, in regard to the future, what do I have? I have boasting. That is what the word means in the latter portion of 5:2 when we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. This means that although we boast, we do not boast in ourselves. We do not

boast in our works. We do not even boast in our faith. Rather, we boast in God. We boast in hope of the glory of God. The word “hope” is a magic word. It is a word that looks to the future. The word means that there is an expectant desire. It is not just something that I desire; it is also something that I expect. On the other hand, it is not just something I expect; it is something that I desire. Without both of those ingredients we do not speak of hope. I both desire and expect the glory of God. I not only boast in God, but I boast in the glory of God. This is the goal to which I am looking. It is no longer the situation as Paul describes in Romans 3:23. My sin has now been removed. The righteousness of Jesus has been imputed to my account. I no longer fall short of the glory of God.

We can see that the present experiences of our life guarantee our hope. They guarantee the future because of what God has done, is doing, and will do. Nothing *can* hinder Him; nothing *will* hinder Him. I will be saved unto the end.

### **2. Afflictions Cannot Destroy Our Hope (Romans 5:3-5).**

My present experiences guarantee this and my present afflictions cannot destroy it. Notice in verse one that we are justified by faith. In verse three we rejoice in hope. In verse five God has poured out His love into our hearts. Faith, hope, and love—the only things that are eternal are ours. Does that not make our justification eternal since it is faith based on hope and love? Love in this case is not our love, but God’s.

### **Producing Perseverance**

In Romans 5:3-5 we see that our present afflictions cannot destroy our hope because the suffering that causes most people to lose hope produces perseverance. Two other words which may be used here are patience or longsuffering. The word is taken from the Greek word *thelipsis* which means “a pressing down, or a pressing together.” It came to mean oppression, affliction, tribulation, distress, or difficult situations. The word is originally the idea of pressing the wheat in a mill or pressing

the grapes beneath one's feet. That pressing brings about the perfection of the thing that is in view.

In Matthew 24:21, 29 Jesus describes how Jerusalem is going to undergo distress that will bring the Christians to glory. In 2 Corinthians 8:13 Paul, in speaking of the Macedonians giving out of their deep poverty, states that their giving was not for the ease of others or for the tribulation of the Macedonians, but rather, was for the purpose of producing equality. In John 16:21 Israel is compared to a woman giving birth to a child. The pain in both of these situations is derived from the word *thelipsis*. In 2 Corinthians 2:4 Paul speaks of the agony of his heart. That agony is a description taken from the word *thelipsis*.

The idea of suffering is that which presses down, but the pressing down is not for destruction; it is for perfection. This suffering, or this pressing down, produces perseverance. Perseverance produces character. The word "perseverance" is a word that originally meant to bear up under, to bear up with, or to bear up because of. It is the characteristic of a man who is unswerving in a deliberate purpose or loyalty. A man's loyalty to the faith and his piety is unswerving even in the greatest trials and sufferings.

Read the book of Job, or better yet, read about Calvary, and there you will find what this patience really is. This patience is steadfastness. It is consistent, or at least it produces consistency. It is enduring. It is a patient, steadfast waiting for something. It is a patient enduring of something. This character produces hope. The word "character" is a word that means the proving of one's faith. The approved state of a tried character, as we have here in this verse, is also seen in many of Paul's letters. In Philippians 2:2 Paul speaks to Timothy about having this tried purpose. 2 Corinthians 2:9 and 9:13 both speak of the Corinthians having this tried purpose. It is to prove something objectively as being a specimen of authentic worth as Paul speaks of their faith being tried and themselves being proven in 2 Corinthians 13:3.

### Hope Does Not Disappoint

We have already talked about hope. However, there is more meaning to it than just the dictionary definition: a constant or confident expectation. Hope is a *joyful* and *confident* expectation.

Look up the word *elpis* in a Greek dictionary and see that the meaning is great anticipation or joyfully expectation. When it comes, it fills my heart with joy. This kind of hope does not disappoint. The word translated “disappoint” really means to “cause to blush.” The word *elpis*, however, does not cause shame. It says that I will never blush with shame because of my sin. The reason for this is because my sin has been placed upon Jesus.

“Disappoint” also means “to dishonor or disgrace.” The Hebrew equivalent is the word *porar* that means “to break or to frustrate.” But because of hope, I will never be dishonored, nor will I ever be disgraced. God will never be disappointed with me again. Yes, I will do things that will disappoint Him, but when I do disappoint Him, He looks at me through the lens of Jesus.

The main reason that this hope will not disappoint is because the love of God has been shed throughout our heart. The love that God has for us is undeserved. He gives all assurance to me. There was and is nothing in us that would attract that love. God loves because He is love (1 John 4:8, 16), not because we are loving or because we are loveable (cf. 1 John 4:10).

In this verse we have the first mention of the Holy Spirit in the letter to the Romans. The Holy Spirit will be discussed more thoroughly in Romans 8, but Paul’s point here is that God’s love is shed throughout our hearts through the Holy Spirit that God has given us. God has already given us the greatest gift, His Son, but He has also given us the great gift of the Holy Spirit. It is no small thing, then, for Him to give us all of the love, mercy, power, strength, and grace that is needed to

carry on to the end. God's action on my behalf in the midst of my afflictions proves that my afflictions cannot destroy my hope.

**3. Lasting righteousness is seen in the gift of God's Son. It is this gift that confirms my hope (Romans 5:6-10).** There is a lot in this section that will not be covered in this chapter, but the main point is that God gave His Son, and that confirms our hope. God's love is seen in Jesus' death. He died for those who are lost, even into the future. The necessity of that death is that we were without strength. The means of our salvation, or justification, is Christ's death. The subjects of that death are ungodly sinners.

So, our sin in the future will not thwart God's purpose to save us any more than our sins in the past. The past act of God's Son will keep us clean from all sin (1 John 1:6-7) if we love His son, believe in His Son, and are following His Son. But this action or love of God is also seen in the life of Christ. The life of Christ is not for the sinner; it is for the saved. The life of Jesus helps my present behavior. The life of Jesus now guarantees my future. I am saved from wrath (Romans 5:9), not just from sin, by the life of Jesus. I am saved from falling according to Romans 5:10. This is the present providence of God. It is God's work in my life, and as I view the life of Jesus, then I know exactly how to live.

Notice something here. If the death of Christ was the means of our reconciliation, then the life of Christ will be the means of our preservation. We must believe that this is really true. There is a triple contrast in these verses. Enemies are reconciled. Lost people are saved. Dead people are brought to life. Now, if God has done all of this, then you can trust Him for the future.

**4. The method of justification will last because God Himself is our hope and the One who crowns our hope (Romans 5:11).** As we contemplate the thought of the believer boasting in God, we see that nothing short of God will satisfy

us. Nothing short of our lives will satisfy God. Justification is an *immediate gift* through faith. It is received, not accomplished. Justification is a *perfect gift*. There is no degree of justification. The feeblest believer in God is accepted by God. We change, but He does not change. The Christ can never die. It is His love, not mine, that is the resting place. His truth, not mine, is the tie. Justification is a *permanent gift*. The believer is covered by Christ in that he is assured of removal of condemnation and guilt in the past. He is delivered from all fear and doubt in the present, and so he is guaranteed a title to heaven. Justification is a *divine gift*. There is a tendency to rest upon human aspects of salvation. I often tremble on the rock, but the rock never trembles under me. Jesus is never in doubt. Justification is an *enjoyable gift*. God's act and God's fact of salvation is a factor and a force in our daily life. This justification will last. It will last because of what God is doing in my life.

### **The Foundation of Righteousness**

Some people consider Romans 5:12-21 to be the most difficult passage of Scripture in the entire Bible. The section begins with the same word as 5:1, "*Therefore.*"

Godet, in his commentary on Romans, points out that every aspect of Romans 3:21-26 has now been elaborated on except the one that deals with the phrase ". . . *to all who believe.*" (3:22) Thus the universality of Christ's salvation is treated in relationship to the entire human race. The object of this concluding paragraph is to show how everything necessary for human salvation, from justification to glory, is secured by Christ's redemption.

Although in some respects this text is difficult, it is absolutely essential to the proper understanding of the apostle's book, for it is key to the three chapters that follow. This paragraph, 5:12-21, consists of a series of comparisons and contrasts. It should be read and then seen for what it teaches on

the surface. This is what the Romans would do. It would simply be read to them. There would not be a lengthy discussion of it. Once read, it would be understood.

### **The Contrast Between Sin and Grace**

In Romans 5:12-14 Paul describes the contrast between sin and grace. The phrase “. . .*who was a pattern of the one to come.*” is essential to understanding this text. There is a contrast between sin and death. Through one man sin entered into the world; through sin death entered into the world; death spread to all men when every man sinned. This is Romans 3:23 again. Sin existed prior to the law of Moses. Even though sin is not imputed where there is no law, law has always been in the world. Death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned like Adam. Adam initiated a universal state.

### **Numerous Contrasts and Grace**

Because of this state of sin, a contrast has developed between all of these things. In 5:15 there is a contrast between the *trespass and the gift*. By the trespass of Adam, many died. But by the grace of Jesus, the grace abounds to many. Then, in 5:16, there is a contrast between *condemnation and justification*. Through one trespass, judgment came into the world resulting in condemnation. In spite of many trespasses, the free gift abounds resulting in justification. In 5:17 there is a contrast between *life and death*. Through one man, Adam, death reigned. But through the one man, Jesus, life reigned. In 5:18 there is a contrast between the *trespass and righteousness*. Adam brought the trespass, but Jesus brought righteousness. In 5:19 there is a contrast between *obedience and disobedience*. Through Adam's disobedience, many were caused to be sinful. Through Christ's obedience to God, many will be made righteous. In 5:20 there is abounding trespass and abounding righteousness.

### **Conclusion**

The law was added so that the trespass might increase. But where sin increased, grace increased all the more. Just as sin reigned in death, so also grace reigned through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ. There is an abounding trespass that causes death. There is an abounding grace that causes life. Sin reigns if one is identified with Adam by disobedience. Life reigns if one is identified with Christ by faith. Some people believe that this teaches Adam's trespass was imputed unconditionally upon all babies born into the world. But this cannot be true because 5:18-19 says that as the trespass was imputed, even so, righteousness is imputed. In the manner in which the trespass was imputed, that is the way that the gift was imputed. In the way the gift was imputed, that is the same way that the trespass is imputed. We have already seen that the gift of Jesus is conditional. It is conditioned upon faith. We have also seen that the death that Adam brings, which is spiritual death, is conditioned upon the disobedience and unbelief of people.

If someone were to read Romans 5:21, and that was the only verse they read, they might conclude that since grace abounds where sin abounds, they should sin even more. "Let us sin more so that there will be more grace." This is the very statement that Paul puts into the mouths of the people in Romans 6:1. We will see Paul's answer to that in the next lesson. It would be contrary to the entire purpose of God and to His character for sin to be encouraged. Paul is going to show that it is illogical and impossible to continue in sin when one believes in the grace of God. We believe in God's grace. May God give you great peace in that grace today.

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# JUSTIFICATION AND SIN

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## Romans 6:1-23

### Review and Introduction

In this chapter we will change our focus from the doctrine of justification to the doctrine of sanctification. Justification is the act of being made right while sanctification is the state of living right. In Romans 6-8 we will see this great doctrine of sanctification in the blood of Christ.

Before we begin our study on sanctification, let us review what we have seen so far. In Romans 1:16-17 we learned that the gospel, which is God's power unto salvation, reveals the righteousness of God. The key word in 1:16-17 is the word "*revealed.*" The gospel has revealed the righteousness of God. In 1:18 through 3:20 Paul says that man's unrighteousness through sin demands the provision of divine righteousness. Righteousness is not only revealed (1:16-17), it is demanded in 1:18-3:20. The righteousness that is needed is provided in Christ Jesus through faith. In 3:21-31 the key word is "*provided.*" This righteousness is warranted by the Old Testament. The key word is "*warranted*" or "made possible" in 4:1-25. In 5:1-21 this righteousness is *permanent*. It is permanent, **number one**, because of its effect to the individual, and **number two**, it is permanent, because it ended the Adamic age. An entirely new order of things is introduced where abounding grace reigns through the righteousness of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. If we are in Jesus and He is our Lord, then the Adamic age is ended and the Christian age is begun in our life.

In 3:21-5:21 the theme is that we have been *justified by faith* in the crucified Lord. From 6:1-8:39 the theme will be *sanctification by faith* in the risen Lord. The matter in question is no longer how to erase sin's guilt, but how to overcome its power. Justification, someone has said, is the gate through which we enter the narrow way of holiness. From this point on we will be dealing with the way of holiness and not the gate into it. What we will be concerned with is the structure (sanctification) that will be built upon the foundation of justification. We will see that justification is not only necessary to sanctification, but it secures it. In fact, sanctification includes justification.

Union with Christ carries two beautiful results: the effect of the atonement for our guilty past as we share in the merits of Christ's death and the effect of the resurrection for our unholy present existence as we share in the merits of Christ's life. Our judicial position is handled by justification. Our spiritual condition is handled by sanctification.

### **Deliverance From the Power of Sin**

The entire section, from Romans 6:1-8:39, deals with the matter of our deliverance from the power of sin. We have already been delivered from the penalty of sin as seen in 3:21 to 5:21. But sin still has the power to overcome us unless we have deliverance from its power.

Paul will make four points regarding deliverance from the power of sin. **First**, he will talk about a *new principle* that makes the believer dead to sin (6:1-14). **Second**, he will talk about a *new position* that makes the believer free from sin (6:15-7:6). **Third**, Paul will talk about a **new power** that makes the believer free from law (7:7-25). **Fourth**, he will talk about a *new possibility* that makes the believer alive to holiness (8:1-39).

### **The Fount of Righteousness**

Romans 6:1-14 deals with the fount of righteousness in that it discusses this new principle that makes me dead to sin. The key word in this section of chapters six and seven is “then.” This means that Paul is drawing a conclusion (6:1, 15; 7:7). This word “then” introduces some objections that these people are going to make.

Romans 6:1-4 answers an objection. The objection is found in verse one: “What you are saying about God and what you saying about His method of declaring men righteous actually encourages sin.” This objection is understandable, but it should not be believed. It is still understandable because of what Paul said in 5:20-21. He said that when sin increased, grace increased all the more. The result is that since sin reigned in death, grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. What Paul taught about the grace of God logically brought about in their minds this objection. They say that Paul’s teaching about grace would encourage sin.

Paul answers that objection in 6:2 with a protest. He says, “Let it not be! May it not ever be considered so!” He appeals to their experience. He asks them how they can continue to live in sin after they had died to it. He actually repels the question as impious before he refutes it as being wrong. It is an evil heart that turns grace into a license to sin. It is this that calls forth the apostle’s righteous indignation.

Paul then gives them a reminder in 6:3-4. He appeals to their knowledge. He asks them, “Are you ignorant?” Of course, they weren’t. “Are you ignorant of what occurred at baptism?” “Are you ignorant of what happened when you were immersed in water because of your faith in Jesus Christ?” “Don’t you remember that there was a death, that you were buried with Christ in your baptism and that you died to sin? You died to sin’s penalty. You died to its consequences. You died to its practices. That occurred when you were immersed. Do you not remember that when you were immersed that it was a burial?”

Don't you remember the putting to death of the old man? Don't you remember burying the old man and putting away all that had died? Because you repented, sin had died. Don't you remember that? Don't you remember that when you were buried you were also raised? You died. You were buried. You were raised. When you were raised, you became a new creature. When Jesus was raised, He was a new creature. He still looked the same, He had the same body, the same marks in His hand, the same scar in His side, the same wounds on His head, but He could appear in the midst of a room with the doors locked. He looked the same, but He was a new creature with new relationships. When you were immersed into Jesus, you were buried and you were raised a new creature. Do you not remember that baptism was followed by a walk in newness of life?" In verses three and four, Paul appeals to their salvation experience and says, "Don't you remember that you were immersed not only that you might be saved but that sin might die, that you might die to sin, that you might bury that old man, and that you might be raised a new man to walk in newness of life?" This is based on his argument in 5:12-21 where he talked about Adam and Christ. "You were the old man, Adam, and now you are the new man, Christ."

### **Freed From Sin In Death**

Romans 6:5-7 states that as a consequence of salvation, justification and sanctification, we have been united with Jesus in His death and in His resurrection. Paul talks here about the old man of Romans 1:18-3:20, the man who was depending upon his philosophy, wisdom, morals, or religious observances. It is Adam in 5:12-21 whom Jesus has conquered in our life. Paul talks here about the body of sin as the place where sin originates. Sin originates in our natural body. But Paul says that we have been united with Christ. This is the real self that at one time was united with Adam. (Paul will pick up the point of slavery in our next paragraph and in the discussion of law and marriage in chapter seven). Here is our real self, once united

with Adam in imitating his sin and now united with Christ in faith in His good work.

Paul then states the principle in 6:7 that anyone who has died has been freed from sin. That is a general maxim. Anyone who died is freed from all debt. Death cancels all obligations and breaks all ties. I will be free from debt in death. My family may have to pick up the debt, but I will be free from physical debt. It is a simple principle that death cancels all obligations and breaks all ties. The general maxim is used here to confirm the fact that the believer in his union with Christ is released from both the penalty of sin and the power of sin. Union with Christ removes the penalty and provides an opening for the stream of grace to flow into the soul. It is illogical; it is unscriptural; it is even immoral to think about continuing in sin so that grace may abound.

### **Paul's Conviction**

In Romans 6:8 Paul states his conviction that since we have died with Christ, we will live with Christ. This death to sin that we enjoyed when we were immersed into Christ liberates us for a new life. The Spirit of God killed sin in our life, and that liberated us to a new life. In 6:9-10 Paul sets out proof that this is true. The statement of our Lord's death clearly indicates the atoning power of His death. Christ paid all the claims of death on behalf of His people. Death no longer had any claim whatsoever on them. Based on this is the call from Paul in 6:11: *"In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus."* Another word for "count" is "reckon" (King James Version). The reckoning is because of our Lord's death and resurrection. The Christian is to keep on reckoning (counting) himself to have similarly died to all that is sinful and in the same way to be living completely and totally to God. We must be careful to note that "dead to sin" does not mean the death of sin as a power in our heart. The apostle does not say that sin is dead to us. He says that we who are in Christ are

dead to it. We are to keep on reckoning ourselves to be this way with simple faith.

### **Sanctification is Implied in Justification**

Sanctification is the second part of our redemption in Christ. Christ is our righteousness and our sanctification, as Paul states in 1 Corinthians 1:30. We need to reckon ourselves to be dead to sin so that when sin brings any demand we do not listen. That is the reason for the command in Romans 6:12-14. Paul begins with the word “therefore.” In other words, since all that we have said is true, since we were immersed into Christ, and since we buried the old man and a new man was raised, we have an obligation only to Christ and not to sin. All of that is true. Do not let sin reign. We must prove that we are in reality what we reckon ourselves to be, that is, dead to sin.

There are two claimants for our life that continually seek us and our obedience: God and Satan. As the believer has entered into the kingdom of Christ and into union with Him, he is to be totally dedicated to Him and yield his members to His service. Implied in not letting sin reign in our mortal body is the presence of sin in our mortal body. Look again at the great promise of 6:14. What is the divine promise? Sin will not reign. What is the divine provision? You are not under law, not under sin, but under grace.

### **The Christian Side of Holiness**

In these verses we see the human side of Christian holiness, our attitude toward Jesus, and our duty toward Jesus. This is clearly seen in three key thoughts of holiness in these verses. **Number one** is the word “reckoned.” Reckoned is an attitude of faith and not a feeling. It is a calculation based on facts. It is a logical decision rather than an emotional decision. When Christ died, we died. When He arose, we arose. We hold this computation true when sin makes its appeal. In the same way, when we long for holiness, we reckon that our life is in Christ and we are therefore holy.

**Second**, Paul says that we are not to let sin reign. Notice here that we have both the Greek imperative mood and the Greek present tense. This implies that there is a continuous attitude and a continuous action on the part of the believer. Because of our oneness in Christ and His death, we are not to allow the dominion of sin in our life. This is our personal responsibility. Christ is our Lord, not sin.

**Third**, Paul says that we are to present, or offer, ourselves. Negatively, he says, “let not sin reign.” Positively, he says, “present for service and use, our body.” This is the Greek past tense. It is a once and for all presentation because of His once and for all death. The practical and daily use of these three key thoughts will give us the secret of being continually and absolutely holy.

### **Continuance In Sin Is Impossible**

In Romans 6:15 Paul states a new objection, that grace allows one to sin. The apostle is still concerned enough to show the incompatibility of justification with continuing in sin. He has shown the new principle of union with Christ. Paul will now discuss its practical power, especially in light of his great statement in verse fourteen, “You are under grace.” Verse 14, as we have already seen, is transitional, at once summing up the former section, and now introducing what follows.

There is a new problem presented in verse 15. Paul says, “*What then?*” This is the thought that we expressed earlier. The word “then” shows a new objection. “Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace?” In 6:1 Paul said, “Shall we continue in sin?” Continuing in sin means practicing sin. Paul says here, “Shall we sin?” That is the permission to sin. We cannot even allow sin as an isolated act. We cannot, even in our mind, permit sin to be available to us. Sin must never be viewed as something that God approves of or permits.

What does “under law” mean? To be under law means to be ruled by law as the principle of the covenant of works. It implies at least three things: **Number one**, it implies a divine

commandment or a number of commandments ordering perfect obedience. **Number two**, it implies a divine promise of life or reward for perfect obedience. **Number three**, it implies a divine threat of punishment for falling short in one single act of perfect obedience.

We should be grateful that we are under grace and not under law. That implies two things: **Number one**, it implies that God is gracious, benevolent, and loving. **Number two**, it shows the willingness of God to bestow righteousness and also the will to obey.

### **The New Obligation**

In Romans 6:16-18 *Paul talks about new obligations*. Grace reveals and empowers one for new obligations. There is a new subjection to righteousness. We can choose our master, but once we have chosen the master, we are obligated to obey. The will of the believer conforms to a mold, pattern, or form of doctrine taking shape from that mold. This obedience from the heart is vivid and very suggestive. He reminds us of the blessed and holy contrast between the past state and the present state. The result is this: being freed from sin they have become servants of righteousness. Being slaves to sin at one time, they are now slaves to righteousness.

In 6:19-20 *Paul talks about new duties*. In the past there had been a yielding to uncleanness and sin, but now there is a yielding to righteousness with a view to holiness. He uses this illustration of slavery because of their lack of spiritual discernment to see all that was really involved in the death of Christ. Paul says simply that you have a new master.

*He then talks about the new rewards* in 6:21-23. An appeal is made to their past experiences. What was the expected outcome from their past commission of sin? It was death, spiritual death, eternal death. In verse 22, he turns to their present state. They have exchanged masters, and what is the result? Justification and holiness is the result. He then states the general law of God's moral universe, that the wages of sin is

death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. We must never forget that this passage is an appeal to the Christian and not to the sinner. Sinning is absolutely impossible to justify for those who realize and maintain their union with Christ. Union with Him and His death means cessation from the exercise of sin. Union with Him in His life means the communication of new life and new power.

### Conclusion

Chapter six has been a very pivotal section in our study. We have already seen the human side of holiness. The apostle now bids us to look at the divine side, those aspects of the divine provision which enable the believer to be holy. These will be discussed not only here but also in the chapter to follow. ***The promise*** is that sin will not have dominion over you. What assurance this is! It is God's desire and purpose, His divine decree, that we shall conquer in everything. ***The provision*** is that you are not under law, but under grace. If I choose deliberately to place myself under grace by surrendering to Christ through baptism and union with Him, grace will inevitably work in and through me. Like standing in front of a fire, the heat soon works its way through my body. ***The position*** is that in Christ Jesus our Lord, justification and sanctification are available. Courage and confidence and joy and boasting come as we triumph in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Sin is impossible to justify. Teaching that man is justified by union with Christ does not encourage sin, it deters sin. It does not allow sin. It forbids and condemns sin. Sin and Jesus are mutually exclusive. Sin and belonging to Christ cannot live in the same world. You and I need to take great peace in believing that Jesus Christ is the answer to the sin question as He is the answer to the salvation question. You are sanctified in Christ. Find peace in believing that.

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# JUSTIFICATION AND LAW

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## Romans 7:1-13

### Introduction

We now turn from discussing the sanctified man in regard to sin, to discussing the sanctified man in regard to law. Let us notice some statements that the writer has already made about the law in this book. In Romans 3:19-20 Paul said that no man can attain righteousness by works of law, but that law only reveals the unrighteousness of man. In 3:21 he made the statement that law has no part in the revelation of God's righteousness or the imputation of God's righteousness except as a witness. In 3:27 he said that the law would not, and could not, exclude the boasting of man. In 4:13 he said that the law has nothing to do with the inheritance that we have as children of Abraham. In 4:15 he made the statement that the law only brings about wrath. In 4:14-20 he says that the law brought man under bondage.

All of those statements perhaps would be stumbling blocks to both Jews and Gentiles without a broader and more comprehensive view of the law of God. What was the law for? Observe carefully what Paul says in chapter seven. To begin with, Paul will say in verses one through six that sin will not have dominion over you for you are not under law but under grace. Secondly, in 7:13, he will show that the law is not sinful even though the law causes sin to abound. He will then show in 7:14-25 that the law is absolutely powerless to deliver men from the struggle against sin. The law cannot justify; it can only

reveal the sinful part of man. Thus, the whole chapter is concerned with the great truth that law is unable to save from indwelling sin.

### **The Justified Are Not Under Law The Illustration of Marriage: 7:1-3**

In the original Greek the first word in Romans 7:1 is “or.” So, this is a continuation of the discussion that has gone on before. Paul talked about the fact that we are freed from sin in 6:15-23, where he used an illustration of slavery. He continued the same discussion in 7:1-3, and, using the illustration of marriage, he made the point that we are free from law.

The main thought here is that death dissolves legal obligations. We saw that same point in chapter six. Death releases someone from any legal obligation, even in regard to marriage. On the death of her husband, a wife is legally free to contract another marriage. This is Paul’s illustration. It is a simple statement about law. As long as the husband lives, she is still considered to be married to him and is obligated to keep his will. If the husband dies, she is no longer married to that man and is free to marry another and to keep her new husband’s will.

### **The Application of this Law to the Christian Life (7:4-6)**

Let us follow the apostle to see the interpretation he makes of his illustration. The wife represents the personality that Paul will discuss in the latter portion of this chapter with the phrase “I, myself.” The wife is the inner person, or the personality. The first husband is the old man, just as Romans 6:16 discussed the old master. Romans 5:12-21 discusses the natural man. Here it is the old husband, or the unregenerate self. As long as that unregenerate self was alive, we were under his law. We might not want to do what the flesh demanded, but as long as we were united in covenant to that old man, we had no choice but to

follow his will. The death of that first husband is the crucifixion of the old man with Christ. The dead man was buried so that a new man might be raised. The old man that was buried with Christ is the same as the old man discussed here that died. When our flesh (the husband) died by our faith in Jesus and our union with Jesus, we (the wife) were set free. Therefore, we were dead to the law of that husband. The soul was set free by the crucifixion of the flesh, the old man, and thereby made dead to its law.

### *1. Union With Christ*

Our flesh demands things of us that we do not want to obey. Our Savior will demand things of us that we enjoy fulfilling. There are three aspects of the Christian life that are suggested here which sum up the whole of Christianity. **First**, there is the union with Christ. With that union, living the old life is impossible. Romans 6:3 says that we cannot live like we used to because we are now united with Christ. **Second**, service to sin is impossible because of that union. This is what Paul said in 6:16. I cannot obey the old master any more because I am united to a new master. **Third**, the old union to the flesh is impossible because of this new union with Jesus. In Romans 5:12-21 there were two heads: the old man and the new man, Adam and Christ. In chapter six we had two masters: the old man and the new man, the fleshly nature and Jesus.

### *2. Bearing Fruit For Christ*

In chapter seven there are two husbands. The new husband is Jesus. Would not the old husband be the flesh? We are dead to the law of that husband. The old husband died and was buried. The old man died and was buried, and God raised a new man to walk in newness of life. Therefore, we have union with Christ. Because of that we bear fruit for Christ. All of these things—the works and the union with Jesus—are for the purpose

of bringing forth fruit for God. Fruit is the expression of life and may be said to indicate character rather than conduct.

### **3. *Service to Christ***

I am united with Christ and bring forth fruit for Him. But I also serve Him. I serve in newness of spirit (Romans 7:6). This is exactly what Paul had said in 6:4, that I walk in newness of life. This line of thought will give us the theme for chapter eight: fruitfulness in service to God in newness of spirit and newness of life with Him.

### **Relation of Law and Sin (7:7-13)**

In Romans 7:7-13 Paul discussed the real nature of law as it relates to sin. The apostle has already spoken of the necessity of being dead to sin and dead to the law. The objector might say that such statements put the law in the same category with sin. If the believer has to break from the law with the same decisiveness that he had to break with sin, then something must be wrong, and even unworthy, in the law. So runs the objection. Romans 7:7-25 continued the thought of verse six. Paul presented a picture of those who are under the law in order to show why death to the law is a part of the gospel. It does not make the law sin. If I am going to be joined to Jesus, then I must be separated from the law of the old husband.

There are several points to note here. In verse seven the law reveals the fact of sin. What purpose does the law serve? **First**, Paul points out the objection (Romans 7:7). Paul looked upon his own experience before he became conscious of moral responsibility and told us that he did not know it was wrong to covet until the law said, "*You shall not covet . . .*" (Exodus 20:17)

### **Paul's Experience With the Law**

All through this passage, the depth and intensity of feeling that was expressed shows that this material must be

autobiographical. Paul looked deep into his own soul as a conscientious Jew wanting to be righteous as the law demanded. He talked about the intensity of the feeling, the tragic feeling of lostness that the law brought to him. **Number one**, law reveals *the fact of sin*. It is wrong to covet, to commit adultery, to lie, to have evil passions, not to love God, or to disobey God. The law reveals the fact of sin.

**Number two**, in 7:8 the law reveals *the occasion of sin*. It is the knowledge of the requirements of the divine law that makes sin effective in the consciousness of man. We begin to have consciousness of sin because of the law. Apart from law a man may be conscious of evil acts, yet law is needed to reveal the presence of sin in the nature. Whether it is written law as in Moses' case or unwritten law as the law written on the Gentile heart, the law must be there for man to really have the consciousness of a violation of that law.

**Number three**, in 7:9 we read that the law reveals *the power of sin*. The only time that I would know that Paul was separated from law was when he was a little child. When he was an infant and a small boy, before he really became aware of the law, he was alive. In describing the wicked king of Tyre, Ezekiel said, "*Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee.*" (Ezek. 28:15, KJV)

When Paul was born, he was born in perfect holiness as any baby is, and he lived in an innocent state. But then came the day when the law came with its commandment that said, "*You shall not covet . . .*" (Exodus 20:17) The law and that commandment had always been there, but now it came specifically to Paul. It dawned on Paul that this coveting was wrong. It was against God's will and His law, so it brought sin to life in his body and condemned him to death. He became fully aware of the power of sin in his life. The law identified it as wrong. But when the law came to Paul, it made it wrong for him also. This is what we call in religion "the age of accountability." No one knows

when that age is for anybody but themselves. Paul remembered the day that the law became an issue in his life, and with that he died. He was alive, but then he died. The law did not kill him. Sin killed him. The law simply made him aware of sin through knowledge.

#### ***4. The Effect of Sin***

In Romans 7:10-11 the law reveals *the effect of sin*. The outcome was death. The effect of sin in Paul's life was death. He said in verse eleven that it killed him. The sinner must die because of his inability to fulfill the law. Notice the three statements that Paul makes of himself in the chapter. He says that there was a time that he was alive apart from the law. But then the commandment came; sin came to life, and he died. Paul has already talked about the fact that through faith in Jesus new life is possible. Paul described the degenerate state of the child, the degenerate state of the sinner, and the regenerate state of the sinner made righteous by the grace of God.

#### ***5. The Deceitfulness of Sin***

Paul said in 7:11 that law reveals *the deceitfulness of sin*. We know the demands of the law regarding sin. When we endeavor to fulfill those demands, we are soon made to realize the hopelessness of our position and our condition. Sin is a deceptive thing. It has been since the very beginning. When Adam and Eve ate of the tree they were deceived. The devil has his wiles. He is able to fool us (2 Corinthians 11:3, 14). Paul said that we are not ignorant of the devil's devices. We are to put on the whole armor of God so that we may stand against the wiles and deceitfulness of the devil. Law reveals the deceitfulness of sin. If we knew what sin was going to do to us before we participated in it, we would never get involved with it. That is the purpose of the law. Law reveals what sin can do to people.

Reflect back on what sin did to David. Throughout the rest

of his life he had to remember, through the actions of his sons, his sin regarding Bathsheba and Uriah. Think also about what sin did to Peter. Think of what sin did to the nation of Israel. But think, primarily, about what sin did to Adam. Sin took Adam from the fellowship of God, outside of the garden, where he would have to eat bread by the sweat of his brow. Think also of what sin did to Jesus, and there see the real deceitfulness of sin. Sin promises joy but cannot give it. Sin promises success but cannot give it. Sin promises value but cannot give it. All that sin can give is a cross. Jesus went to a cross so that you and I would not have to go to one ourselves. All that sin can promise and give is an eternal fire. Jesus endured separation from God so that you and I might never have to endure it ourselves.

### **6. *The Sinfulness of Sin***

Law reveals *the sinfulness of sin* (7:12-13).

#### **The Good Side of Law**

Law is holy; law is righteous, and law is good. It is holy because it discloses the righteousness of God and the sinfulness of sin. It is righteous because it condemns the sinner. It is good because it has a spiritual purpose. We really need to understand the holy, righteous, and good character of the law. There are times when we study books like Romans or Galatians and we are tempted to believe that the law is not a good thing, that it is not a holy or righteous thing. However, law is the expression of the lawgiver. This is true of any law. There are many unholy lawgivers today, and that is why there are many unholy laws in the world today. We should be grateful that we are not judged by these particular lawmakers. But we should be grateful for law because it regulates life. Law protects life. Law was made specifically for man, not man for law.

We also need to understand that law does not solicit sin; it only elicits sin. It brings sin into view. It is not law but sin that

brings death. That is the answer to the question, “*Is the law sin?*” Or course the law is not sin! Law is neither sin nor does law work death, for it is no more the author of death than it is the author of sin. Now, without law we do not know what sin is, and without law sin is not imputed. Without law sin is not exceedingly sinful. Without law sin is viewed as a weak, minor thing in our life rather than the powerful force it really needs to be. Law causes me to hate sin because I see that the very basic nature of sin is ungodliness and that it is not like God. Of all of the things that we should want to be, we should want to be like God.

### **The Law Reveals Sin**

The keynote in this text is the phrase “through the law” or “by the law,” “through the commandment” or “by the commandment” (7:7b, 8a, 11, 13b). Law is intended to reveal sin. It brings home to man that certain things are wrong, and it teaches him concerning its depth of sinfulness. It teaches what is wrong, and it teaches how wrong it is. Law is intended to condemn the sinner, and it does this by showing our utter incapability of fulfilling the law. Earlier in this study we read from Galatians 3:10 that anyone who is under the law is under a curse. The reason for that curse is that no one can keep the law. Law is intended to constrain and conduct the awakened condemned sinner to Christ. The law is able to make us wise unto salvation (2 Timothy 3:15), and it is a schoolmaster that brings us to Jesus (Galatians 3:24). The law brings us to the end of ourselves, and therefore, it brings us to the absolute necessity of Jesus.

### **Conclusion**

Happy is the man who has come to the end of himself, to the end of his own ideas, his own efforts and his own determination to be saved by his own obedience. Happy is the man who has acknowledged his utter sinfulness and his

hopeless inability and has accepted Christ as the goal of the law and the only way to righteousness.

The law is not a bad thing; it is a holy thing. The law brings us to an understanding that the way of a man is not in himself as Jeremiah said (Jeremiah 10:23). It is not in a man to direct his own steps. I must give up; I must repent; I must believe in Jesus. As Romans chapter six told us, I must die with Christ. That dead man must be buried in baptism so that God can raise a new man to walk in newness of life. A man can love the law but is not judged by it. He loves Jesus and is judged only by Jesus.

This is the faith. This is the hope. This is the comfort. This is the peace that this book has to offer us. The next chapter will deal with the utter impossibility of law to deliver man from the unequal struggle against self, against God and against God's law. May God give you peace in fulfilling the law of Christ.

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# THE INABILITY OF THE FLESH

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## **Romans 7:14-25**

### **Review and Introduction**

We are still studying from Romans 7 where Paul is dealing with the relationship of the justified and sanctified person to the law. In this chapter we are going to show, from Romans 7:14-25, the inability of the flesh. In Romans 3:20 Paul has shown that the law cannot justify. Here in Romans 7:14-25 he is going to show it cannot sanctify.

In verses 7-13 Paul's argument has been based upon the distinction seen in the phrase, "not the commandment, but sin resulting from the commandment." In 7:14-25 his argument will rest upon the phrase, "Not I, but sin which dwells in me." His true self, the mind, vindicates and approves the law of God even while indwelling sin, his flesh, resists it.

### **Who Is the Wretched Man?**

Two familiar questions arise when we start our reading in Romans 7:13. The first question is: Do these verses, where Paul describes his carnality in graphic detail, represent his own experiences? The answer has to be yes, or else he is deceiving us. But these experiences are not his alone. Paul is characteristic of all of those who are in like circumstances. These are Paul's own experiences. The second question is: Do these verses refer to the regenerate Paul or the unregenerate Paul, to regenerate people or un-regenerate people? Good and great men stand and have stood on both sides of the question, and when good Christian men differ over a passage, it is not

time for us to be too dogmatic.

Let us present some arguments for both sides of that question. Is it the regenerate person or the unregenerate person? In favor of the unregenerate person, we point to verse 14, where Paul says, “The law is spiritual, but I am carnal. I am permanently sold to sin.” This could not be said of a Christian, especially after the statement in Romans 6:14 where it is stated that *“sin shall not have dominion over us because we are not under law, but rather under grace.”*

In favor of Paul referring to the regenerate person, we refer to 7:22 where he says that he delights in the law of God, which many suppose could not be true of the unregenerate or unconverted person. However, Isaiah 58:2 and the latter part of Romans 7 are thought by many people to prove the contrary.

One point that we need to remember in this passage is that it describes a man who is trying to be good and holy by his own effort and yet is beaten back every time by the power of indwelling sin. The experiences described here are certainly not those of the Christian life *as it ought to be*. In Romans 6:17-18 I read that we are freed from slavery to sin in order to become slaves of righteousness. In Romans 7:6 I am told that we are to live in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter. In Romans 8:1 I will read that there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, for the law of Spirit of life in Christ made them free from the law of sin and death.

Most arguments focus on whether this is the regenerate man or the unregenerate man. But let us consider an alternative view. Remember that the question that this section is answering is from Romans 7:7 and 7:13. The passage does not discuss if there is a dual nature of man struggling. The question is, *“Is the law sin?”* and *“Did that which is good (the law), then become death to me?”* My view is simple. The passage describes a man who is earnestly trying to be holy by his own efforts under the law and apart from grace. The passage thus teaches that the law is powerless for either the salvation of man or the sanctification

of man. Thus, the passage does not refer to the regenerate as a whole or the unregenerate as a whole but is even more specific in its focus.

Romans 7:1 must not be overlooked in the proper interpretation of the text. Paul is writing to people who know the law. Verses seven through thirteen ask questions about the law. They show that the Jews are conscientious under the Mosaic law. They valued its spirituality, but failed to fulfill its requirements. It is, therefore, a picture of a Jew *under* law, seeking to find salvation *by* law and failing to do so. It describes the experience of this unconverted person, a Jew, fully converted in the law, seeking zealously to accomplish a righteousness of his own by works of the law. Morough has stated in his book, *The Wretched Man*, "It is a practical illustration and demonstration of the statement that by works of the law shall no flesh be justified."

Before we look at 7:14-25 let us think about a key to the meaning of this entire section. The first person pronoun "I" is repeated thirty times in this section without a single mention of the Holy Spirit. It indicates what "I" am struggling to do and utterly failing to do in my own strength. The contrast between this and the succeeding paragraphs in Romans 8 is most striking. In Romans 8 there will be 20 references to the Holy Spirit, but there are none here in chapter seven. Here in chapter seven "law" is found approximately 20 times. In chapter eight it is found only three or four times.

### **Paul's Three Confessions**

The main point of our discussion starting in verse 13 is not the condemnation of the law but the powerlessness of the law to help me in my day to day struggles. The conflict is not between the two natures of the believer. It refers to the effect of the law on a heart that recognizes the law's spirituality. Godet, in his commentary, aptly remarks that this passage is like a funeral dirge, the most sorrowful eulogy that ever proceeded

from a human heart. We can believe that. It is the worst news in all of the Bible. When the passage is studied as a whole, it will be found to fall in three sections, or better yet, three confessions. Each confession has three divisions, giving in turn a statement, a proof and then a conclusion.

This section begins in 7:14, which is where Paul will make his first confession, but the context actually begins in Romans 7:13 where the statement is made that leads up to Paul making that first confession. Paul is going to use his own experience under law to prove that point. He now makes the point by going back to the time that he lived under the law to show that the law did show sin to be exceedingly sinful. He shows that the law did kill him and that it was powerless to bring him back to life or to give him life.

### **Confession One: I Am Unspiritual (7:14-17)**

This is a rather detailed reading and sometimes, with all of the “I’s” and “what I want to do I do not do, and what I do is what I do not want to do,” it can get somewhat confusing. So let us break it down into three parts.

**First**, there is the statement by Paul in 7:14 that the law is spiritual, but that he is not. The law is spiritual, but he is carnal. Now, the present tenses which follow do not imply any change of subject. But they are necessary, for he is now going to discuss the character of the law, not its operation. The character of the law necessarily remains unchanged. Paul refers to the law in the present tense, as if it was still in existence. He did not say that the law *was* (past tense) spiritual because the law still exists. While Paul was writing, the law *is* (present tense) spiritual. The present tenses are not to be taken as expressive of present personal experiences, but they are to be taken as experiences under the law. In English it is called the historical present, to speak of the past as if it were present for some good reason. The good reason here is that he is discussing the character of the law. The law is spiritual. When Paul lived

under the law, he was not spiritual. He was carnal. In 7:15-16 notice the proof of that statement. His proof is that self is unable to hinder what it disapproves. He said that he could not tell why he was doing what he was doing. What he wants to do, he does not do. The very thing that he hates, he practices. The ungodly and unregenerate pagan used those words to confess that he was practicing what he knew to be wrong, but his inconsistency arose out of his love for evil. When Paul confessed wrong it was not due to a love for evil. As a matter of fact, he hated the evil. He hated what it did *to* him. He hated what it did *in* him. The proof that Paul was carnal is not what the struggle within Paul was all about. The struggle was the inability to do what he wanted to do. He could will to do good, but he could not do the good he willed to do.

It is interesting that Paul told the Philippians in 2:12-13 that God worked in them both to will *and* to do, according to His good pleasure. When God works in a person who is saved by grace, he not only wills to do good, he can also do the good that God wills him to do. The person mentioned in Romans seven can will and desire to do good all day long. But then sin enters, and he has to do what sin says to do; he cannot do the good he wills to do. Paul was a conscientious Jew, spiritually viewing the law, seeing all that was good in it, wanting to do good, but finding in himself the very opposite.

**Second**, in verse 17, Paul is not trying to absolve himself of blame. He is not even trying to explain why he failed. He is showing his wretchedness. He has found a tyrant within himself who compels him to act against his better self. That is the way we will always be if we are trying to please God and also please ourselves by our performance of the law. We need faith in a substitute, which is Christ.

### **Confession Two: I Am Indwelt By Sin (7:18-20)**

Paul's second confession is found in 7:18-20. This confession centers around the fact that he was an unspiritual

person. Sin brought that unspirituality to him, having been awakened by the law. This is exactly what Paul had said before, but he goes a little deeper here. **First, notice the statement “in me”** in verse 18. He says “in me,” that is, in my flesh, “no good thing dwells.” That statement is parallel to “I am unspiritual” or “I am carnal.” But “in me” is more specific. It includes the clear distinction between “I” and “the flesh.” In me, that is, in my flesh, nothing good dwells. That surely cannot be the Christian who is indwelt by the Holy Spirit.

**Second, there is the proof** in verses 18-19 which expands on verse 15. The will to do good was present and was in reach, but the execution of the good was not found. He did not simply say that what I *do not want* to do, that is what I do. He said that the *good* that he wanted to do, he *could not* do. It lies within the realm of impossibility for Paul to fulfill the good that he wanted to do. That is because of the flesh. That is because of sin. That is because the old man still lives. He is only in union with himself. One who is only in union with himself is easy prey for the devil because he is much more powerful. We need to be united with Jesus so that we can win.

**Third, there is the conclusion** in 7:20 which expands on verse seventeen. Notice the phrase “. . . *sin living in me . . .*” Sin did not come into his life as an unwelcome intruder. It took up possession as a master. Paul is no longer in control of his fate. He is not his own master. Paul is not trying to excuse himself, but rather to describe his profound bondage and misery. He said, “. . . *it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me . . .*” In essence he said, “I am deeply enslaved to sin.” We have all been there. We know the feeling. We can remember the feeling of being on our way to doing something wrong, and something within us was saying, “I am not going to do that; I must not do that; I cannot do that.” The next phrase we say is, “Why did I do that?” If somebody asks you, “Why did you do that?” you would reply, “I really cannot explain it. I did not want to do it. I made a pledge not to do it. But I

seemed powerless.” The reason for that powerlessness is that I was not in union with Jesus.

### **Confession Three: I Am A Wretched Man (7:21-25)**

There are no sadder words in all of the Bible, excluding that short phrase, “*Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!*” These are terrible words and a terrible condition to be in, with no way out. “Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me?” If Paul had not learned of Jesus on the road to Damascus, there would be no answer to that question. Notice the statement in verse 21, “*When I want to do good, . . .*” Paul always wanted to do good. He said, “*When I want to do good, evil is right there with me.*” Paul was ever conscious of a moral contradiction and conflict within himself. Paul had the desire to do good, and yet there was evil always present and ruling over him. The proof is seen in 7:22-23, which parallels verses 15 and 18.

It should be carefully noted that the inward man is not the same as the new man. The mind of man is never used of the renewed nature. It is the immaterial part of man contrasted with the material. The mind of man needs to be renewed, as Paul will say in Romans 12:2 and in Ephesians 2:13. There are four laws included in 7:22-23. There is **the law of God**, that moral law either written in the law of Moses or written on the heart of man. There is **the law of sin** which has been the king of man since the Garden of Eden. There is **the law of the mind**, that moral sensibility in man. And there is **the law of the members of the body**, which is lust and leads to failure.

**Fourth**, is the conclusion of this section (7:24-25). Paul says that he is a wretched man. He is in need of deliverance. He does not use the word “guilty” here. He had used that word earlier. But the word “wretched” describes the man who has tried in every way he can to succeed at something, but has failed miserably and has no more ability. He is worn out. He is beat. He is to the point of exhaustion. He cannot move. His

guilt is not under discussion here. Condemnation is not under discussion here. The indwelling power of evil cannot be overcome by man's unaided strength. He has tried, and he has failed. In regard to his mind, he serves the law of God, but in regard to the flesh, he serves the law of sin. Therefore, the flesh cannot be changed or improved by the law. It can only be convicted or regulated. The flesh can only be changed by the Creator, and that change can only come about by faith and grace in the cross of Christ.

These words of Paul sum up an entire passage and form his settled conclusion under the circumstances. "I am wretched, lost, undone, indwelt by sin and unable to hinder it." The reference cannot be applied to a regenerate man who serves God by grace. To apply all of this to Paul as a Christian would be to admit that the grace of God is as powerless against sin as the law.

### **Chart of the Man Described in Romans 6-7**

We need to think about the two men who have been described in chapters six and seven and see that they are two different men. First, there is the man of Romans 6:1-7:6. This man is said in 6:1 to be dead to sin. In 6:4 he is said to be walking in newness of life. In 6:6 it is said of him that the old man is to be crucified. In 6:12 sin does not reign over him. In 6:14 he is not under law but under grace. In 6:18 he is a servant of righteousness. In 6:22, in the first part of the verse, he is free from sin. In the last part of 6:22 he is bearing fruit unto sanctification. In 6:23 he receives eternal life. In Romans 7:1-6 he is free from law. He is dead to sin. He walks in newness of life. The old man is crucified. Sin does not reign. He is now under grace and is a servant of righteousness. He is free from sin, bears fruit, and receives eternal life. He is free from law.

On the other hand is the man discussed in Romans 7:14-25. This man is carnal according to 7:14. He is sold to sin in 7:15. He is unable to fulfill his godly desire in 7:15, 18-19. He is

indwelt with sin in 7:17-20. He is a slave to sin in 7:23. He is described as a wretched, beaten and worn out man in 7:24a, and a dead man who is alone in 7:24b. These cannot possibly be the same men. One is the “saved by grace” man. The other man is attempting to be saved by law.

### Conclusion

The apostle Paul has indicated two great truths about man. **Number one** is that within ourselves, apart from grace, there is nothing that is good. **Number two**, the law cannot recover us from our evil nature. It cannot change our disposition. It cannot change our power. Paul has stated two negative truths about law. **The first, in Romans 3:20**, is that no flesh can be justified by the law. No one can be released from the accusation of God that he is a sinner by law. Law makes him wretched. **The second** great truth that Paul states about law is that it cannot sanctify. It cannot cleanse me from sin, and it cannot separate me from sin. The remarkably good news is that faith can do both of these things. God can look upon my faith and cleanse me from my sin. God can look upon my faith and separate me from this sinful world. That is why Paul will declare in Romans 8:1-2, *“Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death.”*

In the next chapter we will talk about God’s great power in not only saving us, but in sanctifying us. Stand in your salvation. Stand in your sanctification. Stand in your faith, and as you do, you will find all kinds of peace in believing in Jesus.

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# HOLINESS IS POSSIBLE

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## **Romans 8:1-11**

### **Review and Introduction**

We have finally made it to Romans 8. You will remember that we said at the very beginning of our study that the book of Romans is the high water mark of scripture. If that is true, then chapter eight is the mountain top of the book. It is in chapter eight that Paul climbs to the apex of all that he is ever going to say about the wonderful grace of God. One man has said “. . . in this surpassing chapter the several streams of preceding arguments meet and flow in one river of water of life, as clear as crystal proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb until it seems to lose itself in the ocean of a blissful eternity.” This is absolutely true.

We have seen justification in chapters three through five, and sanctification in chapters six and seven. In chapter eight, union with Christ is seen as their source and as their foundation. Chapters six and seven set forth, mainly by contrast, the power of that union with Christ to sanctify. Chapter six has shown that union with Christ involves the incompatibility of union with sin. We cannot even conceive of being united with sin because of the union that we have with Christ. Chapter seven has shown that union with Christ means the impossibility of union with law.

Although we will not be able to develop the thought in this lesson, it would be good to contrast chapter five with chapter eight. Let us look briefly at several points. Chapter five shows the permanence of righteousness through faith. That is,

righteousness will last until the very end. Chapter eight shows how this righteousness continues in time between the beginning and the end. Chapter five looks forward to say that righteousness will last. Chapter eight looks bit by bit to say that it will continue. Chapter five deals with the basis and the guarantee of my righteousness in the finished work of Christ upon the cross. Chapter eight deals with the life of righteousness that I will live in the power of my union with the Holy Spirit. Chapter five deals with the believer's relationship to God. Chapter eight deals with the believer's relationship to sin, the world, the flesh, the devil, as well as to God.

### **An Overview of Chapter Eight**

Chapter eight really consists of four parts. The first part, in 8:1-11, discusses deliverance from the power of the flesh by the power of the Holy Spirit. Holiness will be the key thought in Romans chapter eight, and verses 1-11 discuss the **possibility of holiness**. In 8:12-17 Paul discusses the full realization of our sonship by the power of that same Holy Spirit, and here, the thought is the **privilege of holiness**. Holiness is possible, and it involves certain privileges. In 8:18-30 Paul asserts that even sufferings do not affect our position because of the same power of that same Holy Spirit. Here, the idea is the **incentive to endurance and holiness**. Holiness is possible; it is a great privilege, and it results from certain incentives. In 8:31-39, which is the concluding paragraph of Romans 8, he says that in spite of everything, or anything, victory is ours through Jesus Christ our Lord. There is **the triumph through holiness**.

We need to notice that chapter eight begins by saying that there is *no condemnation* and ends by saying that there is *no separation*, while saying in between that there is *no defeat*. This is the chapter that climaxes Paul's teaching of the power of God in our life.

### **he Possibility of Holiness**

In this lesson we want to look at the possibility of holiness. It has been made possible by the blood of Christ, and it is possible through the power of the Holy Spirit. In 8:1-4 Paul talks about the ability of the Holy Spirit of God in our lives.

In the New International Version, the words “sinful nature” would probably be better read as “flesh.” This probably communicates Paul’s teaching better than “sinful nature.” There is a contrast between the flesh and the Spirit throughout this whole chapter.

Note what Paul says in 8:1-4. “Therefore” implies that under the changed circumstance of being saved rather than lost and under the changed time of not being under law but being under the Spirit, “*there is now,*” in the present time, “*no condemnation.*” Just as in chapter five he referred past forgiveness to future escape from judgment, and now he deals with the present. Right now, because of the changed circumstances and the changed time, there is no condemnation.

In the original New Testament language (Greek), this is very emphatically stated. It ought to be translated, “there is no kind of.” There is no sort of condemnation. There is no judicial condemnation, and there is no experiential condemnation. There is no sort of condemnation for those that are in Christ Jesus. There is no condemnation for those who have entered into Christ by faith, as we read in Romans 3:21-5:21, nor for those who abide in Christ as we read in Romans 6:1-7:6. For those who have accepted Christ by faith, who have been immersed (baptized) into Jesus, and who have been raised from that baptism to walk in the new life of Christ, there is no condemnation of any kind. That is a glorious fact.

Romans 8:2 gives the perfect explanation as to why this is so. It says that there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ. Why is this? “. . . *because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death.*” This verse provides the evidence and the explanation of verse

one and gives the answer to Romans 7:24. Remember what Paul asked in 7:24: *“What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?”* Romans 8:2 says that it is the Spirit of God who will deliver. Here is the basis of our freedom in contrast to chapter seven. When we enter into union with Christ, we find a new power, the rule of the Holy Spirit, who gives life and thereby controls the flesh and the evil that is within us.

We notice here the two contrasting laws: the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus and the law of sin and death. The one law overcomes the other. Sin and death refer to the source and depth of our condemnation. Now both of these, Christ and the Holy Spirit, deliver us. I love that statement, that the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus set me free from the law of sin and death. That is the perfect explanation.

But then there is the divine cause. God, in sending Christ, is the total cause of our salvation. The adequate cause of our justification is the finished work of Christ upon the cross. Observe the wonderful fullness of this verse. The deity of Christ says that God sent His own Son. The incarnation says that Christ has come in the likeness of sinful flesh. The Lord’s death is at once the propitiation and the expiation of our sin and the redemption from its power. Our sin has not only been dealt with through forgiveness, but also through a sense of power. Deliverance by the cross of Christ from the condemnation of sin is in close harmony with what Paul taught in Romans 6, where he says that we are buried with Christ, that we are raised with Christ and that we live with Christ. This is the complement of the teaching of Romans 3:21-26, where we learn that we are not the cause, and we have not paid the price of this salvation. It is Jesus who is the total and adequate cause.

### **The Purpose of Holiness**

Romans 8:4 talks about the practical purpose of salvation and holiness from God. The “why” of all this is so that we

might be free from the law of sin and death. The law of sin and death is not the law of Moses. The law of Moses was powerless to deliver us from the law that said, "When you sin, you die." The righteous requirements of the law are fulfilled *in* those, not *by* those, that walk, live, and act according to the Holy Spirit.

Law had failed in delivering man from the law of sin and death, because of his inability to keep the law through works. The gospel succeeds in delivering man from sin and death because of God's ability to give grace based on Jesus. Thus, we have the explanation and exposition of the apostle's thesis, that being, that the purpose of the law is now fulfilled. Paul said in Romans 3:19, 5:20 and 7:13 that law demands perfection, and yet law is impotent to empower man to realize its requirements. Hence, there is the introduction of a new law, a new principle, the spirit of life in Jesus Christ.

Note the importance of these four verses. They provide a summary of chapters five through eight and indicate, in a brief but very sufficient form, the secrets of Christian holiness. Romans 8:1 summarizes Romans 5. The condemnation of the sinner is utterly removed in Christ. Romans 8:2 summarizes Romans 6. The condemnation of sin in the soul is ended by union with Christ. Romans 8:3 summarizes Romans 7. The law is clearly unable to produce righteousness, and Christ's death is necessary to free us from the unequal struggle to be right under the law. Romans 8:4 summarizes Romans eight. Holiness is possible and attainable by the power of the Holy Spirit of God. These four verses bring us to the point of being able to discuss the two great principles that seek to control our life, flesh and spirit. We will be told of the possibility, privilege and power that eliminate the reign of sin in our life, letting the Spirit of God be in total control.

### **Contrast of Flesh and Spirit**

In 8:5-11 Paul talks about the contrast between flesh and spirit. Paul said in verses five through eight that he is free from

the possession of a sinful nature. There are two principles that seek to control my life: flesh and spirit. And in verse five Paul says that they control my mind. He says that if I am controlled by the flesh, then my mind is on my fleshly desires. But if I am controlled by the Spirit, then my mind is upon spiritual desires. The two tendencies then, are the fleshly tendency and the spiritual tendency. There are two spirits; there are two tendencies; there are two issues. It is important to notice that we are dealing with two issues. If I am fleshly minded, if I am after the world's things and the things that satisfy my worldly desires, then the end is death. But if my mind is on the Spirit of God and the spiritual matters of Jesus, then that results in a peaceful life. I have two spirits, two principles and two powers still struggling for my life: the power of the flesh and the power of the Spirit of God.

In verse seven he describes the sinful mind in a very tragic yet beautiful way. He says that the sinful mind *is* hostile to God; it *does not* submit to God's law, *cannot* submit to God's law, and *cannot* please God. So if I am living according to my sinful mind, my fleshly mind and my fleshly appetites, then I am living in hostility to God. I do not submit to God's law.

### **Alive In the Spirit**

In 8:9-11 Paul says that I am free to overcome the flesh. In view of the resurrection of the body, the Spirit of God dwells in us. Paul says that three different times in verses 9-11. The Spirit of God dwells in us with the result, according to verse nine, that we belong to Christ. I belong to Jesus, and the proof of that is that He has given the Holy Spirit to dwell in me. If I will simply give myself to Jesus and to the Spirit, then He will control me. The Spirit of God dwells in us, and, therefore, our spirits live even though our bodies are dying. This is what Paul is saying in verse ten. I am made aware of the fact that this body in which my spirit lives is a dead and decaying body, but within me the Spirit of God generates life and then regenerates it. I become

more and more aware of the fact that I am alive. My body may be dead. One day it will be proven to be dead. Someone will take my body out somewhere, put it beneath the soil, or burn it and scatter the ashes. Somehow, my body will go back to dust, but that part of me that has been redeemed by the blood of Jesus will still be living before the throne of God.

Verse 11 makes an interesting statement. Since the Spirit dwells in us, one day our bodies will be given life. Read Paul's words in verse eleven again. This verse carries us all the way back to the Garden of Eden. When God finally decided that it was time to bring His masterpiece of creation into the world, He reached down into the soil, and from that soil He formed a man in His image. He then breathed into that man the breath of life, at which time, man became a living soul. We do not know the nature of Adam's body, but as long as he was in contact with the tree of life, then that body would continue just as it was created, in the very image of God. He would live there eternally young and eternally regenerated by the tree of life from which he ate.

But we know what happened. Adam and Eve looked upon the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, ate of it and began to die. God had told Adam, ". . . *but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.*" (Genesis 2:17) In the Hebrew language what God literally said was, "In the day you eat of it, dying, you will die." There was both a fact and a process brought into being by Adam eating of that tree. He died, and in so doing, he brought into the world the idea of death. Adam began to have a continual death. Because of that we are all born into a world where death is inevitable. Because Adam sinned, physical death was brought into the world.

We are told, beginning in Romans 3:21 and finishing in Romans 5:12-21, that Jesus has cancelled that which Adam brought into the world. That cancellation is only for our spirit and occurs because Jesus died. It is also cancelled when we die

with Him in the act of baptism. Jesus was raised to life, and we also were raised to a new life after baptism. Our spirits live, but the body is still dead and decaying because of Adam's sin.

But now, because of the great power of inspiration, Paul looks forward to the time when Jesus comes again and our bodies rise out of the dust. The marvelous power of God is going to raise those bodies that for years and centuries, and maybe even millennia, have laid in the soil. He is going to raise them to be eternal and incorruptible, and He will breathe back into them the spirit of life. They will become not just living souls, but souls that are back in the body. What kind of a body will it be? Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15:35-36a that this is a question that really should not even be asked because it is a foolish question. But this much is known about the body: it will be spiritual, immortal, and incorruptible. A better phrase might be that it will be just like Jesus' body. The great possibility of holiness is not only that I am transformed spiritually into His image but that my body will be raised to be like His glorious body.

Other writers of the Bible discuss this in greater detail. In Philippians 3:20 I read that since my citizenship is in heaven, I am waiting for a Savior from there. When that Savior comes, He will transform this body of vile humiliation so that it might become like His glorious body. That is going to be quite a day.

### Conclusion

We conclude this lesson by reading 1 John 3:1-2, where John writes,

*“How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.”*

This is a beautiful promise! When Jesus comes, this salvation that has now begun in spirit will finally be accomplished in my body. I will have a body just like His. It does not necessarily mean identical in looks, but identical in quality. I will have a body like the body that Jesus now possesses. I do not know what kind of body that is, but it is good enough for me.

John continued in verse three: *“Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure.”* Why is holiness possible? The bottom line is because I am like Jesus. I am like Jesus spiritually now. I will live for Christ. Life is in Christ. But one day I will be just like Jesus, bodily, and that will be the eternal day, not preceded by yesterday, not followed by tomorrow, but an ever present now.

Holiness is possible because I am like the Lord Jesus Christ. Spiritually like Him now, bodily like Him later. Paul will develop this in the rest of Romans eight. This is Paul’s style. He introduces something and discusses it later. He is going to discuss my resurrected body and my spiritual life with Jesus. He will discuss how I am victorious now and will be victorious then and eternally. The next chapter will discuss the privileges that this state of holiness brings to us. God give you great peace in believing in Jesus.

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# THE PRIVILEGE OF HOLINESS

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## Romans 8:12-17

### Review and Introduction

We need to begin this chapter with a review of the material that we have covered previously. If we really do not know where we are as we study Romans bit by bit, then sometimes one section does not fit in quite like it should. So, we should spend a bit of time at the beginning of the chapter going all of the way back to the beginning and building up to the climax that Paul intended.

In Romans 1:16-17 Paul makes the thesis statement for the book in which he declares that he is unashamed of the gospel. He discusses the fact that the gospel is God's power unto salvation and that it reveals the righteousness of God. He immediately discusses the unrighteous character of man. He says that there is nothing that man possesses, knows, or can do that will help relieve that unrighteous state. He says very simply that all of the philosophies of man only add to the condemnation. He further states that religious observances only add to the condemnation because people violate the law system upon which religion is based. He concludes that all men are under sin and cannot be relieved from that sin by their efforts, religion or morals.

Then, beginning in Romans 3:21, he discusses what God has done. He says that God has brought a righteousness into the world by the death of Christ; it is a righteousness that is apart from the law; it is a righteousness that is through faith in Christ; it is a righteousness that is not caused by any human effort or

human contribution, and it is a righteousness that is caused and paid for by the redemption of Christ upon the cross. That excludes all boasting in law, observances, morality, education, or anything else that man calls his own.

Paul then shows from the Old Testament experiences of Abraham that this is the way that God has always intended to deal with man. Abraham was justified by his faith in God's spoken word, by his observance of God's promises and by the giving of himself to God. He was justified by the steps that his faith took. Paul shows in chapter five that this righteousness that we can share with Abraham is a permanent thing. Its permanence is assured by the death of Christ and the imputation of that death to our life. This brings peace, comfort, and life into our souls.

Paul showed in Romans 5 that everything in the world that was cursed because of Adam is redeemed because of Jesus. That brought objections, of course, from the minds of people. Paul, in discussing the doctrine of sanctification, removes all of the objections that man may have. This way of making man righteous by faith does not encourage sin. As a matter of fact, Paul says that our death with Christ, our burial with Christ, our resurrection with Christ, and our walk with Christ make the idea of a renewed union with sin totally incompatible with the grace of God.

In chapter six Paul discusses that this way of saving man by faith did not even allow sin. It didn't give men an allowance for sin to occur or that sin might be fulfilled. He says that it just does not make sense that those who have been freed from union with the old master (sin) and have been freed from the old man (flesh) would ever want to enter into that union again.

Paul then thought about the fact of the unequal struggle that he had under law. As he writes chapter seven, beginning with verse fourteen, he shows the impossibility of man's effort to relieve himself from that unequal struggle that his spirit had with his flesh. He was not able to find relief, even though he

knew about the law of God, the goodness of God and the character of God. All of that was not enough to deliver him out of that ungodly way. He found himself crying out in near utter despair in 7:24, *“What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?”* In answer to that question, chapter eight loudly shouts, “Christ will! God will, by the power of the Spirit of God!”

### **A New Indebtedness**

After the discussion of the characteristics which feature the regenerate life in 8:1-11, comes the admonition to live accordingly. Observe that this entire section will be dominated with the thought of the Holy Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit in whom the regenerate person is renewed and through whom victorious life becomes possible.

In Romans 8:12-17 we read about an indebtedness that we have to the Spirit of God. We must remember that this section deals with privileges that we have in Christ, and the first of those privileges is a new indebtedness. Our obligation is to the Spirit by whom we put to death the misdeeds of the body. We have been freed. “Freed” is a beautiful word. We have been liberated by the cross from our union with the old nature. That is what chapters six and seven cried loudly. We have been freed by the Spirit of God from the flesh. That is what Romans 8:1-11 declared loudly. We have derived no advantage from the flesh and we are under no obligation to obey it. This simply means that when flesh comes to make a demand on us, we can say to the flesh, “I do not owe you anything. I am not in debt to you. I derive no advantage from you. You did nothing good for me. You have brought nothing good into my life. I do not owe you a thing.”

Many of us get into debt. We buy an automobile, a house or something that we pay out over a period of time. Because we have a debt to someone that we cannot pay in one lump sum, we in effect go to work for them for a period of time in order to

repay the debt that we owe. Somehow, we have to repay that debt. And the feeling when that debt is paid is beautiful. Whether working for the person owed the debt or working elsewhere to make money to pay the debt, as long as the debt exists, a deep obligation is felt. Legally, spiritually and biblically the debt must be paid (cf. Romans 13:8). When payments come due, creditors have a right to demand them. If they are not paid, they have a right to find me and to say, “Why have you not paid that debt?”

Similarly, there was a time when I was deeply indebted to the flesh. It was not because of anything that God had done but what I had done. As we studied earlier in this book, I had put my soul in jeopardy. I had placed my soul totally under the dominion of Satan. The flesh filled my life, and fleshly desires were what I desired. Therefore, when the flesh came with a bill that was due, I had to pay it. But I could not pay that debt. Instead, Jesus paid it for me. He paid it all. I am still in debt, but the debt is to the Spirit of God. I am no longer in debt to the flesh. The flesh profited me nothing; the flesh gave me nothing. I have been redeemed from that indebtedness. Now I am in debt to the Spirit of God.

### **A New Life**

Romans 8:13 changes the line of thinking from my indebtedness to my new life. The flesh, which is the sinful nature of man, cannot be destroyed in this life. The deeds which come from it can be put to death. However, they can only be put to death by the Spirit of God. It is important for my spiritual life that I remember that the flesh is still with me. It is still very dangerous, but the way of dealing with it is by a one time destruction. It cannot be destroyed except by a constant mortification. If you read Colossians 3, Ephesians 4, Galatians 5 or turn back to Romans 1, you will find a comprehensive description of the flesh. The admonition of God is, “Put it to death. Put it off and put on the new garment of Christ, which is

the new life that Christ would have us to live.”

It is important for us to observe that here is the first reference in this book to the actual process of the new life. Until now, Paul has dealt primarily with the change that takes place from the old to the new. But here the change has issued in the character, and the character has issued into conduct. In this section he is dealing with the way that I am to live because of what Jesus has done. He is not talking about my debt; he has already dealt with that topic. I know that I am in debt to the Spirit of God and not to the flesh. Here he will talk about my duty, in other words, the way I am to live. I am to live, not according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit of God.

The flesh will attempt to crush the Spirit and to restrain indwelling sin by sheer will power. That can only end in disaster, as chapter seven has plainly shown. There we saw the man who was seeking to restrain sin by his own will power. He looked at the law of God and said, “That is good. That is what I want to do.” So he reached down deep within himself for that will power, for that strong human ability that says, “I will not do that. I will not do that.” But it could never work. It is the power of a new affection that gets the job done, the presence of the Holy Spirit in the heart. With that, victory becomes not only possible, but almost easy and absolutely inevitable.

Affection really governs more than law ever could. I have a new love. It is the love of God. It is the love for His Spirit, the love for His Son, the love for His book and the love for His people. That old affection of the flesh for the world has been replaced. It has been expelled by a new affection. When love fills the heart, there is no room for anything else. When you love God with your heart, your soul, your mind, your will and your strength, there is no room for any other kind of love. This is the way that sin must be overcome. It cannot be overcome by the awareness of a new debt, but by the possession of a new life. I do have a new indebtedness; it is to God and the Spirit of God. I have a new life, the Holy Spirit of God.

### **A New Guidance**

In 8:14 Paul talks about a new guidance. Here is a great privilege of being a child of God. Who are the sons of God? They are those who are led by the Spirit of God. As we follow the Spirit's leading, we realize and prove our divine sonship. This leading of the Spirit is no mere influence of power, but it is a definite personal action that constitutes our full relationship to the Spirit of God.

Note some other texts in which Paul discusses being led by the Spirit of God. In Galatians five the result of being led by the Spirit is freedom, maturity, fruitfulness, and salvation. What is it to be led by the Spirit of God? To be led by the Spirit of God is the same as being led by the flesh or led by anything else. To be led by someone, you have to know what they want. So we must discover what the Spirit of God would have us to do. To be led by someone, you must also see their example. It takes teaching and example to be led. The Spirit of God teaches us as we read in His word what He would have the people of God do. The Spirit of God also teaches us as we watch the example of those who are filled with the Spirit and are led by the Spirit. As I watch the life of Jesus and imitate Him, I am being led by the Spirit. As I watch the life of Paul and follow him, I am being led by the Spirit. As I watch the life of Timothy or Epaphroditus as they imitate the life of Paul, who himself is imitating Christ, who in turn is led by the Spirit, then I am also being led by the Spirit (Philippians 2:19-30).

A lot of people want to be led by the Spirit but do not want to study the word of God. That is impossible. A lot of people want to be led by the Spirit who memorize the word of God, but do not imitate the life of Christ. That is also impossible. To be led by the Spirit, I must be led by His teaching and by His example. These are the sons of God. How do I recognize the sons of God on earth? I do it by seeing those who are led by the Spirit of God. These are the ones who have been born of God.

### A New Experience

In Romans 8:15 Paul talks about the experience and witness of the Spirit. The experience of the Spirit is another great privilege. Anything involving a believer in fear and bondage cannot possibly be the work of the Holy Spirit. Anything involving an attitude or spirit of fear and bondage must come either from my own heart of unbelief or as a temptation from the evil one. Paul said to Timothy, in 2 Timothy 1:7, that God did not give us a spirit of fear or of timidity. Instead, He gives a spirit of sound mind, soberness and strength. That is the spirit that God gives.

Some people have difficulty when they compare John 3:1-21. Jesus says there that we are children of God by virtue of the new birth. In Galatians 4 Paul says that we are children of God by adoption. Birth by regeneration refers to our relationship and to the union of our nature with God. Adoption refers to our position and our privilege as heirs. The two are complimentary of our divine sonship. We are both born into the family by the Spirit of God and adopted into the family by the Spirit of God. We are born as children and adopted as heirs.

### A New Witness

In Romans 8:16 Paul deals with the fifth privilege of holiness, the witness of the Holy Spirit. Carefully observe that the testimony of the Spirit here is not *to* our spirit, but it is *with* our spirit. In Galatians 4:6 Paul says, "*Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, 'Abba, Father.'*" The Spirit cries out, "*Abba, Father.*" And what does our spirit say? "*Abba, Father.*" Thus, there is a double testimony that we are the children of God, that of the Holy Spirit and that of our own spirit.

The Bible says that at the mouth of two or three witnesses every word will be established (Matthew 18:16: Deuteronomy 17:6; 19:15: John 8:17). God already knew that I was His child. I cried out, "Abba, Father." The Spirit cried out, "Abba,

Father.” Jesus is not ashamed to be called my brother. I have sufficient evidence that I am the child of God.

The word “Abba” has behind it a beautiful concept. It is a baby’s word. It is the very first word that a baby would use when he finally recognizes his Father, his daddy. And so he says, “Abba.” The word “Father” is the word of the mature one who looks and sees the deep relationship that years have brought into being. It is also the word of the mature man who looks at another mature man and says, “We are related. We are alike. We are of the same family.” And so, from the very first word of the child to the very last word of the mature son, we are children of God. That is a great privilege.

### **A New Inheritance**

In 8:17 we have the last of the privileges of holiness. Notice the chain: children, heirs, joint-heirs, co-heirs with Christ. Paul is making very plain and very graphic what being a child of God does for us. We are children of God because we have been born into the family. But we are doubly children of God in that we have been adopted into His will. We are heirs of God, and we are co-heirs with Jesus.

“Co-heirs” implies equality. Jesus *deserves* the double portion for He is the firstborn Son. But that doesn’t mean anything to Him. Even possessing eternal glory was not His main interest. He gave all of that up and became equal with us so that we might become equal with Him. We are co-heirs. We are joint-heirs with Jesus. The heir inherits what the Father possesses. That is what you and I get to do. If we are children of God we inherit what the Father possesses.

The beautiful point of this verse is that we inherit equally with Jesus. Most wills have conditions as does this will. If we suffer with Him, we shall also reign with Him in glory. The possession is heirship and co-reign with God. The only condition is that I suffer and share in the suffering of Jesus. Just exactly what was His suffering? I don’t think that it was so

much the cross as what led up to the cross. It was the fact that He had on His heart and on His mind the lost state of mankind. The suffering that we are to endure is a lost world and its need.

### Conclusion

As we conclude this chapter, let us go back over these verses and see five things they say. **First**, I have a new position. I am no longer in debt to the flesh. I have a new power, the Holy Spirit, who gives me a new spirit and a new attitude. **Second**, I have a new relationship. God is my Father. That is such a beautiful word, one that needs to be discussed by the hour, by the day, by the week and by the year. **Third**, I am in the family of God. Once again, God is my Father, and the Father is obligated to care for, to protect and to nourish His children. As the Creator of all of the world, He has obligated Himself. **Fourth**, He has adopted me as His son. Am I sure? Yes, because there is a new witness, the Holy Spirit, who cries with my spirit, "*Abba, Father.*" I claim this union with God. I claim that I have been adopted. I appeal to Him for all of the needs of my life. In all of my weaknesses, He is my power. In all of my hunger, He is my food. In all of my needs, He is my supply. I have proof of this. I have proof, not only in the cross of Christ and in the love of God, but in the crying and witnessing of the Spirit of God. **Fifth**, there is a new inheritance with God. I am an heir of God, a joint-heir with Christ in all that Christ inherits. These privileges are great reasons to love the Lord our God. They are great reasons to renounce the desires and the demands that the flesh places on us. These are great privileges of God to give us the peace that we need in this war-like world. I hope that these privileges have meant as much to you as they have to me. As you think about them in the days and years to come, may they give you great peace and joy in believing in Jesus Christ.

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# THE INCENTIVES TO HOLINESS

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## **Romans 8:18-30**

### **Review and Introduction**

The condition of suffering in order to receive glory has already been stipulated in 8:17. In Romans 5:3 Paul has shown us that tribulation cannot possibly put the believer to shame. He now elaborates on that thought and teaches that although our life in Christ is encompassed with suffering and even death, the inevitable issue of all of this suffering and death is glory. The suffering believer is simply following the Master's example. As it was for the Master, so will it be for the follower.

### **Suffering Leads to Glory**

Glory is the thought of 8:18-30. It starts and closes with the word "glorified." This section lists several reasons why suffering is going to result in glory. As we look at these reasons, let us begin by studying 8:18-25, where Paul discusses the surpassing greatness of the glory that is coming.

Notice first of all in looking at the surpassing greatness of coming glory that Paul makes comparisons. In 8:17 there is the association of suffering with glory. Paul says very simply that if we share in His suffering we will also share in His glory. If we must suffer with Him, we will be glorified with Him. Our fellowship with Christ is one of both suffering and glory. One is just as real as the other.

### **The Glory Outweighs the Suffering**

So, when we suffer, we should not think that it detracts

from the glory. It is rather a condition of the glory. It is the road down which one must head in order to get to that place called glory. In the first part of verse 18, Paul talks about the disproportion of suffering to glory. In the American Standard Version, it reads, *“For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed to us-ward.”* The scales tip quickly and decidedly in favor of the glory. There is really no comparison between them.

In 2 Corinthians 4:16-18 there is a discussion of this same thing, but one which provides a little more detail. Paul says that outwardly we are wasting away, but inwardly we are being renewed day by day. He then talks about troubles and tribulations. He says two things about them; they are light *and* momentary. He then says that two things result; they are working more and more exceedingly an eternal weight of glory. The troubles are light and temporary. The glory is eternal and weighty. They are not worth comparing.

Sometimes, people come into a counselor’s office, and as they are talking about their troubles, they may sense that the counselor is not totally sympathetic. They may say, “You just do not know anything about my suffering.” The counselor might have to say, “You are right. I do not know it as you know it. But I do know two things about it. Number one, it does not weigh much, and number two, it will not last long when you compare it with what you have in Christ.”

Then, beginning in the latter part of verse 18, Paul talks about the certainty that this suffering will be followed by glory. The phrase in the original language (Greek) implies the absolute certainty of the glory, that it will be unveiled in all of its beauty to those who suffer with Christ. There is no doubt. Any suffering that a person endures for Christ, on behalf of Christ, undoubtedly results in glory.

### **The Appeal of Creation**

In 8:19-25 Paul confirms the fact that suffering results in glory. First, he appeals to the creation. We read where the entire creation groans in travail waiting for its deliverance. This glory is eagerly anticipated even by the irrational creation which longs for the full manifestation of the sons of God.

The creation is not as it was in its original state before sin had subjected it to frustration. Creation did not make a rational decision, but it was subjected to frustration by God in the hope that there would be deliverance of the creation from all corruption. Everything points to the fact that the present condition of the universe is not what it was at first or what it will be later. This state of affairs occasioned by sin is clearly proof of the glory that still awaits all of creation. This is difficult to understand, but creation itself, the inanimate part of it, the unthinking part of it and the unbelieving part of it, has been subjected to frustration, not because it wanted to be but because God wanted it to be, so that it might point as a testimony to a coming glory that awaits the believer.

### **The Attitude of the Believer**

The attitude of the believer in 8:23-25 is the second confirmation. It is very clear that creation is distinguished from Christians. The four references to creation must not refer to Christians. They refer to the visible contents of heaven and earth exclusive of at least the Christian and, possibly, of all mankind. The creation itself has been cursed by sin and is awaiting its redemption.

Not only does the creation groan waiting for the future, but believers are groaning and longing for the resurrection of the body. That is their final redemption. Read 8:23 again. That is the hope in which we were saved. Our salvation is something present and complete in regard to deliverance from the guilt and the condemnation of sin. But our salvation is still future in regard to the perfect deliverance from the presence of sin. We

will only be free from the presence of sin in our life when we are in that resurrected body, when we have the body that Jesus Christ has guaranteed for us.

Reading from 8:24-25 we ask the question, What is the secret of patient endurance? What is the secret of continuance? What is the incentive that He gives to remain holy and to live a holy life? The incentive is the body that awaits us, the resurrected body, the body that is like Jesus. A reminder is needed here; we have a great future, and since we do, we *will* endure. We *can* endure. We *must* endure all that comes upon us. The surpassing greatness of the coming glory is an incentive to live holy.

In 8:26-30 Paul is still occupied with the thought of coming and certain glory, and he provides reasons for feeling assured that the glory is as inevitable as the suffering. Already he has given two confirmations in the appeal of creation in the attitude of the believers.

### **The Pleading of the Holy Spirit**

There are three more proofs which will complete the discussion. The first is the pleading of the Holy Spirit in 8:26-27. In the midst of the present sufferings, the indwelling Spirit does far more than inspire us with hope. He actually helps us in our distress of not knowing how or what to pray. The word "help" is a most striking word. It is found only here and in Luke 10:40, where Martha says to Jesus, "*Tell her to help me.*" The word implies assistance against all opposition. But the word in its original form is so interesting that we need to spend time looking at it.

The word "help" in Greek is a very complex word. In Luke 10:40 the reading could literally say, "Bid her to stand over on the other side, opposite me, and together with me lift and carry." Isn't that a fabulous thought? The Spirit of God stands on the other side, opposite me, and together with me lifts and carries. I cannot do the work. He could do it all, but He does not

do it all. He assists me. He still wants me involved in this endeavor. God has promised that the Spirit of God will be on the other side opposite me when I am trying to lift this burden that is way too heavy for me to carry, and He will help me. He will, together with me, lift and carry. That is why we call this work “intercession.” Now, in particular, the Spirit stands on the other side and together with me carries my weakness in prayer. When helplessness and weariness come to the believer amid suffering and perplexity, in spite of our feeling that there is no way that we can pray, the Spirit of God helps us in prayer.

### **A Note About Translation**

We need to look at 8:26 again and make a note about the translation. The New International Version reads, “*In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express.*” The way that this reads makes it sound as if the groans are the Holy Spirit’s. But the Holy Spirit does not need to groan. In other words, the Holy Spirit can reveal God’s word. He knows God’s heart, and He knows God’s mind. He has no reason to groan in prayer. The word “groan” is in the Greek genitive case, or the possessive case. Paul says that the Spirit intercedes for *our* groans which words cannot express. There are times that we are happy and we cannot express ourselves with words in prayer. There are also times that we are sad and we cannot express ourselves. There is an inner feeling, an inner groaning of either joy, or in this case, helplessness, hopelessness, and haplessness. In that moment, when I am so weak, the Spirit is so strong. When I cannot speak, He speaks. When I cannot think of what to say, He thinks of what to say. He intercedes for me. He says in God’s court, “Here is what your son is really trying to say.” I know that God already knows that, but He still intercedes because He wants to. He loves me. Not only does God love me and not only does Jesus love me, but the Holy Spirit of God

loves me, and He wants to help. That is what love always wants to do. He wants to lift what I cannot lift. He wants to help me carry what I cannot carry alone. That is a great incentive to remain faithful. That is a great incentive even when I have reached the end of my ability to speak and all I can do is groan inside. It is a great comfort and incentive to know that it is at that moment that the Spirit begins to speak on my behalf. That is the great working of God through the Holy Spirit.

### **The Working of God's Providence**

Paul then states something in 8:28 which we already know, that is, that God does good for those who love Him and who have been called in compliance with His purpose. That is great! There is the fact of a constant working. This is seen in the fact that the Greek word for "work" is in the present active indicative, which is the Greek way of saying, "It just keeps going on." We might simply read, "We know that in all things God continually works." God is always at work. That is what Jesus said when they convicted Him of doing good on the Sabbath Day (5:17). Jesus is in essence telling us not to think that on the seventh day His Father quit working. He just quit the work of creation. He did not quit the work of providentially holding the world together. He did not quit the work of tending to Adam and Eve's needs. He did not quit the work of listening to the angel's songs. He just quit the work of creation. God is a worker. To imitate God, you work. God is always working.

There is the fact of a continual working, but there is also the comprehensiveness of this working. That is seen in the words, "He works all things together." The true Christian refuses to think of anything that God cannot use for God's ultimate good and for the Christian's ultimate good. He can use leprosy as in Job's case. He can use a thorn in the flesh as in Paul's case. Perhaps in the greatest proof of all, He can use a cross, as in Jesus' case. There is nothing that God cannot use for the ultimate good of the Christian. It is easy to believe there is

nothing God cannot use. It is harder to believe there is nothing that God will not use. God will use anything and everything.

Notice *the harmony of that divine working*. All things are worked together for good. Is it possible to believe that the cold north wind will harmonize with the warm southern breezes? They do, after all, harmonize. Example after example might be given to prove the truth of this contention. God can take anything and everything that happens and put them together to form one harmonious whole. He takes all of the bad things that happen to me, all of the good things, and even my terrible mistakes, and weaves them into the pattern He had for my life from the beginning. This is the way God works.

Then notice *the benefit of this working*. Paul says, "All things work together for good . . ." The staircase may wind, but each step is still higher than the preceding one. My progress is still upward. Have you ever watched a diamond polisher? He cuts and polishes the diamond for a long time before all of the facets of its brilliance are visible. Then, and only then, does he set it in the proper setting to bring out all of its brilliance. So it is with us. He polishes us with all of the things that happen to us until finally we are ready to be set into His purpose and His glory.

Notice next *the limitations of the working*. It is limited to those who love God and who are called according to His purpose. For the man of the world who deliberately continues without Christ, it may be fearlessly said that everything is against him. God's character is against him; God's law is against him; God's holiness is against him, and God's judgment is against him. The man who is mentioned here is the man who loves God. This man is called according to God's purpose. Because of this, everything will work harmoniously for good as a result of God's marvelous providence. That is a good reason to keep going. That is an incentive to remain holy.

### **The Outcome of God's Purpose**

In 8:29-30 there is the outcome of God's purpose. Notice that this is an act of divine intelligence. Paul mentions those whom God foreknew. That means that God knew ahead of time. God fixed His regard on them with favor, and this regard begins the whole process of redemption. God is omniscient. God knows all things, and God foreknew certain people as an act of divine knowledge and divine will. He predestined these individuals. He foreordained them to be a certain thing. He knew who they would be. These people were to find in the glorified Son of God their pattern, power and goal. He foreordained them to become conformed to the image of His Son so that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.

Then there was an act of divine invitation. God foreknew; He foreordained, and then He called. God called us by the gospel. Read Paul's words in 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14. He talks there about our salvation, and he says that we have been called through the gospel. This is not being merely invited by God through the gospel, for all are invited. It means accepting the invitation. Those who are called come. There is an act of divine forgiveness. Those He called, He justified. That is what this book has been discussing up to this point. Those who are called are made to be as if they never sinned. There is nothing against them in heaven's account book. The only requirement of God is that they believe. The divine action is completed in the fact that the text says that those He justified, He also glorified. The past tense here has often been noted by commentators on the book of Romans, and they have been amazed at this word "glorified." A man named Finley said in his book, "The tense in this last word is amazing. It is the most daring anticipation of faith that even the New Testament contains."

### **Conclusion**

This passage raises a lot of problems in people's minds. The apostle, however, does not even attempt to introduce, much less

explain or to reconcile, the divine and the human aspects of this great passage. This passage seems to appear to some people that man has absolutely no choice. We must not forget that in other passages of the Bible, the human side and human conditions are equally brought to our notice. But this text is illustrating, magnifying, and glorifying God's work. Wisdom will be found at this stage in just keeping strictly to the statements of the book without attempting to reconcile every aspect of truth.

Those who are most deeply impressed with God's omniscience, omnipotence, and omnipresence, will never fail to see their own responsibility to uphold the conditions by which God works. We have already seen these conditions. God works in the believer's life.

In verse 28 God says that there are two requirements for Him to do His great work in the heart and life of a person. He must love God, and he must be called according to God's purpose. Purpose deals with two words: foreknew and predestined. Calling and salvation deal with three words: called, justified, and glorified. God does all of that because He has the ability. He also does it because man believes and trusts God to do what He has the ability to do.

Before one argues about this text, let him bow before Him and trust Him to work everything together for our good, according to what He foreknew, according to what He predestined, according to the gospel by which He calls us, according to the faith by which He justified us and according to the grace by which He will glorify us. God is great; God is good. That is incentive enough to continue steadfast and faithful until the end. God give you peace in that steadfast belief.

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# TRIUMPH THROUGH HOLINESS

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## Romans 8:31-39

### Review and Introduction

So far in Romans 8 we have seen that holiness is possible by the death of Christ, but also by the help of the Spirit. We have also seen the privileges of holiness: a new standing, a new adoption and a new glory. We have seen the incentives to remain holy. Present sufferings are not to be compared with the coming glory. We have seen the magnificent work of God in intercession, intervention and providence.

After emphasizing God's side of Christian redemption, Paul describes the resulting feeling of absolute confidence and shows how that confidence rises to a positive assurance. Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine! The impassioned, but subdued, tones of verses 18-30, which had followed the calm logic of verses 1-17, now pass into sort of a song, a lyrical outburst that quickens and swells to a magnificent climax.

### Three Reasons for a Triumphant Confidence

After asking, "*What, then, shall we say in response to this?*" (Romans 8:31), Paul glories in the blessedness and in the security of the believers by dwelling on three fundamental reasons for his triumphant confidence.

### Believer's Relationship to God

In Romans 8:31-33 Paul states that those whom God has chosen can have total and absolute confidence in four relationships that they have with God. **Number one**, God is

their **advocate**. The second part of verse thirty-one says, *“If God is for us, who can be against us?”* *“For us”* means on our side. If God is on our side, then we already have victory. He is our advocate. He is for us.

**Number two**, God is their **protector**. Again, in verse 31 Paul writes, *“If God is for us, who can be against us?”* Pity any force that would oppose our God. Take a trip sometime from the book of Genesis through the book of Revelation and find out who always wins. Remember the example of David. Here is such a small boy that when he puts on Saul’s armor, he cannot even move. He can move inside the armor, but he can’t move the armor. So he took it off. He picked up a sling along with five smooth stones, and he went out and slew the biggest man in all of the world (cf. 1 Samuel 17). How? God was his helper. God was his protector. David could not be harmed— not by the wild beasts, not by Goliath, not by Saul’s plots against him, not by his own son’s attempts to kill him, not by anyone. David could not be defeated.

**Number three**, God was their **provider**. He did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up for us. How will He not also graciously give us all things? Just like Abraham, God did not spare His own Son. Abraham did not withhold Isaac from God. Because of that, Abraham was provided for by God. When God handed over His Son as a sacrifice on our behalf, He made it clear that He would not withhold any provisions required for the spiritual life. Life can only be lived with Him, and life can only be provided by Him. When Abraham was offering Isaac, Isaac asked Abraham where the lamb was for the offering (Genesis 22:7b), Abraham’s answer was that God would provide. That is literally true. From that time on, the mountain was called “Jehovah Jireh,” which simply means, “The Lord will provide.” The Lord is the provider. You and I will never have a need that He cannot provide. He is adequate, sufficient, abundant and powerful.

**Number four**, God is their **justifier**. There is no ground for

condemnation since Christ has suffered the penalty. There is no law to condemn us since we are no longer under law, but grace. There is no tribunal for our judgment since ours is now a throne of grace and not a throne of judgment. There is no judgment, and there is no judge to sentence us. God is the only Judge and He is our Justifier.

### **The Believer's Relationship to the Son (8:34-36)**

Can anything separate us? Paul's answer is, "No!" Jesus' death provides our satisfaction (8:34). His resurrection provides our justification (8:34). His ascension provides our intercession (8:34). All of these things make us totally inseparable from Christ.

Looking more closely at these verses we see the question, "*Who is he that condemns?*" There is no one to answer. There is no one who stands up to say, "I condemn." Even if they stood to say that, then they would have to overcome Christ Jesus. Christ died, was raised from the dead, and is now at the right hand of God interceding for us. If anyone wants to condemn, they have to deal with Jesus.

### **The Continuing Action of Christ's Crucifixion and Resurrection**

Go back and look again at what was studied in Romans 3 and 4. In Romans 8 Paul is singing his anthem of what he had written about in chapters three and four. The way of making man righteous is based on our total trust and reliance on Jesus and on God's grace and love in the cross. "*For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.*" (John 3:16) The words "*should not*" are not based on doubt, but on reality. God gave His Son so that man may not perish, but that he might have eternal life. This is what Paul will say to the wicked city of Corinth (1 Corinthians 2:1-2).

It is interesting to note that in the Greek language the word

“crucified” is in the perfect tense. This means that in the past Jesus was crucified, but He is seen as still being crucified. It is as if He is still on the cross. His death was accomplished one time but still has continual results today.

Not only did Jesus die, He was also raised from the dead. We didn't run with Peter and John to the tomb and find it empty, but we know that it was empty (cf. Matthew 28:1-15; Mark 16:1-8; Luke 24:1-8; John 20:1-9). We know it was empty because that was the testimony of sincere women (cf. Matthew 28:1-10; Mark 16:1-10; Luke 24:1-12; John 20:1-18). We know it was empty because that was the testimony of a reasoning person named John and an impulsive believer named Peter. We know it was empty because a Roman guard went back and told the Jewish Sanhedrin that it was empty (cf. Matthew 28:11-15). We know that it was empty because that is the testimony not only of believers, but of unbelievers throughout all time. But knowing that the tomb is empty and knowing the power of the empty tomb are two different things. Paul wrote in Philippians 3:10, *“I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death.”* If the tomb was empty, it can only be explained one way. He rose from the dead. His friends could not have stolen the body. Even if He had not died on the cross and was simply weak, He could not have gotten out of that sealed tomb. There is no other explanation except that He arose. Because of this, death cannot separate Him from me. The empty tomb proves that. Because He rose from the dead, in the glory of that resurrection I will win.

There is something yet more powerful than even His resurrection and His death that bought my salvation. His resurrection bought my justification, but His intercession brings my significance before the throne of God (cf. Hebrews 7:25). Why does He live? Why did He die? It was so that I could be saved. Why was He raised? It was so that I could be raised.

Why does He intercede? He does it so that I can live. He makes intercession for me with God so that in spite of my weaknesses, I can be more than a conqueror.

Not only does the Spirit intercede for me (Romans 8:26), but so does Jesus (Romans 8:35-36). "Intercede" means to plead a case. This is what Jesus Christ, the Advocate does, as John states in 1 John 2:1. It is my relationship to God that makes me know that I am more than a conqueror.

### **The Believer's Relationship to Circumstances (8:37-39)**

I cannot be separated nor defeated by anything in the world, not by death, nor life. Life actually threatens us more than death. It is the things of this life that threaten our faithfulness. But Paul says that death cannot separate us and neither can life. This is because when we die, we go to be with Jesus. Because of this, we are not separated. Life is in Jesus (cf. Galatians 2:20). Nothing in the world above can separate us, not angels nor principalities. In other words, neither the angels that serve God, nor those who serve the devil can separate us. Nothing in the realm of time can separate us. This means the things that exist presently or will exist in the future. Nothing in the world of governments, no power can separate us. Paul says, ". . . *neither height nor depth, . . .*" Nothing in the world of space, regardless of how high or deep, nothing in heaven or hell, can separate me from the love of God.

### **Conclusion**

In closing this chapter, we see in Romans 1:18-3:20 that there is the need of divine righteousness. We found out that the wrath of God is revealed against all unrighteousness. In Romans 2:1-3:8 we discovered that the Jew is condemned despite his special privileges. In addition to this, universal condemnation is a proven fact for all mankind. In Romans 3:21-5:21 we discovered that the reception of divine redemption is by faith. It is supplied by the blood of Jesus. It is

proved to be adequate by the spiritual precedent of Abraham in 4:1-25. It is declared to be permanent and complete for all mankind in 5:1-21. In Romans 6:1-8:39 we shall live by faith. Life is empowered by divine righteousness. We learned of victory over sin and liberty from all the bondage of sin in Romans 6. There is liberty from law and the futile struggle to be righteous by that law in Romans 7. Finally, in this chapter, we have seen the glorious life in the Spirit of God made possible by the blood of Christ, shared by all the people of Christ and motivated by all the work of God throughout all time.

The only thing that remains, before we get to the life that is to come, is how God's great promises in the Old Testament fit in with all we have just studied. What about all of the promises that God made to Israel, that they would be His people, that they would be redeemed and glorified, that they would live in a city of their own, worship in a temple of their own, and be ruled by a king of their own? What about all of those promises? How do they fit into the discussion of salvation by grace through faith? This is what Paul will discuss in the next three chapters, in which he illustrates that the grace of God reaches to the promised Israel, those who have been circumcised in the heart and not just the foreskin. The Jew is blessed through the blessing of Abraham, as we read in Romans 3:21-8:39. They, of all people, should have understood this. The Jew will be used as the proof of the grace of God and not only as a proof of the judgment of God. Remember, God is for you. Nothing else matters. God give you peace in believing that.

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# WHAT ABOUT ISRAEL?

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## Romans 9:1-33

### Review and Introduction

In the last chapter, Paul closed Romans 8 on the most triumphant and joyful note that we find anywhere in the entire Bible. In this chapter we will see Paul beginning Romans 9 with a most mournful cry. He begins with tears over the nation of Israel because of their fall. It may seem odd to some that Paul would interrupt the great discussion of salvation by grace through faith in order to spend chapters 9-11 discussing the past and present status of the nation of Israel. But when we look closer, we find that these chapters are not an interruption at all, but that they are absolutely necessary in order for Paul to draw his conclusion in the last few verses of Romans 11.

Paul was considered to be a traitor by the nation of Israel. His preaching in their synagogues about Jesus had stirred up much opposition and caused much trouble. He seemed to the nation of Israel to be a lover of the Gentile people. So Paul has a personal reason for writing these three chapters. He wants all men to know of his heartfelt love for Israel and of his desire for their salvation. Israel might have thought that Paul was saying that God did not think much of them, but Paul presents the fact that both he and God are deeply in love with Israel. He wants them to see that they are valued by God and that every single Jew has a value to God that is equal to the cross of His Son.

There is an even deeper reason for this present discussion by Paul. Romans 8 had presented the believers with security in Jesus and the power of God's election. In Romans 8 we discovered that all things will work together for the good of

those who love the Lord and are called according to His purpose (Romans 8:29-30).

Paul, in essence, is saying that God does everything based on His foreknowledge and on a predestined or foreordained plan.

The natural question that would arise out of the belief that the believer is secure and that God's purpose is being fulfilled would be, "Well, what about Israel?" The Jews had been selected by God (Exodus 19:4-5). David testified in Psalm 147:19-20 that God had made His covenant known to Jacob, and His laws to Israel. God had not dealt with any other nation in this way. In Amos 3:2a we read, "*You only have I chosen of all the families of the earth; . . .*" The Jews apparently felt, even though God had elected Israel, that Paul was saying that God had set them aside and accepted both Jews and Gentiles alike into His kingdom. Would that not make God a liar in regard to His promise or else too weak to fulfill it? However, in Romans 9:6-33 Paul will present four attributes of God to show that Israel's rejection of Christ had not nullified, but rather, had magnified God's promises. But first Paul will reveal his great heart for Israel in Romans 9:1-5.

### **Paul and Israel**

Paul talks first about the sincerity of his feelings. He does this through a three-fold reference. He calls Christ to witness, his own conscience to witness, and the Holy Spirit to witness. The intensity of that feeling is seen in verses two and three.

Paul made a two-fold statement: "*. . . I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart.*" Paul always felt deeply about this issue. He dreamed of Israel's salvation and would weep over their lost state. Paul is like Moses in this regard. In Exodus 32:30-35 Moses asked God not to destroy Israel. If God were going to destroy them, then Moses was willing to be destroyed also. Just like Moses, Paul was willing to be cut off from God and be condemned eternally for the sake of his kinsmen. In Philippians 1:21-26 Paul stated that he was willing

to postpone glory for the benefit of the believers in Philippi. That in itself is strong enough, but in Romans nine Paul goes so far as to say that he is willing to be condemned in hell in place of those who were lost. We are looking deep into the heart of a man, who has, himself, looked into the heart of God and Jesus and realized that the important thing is not that he be saved, but rather that God be glorified and that His will be done.

This deep feeling that Paul had is the result of his relationship to the Jews as national kinsmen. This is the way that it should be today in the church, which is the new Israel, the Israel of God. We should feel the same way toward each other as Paul felt toward his fellow Israelites. Paul is expressing the same thinking here in Romans 9 that he did in Romans 1:14 when he said, "*I am obligated both to Greeks and non-Greeks, both to the wise and the foolish.*" He is speaking of the great debt that he feels toward the Jews.

### **The Basis For Paul's Feelings**

Paul then lists the basis for his feelings in 9:4-5. It involves eight marks of the divine favor of God to Israel, to those who are Jews according to the flesh. These eight marks were intended to lead the Jews to Christ.

**Number one** is, "*Theirs is the adoption as sons; . . .*" (Romans 9:4). God had adopted Israel, they were His first-born (Exodus 4:22; 19:5). He had adopted this nation from all of the other nations of the earth. He did this so that in them He might send the Messiah.

**Number two** is, "*. . . theirs the divine glory, . . .*" (Romans 9:4) In the Old Testament God's presence was known as the *shekinah*. This was the pillar of fire and smoke that went with Israel throughout the wilderness journey. When the tabernacle was built, God's presence was on the mercy seat. The same thing occurred when the temple was built. The *shekinah* was God's visible presence in the Holy of Holies. This signified that not only were they the people of God, but they were also the habitation of God. God had come to dwell with them.

**Number three** is that theirs were, “. . . *the covenants*, . . .” (9:4) God made covenants with Noah, Abraham, Moses and David. They had a right to believe that they would bless all of the nations of the earth. They had a right to believe that they would inherit the earth. They had a right to believe that they would have a king that would rule over them in righteousness. It all started with these covenants.

**Number four** is that theirs was, “. . . *the receiving of the law*, . . .” (9:4) In Romans 3:1-2 Paul wrote that one of the particular blessings that the Jews had was that they had been entrusted with the oracles of God.

**Numbers five and six** are that theirs was, “. . . *the temple worship and the promises*.” (9:4) The worship and service that took place in the temple proved that they had accessibility to God. The promises were the anticipations of the Messiah.

**Numbers seven and eight** state, “*Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of Christ*, . . .” (9:5a) The fact that Christ came in the flesh from them was the climax of all blessings. Notice in 9:5 that the One who is mentioned that came from the Jewish ancestry is God over all and blessed forever.

Israel is not at all slighted by Paul. Paul loves Israel with an unbreakable and unceasing love that would even cause him to wish that he would be condemned. But that could not save Israel because each person is responsible before God. He could not answer for Israel.

### **Israel’s Rejection and God’s Faithfulness**

In Romans 9:6-13 Paul states that the word of God has not failed. He stresses what God’s intentions and actions had been all along. God never said that He thought He could save the entire nation that descended from Israel, but He did save a small remnant. Not all of those who are from Israel (the large circle) are Israel (the small circle). This circle illustration has always been present in scripture. In passages such as Isaiah 1:9;

10:20-22, and Amos 9:9-15, one reads that God has said that there will be a remnant.

God never thought that He could save everyone that was from Israel, but rather only the remnant that returned to Him. This is illustrated by Paul in two different ways: by Isaac and Ishmael and then by Jacob and Esau. This election by God was not one of natural descent. Ishmael was naturally descended from Abraham just as Isaac was. But Ishmael was not the promised son, and Hagar was not the mother of promise who would give birth to the promised son. The word “promise” is the key word. God had said, “. . . *because it is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned.*” (Genesis 21:12) The choice was God’s, and it was a choice of promise.

It was not by human descent, and it was not by human merit. Jacob and Esau illustrate this. The key word here is “purpose” or “election.” Paul is saying that God made the choice while Jacob and Esau were both in the womb, that His choice might be according to purpose and not their works. God is faithful to His *promise*, and because of that Isaac is the seed line. God is faithful to His *purpose*, and so Jacob is the seed line. God is faithful even when all of His people prove unfaithful.

### **Israel’s Rejection and God’s Justice**

Paul then answers in Romans 9:14-18 the question of the Jews that since God chose Isaac over Ishmael and Jacob over Esau, does that not show that God is unrighteous? This may seem to the Jews to be a very logical question, but Paul answers, “*Not at all!*” He rejected the objection as unthinkable. To prove the point he quoted from two different scriptures (Exodus 33:19 and 9:16). Paul believed that it was totally unthinkable that God would be unjust. Go back to Exodus 32:30-35 and see where God was asked to show mercy. If we start talking about pure justice, then nobody will be saved, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23).

Paul quoted Exodus 9:16 regarding Pharaoh to seal the argument in the mind of the Jew. The Jew would not argue against God's righteousness in choosing to reject Pharaoh and save Israel. So Paul's logic is basically that if you don't think that God was unrighteous in doing that, then why do you think that God is unrighteous in what He is doing now? Pharaoh was given every opportunity to repent and praise God. But instead of repenting, Pharaoh resisted God and hardened his heart. Israel had the same opportunities to repent and praise God, but they had the same response as Pharaoh. They rejected the Messiah and hardened their hearts.

### **Israel's Rejection and God's Power**

In Romans 9:19-29 Paul addresses the fact that The objector, who is a Jew, has a new problem. Since God is sovereign and since nobody can successfully resist His sovereignty, what right does He have to judge me, since I cannot resist Him anyway? **Paul's first point** is that no one can talk back to God (Romans 9:19-20). He then uses the example of the potter forming the clay into what he wants it to be. This is all simple logic. Paul says that no one has the right to talk to God in this way.

**Paul's second point** is that God has His purpose (Romans 9:22-24). God has His purposes. God prepares man for glory. God prepares in advance objects of His mercy in order to be glorified through them. But man prepares himself for destruction. In the Greek language, "*prepared for destruction*" is in the middle voice. This means that they had a part in the action. So, the best way to translate this is that they were objects of destruction by means of their own preparation. God's ultimate purpose is to grant mercy upon covenant children. This is what Paul is saying in 9:24. God will grant mercy to all, except those who have prepared themselves for destruction by their unbelief and disobedience.

**Point number three** is that all of this has been prophesied. None of this has occurred by accident. It is exactly what God

knew would happen. He predestined some to conform to the image of His Son. He called them, justified them, and then glorified them, all of it according to prophecy. This is what Paul is concerned with in 9:25-29. He makes his point by quoting from Hosea (2:23; 1:10) and Isaiah (10:22-23; 1:9). The remnant is spared. It has been spared by the grace of God, just as He had predicted.

### **Israel's Reject and God's Righteousness**

Romans 9:30-33 presents a paradox. The Jews sought righteousness but did not find it. The Gentiles were not searching for righteousness and did find it. What is the answer to this? Paul says that Israel tried to be saved by their works, not by their faith. They were ruled by pride. The Gentiles accepted God's gift by faith. They were ruled by their humility. So the outcome was Israel's rejection and the Gentiles acceptance of God. Israel's rejection has now come to mean salvation for the Gentiles. God gave Christ to be a foundation stone of salvation, but Israel rejected it. Christ became the stumbling stone; Israel fell and was crushed.

### **Conclusion**

The sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man are compatible. There is no need for us to reconcile them. God sees no problem in hugging man in all of his sin and deprivation, bringing him into His great, eternally purposed plan of salvation. God is justified. He is dealing with Israel by His promise, by His purpose, by His Son, and by the salvation that He offers them by grace through faith. God give you all kinds of peace in believing in a sovereign God.

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# ISRAEL'S REJECTION OF GOD

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## Romans 10:1-21

### Review and Introduction

In the previous chapter Paul discussed the great theme of the sovereignty of God. He discussed God's faithfulness and found out that Israel was lost because of *their* unfaithfulness, not God's. Paul discussed God's justice to show the Jews that their condemnation and rejection was warranted. He discussed God's power to show that God had already seen that this would occur. He made a plan based upon that foreknowledge. He then discussed God's love. At the end of Romans 9:30-33, we have a transition paragraph that carries us from the discussion of divine sovereignty to the discussion of human responsibility.

### The Cause of Israel's Failure

The theme of this chapter is Israel's rejection of Christ. As in the preceding paragraph, Paul will move from the discussion of divine sovereignty to human responsibility. He explains three characteristics of Israel's rejection of the Messiah. Paul does not see any reason to get into a discussion of how to reconcile the sovereignty of God with the responsibility and the rejection of man. But he does give reasons for Israel's rejection in these sections.

For centuries Israel had read the prophets. They had practiced the law, and they had heard God's promises. All of these were for the purpose of leading them to Christ (cf. Galatians 3:24). Regardless, the majority of the Israelites were not ready when Jesus came (cf. John 1:11). So, how does Paul explain this tragic event? **The first reason** given was that Israel

felt no need of salvation. (Romans 10:1). The Israelites already felt that they *were saved*. In the second and third chapters of Romans, we saw that the Israelites believed that their religious and covenant ties to God were the reasons that they were saved.

**Second**, the Jews were ignorant of God's way of making men righteous. They were ignorant in their zeal for God (Romans 10:2). Sincerity is not enough. It is not enough to be zealous for God. Zeal and sincerity must be linked with the knowledge of the truth.

**Third** is the fact that the Jews were proud and self-righteous (Romans 10:3). The Jews would not submit to God. That was one of their basic problems. They were proud of their own religion and works, and they would not confess their sins. They would not trust the Savior. Paul himself had made that mistake. In Philippians 3:1-11 Paul talks about those things that were gain to him when he was a Hebrew of Hebrews and a Pharisee of Pharisees. In regard to the law, he was found blameless, and Paul boasted about this. But he then admitted that he had acted ignorantly through his unbelief. The Jews had misunderstood their own law, and that is the main point that Paul is making in this section.

### **Righteousness By Works and By Faith**

In Romans 10:4-13 Paul makes several points that deserve attention. The first point that Paul makes is that Christ is the end of the law for those who believe. This was so that God might show His righteousness to everyone who believes. The phrase, "*Christ is the end of the law . . .*" is particularly true in the sense of the law's ministry being terminated. Jesus did not destroy the law in the sense that it would no longer be read and loved or used as an example of how God would have man to live. He did terminate, however, the ministry of the law. The law's ministry was to make sin known, and known for what it is. All that the law was meant to do in making sin and its consequences known, the cross took care of. The cross makes

me know more about sin than the law ever could. The law may tell me what is wrong, and it may even tell me how wrong it is, but it does not tell me God's attitude toward what is wrong. God's attitude toward sin is seen in the cross.

But the phrase "*Christ is the end of the law . . .*" also means that He is the goal or the aim of the law. The law pointed people to Christ. It was a schoolmaster to bring people to Christ. Everything that the law showed that a man ought to be, Christ was. Everything that the law said that a man should do, Jesus did. Everything that the law said that a person should not do, Jesus did not do. This is what caused Paul to make the statement in Romans 4:25 that we are justified by His death, but are saved by His life. We are delivered from futility. We are delivered into an abundant life by the life that Christ lived while He was upon the earth. Paul says in his argument that the Jews misunderstood the law and its goal. They misunderstood its aim and its ministry.

### **Righteousness by Law Described**

In Romans 10:5 Paul makes a second point. He discusses the righteousness that would come by the law. The intense thought here is doing what the law requires. The only way that a man can be justified or be right is by observing the law. But we have already read that no one keeps the law perfectly. As soon as a person violates even one point of the law, he is condemned. He becomes guilty of being a law violator. So history demands that we believe that no man can be justified by law, except Jesus, and that is because He is the only one that kept the law perfectly. A law violator cannot stand before the judge and ask for justice. Justice is, however, what he will get unless he is standing in front of the judge by faith.

### **Righteousness By Faith Described**

In Romans 10:6-13 Paul discusses the righteousness that is by faith. Paul describes this righteousness in 10:6-8. Here is

what righteousness by faith says. Paul quotes from Deuteronomy 30:12 with the addition of some parenthetical thoughts. In essence it is saying that the word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart. Paul adds that righteousness is, “. . . *the word of faith we are proclaiming: . . .*”

There is no need for superhuman effort or search. We do not have to fly up to heaven to get Christ to reluctantly come to earth. We do not have to go into the depths of the earth by our own power in order to bring Jesus up from the dead. Our salvation, justification, sanctification and glorification is not based on superhuman effort or search. God's word was right there for the Jews to receive. It is right there for us to receive as a treasure. It is faith in God that comes from His word that we receive and treasure. That makes us know that we are justified by faith and not by works.

### **Righteousness By Faith Realized**

In Romans 10:9-10 Paul states that justification by faith is realized. This justification comes about through belief. Belief comes from the heart and is confessed by the mouth. It is the heart's faith that God raised Jesus from the dead that brings about the godly response. It is said, “. . . *you will be saved.*” That is the divine response.

What is the confession that brings about salvation? The confession is that Jesus is Lord. In Colossians 2:6 Paul says, “*So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, . . .*” I receive Him as Lord; I walk in Him as Lord. I believe deeply in my heart that God raised Him from the dead. In Romans 6:3-9 I found out that those who believed imitated that belief. They showed this in their response and obedience of faith. Just as Jesus died, was buried and was raised, so were those who believed. They died to self; they were buried in baptism, and they were then raised to walk in a new way of life. When I say with my mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” that takes care of all of my decisions from then on. My only desire is to find out

what He wants and to do it quickly because He is Lord. I believe that God raised Him from the dead, and therefore, life and death place no fear in my heart. I no longer fear death because there is an empty tomb. As long as Jesus' tomb is empty and as long as I confess that He is Lord, I will be saved.

Romans 10:10 repeats all of this. Paul says that it is with the heart that a person believes and is then justified. It is with the mouth that a person confesses and is saved. This is not a one time act. Paul is not talking simply about belief and the confession that preceded my immersion into Christ. What he is talking about is my continual confession and my continual belief. I continually believe, and therefore, I am continually justified. I continually confess, and therefore, I am continually saved.

### **Righteousness by Faith Assured**

Paul then assures me of that in Romans 10:11. He does this by quoting from scripture. Paul wants me to know that what he is saying is authorized, prophesied and assured by the Old Testament, so he quotes from Isaiah 28:16. The prophet Isaiah supports and vindicates God in the matter of making the believer righteous. God is shown to be vindicated in His activity by the Old Testament passage Paul quoted. When Isaiah states these words and Paul then quotes them, in the mind of man God is vindicated in His activity.

### **Righteousness by Faith For All (10:12-21)**

In Romans 10:12-13 the topic of righteousness by faith is expanded by Paul. It is expanded in that there is no difference between Jew and Gentile. The same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses everyone who calls on Him, just as the prophet Joel wrote (Joel 2:32a) There are three great statements in 10:12-13. **First**, there is no difference. God makes no distinction between Jew or Gentile. Faith is still demanded of both of them as we have already seen. Paul is simply discussing

what he first mentioned in Romans 2:17 and continues through 3:31. **Second**, there is also the same Lord who is rich toward all. **Third**, there is a single requirement, that all call on His name. Again, there is no difference. It does not matter who you are; you can be accepted by God. There is no requirement other than faith. This is the very reason for the Jew's rejection. They rejected Christ primarily because they did not see any need of salvation and because they misunderstood their own law.

### **The Human Need**

In Romans 10:14-17 notice the human need. The human need is to call upon God. We have just read in 10:13 a quote from Joel 2:32, "*And everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved; . . .*" David, as a saved individual, also cried out to God in Psalm 116:12-13, "*How can I repay the LORD for all his goodness to me? I will lift up the cup of salvation, and call on the name of the LORD.*" David said that he would praise God for his salvation and that he would call upon God for all of his needs.

Saul of Tarsus, who later became the apostle Paul, had been convicted of the sin of persecuting Jesus. As he was in mourning in the city of Damascus, a man named Ananias was told in a dream to go and tell Saul what he must do to be saved (Acts 9:10-19a; 22:16; (I Peter 3:21). The need is to call upon God, but how can they call upon the name of God unless they believe in Jesus Christ? That is the very thing that Jesus Himself said would condemn the Jews (John 8:24). The Jews must believe. They must put their full weight of belief on Christ if they are going to be saved.

But how can they believe on Christ? In John 6:44-47 Jesus said to the Jews,

*"No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up on the last day. It is written in the Prophets: 'They will all be taught by*

*God.' Everyone who listens to the Father and learns from him comes to me. No one has seen the Father except the one who is from God; only he has seen the Father. I tell you the truth, he who believes has everlasting life."*

In order to believe in Jesus, or anything for that matter, you must hear about it. To believe in Jesus you have to believe the gospel account of Jesus' life. But how can they hear unless they hear from another person? And how will they go preach unless they are sent? In what is called the Great Commission (Mark 16:15). The spreading of the gospel is a beautiful thing. It is good news. There is the human need to call on the Lord by believing, through hearing the gospel as it is preached by those who are sent.

### **The Human Response**

We then notice the human response, particularly Israel's response. In Romans 10:16-17 Paul writes that there were many Jews who refused to accept the gospel message about Jesus Christ, and he quotes from Isaiah 53:1 to show how Isaiah had prophesied that this rejection would occur. How would the Israelites have been able to receive the good news? They need to hear the word of Christ in the message. Many times when we preach, people hear only the message. They do not hear the word of Christ in the message. We must make sure that our message has in it a word from Jesus. The people in Jeremiah's day came to Jeremiah and asked him to pray to the Lord in order to find out if there was a word from Him (Jeremiah 37:17; 42:2, 20).

### **The Result of the Jew's Rejection**

The results of the Jew's rejection are seen beginning in Romans 10:18-21. The question is: Did Israel not understand? Paul quotes Moses from Deuteronomy 32:2, followed by a quote from Isaiah 65:1. Israel is guilty. Notice Paul quoting

from Psalm 19:4 in Romans 10:18. In the first part of that Psalm, God had revealed Himself in creation; and in the latter part of that Psalm, God had revealed Himself in His word. For those reasons, both the Psalmist and Paul declare that the message has gone out into the world. But Israel rejected the message.

Then, in Romans 10:19-20, Paul makes it clear that the message went out to the Gentiles. In order to prove this point, Paul quotes from Deuteronomy 32:21 to show not only that the Gentiles have been saved but also to show God's intent concerning the Jews. His intent was to provoke them to jealousy. Paul also quotes from Isaiah 65:1 to show God rejoicing in the salvation of the Gentiles. For these reasons, Paul states in 10:21 that God has always longed for His people to be saved but that they were a disobedient and obstinate people.

What does this say of God's character? It says that He has great patience. He will hold out His hand all day long if need be. But what does this say about Israel's character? It says that they are disobedient and obstinate. Israel is lost, not because of God's purpose or plan, but rather because of their disobedience to God.

### Conclusion

One thing that is mentioned in Romans ten, that is not the primary interest of the chapter, is the great idea of Christian missions as seen in Romans 10:14-17. God wants everyone to be saved by calling on His name, by believing in Him and by hearing about Him. Elsewhere in scripture are four great reasons for sending out missionaries to preach. **First**, there is the command from above to go out into the whole world and preach the gospel (Mark 16:15). It is in obedience to that command that mission work needs to be done. **Second**, there is a cry from beneath, from hell itself. The rich man said of Lazarus in Luke 16:27, “. . . ‘Then I beg you, father, send Lazarus to my father's house, . . .’” We need to be sending the

Lazarus's that are alive to the rich people's houses. **Third**, there is a call from without. From the city of Troas, Paul heard the cry, ". . . *'Come over to Macedonia and help us.'*" (Acts 16:9) People throughout the world are crying out today. **Fourth**, there is a constraint from within. Paul says, "*For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died.*" (2 Corinthians 5:14)

It is God's will; it is Jesus' heart; it is the Spirit's urging; it is Christ's love that compels us to go and tell others the sweet message of Christ. The world, as the Jewish nation was, is lost. They are not lost by God's desire, nor by His will. They are lost by their own desire and will. We must share with them the saving message of Jesus. I hope that you have found that salvation. I hope that you have found peace in finding Him.

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# Israel, Present and Future

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## Romans 11:1-36

### Review and Introduction

We have been studying God's concern for Israel. In chapter nine Paul opened his heart to us and allowed us to see his great love for Israel, even to the point that he was willing to be condemned if it meant that Israel would be saved. He then presented God's great character in trying to save Israel. He discussed God's faithfulness, justice, mercy, power and love. He showed that although God was sovereign, He was using that sovereignty to express His concern and will for Israel.

Chapter ten devoted itself to discussing the reason for Israel's rejection. Their rejection was not because of unfaithfulness, injustice, lack of power, or lack of love on God's part. Their rejection was simply because of their legalistic approach to their religion and the misunderstanding of their law. They had intellectually and pridefully devoted themselves to the same kind of pursuit as the Gentiles. Therefore, God had no choice but to reject them, though that was not His desire. In Romans 10:21 Paul, in quoting Isaiah 65:2, said that God had stretched out His loving hands to a people who were disobedient and obstinate. They had not only disobeyed God's will; they had mentally opposed God.

### The Remnant Of Israel

Paul will devote all of Romans 11 to presenting proof that God has not given up on Israel. There is always the availability of God's grace, but only if they will repent and seek Him. This thought is found in the Old Testament in Isaiah 59:1-2, "*Surely*

*the arm of the LORD is not too short to save, nor his ear too dull to hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear.*” In 2 Chronicles 7:14 God says to Solomon, “. . . if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.” God had said that He would hear, forgive and heal, if they would only humble themselves to seek and pray.

Paul is saying that God cares for Israel. The value that God placed on Israel ought to silence forever any statement about God being unfaithful or unloving. Consider what God did for Israel throughout the entire Old Testament as He put up with their sin and unfaithfulness. Consider what He did as He brought His Son into the world and let Jesus spend those long years living before Israel and speaking to Israel of God’s love for them. Consider what God did through the cross of Christ. God values Israel, and it is important to realize how much God values us. God does not look upon us as sinful worms. He looks upon us as sinful sons, and we know the value that one has for a son. The father looks out the window every day hoping that the son will come over the hill. He has a robe ready for the son. He has a calf ready to kill and a ring to put on his finger. He has shoes ready to put on his feet (cf. Luke 15:11-32). Paul wants Israel to know that God loves them. Paul also loves them. But God, in all of His infinite characteristics, is particularly characterized by love. God is love, and He wants that love to be made known to Israel.

#### **Four Witnesses, The First Being Paul**

In Romans 11 Paul will call four witnesses to the stand in order to prove that there can be a glorious future for any Jew who will humble himself and turn to God and pray. The first witness is Paul himself. He begins by asking whether or not God had rejected Israel, and answers in the negative by using himself as an example of God’s acceptance of the Jews. This

was illustrated with the large circle and small circle. Paul is now returning to that illustration. He still wants us to remember that God never believed He could save all of those who were *from* Israel. But God has pledged that He will also save some who are *not from* Israel, the Gentiles.

Did God reject His people? Paul says, “*By no means!*” The proof of that statement is that I am saved. Paul is saying that if he were the only Jew saved, then there is a small circle within the larger circle. If he were all that there is to Israel, then he is proof that God loves Israel because God saved him. Throughout his Christian life, Paul considered himself to be the chief of sinners because he had persecuted the church and furthered the Jew’s hatred of the gospel. Paul said that if God could save him, then He could save anybody (cf. 1 Timothy 1:15). Paul will say, “Look to me. I am saved. I am of the people of Israel. I am of the tribe of Benjamin. I am proof of the love of God.”

#### **Four Witnesses, The Second Being the Remnant**

In Romans 11:2-12 Paul talks about the remnant being proof of God’s salvation, the first part of the discussion covering verses two through six. We need to remember what Paul wrote in Romans 8:28-30 when he discusses the fact that “. . . *God works for the good of those who love him and who have been called according to his purpose.*” Those people who were called were those who were predestined to be like God’s Son and would be called His firstborn. They were those who were called, justified, and glorified, all according to this predestination of God. This section is not speaking simply of that small circle called Israel; it is speaking of *anyone* who would call upon God’s name, of *anyone* involved in the purpose of God, and of *anyone* who loved God.

Paul then makes a particular statement about this small circle of Israel within Israel. God did not cast off His people whom He foreknew, but He did reluctantly cast off the nation itself. He had to cast off the nation just like He had to cast off the Gentiles, and for the same reason. They refused to hold God

in their heart and in their knowledge. It was their rejection of God and His Son Jesus that caused Him to reject them.

So God has cast off the nation, those who *are from* Israel. He did not cast off Israel herself, because He foreknew them. He foreknew them, and He had predestined the plan by which they would become conformed to the image of His Son. Paul provides the historical proof of this by mentioning Elijah and the answer that God had for him (11:2b-4b). God has provided a remnant by His grace. God had a foreknown people. This is a scriptural precedent that has been established. We need to remember the historical event that led up to this discussion between God and Elijah. Elijah had fled in fear of Jezebel because he had destroyed the altars of Baal and had the priests of Baal killed (1 Kings 18:16-19:18). In his fear Elijah felt deserted. He had what we call in religion today, “The Elijah Complex.” He was absolutely sure that he was the only one faithful to God. But God had more resources at His disposal than just Elijah. God had 7,000 who had not bowed the knee to Baal.

The application is that there was a remnant even as Paul was writing the letter to the Romans. There was a remnant in Elijah’s day; there is a remnant in Paul’s day. That remnant was not chosen by works, but because of God’s grace. If someone were saved by works, then they could not be saved by grace. Otherwise, works would no longer be works. As oil and water do not mix, so grace and works do not mix.

Paul’s conclusion in Romans 11:7-12 is that the nation did not obtain righteousness, but the elect did. Paul makes it very clear that the hardening of Israel was not total. He said that a hardening of part of Israel had resulted in a falling away. That falling away was not necessarily final. The Jews did not stumble so that they might fall beyond recovery. In their stumbling the Gentiles had found salvation. Israel was able to get back up again.

### **Four Witnesses, The Third Being the Gentiles and Their Salvation**

The Gentiles and their salvation are discussed in Romans 11:13. Paul's ministry, as given to him by God, was to see the salvation of the largest possible number of Gentiles. That ministry drove Paul to the ends of the earth so that he could speak to every Gentile community so that they might be saved.

The hope behind the fact is seen in Romans 11:14-16. Here is the reality of the situation. Paul's hope in doing all of this preaching to the Gentile world is the same as he wrote about in Romans 9:1-2 and 10:1, that Israel might be saved. Paul was interested in the Gentile's salvation. He was driven by the commission given him and by his mission from God. But his hope was that somehow Israel would see it, become jealous of the Gentiles and would themselves turn to God and be saved.

### **Warnings For the Gentile's The Olive Tree**

In Romans 11:17-24 Paul offers up the illustration of the olive tree. The olive tree had long been a symbol of the nation of Israel (cf. Jeremiah 11:16-17; Hosea 14:4-6). In those Old Testament scriptures, God had said that He would cast them into the fire because they were not bearing fruit. The picture is this: God is the root of the olive tree. This is so because He bears all things and is the source of all things. The tree itself is that small circle that we read about in Romans 9:6. It is the *true* Israel that is *from* Israel. It is Abraham's promised seed. They are the tree upon which the branches are borne. Others are there because they accepted the Messiah. Jesus came to His own (John 1:11). The Jews are Jesus' own, having been prepared by the Old Testament prophets and by John the Baptist. Jesus came to His own, but they did not receive Him. Those who did receive Him, He gave the power to become sons of God, even those who believe on His name (John 1:11).

The natural branches of this tree are the believing Jews. The unnatural branches are the individual Gentiles who have been

grafted in, each through personal faith. It is the individual who is grafted into the tree, but it is also the individual who is cut off from the tree. The single reason that the Jews are cut out of their tree is their unbelief. The single requirement for the Gentiles to be grafted into the tree is belief. This removes any ground for boasting from anyone. If someone should boast about being grafted into the tree, then they must remember one thing: the root bears you; you do not bear the root. Even the Gentiles' salvation is proof of God's concern and love for Israel because God grafted the Gentiles into the tree. It was the same tree that was planted by God when he said to Abraham that it was through him that the nations of the earth would be blessed. (Genesis 22:18) From that time forward, God speaks of His people as the natural tree of Abraham's family, into which the Gentile is grafted. That is what Paul said in Romans four. Abraham is the father of all, not only of the Jew who walks in accordance to his faith, but of the Gentile who walks according to his faith. Abraham is my father because I have been grafted into his tree. Abraham does not bear me, but rather it is the root (God) who bears me. I, as a Gentile, eat at the same table in the kingdom of God as does Abraham. The Gentiles' salvation is proof of God's love for Israel.

### **Israel's Salvation**

#### **Four Witnesses, The Fourth Being God Himself**

Paul's last proof that the Jew can obtain salvation is found in God Himself (Romans 11:25-36). Notice, first of all, Paul's statement about God's timing in this situation concerning the Jews. These verses tell us that God has a part in all of these events. God's hardening of Israel was intended to be temporary until the fulness of the Gentiles had come in. Whether this means the full number of Gentiles yet to be saved or the fullness of the Gentiles wrath against Israel is not clear. Either way, it still shows that God is involved in the timing of these actions.

We also notice in this section a promise from God that all Israel will be saved. Remember Romans 9:6? Paul did not say that all Israel, the large circle, would be saved. He said that all Israel, the small circle, would be saved. God knows who He can and will save. Go back and read the contexts of Isaiah 27 and 59. Look also at Jeremiah 31. The context of these chapters is that God has come in judgment (on Israel). But He has also delivered them from that judgment. They have come out of it believing in God. This could very well be speaking of God's last act of grace upon the Jew. That is shown by the destruction of His city and nation. By that last act, God intended to accomplish His will and purpose. Through captivity, He intended to bring about the salvation of the small circle of faithful people.

Notice God's covenant in 11:28-29. We see again the large circle/small circle application. God has not broken His word to Abraham (cf. Romans 4). God is saving the *seed of promise*. He is also saving the *seed of purpose*.

Then, in 11:30-32, we read that God had chosen the Jews to carry the gospel to the Gentiles in order for them to be saved. God is now choosing the Gentiles so that the Jews can see the gospel and be saved.

### Conclusion

Paul concludes the section with a song of praise. Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord for the depth of His wisdom. Praise the Lord for the depth of His knowledge. Praise the Lord for the depth of His judgment. Praise the Lord for His character, mind and counsel. Praise the Lord because He is the Creator of all things. He is the sustenance of all things. He is the goal of all things.

Paul makes a "bottom-line" statement of his intent in 11:36. His intent is to glorify God. That is the purpose of everything that he has done through Christ. In Ephesians 1:3-14 Paul talks about the great purpose of God, and in 1:3-6 Paul is saying, "To the praise of His glory." Paul talks about what Jesus has

become in Ephesians 1:7-12 saying, “To the praise of the glory of His grace.” He talks about the Holy Spirit in Ephesians 1:13-14 saying, “To the praise of the glory of His grace.”

What is the purpose of God? It is to sum up all things in Jesus. It is for us to say, “Praise the Lord.” To God be all of the glory. That is the reason Paul has written the first 11 chapters of Romans. That is really the reason for all of Paul’s letters. I praise the Lord, and in that praising find the significance of life. In that praising I find the peace that comes to my soul, and I also find my worth and value. In praising Him, I know that I am at the very heart of God. God does not want us to argue over His power and sovereignty. He wants us to praise Him for His infinite power and His infinite grace. That is where I find peace and hope. I hope that you will also find peace in believing that.

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# FOUNDATION FOR CHRISTIAN LIVING

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## **Romans 12:1-2**

### **Review and Introduction**

In this chapter we are entering the last great section of the book. Paul introduced what he wanted to talk about in Romans 1:16-17, which is the thesis statement for the entire book. That thesis has as its center the way God makes man righteous, which is faith, enabling the righteous to live by that faith.

Paul has discussed the universal condemnation of man. It did not matter whether man was the intellectual pagan, the moralist or the religionist, because none of those things removed the burden and guilt of sin. He talked about Jesus and His work on the cross, a finished work that accomplished for God the satisfying sacrifice that would enable Him to look justly on the sinner, bringing salvation to him. Paul also talked about the results of salvation, its permanence due to its nature and the fact that it cancelled all that Adam had done in the garden. Paul talked about the fact that the cross enabled men to be free from sin and the law. Living under the law, a person would want to do what God wanted, but would not be able to find the power to do it.

In Romans 8 Paul burst forth in a beautiful anthem of praise. He talked about the possibility of holiness and the privilege of holiness, with the victory and inseparable character that holiness brings upon us. In Romans 9-11 Paul vindicated God in His attitude toward Israel. God's present rejection of Israel was in no way due to a lack of love, ability, power or

grace. God still stretched out His hand to a disobedient, gainsaying and obstinate people. Judgment was brought upon Israel because of God's love for them. Paul presented the fact that God's attitude toward Israel is seen in himself, because he, the Hebrew of Hebrews, had been saved by the grace of God. God's attitude toward Israel is seen in the fact that there was a large remnant of them that had turned to Christ. God's attitude toward them is further seen in the Gentiles being grafted into the Jewish tree. God's attitude toward Israel is seen in that He is using everything to bring salvation to them.

Paul then bursts into a song of praise. He ends the great doctrinal section of Romans eleven by means of a doxology (an announcement of praise) that praises God's wisdom, knowledge, judgment and paths. He praises the depth of these characteristics of God. He looks into the depth of God's wisdom, knowledge, judgment, love, ability and creation. Paul concludes by saying, "*To him be the glory forever! Amen.*" (Romans 11:36)

In Romans 12:1 Paul says, "*Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship.*" Paul's tone is particularly noticeable as he introduces these searching requirements. Whenever Paul has something urgent to share with his readers he uses the words, "I beseech you" or "I urge you" (cf. Ephesians 5:1; 1 Thessalonians 4:1). Paul was careful to live by his own words. In 2 Corinthians 1:24 Paul wrote, "*Not that we lord it over your faith, but we work with you for your joy, because it is by faith you stand firm.*"

We are going to study two verses in this chapter, verses that form the foundation for everything that Paul is going to say in the last section. Here we will find the doctrines of consecration, dedication, and application. Holy living is what is going to be discussed. We already know that a man is *saved* by faith, but can he *live* by faith? Must his works now determine his standing in the kingdom of God? What is it that will determine how he stands, how he lives and how he functions?

### Principles of Consecration

There are several principles noted by Paul in Romans 12:1-2, so we will outline them in five different points. If we understand the principles in these two verses, Paul says that we will be able to test and prove what God's will is.

**First is the ground for this consecration.** The pivot word in 12:1 is "therefore." This word connects us with what we have already studied. Our position of being justified, sanctified and glorified calls for our practice, consecration and dedication. If all I am doing is learning, perhaps what I am learning is entering my heart and affecting my feelings, but not my actions. I have not learned what God wants me to learn. Jesus did not come so that I would *know* some things. Jesus did not even come so that I would *be* something. Jesus came so that I could *have* something and *do* something. (cf. John 10:10). My life is seen in my activity because of what God has done for me. By faith, God has given me salvation, sanctification and glory. Because of this, there are some things that I must do.

The basis of this consecration is the mercy of God. In the Greek language the word "mercy" is a plural noun. The verse should read, "In view of the *mercies* of God." God does not have just one mercy. He has multiple mercies. His mercy is able to become any kind of mercy that is needed. Mercy simply means to provide the thing that is needed but that is not deserved. Mercy provides for a person the thing that he needs, not the thing that he deserves. God's mercies have been the theme of this book so far. His character is one of a merciful God. Morality needs a dynamic, or it will not continue. Conduct needs a power behind it. For this reason, the apostle exhorts us to place ourselves in God's hands for grace to live the true life.

**Second, there is the nature of consecration.** By urging the Romans to offer their bodies as living sacrifices, Paul is conceding that this is a voluntary thing. They were to offer up, or present, their bodies. This is a term associated with bringing gifts to the temple (cf. Leviticus 1:3; 16:7). When Jesus was an infant, His mother and legal father brought Him to the temple

in order to present Him to the priest so that He could be dedicated to God. When I present (offer) my body as a living sacrifice I am telling God, the angels, the devil, the church and myself that I belong to Him.

The word “present” or “offer” occurs in Romans 6:13, the verse which ties chapters 6 and 12 together. It is also in harmony with scriptures such as Luke 2:22 and Colossians 1:28. The idea of presentation is one of a voluntary offering to God of something that is already His. The offering is also complete. Paul said for us to offer our bodies as living sacrifices. That is a comprehensive phrase meaning the spirit, soul and body.

Paul has already talked in the first 11 chapters about the fact that we are saved and that our spirits and souls belong to God. What Paul is talking about now is the bodily activity, its work, or its religion. No religion values the body like Christianity. It is the body that receives impressions from God, that possesses the tendency to obey or disobey, and that exercises the powers that God gives it. The body is called the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). It is the body that magnifies God (Philippians 1:20).

Paul has already spoken of our spirit and soul in earlier chapters. Now it is necessary to speak about us presenting, or offering, our bodies to Him for the purpose of carrying out His will and fulfilling His commands.

***Third, this consecration is voluntary; it is complete, and it is sacrificial.*** Paul said, “. . . offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God . . .” The Jewish sacrifices in the book of Leviticus consisted primarily of two classes. **Number one**, there were those associated with reconciliation. They were the sin offerings and peace offerings. **Number two**, there were those associated with consecration (dedication) which were based on the reconciliation that the person offering the sacrifice had with God.

Our sacrifice for sin is the Lord Jesus Christ, but our sacrifice for dedication is ourselves. As He died, so we must

also die. Paul said in Romans 6 that we were buried with Him through baptism into His death. Just as He died, we also die, and just as He was raised, we also will be raised. The cross of Christ is adequate and sufficient enough to take away all of my sins and make me justified, sanctified and glorified in Christ, but it is the life of Christ that enables me to present my body as a living sacrifice. Paul said that Jesus was crucified for our sins, but that He was raised for our justification (Romans 4:25). Just as we have been saved by His death, so will we also be saved by His life (Romans 5:10).

It is a very deep and powerful sacrifice when we offer ourselves to God. A good parallel here is Isaac. When Isaac was put on the altar he died, not only in his mind, but also in his father's mind. Even after Isaac was spared by God, both he and his father believed in their minds that Isaac was a living sacrifice (cf. Hebrews 11:17-19). Jesus is also a living sacrifice. He died on the cross, but in a sense He is still on the cross. In 1 Corinthians 2:2 Paul said, "*For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.*" The word "crucified" is in the Greek perfect tense which means that, in effect, Jesus is still on the cross. He is still a living sacrifice. He was crucified before the foundation of the earth. He was born crucified, and He lives crucified. That is the way it is with us today.

Our sacrifice is **practical** in that the offering is performed with the attitude of service. The outcome is not only salvation, but also the deliverance from the hands of our enemies so that we might serve Him. We serve Him not out of fear, but rather in holiness and righteousness all of the days of our life (Luke 1:74-75).

The New International Version reads, ". . . *this is your spiritual act of worship.*" The word "spiritual" is better translated "rational." "Rational" comes from the Greek word *logiken* that is translated "logic." What Paul is saying, then, is that it is **logical, or rational**, to offer up our bodies as living sacrifices. We are to let the rational part of us, our reasoning

abilities, dictate our actions toward God. We are to love God with all of our heart, soul, mind and strength. We are to follow what our mind dictates. This is the nature of consecration.

***Fourth are the commands of consecration.*** In 12:2 Paul begins with a negative command: “*Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, . . .*” Do not be forced into a pattern of worldly behavior. Do not allow yourself to be pushed into the things that this world believes and treasures. The word “world” is translated from the Greek word *aione* (eon) which would be better translated “age.” In this case it means “the present age.” In the Bible, the word is associated with evil (cf. Galatians 1:4; 2 Corinthians 4:4; Ephesians 2:2).

Paul emphasizes that if we aren’t careful, we will find ourselves influenced and fashioned by the world. When this happens we will give up to its spirit and way of life. The ways of the world are so attractive, and they feel good. Jesus spoke of the pleasures of this world and the damage they can do (Luke 8:14). Anybody who believes that this world does not have pleasures, does not believe what Jesus says and is ignorant about the ways of the world. They have not experienced some of the things that the world has to offer. The devil makes a person feel good on a temporary basis, but in the end he only leads them to bitterness.

On the positive side, Paul says, “. . . *but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.*” “Be transformed” is in the Greek passive tense. That means that the person involved allows the transformation to come upon them. The mind in scripture is much more than intellect; it has a moral aspect as well. In Romans 1:28, 7:23, and 11:34 we read of the mind of the world, the mind of Christ, the inner mind of man and the mind of God. The mind blends the intellect with the moral. In other words, it may be described as the means by which the soul perceives and discerns between what is good and what is truth. It is very important that we consider this idea of moral transformation by means of what we are thinking. We are to be renewed in our mind.

***Fifth is the outcome of this consecration.*** Paul is saying, “I will allow myself to be changed completely and totally. Then I will be able to prove and test what is the good, perfect, and pleasing will of God.” The will of God will be known. The word “prove” or “test” means to try, as to try or test something in a laboratory. It refers to the spiritual discernment which is the result of an inward transformation. There is no truer mark of a growing, progressing and ripening Christian life than spiritual discernment. In order to arrive at that point, transformation is absolutely essential. Notice that the will of God will not only be known, but the will of God will also be carried out. This is the expression of God’s will for a man’s life. I will do the will of God. I not only will be able to prove the will of God, but I will also do the will of God.

The will of God is not only to be known and carried out, but it is also to be enjoyed. Paul says that I will find out that the will of God is good, acceptable and perfect. Our new experience with Christ deepens our capacity for greater blessing. As we yield ourselves continually to the grace of God, we find that His will is essentially good and that our obedience is well pleasing to Him. Ethically, we realize the end for which we are intended.

### **Conclusion**

What has been under discussion in these two verses is not growth, but transformation. Growth suggests progress, but transformation indicates a change. Our Lord grew, but He never needed to be transformed. We must first be transformed, then we can grow by doing God’s will on earth.

The word “transformation” comes from the word “metamor-phosis.” It means that a total change takes place. The best illustration is a caterpillar changing into a butterfly. The caterpillar weaves a cocoon around itself and dies. Over the fall and winter it stays in that cocoon. But in the spring something begins to happen; a change has taken place. Over those fall and winter months, that dead caterpillar has transformed itself into

a beautiful monarch butterfly. You would never recognize that it was once a caterpillar.

So it is with you and me. Our sinful self has a cocoon woven around it that is called the mercy and grace of Christ. We go through a struggle until we are finally immersed into Jesus and come out as a new creature. All things are new. We shake out our wings, and we fly with the power of grace and faith into the arms, works and will of God. What a privilege this is. What a change takes place when we present our bodies to God as a living sacrifice and are transformed into His glory. What a peace this is. May you find great peace in being a transformed, living sacrifice to God, holy and pleasing to Him.

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# THE WORKING OUT OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

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## **Romans 12:3-21**

### **Review and Introduction**

In Romans 12:1-2 we studied the principle of dedication or consecration. We saw that consecration is based on the transforming work of God due to the renewing of our minds.

Paul is now going to show how the principle of consecration is applied to the various aspects of life, a life which is lived by faith. Paul wants his readers to consider how their life of faith relates to the entire body of believers as stated in Romans 12:3-13. He then shows how their life extends out to the entire world.

### **Romans 12:3-8: Humility Within the Body**

In Romans 12:3-8 Paul states that a right relationship with God results in a right relationship with our fellow believers. From the spiritual aspect of our life emerges the social aspect. Pride is, ever has been, and probably ever will be, the greatest enemy of true righteousness. Humility is what is needed. Paul expresses his own humility when he says, "I am speaking through the grace given me." He could teach and impress this upon them without any pride because he was teaching from the grace of God. Paul's preaching was a result of his own ability. He did not teach from his position as an apostle. He did not teach from the standpoint of his education, although he was one of the more educated men of the first century. He spoke from a position of grace. He makes his appeal from this grace to every Christian without exception.

### **The Call of Humility**

Since we are now living transformed lives, our first need as a Christian is to have an awareness of what our attitude must be like toward our fellow Christians, of how we must properly utilize our spiritual gifts. Paul says that we are not to think of ourselves more highly than we ought to. Each Christian is only one part of the great hope, and unless his opinion of himself agrees with God's opinion of him, his life will result in failure.

Paul is talking about allegiance throughout this section. He spoke earlier of our allegiance to God, which we show by presenting our bodies as a living sacrifice. Now he speaks of our allegiance to the Holy Spirit and to our fellow Christians by exercising the gifts that God has given us so that they will be benefitted.

An interesting thing is seen in Paul's statement that action is to be limited by the divine gift. He says in 12:3 that we are to view ourselves and our gifts in accordance with the amount of faith that God has given us. God gives to each man a measure of faith. It is a solemn and searching thought that everyone has been given a gift (cf. Ephesians 4:7). But the gift must be used; it must be used according to how much faith has been given to us. We are to use our gift just as we receive it, as the steward of God's tremendous grace. We know that faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God, but faith is also said to be the gift of God (John 6:40, 47). God gives us grace through His word, but He also gives us grace to believe it.

### **The Reason for Humility**

In Romans 12:4-5 Paul says that the diversity of God's gifts constitutes the main reason for a Christian to be humble. As the vine has many branches and the body has many members, so the church is made up of a large number of individual members. Each has his own gift which was intended to be exercised in its proper place and in the proper manner.

Paul makes a very important point here, that is, that the church is an organism rather than an organization. While it is

organized, it is an organism, and this figure of a body with its several members is a definite reminder of the place and limit of each individual Christian. Paul not only talks about my place in the body, but he also talks about my limitations within the body. The work of the hand is limited by the fact that it is a hand. The work of the ear is limited by the fact that it is an ear. The ear cannot perform the duty of a hand, and the hand cannot perform the duty of an ear. In working together, with each member performing their duty, they build up, benefit and glorify my physical body. It is the same way with you and me in the body of Christ. I cannot perform your duty or responsibility, and you cannot perform mine. We are both in the body, and as we work in the body with our different capabilities, each exercising our gifts, we are building up the body. We are maturing the body.

Three thoughts are suggested here: unity, diversity, and harmony. Notice the unity. There are many members, but just one body. Notice the diversity. All of the members do not perform the same function. Notice the harmony. Each member belongs to the others. Those three things must be realized and blended. We have unity of body, diversity of function, and harmony of position. When these three things are realized and blended together, the church lives its true life and is able to do its work.

### **The Expression of Humility**

In Romans 12:6-8 there are seven gifts listed. Four of them are “official” gifts: prophecy, teaching, ministry and exhortation. The last three are “general” gifts: giving, ruling, and showing mercy. Whether these gifts are “official” or “general,” Paul is going to show that humility is necessary for the expressing of these various ministries or gifts of service.

Paul lists the *gift of prophecy* first because it is the most important and also because it was the inspired declaration of the will of God. Prophetic work was to be done in proportion to the faith of the prophet. Even when the gift was miraculous, its

exercise was limited or determined by faith. Paul said, “*If a man’s gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith.*” (Romans 12:6b) The emphasis being placed here is not on the gift itself, but on the proportion of faith that the individual has in exercising the gift.

Prophecy was necessary, for it introduced to the world the faith which was once for all delivered for the saints (Jude 3). Prophecy ended when the particular work for which the prophecy was intended was accomplished. The prophet was limited in his exercise of that miraculous gift by his faith. Since that is true of the miraculous gift of prophecy, then we know that it is true of the other six non-miraculous gifts that Paul will list.

In the case of the **gifts of service, teaching, or exhortation**, the Christian is to give himself to his own special work. He is to exist and be absorbed in his work of service. He is to know the rules that govern his work and operate within the limits of those rules. Paul says that if a person’s gift is serving, then he should serve. If the gift is teaching, then teach. If the gift is one of encouragement, then encourage. When people know their gift and begin to exercise it, they become absorbed and satisfied with their work. They become aware that this is the thing that they should be doing. Paul says that this is the right thing to do, so our responsibility is to find out what our gift is and to get busy in exercising it.

Paul then mentions the **gift of giving**. This may appear to be a strange gift, because it is a gift that not many people aspire to have. Paul, however, says, “. . . *if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; . . .*” (Romans 12:8b) The individual is to take his own possessions and use them in a very liberal and generous way, giving them freely for the good of the Christian community.

Paul discusses the **gift of leadership** next. Ruling is not something that is learned by attending a seminar. It is a gift that comes from God. The person who rules is to rule with sincerity and focus. He is to remember the need for impartiality, for

fairness. He is not to be lazy, but must exert himself. He is to be diligent in his leadership. The biblical idea of leadership is really one of helping, lifting, guiding and being an example to those being led.

Paul then mentions the *gift of mercy*. If one has the gift of mercy, he is to be merciful with an attitude of cheerfulness. The word “cheerfulness,” when translated from the Greek, means “gladness” or “graciousness.” These individuals are to be merciful in such a way that they bring joy to people. The person giving mercy is identified as being eager and graceful to lighten the load of the other person to make them feel relieved. A good illustration of this is a person making a visit to someone who is in the hospital. A merciful person enters a gloomy situation, and when they leave, they have left a bit of joy, a bit of Jesus, and a bit of light in the middle of a dark situation.

Recognizing what gift we possess, along with the determination to exercise that gift, will form the best possible means of glorifying God and blessing those around us. We need to be a group of believers who work through the Holy Spirit who has gifted us. We must use our gifts to build up our fellow Christians, whom those gifts are to benefit.

### **Duties to the Brethren**

There are several duties mentioned by Paul that apply to each individual. The first is the *gift of love*. Paul will discuss this again in Romans 13:9-13, and although he doesn't take that long to discuss this gift here, it appears that Paul knows that this is a duty of ours to the brethren and the world. It helps us apply the salvation that we have been given through Christ. Love is stated in the first part of verse nine. Love must be sincere. It must be without hypocrisy. Love detests that which is evil and clings to what is good. Paul then talks about loving the brethren. Paul says, “*Be devoted to one another . . .*” A great personal study is to notice how many times the phrase “one another” is used in the Bible to see the great relationship that we have, not only with Jesus, but with one another. Paul

states in these verses that we are to be devoted to others, to honor others, and to live in harmony with others. We must recognize that we belong to others since we have “one another” relationships in the body. We are to be affectionate to the brethren, and we are to prefer the brethren above ourselves.

The next duty is the *gift of service* that I am to give to the brethren (Romans 12:11). Three things are said in this verse in regard to the gift of service. **First**, regarding my serving others, I am to be diligent and not resistant to activity. **Second**, my attitude must be one of enthusiasm. **Third**, I must be submissive since I am serving the Lord.

Paul then speaks of the *gift of fellowship* (Romans 12:12-14). Paul is saying that I am to be patient with others because of the trouble, tribulation and affliction that we endure together. I am to be steady and strong as we pray together. I am to communicate the needs of the saints and show hospitality. These are points of allegiance, honor and love that I am to show toward my brothers and sisters in Christ.

### **Duties to All Men**

In Romans 12:14-21 my life of faith is now exposed to the public. The Christian is now out in the world among the pagans. How are we to act since we have been justified by faith and have no condemnation? How are we to act toward our enemies? In verse fourteen Paul writes, “*Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.*” I am to bless my enemy and not curse him. This is very hard to do, because when we are being cursed, we are not to curse back, and when we are being harmed, we are to bless and pray for the one who is harming us.

In Romans 12:15 we see how we are to react to the emotions of the world. If people are rejoicing with good reason, then rejoice with them. If they are in a period of mourning, then mourn with them. If they are benefitting financially, socially, or politically, then rejoice with them. If they lose in some area of their life, then we are to mourn and weep with them.

When there are differences of opinion, or position, what are

we to do? Paul answers the questions in 12:16. I am to descend to where those who are lowly are. It means that I do not look down on whoever it is, but that I attempt to understand their situation. They may not understand this, but I am on their level. I am a sinner saved by grace, just as they are a sinner who is lost by their actions. We are both equals as far as God's value of us is concerned. I am not to be conceited when I am out among the people of the world.

When I am in the public arena and things are happening all around me and when evil is coming toward me and the circumstances are so bad, how am I to react? In 12:17 Paul says, "*Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody.*" This is very difficult to do. The law of Moses said to repay evil deeds with evil deeds. The law said that if you plucked someone's eye out, then they were to pluck one of your eyes out. If you murdered someone, then you must die. It was a situation where it was an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, a life for a life, evil for evil, and good for good. But Paul is saying that we are under grace and saved by grace. There is no longer any condemnation for us because we are no longer children of the world. Our citizenship is in heaven. Because of the benefits that we have under grace, it is no longer a situation of repaying evil for evil. We must be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. We are to make sure that the honorable thing is done, even by the world's standards.

In 12:18 Paul writes that peace is what we seek, what we honor, and what we have with God. We should not find it too hard to live in peace with others. However, we notice two qualifiers of living in peace. The first is: If it is possible, live in peace. At times it may not be possible, but make sure that if the attempts at peace break down, it is not our fault that it happened. The second qualifier is to strive for peace. Striving means that a commitment has been made on our part. The devil is going to do his best to make sure that peace does not exist.

He wants victory at all costs. In contrast to Jesus, who could have been a victorious warrior by calling on multiple legions of angels to assist Him, the devil is not here to bring peace. The devil causes judgment to be brought, but it is the Lamb of God who brings peace (Ephesians 2:14-18).

Paul makes a beautiful statement concerning revenge in Romans 12:19, and while it may appear to be an unusual statement, we must consider the fact that if we are avenging evil, then we are taking God's place by doing something that He has said is reserved for Him exclusively. We do not have to worry about avenging the evil that has been done. God will take care of it. We can hate the evil; we can cling to that which is good, but we are not to try to avenge the evil in order to make good happen. The results of this are seen in 12:20 as Paul says that we are to return good for evil, not evil for evil. What is accomplished by doing this? It makes the other person feel bad about what they have done to you. We return good for evil because of our love for those in the world, and because we want to help them out of the trouble that evil has brought into their lives.

The whole idea behind what Paul is saying is that evil must be overcome, and it must be overcome with good (Romans 12:21). A fire cannot be extinguished by pouring gasoline on it, but that is exactly what we do when we repay evil with evil. We are adding fuel to the fire of the devil. However, we extinguish the fire when we overcome evil by doing good. Jesus was the supreme example of what is being discussed here. When He was among His worst enemies was when He taught His most tender lessons. Jesus went about doing good, and that is what Peter told Cornelius (Acts 10:38). As He went about doing good, He bruised the serpent's head until finally He died the good death and destroyed the devil's power forever. When evil is done to us, let us not do evil in return. Let us do good, and in doing good we will not only be serving God, but we will also be showing allegiance to the world that God Himself created

and will be bringing the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ to where it cannot be found anywhere else. We will bring the peace of God to the world. Let us strive to be humble, not only to the brethren, but also to all the world. God give you peace in believing in Jesus.

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# THE CHRISTIAN AND CIVIC AFFAIRS

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## Romans 13:1-14

### Review and Introduction

In the last chapter we saw Paul give 27 one-line commands to Christians, telling them that grace made them responsible to their brethren and individuals that they would meet out in the world. The question might naturally arise as to how salvation by grace through faith affected the Christian's relationship to the government in matters of civic and civil affairs. This would be a particular concern when the emperor happened to be a wicked fellow named Nero, and the Roman Empire was developing policies that were aimed at persecuting the church of God.

### Obedience

In order to address this concern, Paul says in 13:1-7 that our relationship to the government is to be one of obedience. This would be very strange for someone who was being persecuted in the city of Rome by the very people they were being told to be submissive to. However, we need to understand that this is the only course available for the children of God if they are to be lawful citizens. When Paul talked about being free from law, he was not talking about being free from the obligation to submit to the law. He simply meant that we are free from law as the system by which we will be judged eternally. Law regulates our life while we are here on earth, but we will not be judged by law when we stand before God.

### **The Duty to Those In Authority**

Paul says that everyone must submit to the governing authorities. Obedience is involved here, not only in submitting myself to the law's demands, but also to the law keeper's protection and judgment. The reason for this is seen in the latter part of verse one. Remember what Jesus said to Pilate when Pilate asked Him, "*Do you refuse to speak to me? Don't you realize that I have power either to free you or to crucify you?*" (John 19:10) Jesus responded to that question by saying, "*You would have no power over me were it not given you from above.*" (John 19:11) In Daniel 4:17 Daniel states that it is God who sets up kings and removes them. God does what He wants to do. Nobody can stay His hand or question Him as to what He is doing.

In Daniel 4:34-35 King Nebuchadnezzar boasted about the great city that he had built, about the great gardens that were there, and about his great power. Because he failed to give God the glory for what he had been allowed to accomplish, God caused him to go out into the fields and crawl around on his hands and knees like an ox and eat straw. He did this until his hair grew like the feathers on a bird and his nails grew like the claws on a bird. After a period of time, Nebuchadnezzar came to his senses and praised God who is the Most High. He recognized that God was supreme in all things and did whatever He wanted to without anyone questioning Him.

### **The Reason**

The governing powers are ordained by God. Those in power might not have to learn the lesson that Nebuchadnezzar had to learn, but perhaps they can learn the lesson by our behavior, by our good citizenship, and by our being obedient to and respectful of the government.

### **The Denial**

Refusing to obey and respect the government is equal to

denying God and rebelling against Him. He who rebels against authority is rebelling against what God has instituted. Those who do so will bring judgment upon themselves. However, if the government tells me to do something that is in violation of God's law, then I must obey God rather than the government (Acts 5:29). This is not referring to laws that I simply do not like. Those laws are normally just inconvenient to me, or they bother me a little, but I still do not have the right to disobey them. I do not have the right to rebel. The reason is not that the law is right or wrong, but that God has given that nation authority to govern by His will and His way. If they are abusive, God will judge them, but my situation is still one of submission.

### **The Vindication**

The vindication for being obedient is seen in 13:3-4. Paul discusses being free from the fear of the government. If I want to be free from fear, I will do what is right because the government leader is God's servant to me to do good. If I do wrong, then I have reason to be afraid because the leader does not bear the sword for no good reason. He is God's servant and agent of wrath to bring punishment upon those who do wrong. This is very serious. The ruler is a servant of God, both for good and for judgment. If you do good, he will reward you and protect you. If you do evil, then he will judge you and bring punishment upon you, and he has God's approval to do it.

### **The Spirit**

The spirit of obedience is seen in Paul's words that it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment, but also because of conscience sake. There are three reasons why we are to obey. **Number one**, the governing authorities are from God Himself. **Number two**, there is possible punishment in violating the law and reward in obeying it. **Number three**, we obey the law and governing

authorities in order to have a clear conscience. I belong to God, not the government, but since the government is instituted by God, it is instituted for my good and benefit. The government was never intended to harm man, but rather was intended to do him good. Because of my relationship to God, my relationship to His word, my relationship to my brothers and sisters in Christ, and my relationship to my own salvation, my conscience demands that I obey the law of the governing authorities.

### **The Illustration: Taxes and the Call to Obedience**

In 13:6 Paul addresses the issue of paying taxes. Why do we pay taxes? We pay taxes so that the authorities, who are God's servants in the government of the nation, may have their support. Taxes are used to support the civic authorities and civil powers. We pay these taxes as part of our call to obedience. This call to obedience covers four areas of taxation: personal taxes, export and import taxes, and revenue taxes. Paul then gets to the point of what is really essential. If you owe respect, then give respect. Respect is veneration and fear. If you owe honor, then give honor. To hold someone in honor is to hold them in high regard. Our relationship to God demands that we have a helpful, submissive, and obedient relationship to the government. *Our relationship obligations to the government are to pay, pray and obey.*

### **Love Fulfills All Duty**

Paul shows that love fulfills all duties that we have to the civil government. If our conscience, threat of punishment, and our relationship that he intends for us to have to God is not enough, then love will fulfill all duties. In Romans 13:8-10 we see Paul describing the connection between love and the civil law.

### **Love Fulfills the Law**

Paul closes with the statement that he started with: Love fulfills the law. What we need to see here is that it is not love

that keeps the law perfectly. It is not that love empowers me or that God empowers me to keep the law perfectly. However, if I have love, I have fulfilled the very *purpose* of the law. It is interesting that God gave the law in order to bring about love, and when men love, they fulfill every intent that God had in bringing the law to man. When I love my fellow man, I am doing exactly what God did. God showed His love toward all of us, that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us (Romans 5:8). Christ died for the weak, the sinful, and the ungodly. It was love that made Him do that, and it fulfilled the purpose of the law and brought salvation to people. When I deeply love my brother and take care of my brother, I have fulfilled the law in every way that God wanted. I am grateful that Jesus fulfilled the purpose of the law perfectly through His love toward us, but I am also grateful that when I fail to fulfill the purpose of the law through my lack of love, God's love is still in my heart through the Holy Spirit whom He has given me.

### **Love Sums Up the Commandments**

The second thing is that love not only fulfills the law, but it keeps the commandments. It does not keep them perfectly, but it does keep them in a loving way. Paul tells us to look at all of the commandments, and regardless of how many other commandments there may be, they can all be summed up in one rule: love your neighbor as yourself. If that commandment is kept, then all of the commandments are kept. That is exactly what Jesus said when He was asked what the greatest commandment was (Matthew 22:36-38). The entire law and the words of the prophets hang on this single word: love.

Love is a hard word to define and a difficult concept to grasp. It affects our feelings, but it is not a feeling because we are commanded to love. You cannot command people how they are to feel. They feel the way they do because of their circumstances, their mind-set and their attitude. Love appeals to the ability of man to do things. Love is the active pursuit of

good toward others. It wishes good toward others and shows the good in your life that you would expect of others.

### **Love Blesses Others**

Love keeps the commands because the commands were given to benefit others. Verse ten tells me that love not only fulfills the law and keeps the commands, but it tells me that love blesses my neighbor. I love the use of the word “therefore” in this verse. Love does no harm to its neighbor. “Therefore,” love is the fulfillment of the law. Why is love the fulfillment of the law? Because it blesses the neighbor. Anytime that I do any physical, mental, financial, or spiritual harm of any kind to my fellow man, I am not acting out of love. I am not fulfilling the law. I am not making the response to the salvation that God has given me in Christ.

In the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30-37), the Samaritan is called a “certain Samaritan.” However, every time that we talk about this parable, we call him the Good Samaritan. Why? Because he was loving. He fulfilled the law. He kept the commandments. He blessed his neighbor. The man who had been beaten and left in the ditch to die was passed over by both the priest and Levite, both of whom were considered to be religious men. They were repelled by what they saw, and they hurried down the road. The Samaritan, on the other hand, did not even worship in the right way or in the right place, but when he came upon the beaten man, he went down into the ditch, cleaned the man’s wounds, put him on his mule, and carried him to the inn. He rented a room for the man, told the innkeeper to watch over the man until he returned, and if there were additional costs incurred, then he would settle with the innkeeper when he returned. He mortgaged his future for someone he did not even know. This is the way that we are to love our neighbor, not just in words, but also with deeds. That is my responsibility to the civil government and its laws; I am to love.

### **Love Pays Our Debt to Others**

Although we are to owe no man anything, at the same time there is a debt which we have to our fellow man which can be paid in full. The debt which Paul is discussing here is a spiritual debt. Do not be in spiritual debt is Paul's meaning. He is not talking about physical/financial debt. Owe no man anything spiritually. Here is a debt that can never be fully paid except through the continuing action of loving one another. That is the only spiritual debt that I am to owe to any man. I am not to owe any man by *having* to be in submission to him. I am to only owe him the submission of love, and because I love him, I will always seek after his good.

How does this apply to the civil authorities? We are to submit to the governing authorities. We pay our taxes; we pray for them, and we show our love to them by our submission to them. By showing our love to them, we will avoid any harm coming to us. In 1 Corinthians 13 Paul discusses the characteristics of love. He talks about all of the things that we consider to be great, but in the end he says that all of these things are worthless if love is not involved. He shows everything that love is, but he concludes by saying that among the three great things, faith, hope, and love, the greatest of them is love.

### **Motivation and Power to Carry On**

If I am going to obey an ungodly government, like the Roman government, and love the pagan idolaters that I live among in my particular city, then I am going to have to have some strong motivation. I am going to need some real power given to me by God. This is what Paul discusses in 13:11-14. Paul makes a solemn appeal in verse 11 and delivers a clear explanation of why we are to wake up from our slumber, “. . . *because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed.*” There is a glorious expectation at hand. Put off the night, the day is at hand. Paul is contrasting day and night here.

He expects us to quit living like we are in the darkness. We are, instead, to live like it is the daytime (read Jesus' words in John 3:19-20).

Paul says that the day is at hand. He is referring to Jesus here, for it is Jesus who is "the day star" as the book of Revelation declares (Revelation 22:16). It is Jesus who is "the day" as Peter states in 2 Peter 1:19. He is the light of the world, as Jesus described Himself in John 8:12.

### **The Practical Exhortation**

Paul urges the Romans to live their lives as if they were always in full view of everybody in the daytime. Their behavior was to be decent. They were not to be involved in orgies, drunkenness, sexual immorality, debauchery, dissension, or jealousy. Paul says that the armor of light must be put on. In this case, the armor is Jesus Christ. Paul describes this armor in detail in Ephesians 6:10-17. There is faith, righteousness, preparation for the gospel of peace, salvation, and the sword of the Spirit. All of these things are the armor of God. Here, in Paul's words in Romans 13:12-13, the armor is Jesus. I am to put on the full armor of God. I am to behave in a manner that suggests that all of my actions are noticeable. I am to clothe myself with the Lord Jesus Christ.

I am to avoid gratifying the sinful nature of the flesh. Some of the words used by Paul are not understood by most people today. Words like reveling, drunkenness, chambering, and wantonness, but Paul makes a statement that says that what I am to do is in complete opposition to those things. I am to completely revise my life by putting on the Lord Jesus Christ. Wearing Jesus as my garment is a complete positive in my life. The negative is to give any thought to satisfying the flesh.

### **Conclusion**

Looking back at these verses, we see three very simple ways to remember how we are to live in the world. **Number one**, we

are to wake up from our slumber. **Number two**, we are to clean up our lives. We are to put aside the deeds of the world (darkness) and put on the armor of light (daytime). **Number three**, Paul says that we are to grow up. We are to clothe ourselves with Jesus and stop thinking about ways that we can satisfy the desires of the flesh.

The growing Christian is the one who is seen to be wearing Jesus as his garment. More than that, he is seen to be the one who is not thinking like a child any more. He is not thinking about what simply fulfills his desires, but instead, he is thinking about how he can serve his brother, serve his fellow man, and serve the nation in which he lives. We love the nation in which we have been born, so we need to live in it as a citizen of God. We need to live in it as the Lord Jesus Christ would live in it. We don't want to be the man that the poet speaks of when he says, "Breathe, there is a man that is so, so dead, who never to himself said, 'This is my home, my native land.'" I have peace in Jesus. I have peace in the church. Therefore, I have peace in the nation in which I live. May God grant to you the blessing of finding that peace through faith in Christ.

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# LOVE THE BROTHERHOOD

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## Romans 14:1-15:13

### Introduction

This chapter deals with Romans 14:1-15:13, which addresses our relationship to the weaker brother. We are not saying the “weak”

brother, but rather the “weaker” brother. Because of our salvation and our understanding of our freedom from law, how are we to deal with those who have not yet come to that same understanding, but are still fellow brothers in Christ?

### Receive One Another: A Call to the Strong

Paul begins in Romans 14:1 with a call to the strong to not judge or tempt the one who is weak. Paul is saying that I am to receive the weaker brother. I am not to argue with him about his opinions, his decisions regarding his scruples, his disputes, or his differences of opinion with me. Paul will illustrate this in 14:2-4 by contrasting two individuals and showing how adjustments are made when differences exist.

The difference between the two men is over the eating of meat that had been offered to idols. Any meat which was purchased in the marketplace of a pagan city in the first century had probably been offered to idols. Some of the brethren, those who were weaker, had reached the point where they would not eat any meat at all because they were afraid that the meat had been offered to an idol. The stronger brother knew that the idol was no god, and so he could eat the meat without violating his conscience. The weaker brother, on the other hand, believed

that there was a god involved, and he could not eat the meat without feeling that he was violating his conscience.

The adjustment is that the stronger brother was not to hold it against the weaker brother because he would not eat, and the weaker brother was not to judge the stronger brother for eating the meat. Why? Because God had already accepted both of them. God is able to make both of them stand, so how dare one of them not accept the other! If I am the weaker brother looking at the stronger brother, I am not to question how he can do something which offends me. I am not to question God's acceptance of him either. If I am the stronger brother, then I am to receive the weaker brother and not argue with him. I am to live before him and teach him the way of Christ, but I am not to reject him.

The second difference and adjustment is seen in 14:5. The issue is that one man is saying that some days are more holy than others, while another man is saying that every day, being created by God, is alike. We may have duties on a certain day that we don't on others, but nonetheless, every day is holy.

The adjustment is that it is wrong to argue about the issue and to try to convince the other that they are wrong. This issue is an incidental matter. This is simply a difference of opinion. They can both go to heaven, either believing that one day is holier than another, or that all of the days are equal. The adjustment also includes having each man assured in his own mind. Whatever you believe about this matter, then hold to it. Be convinced of it. Let it be the sacred thing to you. There is a right viewpoint in doing anything and everything we do, whether it is obligatory, or whether it is optional. The right viewpoint is to do all things with the focus upon the Lord (14:6). Everything is to be done, or left undone, in the light of this great thought. I am doing this to the Lord. This is my service to God.

The fundamental reason for doing all of this is stated in 14:7-9. This is the same confession that was made in chapter

ten which leads one to salvation. The Lordship of Christ is fundamental in making all decisions, even the decision of how I will accept the weaker brother, or if I am the weaker brother, how I will accept the stronger brother.

### **The Consequences of Not Accepting the Brother**

Paul rebukes his readers for failing to accept the weaker or stronger brother (Romans 14:10-12). We stand before God's judgment seat right now, not only on the judgment day. We are to stand before God's judgment, not the judgment of one another. It does not matter in the final analysis that I am the weaker brother or the stronger brother. I am still a brother. If I am the stronger brother, then I am not to look down on the weaker brother, and if I am the weaker brother, then I am not to judge the stronger brother for what he does.

The true attitude is one of holy fear. Paul said that I am going to stand before the judgment bar of God and I am going to confess to Him. I am going to be in the presence of God eternally. With that holy fear I know my weakness. No matter how strong I have become in Christ, when I stand in the presence of God in my mind and I see God viewing me, it causes holy fear and causes me to see my weakness. Maybe I am seeing myself as I ought to be seeing myself, as the weakest of brothers, or even as the chief of sinners.

Verse 12 makes the fabulous statement that each one of us is responsible before God for our actions, not the actions of others. Each of us will give an account of ourselves before God. This is not necessarily the judgment day that Paul is talking about here, but that every day we are responsible before God for our actions.

### **Edify One Another: Do Not Grieve the Weaker Brother**

In 14:13-18 Paul makes a beautiful statement about not causing the weaker brother to stumble. The first exhortation by Paul is in verse thirteen and there are three things to notice in

this exhortation. Stop passing judgment. I must make up my mind that I am not going to put any obstacle in my brother's way. I do not want to judge my brother, and I do not want to make him fall. I do not want to hinder him or slow down his spiritual growth. I feel and act this way because of my love for him. I want him to grow. If he grows slowly, or quickly, that is fine. The only thing that I am interested in is that this brother is helped by God, just as I am, and that means that it is God who is causing him to grow. There is no sin in being weak, and there is no pride in being strong.

In verse 14 Paul makes a shocking assertion. He says that he knows and is persuaded that nothing is unclean. No food is unclean. That is exactly what Peter learned while on the rooftop when he saw animals coming down on a sheet and the Lord told him to go ahead and kill and eat (Acts 10:13-14) The Lord made the point to Peter that what He now calls clean was not to be called unclean (Acts 10:15). The strong brother knows that nothing is unclean. He knows that the Lord has created everything, and that it is to be received with thanksgiving.

In 14:15 Paul urges the reader to not destroy his brother. Do not destroy the brother who Christ died for by exerting your strength over him. You have the right to eat your meal, but you also have the right not to eat that meal. It is your right to give up your right. This right extends to both the strong and the weak, but the weak brother cannot make that response because he has a weak conscience. A weak conscience is normally governed by law, not by faith and grace. The strong brother knows this. He ought to be able, therefore, to give in and give up his rights in order to not cause the weaker brother to be destroyed.

Paul says, "Do not harm your influence by what you do. Do not let your good be spoken of as evil." Why do we exist as stronger brothers in a congregation or in a fellowship of people? Isn't it so that we can help mature the weak? This will not happen if by the things we do, we cause the weak to stay at

a distance from us. Our influence will be harmed. This is why we are not to live in a way that will cause us to be thought of as evil.

The true attitude is expressed in verses 17 and 18. The kingdom of God is not about eating and drinking. Whether we eat meat or not, whether we drink or not, it does not matter as far as the kingdom is concerned. The thing that matters kingdom-wise is that we are sharing righteousness and spreading peace and joy. Anyone who serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and is approved of by his fellow man.

### **Do Not Destroy God's Work In the Weaker Brother**

In Romans 14:19-23 Paul tells the reader to make up his mind not to put up a stumbling block or an obstacle in his brother's way. Paul says to make every effort to do what will lead to peace and mutual edification. Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food. All food is clean, but it is wrong for a man to eat anything that causes someone else to stumble. It is necessary to realize that you do not have to eat the meat simply because it has been created for you to eat.

Two things are necessary here. **Number one** is to strive for peace and mutual edification. I am to strive for the peace that I possess, to be possessed by the weaker brother, which will result in both of us being built up. This corresponds with what Paul wished to accomplish back in Romans 1. He wanted to come to Rome in order that his and the Romans' faith might be built up. Would it not be great to have the weaker brother tell the stronger about how his faith is being strengthened in Christ? This is what will bring about peace rather than the arguing over his scruples and opinions which build up bad feelings between two people.

**Number two** is to not overthrow the weaker brother for what you, as the stronger brother, want and desire. The stronger brother knows so much that there are some weaker brothers that could be destroyed if he dumped a full load of demands on

them. I dare not overthrow the weaker brother by exercising my right to do something when I am not obligated to do so.

There is a very simple privilege stated in verse 21. That privilege as a stronger brother is to not do anything that would cause the weaker brother to stumble. I will give up any of my rights. The only thing I must do, and will do, is honor Jesus and serve Him. Even though it is right for me to exercise all of my opinions and rights, I will refuse to do so. That is a great privilege that only the stronger brother has.

There is a closing reminder in verses 22 and 23 to the stronger brother. If you believe that it is alright to eat meat and you know that every day is alike, then keep that faith to yourself. You do not need to go around talking about it. You do not need to preach about it or teach on it, because that will cause dissension, jealousy, and division in the body of Christ. Be silent about your faith in these matters. To the weaker brother, Paul said for them not to violate their faith. He said that a man is blessed if he has faith in what he does, but if he does not have faith in what he does, then he shouldn't do it. The weaker brother is the one who questions these activities. Do not violate your faith. Do what your conscience says to do and love the stronger brother.

### **Please One Another: In Imitation of Jesus**

In 15:1 Paul writes that the strong are told to bear the infirmities and failings of those who are weak. The strong should not be attempting to please themselves. To emphasize this, Paul encourages his readers in 15:2 that as they view the weaker brother and see his weakness, shortcomings, and lack of maturity, that should try to please him because that will build him up spiritually.

There are two qualities for pleasing this weaker brother: **(1)** It must be for his good, and **(2)** it must be for his edification. As the stronger brother, I am to seek the pleasure and good of the weaker brother, instead of pleasure and good for myself

(Romans 15:3). Christ did not please Himself. Paul recounts this in Philippians 2:5-8 where he writes that Jesus did not even consider Himself to be equal with God, but instead, He emptied Himself and became a servant. He was not interested in pleasing Himself; He was interested in pleasing others.

Paul quotes from Psalm 69:9b to back up what he has been saying. Jesus bore the insults of weaker brothers. We need to do the same today. Paul talks about the inspiration that all of the Old Testament scriptures would give to this point (15:4). All of the Old Testament saints were just like Jesus in this regard; they bore the weaknesses of the weaker brothers among them. Abraham bore Lot's weaknesses; David bore Jonathan's weaknesses, and in so doing fulfilled the law of Christ.

### **An Urgent Request**

In Romans 15:5-6 Paul urges the Romans to fulfill the law of Christ so that God may be glorified. In order to make this happen, God will provide the encouragement and endurance to do so. God gives encouragement in unity. God gives this spirit among us as we follow Jesus Christ. This means that we follow Jesus in bearing with the burdens of our weaker brothers. This is what will cause glory to be given to God.

### **The Application**

In Romans 15:7 Paul says that the brethren are to accept one another just as they had all been accepted by Christ. Their acceptance of each other would cause God to be praised. This verse applies to both the Jews and the Gentiles (15:8). He says that we are to receive one another just as Christ received us. Jesus was made a minister to the circumcision in order to confirm the promise that was made to Abraham, that in his seed, all of the nations of the earth would be blessed, and in order to enable the Gentiles to glorify God for the mercy that He has given.

### **Paul Draws Support from the Old Testament**

In 15:9-12 Paul quotes from Psalm 18:49, Deuteronomy 32:43, and Isaiah 11:10 to show that the Gentiles will praise and give glory to God.

Paul shows why he desired to write this letter to the Romans. In 15:13 he says that he wrote this epistle in order to give the Romans joy and peace in believing, so that they might have total hope in the power of the Holy Spirit. He wants them strengthened with power in the inner man. He wants them to have joy and peace, hope and power, all in the Holy Spirit of God.

### **Conclusion**

The stronger brother is responsible for bearing the burdens of the weaker brother. God is responsible to see that the stronger brother has the power to do so, and He is responsible for working in that action to bring joy, peace, and hope into the hearts of both the strong and weak brother. All that is left now is Paul's grand conclusion as he greets, praises, and warns the Romans. God give you peace in believing in Jesus.

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# PAUL AND THE BROTHERS

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## Romans 15:14-16:27

### Introduction

This is the concluding chapter in our study of the book of Romans. In Romans 15 Paul is talking about the Christian as a worker. In Romans 16 Paul will issue some final greetings.

### The Christian As A Worker

#### The Mind and Attitude of the Worker

Paul's interest in, and for, the Christian worker is seen in Romans 15:1-4. He is interested in helping the weaker brother grow and mature in Christ. *The mind* of that worker is seen in 15:5-6 where Paul admonishes them to be of one mind with one another. *The attitude* of that worker is seen in 15:7-12, in that he receives others just as Christ has already received them.

#### The Equipment of the Worker

In Romans 15:13-16 Paul lists the equipment that will enable his readers to do the work of God. He says in verse 13 that they have joy, peace, trust and hope, and in verse 14, he states that they are full of goodness and knowledge. For that reason, they are said to be competent enough to instruct one another. They are able to counsel each other in the good and lasting ways of God.

#### The Sufficiency of the Worker

In Romans 15:17-21 Paul says that both he and the Romans are sufficient because Christ is working in them. Earlier, he had given them a three-fold description of his ministry. He said that

he was a minister of Christ with the priestly duty of proclaiming the gospel of Christ. So it is with us today; we are ministers of Christ. We serve in the temple of God, and we proclaim the word of God. That was the most important work of the priest. The priest offered up sacrifices on occasion, but his everyday priority was to be out among the people teaching them about God. Paul tells the Roman brethren that they are sufficiently equipped to do this because of what they had heard and seen in him.

### **The Characteristics of the Worker**

In Romans 15:22-23 Paul talks about himself, saying that there had been things occurring that had prevented him from coming to Rome sooner, but since those matters had been taken care of, then he knew that it was God's will for him to continue his work. This would eventually take him to Spain. It seems as though Christ had not been preached there. On his way to Spain, Paul intended to visit the brethren in Rome. After he had stayed a long time with them, he would then enjoy the benefits of their assistance. Paul does not ask for their assistance; he just assumes it will be given.

In 15:25-26 Paul writes about how he feels toward the needs of the poor. Before coming to Rome, however, there is something else which must be done. As the apostle to the Gentiles, Paul is a spiritual debtor to the Jew, and he is going to take the saints in Jerusalem the help that these Gentile brethren were giving them. Paul then follows up those statements by saying that the Gentiles were obligated to render this assistance (15:27).

The Gentiles are told by Paul that they are spiritually indebted to the Jews, and, therefore, they need to provide for the Jews' physical needs. It is an equal sharing. There is a mutual participation in what Paul admonishes and teaches. The Jews have brought the gospel to the Gentiles, and so now, with

the Gentiles in a saved state, having been justified, sanctified, and glorified in Jesus, the Jews have a physical need that must be met. The Jewish saints in Jerusalem have some poor among them, and Paul is using this opportunity to tie the Jew and Gentile together so that they will become equally indebted to each other. The Jews have shared their spiritual blessings; now the Gentiles will share their material blessings.

### **It All Depends Upon God**

In Romans 15:28-29 Paul says that he is under the providence of God. The Romans are under the providence of God, but Paul is sure that once he has gone to Jerusalem and made sure that the Jewish saints have received the gift from the Gentile saints, there will be no more preventing him from going to Rome on his way to Spain.

We do not know whether or not Paul ever made it to Spain. He did visit the Romans, and as it turns out, the Roman brethren did not have to help him because Paul was arrested while in Jerusalem and was brought to Rome at government expense. The government paid for his rent while he was there; they fed him, and they had a guard watch over him to insure that he was not harmed. Paul prospered while visiting the brethren in Rome.

### **The Prayerful Attitude of the Worker**

In Romans 15:30-32 Paul states that he is dependent on prayer, both his and theirs. Paul wants them to join him in praying for his work. He wants them to intercede so that he will arrive in Rome in peace. He says in 15:31 to pray, **number one**, that he will be rescued from the unbelievers in Judea; **number two**, that his service in Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints, and **number three**, that he will be able to come to see them. Paul, at this point in time, is not sure what God's will is. He is just sure that he is going to do God's will. Whatever God's will is for Paul, it is Paul's pleasure to follow that will.

Paul asks the brethren in Rome to pray for him. More can be accomplished by praying than anything else we do, because when we depend on prayer, we depend upon what God can do, and that is everything that needs to be done. Paul said in 15:32 that when he saw the Roman brethren, he wanted to be refreshed. It may be that Paul knows that his life is about to come to an end. He is close to the time that he will be poured out as a sacrifice to God (2 Timothy 4:6-8). For that reason, he wants the refreshment that he can get in seeing the fruit of his labor in a place where he has never been. There is a joy for Paul in knowing that when he goes to be with Jesus, which is far better (cf. Philippians 1:22-26), his work will be continued in this capitol city, this pagan city of Rome.

### **The Worker's Attitude Toward Peace**

In Romans 15:33 Paul wishes for all of them to have and experience the peace of God. Is there anything more that one could ask for others to have?

### **The Conclusion to Romans**

In Romans 16:1-2 Paul commends a sister in Christ. Phoebe is a servant of the church in Cenchrea. The word "servant" here is the Greek feminine form of the word "deacon." She is to be recognized as a servant by the church in Rome. It is not said why she is going to Rome. She could be going there on business as a wealthy woman. Whatever her reason for traveling to Rome was, Paul says that she is able to help many people because of her wealth, one of which was Paul himself. So Paul asks them to do two things for her. **Number one**, receive her. Greet her and welcome her. Accept her. Greet her because she is in Christ and because she is a great saint and servant. **Number two**, give her any help that she may need because she has been a great help to so many people.

The word "help" is the word from which we get our English word "patron." The patron was the one who supplied all that

was needed, the one who watched over every event and circumstance and made sure that nothing was lacking. That is what Phoebe did. She made sure that nothing was lacking so that the task at hand could be accomplished.

### **Friends to Greet**

In Romans 16:3-16 Paul greets 28 people, including some entire households, that he knew in Rome. These were people whom Paul had met in other places and who had done some work for him or with him. He begins in 16:3-4 with Priscilla and Aquila, who were his fellow workers in Christ Jesus. What great people these two were. We meet them on several occasions in the book of Acts. They are tentmakers like Paul, and Paul had worked beside them in the city of Corinth. They had disciplined each other and had become stronger because of their contact together. How, or when, they had risked their lives for Paul is not known, but the Gentile churches praised God because if these two people had not been present, then Paul may very well have died.

In 16:5 Paul tells the Romans to greet the church that is meeting at Priscilla and Aquila's house. Within the city of Rome, there were a lot of small groups meeting, as well as larger assemblies. There was a group meeting in the house of Priscilla and Aquila. Paul then passes on his greeting to Epenetus, the first person that Paul converted in Asia. Now he is in Rome spreading the gospel.

In 16:6-7 he wants greetings passed to Mary, Andronicus and Junius. The latter two were Christians before Paul was and he notes that they had done tremendous work with the apostles, even to the point of going to prison. What a pair these two are. They have been in prison with Paul, were well known among the apostles, and were believers in Christ before Paul was. Paul was not the first of his household to become a Christian. Here are some of his relatives that were Christians before he was.

In 16:8-13 Paul sends greetings to another group of people.

Among these is Rufus, who is not Paul's mother, but rather, is Rufus' mother. However, she has acted like a mother to Paul anytime that he was around her.

In Romans 16:14-16 Paul greets five individuals and the house church that they meet in. Following these are four more names and the mention of the saints who meet with them. He then gives the command for them to greet one another with the holy kisses and that the churches of Christ all send their greetings to those in Rome. Paul says for all of these individuals to greet one another. Paul knows people in Rome, and he is thinking of them all. There are eight women, nine, including Phoebe. There are five households who are in Christ, along with five house churches. Paul names three of his relatives. Before this chapter is over, Paul will have sent greetings to 38 different people or at least have made mention of them. These are his brethren in Christ; these are his friends.

### **Enemies are Mentioned and Are to Be Avoided**

It is unfortunate that Paul had to also mention some foes of his along with a warning. We need to understand that discipline is needed against these false teachers. Paul names his foes and says three things of importance regarding them. **Number one**, mark them. Note them, and take knowledge of them. Watch out for them. **Number two**, turn away from them. Have nothing to do with them. Do not fellowship with them. The reasons for this are simple. They do not serve God, and they deceive the innocent. **Number three**, continue to be obedient. Everyone has heard about their obedience. Paul is more than glad to mention their obedience, but he also feels that he must remind them of these people (cf. Revelation 2:1-7 and Jesus' reminder to the church in Ephesus). Paul is very happy to hear of the faith of the Romans, but in order for Paul to continue to have joy over them, they had to be sure to be alert for those who were good, innocent, and ignorant about evil, and to make sure that

the false teachers were cast out. If these things did not happen, then Paul's joy would not be complete.

### **Paul's Fellow Workers**

In 16:21-24 Paul sends his own greetings to the brothers. It is encouraging that we get to see that Paul was surrounded by good men that were helping him in his work. This explains some of the success that he had. Timothy is always with him. There are three more relatives of Paul's mentioned. His stenographer, Tertius, is named, along with a very important person named Erastus, who was a city official, and then a man named Quartus. All of these brethren sent their greetings to the church in Rome.

### **Paul Praises God**

Paul sings another song in praise of the gospel of God. Here, honor is given to God because of the fact that the mystery which had for so long been hidden had now been revealed and was known because of the writings of the prophets. The mystery that was not revealed in the Old Testament is now made known to all the nations. Two things make that mystery known. **Number one** is the fulfillment of the prophecies that have been made, and **number two** is the preaching of the gospel. Paul said that all that had been promised by God was fulfilled. God's Son has come. Salvation is now present. The purpose of all of this is that the world might believe and obey. The obedience of faith is to the only wise God, with praise and honor through Jesus Christ, who is worthy of glory.

### **Conclusion**

What is the result of all that we have studied? Paul answers the question for us in Romans 1:16-17. God has brought in His Son a sufficient cause and cost for our salvation. He accepts our trust, reliance, and commitment to Him as a sufficient response to His giving of Jesus Christ. Because of our response He

brings into our life peace, harmony, joy, victory, and an inseparable attitude that says that nothing can separate us from God's love (Romans 8:38-39).

This causes me to offer unto God all that I am, all that I have, and all that I will ever be. All that I will ever have is His. Use it, Lord. Use it for Your glory. Use it for the salvation of lost people. Use it for the building up of Your church. Use it for the bonding together of Your people. Use it for the rebuking of all evil desires of evil men throughout all the world. But, Father, above all else, unto You be the glory. Unto You be the honor. Unto You be the praise, forever and ever throughout all generations. This is why we have peace in believing in Jesus Christ

# Richard Rogers



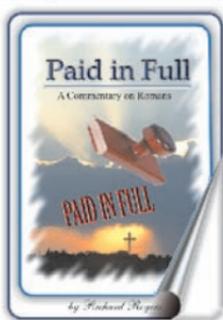
Richard Rogers was born in 1936 in Dallas, Texas. He was educated at Abilene Christian University, and Florida Christian College. He was an avid reader, a diligent student of the Bible, and authored some twenty teaching workbooks and published outlines.

Richard was well known and recognized as a gifted evangelist, teacher, and lectureship speaker. Until his death he was in great demand as a missionary encourager and world evangelist. He taught for more than three decades at Sunset International Bible Institute, assisting in the training of thousands of preachers and missionaries. Richard mentored church planting teams in California, Mexico, Thailand, and the Philippines.

Richard preached for local congregations at Blue Ridge, Azle, Midland, and the Sunset Church of Christ in Lubbock, Texas. Speaking appointments took him to forty states and thirty foreign countries and to many Christian university campuses as a teacher and lecturer. He was also a frequent speaker at soul-winning workshops across the nation.

Richard can still be heard proclaiming the word of God via hundreds of audio and video sermons and lessons available through Sunset External Studies.

Richard and his wife, Barbara, were blessed with four children and eight grandchildren.



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