

Rom. 1:1 Romans Series #1 9/21/08

This morning we are going to start a new sermon series on the book of Romans. **Martin Luther** starts the preface to his commentary on Romans with: "This Epistle is really the chief part of the New Testament and the very purest Gospel, and is worthy not only that every Christian should know it word for word, by heart, but occupy himself with it every day, as the daily bread of the soul. It can never be read or pondered too much, and the more it is dealt with the more precious it becomes, and the better it tastes." **John Calvin** identifies the theme of the book as: Man's only righteousness is the mercy of God in Christ, when it is offered by the Gospel and received by faith." He also remarks that "if we have gained a true understanding of this Epistle, we have an open door to all the most profound treasures of Scripture." (Schreiner, 1).

The book of Romans is an extremely important book both in terms of the theology it presents and the way it has been used down through history. On more than one occasion it is this epistle that God used to bring the foundational truths of the gospel to the foreground in people's lives. For example, the book of Romans greatly influenced Thomas Bradwardine, the 14th century English theologian. He preached and taught the gospel in England and was John Wyclif's theological mentor. His life's verse was Rom. 9:16 - "It does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who shows mercy." Perhaps the most notable person who was influenced by the book of Romans was Martin Luther. In his theological duties, he was assigned to teach this book. Through his study, he came to understand the principle of justification by faith alone. After studying Rom. 1:17, **Luther wrote**, "There I began to understand that the righteousness of God is that by which the righteous lives by a gift of God, namely by faith. And this is the meaning: the righteousness of God is revealed by the gospel, namely, the passive righteousness with which merciful God justifies us by faith. . . . Here I felt that I was altogether born again and had entered paradise itself through open gates. There a totally other face of the entire Scripture showed itself to me. Thereupon I ran

through the Scriptures from memory. . . . Thus that place in Paul was for me truly the gate to paradise." This led to his writing his 97 and his 95 thesis which were the beginning of the Reformation. It was when the introduction to Luther's commentary on Romans was being read in church that John Wesley said his heart was warmed and he was converted. These kinds of illustrations are found throughout church history. This morning we are going to consider some basic introductory material to the book and examine some aspects of Paul's authorship of Romans.

### **I. Introduction to Romans.**

**A.** The book of Romans presents a systematic theology of Paul's teaching. At the time Paul wrote the book of Romans, he had not yet travelled to Rome (1:10-11, 13; 15:22). Therefore, he doesn't address any specific problems going on in the church at Rome like he does in other epistles. Instead, he simply gives an overall presentation of his theological teaching. The result is that Romans is the most complete and systematic theology found in a single book in the New Testament.

### **B. Theological themes in the book.**

- 1.** The book of Romans provides crucial teaching on the nature of man's sin. It deals with fallen man's individual sin before God and with the imputation of Adam's sin to his posterity.
- 2.** It also sets forth how a person can be accepted by God. In this regard, it deals with election, justification, and how Christ's work is applied to the believer. Rom. 9 is one of the main chapters in the New Testament which presents the doctrine of election.
- 3.** It also deals with the fruit of justification, sanctification. In this regard, it addresses a proper balance between justification by faith alone and antinomianism or lawlessness. It also sets forth important points concerning our union with Christ and issues of Christian growth.

4. In terms of understanding the nature of the church and the people of God, it addresses issues concerning Jews and Gentiles in the church. It answers questions concerning the nature of the people of God.

**C. Paul, the apostle, is the author of the book.**

Rom. 1:1 - Besides this self-identification, Paul's authorship is well-attested in early church history. For example, Polycarp, a disciple of John, in his letter *To the Philippians* VI.ii quotes several of Paul's epistles including Romans (Rom. 14:10, 12). The mid-second century heretic, Marcion, spoke of Romans as being one of Paul's epistles. This reflected a common knowledge of the day. Paul's authorship is also affirmed by Irenaeus (*Against Heresies* III.xvi). The Muratorian Fragment (about 180-200) contains the oldest list of New Testament writings. In regard to the book of Romans, it mentions Paul's authorship of the book. One final example is from Eusebius, the great church historian of the fourth century. In his *Ecclesiastical History* III.iii.4-5, he mentions Paul's epistles and mentions Romans as one of them.

**D. Place and date of its composition.**

It is possible to correlate the accounts of Paul's travels in the book of Acts with information in the book of Romans in such a way as to determine the place and time the epistle was written.

**First**, it is clear that Paul was about to leave for Jerusalem with a contribution from Macedonia and Achaia. **Rom. 15:25-29**

This would imply that he was at least near Macedonia and Achaia.

**Second**, Paul refers to the church in Cenchrea. Cenchrea was a port of Corinth. He also mentions Phoebe, a servant of that church, who is about to leave for Rome (**Rom. 16:1-2**).

**Third**, Paul mentions Gaius as his host (**Rom. 16:23**).

In 1 Cor. 1:14, Paul mentions that Gaius is one of the people he baptized at Corinth. In Acts 20:2-3, we are told that Paul, on his third missionary journey came to Greece and

spent three months there. After this, he went to Jerusalem and passed through Macedonia. He sailed from Philippi after the days of unleavened bread (Acts 20:6). This would mean that he left Corinth not later than March that year. In Acts 24:17, in his speech before Felix, Paul referred to his journey to Jerusalem to bring alms and offerings to his nation. There is no reason not to associate this offering with the one he mentions in Romans 15:26. All of this would indicate that the epistle was written from Corinth or its vicinity toward the end of Paul's three month stay in Greece at the close of his third missionary journey. It also means that it was written in the early spring of that year.

**This would place the time of writing around A. D. 57 or 58.** There's some doubt as to exactly when he went to Jerusalem.

#### **E. The composition of the church at Rome.**

Was the church at Rome comprised mainly of Jews or mainly of Gentiles or a mixture of both? There is good evidence in the epistle for the church being a mixture of both Jews and Gentiles.

The evidence for Gentiles being present is strong: Rom. 1:5-6, 13; 11:13; 15:15.

There is also evidence for Jews being present in the church.

Rom. 2:17-25 is a direct address to Jewish people. Paul mentions Abraham as our forefather according to the flesh in Rom. 4:1. The greeting to Prisca and Aquila in Rom. 16:3 of whom we know, at least that Aquila was Jewish from Acts 18:2.

Paul sends greeting to Adronicus and Junias whom he calls my kinsmen (Rom. 16:7) as well as to Herodian, whom he also calls his kinsmen (Rom. 16:11).

An extensive treatment of questions which were of deep concern to Jewish Christians in chapters 9-11 also indicates that Jewish Christians were present in the church.

Paul makes numerous references to the law which would have special meaning to a Jewish audience.

There is not way to tell what percentage of the church is which, but it is clear that both groups were present in this church.

With these introductory considerations in mind, let begin to look at the epistle itself.

## **II. Paul's qualifications to write to the church at Rome.**

### **Rom. 1:1**

Paul lists three things about himself in this opening greeting.

**A. First, he calls himself a bond-servant of Christ Jesus.** The purpose in this designation is to affirm the completeness of his commission by Jesus Christ. He wasn't writing this epistle on his own, but he was writing as a servant of Christ. The prophets in the Old Testament were often given this designation in their calling and role as a prophet of God. **Num. 12:6-7; Josh 24:29:** "And it came about after these things that Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, died, being one hundred and ten years old." **Isa.**

### **20:3**

Therefore, Paul uses a self-designation that connects him with Old Testament prophets.

It also affirms that Jesus is Lord.

**B. Second, he calls himself and apostle.** While the term can refer in general to someone sent on a mission, Paul is using it in the richest sense of the term. It refers to the twelve, Matthias replacing Judas, plus Paul. This was a special non-repeatable office in the church. The qualifications for the office make it clear that it is an extraordinary office that is not repeatable.

**First**, an apostle had to have been chosen and sent forth by Christ himself. This was the case with the original twelve and Matthias was chosen supernaturally and affirmed by the other apostles. Paul was also directly chosen by Christ - **Acts 9:15; Gal. 1:15-16.**

**Second**, an apostle had to be eye-witnesses of the resurrection. Acts 1:21-22; 1 Cor. 9:1; 15:8.

**Third**, the apostles were empowered by the Holy Spirit to write Scripture. They were instruments of divine revelation.

1 Cor. 2:12-13; 1 Thess. 2:13; **Matt. 10:20, 40** - the one who rejects the apostles is rejecting Christ and the Father.

I've heard people say, "I like Jesus, but I hate that apostle Paul." To reject Paul is to reject Jesus. What Paul writes is the same as if Jesus, in all his glory, were standing there proclaiming it. This is significant in terms of Paul's authority in writing this and all his epistles. 1 Pet. 3:16 calls Paul's writings "Scripture."

**Fourth**, they did extraordinary miracles (2 Cor. 12:12; Acts 2:43; 5:12-15).

**Fifth**, they were foundational for the church. This is especially seen in their writing of Scripture (Eph. 2:20).

These qualifications make this a non-repeatable office.

**C. Third, Paul states that he was set apart for the gospel of God.** Paul's conversion was purely by God's sovereign action.

Acts 26:9-11 - Paul was totally obsessed with the desire to destroy Christianity. Notice in verse 11 that he tried to force them to blaspheme. How would he do that? With threats, fear, or torture. **Illus.** - During WW II, Jewish people would carefully memorize the faces of guards and concentration camp commandants so that after the war, they would be able to track them down and bring them to justice. To a Christian, living his Palestine at this time, the face of the persecutor was Saul of Tarsus.

Acts 26:12 - Take the persecution to another region and city.

**R. C. Sproul** compared Paul to Captain Ahab in Moby Dick. Remember in that story the whale represents God and Ahab reflects man's obsession to destroy and replace God. The last lines of Ahab in the book can easily be applied to Paul's obsession to destroy the church. In "Moby Dick," Ahab expresses his obsession and hatred of the whale. In his final pronouncement before he is swept overboard he says, "Towards thee I roll, thou all-destroying but unconquering whale; to the last I grapple with thee; from hell's heart I stab at thee; for hate's sake I spit my last breath at thee." Ahab's obsession is similar to the obsession Paul had with destroying Christians before his conversion. Paul was a nemesis of Christ, a beast consumed with destroying and eradicating the name of Christ.

**Acts 26:12-18** - Here is Paul's conversion.

### **Gal. 1:13-16**

**Acts 26:19-20** - Paul was faithful. Wherever God told him to go, he went. Whatever hardship or suffering he encountered, he remained faithful. **Acts 26:22-23** - Paul said nothing more than was proclaimed in the prophets.

He also affirms that the gospel which he preached was by divine revelation. **Gal. 1:11-12** - "For I would have you know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ."

Paul's self-identification demonstrates that he is qualified, as an apostle and, therefore, vehicle of revelation, to write authoritative Scripture to the church at Rome.

An important application of this for us is the authority of Scripture. Do you ever place the words of Jesus above those of the apostles? Matt. 10:40 affirms that to reject Paul or Peter or any of the apostles is to reject Christ and his Father.

Also, if you are in Christ, you were also saved by the sovereign hand of God. Paul's conversion was dramatic, but, if you are redeemed, your salvation is no less supernatural.

You were dead in sin and God made you alive in Christ Jesus.

A new convert who gave his testimony during a church service. With a smile on his face and joy in his heart, the man related how he had been delivered from a life of sin. He gave the Lord all the glory, saying nothing about any of his own merits or what he had done to deserve the blessings of redemption. The person in charge, who was very legalistic, didn't fully appreciate the reality of salvation by grace through faith alone, apart from human works. So he responded to the man's comments by saying, "You seem to indicate that God did everything when He saved you. Didn't you do your part before God did His?" The new Christian jumped to his feet and said, "Oh, yes, I did. For more

than 30 years I ran away from God as fast as my sins could carry me. That was my part. But God took out after me and ran me down. That was His part."

If you are in Christ, you have separated to the gospel and granted faith and repentance by the sovereign power of God.

### **Rom. 1:2-4 Romans Series #2 9/28/08**

Last week we started a new sermon series on the book of Romans and looked at some introductory material about the epistle as well as Paul's authorship as an apostle. This morning we are going to continue looking at the introductory section of the book. These short verses contain important statements about the old covenant promise of the Messiah and their fulfillment in Jesus, the two natures of Christ, and the Trinity.

#### **I. The redemption Christ accomplished is the fulfillment of the old covenant promises. Rom. 1:1-2**

The Scriptures are called holy. They are from divine origin and Paul distinguishes them from all other writings in this way.

This passages shows us how Paul considered that the old and new covenants have an essential unity to them. The message of the Old Testament and the fulfillment of those promises in the New Testament form a unit. When Paul speaks of the prophets of the Old Testament, he is referring to all the prophetic promises in the Old Testament concerning the Messiah. In the Old Testament, there are over 300 messianic prophecies. Many of those are directly quoted and applied to Jesus in the New Testament.

Paul is writing exactly what Jesus proclaimed.

**Luke 24:25-27, 44-48.** Peter makes a similar statement in Acts 2:14-21 when quotes the prophet Joel and says that the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost is what Joel prophesied. **Acts 2:25-36** - Peter says that David prophesied concerning the death and resurrection of Christ.



**Acts 3:22-25** - Peter says that Moses and all the prophets from Samuel on through the Old Testament foretold the work of Christ and the coming of the Church.

**Acts 4:23-31** - The entire church is gathered and prays about the persecution they are experiencing. They quote Psalm 2 and say that it predicted the sacrifice of the Messiah.

**Acts 7:52** - Stephen proclaimed that the prophets foretold the coming of Christ.

**Acts 10:43** - Peter says that all the prophets testify about Jesus.

**Acts 13:27-41** - Paul declares that the suffering of Christ under the rulers of Jerusalem and Pilate was in fulfillment of all that had been written in the Old Testament. He then quotes David and concludes with warning the Jews that judgment for rejecting the Messiah was also prophesied.

**Acts 26:22-23** - Paul said, "I am saying nothing beyond what Moses and the prophets said would happen in regards to the Messiah. The suffering of the Messiah, his resurrection, and the proclamation of his work to both Jews and Gentiles was all prophesied in the Old Testament. This affirms an essential unity in the Scriptures concerning the plan of salvation through Christ's work. We also see this principle elaborated on later in Romans. When Paul is presenting the doctrine of justification by faith alone, he gives examples from Abraham and David (**Rom. 4:1-8**). He quotes Gen. 15:6 in regard to Abraham believing God and it being credited to him as righteousness and he quotes David's words from Psalm 32:1-2 affirming the same principle.

Paul does not present the idea that the Old Testament believers were saved in a different manner from the New Testament believers. In fact, in his use of Abraham and David, he argues that the New Testament saint is saved in exactly the same way. The same idea is found in **1 Tim. 3:15**. In this statement, Paul affirmed that the Old Testament Scriptures, which Timothy would have had from childhood, contained enough information about the work of the Messiah to lead one to salvation. Therefore, Paul affirms that the Old Testament presents the suffering Messiah as the object of faith. When Paul spoke with the Jews from Scripture, he "reasoned with them from the Scriptures" (Acts 17:2). Paul

also saw the death and resurrection of the Messiah as "the hope of Israel" (**Acts 26:6-8**). Another New Testament example of someone having an understanding of the suffering Messiah from the Old Testament prophecies is Simeon. In his *Nunc Dimitis*, in **Luke 2:29-32**, he states that the child, Jesus, will be "a light of revelation for the Gentiles" (v. 32) which is a quote from Isa. 9:2; 42:6; 49:6. The prophecy Simeon gave to Mary in Luke 2:34-35 presents the concept of the suffering Messiah. It also interesting that Martha understood that there would be a future resurrection when she was speaking with Jesus about her brother Lazarus. **John 11:23-24** This understanding would have come from the Old Testament Scriptures. The *Westminster Confession* affirms this basic unity in the message of salvation in the Scriptures. Chapter 7.5 states, "This covenant [covenant of grace] was differently administered in the time of the law, and in the time of the gospel: under law, it was administered by promises, prophecies, sacrifices, circumcision, the paschal lamb, and other types and ordinances delivered to the people of the Jews, all foreshadowing Christ to come: where were, for that time sufficient and efficacious, through the operation of the Spirit, to instruct and build up the elect in faith in the promised Messiah, by whom they had full remission of sins, and eternal salvation; and is called the Old Testament." **Chapter 7.6** further elaborates on this: "Although the work of redemption was not actually wrought by Christ till after His incarnation, yet the virtue, efficacy, and benefits thereof were communicated unto the elect in all ages successively from the beginning of the world, in and by those promises, types, and sacrifices wherein he was revealed, and signified to be the seed of the woman which should bruise the serpent's head; and the Lamb slain from the beginning of the world: being yesterday and today the same, and for ever." This is in keeping with Paul citing that Abraham and David were justified by faith alone and with the idea that the Old Testament Scriptures were sufficient for Timothy's salvation. It is also in keeping with Heb. 11 in which the Old Testament saints were believing in the Messiah. For example, Moses looked toward Christ. **Heb. 11:24-26** **John Murray**, in his commentary on

Romans affirms this and writes, "When Paul says, 'promised before' he does not mean to suggest that the disclosures given of old pertained exclusively to that which would be fulfilled and become effective in the fullness of time. The supposition would be inconsistent with what we shall find later on, especially in [Romans] chapter 4. The gospel was efficacious for those who received it in the form of promise" (4). One passage that is sometimes used to argue that the Old Testament believers were not justified by their faith in the Messiah is 1 Pet. 1:10-12. Some translations, including the NASB and ESV, mistranslate this passage. The Greek does not have the term "person" in it. It only speaks of what kind of circumstances or time in which the Messiah will come.

Robert Reymond comments that these translations "offer a terribly misleading translation here by the 'what person or time.' Peter's 'or' is not disjunctive as if two contrasting questions are referred to but conjunctive, that is only one question concerned them, the question of time, which could be asked either way: 'In what sort of or what kind of time period do his sufferings occur?'" The Greek simply says "what sort of or what kind of time." NIV translates the Greek correctly with "trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the suffering of Christ and the glories which would follow. This is consistent with Jesus statement in Luke 24:25 to the two on the road to Emmaus that they should have understood the suffering of the Messiah from the Old Testament prophecies. Paul is stating in Rom. 1:2 that the gospel of God for which he is set apart and called as an apostle was promised through the Old Testament. This affirms the unity of the plan of salvation throughout redemptive history.

## **II. The redemption Christ accomplished is in keeping with the two natures of Christ. Rom. 1:3-4**

These two verses present the humanity and deity of Christ. First, we see his humanity. He was born a descendant of David according to the flesh. The classic statement concerning the two natures of Christ comes from the council of Chalcedon in A. D. 451

which states that Christ was one person with two natures, the human and the divine natures. It also affirms that the two natures were without confusion, change, division, or separation. The same idea is carried forward in most Christian confessions and statements of faith after Chalcedon. Down through church history, when people shift or depart from that definition, they end up in one of the various Christological heresies that were present before that council. **Rom. 1:2** is an important verse concerning the human nature of Christ. He was born of the lineage of David. This affirms his true humanity. His human nature is of that specific genealogy and genetic makeup. **Rom. 9:5; 2 Tim. 2:8** affirms the same lineage. In terms of the Scriptural support for the true humanity of Christ, there are numerous passages which show it. Matt. 1 and Luke 3 both give his human ancestry. His historicity is affirmed in the gospel accounts. He was born at the time of Caesar Augustus when Quirinius was a military governor of Syria. He began his ministry in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea and Herod was tetrarch of Galilee. Annas and Caiaphas were in the high priesthood (Luke 3:1-2). He was born of a woman (Gal. 4:4). The virgin birth also affirms his true humanity. 1 John 1:1f; 4:1f. Human needs are attributed to him. After a journey, he was tired, and sat down by a well and asked for water in Samaria (John 4). He slept through a storm on the sea (Mark 4:37-38). He spit on the ground and made mud with his saliva (John 9:6). He wept over Lazarus's death (John 11:35). He deeply moved within himself about the death that brought such sorrow (John 11:33, 38). A crown of thorns was pressed on his head (John 19:2) and he was struck in the face (John 19:3). He bled when he was crucified and blood and water flowed from his side when the spear was thrust into his side (John 19:34). He was thirsty on the cross (John 19:28). After the resurrection, on two occasions he showed his disciples his wounds (John 20:20, 27). He ate with his disciples on more than one occasion after his resurrection. **Heb. 2:14, 17** - He was made like his brethren in all things. It was man who sinned and, in his work of redemption, he suffered as a true human being. He was truly human, yet without

the imputation of Adam's sin. **Charles Spurgeon said**, "Infinite, and an infant. Eternal, and yet born of a woman. Almighty, and yet hanging on a woman's breast. Supporting a universe, and yet needing to be carried in a mother's arms. King of angels, and yet the reputed son of Joseph. Heir of all things, and yet the carpenter's despised son." **He also said**, "He is not humanity deified. He is not Godhead humanized. He is God. He is man. He is all that God is, and all that man is as God created him." **Susan E. Fair captured this in a poem:** What child is this, who laid to rest, on Mary's lap is sleeping? He is a baby. . . a baby who cries when he is hungry and stares in amazement every time he finds his toes./ He is a Child. . . a child who skins his knees and plays tag with other children./ He is a young man. . . a young man who works hard at learning and thinks about his plans for the future./ He is a man. . . a man who enjoys telling a good story and spending time with people he loves./ He is God. . . the God who chose to come and walk a solitary road that led him to a waiting cross./ What child is This? He is our Savior. **We also see his deity in Rom. 1:3.** In Paul's epistles, he set forth the highest concept of the divinity of Christ. We see this in Rom. 9:5; Col. 1:19; 2:9. Since this is the first time he uses the title "Son" in his epistle, we should consider the highest connotations associated with it. He is the eternal God, the Son. He was declared or appointed the Son of God with power at his resurrection. This has a reference to his messianic Lordship in the plan of salvation. It does not mean that he began to be the Son of God at his resurrection, but that he entered into a new aspect of his messianic mission. This is similar to Jesus' statement in Matt. 28:18: "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth." That is in reference to his victory over death and his messianic rule. Peter refers to this in **Acts 2:32-36.** So, we have his deity set forth as well as his glorious messianic reign. **John Murray comments**, "By his resurrection and ascension the Son of God incarnate entered upon a new phase of sovereignty and was endowed with new power correspondent with and unto the exercise of the mediatorial lordship which he executes as

head over all things to his body, the church" (11). This is connected with the power and

work of the Holy Spirit. **Rom. 8:11**

We also see the Trinity in this passage. Rom. 1:1 - "gospel of God (Father). Rom. 1:3 - "Concerning his Son." Rom. 1:4 - "Spirit of holiness" or Holy Spirit. What does all this mean for us? It means that our salvation was accomplished by the Divine-human Messiah who met all the demands of sin. It was man who sinned and justice demanded a human payment. Sin has an infinite disvalue before an infinitely holy God and the Jesus, as divine met all the demands of the infinite disvalue of sin before God. This gives us a foundation for assurance as we live the Christian life. **In Shakespeare's play *MacBeth*** the satanic prophecy was given to MacBeth that "no man born of a woman will conquer you." That prophecy inspires MacBeth to fight even the dreaded MacDuff. In the heat of the battle MacBeth taunts MacDuff with the prophecy and confidently wields his sword because of it. But, then the battle turns when MacDuff informs MacBeth that he was, technically speaking, born of a woman since he was torn from his mother in her death. As soon as MacBeth hears those words, his strength leaves him and he is immediately taken in battle. Many Christians live defeated lives, not because they are failing to follow spiritual steps, but because they do not have the confidence that no one, not even Satan, can "lay a charge against God's elect" (Rom. 8:32). In the heat of battle, the strength we have to keep going comes from knowing that our Commander has already determined the outcome of the war by His victory. His resurrection and ascension guarantees that even when we have serious battles, they will not ultimately defeat us. Christ's person and work give us the assurance of our salvation, of being confident that we belong to God, and that nothing reaches me that does not first go through the hand of God.

**Rom. 1:5-7 Romans Series #3 10/19/08**

Before my Ukraine trip, we started a new series through the book of Romans. We've examined Paul's apostleship and his opening statements. Paul made the point that Christ was promised in the Scriptures of the Old Testament. That the suffering Messiah was not a promise or idea that was unknown to the Old Testament believers. In fact, those Old Testament saints were saved the same way we are through faith in the Messiah. We noted that Paul uses Abraham and David as his main examples of how a person is justified by faith alone in Rom. 4. We also see in these opening verses the two natures of Christ - his human and divine natures as well as the Trinity. God, the Father sends his Son. The Holy Spirit is active in the resurrection of Christ (Rom. 8:11). This morning we are going to consider the next section in the introduction. Rom. 1:5 - Paul mentions that he received grace and apostleship. It is possible to translate this as the grace of apostleship, but I think it is better in keeping with Paul's thought to see it as grace and apostleship. This fits Paul's statement in 1 Cor. 15:10 - "I am what I am by the grace of God. . . ." I just want to make an introductory comment about the phrase "obedience of faith." Some in the Federal Vision perspective have used that phrase to argue that faith is a work and then extend that to say that obedience or works is an instrumental cause of our justification. **Robert Reymond** notes that the genitive should be construed as either a genitive of source and rendered 'obedience that flows from faith' or as an appositional genitive meaning 'obedience that consists of faith.'" The NIV translates it "the obedience that comes from faith." That is capturing the Scriptural idea that true saving faith will produce an obedience to God. That is the genitive of source. The appositional genitive

"obedience that consists of faith" reflects another Scriptural idea that obedience is an obedience in which faith is the controlling principle. That is the more common usage of this construction in the New Testament.

In this section, Paul introduces an important concept which he will elaborate on more fully in Romans 8, the idea of effectual calling. Paul describes the Christians at Rome as saints who have been called by God. This idea of calling emphasizes the divine initiative in our salvation.

**I. Fallen man, in order to be redeemed, must be effectually called by God. Rom.**

**1:6-7** The reason Paul describes Christians as those who have been called in these two verses is because if anyone is a Christian, it is because they have been called by God. When we think of calling in terms of salvation, there are two aspects that are usually considered. First, there is the general call of the gospel. That's the proclamation of the gospel in some form such as a sermon, a gospel tract, or personal witness. It is the basic communication of the gospel content. Second, there is the effectual call of God which works with the general call of the gospel and makes it effective. **William Hendriksen defines it like this:** "By this inner or effective call is meant that operation of the Holy Spirit whereby he so applies the gospel to the minds and hearts of sinners that they become aware of their guilt, begin to understand their need of Jesus Christ, and embrace him as their Lord and Savior" (Romans, 47). The theological backdrop to this is the biblical concept of the nature of man's sin. The Bible teaches that sin permeates every aspect of man's heart and makes him incapable of coming to Christ apart from God's intervention and grace. **Rom. 3:9-12; 8:7-8; 1 Cor. 2:14; 12:3; John 6:44-45; 6:3-5;** - Can't see or enter kingdom. Arminian theology holds that sin does not effect every aspect of man's heart, but that some little portion of his heart is able to make take the first step in salvation. However, all of these Scriptures hammer the point that man does not have the moral ability to come to Christ apart from divine grace. **R. C. Sproul said,** "What you have in Arminianism is a man who is dead in sin, in bondage to sin by nature a child of wrath, who is altogether flesh, who hears the gospel preached and in his flesh and by his flesh and in his state of spiritual death, in which he is fleeing from the presence of God, turns around and chooses Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior and then is born again. Before he is born again, he sees the kingdom of God, he enters the kingdom of God, he chooses the kingdom of God. All of which Jesus said is impossible. Unless a man is born of the Spirit, he cannot see the Kingdom of God." **John Gerstner said,** "Alongside getting faith out of a heart that is utterly hostile and unbelieving, making a silk purse out a sow's ear or getting blood from a turnip is child's play" Paul speaks of both aspects of this calling in **1 Cor. 1:21-24, 30-31**. Another passage which summarizes these points is **Eph. 2:1-5**. Man is described as dead in sin and by nature a child of wrath. Notice in verse 4 who acts first. **J. Gresham Machen said,** "Man, according to the Bible, is not merely sick in trespasses and sins; he is not merely in a weakened condition so that he needs divine help: but he is dead in trespasses and sins. He can do absolutely nothing to save himself. . . ."

**George Whitfield** compared our spiritual resurrection to Christ's raising of Lazarus:

"Come, ye dead, Christless, unconverted sinners, come and see the place where they lay the body of the deceased Lazarus; behold him laid out, bound hand and foot with

grave-clothes, locked up and stinking in a dark cave, with a great stone placed on top of it. View him again and again; go nearer to him; be not afraid; smell him. Ah! how he stinketh. . . . Was he bound hand and foot in grave-clothes? So art thou bound hand and foot with thy corruptions: and as a stone was laid on the sepulchre, so is there a stone of unbelief upon thy stupid heart. Perhaps thou hast lain in this state, not only four days, but many years, stinking in God's nostrils. And, what is still more effecting, thou art as unable to raise thyself out of this loathsome, dead state, to a life of righteousness as true holiness, as ever Lazarus was to raise himself from the cave in which he lay so long. Thou mayest try the power of thy own boasted free-will, and the force and energy of moral persuasion and rational arguments (which, without all doubt, have their proper place in religion); but all thy efforts, exerted with never so much vigor, will prove fruitless and abortive, till that same Jesus, who said, 'Take away the stone,' and cried, 'Lazarus, come forth,' also quicken you." **1 Pet. 1:3-5**

Paul speaks of an effectual call in Rom. 8:30 - Notice that all who are called are justified. Every person who is called is justified and ultimately is glorified. Therefore, this call is a call that brings a person to saving faith in Christ. This gives us confidence in evangelism. It is our duty to make the gospel known, but we can't make anyone believe. However, as we make it known, God will save his elect. While we try to present the content of the gospel in a lucid and clear manner, even when we don't have an answer to every argument or present the gospel in the clearest possible manner, the Holy Spirit can use that and bring someone to salvation. **Charles Spurgeon said,** "I take it that the highest proof of Christ's power is not that he offers salvation, not that he bids you take it if you will, but that when you reject it, when you hate it, when you despise it, he has a power whereby he can change your mind, make you think differently from your former thoughts, and turn you from the error of your ways." **He also said,** "I do not come into this pulpit hoping that perhaps somebody will of his own free will return to Christ. My hope lies in another quarter. I hope that my Master will lay hold of some of them and



say, 'You are mine, and you shall be mine. I claim you for myself.' My hope arises from the freeness of grace, and not from the freedom of the will. A poor haul of fish will any gospel fisherman make if he takes none but those who are eager to leap into the net. Oh, for five minutes of the great Shepherd's handiwork!"

## **2 Tim. 1:9**

### **II. This effectual call is based on the eternal purpose in election. Rom. 1:7**

The expression "beloved of God" has a particular meaning in the book of Romans.

**William Hendriksen comments**, ". . . a study of the book of Romans in its entirety reveals that for Paul these words indicate not only that God *now* loves the believers in Rome but also that he had loved them from all eternity (cf. Jer. 31:3), and would never stop loving them (Rom. 8:31-39). One example of this is found in **Rom. 8:29**. We will look at this in more detail in a future sermon on that text, but the idea of foreknowledge is not just a bare foreknowing of someone. **John Murray writes on Rom. 8:29**: "Many times in Scripture 'know' has a pregnant meaning which goes beyond that of mere cognition. It is used in a sense practically synonymous with 'love,' to set regard upon, to know with peculiar interest, delight, affection, and action. . . . There is no reason why this import of the word 'know' should not be applied to 'foreknow' in this passage. . . . (317). This is exactly in keeping with **Eph. 1:4-5. Jer. 31:3;**

**2 Tim. 1:9** - If you are in Christ now, it is because God has effectually called you to himself. He has raised you from spiritual death to life; he has caused you to be born again; he has granted you faith and repentance, and effectually drawn you to himself. This is all in keeping with his eternal love for you. God's attribute of omniscience means that God knows all things for all eternity. It means that he doesn't come to knowledge through learning something or through going through some experience. Everything there is to know, including all future events, he knows perfectly and always. That includes not only events, but his knowledge of all people. The Scriptures we just read declare that God has set his love on his elect from all eternity. If you are in Christ now, then you

know that God has loved you forever. There has never been a time in all eternity when you were not known to God and loved by him. In all eternity to come, you will always be an object of God's special and specific love. **Jonathan Edwards said,** "How great a happiness must it be to be the object of the love of him who is the Creator of the world, and by whom all things consist, and who is exalted at God's right hand, and made head over principalities and powers in heavenly places, who has all things put under his feet, and is King of kings and Lord of lords, and is the brightness of the Father's glory! Surely to be beloved by Him, is enough to satisfy the soul. . . ." **John Owen, the great Puritan writer, said,** "We are never nearer to Christ than when we find ourselves lost in a holy amazement at His unspeakable love." What does this mean for us? It means that, if you are in Christ, your salvation has been determined by God from all eternity.

It means that your salvation is as sure as the eternal plan and power of God. Since no purpose of God can be thwarted, then nothing can separate you from the love of God in Christ. This gives us assurance of salvation and a confidence in our relationship with God through Christ. **Rom. 8:35-39**

After two years of trying to get rid of an adopted son they considered a trouble-maker, a Miami couple finally convinced a judge to cancel their adoption. The Associated Press reported on May 11, 1982 that the couple had tried to improve their adopted son's behavior for five years before finally giving up. Apparently they felt they had made a mistake in adopting him. But their son was described by a social worker as "intelligent, cooperative, communicative, and motivated to go to college." That's tragic - but just as tragic is the number of believers who fear that God will disown them the moment they step out of line. Sometimes Christians who had a poor relationship with their parents find it hard to believe that God has accepted them in Christ - but God does! That's what the Bible teaches!

This idea of effectual calling means that it is God's doing that we are in Christ. This emphasizes that our salvation is completely of God's mercy and God receives all the

glory for our salvation. This also gives us an assurance of God's love toward us forever.

### **1 John 4:10**

**Robert Murray McCheyne** wrote a hymn that captures this well:

When this passing world is done/ when has sunk yon glaring sun,/ looking o'er life's  
finished story,-/ Then, Lord, shall I fully know,/ not till then, how much I owe.

When I hear the wicked call/ on the rocks and hills to fall,/ When I see them start and  
shrink/ on the fiery deluge brink, -/ Then, Lord, shall I fully know, not till then, how  
much I owe.

When I stand before the throne,/ dressed in beauty not my own,/ When I see thee as thou  
art,/ love thee with unsinning heart, -/ Then, Lord, shall I fully know, not till then, how  
much I owe.

When the praise of heav'n I hear,/ loud as thunders to the ear,/ loud as many waters'  
noise, sweet as harp's melodious voice, -/ Then, Lord, shall I fully know,/ not till then,  
how much I owe.

Chosen not for good in me,/ wakened up from wrath to flee,/ Hidden in the Saviour's  
side,/ by the Spirit sanctified, -/

Teach me, Lord, on earth to show,/ by my love, how much I owe.

Rom. 1:8-17 Romans Series #4 10/26/08

It is appropriate that we looking at this section of Scripture on this Sunday because we are coming up to Oct. 31st. That date is an extremely significant date in church history. As you are probably aware, that is the day that Martin Luther in 1517 nailed the 95 Thesis on the Wittenberg Castle Church door. That was not an act of defiance. Issues for debate were often nailed to the church door. However, the hammer blows that sounded that day are still reverberating throughout the world. Luther invited the Wittenberg University students and faculty to a public debate regarding the university's position on the sale of letters of indulgence. Simply stated, an indulgence was a way in which a person could purchase merit before God, the idea being that one could ultimately gain

enough merit before God to enter heaven. Luther's invitation to debate was followed by 95 points in which Luther challenged the practice of selling indulgences and set forth the New Testament message that salvation only comes through faith in Christ. Luther's timing was perfect. He posted his challenge to the existing Roman Catholic practices and doctrines concerning indulgences on the eve of All Saints Day (Halloween). The Castle Church at Wittenberg housed 18,000 sacred relics and was visited each year by thousands of pilgrims on the Day of All Saints. They endured the expense and hardship of travel in order to pray before these so-called special relics and earn many years worth of indulgence before God - 1,902,202 days to be exact.

However, on November 1, 1517, as pilgrims from far and near entered the Castle Church, they read the 95 Thesis which were questioning the very fundamental purpose of their pilgrimage. Luther's 95 Thesis, in accordance with the teaching of the Bible said that forgiveness is free through faith in Christ and that viewing religious relics had nothing to do with salvation. Within one month all of Europe knew of the thesis' content and there was intense interest in the outcome of the debate.

Historically, this event touched of the greatest revival in the history of the church. After giving some introductory statements concerning God's providence in the gospel, Paul introduces the topic of justification in the book of Romans. This morning, we are going to first look at some important points in this opening greeting and then consider Paul's introduction to justification in Rom. 1:16-17.

## **I. The proclamation of the gospel is under God's providential control. Rom. 1:8**

### **A. Through God's providence, the gospel had reached a group of people in Rome.**

We don't know exactly how the gospel came to these people. We know there was a great deal of travel in the Roman Empire which could have brought the message of the gospel in the capital city of the empire. We do have a reference in **Acts 2:10** that on the day of Pentecost, visitors from Rome were present. Some of these people might have come to Christ and brought the message back to Rome. However the gospel came to that city, the

Holy Spirit had empowered the message of the gospel and brought a group of Jews and Gentiles to salvation. This was a point of encouragement for the early Christians as they heard about believers in the capital city of the empire. **Francis Schaeffer said**, "It just have been a great encouragement as word came back that in Rome, the capital of the world, there was a faithful church of Jews and Gentiles" (20).

There is an important phrase that I don't want us to miss in Paul's statement in Rom. 1:8. He says that he thanks God "through Jesus Christ." **Charles Hodge** comments on this phrase, "This form of expression supposes the mediation of Christ, by whom alone we have access to the Father, and for whose sake alone either our prayers or our praises are accepted" (24).

**R. C. Sproul wrote**, "A few years ago, a prominent Baptist preacher and college president got into trouble when he commented that God does not hear the prayers of Jewish and Muslim people. His remark provoked an outrage. I would never say that God does not 'hear' the prayers of Jewish and Muslim people. He hears them, and that is to their great disadvantage. The Scriptures make it clear that unless they pray through the one Mediator, then God abhors their prayers of unbelief. In a sense, the prayers are insulting to God. That is why he used such strong language when he said through the prophet Amos: 'I hate, I despise your feast days, and I do not savor your sacred assemblies' (Amos 5:21). God is not happy with worship that is not sincere and not according to his requirements. When empty ritual is offered, God will not accept it. That is the teaching of the prophets. See WC 21.3 *Truths We Confess*, vol. 2, 318-319. **1 Tim. 2:5** **D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones said**, "A central message of the New Testament is that there is no possibility of prayer, or of entry into the presence of God, except in and through and by our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." *The Unsearchable Riches of Christ*, 98. The main point I want to emphasize, however, is that we see God's providence in the gospel initially coming to Rome.

**B. Paul acknowledges that God's providence orders and controls all his missionary activities. Rom. 1:9-10, 13**

Paul expresses an understanding that it is by God's will that he would be able to come to them. The Latin phrase *Deo Volente* (God willing) is not an empty phrase to Paul.

Earlier in Paul's missionary work, we see God's providence in directing his steps.

**Acts 16:6-10; 18:21.** Paul regularly acknowledges this is life and mission are under the sovereignty of God. **Rom. 15:31-32;**

**1 Cor. 4:19; 16:7** Whether it is the direction of our lives and activities or other issues we face in life, like Paul, we have to acknowledge that God's providence orders our lives.

Even when we don't understand a particular direction or something we experience that is difficult, we have to trust God's wisdom and plan. One commentator said it this way:

"Trust his character even when you can't trace his plan." (Woodrow Kroll)

**C. Finally, in this introductory section, we see Paul's desire to encourage them.** The reason is because he is under obligation to all people groups and classes of people. **Rom. 1:10-12, 14-15**

Paul is probably not thinking of extraordinary spiritual gifts, but the idea of general encouragement and strengthening in the faith. The indefinite character of Paul's expression points toward a gift of grace of a more generic character. Paul also mentions a mutual encouragement of both them and himself.

Rom. 1:13b-15 emphasizes Paul's mission to make the gospel known among all the Gentiles. This phrase indicates Paul's desire to preach the gospel to all nations and all classes. John Murray notes, "The purpose of these classifications is simply that the gospel is for all without distinction of nationality or cultural development and that he as an apostle to the Gentiles is under divine obligation to preach the gospel to all" (25). As believers, we are encouraged by each other's faith. I certainly see that when I travel to Ukraine. The students there are so hungry for teaching and learning the Word of God and there is a mutual encouragement in the faith. This also emphasizes our obligation to

make the gospel known both in our immediate world and to think beyond ourselves toward the world and missions.

Just like at the time of Paul, God providentially orders the proclamation of the gospel throughout the world in order to gather his elect. This brings us to the heart of the message of this book in Rom. 1:16-17.

## **II. The gospel is the power of God for salvation.**

**Rom. 1:16** - Paul gives the reason for his determination to preach the gospel to all types of people. It is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believes. Paul expresses this in a negative manner - he is not ashamed of the gospel. Remember the contempt that the philosophical and secular world of that time had for the gospel. There is a progression of thought in this section. First, Paul says he is ready to preach the gospel at Rome and he is not ashamed of the gospel. Then he tells us why he is not ashamed of it because it is the power of God for salvation. Finally, Paul states why it is the power of God for salvation - the righteousness of God is revealed in it.

An important point on this is that the "gospel," the message of salvation through faith in Christ, is the power of God for salvation. **1 Cor. 1:21** Today, in the marketing and emergent church movements, there is a downplaying of preaching. In fact, preaching is often said to be out of date and should not be a part of church life and worship. **Robert Reymond writes**, "The problem in our day, which gives rise to highly questionable church growth methods, is two-fold: On the one hand, we are seeing a waning confidence in the message of the gospel. Even the evangelical church shows signs of losing confidence in the convincing and converting power of the gospel message. That is why increasing numbers of churches prefer sermons on family life and psychological health. We are being overtaken by what Os Guinness calls the managerial and therapeutic revolutions. The winning message, it seems, is the one that helps people to solve their temporal problems, improves their self-esteem and makes them feel good about themselves. In such a cultural climate, preaching on law, sin and repentance, and

the cross has all but disappeared, even in evangelical churches. The church has become 'user friendly,' 'consumer oriented,' and as a result evangelical churches are being inundated with 'cheap grace' (Bonhoeffer). Today's 'gospel' is without discipleship, and thus 'another gospel' and accordingly no gospel at all, all traceable to the fact that this is how too many people today have come to believe that the church must be grown.

On the other hand, we are seeing a waning confidence in preaching as the means by which the gospel is to be spread. As a result, preaching is giving way in evangelical churches to multimedia presentations, drama, dance, 'sharing times,' sermonettes, and 'how to' devotionals. Preaching is being viewed as outdated and ineffective. . . . And once a person joins such a church, conventional wisdom has it, the church and the minister must meet his every felt need. Accordingly, ministers have become managers, facilitators, and motivators - everything but heralds of the whole council of God - and this all because they have lost confidence in the preaching of God's Word as the primary means for the growth of the church and the individual Christian."

*A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith*, 882-883.

Like Paul, we should have a confidence in the proclamation of the gospel because it is the power of God to salvation. God uses the external proclamation of the gospel to effectually call people to himself in salvation. **Martin Luther said**, "The godly rejoice when the Gospel is widely spread."

### **III. The gospel is the way in which we are justified before God.**

**Rom. 1:17** - The reason why the gospel is the power of God to salvation is because in it is revealed the righteousness of God.

The idea of salvation and the revelation of the righteousness of God are concepts that are often linked together in the Old Testament. **Psa. 98:1-2; Isa. 46:13; 51:5-8; 56:1; 61:10-11**

These passages set forth the idea that God's righteousness would be revealed with saving effect. Paul, in using this type of terminology, means that the righteousness of God is



actively being brought to bear on man's sinful condition resulting in salvation. When we speak of "righteousness" in this context, we need to observe that this is a righteousness that comes from faith to faith, from the beginning and end by faith. The instrumentality of faith is prominent in this statement. The phrase, "from faith to faith" sets for the same ideas as the phrase in verse 16, "to everyone that believes." This salvation is received by faith alone. In 1563, a German theology professor, Zacharias Ursinus, formulated his personal faith in Answer 21 of the Heidelberg Catechism: True faith - created in me by the Holy Spirit through the gospel - is not only a knowledge and conviction that everything that God reveals in his Word is true, but also a deep-rooted assurance that not only others, but I too, have had my sins forgiven, have been made forever right with God, and have been granted salvation. These are gifts of sheer grace earned for us by Christ." The righteousness mentioned in this context is a righteousness to salvation. It is referring to an imputed righteousness that brings salvation. **Rom. 3:21-22; Phil. 3:9; 2 Cor. 5:21** The quote from Hab. 2:4 supports this idea. The Hebrew Masoretic accentuation connects the first two words together, "The righteous in his faith shall live." Charles Hodge comments that the "shall live" means, ". . . shall attain that life which Christ gives which is spiritual, blessed, and everlasting."

Therefore, this passage sets forth, in succinct form the idea that we are saved through faith and in that salvation, a righteousness from God is imputed to us. The doctrine of justification by faith alone has been under attack in recent years through the New Perspectives on Paul and the Federal Vision theology. **John Murray writes**, "If there is one thing the church needs today it is the republication with faith and passion for the presuppositions of the doctrine of justification and the reapplication of this, the article of a standing or falling church." *Collected Writings*, Vol. II, 203.

It is crucial for the health of the church and the preservation of the gospel that we proclaim strongly and clearly that we are justified by faith in Christ alone and not by works in any degree. In his reply to Cardinal Sadoletto, Calvin wrote: "You, in the first

place, touch upon justification by faith, the first and keenest subject of controversy between us. Is this a knotty and useless question? Wherever the knowledge of it is taken away, the glory of Christ is extinguished, religion abolished, the church destroyed, and the hope of salvation utterly overthrown. That doctrine, then, though of the highest moment, we maintain that you have nefariously effaced from the memory of men." In 1662, David Dickson lay on his deathbed. He was a Presbyterian minister of the Church of Scotland who wrote a wonderful commentary on Psalms. He was a professor of divinity in Glasgow University and later in Edinburgh University. But at the end of his life at the age of seventy-nine, when he was visited by his friend, John Livingstone, it was not those things to which he was looking. No, this is what he said, "I have taken all my good deeds and all my bad deeds, and cast them through each other in a heap before the Lord, and fled from both, and betaken myself to the Lord Jesus Christ, and in Him I have sweet peace." (From: A Commentary on the Psalms [reprint, Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1959], xxiii.).

**John Carrick comments on this:** "My good friends, have you done that? Have you taken all your good deeds and all your bad deeds, and have you cast them through each other in a heap before the Lord and fled from both, and betaken yourself to the Lord Jesus Christ, and in Him do you have sweet peace?" (From "The Covenant," p. 144-145)

Rom. 1:18-25 Romans Series #5 10/26/08

Last week in our sermon series through Romans, we observed that Paul introduced the key theme of this epistle in Rom. 1:16-17, the idea of justification by faith alone. He's going to come back to that theme, but in the next section in Romans, he sets forth one of the stronger indictments against man's sin in the Bible. From Rom. 1:18 - 3:20, Paul develops the theme of man's sin, repression of the knowledge of God, idolatry, violation of God's law both the external revealed law of God and the law written on the heart, and fallen man's universal hostility toward God. Our text this morning also introduces the concept of the wrath of God in the book of Romans. Paul develops this in the book and

applies it directly to Christ's work of propitiation on the cross. I have found this section in Romans to be one of the texts that the more I study it and contemplate it, the more profound it appears. This is an amazing assessment of the nature of man's sin and hostility toward God and, as you would expect, fits perfectly the reality of what we see in our own culture and around the world in terms of the repression of God and subsequent idolatry. It also speaks strongly to the Christian that every concept and understanding we have of God must come from Scripture and not our own speculation.

**I. The wrath of God is revealed against fallen man and his repression of the knowledge of God. Rom. 1:18-20**

When Paul begins his exposition of man's fallen condition, he introduces the crucial concept of the wrath of God. The idea of the justice and wrath of God is not where most gospel presentations begin today. However, Paul sets this forth as the beginning of his discussion of man's sin and need before God.

The word "For" at the beginning of verse 18 should not be left untranslated. There is a strong connection between verses 16-17 and verse 18. There is a great need of this gospel in which the righteousness of God is revealed because the wrath of God against man's sin is also revealed. **D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones said,** "Why is he [Paul] ready to preach the gospel in Rome or anywhere else? He does not say it is because he knows that many of them are living defeated lives and that he has got something to tell them that will give them victory. He does not say to them, 'I want to come and preach the gospel to you in Rome because I have had a marvelous experience and I want to tell you about it, in order that you may have the same experience - because you can if you want it; it is there for you.' This is not what Paul does. . . . There is no mention here of any experience. He is not talking in terms of their happiness or some particular state of mind, or something that might appeal to them, as certain possibilities do - but this staggering, amazing thing, the wrath of God! And he puts it first; it is the first thing he says at once."

**Robert Reymond writes that** ". . . the idea of the wrath of God is stubbornly rooted in the Old Testament, where it is referred to 585 times' by no less than twenty different Hebrew words that underscore God's indignation against human sin and evil.

The matter is no different in the New Testament. . . . In the section leading up to Romans 3:25, namely Romans 1:18-3:20, Paul argues not only for the case of universal human sin but also directly refers to God's wrath in 1:18; 2:5, 8; and 3:5. Because divine wrath occupies such an important place in the argument leading up to the usage of this verb in Romans 3:25 on is justified in looking for some expression indicative of its cancellation in the process that accomplishes salvation.

*The Lamb of God*, 96.

If someone wonders why they need Christ, the answer is that they need to be saved from the justice and wrath of God against their sin. Paul says that the reason you need salvation, if you are outside of Christ, is because you are under the wrath of God.

**William Hendriksen** gives a good definition of the wrath of God. He states that, "God's wrath is his settled indignation" (67).

#### **A. Fallen man has a basic knowledge of the existence of God.**

##### **Rom. 1:19-21a**

Rom. 1:19 states that God has made himself known to every person.

Rom. 1:20 states that the witness of God in creation bears witness to his existence and leaves everyone without excuse. This does not mean that lost people have a detailed understanding of the attributes of God from the witness of creation, but they have enough understanding of God's existence to leave them without excuse. The Belgic Confession, Article 2, in commenting on Rom. 1:20 says that we know God by two means: "First, by the creation, preservation, and government of the universe, since that universe is before our eyes like a beautiful book in which all creatures, great and small, are as letters to make us ponder the invisible things of God: his eternal power and his divinity, as the

apostle Paul says in Romans 1:20. All these things are enough to convict men and to leave them without excuse."

The second means is the Word of God.

**B. Whatever knowledge of God that fallen man has from the witness of creation he hates and suppresses. Rom. 1:18**

People tend to suppress things that they don't like or things that make them uncomfortable. Years ago a rich Chinese man came home from England with a microscope he had bought. One day he looked at a tiny bit of his dinner rice under the microscope. To his horror, he saw tiny living creatures crawling all over it. He loved rice, but a part of his religion was that he was not to eat any living thing. So what did he do? He smashed the microscope! Sound foolish? It is no more foolish than the person who rejects whatever witness of God he has from creation or the person who rejects the Bible when he doesn't like some of the things the Bible reveals.

Not only does fallen man suppress the truth of God, but he has an animosity toward the true and living God. **R. C. Sproul said** that he was asked to speak at a college where a group was present who had joined together in a club that was called The Atheists' Club. He was invited by The Atheists' Club at this particular college to give the case for the existence of God, to do a little exercise in apologetics and to give evidence for the existence of God. He did all of that as they had asked him to do, but said at the end, 'Let me say to you that I am willing and open to discuss all of these arguments with you. You can press me on their cogency and give all the response that you want, but let me tell you, just so I lay it on the table, what I really think is the problem here. I think the real problem here is what we are dealing with is not, in the final analysis, an intellectual problem; it's a moral one. I don't think that the reason you deny the existence of God is because you've had insufficient evidence to come to a reasonable conclusion that God exists. I think your problem is that you hate God and it's going to take more than this intellectual discussion to get you past that, but I'm willing to look at the intellectual

questions all you want. But, I want you to know where I'm coming from; I'm standing here convinced that your problem is moral and you hate God because he stands as the ultimate barrier to your will and your pleasure.

He said, "I was surprised how many of them stayed to carry on the conversation. There were a few that got up in absolute fury and stormed out of the room. He concluded, "The whole drama of the Scripture is based on the assumption and presupposition that you are estranged from God; that you are God's avowed enemy; that you will do anything in your power to avoid collaborating with him or willingly giving your service to him because you are against him, you are opposed to him. I only say that, not because I know your personal history or know anything about you other than that you're human and that what the Scriptures reveal about our human character is that we are people who are by nature at war. That's why the heart of the message of Christianity is a message of peace; it is a message of bringing ultimately peace with God."

**John 3:19** is a good commentary on Rom. 1:18.

**C. Fallen man is without excuse. Rom. 1:20**

Notice that universally all men are under that wrath of God and are without excuse.

Numerous times through the years I received a pastoral question about the state of those who never hear the gospel. Obviously, down through history there have been those who had died without ever having the opportunity to hear about Jesus. We are certainly commanded in Scripture to take the gospel to the world and make it known. The question is, "What happens to those people?" In his *Objections Answered* series, R. C. Sproul gave a good introduction to this question. He said, "The innocent native in Africa who has never heard the gospel doesn't need the gospel, but simply goes to heaven without Christ." He then quickly interjected, "Before you accuse me of being a heretic, notice exactly what I said, 'The innocent native.' Are there any innocent natives or people anywhere? No there aren't. Everyone has Adam's sin imputed to them and everyone personally sins. When we deal with this question, we need to affirm that God when God

judges people who have never heard of Jesus, they are not under the wrath of God for rejecting Christ. They couldn't be when they never heard of him. They are under the wrath of God for rejecting the Father, a knowledge of which they have from the witness of creation. They might not know details about the nature of God, but they know he exists and universally, every fallen person in this world, outside of Christ, rejects God and creates idols. They are without excuse. God will render a perfect judgment based on whatever opportunities they might have had or not had, but they are all under the wrath of God because of their rejection of God and idolatry. This leads us to the next point in this text.

## **II. The wrath of God is revealed against fallen man's idolatry.**

### **Rom. 1:21-25**

Notice the progression in this passage. God's wrath is revealed against fallen man's suppression of the knowledge of God. Man knows there is a God, represses that knowledge, does not give thanks for glorify God, and then exchanges the knowledge of the true God for some kind of idol. The idol could be various images of created things made out of wood, stone, or precious metals

(v. 23). Or, it could simply be a false concept of God. The point is that fallen man suppress the truth and creates idols. Calvin said that fallen man is a idol factory.

We also see a progressive degeneration in fallen man's idolatry. Those who hold to some kind of evolutionary concept on man usually refer to a societal evolution as well as a biological one. In terms of religious thought, it is often set forth that man gradually progresses in religious perspective. A primitive culture may hold to some form of animism with there being a spirit of the trees or waterfalls, or woods. It is said that as they progress, they will move to polytheism. From there they might progress to henetheism. The idea that there is a one god for a particular people or region. Finally, as they advance, they will arrive at monotheism. However, the reality set forth in the Bible is the opposite of that schema. We are all descended from Adam through Noah.

Therefore, at one time, everyone was a monotheist. As man degenerated in sin, he went away from truth. Henotheism, polytheism, animism are all examples of man's progression away from the truth of there being one true God. **Robert Brow** noted this in his book, *Religion: Origins and Ideas*. He argued that the popular theory of evolutionary religious development does not fit the facts. The work of anthropologists indicates that the original form of religion was monotheism and that "primitive" cultures actually fell away from that. **He writes**, "Research suggests that the tribes are not animistic because they continued unchanged down through history. Rather the evidence indicates degeneration from a true knowledge of God." More atheistic expressions of this principle may simply glorify man as the center of all things. In his work, "Hymn of Man", English poet Algernon Charles Swinburne wrote: "Glory to Man in the highest!/ For man is the master of all things." Although few have been bold enough to put such a sentiment into words, many people today live as if this were the guiding principle of life.

This passage in Rom. 1:18f sets forth the psychology of atheism in that man suppresses the knowledge of God and sets up himself as god. **Charles Spurgeon said**, "The unregenerate man has always an idol. He will worship anything rather than his God; yea, he will sooner worship himself than his Savior."

This is why, as people who believe in Christ and hold to the Bible as being a true revelation from God, we must form all of our understanding concerning the person and attributes of God from Scripture and not from our own imaginations. This is one of the reasons why we need constant exposure to the Word of God both in our own reading and study and in hearing it preached and taught. **A. W. Pink** writing around fifty years ago said, "The 'god' of this twentieth century no more resembles the Supreme Sovereign of Holy Writ than does the dim flickering of a candle the glory of the midday sun. The 'god' who is now talked about in the average pulpit, spoken of in the ordinary Sunday School, mentioned in much of the religious literature of the day, and preached in most of the so-called Bible Conferences is the figment of human imagination, an invention of



maudlin sentimentality. The heathen outside of the pale of Christendom form 'gods' out of wood and stone, while the millions of heathen inside Christendom manufacture a 'god' out of their own carnal mind. In reality, they are but atheists, for there is no other possible alternative between an absolutely supreme God, and no God at all. A 'god' whose will is resisted, whose designs are frustrated, whose purpose is checkmated, possesses no title to Deity, and so far from being a fit object of worship, merits nought but contempt." *The Attributes of God*, 28-29.

**Greg Bahnsen writes**, God's word has supreme authority. 'Woe to him who strives with his maker!' (Isa. 45:9). The standard by which we judge all teachings must be this word of authority from God (1 John 4:11; Deut. 13:1-4): 'To the law and the testimony; if they speak not according to this word surely there is no light for them' (Isa. 8:20). If you fail to submit presuppositionally to God's self-attesting, authoritative word, then you shall be 'double-minded' and unstable in all your ways, driven by the wind and tossed about (James 1:5-8). Instead of being driven by the 'wind' of God's 'Spirit,' you will be carried about by every wind of doctrine through the cunning of humanistic thought and the craftiness of error (Eph. 4:13-14). Therefore, we must unyieldingly hold fast to the confession of our Christian hope (Heb. 10:23). Here God's assertion: 'I, [the Lord], speak righteousness; I declare things that are right' (Isa. 45:19). His word, from the very outset, must be accounted as authoritatively true; one must not waver in this regard. God's veracity is the ultimate standard for our thoughts: 'let God be found true, but every man a liar!' (Rom. 3:4)."

From: *Always Ready*, 25.

Rom. 1:24-32 Romans Series #6 11/9/08

Last week we began looking at Paul's indictment against man's sin and fallen condition. Rom. 1:18 - 3:20 develops this theme. Romans 1 especially addresses the Gentile world although the sins mentioned could be applied to anyone including those who have the written Word of God. Romans 2 primarily focuses on Jews who have the written Law of

God. Rom. 3:9-20 concludes that both groups are under sin. Paul's main point in all of this section is to prove his conclusion in Rom. 3:19-20. We observed last week that fallen man suppresses the knowledge of God which he has from creation and creates idols. Calvin calls sinful man an idol factory. God has revealed his existence in the witness of creation and that leaves all people without excuse. Fallen man exchanges the truth of God for a lie. This morning we are going to examine God's response to man's suppression of the truth of God and idolatry. Our text mentions three times that God turns the over to their sin. This is also an important text concerning ethical debates on homosexuality because that particular sin is specifically mentioned and condemned in this text.

**I. As a result of fallen man's suppression of God and idolatry, God gives them over to their sin. Rom. 1:24, 26, 28**

It is significant that three times in this text, Paul states that God turned them over to their sin. **Charles Hodge** comments on this: "It is . . . a judicial abandonment. It is as a punishment for their apostasy that God gives men up to the power of sin. He withdraws from the wicked the restraints of his providence and grace, and gives them over to the dominion of sin" (40). Hodge uses the phrase "judicial abandonment." That a good term to describe this action of God. God daily endures the rebellion and cosmic treason of men. The fact that he allows any sinner outside of Christ to live one moment of extra life is an act of unimaginable mercy. However, there does come a time when God enters into a process of judgment. **William Hendriksen comments on this text:** "Mercy unrequited produces wrath. Divine patience without favorable response on the part of man results in the outpouring of divine indignation. . . . What the present verse (24) holds before us, therefore, is the fact that at the proper time - known only to God - impenitent sinners are by that wrath allowed to be swept away by their own sins into the pit of their vile passions. By a positive action of God's will they are finally abandoned"

(75). Notice how our text develops the sinful condition and actions of fallen man - **Rom. 1:22-23, 25**

They repress the knowledge of God (Rom. 1:18) and they exchange the glory of God for an image or idol in the form of the creation. They worship the creature rather than the Creator.

The response of God is that they are finally judicially abandoned and turned over to their sin. When we speak of God restraining sin, this touches on the idea of what is usually called common grace. That is the grace God exercises in restraining evil.

**Exo. 34:23-24; Gen. 20:6.** It also applies to the fact that God allows the sun to shine and the rain to fall on the crops of the wicked as well as the righteous. This action of God giving them over to their sin is the idea of God withdrawing the restraints of his providence and grace. He removes at least some of the restraint on their sinful hearts and allows them to pursue their sin. God gives them up to the existing condition of their sinful hearts. **John Murray** notes that "the result is that they reap for themselves a correspondingly greater toll of retributive vengeance" (44-45). **R. C. Sproul said,** "The pride that goes before destruction and the haughty spirit that precedes a fall is an attitude that assumes that God is unaware of what is going on or, if aware, is powerless to do anything about it. Unpunished sin evokes a fearlessness in the sinner by which he grows ever more brash in his defiance. The sinner mistakes God's patience and long-suffering for impotence, and carelessly heaps up for himself wrath against the day of wrath. The longer the judgment is delayed, the worse it is when it falls.

From: *Tabletalk*, July, 1999 (vol. 23, No. 7), 7.

**He also said,** "God's grace is not infinite. God is infinite and God is gracious. We experience the grace of an infinite God, but grace is not infinite. God sets limits to His patience and forbearance. He warns us over and over again that someday the ax will fall and His judgment will be poured out." This turning them over to their sin is simply a foretaste of the future judgment. That judgment will finally come when they perish in

their sins and are condemned to hell forever. There are many examples of people whose rejection of God is seen in their increased depravity and sin. **George Bernard Shaw**, who as a young man repudiated the gospel, became increasingly hostile to it as he grew older. In the flyleaf of a Bible he sold to an auctioneer 4 years before his death is this inscription: "Except as a curiosity, this book is a most undesirable possession. I must get rid of it. I really cannot bear it in my house!" The reports concerning his death indicate that he died without a ray of hope. Another example of this is found in Oscar Wilde. He wrote: "The gods had given me almost everything. But I let myself be lured into long spells of senseless and sensual ease. . . Tired of being on the heights, I deliberately went to the depths in search for new sensation. What the paradox was to me in the sphere of thought, perversity became to me in the sphere of passion. I grew careless of the lives of others. I took pleasure where it pleased me, and passed on. I forgot that every little action of the common day makes or unmakes character, and that therefore what one has done in the secret chamber, one has some day to cry aloud from the house-top. I ceased to be lord over myself. I was no longer the captain of my soul, and did not know it. I allowed pleasure to dominate me. I ended in horrible disgrace." *Ordering Private World*, 15.

## **II. Fallen man, as a result of God's judicial abandonment, pursues sin and corruption. Rom. 1:24, 26-27**

It is interesting that in verse 21, they do not "honor God as God." In verse 24, God gives them over to dishonor. Paul mentions sexual sin with a particular focus on homosexuality. Paul might have begun with this sin because sexual practices were closely associated with idolatry. The temple to Aphrodite in Corinth had an estimated 1000 to 2000 male and female prostitutes for the worship of Aphrodite. But, whatever the reason, Paul sets forth an strong condemnation for homosexuality as being contrary to the natural created order of God as well as the law of God. **Rom. 1:26-27**

I've often been amazed at arguments for homosexuality which come from the theologically liberal community. On more than one occasion I've seen some article or letter to the editor in a paper written by a liberal pastor or theologian. Often the argument will be made that the condemnation of homosexuality only comes in the Old Testament in the ceremonial law. However, the idea of marriage between one man and one woman is set forth in the original creation order in Gen. 1 and 2. Jesus cites both of those passage as real history in supporting the sanctity of marriage in Matt. 19:3-10. Also, the commands against homosexuality are not framed as simply a part of the ceremonial law, but as part of the exposition of the 7th commandment concerning sexual purity.

However, it is not just condemned in the Old Testament. Homosexuality is clearly condemned as a serious sin in the New Testament. This passage in Rom. 1 is not ambiguous. **1 Cor. 6:9-11** Verse 11 is important in this regard - "such were some of you." In other words, change is possible. Some of them did engage in homosexuality, but Paul says that is not what they are now. **1 Tim. 1:10** also lists homosexuality as a violation of God's ongoing moral law. **Rom. 1:27** - "due penalty of their error." This certainly refers to all the negative consequences of sin and rebellion against God. It is not an exegetical stretch to say that it applies to the physical consequences that come from engaging in sexual practices against God's created order and law.

Sometimes the argument is set forth that people are born homosexuals, that it is a third sex and, therefore, it is a natural and proper expression of sexuality for some people.

There is not scientific evidence of that whatsoever. But, even if that were the case, that doesn't change anything in terms of God's commands and condemnation of the practice. God gives commands concerning heterosexual behavior. He commands that sex is only to take place in marriage. He forbids adultery and polygamy. Even if someone were born homosexual (don't think that's the case), if God forbids the practice, the issue is settled. **Rom. 1:28** - We see a progression toward sin and corruption. God turns them over to a depraved mind. This is a mind that is so corrupted by sin that it turns all ethics

upside down. **Isa. 5:20-21** **James Montgomery Boice** comments on this depraved mind: "It is the mind of the devil, which is what Adam chose to pursue when he followed the dangling carrot: 'You will be like God, knowing good and evil' (Gen. 3:5). Adam did not become 'like God,' knowing good and evil; he become 'like Satan.' And, being like Satan, in time he came to call the good bad and the bad good" (182). This is especially seen at the conclusion of this section in Rom. 1:32.

**Illus.** - R. C. Sproul teaching ethics in the mid-1960s. Sexual revolution - Three traditional arguments against premarital sex - 1) Hurt your reputation; 2) might get pregnant; 3) might get some disease. His students said the opposite concerning reputation. Now they had the pill and didn't fear pregnancy. Now drugs were available to cure venereal disease (before AIDS). Sproul pointed out that there is an important argument which they left out. God says those actions are worthy of death. **Rom. 1:32** We could spent several sermons examining each of the various sins which are set forth in the list of sins in Rom. 1:29-31, but I want to draw your attention especially to these people being "haters of God." (v. 30). That phrase connects this whole passage together. In verse 18, people suppress the knowledge of God in unrighteousness. After suppressing the knowledge of God, they set up idols. God's judgment comes in giving them over to their sin. Their mind and conscience is corrupted and they engage in every kind sin and perversion even to the extent of calling their sin good. The bottom line of this is that hate God. **John Gerstner writes**, "Man as a sinner hates God, hates man, and hates himself. He would kill God if he could. He does kill his fellow man when can. [And] he commits spiritual suicide every day of his life." **James Montgomery Boice concurs**, "Not many people would admit that they hate God, choosing rather to think of themselves as rather tolerant of him. But nowhere do they show their hatred more than in their condescending attitudes. Scratch beneath the surface, allow something to come into their lives that they consider unwarranted or unfair, and their hatred of God immediately

boils over. 'How could God let this happen to me?' they demand. If they could, they would strangle him!" From: *Romans*, Vol. 1, 189.

Paul touches on this idea repeatedly in the book of Romans.

**Rom. 5:10; 8:7** - The person outside of Christ hates God, suppresses the knowledge of God, and becomes an idol factory.

When God removes his restraint from their sin, they pursue every kind of wickedness and rebellion against God.

### **III. Fallen man encourages others in rebellion against God.**

#### **Rom. 1:32**

The key idea here is that they give hearty or full approval to all of these sins. Someone may commit some particular sin and feel ashamed by it. Here people are not ashamed, but give it full approval and encourage it. That is certainly what we see in both heterosexual and homosexual sin in this country. We also see it in every area of sin and rebellion against God. Good is called evil and evil is called good.

**John Murray writes**, "The most damning condition is not the practice of iniquity, however much that may evidence our abandonment of God and abandonment to sin, it is that together with that practice there is also the support and encouragement of others in the practice of the same. To put it bluntly, we are not only bent on damning ourselves but we congratulate others in the doing of those things that we know have their issue in damnation. We hate others as we hate ourselves and render therefore to them the approval of what we know merits damnation. Iniquity is most aggravated when it meets with no inhibition from the disapproval of others and when there is collective, undissenting approbation" (Romans, 52-53).

Again, we see the point that sin is worthy of death. **Rom. 6:23**

The main point of Paul's exposition against man's sin in this chapter and in chapters 2 and part of 3 is to drive home our desperate need for salvation. There is absolutely no hope for fallen man apart from Christ and his work of redemption.

This passage and the next section which continues this indictment against man's sin emphasizes that all people outside of Christ are under the judgment of God. Many people in our culture think God is a nerf ball who just bounces off of them and their sin. However, the Bible teaches that God will surely judge the wicked. This passage affirms in no uncertain terms, that God will bring ultimate justice. One day you will stand before a just and holy God. How will you stand before him? If you are not in Christ, you will die in your sins and you will face God's judgment. This passage calls you to repentance. It calls you to throw yourself on Christ and his work.

### **Romans 2:1-6 Romans Series #7 11/16/08**

Romans 1 introduces the gospel and then addresses the fact that fallen man universally represses the knowledge of God and sets up idols. Romans 1:24, 26, 28 speak of God's judicial abandonment and judgment on man's idolatry. Rom. 1:32 emphasizes the depravity of fallen man's mind in that he gives hearty approval to those things which he knows are worthy of death. He calls evil good and good evil. He encourages rebellion against God.

Romans 2 continues the theme of Romans 1 and examines the idea of God's justice in his judgment to both Jews and Gentiles. There is an emphasis in his chapter on Jews who have the written Law of God. The first part of this chapter address those people who self-righteously look down on others. In this whole chapter, Paul especially addresses his fellow Jews. While they may not have made idols like the Gentiles, often, by means of self-righteousness, they had made an idol of themselves.

This morning we are going to look at some of the aspects of God's righteous judgment and justice that are set forth in this section. This is an important section to understand. First, it shows us our need for salvation and drives home that our only hope is in Christ; Second, it shows us a vital attribute of God - his righteousness or his justice; Third, it continues to demonstrate that there is no salvation outside of Christ.

#### **I. God's righteousness is seen in his judgment.**



Rom. 2:1-3 - This chapter starts with a simple point of logic. If you condemn certain things as sin and you do those things yourself, you are condemning yourself as a sinner. **Francis Schaeffer**, in commenting on Romans 2:1-3, writes, "When God says, 'You are inexcusable,' many people will offer one of two objections. They might say, 'I may be a sinner, but at least I'm better than most other people.' Or they might say, 'I may be a sinner, but I'm good enough to get by. Surely God wouldn't condemn me.' Once, while staying at a hotel on the Italian Riviera, I had several conversations about the Lord with two English businessmen, both of whom were atheists. The first insisted that the second one had been unfair in his business. One evening he said, 'Well, if there's a God He must accept me, because I'm better than others.' I said, 'What do you mean?' And he said, 'Well, look at that other man over there. He's just a nasty, dirty businessman. I'm better than he.' About five minutes later I happened to be talking with the other businessman, and he said, 'If there is a God, I will be all right.' I asked why, and he said, 'Well, I'm better than others. I have two sick sisters and I've given my life to taking care of them.' When you talk with nonbelievers about spiritual things, they will often say just this: 'I'm better than other people, so I'll get by.' Paul answers these two objections in 2:1-6. God says, 'You won't get by'; you won't 'escape the judgment of God' (2:3). We won't get by because God judges on a standard of perfection. *The Finished Work of Christ*, 46.

The beginning of this chapter gives strong rebuke to anyone who claims self-righteousness. Unless, they are sinlessly perfect, their condemnation of others is also self-condemnation.

In the middle of this rebuke, some important statements are made concerning the judgment of God. **Rom. 2:2-3**

**We see here the principle that God's judgment is right and perfect.** God declares repeatedly in the Bible that he is holy and just. **Exo. 34:7** - He will by no means clear the guilty.

**Ezek. 18:4; Hab. 1:13; Rom. 6:23.**

**Rom. 2:2** says that the judgment of God rightly falls upon those who practice such things. How many sins have you committed in your life? We can all think of specific sins we've committed, but when you realize that sin is any transgression of the law of God in thought, word, or deed, and includes every impure motive or desire of the heart or anything you neglect to do that God has commanded, then you realize that you have broken God's law a staggering number of times. God is our creator; he is the ultimate judge in his universe and he is holy and just. When you break the law of God you forfeit any claims to life. Once you sin, every breath you breathe is by God's mercy. It is mercy that is a free gift. Justice would be for God to give every person what they deserve. Justice is owed; mercy is freely given.

Jonathan Edwards in one of his sermons made the statement, "Since you got up this morning, what have you done that would cause God to give you another moment of life?" A theological question that I've often been asked is "Why doesn't God save everybody?" People look at some of the final judgment passages such as the end of Matthew 25 and observe that there is one ultimate division in mankind - those who are in Christ and are redeemed and those who are not redeemed and are sent into hell by Jesus. They look at those passages and wonder why God doesn't save everybody. It's certainly in his power to do so, but he doesn't. Scripture doesn't give a definitive answer to the eternal decrees and councils of God, but if you understand the principles of justice and mercy the question really is, "Why does God save anybody?" I've had a few people say to me, "I have a theological problem I just can't understand and that is why God would save me." Since justice is owed and God is holy and everyone has broken his law, why did God show mercy in a tremendous plan of salvation in which Christ took the justice due to his people. It is certainly a demonstration of God's attributes of love and mercy, but God was not obligated to do it.

**John Murray wrote:** "He [God] cannot deny himself. To be complacent towards that which is the contradiction of his own holiness would be a denial of himself. So that

wrath against sin is the correlate of his holiness. And this is just saying that the justice of God demands that sin receive its retribution. The question is not at all: How can God, being what he is, send men to hell? The question is: How can God, being what he is, save them from hell? *Collected Writings*, Vol. 2, 81-82.

We see first of all in this passage that when God does bring judgment on sin, that judgment is right and just.

**II. God's present restraint of his judgment is an expression of his mercy and patience. Rom. 2:4**

God could justly bring his judgment upon all who have broken his law, but he extends mercy.

Gen. 3 - Fall into sin - God told them that the day they ate of the fruit, they would die.

While spiritual death is included in that, the threat is also physical death.

Adam and Eve sinned against God and what did God do?

They deserved death; he told them they would die if they ate, but he extended mercy to them. In fact, he promised a redeemer who would crush the head of the serpent. That redeemer would be the seed of the woman. He would be human, but he would also have the power to crush the head of the serpent which implies divine power. In the first promise of redemption, there is the implication that the Messiah would be human and divine. That point is elaborated on later, but it is implied at the outset.

We see the same principles of justice and mercy set forth in

Rom. 2:4. Man has broken God's law; he deserves justice and the judgment of God, but God extends mercy and withholds judgment for a time. It is important to understand that this mercy is a free gift; it is not owed. Because we receive so much mercy from God, it is easy to confuse justice and mercy and think that mercy is owed to us. **Illus. - R. C.**

**Sproul and papers due.**

We become accustomed to his grace and forget that we are receiving mercy and grace.

We begin to think that mercy is owed to us. Jesus strongly addressed this issue in **Luke 13:1-5**.

**Jonathan Edwards sermon** - Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God.

Illustrations depicting God's justice with an emphasis on his mercy - spider hanging by a thread, arrow at heart.

Don't presume on the next moment of grace. Repent now!

That's what Jesus declared. That's what Romans 2:4 declares.

If you are not in Christ now, don't presume that you will receive another day of grace.

Flee to Christ now!

This is the heart of the gospel. Man is a sinner under the judgment of God. God fulfills all the demands of his justice in Christ. This is why Christ had to die in order for God to save anybody. Justice had to be fulfilled. Often this message is watered down or not proclaimed. R. C. Sproul said, "The church is living in Mr. Roger's Neighborhood - accept everything and everybody, have self-esteem, feel good, and go to hell happy."

**God's kindness and patience should cause people to repent, but the universal response of unregenerate man is stubbornness and unrepentance. Rom. 2:5-6**

Man does what he wants to do and apart from the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit, he does not want Christ.

Rom. 2:5; Rom. 3:10-12; John 1:12-13 - Those to whom God changes their hearts come.

John 6:44-45; Rom. 9:16

Are you in a state of grace or do you chafe against God's revelation of himself in Scripture. Do you love God's law? What is your heart's response to God and his commands? Do you truly trust in Christ alone?

**III. God's righteousness is seen in the fact that his judgment perfectly fits the crime.**

**Rom. 2:4-6**

God will render to every man according to his deeds.

The more a person sins, the greater judgment and punishment he will receive. We speak about the issues of heaven and hell and sometimes we get the idea that it is an all or nothing proposition. You either go to heaven or you go to hell. While those are the only two options, there are degrees of punishment and degrees of reward in heaven.

**Rom. 2:4-6;** - Store up treasures in heaven or wrath in hell.

**Matt. 11:20-24; 16:27; Luke 12:47-48; 20:46-47; John 19:11.**

In human justice, if a man is convicted of multiple murders - a serial killer, we can only execute him once or give him one life sentence, but in the justice of God, God has the power and ability to give him justice and punishment for offence.

Rom. 2:6 - God will render to every man according to his works. The greater and the more the sin, the greater the punishment for eternity in hell. The greater the opportunity and knowledge, the greater the responsibility and judgment. The preaching of the gospel is a two-edged sword. On the one hand it is the only way people come to salvation. God has ordained the proclamation of the gospel as the means by which he saves sinners. However, for those who hear it and reject, their judgement is greater than if they had never heard. **Heb. 10:26-31** - This is speaking of those who hear the gospel and were perhaps even a part of the community of faith, but they were never saved. **Charles Spurgeon said**, "Oh, if the damned in hell could come to earth, they would let you know what solemn work it is to hear the gospel. Think not that you can hear the gospel without having your salvation or damnation affected thereby." **Jonathan Edwards said**, "Besides the guilt that you would have had if a Saviour never had been offered, you bring that great additional guilt upon you, of most ungratefully refusing offered deliverance. What more base and vile treatment of God can there be, than for you, when justly condemned to eternal misery, and ready to be executed, and God graciously sends his own Son, who . . . with a pardon in his hand, and not only a pardon, but a deed of eternal glory; I say, what can be worse, than for you, out of dislike and enmity against God and his Son, to refuse to accept those benefits at his hands? How justly may the anger of God

be greatly incensed and increased by it! When a sinner thus ungratefully rejects mercy, his last error is worse than the first; this is more heinous than all his former rebellion, and may justly bring down more fearful wrath upon him. **Jonathan Edwards in commenting on degrees of punishment said,** "The lost in hell would give the world and all beside if the number of their sins could be one less." Think about the implications of that.

This principle affirms God's justice. The greater the sin and the more the sin the greater the punishment. There is an absolutely perfect judgment in keeping with God's righteousness and justice. **Charles Spurgeon said,** "God's wrath, though it come not on you yet, is like a stream that is dammed up. Every moment it gathers force. It bursts not the dike, yet every hour it is swelling it. Each moment of each day in which you remain an unbeliever you are treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath when the measure of your iniquity is full."

Do you realize that one day you will stand before a holy God and give an account of your life? God is all-knowing. Every sin will be revealed. There is only one way you can stand in that day and that is if you are in Christ and clothed in his perfect righteousness. A Christian traveling on an ocean liner offered a Gospel tract to a passenger. The man accepted the literature with a scowl and then with a flourish tore it into tiny pieces, cradled the fragments in his hand for a moment, and finally tossed them overboard. The Christian went away with a heavy heart, while the unbeliever headed for the ship's bar. As he lifted a drink to his lips, however, he noticed a small piece of paper adhering to his coat lapel. Quickly plucking it off, he inspected it and discovered it was a tiny scrap of the discarded tract. Only one word appeared - "God." As he turned it over, he was startled to read on the other side - "eternity." Suddenly the Holy Spirit winged the arrows of conviction into his soul. The man tried to distract himself with the entertainment on the ship. He went to the ship's casino and gambled, but that didn't work. He went to the ship's ballroom and danced, but that didn't work either.

He tried talking with people in the lounge, but wherever he went, those two solemn words haunted him. To his troubled mind they seemed etched in letters of light! Finally in desperation, seeking relief, he looked up the tract distributor. That man was happy to present the gospel to him and some time later joyously led him into a redemptive relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. This passage in Romans 2 presents those two words, **God and eternity**, strips us of self-righteousness, and shows us our need. Flee to Christ. If you are in Jesus, realize that Jesus took the justice due to you. That should motivate you to worship and service.

Rom. 2:5-11 Romans series #8 11/23/08

In our series on the book of Romans we have seen that God's wrath is revealed from heaven against fallen people who suppress the knowledge of God and create idols. They exchange the knowledge of the incorruptible God for an image of something in the creation. There can reach a point in man's sin when God judicially gives them over to their. The nadir of fallen man's sin is seen in his calling good evil and evil good. Rom. 1:32

Rom. 2 especially addresses the Jewish community, but the principles set forth apply universally as well. We observed last week that God judgment on sin is just and right. However, fallen people think lightly or despise the kindness and patience of God. As a result, they are storing up wrath for the day of wrath and God will give retributive justice in his final judgment. Our text this morning is a continuation of this idea. Sometimes this text troubles Christians because it might appear to be teaching some kind of works salvation. However, as we will observe, that is not the case. It is only the person who is regenerated or made alive in Christ who has the desire and character to persevere in doing good and seeking the ultimate promises and goals of salvation in Christ. This text is important in its demonstration of the difference between believers and unbelievers and in proclaiming that there are only two paths before us. One is the path of salvation in Christ, the other path is the way of damnation.

**I. The path of the redeemed is contrasted with the path of the lost. Rom. 2:7-11**

Rom. 2:7 describes those who are persevering on the path of salvation. Rom. 2:8 describes those who are on the path of condemnation and judgment. The order is reversed in verses 9 and 10. Therefore, it forms an ABBA form or a chiasmic structure. As I just mentioned sometimes Christians struggle with this text because, on a surface reading, it may appear to be teaching some kind of salvation by good works. In answering this issue, it is important to note that this text appears in the book of Romans, a book which sets forth justification by faith alone as strongly as you can find it anywhere in the Bible. Obviously, Paul's intention in this text is not to contradict what he wrote in Rom. 1:16-17 and will develop in great detail in Rom. 3 and 4.

Paul is describing the actions and attitudes of two different groups of people. He is looking at flows from their hearts and is seen in their motivations, attitudes, and actions.

**A. The terms of the first path describe the future expectations of the redeemed in**

**Christ. Rom. 2:7** - Notice what they are seeking: glory, honor, and immortality.

Elsewhere in Paul's writings, these terms are used to describe the ultimate hope and expectations of the Christian. **Glory** refers to the final consummation of our redemption by which we are transformed into the image of Christ. **Rom. 8:29-30; 8:18; 9:23; 1 Cor. 15:43;**

**2 Cor. 4:16-17. Honor** refers to God's approval of believers which is often in contrast to the dishonor and scorn given to them from the world. **Immortality** refers to the resurrection hope of God's people. The term is used in 1 Cor. 15 in describing the instantaneous transformation of believers at the coming of Christ. **1 Cor. 15:51-54; Phil. 3:20-21**

Therefore, these goals or expectations are those which flow from a Christian heart. The perseverance in doing good with these things in mind reflects the heart of someone who is regenerate or in a state of salvation. They flow from a redeemed heart.



**John Murray comments on these terms,** "The three terms have indisputably in the usage of Paul redemptive associations, and this consideration of itself makes it impossible to think that the eschatological aspiration referred to is anything less than that provided by redemptive revelation. The three words define aspiration in terms of the highest reaches of Christian hope" (Commentary, 64). Therefore, these actions are the result of salvation in Christ. Only a Christian has these aspirations.

The same thing is true concerning the four things that God gives to these people as rewards. The four things mentioned are: eternal life, glory, honor, and peace. **Rom. 2:7b, 10.**

Eternal life refers to salvation. We just considered glory and honor as part of our Christian hope. Peace in verse 10 parallels immortality in verse 7 and, therefore, points to peace in heaven, the idea of a person being delivered from sin and misery.

Again, this emphasizes that the person who is on this path is a Christian and these aspirations or goals flow from true saving faith. It is also important to remember that no one will choose this path apart from the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit. These are goals and aspirations which belong only to a person who has been sovereignly born again.

Paul emphasizes this in Rom. 3:10-12.

Jonathan Edwards observed in *Religious Affections* that a man must first love God, or have his heart united to him, before he will esteem God's good his own, and before he will desire the glorifying and enjoying of God, as his happiness.

**David Jones comments,** "The real problem of ethics is not in finding the rule to direct us how to glorify and enjoy God but in having the will to make this our aim in the first place. Leopards are not in the habit of changing their spots. Something drastic has to happen for human beings to make God their goal, a change of heart so profound it is like being born all over again, this time from above." *Biblical Christian Ethics*, D. Jones, 37.

**B. The terms of the path of the lost describe the sinfulness of the lost. Rom. 2:8-9.**

Apart from God's divine intervention, the path of the lost describes the path every lost person naturally pursues. Paul sets forth four things which the lost do which reveals their sinfulness. **First**, they are selfishly ambitious or self-seeking. This is the opposite of the first and second "greatest" commandments to "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength" and "Love your neighbor as yourself." (Matt. 22:37, 39). This describes a person who does not honor and love God or his neighbor.

**Second**, they do not obey the truth. This is connected to the idea Paul presents in Rom. 1:18f. Lost man suppresses the truth of God and creates idols. He rejects the truth of God which is seen in creation. If he has the written Word of God, he also rejects that.

**Third**, they obey unrighteousness. Again, this connects to Paul's description of the lost in Rom. 1. **Rom. 1:28-32; Isa. 5:20** - Calling good evil and evil good. **Fourth**, they do evil (v. 9). Again, this is reflecting the downward spiral of wickedness described in Rom. 1. The end result of this path is also set forth in four items: tribulation and distress, wrath and indignation. Tribulation and distress address the idea of God's punishment on the wicked. Wrath and indignation address God's opposition and condemnation of all evil. Again, we see the idea of God's wrath against sin being clearly proclaimed. These characteristics and results demonstrate that this path is the way of the lost and will result in judgment and damnation.

So, we have two paths which are characterized by various motives, actions, and goals with commensurate results to their actions. One is the way that leads to death and damnation. The other path is the one that believers are on and their perseverance in doing good is a result of their salvation and the work of the Holy Spirit in their lives.

**Matt. 7:13-14**

**II. The description of these two paths indicates that true saving faith produces a change in a person's life.**

**Rom. 2:7, 10** As we just observed, this describes a true Christian. A person who has been regenerated by the work of the Holy Spirit and has been justified by faith in Christ alone will persevere in doing good and in having these aspirations.

**A. This teaches that true saving faith is never alone.**

Remember the phrase the Reformers used, "You are saved by faith alone, but never by a faith that is alone. True saving faith always produces a desire to obey God and grow in the things of God. **Richard Pratt writes**, "Many things in life come in pairs. Some pairs are easy to keep together. Trousers, for instance, don't normally come apart. It's unusual to lose one lens from your glasses. Other pairs, however, are hard to keep together. I have at least four different right-handed gloves in my drawer at home. I also have lots of socks that don't have a match. Gloves and socks come in pairs, but they are hard to keep together. In Genesis 15 and 17 we have a pair of concepts that most Christians find hard to keep together. These chapters tell us the importance of faith and fidelity, but we tend to forget one or the other. There are many people in the church who think they can earn their salvation. 'Just be good enough and you'll get to heaven,' they imagine. But Genesis 15 opposes this idea

[This is where Abraham is justified by faith in the Messiah].

But there are others in the church who believe they can live in rebellion against God and still be saved from his judgment. 'It doesn't matter how you live,' they advise. 'Just believe.' Genesis 17 opposes this error [In this chapter, Abraham is instructed to live a life of obedience before God]. Saving faith will always be accompanied by a life of good works.

*Designed For Dignity*, 93. **Thomas Watson**, the Puritan pastor and author wrote: "He who rightly applies Christ puts these two together, 'Christ Jesus my Lord' (Phil. 3:8). Many take Christ as Jesus, but refuse him as Lord. Do you join 'Prince and Savior' (Acts 5:31)? Would you as well be ruled by Christ's laws as saved by his blood? Christ is 'a priest upon his throne (Zech. 6:13). He will never be a priest to intercede unless your

heart is the throne where he sways his sceptre. A true applying of Christ is when we so take him as a husband that we give up ourselves to him as Lord."

This text describes the results of regenerate heart and true saving faith. True saving faith is never alone; it always produces a heart toward God and growth in obedience. It is God that causes us to persevere, but a true Christian does persevere in his Christian growth.

**B. This also speaks against antinomianism.**

Antinomianism is a technical word that describes the idea of lawlessness. The Greek word for law is *nomos* so the idea is anti-law or lawlessness. This is the attitude that says, "I'm saved by grace, oh happy condition. I can sin as I please and still have remission." That is completely contrary to the heart of a true Christian. Most Christians would recoil against that kind of cavalier attitude toward sin. However, within the last 25 years, there was a theological movement inside Dispensational theology that taught a form of antinomianism. The goal was to highlight the grace of God in salvation, but the result was to present a false gospel. The argument ran that someone could have Jesus as their Savior with no submission to his Lordship or commands at all. The idea was that someone could come to Christ with no repentance and no concern for the commands of God. It often degenerated into some kind of salvation by profession of faith only and sometimes not even that. In this perspective, there was no connection between justification and sanctification at all. **For example, Charles Ryrie** removed any connection between true saving faith and sanctification. He writes, "Normally one who has believed can be described as a believer; that is, one who continues to believe. But. . . a believer may come to the place of not believing, and yet God will not disown him, since He cannot disown himself." John Gerstner comments that, for Ryrie, it is apparently too much to require that a person believe in Christ as a condition for salvation. Ryrie tends to focus on how little a person can do and still be saved. At the time of the Reformation, the Roman Catholic Church argued that the Reformers doctrine of justification by faith alone would produce lawlessness. **John Calvin, in his reply to Cardinal Sadoletto**, argued

that justification is connected to sanctification: "We deny that good works have any share in justification, but we claim full authority for them in the lives of the righteous. For if he who has obtained justification possesses Christ, and at the same time, Christ never is where His Spirit is not, it is obvious that gratuitous righteousness is necessarily connected with regeneration. Therefore, if you would duly understand how inseparable faith and works are, look to Christ, who, as the Apostle teaches (1 Cor. 1:30) has been given to us for justification and for sanctification. Wherever, therefore, that righteousness of faith, which we maintain to be gratuitous, is, there too Christ is, and where Christ is, there too is the Spirit of holiness, who regenerates the soul to newness of life. On the contrary, where zeal for integrity and holiness is not in vigor, there neither is the Spirit of Christ nor Christ Himself; and wherever Christ is not, there is no righteousness, nay, there is no faith; for faith cannot apprehend Christ for righteousness without the Spirit of sanctification."

This is simply what Jesus said in **John 14:15, 21, 23**.

**In 1991, J. I. Packer wrote,** "If, ten years ago, you had told me that I would live to see literate evangelicals, some with doctorates and a seminary teaching record, arguing for the reality of an eternal salvation, divinely guaranteed, that may have in it no repentance, no discipleship, no behavioral change, no practical acknowledgment of Christ as Lord of one's life, and no perseverance in faith, I would have told you that you were out of your mind. Stark staring bonkers, is the British phrase I would probably have used. But now the thing has happened. In *The Gospel Siege* (1981) and *Absolutely Free!* (1989), Zane Hodges, for one, maintains all these positions as essential to the Christian message, arguing that without them the Gospel gets lost in legalism. Wow." *Tabletalk*, 1991, 15, 5:7-9.

Rom. 2:7-11 contrasts the path of the redeemed with the path of the lost. It emphasizes at the end once again that God's judgment is absolutely just. He shows no favoritism because any ethnic distinction. This text shows us the nature of a true regenerate heart

and it provides a strong warning to those outside of Christ. **Rom. 2:8-9** How will you stand before God? If you are not in Christ, the end result of your life will be an eternal wrath and indignation from God and an eternal tribulation and distress in hell. **Charles Spurgeon said**, "Unbeliever, if God cannot and will not forgive the sins of penitent men without Christ taking their punishment, rest assured he will surely bring you to judgment. If, when Christ had imputed sin laid on him, God smote him, how will he smite you who are his enemy, and who have your own sins upon your head? God seemed at Calvary to take an oath and say, 'By the blood of my Son I swear that sin must be punished!' If it is not punished in Christ for you, it will be punished in you for yourselves." At Best #37  
Rom. 2:11-16 Romans Series #9 11/30/08

One T-shirt says, "He who dies with the most toys wins." Another one says, "He who dies with the most toys still dies." Who dies? The guy with the toys, and the guy with the T-shirt. The king and John Calvin. Dostoyevsky and de Sade. The architect and the actor. You and me. At this point, the mortality rate shows no sign of dropping: one out of one still dies.

*Nine Marks Of A Healthy Church* by M. Dever, 80 (some alteration) If Jesus doesn't return in the next 100 years, everyone of us in this room will have died. One day you stand before God. Our text this morning continues the theme of the judgment and justice of God. Romans 2 sets forth some important principles concerning God judgment. **First**, it is right and according to truth (v. 2). **Second**, God's judgment is a retributive judgment. He will render to every man according to his deeds (v.5-6). Every day the lost person stores up great wrath for the day of wrath. **Third**, his judgment is righteous (v. 5). There will be no injustice in God's judgment. It will be in accordance with his perfect righteousness. **Fourth**, God's judgment will be impartial (v. 11). He will not show favoritism in any way. Our text continues this idea. It addresses two groups of people - those who have the written Law of God and those who do not. It speaks about the final judgment of God on both groups. At this time, the group that had the law of God was the

Jews. They had received the oracles of God down through Old Testament history. The ones who did not have the written law of God were the Gentiles. Those distinctions could be applied today to those who have the Bible and have heard the gospel and those who do not and have never heard about Jesus. Our text addresses both groups and provides important information concerning God's judgment on all people.

### **I. God gives a righteous judgment of sinners under the law.**

Rom. 2:12-13

The Jews had the great advantage of having the oracles of God. The Old Testament revelation set forth the character and nature of God, the law of God, and the promise of salvation in Christ. **Rom. 1:1-2; 3:1-2.** Think about all the Messianic promises through the Old Testament. You could think of them like a seed in Gen. 3:15 that begins to grow. All through the Old Testament with more prophecy and types added, it grows until finally at the time of the coming of Jesus, it is a large tree bearing fruit.

In terms of the Law, the people of Israel heard the very voice of God speak the Ten Commandments from Mount Sinai. When they didn't want to hear God speak anymore, Moses acted as a mediator and delivered all of God's law to them. The Law of God also contained the promise of salvation through the work of the Messiah. The sacrificial system taught the principle of substitutionary atonement and pointed typologically toward the work of Christ. The Jews had the great advantage of being the recipients of this redemptive revelation from God. Sadly, by the New Testament period, many Jewish people trusted simply in the fact that they had the law. Self-righteousness had become prevalent. **Luke 18:9-14 18:18-23** - Jesus simply went to the first commandment to show him that he really hadn't kept the law. His wealth was his god. Jesus applied the law to the motivations of the heart in the Sermon on the Mount - murder and unjust anger, adultery and lust. Many Jewish people simply relied on the fact that they had the law. Some, like the Pharisees, believed they kept it because they applied it in an external

manner. However, the principle Paul sets forth is that the demands of the law are absolute perfection and obedience to it. **Rom. 2:13; Gal. 3:10-12**

Paul applies this in a very pointed way near the end of Rom. 2.

**Rom. 2:17-23**

**Rom. 2:12** - I started the second part of the verse because his principle also applies today to anyone who has heard the Word of God and the message of the Gospel. Therefore, it applies to everyone who has heard the gospel. It certainly possible for people to grow up in church, hear the gospel, or be a member of a church and think they are right with God because of some heritage of exposure to the gospel in their lives. **Martyn Lloyd-Jones said**, "Many people come to listen to the gospel. . . who have always gone to church and Sunday School, . . . yet they may be unregenerate. They need the same salvation as the man who may have come to listen who has never been inside a House of God before. He may come out of some moral gutter; it does not matter. It is the same way, the same gospel for both, and both must come in the same way. Religiosity is of no value; morality does not count; nothing matters. We are all reduced to the same level because it is "by faith," because it is "by grace." **A goat wanted more than anything** else in the world to be a lion. He told himself that if he could learn to walk like a lion, talk like a lion, and go where lions go, he would be a lion. So he practiced stalking through the jungle and tried to swish his stubby little tail majestically. Then he sought to turn his pitiful little bleat into the deep, awesome roar of the king of beasts. He worked and worked on it. Finally he convinced himself that he really looked and sounded like a lion. "Now," he said, "all I have to do to be a lion is go where lions go." So he marched into lion territory one day about lunchtime. You can imagine what happened! Sometimes people think that because they've learned to walk, talk, and act like Christians, they really are. Like the Jews at the time of Paul, a person growing up in Church or an adult who has been in church for quite while may think they are in a state of grace because of church membership or having some knowledge of the Bible. People who have Christian



parents and grow up in the church may think they are Christians because they know hymns and they find passages in the Bible. They know the Christian language and the sub-culture of the church. However, if they don't have faith in Christ themselves, that heritage simply makes them all the more accountable before God. **Henry Ward Beecher said**, "Oh child of many prayers; Oh child of baptism and covenants; Oh child of the Sabbath-school and the early Church - if you are going from glory to glory, how joyful is your lot! But if you are going on from insensibility to insensibility, if you sin more and feel less, if you are becoming harder and harder, if moral waste is more and more manifest in you, if death already begins to show itself in the supernal and superior part of your nature, if conscience ceases any more to speak and hope is gone, and faith is lost, and wreck and ruin have come upon the crystalline sphere of your being - then woe is you!" **Thomas Watson wrote**, "We may have the kingdom of God come nigh us, but not into us; the sound of the word in our ears, but not the savor of it in our hearts. Luke xi:20. Many of the Jews, who had Christ for their preacher, were not the better for it. Hot clothes will not put warmth into a dead man. Thou mayest have hot clothes, warm and lively preaching, and yet be spiritually dead." *The Lord's Prayer*, 65. Rom. 2:12 - Notice that those who have sinned under the law or with a knowledge of the law will be judged by the law. They will be judged according to the standards of the law of God and the law demands absolute perfection externally and in the internal attitudes and motivations of the heart. **Luke 12:47-48**

All of here have heard the gospel. You all have the Word of God. Most of you are carrying a Bible with you right now. You are all the more accountable because much has been given to you. Are you truly in Christ?

## **II. God gives a righteous judgment of sinners without the law.**

**Rom. 2:12** - This refers to Gentiles who did not received the Old Testament redemptive revelation from God. They did not receive the oracles of God like the Jews did.

However, our text declares that they will perish apart from the law. The excuse might be

given that they did not have the law. Paul answers that excuse or objection in Rom. 2:14-15. Two things are mentioned that leave them without excuse. **First**, even though they didn't have the written law like the Jewish people, they did have the law of God written on their hearts. **Second**, they also possess consciences that tell them they ought to obey this law and accuses or condemns them when they don't. **In Rom. 1:19-20**, Paul states that all people possess a knowledge of the existence of God from the witness of creation. They know there is a God and this leaves them without excuse. In this text, the idea is extended further. Here the Scriptures declare that all people have the moral code of God written on their hearts. Paul says that everyone has the law of God written on their hearts. **Rom. 2:14-15a** This is the same moral code that the Jews have in written form. **John Murray comments**, ". . . they themselves, by reason of what is implanted in their nature, confront themselves with the law of God" (73).

The second thing that leaves them without excuse is their conscience. It bears witness to them that they are obeying or disobeying what they know is right. **Rom. 2:15-16** While this sense of right and wrong can be corrupted, we see it operate in lost people when they have a sense of moral oughtness that corresponds to what we know God has said in Scripture.

For example the story is told of a man who lost his wallet. A few days later he received this letter, "Sir, I found your wallet. Remorse is bothering me, so am sending some of your money back to you. When remorse bothers me again, I will send some more money." Finally, we see that their thoughts either excuse or accuse them. That means they have a memory of what they have done and know that it is right or wrong before God.

**James Montgomery Boice** notes that there are three important witnesses against the natural man in Rom. 2:12-16: **1) The law of nature.** He writes, ". . . although there are obvious differences in the way various races and cultures look at morals, there is nevertheless far more agreement than we might think at first. Regardless of culture, there

is (with few exceptions) a general regard for life, honor, bravery, selflessness, and such things. And the law codes and moral treatises of the ancients are remarkably like our own." **2) Conscience.** The conscience also bears witness (Rom. 2:15). Nature is an objective standard; conscience tells us we should do the right thing personally. Robert Haldane says, "Knowledge shows what is right; the conscience approves of it and condemns the contrary" (An Exposition of the Epistle to the Romans, 1958, 91).

**3) The Memory.** This is seen in Rom. 2:15. **Boice writes,** "What a picture we have here! Three accusers, combining their witness to prove that even the person without the law will perish! Donald Grey Barnhouse was known for his vivid and often very original illustrations, and at this point in his treatment of Romans he refers to the famous Revolutionary War painting 'The Spirit of '76.' It shows a drummer, a standard-bearer, and a fifer marching briskly down the road. Barnhouse says that our conduct (measured by the moral law), our conscience, and our memory are like those figures: Your conduct beats the drum that declares by our resounding good works that you know there is a divine law. Your conscience waves the flag that reminds you that often you have trampled your principles in the dust as you rushed past on your way to complete the desires of your own will. And the fife of your memory shrieks its refrain to remind you that you have sinned. The excuses and accusations of your thought run like shrill arpeggios in the counterpoint of your guilt. And the trio, conduct, conscience and mind, are all in step, in a perfect unison of condemnation because you have followed the road of your own will, refusing the road that forks at the cross of Jesus Christ that will lead you, if you follow it, even into eternal life." *Romans*, Vol. 1 by Boice, 238-239. The important thing to notice in this text is that both groups apart from Christ perish. There are no innocent natives in Africa or anywhere else. Rom. 1:18f informs us that they reject the knowledge of God which they have and they are without excuse. They become idol factories. Rom. 2:12-16 informs us that whatever light they have by either the

written law or the law written on their hearts, their conscience tells them to obey it, but they break it and their thoughts or memory condemn them.

### **III. God's righteous judgment should move us toward evangelism and missions.**

Rom. 2:12 Again, both groups perish. Therefore, as those who know the gospel and know the only way of salvation through faith in Christ, if we truly love our neighbor, we will have a concern to make the gospel known to them. That can refer to evangelism here and in missions on foreign soil. **Charles Spurgeon said**, "If sinners be damned, at least let them leap to hell over our bodies. If they will perish, let them perish with our arms about their knees. Let no one go there unwarned and unprayed for." **Robert Reymond writes**, "We should be willing, as was Paul, to endure loneliness, pain and suffering, loss of friends, persecution, insults, misunderstanding, physical affliction, even death itself, if necessary, for the cause of Christ. That is to say, we should be willing to go anywhere, at any time, at any cost for Christ's sake (see Acts 20:24; 1 Cor. 4:9-13; 2 Cor. 11:23-28; Phil. 3:7-9; 2 Tim. 4:6-8). Simply put, if Christ is God and if he died for us, then nothing he would demand of us should we regard as too great a thing for him to ask or too high a sacrifice for us to make in his service.

The English evangelist John Harper was on the Titanic when it sank in 1912. Several survivors told of the last time they saw John Harper. All through the trip, he had been talking with everyone he could about the gospel. In fact, just when the Titanic hit the iceberg, Harper had been seen leaning against a rail speaking with a young man about Christ. Four years after the Titanic sank, a young Scottish man rose in a meeting in Hamilton, Canada and said, "I am a survivor of the Titanic. When I was drifting alone on a spar that awful night, the waves brought John Harper, also on a piece of wreck, near me. "Man," he said, "Are you saved?" "No," I said, "I'm not." He replied, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." The waves bore him away; but strange to say brought him back a little later and he said, "Are you saved now?" "No, I can't say that I am." He said again, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved."

Shortly after that he disappeared beneath the waves and there alone in the night, I believed in Jesus as my Savior. I'm the last person John Harper to whom John Harper presented the gospel and God saved me from that witness."

John Harper, in the face of his own death, didn't miss one final opportunity to present the gospel.

Rom. 2:17-29 Romans series #10 1/4/09

Before the advent season, we were working our way through Romans 2. We've observed that Jews who had the written law broke it and the Gentiles who had the law written on their hearts also violated what they knew of the commands of God. The standard of the law of God is absolute perfection. Therefore, both groups perish. In this last section of the chapter, Paul especially drives home this point to the Jews who had the great advantage of receiving the written law and oracles of God. This section emphasizes once again that no one can be saved through good works or attempts at keeping God's law.

### **I. The Jews had the written revelation of God.**

#### **Rom. 2:17-20; 3:1-2**

There is an important concept presented in these verses. Rom. 2:18, 20 - The law of God gave the Jews an external written revelation of the will of God. As a result, they had the "embodiment of knowledge and of the truth." They had a written revelation that objectively informed them concerning right and wrong, the plan of salvation through the substitutionary work of the coming Messiah, and the nature of God. The Old Testament revelation provided them with a knowledge of the person and attributes of God. While the New Testament sheds light on the Old Testament revelation, the vast majority of doctrinal material is present in the Old Testament. For example, concerning the doctrine of the Trinity, the Old Testament uses plural pronouns in God's speaking to himself at the time of creation (Gen. 1:26), the angel of the Lord acts as God, receives worship, and is even directly called God at places and yet, is distinct from the Father. In every context, the Angel of God speaks and performs deeds as if he were God himself, but distinguishes

himself from God. The Holy Spirit is set forth as God, but distinct from the Son and the Father. The distinct persons of the Trinity are also implied in **Isaiah 63:9-10**. Isaiah speaks of the Lord, the Angel of his presence, and his Holy Spirit as distinct persons.

**B. B. Warfield**, in his article on the Trinity said it this way: "The Old Testament may be likened to a chamber richly furnished but dimly lighted; the introduction of light brings into it nothing which was not in it before; but it brings out into clearer view much of what is in it but was only dimly or even not at all perceived before. . . . Thus the Old Testament revelation of God is not corrected by the fuller revelation which follows it, but only perfected, extended and enlarged."

We could point to other foundational doctrines of the faith which are revealed in the Old Testament revelation. We have already observed in Rom. 1:1-2 that the gospel was promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures. The Jews had this great advantage of having the oracles of God (**Rom. 3:1-2**).

**Psa. 119:97-105**. Four parallel items are set forth in vs. 19-20 concerning the Jew who has the law and his self-perception. **First**, he considers himself a guide for the blind. Here is the idea of physical blindness being a symbol of intellectual and spiritual blindness. **Matt. 15:14; Matt 23:16** - Jesus calls the Pharisees "blind guides." **Second**, a light for those who are in darkness. The Jews were to have a mission mentality from the beginning. Abraham was told that in his seed all the nations would be blessed (Gen. 22:18). Mal. 1:11 - From the rising of the sun, even to its setting, my name will be great among the gentiles or nations. Isa. 42:6 - "I have appointed you as a light to the Gentiles. (same in Isa. 49:6; 60:3). To a certain extent the Jews understood this. For example, the Old Testament was translated into Greek so the Gentiles as well as Jews living in those regions could read and understand it. However, the opposite of being a light was also true. By the time of Jesus, the law had been misapplied and made into an elaborate legalistic system. The teaching of the Pharisees was not that the law pointed to the Messiah, but that it was the means of righteousness. **Matt. 23:15**

**William Hendriksen** comments on this that the convert "must become a full-fledged legalistic, ritualistic, hair-splitting Pharisee, one filled with fanatic zeal for his new salvation-by-works religion. As Jesus implies, soon this new convert would even out-Pharisee the Pharisees. . ." (103).

**Third**, an instructor of the foolish. They were convinced that they had all wisdom in their system.

**Fourth**, a teacher of the immature. Again, they were going to instruct those who did not understand their system of works righteousness. The tragic element in this is that at this time, instead of embracing the true law of God which pointed to the Messiah, they had corrupted it and added to it a load of man-made restrictions and modifications. They had excused their sin and violated the true commands of God all under a pretense of superiority and self-righteousness.

**Many of the Jews did not understand the purpose of the law was to reveal sin and drive to the Messiah. Rom. 2:17**

They relied upon the law, not only as a revelation of the will of God, but also as a way of salvation. Remember that Jesus taught that the Old Testament Scriptures proclaimed him and his work. **John 5:39, 46-47** - Jesus said that if they did not believe in him, they were not believing Moses or the rest of the Old Testament. That means that the real message of the Old Testament was salvation by faith in the Messiah. At the time Paul is writing Romans, the Old Testament and the law had been corrupted to be viewed a way of self-righteousness and salvation.

**II. The Jews, like all people, violated the law of God while at the same time claiming they were teachers of the law.**

**Rom. 3:21-24**

They claimed to know the law and teach the law. They claimed to be obedient to the law and be in a right relationship with God through the law. The reality, which Paul poignantly points out, is that they were law-breakers. The phrase on robbing temples

may seem strange to the ear, but it addresses the idea of stealing idols for their value and perhaps also for some spiritual benefit. **Deut. 7:25** - The practice is forbidden so it was a temptation that was present. Apparently, this is something the Gentiles knew the Jewish people who lived among them might do since this is specifically mentioned when the riot took place at Ephesus. **Acts 19:37** Temple robbery was not unheard of in the Gentile world. Paul's main point in this section is to point out to Jewish readers of this letter, that all are guilty before God. The standard of the law is absolute perfection. Paul will also show in Rom. 5:12-19 that we are all born with Adam's sin imputed to us. Therefore, on the basis of the imputation of Adam's sin and personal violation of the law of God, everyone is a sinner in need of salvation. Paul gives a final punch in **Rom. 2:23-24**. The quotation is based on the LXX translation of Isa. 52:5.

The idea is that the Gentiles reason that since the Jews are behaving wickedly, their god must be wicked too.

Instead of being paragons of virtue, they are actually negative witnesses against God.

They are law-breakers who need salvation.

**There is a humorous story** of a self-righteous, pompous Sunday school teacher who was trying to explain to his class the importance of living in holy obedience to Christ. With head held high and chest thrust outward, he strutted impressively back and forth across the room, while saying arrogantly, "Now boys, why do people call me a Christian?"

There was a momentary silence. Then one of the boys slowly raised his hand. "Yes?" boomed the teacher. The boy responded, "Probably because they don't know you."

**Charles Spurgeon said,** "The apostle says, 'As many as are of the works of the law are under the curse.' Now, there are some of you who choose to be under law; you deliberately choose to be judged by it. How so? Why, you are trying to reach a place in heaven by you own good works; you are clinging to the idea that something you can do can save you; you have therefore elected to be under the law, and by so doing you have chosen the curse, for all that the law of works can do for you, is to leave you still



accursed, because you have not fulfilled all its commands. O sirs, repent of so foolish a choice, and declare henceforth that you are willing to be saved by grace, and not at all by the works of the law. Thou art under the curse as thou now art, but I rejoice to have to tell thee that the curse has been removed through Jesus Christ our Lord. O may the Lord lead thee to see the plan of substitution and to rejoice in it." *12 Sermons on the Passion and Death of Christ*, 61.

**Therefore, the first application** of this is that the law shows us our sin. It shows us that we cannot save ourselves and we need a Savior. Paul directly applies that point to his fellow Jews who claimed to know and teach the law, but broke it. **A second application** is that it is possible for people to know the Word of God and not apply it to their lives. For the Jews to whom Paul was addressing, they claimed to know the law, but their lives were a constant violation of the law. Of course, they also misapplied the law as a way of salvation. For us today, the same principle can apply. Throughout my years as a pastor, I've often spoken with people who had a good theological understanding, but did not practice the more basic aspects of Christian living. For example, I've spoken with people who expressed deep understanding of certain theological issues, but they never went to church or worshipped with the people of God.

**III. What makes a person a Jew in the full spiritual sense of the term is not ethnicity, but a regenerate heart.**

**Rom. 2:25-29**

One of the main things the Jewish community trust in was their being set apart unto God with the covenant sign of circumcision. It was a great blessing to born into the community of faith. However, neither having the law or being circumcised sufficed for salvation. If the outward circumcision does not reflect an inner reality, then it is meaningless. Remember how many times the Pharisees argued with Jesus that they were descendants of Abraham and, therefore, in a right relationship with God. **John 8:32-44**

Here were a group of people who were ethnically descended from Abraham, but Jesus tells them that God is not their Father, but rather, the devil is their father. In a similar way, Paul draws a distinction in this passage between Jew and Jew. He speaks of the one who is a Jew outwardly only. He has a certain ethnic heritage. He was born into the community of Israel and he received the covenant sign of circumcision. Paul also speaks of the individual who has faith and subsequent obedience to God. He calls this person a true Jew in the full spiritual sense of the word. He is a part of the true covenant community.

**Rom. 2:28-29** - The idea of a circumcision of the heart runs through the Old Testament. **Deut. 30:6; Jer. 4:4; 9:26; Ezek. 44:7** **William Hendriksen comments**, ". . . the apostle affirms that 'he is not a (real) Jew who is one only on the outside . . . but he is a Jew who is one inwardly . . .'" (109).

The "Israel of God" in the new covenant context is comprised of both believing Jews and believing Gentiles. **Rom. 2:28-29** states that external circumcision does not make a person a Jew.

**Rom. 4:9-13, 16-17A; Gal. 3:6-14** - Paul states that Abraham is the "father" of two communities. He is the father of believing Jews and equally the father of all uncircumcised believers (Gentiles). Throughout Galatians, Paul argues that the law of circumcision, which previously marked off the people of God, now avails nothing. In fact, anyone who insists on keeping the law by requiring circumcision is denying the work of Christ (Gal. 5:1-4). Paul states that those who insist on circumcision are only trying to avoid the persecution that comes from being identified with the cross of Christ (Gal. 6:12). Paul will only boast in the cross of Christ because all other boasting ends when one realizes that Jesus had to die before sinners could be redeemed (Gal. 6:14). **Gal. 6:15** sets down a rule for identifying the people of God. Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is anything, but a new creation. This is a radical statement. Paul states that circumcision means absolutely nothing in terms of the identity of the people of God

and lack of circumcision means absolutely nothing in this regard. The mark of identity that set God's people apart through the old covenant now has no meaning in terms of the identity of the people of God. Only the experience of a new creation by God's grace establishes a person as one of God's people. **The main point in this chapter is that Paul strips away all claims at self-righteousness.** Someone might say, "I have the law of God" or "I own a nice leatherbound Bible." Fine, do you apply it's message. Has it driven you to the end of yourself and to Christ alone for salvation?

**Charles Spurgeon said,** "The greatest enemy to human souls is the self-righteous spirit which makes men look to themselves for salvation." **James Kennedy writes:** It was a dark night on the Mississippi highway from Jackson to Vicksburg. The sky was overcast, but at least the heavy rains of the last few days had stopped. The truck driver relaxed in the cab of his truck and watched the broken line of the road disappear monotonously beneath his cab, thankful that at least now the roads were dry and much safer. Suddenly the twin tail lights of the car in front of him melted into the road and disappeared! He sat bolt upright in his cab. That was inexplicable. It could not happen, and yet it just had. That thought went through his mind in a fraction of a second. In the next fraction of a second he saw the gaping black hole where a bridge had stood over the river. He slammed on his brakes. The wheels stopped instantly, but there was no longer any road beneath them. His truck sailed silently and eerily into the black void. Breaking glass, he extricated himself and managed to swim to shore. He scrambled up the embankment, all the while hearing one car after another zoom smoothly into the gap, and disappear, followed by shrieks and a booming splash. Finally, he reached the road and frantically waved his hands at oncoming cars. They were no doubt surprised by this dripping scarecrow, but at least three passed him before he was able to stop a driver from speeding over the edge. Sixteen people died that night. Each had faith in a bridge that the swollen river had torn away - a bridge that was out. Many suppose that by the bridge of good works- morality, piety, church membership, good character, and religiosity - they can

somehow make their way across that dark river safely into paradise. That bridge is out. The abyss is real, and it is eternal. I cannot imagine how frightening it must be to feel yourself, at the end of life, silently slipping over the edge into eternity without heeding God's call - without being justified, adopted, and sanctified. *How Do I Get To Know God?*, 114-115.

Rom. 2:28-29 Romans Series #11 1/11/09

Last week we considered these last two verses in Romans 2 and observed that the principle of a renewed or regenerated heart is what makes a person a Jew in the spiritual sense of the term. Ethnic lineage or being outwardly circumcised does not make a person a Jew in the full sense of the term. Today we are going to examine this principle further and look at how this idea is developed here in Rom. 2 as well as in other Scriptures. We could start at several points, but perhaps the best point at which to begin is how this idea is set forth in the Old Testament. God promised Abraham an innumerable seed (Gen. 12:2; 15:5) which indicates that redemption has a perspective toward the multiplication of the descendants of the redeemed.

However, who is this "seed of Abraham?" How do Jews and Gentiles relate to the seed of Abraham down through redemptive history.

In answer to this question, we need to consider various aspects of the identity of "the Israel of God."

### **I. Abraham was originally a Gentile or pagan who was called by God for the fulfillment of God's redemptive purposes.**

**Gen. 12:1-4** - When Abram was originally called, he was simply one of many Gentile idol worshipers on the other side of the Euphrates River (**Josh. 24:2-3**). There was nothing in Abram that made him different from any other pagan living at the time. However, God made a distinction in Abram in calling him out from idolatry and to Abram (later Abraham) were given the promises of the land, a seed, and a blessing. God sovereignly establishes a covenant with Abraham in Gen. 15. In this covenant ritual, God

bases his promises on his own nature and foreshadows the cross of Christ. **Gen. 15:8-18a** - This ceremony is a pattern that would have been familiar to Abraham. It was a pattern that was used to establish treaties and contracts at that time.

**Explain** - Self-maledictory oath. "If I break the terms of the agreement, let me be killed like this animal." God was saying that if he can cease to be, then his promise will not be fulfilled. He also took upon himself the curse of the covenant breaker. That was ultimately fulfilled in Christ bearing the curse of the covenant breaker on the cross. **Jer. 34:18-20**

It is important to note that all of the patriarchs are depicted as being called and redeemed on the basis of God's divine election. Again, Abram was simply another pagan that God sovereignly called to himself.

**II. From the beginning of Israel's history, any Gentile could become a full-fledged Jew. Abraham's descendants, however, would begin their life with an identity as the people of God.**

The descendants of Abraham began their lives with an identity among the people of God. They received the sign of circumcision which identified them as the people of God at eight days of age.

Gen. 17:12 However, a foreigner could become a full Jew. This was implied in the promise that Abraham would be a blessing to all nations (**Gal. 3:8**). It is directly set forth in

**Gen. 17:9-14, 23, 26-27**

When God first gave the covenant sign of circumcision to Abraham, he specifically indicated that any Gentile could become a Jew by professing the God of Abraham and being circumcised.

**Exo. 12:43-44, 48-49** - Here the same principle is set forth. A stranger or foreigner may eat of the Passover if they are circumcised. That would indicate that had some understanding of what it meant and wanted to be a part of the covenant community. This

would imply adherence to the true and living God as he revealed himself in the Old Testament Scriptures and the presence of faith in the promises of salvation through the coming Messiah. Therefore, a foreigner could join the covenant community and become a part of it through receiving the covenant sign. **Rahab** and **Ruth** are a good examples of this. Not circumcised because of her gender, but she expressed faith.

**Benno Jacob, a Jewish commentator on the book of Genesis states:**

"Indeed, differences of race have never been an obstacle to joining Israel which did not know the concept of purity of blood. . . . Circumcision turned a man of foreign origin into an Israelite" (*The First Book of the Bible: Genesis*, 233).

**III. It was possible for people who began with an identification with the people of God to be cut off and considered "not my people." Hosea 1:8-9** While there is a promise of restoration for a remnant of Israel, according to the prophecy of Hosea, many of the descendants of Abraham became *Lo-Ammi*, meaning "not my people" by the exile. Because of their unbelief and refusal to repent, the majority of Abraham's descendants were cast back into the Gentile world. The ten northern tribes were absorbed into the Gentile world and ceased to exist as a distinct people.

In fact, the Assyrian exile in 722 B. C. took them out of the land and put in the region of Ur of the Chaldeans.

Right where Abram was when he was originally called. Therefore, being a descendant of Abraham was not guarantee that a person would remain among God's covenant people without any consideration of his faith and his faithfulness to God's covenant. However, God did have a remnant among the exiled from the southern kingdom of Judah and some returned to the land as Jeremiah prophesied in **Jer. 25:11; 29:10. Rom. 9:6**

**IV. The election of God was not exclusively given to the ethnic descendants of Abraham.**

God could redirect his mercy and grace and choose other peoples to be his own. We especially see this principle in a judgment prophecy in the book of Amos.

**Amos 9:7.**

**Amos 9:8-10** - Amos said that God will shake the house of Israel among the nations, and all the sinners among his people will die.

Yet, the house of Jacob will not completely be cut off -**Amos 9:8.**

**Amos 9:11-12** - The phrase "in that day" refers to the time after this judgment has come upon Israel. After this judgment, Esau will have God's name set on him. The salvation of Edom will be accomplished as a consequence of the restoration of the fallen tent of David. This discussion of the Edomites is way of saying that the Gentiles will come in. Esau the original father of the Edomites is the epitome of the non-elect or of Gentiles.

**Amos 9:12** - Amos states that God's name will be placed on Edom, the descendants of Esau, indicating his election of this people. In Deut. 28:9-10, the identical phrase is applied to God's election of Israel.

This prophecy states that there will be a remnant from the house of Israel as well as an elect from the nations. This is fulfilled in the new covenant spread of the gospel to the nations. See: Acts 15:14-19.

James is not looking toward some future reality, but is addressing the present situation of Gentiles being saved. His and the apostles' conclusion is that it is not necessary to circumcise them. James applies the Amos passage that present situation and views David's rebuilt tabernacle as the church which the Gentiles are coming into.

Jesus states that the kingdom will be taken away from Israel (Matt. 21:42-44; 8:11-12).

The kingdom will be taken away from Israel and given to a nation bearing fruit, but there will be a remnant of believing Jews (Rom. 11:1-6).

**V. Christ has made believing Jews and Gentiles into one covenant people of God.**

**Eph. 2:11-19.** The dividing wall of hostility has been abolished in Christ and Jews are fellow members of the body and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ through the gospel

**Eph. 3:4-6** - Notice that this is not something that was completely unknown before the new covenant period. It was not known "as it has now been revealed." It is revealed in a fuller sense in the new covenant, but it was not unknown. **Gal. 3:8**

**VI. The "Israel of God" in the new covenant context is comprised of both believing Jews and believing Gentiles.** Rom. 2:28-29 states that external circumcision does not make a person a Jew.

**Rom. 4:9-13, 16-17A; Gal. 3:6-14.** Paul states that Abraham is the "father" of two communities. He is the father of believing Jews and equally the father of all uncircumcised believers (Gentiles). Throughout Galatians, Paul argues that the law of circumcision, which previously marked off the people of God, now avails nothing. In fact, anyone who insists on keeping the law by requiring circumcision is denying the work of Christ (Gal. 5:1-4).

**Gal. 6:12-** Paul states that those who insist on circumcision are only trying to avoid the persecution that comes from being identified with the cross of Christ.

**Gal. 6:14** - Paul will only boast in the cross of Christ because all other boasting ends when one realizes that Jesus had to die before sinners could be redeemed.

**Gal. 6:15** - Paul sets down a rule for identifying the people of God. Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is anything, but a new creation. This is a radical statement. Paul states that circumcision means absolutely nothing in terms of the identity of the people of God and lack of circumcision means absolutely nothing in this regard. The mark of identity that set God's people apart through the old covenant now has no meaning in terms of the identity of the people of God. Only the experience of a new creation by God's grace establishes a person as one of God's people. We are back to **Rom. 2:28-29**



Gal. 6:15 uses the phrase, "the Israel of God."

What does Paul mean in this phrase. NIV translates it "even the Israel of God" making it refer to the church. Kai can have an epexegetical or explanatory meaning. That translation best fits the context. What is the rule upon which Paul places his apostolic blessing? It is placed upon those who do not make circumcision or uncircumcision the basis for determining the people of God. In other words, no distinction between Jew and Gentile must be made in terms of identifying the people of God. It is in this context that the phrase, "the Israel of God" must be evaluated. If you make it mean a separate people from those who follow the rule in verse 16, then Paul has broken the very principle he set forth in verse 15 and made a distinction based on ethnic categories. If the Kai is translated as "even" as NIV does, then Paul's statement exactly fits what he says in verse 15. He does not make ethnic distinctions, but only the point of a new creation or salvation. Therefore, he affirms the idea of the new covenant community, the church being the Israel of God. This would also fit perfectly the principle he sets forth in Rom. 2:28-29 as well as the idea that Abraham is the father of all who believe. **Gal. 3:26-29; Rom. 4:11-12, 16-17a**

**John Calvin** in his *Commentary On Galatians* cites Justin Martyr: "We, who have been brought to God by this crucified Christ, are the true spiritual Israel, and the seed of Judah, and of Jacob, and of Isaac, and of Abraham, whose faith was attested and who was blessed by God, and called the father of many nations, while he was in uncircumcision."

**Calvin comments:** "In a word, he gives the appellation of the *Israel of God* to those whom he formally denominated the children of Abraham by faith (Gal. 3:29), and thus includes all believers, whether Jews or Gentiles, who were united into one church."

**O. Palmer Robertson writes,** "Contrary to much modern thought, it is not those who distinguish between Jews and Gentiles who are blessed by God, Instead, those who maintain this distinction are the very ones who have been denied God's blessing" (*The Israel of God*, 46). **Phil. 3:1-3;** 1 Pet. 2:9-10 (compare with Exo. 19:5-6). This affirms

once again that we can trust in nothing in ourselves for salvation. Many Jews trusted in their being descendants of Abraham. Paul says that Abraham's children are only those who walk in the faith of Abraham. People today may trust in the fact that they grew up in a Christian family and so they are right with God. It is a great blessing to be born or adopted into a Christian family, but every individual has to believe. That old cliché that God doesn't have any grandchildren is true. People trust in church membership or the fact they were baptized almost the same way the Jews trust in the fact they were circumcised. Paul's main point in Rom. 2 is to show that having the law, while it is a great advantage to have the oracles of God, will not save you. The only thing that makes a person a true Jew in the full spiritual sense of the term is a regenerate heart and subsequent faith and repentance in Christ alone for salvation. **Charles Spurgeon said,** "The cardinal error against which the gospel of Christ has to contend is the effect of the tendency of the human heart to rely on salvation by works. The great antagonist to the truth as it is in Jesus is that pride of man which leads him to believe that he can be, at least in part, his own savior. This error is the prolific mother of multitudes of heresies."

**Warren Buffet,** one of the world's richest men, now worth an estimated 38 billion dollars, said this after giving 30 billion dollars to the Bill Gates Foundation: "There is more than one way to get to heaven, but this is a great way." 7/12/06 **Robert Reymond said,** "While I trust that all of you here are genuinely converted and true Christians, I must urge you to examine yourselves to make sure that you are trusting solely in the preceptive and penal obedience of Jesus Christ for God's forgiveness and imputed distributive righteousness. For make no mistake about it, the day will come when you and I will stand naked before God, and in that day the issue of in whom or in what we trusted here for our salvation will be all-important. And 'though [we may] wish to dispute with him,' as Job states, 'we will be unable to answer one time out of a thousand (9:3), for you and I in that Great Day will be stripped of all the things in which we may have placed our confidence in this world. We will stand before the throne of the Judge of

all the earth in that day without earthly title, without money, without property, without earthly reputation, without personal prestige - in utter poverty in ourselves. And unless we have been forgiven of our sins and are enrobed in the glorious dress of the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ, God will consign us to eternal perdition for our sins.

Beloved friends, if you have never completely repudiated your own self-help efforts at self-salvation and have never totally trust in the Savior's righteous life and sacrificial death alone for your salvation, I beg of you, do both right now!" From: *What Is God?*, 227-228.

### **Rom. 3:1-8 Romans Series #12 1/18/09**

Last week we considered the principle that Paul sets forth at the end of Rom. 2 that simply having a certain ethnic heritage or some external sign does not make a person a Jew in the spiritual sense of the term. It is a regenerate heart which makes a person a part of the community of faith or the Israel of God. Paul makes this point in order to emphasize to his Jewish readers that their heritage of having the written Word of God and their being circumcised will not save them. They must have a renewed heart and faith in the Messiah. Paul elaborates on this in Romans 3. He anticipates an objection which could arise that if one is a true spiritual Jew only through a regenerate heart, then is there any advantage to being a Jew in the more outward literal sense or in having been circumcised? Is there any advantage to be born into the Jewish nation? Paul answers that objection and points out that, even though many of Jewish heritage have rejected the Messiah, God is still faithful and will fulfill his covenant promises to those who do believe. A remnant will be saved.

#### **I. The Jews had the great blessing of having the oracles of God.**

**Rom. 3:1-2** - What advantage did the Jew have. A great advantage. They had received the written Word of God. **Rom. 9:4-5**

This is a great blessing and advantage over the Gentile world. They knew the attributes and nature of the true and living God. They had the covenant promises of the Messiah. They had the law of God which objectively informed them of right and wrong. They had the ceremonial law which taught the principle of substitutionary atonement and pointed toward the work of the Messiah. They were also a part of a community of faith in which the Scriptures were read, taught, and preached.

**William Hendriksen comments on Rom. 3:1-2:** "When Paul mentally calls the roll of Jewish prerogatives, one time tops all others, namely, the fact that to the Jews, and to no other nation, was accorded the unique privilege, the high honor, of being the custodians of the oracles of God, that entire special revelation to Israel which consisted not only of commandments, but also of predictions and promises." Commentary on Romans, 109.

**This affirms the OT Scriptures as God's Word.**

The Old Testament is called the "oracles of God."

**Charles Hodge comments,** "Here, as in innumerable other places, the sacred writers of the New Testament use forms of expression which clearly imply that they regarded the sacred writings of the Jews as really the word of God" (69-70). **B. B. Warfield**, in his work, *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible*, refers to Rom. 3:2 and says, "The very point of this use of the word[ oracle] is that it *identifies* the Sacred Books with the Oracles" (404).

**He elaborates:** "That is to say, we have unobtrusive and convincing evidence here that the Old Testament Scriptures, as such, were esteemed by the writers of the New Testament as an oracular book, which in itself not merely contains, but is the 'utterance,' the very Word of God; and is to be appealed to as such and as such deferred to, because nothing other than the crystallized speech of God. . . . Let him that thinks them something other and less than this, reckon, then, with the apostles and prophets of the New Covenant - to whose trustworthiness as witnesses to doctrinal truth he owes all he knows about the New Covenant itself, and therefore all he hope for through this New

Covenant" (406-407). This also means that the Jews had a definite set of books which they understood were the oracles of God or the Scriptures. See: **Luke 24:27, 44; John 5:39; 10:35; Acts 17:2, 11; Mark 7:13 (Matt. 15:6); Matt. 21:42; Heb. 1:1-2.** It is important to observe that there was a set collection of books which they understood to be the Word of God.

What advantage has the Jew? A great advantage because he has the Word of God. In a similar way, the question could be asked, what is the advantage of being born into a Christian home? It is a great advantage because the child is taught the word of God, the way salvation through faith in Christ, and is a part of the covenant community in the church. To be born into that situation is a great advantage over someone born into an unbelieving home.

Of course, this great advantage and blessing also has responsibilities. To whom much is given, much is required.

For all who are in a Christian situation and have the Word of God, there is a duty to read and study the Bible. In our seminar with James White, the statement was made concerning the inspiration of the Bible that if God has truly written a book, don't you think it would be a good idea to read it?

Amos predicted a famine of hearing the word of God (Amos 8:11-12). **O. Palmer Robertson writes**, "It would be far better to starve to death with your heart filled with the word of God than to be stuffed with food and be empty in your soul."

**Lt. General William K. Harrison** was the most decorated soldier in the 30th Infantry Division, rated by General Eisenhower as the number one infantry division of World War II. General Harrison was the first American to enter Belgium, which he did at the head of the Allied forces. He received every decoration for valor except the Congressional Medal of Honor - being honored with the Distinguished Silver Cross, the Silver Star, the Bronze Star for Valor, and the Purple Heart (he was one of the few generals to be wounded in action). When the Korean War began, he served as Chief of Staff in the United Nations

Command - and because of his character and self-control was ultimately President Eisenhower's choice to head the long and tedious negotiations to end the war. General Harrison was a soldier's soldier who led a busy, ultra-kinetic life, but he was also an amazing man of the Word. When he was a twenty-year-old West Point Cadet, he began reading the Old Testament through once a year and the New Testament four times. General Harrison did this until the end of his life. Even in the thick of war he maintained his commitment by catching up during the two-and-three day respites for replacement and refitting which followed battles, so that when the war ended he was right on schedule. When, at the age of ninety, his failing eyesight no longer permitted his discipline, he had read the Old Testament seventy times and the New Testament 280 times! No wonder his godliness and wisdom were proverbial, and that the Lord used him for eighteen fruitful years to lead Officers Christians Fellowship (OCF). General Harrison's story tells us two things. First, it is possible, even for the busiest of us, to systematically feed on God's Word. No one could be busier or lead a more demanding life than General Harrison. Second, his life remains a demonstration of a mind programmed with God's Word. His closest associates say that every area of his life (domestic, spiritual, and professional) and each of the great problems he faced was informed by the Scriptures. People marveled at his knowledge of the Bible and the ability to bring its light to every area of life.

## **II. The Jews unfaithfulness did not nullify the faithfulness of God. Rom. 3:3-4**

Notice that Paul does not say that none of them believed. He states, "What if some did not believe?" Paul is implying here what he states clearly later in Romans. **Rom. 9:6.** Not everyone who was a descendant of Abraham was automatically in a saving relationship with God. Through the Old Testament, there was always a remnant which believed. **Rom. 11:1-5**

God is faithful to keep his promises to those who believe.

Who are those who believe? They are the elect of God.

**Rom. 11:5, 7**

Sometimes this passage Rom. 3:3-4 is used to argue that Jews will be saved whether they believe in Jesus or not, that there will be a future hope for Israel regardless of their faith or unbelief. **William Hendriksen comments**, "Does he [Paul] mean then, 'In spite of their unfaithfulness God will still grant them a glorious future, because they are Jews?' Probably not. His real meaning seems to be this: 'Since God is faithful, those Jews who are faithful to him, and therefore to that which has been entrusted to them, will certainly receive the fulfillment of his promises'" (111). This is exactly what Paul states later in Rom. 9-11.

**Rom. 3:4** - Paul places God's faithfulness in contrast to human unfaithfulness. Human unfaithfulness and deceit causes God's truth and faithfulness to stand out strongly. The quotation is from Psalm 51:4b. In order to see the strength of this quotation, it is important to remember the historical context of Psalm 51. David had fallen in to serious sin. He had committed adultery with Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah. When Bathsheba became pregnant, he had tried to cover his sin by bringing Uriah back from the war front to be with his wife. When that didn't work because Uriah's integrity, David then engineered Uriah's death and married Bathsheba. God sent Nathan the prophet to confront David and call him to repentance. Psalm 51 is David's prayer of confession and repentance over these series of sins.

**Psa. 51:4** - David says that God's judgment against him is true and right because he had sinned against God. While God's faithfulness gives great assurance to those who believe, to those who rely on Christ alone for their salvation, his faithfulness is also an assurance of judgment and justice to those who are still in their sins. God's faithfulness is a comfort to believers and should be a source of terror to those who break his commands and shun his way of salvation through Christ.

**III. Utilitarian arguments will not stand because God's faithfulness ensures justice.**

**Rom. 3:5-8** A utilitarian objection is set forth in a pair of statements. Remember

utilitarianism is a philosophical system which essentially teaches that the end justifies the means. **Frederic Godet**, in his commentary on Romans makes this statement: "It [the argument that good ends justify evil means] has always been sought to justify the greatest crimes in history by representing the advantages they have resulted to the cause of humanity. There is not a Robespierre who has not been transformed into a saint in the name of utilitarianism" (vol. 1, 233).

The objection which Paul answers is this: "Since man's unrighteousness brings out more sharply God's righteousness, then God should excuse our sin because our sin shows God's glory.

**Rom. 3:5, 7**

Paul replies with a statement affirming the certainty of God's judgment. **Rom. 3:6** Paul says that any argument that suggest that God will not judge the world is false. He will surely judge and enact perfect justice.

**Rom. 3:7** - Paul doesn't even answer this second expression of the same objection, but goes on to a third form of the objection in Rom. 3:8. Apparently, some had charged that Paul taught the idea that the more one sins, the more God is glorified. This statement goes even further in its rationalization of sin. In addition to simply dismissing the judgment of God or excusing sin, this argument encourages sin. It encourages breaking God's law with the argument that it will glorify God's truth. This is a form of antinomianism as well as a utilitarian argument. Paul simply states that "Their condemnation is just."

Again, Paul is driving home the necessity of a Savior. The Jews had the great advantage of having the Word of God and the Old Testament covenant sign of circumcision. They were set apart unto God and possessed the Scriptures. Those Jews who were faithful to the Word God, in other words, believed in Jesus as the Messiah, received God's promised salvation. Remember Jesus said the Scriptures and Moses spoke of him. **John 5:39, 46-47.**



Those who did not believe will receive the judgment of God. Human unfaithfulness causes God's faithfulness to stand out. However, this cannot be used as a justification for sin.

This emphasizes the need everyone has for a Savior. We cannot save ourselves. **Robert Reymond writes:** . . . God has immutability declared that he will save only those who trust the saving work of his Son and will consign to perdition those who do not trust the saving work of his Son. So let the unbelieving moralist be as good, as moral, as honest, as upright as he can be, he will still be condemned. For God's declaration will forever stand: "He only who trusts my Son will be saved; he who does not trust my Son is condemned already and shall be damned forever" (see John 3:18). This declaration is an unchangeable as God himself. After ten thousand years of conscious torment in hell the moralist will still read this divine edict in burning letters above him: He only who trusts my Son will be saved; he who does not trust my Son is condemned already and shall be damned forever. After ten billion ages of anguish in hell have rolled away the man who looked to his own morality in this life for his salvation will still see it emblazoned over the "great chasm that has been fixed". . . .: He only who trusts my Son will be saved; he who does not trust my Son is condemned already and shall be damned forever.

And when the tormented moralist - perhaps ever hoping in the words of Alfred Lord Tennyson's "In Memoriam," that "at last - far off - at last . . . winter [will] change to Spring" - thinks that the wheel of eternity must surely have spun out its last thread after it seems that the ages of ages have past, after it seems that every particle of what we call eternity must surely have run out, he will still see written in flaming letters burning as brightly as they ever did these words:

He only who trusts my Son will be saved; he who does not trust my Son is condemned already and shall be damned forever.

No, dear friends, I get no pleasure in saying it but say it I must: the words of Dante's *Inferno* do indeed apply here to the impenitent and unbelieving: "Leave every hope, ye who enter here." From: *What Is God?*, 114-115.

**Rom. 3:9-28 1/25/09 Romans Series #13**

In the first two and a half chapters of Romans, Paul sets forth the truth that everyone is a sinner and under the judgment of God. Fallen man represses the knowledge of God and sets up idols (**Rom. 1:18-32**). Both Jews and Gentiles have broken the law of God and, apart from Christ, face God's righteous judgment. In Rom. 2:5-6, Paul brings out that there are degrees of judgment or punishment. The greater and more the sin, the greater the condemnation. In Romans 1 and 2, Paul strips away from religious people all claims of self-righteousness. Knowledge of the gospel, religious activity, and a religious heritage will not save you, if you do not trust in Christ alone as your Savior.

This morning we are going to look at the conclusion of this section dealing with man's sinful condition before God and begin to look at the only way of salvation, the work of Christ.

It is vital that you understand and apply this section of Scripture to your life, because real faith in Christ and true repentance are impossible unless you understand your need before a holy God. Real faith and repentance contain an acknowledgment of guilt before God, a conviction that if God were to damn you to hell for your sins, he would be just and righteous in that action, and a profound awareness that your only hope of salvation is the mercy of God in Christ. Those elements cannot be present as long as you trust in something in yourself for salvation. As long as you cling to any hope in yourself - your good works, religious activities, Christian background - you will not see your need for Christ. This passage contains a 14 point indictment against our sin.

**I. All are under sin.**

Rom. 3:9 - Jew and Gentile; Religious and irreligious are all under sin and the judgment of God. All are enslaved to sin.

Paul then puts together a series of Old Testament quotations that demonstrate man being under sin or a slave to sin.

**A. No one is righteous.**

**Rom. 3:10, 12.** No one is righteous and no one does good - not even one. Some people might object and say, "I know people who are good people." Examples of care - fire and help, donate food, clothes, give blood, etc. The definition of "good" in this text is in accordance with God's law. Good according to God's law is something God has commanded and it must be done with perfect motives. People do externally good things out of enlightened self-interest. Sometimes it pays to be good. If you do a good job, you might get a raise; help someone and you may get praise or, at least, feel good about yourself. According to the standard of God, no one does good, not even one.

**Illus.** - good dog. Different standard for dogs than for men.

**Luke 18:18-23** - expound - Jesus just went to the first commandment and showed the man his sin. Many people believe they are good enough to go to heaven because of their own righteousness. Here the Bible proclaims that no one has any personal righteousness.

**Charles Spurgeon** said, "The greatest enemy to human souls is the self-righteous spirit which makes men look to themselves for salvation."

**B. No one understands or seeks for God.**

**Rom. 3:11** - No one understands who God is or the things of God.

No one, apart from the grace of God, seeks for God.

In the Christian community, it is common to hear the expression, "Someone is not a Christian yet, but they are seeking for God." I've heard people say that the rise in the occult and the new age reflects man's universal search for God. It certainly reflects man's universal propensity toward idolatry, but not man's search for the true God. The Bible declares that no one seeks for God.

Michael Horton said that sinful man does not seek for God just like a thief doesn't seek for a police officer.

When we see lost people supposedly seeking for God two things are possible. It is possible that the Holy Spirit is drawing someone to Jesus; that He is changing their mind and attitude toward the gospel. The other possibility is the more common one and that is that people are seeking the benefits of a relationship with God.

As Christians we know that there are certain benefits that only come from a relationship with God through Christ. Assurance of going to heaven, knowing that we are forgiven and accepted by God, knowing God's fatherly care are benefits that come through faith in Christ. When we see lost people seeking those benefits, we assume that they are seeking a real relationship with God. **The nature of man's sin is such that he will seek the benefits of a relationship with God while at the same time running from God.**

Man only seeks God when the Holy Spirit opens his heart and makes him alive in Christ. Jonathan Edwards said that the chief vocation of the Christian is to seek God. This text states that no one is righteous, no one does good, no one understands the things of God or seeks God apart from a prior work of the Holy Spirit. **This is similar to Eph. 2:1-3** - Man is dead in sin.

Eph. 2:4-5 - But God. . . .

Illus. - sick man in a hospital. No one understands or seeks for God apart from the Holy Spirit. **John 6:44-45, 63-65**

### **C. The sinful heart is filled with corruption.**

#### **Rom. 3:13a**

Their throat is an open grave.

First century, middle east - bury quickly. Remember Lazarus.

Imagine an open grave with a rotting corpse in it. This passage likens our throats to an open grave. The throat is a channel to the heart. It is like an open grave that goes to a heart filled with corruption. This is similar to what Jesus said about the heart. **Mark 7:20-23**

The corruption that is in the heart flows out of it in every kind of sin and vice. **Rom. 3:13-18** - Paul starts with the throat and works his way out through the mouth and tongue. Our words are often an x-ray picture of our heart. Dr. L. Nelson Bell warned that a person who freely used "Hell," "damn," and "devil" in his conversation may well be reminding himself of his destination, his condition, and his master. **Rom. 3:15-17** - Paul shifts to the feet and the sinful actions of man. **Rom. 3:18 summarizes it all** - "There is no fear of God before their eyes."

This passage paints a dismal picture of man's condition in sin. This summary section of the book of Roman's indictment against man's sin leaves no room for self-righteousness or any claim to having merit before God. **Charles Spurgeon** said, "No man living has ever exaggerated his own sin or thought too basely of himself. There does not live beneath the canopies of heaven any man whose sense of sin is as deep as the sin really is."

Do you recognize your need before a holy God? Do you recognize that you have broken God's law and that God's judgment against you is right and just? Don't take this indictment lightly. Even if you profess to know Christ, examine your heart. Do you truly trust in him alone? God's judgment is just and severe and it will surely fall on every person outside of Christ.

## **II. The law stops all claims of self-righteousness.**

### **Rom. 3:19-20**

#### **A. This proclamation is to both Jews and Gentiles.**

The Jews had the Scriptures and the written law of God; the Gentiles had the law of God written on their hearts. This is why the whole world is accountable to God. When I was growing up, there was a rule in our house about not saying, "Shut up." In the law, God tells every person to "shut up" concerning any claim to self-righteousness. Think of ten commandments - external and internal application. Review.

**James 2:10, 11** - Bowling pins as compared to pane of glass.

Rom. 3:21 - No one is justified by keeping the law because no one is perfect. The law shows us our sin.

**John Calvin writes**, "The Lord testifies that he recognizes no righteousness of works except in the perfect observance of his law. What perversity it is for us, when we lack righteousness

. . . to boast of some little bits of a few works and try through other satisfactions to pay for what is lacking?" (3,14,13)

**Jonathan Edwards said**, "A sacrifice, before it can be offered, must be wounded and slain. The heart of a true Christian is first wounded by a sense of sin, and the great evil and danger of it, and is slain with godly sorrow and true repentance. . . ." *Jonathan Edwards on Knowing Christ*, 222-223.

In order to come to Christ, you must acknowledge that you are a sinner and you have no hope of salvation in yourself. Part of that godly sorrow for sin is a recognition that God is holy and his judgment against sin is right. It is an acknowledgement that we are all sinners who are under the judgment of a holy God.

### **Rom. 3:23**

#### **III. Christ's work meets all the demands of our need before a holy God.**

If the Scriptures only proclaimed the truths of Rom. 1:1-3:20, it would simply tell us that we have no hope of salvation.

Rom. 3:21 starts with an important word in this section, "but."

#### **A. To have a relationship with God and enter heaven, a person must be sinless and perfectly righteous.**

Exo. 34:7; Hab. 1:13; Rom. 6:23

The work of Jesus meets both of these needs. Christ's work on the cross met the need of our sin; Christ's righteous life met our need to be perfectly righteous.

This section in Romans mentions both of these aspects of our salvation.

#### **B. First, it mentions how we are made righteous.**

Rom. 3:21-24; 2 Cor. 5:21

**C. Second, it mentions how we are freed from the judicial wrath of God against our sin. Rom. 3:25;** Acts 10:43

Christ was a propitiation for us. He took the wrath of God against our sin.

Illus. - Jesus on cross - "My God, My God. . . ."

Remember the theme developed in Romans of God's righteous judgment against our sin.

Rom. 1:18; 2:5; 5:9

Notice that God's justice is emphasized here also. **Rom. 3:26**

Because God is holy and just, he couldn't just pretend you didn't sin. There is a wage to sin that must be paid. **Rom. 6:23**

If you are in Jesus, he paid that wage for you as your substitute. God can forgive you and still be just.

**2 Cor. 5:21** - Sins forgiven and Christ's righteousness imputed.

In January 1985, a large suitcase, unmarked and unclaimed, was discovered at the customs office at Los Angeles International Airport. When U. S. Customs agents opened the suitcase, they found the curled-up body of an unidentified young woman. She had been dead for a few days, according to the county coroner.

As the investigation continued, it was learned that the woman was the wife of a young Iranian living in the U. S. Unable to obtain a visa to enter the U. S. and join her husband, she took matters into her own hands and attempted to smuggle herself into America via an airplane's cargo bay. While her plan seemed to her simple though risky, officials were hard pressed to understand how such an attempt could ever succeed. Even if she survived the journey in the cargo bay, she would remain an illegal alien, having entered through improper channels.

Some people believe they'll enter the kingdom of God on their own since they've been reasonably good citizens or church attenders. But entry plans of our own design prove not only foolish but fatal.

Rom. 3:21-4:8; 5:1-2 2/15/09 Romans series #14

Before my Donetsk trip, we were working our way through the first section of the book of Romans. This section contains some of the more important truths concerning the nature of man's sin and God's plan of salvation. We have observed that:

- 1) Man represses the knowledge of the true God and becomes an idol factory. Rom. 1:18-25
- 2) God's judgment against man's sin is right and just. In this regard, there are degrees of punishment in hell. The greater and more the sin, the greater the punishment. Rom. 2:5,6
- 3) Religious knowledge, activity, or a religious heritage does not guarantee salvation. Only the work of Christ will save a person, a work that is received by faith alone.
- 4) All are under sin - no one is righteous or does good. No one understands the things of God or seeks for God apart from the work of the Holy Spirit. Rom. 3:9-12
- 5) Finally, we are justified before God by faith in Christ alone. This morning I want us to look at Rom. 3:21f more carefully and consider some of the results or fruit of our justification. This is a crucial text because in recent years the doctrine of justification by faith alone has been under attack in the evangelical community. The new perspectives on Paul and the federal vision theology have undermined this foundational doctrine of our salvation. This section in Romans contains the heart of the New Testament teaching on how we are saved from the wrath of God and accepted by God.

### **I. We are justified by faith alone.**

Rom. 3:21-24, 28. As we observed in the last sermon in this series, in order to enter heaven, you must have two things in your life. First, you must be absolutely sinless and second, you must be perfectly righteous. This is why the law can't save you. Rom. 3:19-20. The law shows you your sin and your need for Christ. Many people when they look at the law look at one or two of God's commands and breathe a sigh of relief and think, "Well, I've broken one or two of the commandments, but I haven't broken them all. For a



person to think that reflects a misunderstanding of the law. To keep the law means that you not only externally keep the commandments of God, but also internally keep them. Every attitude, motive, and direction of the heart has to confirm perfectly with the law of God.

**James 2:10-11** - bowling pin and pane of glass.

When you consider the demands of the law and really understand them, you realize that the Scripture is true when it says that no one is righteous, not even one.

However, to have a relationship with a holy God and to enter heaven, you must be sinless and positively righteous.

This is where the work of Christ comes to bear on our salvation.

In his work on the cross, he took the punishment due to the law-breaker. He laid down his life for his sheep as he declares in John 10. This addresses our need to be sinless.

God can forgive us and not violate his justice because Christ paid the penalty of sin for us. **Rom. 3:26**

That takes care of our need to be sinless, but what about the need to be perfectly righteous? Jesus kept the law of God perfectly. He was tempted in all points as we are, yet without sin (Heb. 4:15; Rom. 5:19 - obedience of the one).

When you believe in Christ; when you rely on his work alone, his perfect righteousness is credited to you. This is a free gift by the grace of God and it is received by faith. **Rom. 3:22-24**

**B. Justification is a legal declaration from God.**

It is a forensic work. It is an objective change in our status before God. **Rom. 4:1-5** - expound

If you believe in Christ, you are forgiven and accepted as righteous in the sight of God because of Christ's righteousness being credited to you. If you have Christ's righteousness, you cannot be considered any more righteous in God's sight.

Everything Christ merited in his perfect life and obedience to God is legally credited to you. At the time of the Reformation, the Roman Catholic church objected to this saying that the idea of Christ's righteousness being imputed or credited to the believer was a "legal fiction." They said that it was a fiction because people were still unrighteous. How could God call people righteous when, in their lives, they were still ungodly? The Reformers responded by saying that the imputation of Christ's righteousness was a real imputation. The believer really received a legal accounting of being righteous before God because he really received the righteousness of Christ. **Rom. 4:5** - Notice that it is when we are still ungodly that we come to Christ. It is not after we have made ourselves righteous through a series of spiritual exercises or good works. We come to Christ in faith throwing ourselves upon him.

Luther had a little Latin phrase that captures the essence of this well - *Simul justes et peccator*. Explain.

Again, this salvation is a free gift that is not earned or deserved in any way. **Rom. 3:22-24, 28; 4:1-4, 16.**

This is a foundation for confidence and assurance before God. If Christ has paid for your sins and you are legally declared righteous before God, you are secure in your salvation. **Charles Spurgeon** in commenting on Christ work for us and the assurance it brings said, "The consequences are that He hath redeemed us from the curse of the law. As many as Christ died for, are for ever free from the curse of the law; for when the law cometh to curse a man who believeth in Christ, he saith, "What have I to do with thee, O law? Thou sayest, 'I will curse thee,' but I reply, 'Thou hast cursed Christ instead of me. Canst thou curse twice for one offence?'" Behold the law is silenced! God's law having received all it can demand, is not so unrighteous as to demand anything more. All that God can demand of a believing sinner, Christ has already paid, and there is no voice in earth or heaven that can henceforth accuse a soul that believes in Jesus." *12 Ser. Passion and Death of Christ*, 64.

Do have this assurance in your life? As we have looked at this section in Romans, we have been confronted with man's desperate need for a Savior. God is holy and man is sinful. You have no hope apart from Christ. Do you truly trust in him? Do you know, right now, that your sins are forgiven and Christ's righteousness is given to you?

## **II. The fruit of our justification.**

Rom. 5:1-2

The immediate fruit or results of our justification are peace with God and access to God.

### **A. Peace with God.**

This is not referring to a peaceful feeling in regard to God. It is referring to the fact that those who are in Christ, the judgment of a holy God has passed from them. The conflict between a holy God and a sinful person is over when that person is in Christ. The person who has broken God's law deserves the justice of God in hell. On the cross, Jesus took the that justice and, if you are in Christ, the condemnation of God's wrath against sin is forever removed from you. **Rom. 8:1**

Sometime ago Albert Speer was interviewed about his last book on ABC's "Good Morning, America." Speer was the Hitler confidante whose technological genius was credited with keeping Nazi factories humming throughout World War II. The only one of twenty-four war criminals to admit his guilt, Speer spent twenty years in Spandau prison. Interviewer David Hartman referred to a passage in one of Speer's earlier writings: "You have said the guilt can never be forgiven, or shouldn't be. Do you still feel that way?" Speer had a stricken look on his face as he responded: "I served a sentence of twenty years. I could say 'I'm a free man, my conscience has been cleared by serving the whole time as punishment.' But I can't do that. I still carry the burden of what happened to millions of people during Hitler's lifetime. I can't get rid of it." Hartman pressed the point. "You really don't think you'll ever be able to clear it totally?" Speer shook his head, "I don't think it's possible." It would have been wonderful in Speer could have heard the gospel and realized how it is possible for real guilt to be totally cleared, but the

ABC interview was his last public statement; he died shortly after. Speer was right about one thing. He couldn't clear his burden of guilt on his own. **Exo. 34:7** - The only way a person can be accepted by God is if Christ takes his punishment for him and give him his righteousness.

**B. The second fruit of justification is access to God.**

Rom. 5:1 - "Introduction" = access - Like the introduction into a royal court. When you believe in Christ and are justified, you have access to God. We are so accustomed to entering into God's presence that we forget what a tremendous blessing this is.

**Lev. 10:1-3; Lev. 16; Heb. 4:14-16** - "Passed through" - expound.

You can approach the very throne of God and receive help in time of need. You have a mediator who is not an earthly priest, but the eternal Son of God. You can come with confidence to the throne of grace to receive help in time of need.

In the context of speaking of this blessing by which we can enter God's presence through the work of Christ, the writer to the Hebrews gives a warning. **Heb. 2:1-3; 12:18-25**

Don't take this salvation lightly. If you are in Christ, realize what has been done for you. Pray that God would open your understanding to comprehend the depth of the mercy that you have received. Your only rational response is worship and service.

If you are not in Christ, I beg you, flee to Christ. If you ignore what you have just heard and refuse him, there is no escape from the just wrath and judgment of God.

**Heb. 10:26-31; Luke 12:4-5** - If you are justified by faith in Christ alone the blessings of being at peace with God and having access to his benevolent and merciful presence are yours. But if you are not in Christ, the presence of God will be for you a consuming fire. Are you in Christ? Do you know that your sins are forgiven and you stand before God clothed in the righteousness of Christ? Do you truly have that confidence?

Michael Faraday was a brilliant scientific genius of his day. As he was nearing the end of his life, a friend stood by him and inquired, "What are your speculations now?"

"Speculations?" Faraday replied in astonishment. "I have none. I know whom I have believed. My soul rests upon certainties!"

You will either enter God's presence and experience his tender, fatherly care and love, or you will experience is terrifying judgment. Whether you are in Christ or not in Christ determines which it will be. If you are not sure of your salvation or you know that you are not in Jesus, I pray that you will either be converted to faith in Christ or, at least, awakened to your peril.

Rom. 4:9-16 Romans series #15 2/22/09

**Robert Reymond writes**, "With a gloriously monotonous regularity Paul pits faith against all law-keeping, viewed as its diametrical opposite. Whereas the latter relies on human effort of the law-keeper looking to himself to render satisfaction before God and earn merit, the former repudiates and looks entirely away from self and all human effort to the work of Jesus Christ, who alone by his obedient life and sacrificial death rendered full satisfaction before God and men."

From: *Paul: Missionary Theologian*, 425.

Our text this morning continues this "gloriously monotonous regularity" of affirming we are justified by faith alone and not by any works of the law or ceremonial ordinance.

Paul especially focuses on circumcision and the propensity of Jews to trust in that sacrament as the guarantee of their salvation.

**I. Covenant signs to not contribute or effect justification and, therefore, nullify the principle of justification by faith alone.**

**Rom. 4:9-11**

Paul has already emphasized that external circumcision does not save a person. In Rom. 2:28-29, he made the point that a circumcision of the heart is what make a person a true Jew in the full spiritual sense of the term. In this text, Paul is proving the point of justification by faith alone through looking at Abraham and David. He anticipates an objection from a Jewish audience concerning the sign of circumcision. God had given

that covenant sign to Abraham. Many Jews trusted in the fact that they had that heritage and that covenant sign. They believed they were in a right relationship with God because they were descendants of Abraham and had been circumcised. Paul answers this perception.

**A. Circumcision was not necessary for justification because Abraham was justified by faith before he was circumcised.**

Abraham received the sign of circumcision many years after his initial justification by faith alone.

We see in Gen. 17:24-25 that Abraham was ninety-nine years old when he was circumcised. On that same day Ishmael was circumcised at thirteen years of age. In Gen. 15, God made a covenant with Abraham and Abraham believed God and it was reckoned to him as righteousness (15:6). Gen. 15:2 points out that Abraham did not yet have any children. Ishmael was conceived with Hagar in Gen. 16.

Therefore, between the time Abraham was justified by faith alone, a faith which had as its object the singular seed, the Messiah, and the time he was circumcised, there was at least an interval of fourteen years. A Jewish tradition set for in a Talmud and Midrasch places the gap at twenty-nine years. However, an interval of less than fourteen years is impossible. Therefore, it was the uncircumcised Abraham, who resembled a Gentile, to whom the promise was given and who was justified by faith alone. Paul's point is that since Abraham was justified before he was circumcised, then circumcision does not cause or contribute to justification.

**B. Circumcision was given as a sign and seal of the righteousness which had been imputed to Abraham by faith.**

**Rom. 4:11**

Two things are mentioned concerning circumcision: it was a sign and a seal. As a sign, it signifies or indicates a fact. A sign points to something. For example, a road sign may say, Kansas City, 200 miles. You know from that sign that you are 200 miles away from

Kansas City. However, the sign is not Kansas City itself. It simply points toward it. The sign and the thing signified are closely related. In the case of circumcision, the cutting away of the foreskin symbolizes the excision of guilt and pollution of sin. This especially points to the expiation of guilt through the work of Christ which is applied in our justification. Therefore, circumcision pointed toward the work of Christ which was the heart of the covenant God made with Abraham. The Jews had become focused on the sign itself and not on what the sign signified.

As a seal, it was the visible guarantee of the trustworthiness of God's promise. It was a visible mark which served as a reminder of God's promise of salvation for those who believe.

In the Old Covenant, the two signs that God established were circumcision and the Passover. Both of them pointed toward Christ and his work. In the New Covenant, those signs have been replaced by baptism and the Lord's Supper. Just like circumcision was a sign and seal of Abraham's faith, in the new covenant, baptism serves as a sign and seal of our faith. Baptism and the Lord's supper both point toward Christ's work and the application of that work to us through the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit. For example, 1 Cor. 5:7 directly calls Christ our passover who has been sacrificed. The terms circumcision and baptism are used interchangeably to describe regeneration in Col. 2:11-12. Here the terms are used as synonyms to describe the thing which they signify, regeneration. This shows the close connection between the two signs. This is also a strong argument against baptismal regeneration. Circumcision didn't automatically grant regeneration and neither does baptism. Just like many of the Jews trusted in circumcision as guarantee of salvation, many professing Christians today look to baptism as a granting automatic salvation. Just like circumcision didn't save anyone or confer regeneration, in the same way baptism doesn't confer that which it signifies. Similar to circumcision, baptism is a sign and a seal, but it does not save or contribute to a person's justification. However, both circumcision and baptism are signs that point to regeneration and the

application of Christ's work to the believer. Charles Hodge comments: "The sacraments and ceremonies of the Church, although in the highest degree useful when viewed in their proper light, become ruinous when perverted into grounds of confidence. What answers well as a sign, is a miserable substitute for the thing signified" (Commentary, 125). This also means that circumcision was not just a national badge or Jewish boundary marker. It pointed toward God's covenant and salvation through faith in Christ.

**Charles Hodge writes on Rom. 4:11:** "From this passage it is evident that circumcision was not merely the seal of the covenant between God and the Hebrews as a nation.

Besides the promises made to Abraham of a numerous posterity, and of the possession of the land of Canaan, there was the far higher promise, that through his seed (i.e. Christ, Gal. 3:16) all the nations of the earth should be blessed. This was the promise of redemption, as the apostle teaches us in Gal. 3:13-18. . . . The blessing promised to Abraham, in which the Gentiles participate through Jesus Christ, can be none other than redemption. As that blessing was promised to Abraham on the condition, not of works, but of faith, the apostle hence argues, that in our case also we are made partakers of that blessing by faith, and not by works. This was the covenant of which circumcision was the seal. All therefore who were circumcised, professed to embrace the covenant of grace. All the Jews were professors of the true religion, and constituted the visible church, in which by divine appointment their children were included." Commentary on Romans, 117.

There are debates on issues of baptism (adult and infant), but at least in the old covenant economy, Abraham was given circumcision as a sign and a seal of his faith and then instructed to apply that sign to his children with the hope and expectation that they would have faith.

Again, what does this emphasize? It hammers home the idea that Abraham and we are justified by faith apart from any external sign, ceremony, or works. Abraham was given circumcision as a sign and seal of his faith, but he was already justified by faith in Christ.

**J. Gresham Machen said,** "To say that we are justified by faith is just another way of



saying that we are justified not in the slightest measure by ourselves, but simply and solely by the One in whom faith is reposed."

**II. Abraham being the spiritual father of all who believe emphasizes that justification is by faith alone.**

**Rom. 4:11-12** - Notice that all believing Gentiles are spiritual descendants of Abraham and all believing Jews are spiritual descendants of Abraham. Ethnic or religious heritage is not what matters, but the presence of faith in Christ. The Jews had a great advantage in having received the oracles of God. They had the promises, prophecies, shadows, types, and ceremonies which all pointed toward Christ and his work. **John 5:39, 45-46**

In every generation, the Holy Spirit used those old covenant shadow forms and ceremonies to create faith in the heart of God's elect. However, many Jews simply trusted in the fact that they were descended from Abraham and were circumcised. They trusted their heritage and not the Messiah. Paul states that Gentiles who believe are justified by faith and righteousness is reckoned to them (**Rom. 4:11**). He also states that Jews who are not just circumcised, but who also believe are justified. He reiterates this point in **Rom. 4:16-17a**. Paul makes the same point in

**Gal. 3:6-9, 13-14, 26-29**. Notice how many times the Scriptures state that it is by faith that we are sons of Abraham. **Gal. 3:7, 14, 26; Rom. 4:11-12, 16**. In fact, Paul says that if salvation and being an heir of Abraham simply comes through having the law or trying to keep the law, then the principle of faith is made void. **Rom. 4:14**. The law simply bring wrath and the justice of God because everyone has broken it. **Rom. 4:15**

**John Murray said**, "Faith is self-renouncing; works are self-congratulatory." Romans, 123.

**Charles Spurgeon said**, "Any attempt to keep the law of God with the view of being saved thereby is sure to end in failure. So contrary is it to the express warnings of the divine Lawgiver, and so much does it run counter to the whole gospel, that he who ventures to seek justification by his own merits ought to be ashamed of his presumption.

When God tells us that salvation is not by the works of the law, art thou not ashamed of trying to procure it by thy obedience to its precepts? When he declares that by the works of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight, art thou not ashamed to go and seek after justification where he tells thee it never can be found? When he over and over again declares that salvation is by faith, and that it is a matter of grace to be received, dost thou not blush for thyself that thou shouldst give the lie to God, and propound a righteousness of thine own conceit, in which thou has vainly tried to keep up a respectable appearance, screening the palpable delinquencies of thy life under a thin veil of piety toward God and charity toward men? Eternal life is not to be earned by any trade you can carry on in works of the flesh; because, however estimable in the opinion of men, they are simply execrable in the sight of God. If a man seeks to keep the commandments of God in order that he may attain eternal life thereby, he will be ashamed and confounded. He had better once renounce the folly of attempting so insane, so futile, so impossible a task as that of defending his own cause and justifying his own soul." All through this text, there is the constant refrain that we are justified by faith alone and not in any way by our works, ethnic or religious heritage. Do you trust in anything in yourself for salvation? If you rely on anything you have done or plan to do, you are not in a state of salvation and if you die trusting in yourself, you will go to hell. This also means that you cannot trust a religious heritage for salvation. You might have been raised in a Christian home and that is a great advantage. Like the Jews, you have known the oracles of God and the gospel from an early age. However, that also makes you all the more accountable before God and you must have faith yourself.

### **III. Justification by faith alone emphasizes that our salvation is completely of God's grace. Rom. 4:16**

Here, a reason is given for justification being by faith. It is that way so that salvation would be in accordance with grace. **Robert Reymond comments on Rom. 4:16:** "I recall on one occasion how shocked I was to hear a well-known, highly regarded

preacher of the gospel say: 'I don't know why salvation is by faith in Jesus Christ. God just declared that that is the way it is going to be, and we have to accept it because God said it.' I was shocked, I say, because this preacher should have known why salvation is by faith. He should have known because Paul expressly declared: '[Salvation] comes by faith, in order that may be by grace' (Rom. 4:16). *Paul: Missionary Theologian*, 428.

This statement in Rom. 4:16 drives home again the point Paul has been emphasizing. We are justified by faith alone and that means our salvation is completely of God's grace. In A.D. 1100 Anselm the archbishop of Canterbury wrote a tract to console the dying. He first asked a series of questions designed to help the sinner realize that his own works could never save him. He then addressed the dying person with these words: "Come, then, while life remaineth in thee; in Christ's death place thy whole trust. Let His sacrifice alone cover thy sin. Then, when thou standest for judgment, say, 'Lord, between Thy wrath and me I plead the death of Jesus Christ. I put it between my sins and Thee. His merits I offer for those which I ought to have, but have not.'"

**John Newton**, when he was 82 and near death said, "My memory is weak, but I remember two things: I am a great sinner, but Christ is a greater Savior."

Rom. 4:16-25 Romans Series #16 3/1/09

In the last section in the book of Romans, Paul has set forth the doctrine which Luther called the doctrine of the standing or falling church, the doctrine of justification by faith alone. We have observed that this is a free gift based on the grace of God. The work of Christ in his preceptive and penal obedience is the foundation of our justification. When we believe in Christ, our sins are forgiven because Christ has paid the debt of that sin in his work on the cross and we are accepted as righteous in the sight of God because Christ's perfect obedience is imputed to us.

Paul has demonstrated that this is the way any redeemed person has ever been justified before God whether they are an old covenant or new covenant believer, Jew or Gentile.

Paul gave the example of Abraham and David both being justified by faith alone and emphasized that the covenant sign of circumcision did not contribute to or cause that justification. Rom. 4:16 makes the important statement that it is by faith that it might be in accordance with grace. In the next section, Paul speaks about the nature and object of Abraham's faith and applies those principles to our believing in Christ. We're going to examine first some of the characteristics of Abraham's faith that are set forth in our text and then Abraham's trust in God as the object of that faith.

### **I. The characteristics of Abraham's faith.**

**A. The first thing we see about Abraham's faith is that it was a trust in God's promise. Rom. 4:18, 20-21** Paul quotes Gen. 15:5 in which God promises descendants to Abraham that will be as numerous as the stars in the sky. God promised Abraham that he would have a massive number of descendants. That promise is ultimately fulfilled in every believer being a spiritual descendant of Abraham. All through this last section of Rom. 4, the idea of God's promise is emphasized. In fact, the term "promise" is used four times (vs. 13, 14, 16, 20) and the verb "promised" once (v. 21). An important aspect of faith is that it is a trust in the promises of God. Often when people think about the concept of faith, they understand it in subjective and man-centered terms. The idea is often simply to believe something even though you have no basis to believe it. For example, the American philosopher George Santayana (1863-1952) spoke of "the brute necessity of believing something so long as life lasts." You believe something. You have some wish or hope, but it is based on a subjective feeling not on an objective promise from God. Abraham believed God's promise. Similarly, in our salvation, we believe God's promise that those who believe in Christ are justified before God.

**Abraham's faith is was based on God's Word. Rom. 4:18-21** Abraham received a promise from God. God has spoken to him and he believed that word. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones said that Abraham's faith was based on "the bare Word of God and on nothing else whatsoever" (211). What are some of the promises which God gave to Abraham? He

promised him certain temporal blessings as well as spiritual blessings. The temporal blessings functioned typologically and pointed toward the spiritual blessings. God promised Abraham the land of Canaan. Heb. 11:9-11, 14-16 makes the point that the land functioned as a type of heaven and the final inheritance of the new heaven and new earth for believers. God promised Abraham an heir and a large number of descendants. The temporal aspect of that was fulfilled in Isaac and the nation of Israel. The spiritual fulfillment was in the ultimate seed, Christ and in all believers being spiritual children of Abraham (Gal. 3:16). God promised Abraham that through him all the nations would be blessed which has its fulfillment in the work of Christ saving people out of every nation. Abraham believed the promise of God not only of a natural line of descendants, but also he looked toward the promise of redemption in the covenant God made with him. He looked toward that singular seed, the Messiah (Gal. 3:16). **Charles Spurgeon said,** "The pith, the essence of faith, lies in this - a casting oneself on the promise."

**B. A second characteristic of Abraham's faith is that he believed God despite contrary circumstances. Rom. 4:19**

Abraham didn't have any external support for believing God's promise. He was an old man and Sarah was an old woman past child-bearing years. As time went on the reality of their advancing age become more intense. However, in spite of his circumstances, he trusted the promise and word that he had received from God. **James M. Boice said,** ". . . nothing is more rational than to believe God even in the face of evidence to the contrary. . . . . faith stands always with God and his Word, even when doing so appears foolish from a human perspective. Rom., Vol. 1, 482.

**C. A Third characteristic of his faith was that he had full assurance in the promise and word of God.**

Paul presents this idea in several ways. **Rom. 4:19, 20, 21.**

How was Abraham able to have this full assurance? He didn't look to himself or to his circumstances, but to God. His faith was grounded in the nature and character of God and his promise. Coupled closely with this full assurance is the fact that Abraham acted in obedience to God. Years later, after Isaac has been born, God instructed Abraham to sacrifice Isaac. Abraham acted in faith in his obedience to God. James 2 brings out the fact that true saving faith will always be seen in the obedience it produces. Even in that action, Abraham was fully assured of the promise of God. **Heb. 11:17-19** Abraham, in the midst of this test, still trusted and believed God. He knew that God has promised that through Isaac he would have descendants. Therefore, he believed that even if he sacrificed him, God was able to raise him up and thus keep his promise.

In a similar way to Abraham, our faith in Christ is based on the promise of God. **John 3:16; Acts 10:43; 2 Tim. 1:12**

## **II. The object of Abraham's faith: God.**

Implied in what we have just considered is the idea that God is faithful and trustworthy. Abraham didn't look to himself, but to God and his nature and character. Abraham fixed his mind on God.

All of the attributes of God relate to this, but I want to focus on a few that are especially pertinent.

**A. God is truthful.** God made certain promises to Abraham. The fact that God is truthful is a basis for Abraham's trust.

If God were not truthful, then the promise would have meant nothing. Abraham trusted God's truthfulness. **Titus 1:2**

**Heb. 6:13-18 Timothy Cruso, the Puritan writer, said,** "The being of God may as well fail as the promise of God." **He also said,** "Promises, though they be for a time seemingly delayed, cannot be finally frustrated. . . . the heart of God is not turned though His face be hid; and prayers are not flung back, though they be not instantly answered."

An important application of this for us is the truthfulness of the Bible. God has spoken and revealed himself in Scripture. In fact, apart from Scripture, we don't know the nature and character of God. Our affirmation of the truthfulness of God is tied to the truthfulness of Scripture. **James M. Boice writes**, "We are sometimes told that we can believe God without believing the Bible. But it does not require a course in logic to see the absurdity of that statement. If the Bible is not God's Word, to be fully believed because it is God's Word, then where does God tell us anything? Where does God ever show us what needs to be believed? And if there is nowhere that God does speak, to say that we can believe him is ridiculous. If God has not spoken to us truthfully in the Bible, then we cannot exercise belief in him - even when we want to. Look at the possibilities:

1. Either God has spoken to us in the Bible, which is truthful because he is truthful and which we therefore need to believe implicitly, or
2. God has not spoken clearly anywhere, and therefore to say that he is truthful and that we believe him is meaningless.

The only possible way to avoid this - a way unfortunately taken by some so-called evangelical scholars of our day - is that God has spoken in the Bible but that the divine and therefore true parts of the Bible are mixed with human error. If that were the case, who is to winnow the divine wheat from the human chaff? The only possible answers are either (1) the individual himself by some subjective process, or (2) the scholar. But in either case, 'faith' is not directed to God but to human beings, either ourselves or the scholars who decide what God has said and what can be trusted. This is not believing God. It is believing ourselves. Those who affirm the truthfulness of God always affirm the truthfulness of the biblical revelation."

**As an example, James M. Boice** cites a statement which attacks the trustworthiness of the Bible. Dr. Robert G. Bratcher, a translator of the "Good News for Modern Man" Bible, at a three-day national seminar of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission said, "Quoting what the Bible says in the context of history and culture is not necessarily

relevant and helpful - and may be a hindrance in trying to meet and solve the problems we face. . . . Even words spoken by Jesus in Aramaic in the thirties of the first century and preserved in writing in Greek thirty-five to fifty years later do not necessarily wield compelling or authentic authority over us today." Boice comments, "That is a powerful expression of unbelief! For Bratcher is not merely saying that the words attributed to Jesus are wrong, being incorrectly reported, but that the very words of Jesus [in Aramaic] may be wrong. And that means that Jesus either was mistaken or lied." Romans, Vol. 1, 488-489.

God's truthfulness and our trust in him is directly tied to our trust in his word in Scripture. To affirm the truthfulness of God is to affirm the truthfulness of the Bible.

**B. A second attribute of God that had direct bearing on Abraham trusting God is God's faithfulness.** Abraham believed God's promise and the fact that God would not forget his promise or change his mind. **Rom. 4:20 A. W. Pink writes,** "Everything about God is great, vast, incomparable. He never forgets, never fails, never falters, never forfeits his word. To every declaration of promise or prophecy the Lord has exactly adhered, every engagement or covenant or threatening he will make good, for 'God is not a man that he should lie; neither the son of man that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?' (Num. 23:19)."

*The Attributes of God, 52.*

These attributes of God are strong encouragement for us. We know God's promises concerning our salvation and his providential work in our lives are sure and firm based on his nature and character.

**Charles Spurgeon said,** "Let us lean on God with all our weight. Let us throw ourselves on his faithfulness as we do on our beds, bringing all our weariness to his dear rest."

**C. A third attribute of God upon which Abraham trusted is his omnipotence.** Our text directly mentions this attributes.



**Rom. 4:17, 21.** Here is a reference to God's creation of all things out of nothing as well as a statement concerning God's ability to carry out his divine will and purpose. It was not difficult for God to give Abraham and Sarah a child in their old age. It was not difficult for God affect the virginal conception and birth of Christ. **Luke 1:34-37**

An important point on the omnipotence of God is that God, while creation demonstrates great power, it does not show omnipotence because it is finite. **Robert Reymond writes,** ". . . it is inherently impossible for the infinitely powerful God ever to employ all of his power. To say that he can immediately places a limitation upon it. The fact of the matter is that nothing in the universe or to the universe itself can I direct your attention as the visible result or the display of the full exercise of omnipotence, that is all of his power." *What Is God?*, 153-154.

**Stephen Charnock writes,** "When I have spoken of Divine power all that I can, when you have thought all that you can think of it, your souls will prompt you to conceive something more beyond what I have spoken and you have thought. . . there is infinitely more power lodged in His nature [that is] not expressed in the world."

*Discourses on the Existence and Attributes of God*, 2:9-10.

This means that when God makes a promise, he is able to fulfill that promise. Abraham's faith in God and his trust in God's promise was based on his understanding of God's truthfulness, faithfulness, and omnipotence. The same is true for us in terms of anything for which we trust God. Rom. 8:28. This is true in our salvation that we can trust the promise of God that those who believe in Christ are redeemed and justified before God. This also has an important application for us. If we want to strengthen our faith and trust in God, then we need to focus our minds on who God is as he reveals himself in Scripture.

This directly addresses how we grow in our faith and trust in God. **D. Martyn**

**Lloyd-Jones said,** "If you are anxious to know how to have a strong faith, here is the method. It means thorough and deep knowledge of the Bible and of God through it; not

suddenly taking up an idea and deciding to 'go in' for faith. If you want to have strong faith, read your Bible; go through it from beginning to end. Concentrate on the revelation that God has given of himself and of his character. Keep your eye especially also on prophecy, and then watch his promises being fulfilled. That is the way to develop strong faith - be grounded in all this. Then read the historical portions of the Bible, and, the stories of the great heroes. That is why the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews gives that gallery of portraits of these great saints in the eleventh chapter. He says, Look at these men, who were men like yourselves. What was their secret? It was that they knew God, they gave glory to God and relied utterly upon him and his word. Turn that over in your mind, keep on speaking to yourself about it; meditate on it. . . . Then, finally, you apply all that in practice to particular cases as they arise in your own life and experience. 'He staggered not, but gave glory to God.' That is the secret of faith. It is our ignorance of God that constitutes our main trouble."

*Romans: An Exposition of Chapters 3:20-4:25, 235.*

Rom. 4:22-5:2 Romans Series #17 3/8/09

Last week we looked at the nature of Abraham's faith. He believed the promise of God which God gave him in the Abrahamic covenant. He especially focused on the nature and character of God in his faith. The ultimate focus of Abraham's faith was not just toward temporal blessings, but toward the promise of salvation through the Messiah. Gal. 3:16 brings out that Abraham looked toward that singular "seed" which was Christ. All through Romans 4, the idea that Abraham was justified by faith in Christ alone is emphasized. Abraham believed God and it was reckoned to him as righteousness. Paul makes the point that we are saved in the same way as Abraham. Everyone who believes is a spiritual descendant of Abraham. This last section of Romans 4 once again applies the principle of justification by faith alone to us and makes an important statement about the work of Christ.

Rom. 5:1-2 gives a direct application of our justification by faith alone. This is one of those places where the chapter divisions break the flow of the thought. Remember those chapters and verses were added later and were not a part of the original letter. This morning we're going to look at this last section in Romans 4 and the application in Rom. 5:1-2.

**I. Christ was delivered to death for our sins. Rom. 4:25** - When the proclamation of the gospel in the New Testament is examined, there are certain key points that are almost always present in that proclamation. It includes the ideas that Christ died to save sinners, that he died for our sins as a substitutionary atonement. It also includes the fact of his resurrection.

The sermons in Acts may elaborate on these points by mentioned fulfilled prophecy, Jesus' miracles, his ascension into heaven, and his role as the judge in the final judgement, but they include the essential points of his substitutionary atonement and resurrection. **1 Cor. 15:1-4**

**Martin Luther said of Rom. 4:23-25**, "In these verses the whole of Christianity is comprehended." He was right. This passage does present a great summary of the essence of how we are redeemed. Christ died for our sins and he was raised demonstrating that the work was perfect and accepted. Several important points are set forth in Rom. 4:25.

**A. God delivered him up for our transgressions.**

This idea is set forth repeatedly in Scripture.

**Rom. 8:31-32; Gal. 1:3-4; Acts 2:22-23; 4:27-28.**

It is important to note that the inhuman treatment of Jesus was ordained by God before the foundation of the earth for the redemption of sinners.

**B. We also see that his work of atonement was for others. He was a substitutionary atonement in order to save his people from their sins (Matt. 1:21). Rom. 4:25a; Isa. 53:4-6, 10-12**

We've already seen this idea in Rom. 3:25. Christ was a propitiatory sacrifice for our sins. **Rom. 5:6-8**

**Donald Grey Barnhouse** illustrates the substitutionary nature of Christ's death by the story of Barrabus. Barnhouse pictures Barrabus sitting in prison, staring at his hands, which were soon to be pierced by nails, and shuddering at any sound of hammering that might remind him with horror of his own impending crucifixion. Suddenly he hears the crowd outside the prison shouting, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" He thinks he hears his own name. Then a jailer comes and takes him from his cell. Barrabus thinks it is time for his execution, but instead the jailer tells him that he is being set free. The crowd has called for his release. Jesus of Nazareth is to die instead. Barrabus watches Jesus being taken to Calvary and watches him being crucified. He hears the sound of the hammer and knows that the blows that are fastening Jesus to the cross were meant for him. **Barnhouse concludes,** " Barrabus was the only man in the world who could say that Jesus Christ too his physical place. But[all who are Christians] can say that Jesus Christ too [their] spiritual place." **Boice:** "The fact that we are sinners means that we deserve to die. We deserve the eternal punishment of the lake of fire. But Jesus was delivered up for our offenses.

He was crucified for our sins." Jesus took the judgment of hell for us. He was a propitiatory sacrifice on the cross.

**Donald Grey Barnhouse** summarized it like this: "Christianity can be expressed in three phrases: I deserved Hell; Jesus took my Hell; there is nothing left for me but his heaven." All through the last of Rom. 3 and this chapter Paul has been emphasizing that we are justified by faith alone based on Christ's perfect work of substitutionary atonement. If you believe in Christ, then you are justified before God. Your sins are truly forgiven and Christ's righteousness is imputed to you.

In 1563, a German theology professor, Zacharias Ursinus, formulated his personal faith in Answer 21 of the *Heidelberg Catechism*: "True faith - created in me by the Holy Spirit

through the gospel - is not only a knowledge and conviction that everything that God reveals in his Word is true, but also a deep-rooted assurance that not only others, but I too, have had my sins forgiven, have been made forever right with God, and have been granted salvation. These are gifts of sheer grace earned for us by Christ." Do you ever struggle with feeling alienated from God even though you confess your sins and your trust in Christ? Have you ever had the experience of beginning to pray and then you remember a series of sins you committed several years ago and you don't feel like you can even pray?

Christ's perfect work of substitutionary atonement means that condemnation is an utter impossibility for the person who has faith in Christ. **Rom. 8:1, 33** - "Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies." **Luther illustrated** this by telling the story of a dream in which Satan brought stacks of his sins to him. After three large stacks, he asked, "Is that all, devil?" "Yes, that's all your sins." In his dream, Luther took his quill, dipped it in ink, and wrote on the first stack, **1 John 1:7**, "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses me from all sin." He said, "Now get out of here, Satan!"

## **II. Christ's resurrection was the proof that the full payment for sin had been made.**

### **Rom. 4:25**

The resurrection proves or demonstrates that Christ's work was perfect, complete, and accepted by God. If Jesus had sinned in any way, his work of atonement would have been worthless. He would not have been a proper sacrifice for sins.

The resurrection is a statement that God accepted Christ's work of atonement. Therefore, it is also a statement concerning the sinlessness of Christ and that he perfectly carried out the will of the Father in all he did and in all he taught. The resurrection is a complete vindication and affirmation of Jesus' person and work. **D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones said**, "The resurrection is the proclamation of the fact that God is fully and completely satisfied with the work that his Son did upon the Cross."

*Romans: An Exposition of Chapters 3:20-4:25*, 244.

**R. A. Torrey writes,** "When Jesus died, he died as my representative, and I died in him; when he arose, he rose as my representative, and I arose in him. . . . I look at the cross of Christ, and I know that atonement has been made for my sins; I look at the open sepulcher and the risen and ascended Lord, and I know that the atonement has been accepted. There no longer remains a single sin on me, no matter how many or how great my sins may have been. My sins may have been as high as the mountains, but in the light of the resurrection the atonement that covers them is as high as heaven. My sins may have been as deep as the ocean, but in the light of the resurrection the atonement that swallows them is as deep as eternity."

We see the point emphasized again in this statement that we are justified before God because of Christ's work.

**Rom. 4:22-24; 4:5-8.** Again, here is the promise of God that if you believe in Christ, you will never be condemned. Your sins are truly paid for and forgiven because of Christ's perfect work.

Do you realize that if you believe in Christ, then the justice of God is on your side? Christ has paid the full debt of your sin, if you are truly in him. For God to punish that sin again would be a violation of his justice. **Illus. - R. C. Sproul** and man who said he'd prayed 100 times for forgiveness of a certain sin. Sproul said he wanted him to go and pray and ask forgiveness one more time. The man got angry. "I've already told you I've prayed for forgiveness 100 times. Sproul said, "Yes, but this time I want to you ask God to forgive you for your arrogance. Hasn't God promised that if you confess your sins he will forgive you? **1 John 1:9** - Notice the idea of God's justice being referenced in this promise. Since Christ has died as our substitute, it is just for God forgive those who believe in Christ. **Rom. 3:26 Charles Hodge writes on Rom. 4:25:** ". . . he was delivered in order that our sins might be expiated, and he was raised in order that we might be justified. His death and his resurrection were alike necessary; his death, as a satisfaction to divine justice. He bore our sins in his own body on the tree. That is, he

bore the punishment of our sins. . . . His resurrection was no less necessary, first, as a proof that his death had been accepted as an expiation for our sins. Had he not risen, it would have been evident that he was not what he claimed to be. We should be yet in our sins, 1 Cor. 15:17, and therefore still under condemnation. Our ransom, in that case, instead of being publicly accepted, had been rejected."

*Commentary on Romans*, 129.

### **III. Christ's work brings peace between God and the person who is justified by faith in Christ. Rom. 5:1-2**

We see again the idea that we are justified by faith.

We have already touched on the idea that the first benefit Paul mentioned concerning our justification is that we have peace with God. When we consider this idea of peace, that is not referring to a subjective peaceful feeling. It is referring to the alienation which comes because God is holy and man is sinful. It is important to note that all through this next section in Romans 5, the emphasis is not on man's hostility toward God, but on God's divine enmity toward sinful man. Christ's work of atonement removed that divine hostility and established peace between the justified man and Christ.

**Illus.** - R. C. Sproul tells the story that at the end of WW II, he was a little boy playing stick ball in the street. It was just his turn to bat and suddenly the street exploded with people cheering and shouting, "The war is over!" **tell story**

Because of Christ's work the conflict between God and the justified man is over. In our regeneration, God changes our hearts so that we are no longer hostile toward him, but the context in Romans 5 is the removal of God's holy alienation from sinful man because of Christ's atonement. **D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones said**, "There is no peace between man and God until a man grasps this doctrine of justification. It is the only way of peace. From: Assurance, 18. Gems, 176.

We also see that we have an introduction or access into this grace in which we stand.

**Charles Hodges comments:** We are indebted to Christ not only for peace, but also for access to this grace (this state of justification), which is the ground of our peace. We stand in this grace because the Holy Spirit has applied to work of Christ to us. He has granted us faith and repentance and brought us to Christ. We stand in this grace and that position is not a precarious one because God preserves and keeps us in our salvation. Being in a state of justification, standing in this grace, gives us assurance of being able to come into God's presence. **William Hendriksen comments on Romans 5:2:** ". . .it was indeed through the person and work of the Savior, appropriated by faith, that access into this state of grace - that is, the state of justification - had been effected. Moreover, access to this state of grace implies confident access to the Father (**Eph. 2:18; 3:11-12**) and to his throne of grace (**Heb. 4:16**)." *Commentary on Romans*, 169. Because we are justified and we are in a state of grace before God, we have confident access into the presence of God. This is why no one can come to the Father except through Jesus. **John 14:6; Acts 4:12; 1 Tim. 2:5** Because of his holiness, God has a divine enmity toward sinful man. Sinful man cannot enter into the presence of a holy God without an atonement for his sin. Christ provided that atonement. **D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones said,** "A central message of the New Testament is that there is no possibility of prayer, or of entry into the presence of God, except in and through and by our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

*Unsearchable Riches of Christ*, 98.

The hope of the glory of the God refers to our future glorification. This is similar to Rom. 8:30 - all who are justified are glorified. If you are in Christ, your salvation is secure. You will be glorified. We stand in this grace and that position is not a precarious one because God preserves and keeps us in our salvation. **R. C. Sproul writes,** "Nothing is more 'un-American' than to have an exclusive understanding of God. Yet nothing is more fundamental to the biblical concept of monotheism than the exclusivity of the God of heaven and earth. In 1 Kings 18 we read of the prophet Elijah engaging in a contest



with the priests of Baal on Mount Carmel. But try to imagine Elijah giving an interview to the media assembled to watch this contest. Imagine him speaking into a microphone, saying, 'Well, you know at the end of the day, I and the prophets of Baal really worship the same God. We believe in the same religion. We just do it differently. Our religious activity is not the same. There are elements in the religion of Baal that are different from the elements of the religion of Israel, but surely the God of Israel doesn't mind. In fact, He's honored when we celebrate our religious unity.' Can you imagine anything more foreign to the teaching of sacred Scripture than that? It has been said by biblical scholars and that the greatest weakness that led to the destruction of the Jewish nation in the Old Testament was not military weakness but a theological weakness. What got the people of Israel into trouble with God over and over again was the blending and mixing of their God-given faith with pagan religion. From: *When Worlds Collide*, 18-19.

We've just considered a grand summary of the gospel. Man is a sinner alienated from God and under God's judgment. Christ has met all the needs associated with our salvation in his work of atonement and his resurrection proclaims that the work is perfect and accepted. The only way of salvation is to be justified through faith in Christ, but God promises forgiveness and imputed righteousness to those to believe through the work of the Holy Spirit. Examine your heart. Do you believe in Christ? Are you at peace with God through being justified by faith in Christ alone?

Romans 5:3-5 Romans Series #18 3/15/09

Last week we considered the last part of Rom. 4 and the first part of Romans 5. Rom. 5:1-2 mentions that because we are justified by faith, we have peace with God. The context of Rom. 5 indicates that the peace is the removal of God's holy alienation from us. God has a divine enmity toward sinful man because of his own holiness. Christ's work on the cross removed that enmity in fulfilling all the demands of God's holy justice. Paul mentions that we have access into this grace in which we stand. In other words, we stand in this state of justification. We noted that peace with God and standing in this

grace means that we have access into God's presence. Paul concludes with a statement concerning our sure hope of future glorification. This is similar to Rom. 8:30 - all who are justified are glorified. Rom. 5:3 states that not only do we rejoice in this future hope of glory, but we also rejoice in tribulations. We are able to do this because we have a Scripturally informed perspective on tribulations and suffering. We understand that God uses suffering and trials in our lives for his purposes. This morning we're going to examine some of those purposes as set forth in this text and look at some other purposes for suffering that are presented in other texts.

### **I. God uses suffering to promote our sanctification.**

The first idea we see concerning this is presented in this text.

#### **A. God uses suffering to build Christian character.**

**Rom. 5:3-5.** In terms of Christian character, the first thing Paul mentions that tribulation brings is perseverance (hupomone). The word reflects the idea of perseverance, constancy, and patient endurance. Do you realize what a rare thing perseverance is in the Christian life and especially in Christian service. Going through various times of suffering and hardship and remaining faithful through the sustaining power of the Holy Spirit bring about perseverance. That leads to the next idea mentioned, proven character. **Charles Hodge** points out that constancy or perseverance produces evidence of both the faithfulness of God in keeping his people and the reality of true regeneration and saving faith in us. Therefore, tribulation produces a strong tested or proven faith and Christian character. This proven character strengthens Christian hope. A character which has been tested or proven through the work of the Holy Spirit strengthens our Christian hope because the whole process encourages our assurance of being in Christ. Going through trials and seeing the sustaining work of God in our lives strengthens our sure expectation of glorification (v. 2).

**Rom. 5:5** - The reference is to God's love being poured out to us, not our love toward God. His love is poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit. Notice in this section how Paul speaks of faith (vs. 1-2), hope (vs. 2, 4), and love (v. 5).

This passage is almost identical to what James writes about trials and suffering in **James 1:2-4**. James tells them to consider it all joy when they experience various trials. This is a strange exhortation. In fact, James seems to be out of touch with reality. Remember, however, that James is well-acquainted with persecution. He witnessed the death of Stephen and the lived through the persecution that followed. He saw close brothers and sisters in the Jerusalem church thrown into prison, tortured, and killed. He saw them scattered throughout Judea and Samaria because of persecution. He was well-acquainted with suffering and trials because of commitment to Christ. **James and Paul** write almost the same thing in terms of how the Christian is to view trials and suffering. **Christians are to consider it all joy because of a knowledge of what trials produce. James 1:3; Rom. 5:3-4**

The Christian should see the hand of God in all of life.

You are to consider it all joy because you know something.

You know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance with the goal that you will be a mature Christian lacking nothing. The trials and pain you experience do not come to you by chance. *The Heidelberg Catechism* states it this way: "All things, in fact, come to us not by chance, but from his fatherly hand" (A 27). We are to count it all joy when we experience trials because of a cognitive understanding of what they produce in our lives. **Trials produce Christian maturity.**

**James 1:3-4; Rom. 5:3-4** - God uses various trials to produce perseverance and maturity in us. An old Arabic proverb states: "Sunshine alone creates deserts." **Charles Spurgeon said**, "Better to be taught by suffering than to be taught by sin! Better to lie in God's dungeon than to revel in the devil's palace."

**James 1:3-4.** Notice the link between verses 3 and 4. Verse 3 ends with the word "endurance" or "perseverance." Verse 4 begins with the same word. James 1:4 - "Let perseverance have its perfect result." We are to persevere in our trials so that the work God has begun may be brought to completion.

As you persevere in faithfulness and trust in God in the midst of adversity, that process will produce greater Christian maturity in you. You cannot speed up this process. It needs time. **For example**, a person may have a broken leg that's set and put in a cast. Each time he goes to his doctor, his leg is x-rayed and he receives the encouraging news from his doctor that his leg is healing satisfactorily. Each time he visits the doctor he receives the same news, but he is strictly told not to put pressure on his leg and that it must be supported in the cast for it to heal. The healing process must run its course. In a similar way, we must persevere in the trials we endure maintaining a trust and faith in God so that they can produce greater maturity in us. If you are dealing with a trial or crisis in your life now, it is important to persevere in your faith and trust in God and in your obedience to his clear commands. If the person with a broken leg would try to take the cast off too soon, the results would be disastrous for the healing process. I observed that exact thing happen years ago with a man I knew in San Antonio - Ron taking off cast. Paul and James both call for a perception of suffering as a chance to grow in commitment to Christ and Christian maturity. That is certainly at odds with a world that conceives life solely in terms of gratification and self-aggrandizement. The culture in which we live views anything interfering with pleasure as something that must be avoided at all costs.

**Luke Timothy Johnson writes**, "The [concept of endurance in something that is not pleasurable] is not attractive to hedonism for it assumes an understanding of human character based on something more profound than pleasure, possession, or power (James, 183). We are to consider or reckon it all joy when we are dealing with trials because our very existence is to be defined in terms of our relationship with God through faith in

Christ. It is this understanding of reality that enables us to rejoice in tribulation. In the novel *Billy Bud*, Herman Melville writes the line: "Until we understand that one sorrow outweighs a thousand joys, we will never understand what Christianity is trying to make us." **R. C. Sproul commented:** "He didn't say, 'We'll never understand theology; we'll never understand God; we'll never understand doctrine.' He's saying, 'We'll never understand what Christianity is trying to make us.' That character comes through affliction. **Richard Pratt writes:** "Think of it this way. God calls us to troubles as surgeons invite us to their operating tables. Their knives inflict terrible pain. No sane person enjoys the ordeal of surgery. To deny the anguish is to lie. Nonetheless, we voluntarily submit to the knife. Why? We allow them to cut because the pain will bring about better health in the future. Paul tells us that the same thing is true of God. He tells us to submit to the knife of suffering for Christ for the good it will bring to us. God is working all our troubles into something wonderful for us. We can submit to his call because he promises to work the pain for our good. *Designed for Dignity*, 194-195. Peter presents the same idea in **1 Pet. 1:6-7**. Peter also affirms that it is God's providence which governs every trial and every point of suffering we experience. **1 Pet. 4:19**

**B. Closely related to this is the fact that God also uses suffering or trials to bring correction to his people.**

**Heb. 12:5-11; Heb. 12:9-10** - This is a logical argument. If our human parents disciplined us imperfectly with the fallibility of human judgment, for our good, how much more does our heavenly Father, with omniscient knowledge of our circumstances and persons discipline us perfectly for our good. The result of his discipline is that we would share in his holiness. The goal is our sanctification. **Heb. 12:11 Philip Hughes writes,** "How easily the desire for holiness is set aside when our worldly affairs are proceeding smoothly and comfortably! and how needful, then, is God's fatherly discipline which, when rightly received, teaches us not to rely on ourselves or to seek earthly security but to look trustingly and gratefully to him alone for help and blessing!"

**Hugh Latimer**, the English Reformer, speaks of the Christian's sufferings as "sauces" which give us a relish for Christ: "For like as sauces make lusty the stomach to receive meat, so affliction stirreth up in us a desire for Christ. For when we be in quietness we are not hungry, we care not for Christ; but when we be in tribulation, and cast into prison, then we have a desire to him; then we learn to call upon him; then we hunger and thirst after him; then we are desirous to feed upon him. As long as we be in health and prosperity we care not for him; we be slothful, we have no stomach at all; and therefore these sauces are very necessary for us. . . . Therefore it cometh the goodness of God when we be put to taste the sauce of tribulation: for then he doth it to a good end. . . . For these sauces are very good for us; for they make us more hungry and lusty to come to Christ and to feed upon him." When he said this, it came from a man who was well-acquainted with persecution. He was imprisoned and ultimately burned at the stake under Mary Tudor. When he and Nicholas Ridley were being taken to the stake for burning, Latimer turned to Ridley and said, "Be of good cheer, Brother Ridley; we have lighted such a candle in England as by the grace of God shall never be put out." **II. God's sovereignty gives us a proper perspective on suffering.**

Rom. 5:3; James 1:2 We have already touch on this, but I want to examine it more carefully. How can we rejoice in tribulation?

It is easy in the midst of some trial or time of grief or pain, to wonder if our suffering has any ultimate meaning. Have you ever wondered if your suffering or your pain is futile? It is at this point that the sovereignty of God comes directly to bear on our lives. If God is not sovereign and providentially working out a perfect plan in my life, then the suffering we experience might be meaningless. It might be just the result of living life in this kind of work and have no ultimate meaning. This is one reason why the biblical revelation of the sovereignty of God is so important. **Eph. 1:11; Acts 17:26; Isa. 41:4; Job 42:2; Dan. 4:34-35; Matt. 10:29-31** God is sovereign and if not one sparrow falls outside his plan, then he is certainly working out his purposes in your life.

God is sovereign when death comes to your home.

God is sovereign when you fight cancer.

God is sovereign when you face a debilitating illness.

God is sovereign in your pain or grief.

God is sovereign when you are persecuted for Christ.

Ironically, it is often the experience of suffering that cultivates this kind of trust in us.

In God's eternal plan, some people have a divine calling of suffering and dying for the gospel. That is their vocational call from God. **Acts 9:15-16** - But the Lord said to Ananias, "Go! This man is my chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel. I will show him how much he must suffer for my name."

#### **Rev. 6:9-11**

All of this means that when you do suffering in whatever form, it has meaning in the eternal plan of God. Your pain is not futile. Often we don't understand our points of suffering, grief, and pain, but we can rest in the fact that it has meaning because God is sovereign. **Gerhard Maier wrote:** "Because God gives history a purpose, each individual event and its respective form lie in more or less direct connection to that purpose. The purpose of events is not exhausted in their isolated occurrence; it rather reaches beyond them." *Biblical Hermeneutics*, 198.

**Job 2:8-10** - Job's response to his wife is poignant. He did not understand why God had called him to suffer, but he did understand that God had called him to that position.

In the midst of answering his friends he makes one of the more heroic statements in Scripture - Job 13:15 - "Though he slay me, yet will I hope in him." The only answer Job ever received was a revelation of God himself. He didn't receive a detailed explanation of why he was called to suffer, but he did receive a tremendous revelation of the power of God. Essentially, God said, "Job, I am your answer."

**He wasn't asked to trust an impersonal plan, but a personal sovereign God who is wise and good and does everything for a reason.**

In 1636, amid the darkness of the Thirty Years' War, a German pastor, Martin Rinkart, is said to have buried five thousand of his parishioners in one year, an average of fifteen a day. His parish was ravaged by war, death, and economic disaster.

In the heart of that darkness, with the cries of fear outside his window, he sat down and wrote this table grace for his children:

Now Thank we all our God/ With heart and hands and voices;/ Who wondrous things hath done,/ In whom his world rejoices./ Who, from our mother's arms,/ Hath led us on our way/ With countless gifts of love/ And still is ours today.

Here was a man who trusted God's providence and believed God no matter what his outward circumstances.

That hope is only for those in Christ.

Rom. 5:6-11 Romans Series #19 3/22/09

This passage in Romans is one of the key passages in the New Testament on Christ's work of atonement. It not only addresses issues of what Christ did on the cross for us, but also sets forth the basic motivation for the atonement. The term atonement describes every aspect of Christ's work of salvation for us.

**A. W. Pink wrote:** "The Divine way of salvation is the most stupendous monument of Divine wisdom and grace, of sovereignty and power, of justice and mercy, that ever was exhibited in this world. God has provided a Saviour, who, by His virtuous life and vicarious death, has made atonement for sin, by which all His people obtain eternal life. The whole scope of revelation, from the first intimation made in Eden (Gen. 3:15) to the end of the New Testament, bears witness to this marvelous and precious way of salvation. The Divine promises declared it, the types illustrated it, the prophets foretold it. When the Son of man was here, He announced that He "came to give His life a ransom for many" (Matt. 20:28): almost everyone knows that a "ransom" is a price paid for the



recovery of anything that is lost to its original owner. The uniform teaching of the Epistles is, that "Christ Jesus came into this world to save sinners."

*The Satisfaction of Christ*, 303.

A. W. Pink was right. The atonement is the greatest demonstration of God's love and justice ever exhibited. This morning we are going to consider some of these aspects of the atonement.

Understanding these truths provide a foundation for confidence and assurance in our relationship with God. The doctrine of the atonement is the heart of our salvation.

**Charles Spurgeon said**, "I do not think a man ought to hear a minister preach three sermons without learning the doctrine of the atonement."

**I. Christ's work of atonement is a tremendous demonstration of the love and justice of God. A. We were objects of God's wrath.** Rom. 1:18; 2:2-6; Rom. 2 emphasizes that God's judgment against sin is right and just. Rom. 3:9-12 - No one is righteous according to the standard of God's law. This is not saying that people don't do nice things or express kindness in some way or another; it is saying that no one meets the demands of God's law - outside of Christ, no one does good according to God's definition of good.

Rom. 3:23 This is why when the Bible speaks of Christ's work of atonement, the idea of God's justice being fulfilled is a key idea. Rom. 3:25-26; 5:9 - "shall be saved" = future tense.

Since we had all broken God's law and were rightly under the judgment of God, the problem of our salvation is how could God forgive us and still maintain his justice. **John Murray, wrote:** "He [God] cannot deny himself. To be complacent towards that which is the contradiction of his own holiness would be a denial of himself. . . . the justice of God demands that sin receive its retribution. The question is not at all: How can God, being what he is, send men to hell? The question is: How can God, being what he is, save them from hell? *Collected Writings*, 2:81-82

**B. This is why the atonement of Christ is such a supreme demonstration of the love of God.**

Rom. 5:6-8

When we were helpless and ungodly, Christ died for us.

Rom. 5:7 - The two words here reflect the idea of just (*dikaos*) and kind, warmth, and love (*agathos*). The just man commands respect; the good or kind man receives affection. Sometimes people will lay down their lives for someone who is of high moral character like a great leader, but it more likely that people will lay down their lives for someone who commands their affection. We were the opposite of both characteristics in the eyes of God. We weren't just or righteous in any way and we didn't have anything in us that would cause God to be kindly disposed toward us. When we were the opposite of having good character or sterling qualifications in the eyes of God, Christ died for us.

Rom. 5:7-8 - "While we were yet sinners" - not when we were good and righteous and deserving of God's love. We deserved God's judgment and justice for violating God's law, but God demonstrated his love and his mercy in Christ dying for us.

This entire passage emphasizes the point that Christ died for us when we didn't deserve it and that his work was a supreme demonstration of God's love.

**Rom. 5:6 - helpless and ungodly; Rom. 5:8 - yet sinners**

**Rom. 5:10 - while we were enemies of God** - Here is the idea of the divine enmity and wrath against sinners. **1 John 4:9-10**

**Jonathan Edwards wrote:** "The grace of God in bestowing this gift is most free. It was what God was under no obligation to bestow. He might have rejected fallen man, as he did the fallen angels. It was what we never did anything to merit; it was given while we were yet enemies, and before we had so much as repented. It was from the love of God who saw no excellency in us to attract

it. . . . From: Sermon on 1 Cor. 1:29-31: "God Glorified in Man's Dependence" in

*Knowing Christ, 37*

This is why Paul says that the wisdom of God is proclaimed in the cross - Christ's work of atonement met all the demands of God's justice and all of demands of God's love.

This is also why Christ is the only way to the Father. Only his infinite sacrifice met all the demands of God's justice so that God could forgive you and still be just.

**Rom. 3:26** One point that is important to consider is that this plan of salvation is trinitarian to the core. God, the Father demonstrates his love toward us in sending his Son. God, the Son demonstrates his love in dying for us. God, the Holy Spirit applies that salvation in working regeneration in our hearts.

Do you see the depth of mercy, grace, and love that is extended to you in your salvation?

When you realize that apart from Christ you were an object of God's divine wrath, that you rightly deserved the wrath and justice of God against your sin, then you can realize how profoundly God's mercy and love are demonstrated in Christ dying for you.

Does that move you to worship, to gratitude, and service to God?

When I consider what I deserved and the mercy I received, that motivates me! If that doesn't move your soul to praise, examine your heart concerning your salvation.

## **II. Christ's work of atonement was a substitutionary work.**

Rom. 5:6 - "for the ungodly;" 5:8 - "Christ died for us;"

5:9 - "justified by his blood;" "saved from the wrath of God through him;" 5:10 - "through him; "by his life."

The famous physician, Dr. James Simpson of Scotland, once gave this stirring testimony:

"When I was a boy, I saw a sight I shall never forget - a man tied to a cart and dragged through the streets of my hometown. His back was torn and bleeding from the whip. It was a shameful punishment! For many offenses? No, for just one. Did anyone offer to bear some of his lashes? No! He endured them alone. His penalty was determined by a changing human law and was the last instance of its enforcement. When I was a student at the university, I saw another sight that lingers in my memory - a man being led to the gallows. His hands were tied, and his face was pale as death. Thousands of eager eyes

were on him as he walked slowly to the place of execution. Did anyone ask to die in his place? No! He underwent the full sentence of the law alone. For many offenses? No! For only one! He had stolen some money, and he paid with his life. It was the penalty of a changing law, for it was the last time capital punishment was inflicted for that crime. I saw another sight I shall never forget - myself a sinner, standing on the brink of an eternal Hell. For one sin? No! For many grievous wrongs committed against the unchanging laws of God. I looked again and behold, Jesus Christ became my substitute? He bore in His own body on the tree all the punishment for my sins. He suffered, 'the just for the unjust,' that He might bring me to God."

**Charles Spurgeon** said, "The heart of the gospel is redemption, and the essence of redemption is the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ. They who preach this truth preach the gospel, however else they may be mistaken. But they who preach not atonement, whatever else they should declare, have missed the soul and substance of the divine message."

**Rom. 5:9** - This is a future tense.

We are saved from the wrath of God through Him.

This reiterates the idea that God's just wrath is poured out against sin. We are saved and will be saved from that wrath because Christ took that wrath in our place.

**Charles Hodges comments on Romans 5:9:** "This and the following verse draw the obvious inference, from the freeness and greatness of the love of God, as just exhibited, that believers shall be ultimately saved. It is an argument *a fortiori*. If the greater benefit has been bestowed, the less will not be withheld. If Christ has died for his enemies, he will surely save his friends." Commentary, 138. The term "propitiation" is used four times in the New Testament: **Rom. 3:25; 1 John 2:2; 4:9-10; Heb. 2:17**. Christ fulfilled all the demands of God's justice in taking the wrath due his sheep. On the cross, he took the agonies of damnation for you, if you are in him.

This brings into focus again our dire need for salvation. There are only two options: either Christ took the wrath of God due to you or you will take that wrath yourself.

**Charles Spurgeon** said, "If Christ, who was God's Son, suffered so bitterly for sins that were not his own, how bitterly must you, who are not God's sons but God's enemies, suffer for sins that are your own? And you must so suffer unless Christ, the substitute, stands for you."

**Robert Murray McCheyne**, the great Scottish preacher of the early 19th century, was once touring a foundry in his area, he stopped to gaze at the bright glow of a blast furnace. Turning to the one who tended it, he said, "Does the fire remind you of anything?" Then he left without saying another word. The unconverted man had heard him preach of the terrible doom of hell awaiting the lost and knew what McCheyne meant to convey by that remark. The Holy Spirit used that remark and the man's soul was troubled and found no rest. It led to him believing in Christ and receiving eternal life. Some people try to dismiss or minimize the doctrine of God's just wrath against sin and the doctrine of hell by saying that those outside of Christ will simply burn up and cease to exist. In Matt. 25:46, Jesus spoke of eternal punishment and the numerous other passages speak of an unending eternity in hell for the lost. **Jonathan Edwards**, in preaching on Revelation 6:15-16 said, "Wicked men will hereafter earnestly wish to be turned to nothing and forever cease to be that they may escape the wrath of God."

On the cross, Christ, as our substitute, took the punishment of hell for his people. Faith in Jesus means that your trust that work, that you commit yourself to Christ for salvation. Do you truly believe? If you don't trust in Christ, you will take the punishment for your sins forever in hell.

### **III. Christ's work of atonement secured our salvation.**

Rom. 5:9-10

#### **A. We are justified and secure in our salvation because of the work of Christ.**

If God set his love upon you while you were still a sinner and an enemy of God, how much more can you be assured of his love upon you now that you are justified by the work of Christ.

Do you ever struggle with guilt before God. The answer to real guilt is real forgiveness.

1 John 1:9 - This promise is based on the justice and faithfulness of God. If Christ has truly taken the wrath and condemnation due to you as a law-breaker, then the debt is truly paid. God's justice is on your side. It would be an injustice for God to punish your sins twice. If you are truly in Christ, then you can be confident that condemnation is an utter impossibility for you. **Rom. 8:1**

Charles Spurgeon said, "What! Did Christ at one tremendous draft of love drink my damnation dry, and shall I be damned after that? God forbid! What! Shall God be unrighteous to forget the Redeemer's work for us and let the Savior's blood be shed in vain? Not hell itself has ever indulged the thought which has only been worthy of the men who are traitors to God's truth."

### **B. We are reconciled to God.**

This statement is closely related to Rom. 5:1 - peace with God. The focus in the idea of reconciliation is on God's side.

Because God is holy and man is sinful, there is a need for God to be reconciled to man.

### **Hab. 1:13.**

Because Christ has taken the wrath due us, God can look favorably upon us and embrace us as his children without any violation to his holy character. Notice also that every aspect of the atonement mentioned in the passage is an accomplished work. Christ actually took the wrath of God against his people. He actually reconciled us to God.

Remember Jesus' statement, "It is finished." - tetelestai. Do you know for sure that these tremendous benefits are applied to your life? Are you in Christ?

**Martin Luther's** struggle with the guilt of sin helped prepare him for the great freedom he found when the truth of justification by faith finally dawned on him. This poem by

Luther expresses it well: I do not come because my soul is free from sin and pure and whole and worthy of Thy grace; I do not speak to Thee because I've ever justly kept Thy laws and dare to meet Thy face.

I know that sin and guilt combine to reign o'er every thought of mine and turn from good to ill; I know that when I try to be upright and just and true to Thee, I am a sinner still.

I know that often when I strive to keep a spark of love alive for Thee, the powers within Leap up in unsubmissive might and oft benumb my sense of right and pull me back to sin.

I know that though in doing good I spend my life, I never could atone for all I've done; but though my sins are black as night, I dare to come before Thy sight because I trust Thy Son.

In Him alone my trust I place, come boldly to Thy throne of grace, and there commune with Thee. Salvation sure, O Lord, is mine, and, all unworthy, I am Thine, for Jesus died for me.

Rom. 5:12-19 Romans Series #20 3/29/09

I've often heard the statement, "People are basically good." While people will admit that no one is perfect, no one is really that bad. However, if people are basically good, why does everybody sin; why is evil universal? This passage of Scripture is an extremely important section concerning man's sin and how we are made righteous before God in our justification. This passage sets forth the doctrine of original sin. The term "original sin" does not refer primarily to the first sin committed by Adam and Eve, but to the result of the first sin - the corruption of the human race. It refers to man's fallen condition in sin, a condition into which we are born. In early church history, this passage was the center of a debate between the important theologian Augustine and a British monk named Pelagius. Pelagius argued that man is basically good and that he only sins because he has bad examples. He also argued that God's grace and the work of Jesus were helpful in salvation, but were not necessary because man, in his basic goodness, could work his way

to heaven. Augustine used this passage in Romans 5 to show that man is born with a corrupt nature and sins because he is born a sinner; Adam's sin and corruption is credited to all his decedents. Pelagius was declared a heretic in A. D. 418. His ideas, however, are the most commonly held view of man in our culture. This morning we are going to consider three key ideas from this passage. We are going to look at its teaching concerning Adam's sin being imputed or credited to all his descendants.

We will consider how Christ's righteousness is credited to his people, and the fact that our salvation is purely of God's grace.

This passage is the theological foundation for the concept of man being a sinner and how we are made righteous in Christ.

### **I. Adam's sin was credited or imputed to all men.**

Rom. 5:12 In Paul's writing style, whenever he wants to draw a comparison (just as this is true, so also this is), he always uses a certain grammatical construction: (hosper) "just as" - (houtos kai) "so also." Rom. 5:12 contains the "just as" and Rom. 5:18 completes the comparison with the "so also."

This passage essentially teaches that when Adam sinned, the whole race sinned in him. He was the representative head for all of his posterity. Every person sins individually, but ultimately every person is a sinner because Adam's sin is imputed to them. A person goes to hell first because he is a sinner in Adam and secondly because of personal individual sins. In the same way, a person goes to heaven, not because of individual works of righteousness, but because Christ's righteousness has been imputed to him.

**Rom. 5:12** - Notice that it is through the one man, Adam that sin entered into the world. 12 times in this passage the term "one" is used to emphasize either the one man Adam or in contrast, Christ. One sin involved the entire race. Death spread to all men because all sinned. The phrase, "all sinned" is in the Aorist tense in Greek. That tense is a punctiliar past tense. Something occurs at one moment in the past. This verse is saying that at the moment Adam sinned, all his posterity were declared sinners. **Charles Hodge** comments



on Rom. 5:12: ". . . a large class of commentators from Pelagius down, say these words can only mean that all have sinned in their own persons. Death has passed on all men, because all have actually sinned personally. This interpretation is . . . by the almost unanimous judgment of the Church, utterly inadmissible. 1. It is inconsistent with the force of the tense. The aorist (emarton) does not mean do sin, nor have sinned, nor are accustomed to sin. It is the simple historical tense, expressing momentary action in past time. All sinned, i.e., sinned in Adam, sinned through or by one man. . . . 2. It is also incompatible with the design of this verse, to make emarton refer to the personal sins of men. As so often remarked, the design is to show that Adam's sin, not our own, is the cause of death. 3. Verses 13, 14, are intended to prove what is asserted in ver. 12; but they do not prove that all men personally sin, but the very reverse. 4. This interpretation destroys the analogy between Adam and Christ. It would make the apostle teach, that as all men die because they personally sin, so all live because they are personally and inherently righteous. This is contrary not only to this whole passage, but to all Paul's teaching, and to the whole gospel." Commentary on Romans, 149.

This idea flows through this passage - Rom. 5:15,16,17,18,19.

Emphasize pertinent phrases in each verse.

The fact that Adam's sin is imputed or credited to all his posterity is seen in the fact that all die.

#### **A. Death is a result of sin.**

The first lie of the devil was that you could sin and not die.

Gen. 3:4 - The serpent said to the woman, "You shall not surely die." Sin and death are absolutely linked in Scripture.

**Ezek. 18:4; Rom. 6:23; Rom. 5:12, 17**

No death before sin - creation issues.

**Milton** wrote of sin in this way, "Sin and her shadow, death."

Rom. 5:13-14 - The fact that people die before the formal giving of the Law at Mount Sinai is evidence that Adam's sin is assigned to the race. That it is a legal declaration is emphasized in Rom. 5:14 - A person might not have committed the same sin as Adam, but they are counted as sinners.

This also indicates that God's law was in place and had been broken before the formal giving of the Ten Commandments.

**Hosea 6:7** - "But like Adam they have transgressed my covenant."

All people are counted as sinners first of all because they are descendants of Adam. Death shows that all are sinners. The fact that anyone dies demonstrates that sin is imputed.

**B. Adam was a representative of all people and when he sinned all his natural descendants were counted as sinners.**

Rom. 5:12, 18a, 19a - natural descendants - **Christ - virgin birth**

The Westminster Shorter Catechism Q16 in talking about the imputation of Adam's sin **states:** "The covenant being made with Adam, not only for himself, but for his posterity; all mankind, descending from him by ordinary generation, sinned in him, and fell with him, in his first transgression." I remember Robert Reymond asking our class when we memorized that why we thought the phrase "ordinary generation" was used in that answer. That phrase excludes Christ. He was not born by ordinary generation in the virginal conception and birth.

We just looked at how this passage emphasizes that it is through one who sinned that we are made sinners and it is through one transgression that death and judgment came. One of the struggles that people have with this passage and the principle of representation set forth in it is that we've all had the experience of being improperly represented. For example, most of us have probably voted for someone and maybe even worked in the campaign of someone who once they

got elected voted for things we would have never supported. We have chosen representatives who didn't truly represent us. In the case of Adam being our representative, who chose him as a representative for us? God did. In perfect omniscience and wisdom, God chose a representative for us that perfectly represented us. Adam acted exactly like every one of us would have acted in the same circumstances.

**Illus. - railroad worker in old west - "Old Adam"**

While the illustration takes place after we are sinners, the principle is true. All of us would have done the exact actions that Adam did in the garden. All of us would have rebelled against the command of God and committed cosmic treason against our Creator. Those who object to the principle of imputation in regard to Adam's sin being imputed to the race object to the principle by which we are saved. Just like Adam's sin is imputed to the race, Christ's righteousness is imputed to believers. We'll consider that more in a moment.

**C. Third, the corruption of Adam's sin is imputed to his natural descendants.**

When Adam fell into sin, the entire race fell into sin. After Adam's sin, death reigns, the judgement comes, condemnation results, and man's heart is corrupted.

**Gen. 3:7,8,12; Gen. 6:5** - One minister, in talking about the imputation of Adam's sin said, "My wife and I had twin girls and they were angels! When they were around two years old, I heard a blood curdling scream come from their play room. "What's that?" I thought to myself. "Angels don't scream." I rushed to the play room and discovered that one angel and the other angel by the hair and was beating her over the head with a block. I called to my wife, " Nancy, look what your child is doing!"

That's when I discovered that you don't have to send your kids to sin school. It is imputed to them from Adam. In a "Grin and Bear It" cartoon, a mother is talking to a school principal about her son who is obviously in trouble, "He knows right from wrong and he prefers wrong."

**Illus. - Augustine and neighbor's pears/pigs** - In vandalism the only thing a person gets is the joy of being evil.

So, we see that Adam's sin and corruption are imputed to his natural descendants as a legal declaration of God. A person is under the judgment of God first of all because of Adam's sin being credited to him and second, because of his personal sins.

Rom. 3:23

As I mentioned a moment ago, we also see this principle of imputation in regard to Christ's righteousness being credited to us when we believe.

**II. Just like Adam's sin was credited to all people, Christ's righteousness is credited to believers.**

**A. Christ, in his human nature, perfectly obeyed the law of God.**

Rom. 5:14,18-19 - Notice the contrast between Adam's disobedience and Christ's obedience. Mention parallelism in Verse 18 - "all" **Heb. 4:15; 2:18** - temptations of Jesus - replay of Garden of Eden **B. It is by Christ's obedience that believers are counted as righteous before God.** Rom. 5:17-19; 4:1-8; 1 Cor. 15:21-22

Augustus Toplady, author of many hymns, including "Rock of Ages," wrote in his private diary under December 31, 1767: "Upon a review of the past year, I desire to confess that my unfaithfulness has been exceeding great; my sins still greater; God's mercies greater than both." And again, "My short-comings and my mis-doings, my unbelief and want of love, would sink me into the lowest hell, was not Jesus my righteousness and my Redeemer."

This crediting of Jesus' righteousness is a legal declaration of God. Rom. 5:18 - Notice how condemnation and justification are contrasted. Both are legal terms.

Remember, two things take place in justification by faith alone: your sins are forgiven and Christ's righteousness is credited to you. His righteousness is credited as a legal declaration of God. 2 Cor. 5:21; Phil 3:9

Abraham believed God and it was reckoned to him as righteousness.

Who is your spiritual head now - Christ or Adam? If you are not in Christ, if you don't trust in him alone as your Savior, then you are under the judgment of God for Adam's sin and your personal sins. Unless you believe in Christ, you will perish in your sins. We've seen that Adam was our perfect representative and his sin is legally imputed to us. If you are in Christ, his perfect obedience, his righteousness, is imputed to you.

### **III. Our salvation is purely by the grace of God.**

This passage repeatedly states that it is through one man and one transgression that condemnation, judgment, and death came to the race. But, it also repeatedly states that much more the grace of God, the gift of grace, the gift of righteousness came through Christ. **Rom. 5:15-17** - emphasize grace and gift statements.

Jesus kept the law perfectly and when you believe and are in spiritual union with him, his perfect righteousness is credited to you as a free gift of God. It is not something earned or deserved. Is this blessing yours? Are you in Christ? Do you trust in him alone as your Savior? If you are in Christ, condemnation is an utter impossibility for you. Rom. 8:1

Illus. - Harold Hull - Adam's sin.

### **ROMANS 5:12-19 CRITIQUES OF VARIOUS INTERPRETATIONS**

These critiques come from Charles Hodge's *Commentary on Romans*, 148-153 and Robert Reymond's *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith*, 436-438.

#### **Various interpretations on Romans 5:12:**

**I.** All sin consists in the voluntary transgression of known law and no one man can sin in another. "Because all sinned" therefore means that all have sinned in their own persons. Death has passed on to all men because all have sinned personally. This is the position of Pelagius.

#### **Answer:**

1. It is inconsistent with the force of the verb tense. The aorist does not mean do sin, nor have sinned, nor are accustomed to sin. It is the simple historical tense, expressing momentary action in past time. All sinned, i.e., sinned in Adam, sinned through or by one man.

2. It is also incompatible with the design of this verse to make *harmarton* refer to the personal sins of men. The design is to show that Adam's sin, not our own, is the cause of death.
3. Verses 13-14 are intended to prove what is asserted in verse 12; but they do not prove that all men personally sin, but the very reverse.
4. This interpretation destroys the analogy between Adam and Christ. It would make the apostle teach that as all men died because they personally sin, so all men live because they are personally and inherently righteous. This is contrary, not only to this passage, but to all of Paul's teaching and the gospel itself.
5. This interpretation is not only inconsistent with the context, the verb tense, the apostle's argument, and the analogy of Adam and Christ, but it makes the apostle assert what is not true. Infants die before they have had any opportunity to commit personal sins. See: Romans 5:14.

Hodge comments, "An interpretation which makes the apostle teach what is not true, needs no further refutation" (149).

## **II. "Because all sinned" means "because all are corrupt."**

This is a form of the mediate imputation view, sometimes called the "new school" view. Adam, having defiled his nature by sin, transmits that defiled nature to all his posterity, and, therefore, all die because they are inherently corrupt. This is what is called mediate imputation or the doctrine that it is not the sin of Adam, but the inherited depravity derived from him which is the ground of condemnation for the race.

### **Answer:**

1. It is contrary to the simple meaning of the words. In no case does *harmartano* (sin) mean corruption of nature.
2. This view supposes that the corresponding phrase, "sin entered into the world," means "men became depraved." This is not a true meaning of the words Paul uses.
3. It is inconsistent with the apostle's argument. Verses 13-14 are designed to prove that all men sin in Adam. They do not prove that all men are inherently corrupt.
4. It vitiates the whole analogy between Christ and Adam and, therefore, destroys the very foundation of the gospel. The foundation of justification is that the righteousness of Christ is something outside of a person and is distinguished from any subjective state of a person. There is nothing in a person on which they could rely for their justification. "It is, therefore, the essential part of the analogy between Christ and Adam, the very truth which the apostle designs to set forth, that the sin of Adam, as distinguished from any act of ours, and from inherent corruption as derived from him, is the ground of our

condemnation. If this be denied, then the other great truth must be denied, and our own subjective righteousness be made the ground of our justification; which is to subvert the gospel” (Hodge, 150).

5. This interpretation contradicts verses 15-19 which state that the sin of Adam was the ground of our condemnation. While it is true that Adam’s corruption is transmitted to us, that is not set forth as the basis of our condemnation. In a similar way, the holiness of believers which they derive from Christ is not set forth as the basis of their justification.

### **III. “Because all sinned” means that all men sinned actually in Adam.**

This is known as the realist position. William G. T. Shedd and James Henry Thornwell were proponents of this position.

Adam was not merely a representative, but all men, being in him, concentrated as a generic life, sinned in him. This interpretation contends that human life must be viewed generically and numerically as a single unit. It states that “Adam possessed the entire human nature and that all mankind, being present in Adam as a generic humanity, corrupted itself by its own apostatizing act in Adam. Individual men are not separate substances, but manifestations of the same generic substance. They are numerically one in nature. The reason that all men are accountable for Adam’s sin is because they *actually* (really) sinned in Adam before the individualizing of human nature began” (Reymond, Systematic, 436).

#### **Answer:**

1. The proposition “all men sinned in Adam,” has no meaning. To say that “in Adam all die” conveys a distinct idea, but to say that “all actually expired in Adam” conveys no meaning. Charles Hodge comments, “Even on the extremist realistic assumption that humanity as such is an entity, the act of Adam was no the act of all men. He act may have vitiated his generic nature, not only for his own person, but for his posterity; but this is very different thing from his act being their act. His sin was an intelligent act of self-determination; but an act of rational self-determination is a personal act. Unless, therefore, all men as persons existed in Adam, it is impossible that they acted his act. To say that a man acted thousands of years before his personality began, does not rise even to the dignity of contradiction; it has no meaning at all” (151).

2. This interpretation is inconsistent with the design of the passage. If the analogy between Christ and Adam is carried forward with this idea, then, not only are we all sinners because we sinned in Adam, but we are all righteous because we all obeyed in Christ and his righteousness and death were also our own acts. This is not only impossible, but also unscriptural.

John Murray writes:

Since the analogy instituted between Adam and Christ [in Rom. 5] is so conspicuous, it is surely necessary to assume that the kind of relationship which Adam sustains to men is after the pattern of the relationship which Christ sustains to men. To put the case conversely, surely the kind of relationship that Christ sustains to men is after the pattern which Adam sustains to men (see Rom. 5:14) (John Murray, *The Imputation of Adam's Sin* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1959), 39.

#### **IV. “Because all sinned” means that Adam acted as a representative head.**

This is the federal (immediate imputation) view.

Hodge writes, “Such was the relation, natural and federal, between him and his posterity, that his act was putatively their act. That is, it was the judicial ground or reason why death passed on all men. In other words, they were regarded and treated as sinners on account of his sin” (151).

#### **In support of this interpretation:**

1. The force of the aorist tense in Rom. 5:12. All sinned when Adam sinned. Adam acted as a representative and his sin is legally imputed to his posterity.
2. This sustains the analogy between Adam and Christ. Just as Adam's sin is imputed to his posterity descending from him by ordinary generation, Christ's righteousness is imputed to all who are in spiritual union with him.
3. Rom. 5:12 introduces a protasis “just as” (*hosper*) phrase which is completed in the apodisis “so also” (*houtos kai*) in verses 18-19. In Paul's writing style, whenever he wants to draw a comparison (just as this is true, so also this is), he always uses a certain grammatical construction: (*hosper*) “just as” - (*houtos kai*) “so also.” Rom. 5:12 contains the “just as” and Rom. 5:18 completes the comparison with the “so also.”
4. Romans 5:12 (13-14 [15-17]) 18.

An idea is introduced in verse 12 and completed in verse 18. At the end of verse 12, Paul writes the phrase, “because all sinned.” Verses 13,14 explain what this phrase means. At the end of verse 14, Paul says that Adam is a type of the one who is to come (Christ). Verses 15-17 explain Adam is a type of Christ and how he is not a type of Christ. Finally in verse 18 Paul concludes the idea he began in verse 12.

This passage essentially teaches that when Adam sinned, the whole race sinned in him. He was the representative head for all of his posterity. Every person sins individually, but ultimately every person is a sinner because Adam's sin is imputed to them. A person goes to hell first because he is a sinner in Adam and secondly because of personal individual sins. In the same way, a person goes to heaven, not because of individual works of righteousness, but because Christ's righteousness has been imputed to him.



5. Verses 13-14 connect sin with death. The fact that there is death demonstrates that sin is being imputed. The first lie of the devil was that you can sin and not die. Ever since Satan has been trying to drive a wedge between sin and death. Since all men after Adam die, they are counted as sinners. "Even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of sinful Adam" emphasizes that Paul is not talking about individual sins, but the imputation of Adam's sin to the race. See: Hosea 6:7.

6. Repetitive insistence that by the one man's sin all were made sinful. "One" is used 12 times in this short passage. One sin involved the entire race.

This idea of imputation is important, because Paul uses this idea of the imputation of Adam's sin to the race to teach how we become righteous through the imputation of Christ's perfect obedience to the law. Just as we were sinners through the imputation of Adam's sin, so in the same way, we are made righteous through the imputation of Christ's righteousness.

**Charles Hodge comments:** "This interpretation is required by the whole scope of the passage, and the drift of the argument. The scope of the passage, as shown above, is to illustrate the doctrine of justification on the ground of the righteousness of Christ, by a reference to the condemnation of men for the sin of Adam. The analogy is destroyed, the very point of the comparison fails, if anything in us be assumed as the ground of the infliction of the penal evils of which the apostle is here speaking. That we have corrupt natures, and are personally sinners, and therefore liable to other and further inflictions, is indeed true, but nothing to the point. In like manner it is true that we are sanctified by our union with Christ, and thus fitted for heaven; but these ideas are out of place when speaking of justification. It is to illustrate that doctrine, or the idea of imputed righteousness, that this whole passage is devoted; and, therefore, the idea of *imputed sin* must be contained in the other part of the comparison, unless the whole be a failure. Not only does the scope of the passage demand this view, but it is only thus that the argument of the apostle can be consistently carried through" (*Commentary on Romans*, 153).

Romans 5:20 - 6:2 Rom.#21 4/19/09

Rom. 5:20 - Two questions - What about the Law? - Rom. 7.

Since where sin abounds grace abounds, do we continue in sin for grace to abound?

Rom. 6 addresses that question.

Two poles in Christian living - legalism and antinomianism.

Legalism - definition.

This morning we are going to look at the opposite pole of legalism, antinomianism. That is a technical word which means lawlessness. *Nomos* is the Greek word for law.

Therefore, antinomianism is anti-law or lawlessness. Antinomians argue that since a

person is justified by faith alone and not by the works of the law, he is, therefore, free from the obligation to obey God. People often swing back and forth between legalism and antinomianism in their Christian lives.

### **Review justification by faith alone.**

Just as there are different expressions of legalism, so there are different expressions of antinomianism. In order to examine our lives and guard our hearts, it is important to have a good understanding of some of the ways this distortion of true righteousness can manifest itself in our lives. What are some of the forms of antinomianism? This morning I want us to consider some basic forms of antinomianism in light of Romans 6.

#### **I. Libertinism.**

This is the most blatant form of lawlessness. This position simply says it doesn't matter what a Christian does. He is at complete liberty to do whatever he feels like doing because he is not under the law in any way. Poem - "I'm saved by grace, oh happy condition. I can sin as I please and still have remission." **Rom. 6:1-2** In the Reformation of the 16th century, the idea of libertinism was the danger that the Roman Catholic Church was concerned about when it considered the Reformed doctrine of justification by faith alone. They were afraid that if people thought they were justified by faith alone and not by works, then they would engage in blatant disobedience to the commandments of God. Luther addressed this problem and when he set forth the doctrine of justification by faith alone, he emphasized that a person is saved by faith alone, but never by a faith that is alone: true justification will always lead to a desire to obey God. If a person has no concern to obey God, no matter what they claim to believe, that is evidence that they are not truly justified. In other words, true justification is never divorced from true sanctification or Christian growth in righteousness. In Luther's small work, *The Freedom of the Christian Man* (1520), he brings out that we are justified by faith alone, but true justification will always be seen in a life that wants to obey God and grow in righteousness.

**John Calvin**, in his *Reply to Cardinal Sadoletto*, argued that justification is connected to sanctification: "We deny that good works have any share in justification, but we claim full authority for them in the lives of the righteous. For if he who has obtained justification possesses Christ, and at the same time, Christ never is where His Spirit is not, it is obvious that gratuitous righteousness is necessarily connected with regeneration. Therefore, if you would duly understand how inseparable faith and works are, look to Christ, who, as the Apostle teaches (1 Cor. 1:30) has been given to us for justification and for sanctification. Wherever, therefore, that righteousness of faith, which we maintain to be gratuitous, is, there too Christ is, and where Christ is, there too is the Spirit of holiness, who regenerates the soul to newness of life.

On the contrary, where zeal for integrity and holiness is not in vigor, there neither is the Spirit of Christ nor Christ Himself; and wherever Christ is not, there is no righteousness, nay, there is no faith; for faith cannot apprehend Christ for righteousness without the Spirit of sanctification."

Most Christians are not as blatant as the little poem I cited a moment ago. However, there are some subtle forms of libertinism inside the Christian community. One form of this is when people take a passive approach to fighting sin or simply take a casual attitude in regards to pursuing righteousness. I think this attitude is often stimulated by a system of theology called dispensationalism. This system argues that there is no place for the law of God whatsoever in the Christian life. The motive for this theology is to preserve the grace of God in salvation, but it errs in making a non-Scriptural radical division between the Old and New Covenants. Dispensationalism argues that the Christian has no obligation toward obeying the moral commands of God. The result is that dispensational theology robs the Christian of the revelation of God's moral will in Scripture and opens the door each person simply doing what is right in their own eyes. If a person doesn't think the law of God has any place as a revelation of God's moral will, then their ethics

end up in speculation. While we don't keep the law for our justification, it is a pattern for our sanctification or Christian growth.

An extension of this error is seen in dispensationalism's attack against submission to the Lordship of Christ. It is argued that a person can come to Jesus as his Savior, but not as his Lord. In other words, you can receive forgiveness and have the hope of heaven, but you don't have to have any thought toward obedience toward God. This means that a person can be a Christian without ever bearing any fruit whatsoever. What does James say about that in James 2:14f - "Faith without works is dead." Real saving faith is a living vital faith that produces obedience to God. In fact, James used the example of Abraham. Abraham was justified before God when he believed, but later the reality of that salvation was seen in his obedience when he offered Isaac in obedience to God. This idea leads to false evangelism - "You can be a Christian and never repent and never seek to grow."

John 14:15; 15:1f - Everyone who abides in me will bear fruit.

If a person has no fruit, no changed character or growth, no matter what they profess, they are not in a state of grace.

You cannot separate justification from sanctification or Christian growth. If a person is truly justified through faith in Christ, he will bear fruit. **J. I. Packer, in 1991, wrote,** "If, ten years ago, you had told me that I would live to see literate evangelicals, some with doctorates and a seminary teaching record, arguing for the reality of an eternal salvation, divinely guaranteed, that may have in it no repentance, no discipleship, no behavioral change, no practical acknowledgment of Christ as Lord of one's life, and no perseverance in faith, I would have told you that you were out of your mind. Stark staring bonkers, is the British phrase I would probably have used. But now the thing has happened. In *The Gospel Siege* (1981) and *Absolutely Free!* (1989), Zane Hodges, for one, maintains all these positions as essential to the Christian message, arguing that without them the Gospel gets lost in legalism. Wow." *Tabletalk*, 1991, 15, 5:7-9.

Here is what Luther said - Faith alone justifies, but not the faith which is alone. Saving faith and true justification must always be followed by works. Do you have a concern to obey Christ? Have you ever used the idea of grace to excuse or cover sin - "I don't have to fight against this temptation, I'm forgiven no matter what." Do you love the law of God? Realize that the law of God is beautiful because it's his law and reflects his character. **The Puritan, Thomas Adams, said,** "The law, though it have no power to condemn us, hath power to command us." **William Secker said,** "The Law by which God rules us, is as dear to Him as the Gospel by which he saves us."

## **II. A second form of antinomianism is what you could call gnostic spiritualism.**

One of the first cult to emerge in Christian history was a group called the gnostics. Their name comes from the Greek word for knowledge, *gnosko*. The members of this cult believed that they had a higher mystical knowledge that gave them the right to set aside the teachings of the Scriptures. This cult does not exist today, but some of the mysticism concerning higher knowledge can be found in the Christian community. Gnostic lawlessness manifests itself when a person rationalizes or excuses some action that is clearly sin according to the Word of God through claiming some mystical permission from God to commit this sin. For example, in the last ten years I've had two different people come to me for pastoral counseling that were clearly involved in an adulterous relationship.

In talking to me about a relationship that was clearly sin, the statement was made to me, "I've prayed about this and God has told me that it is okay to pursue this relationship." In other words, the Holy Spirit has given me a revelation that's its okay to commit adultery this time. One single person told me that God had revealed to him that a woman he was involved with was to leave her husband and marry him. **R. C. Sproul writes concerning this,** "I have had Christians come to me and report behavioral patterns that violated the commandments of Christ, but then say, 'I've prayed about this and feel at peace in the matter.' Some have indeed committed outrage to the Spirit of truth and of holiness by not

only seeking to excuse their transgressions by appealing to some mystical sense of peace delivered to them by the Holy Spirit, but by actually laying the blame for the impulse of their sin at the of God the Holy Spirit." (*Ethics and the Christian*, 40). This type of antinomianism or lawlessness is often seen in association with sexual sin because intense emotions are involved. A person gets caught up with the emotion and desire of an illegitimate relationship and desperately wants the relationship to continue. However, he's a Christian, he knows what God says in his Word about his sin and he feels guilt. In the midst of these emotions, it's easy to use this kind of mysticism as a rationalization for the sin. This is why it is so vital for the Christian to know the commandments of God. The Scriptures give us the clear, objective commands of God and they are to be studied, memorized and built into the fabric of our lives. If you don't know what God has commanded, then you are vulnerable not only to a mystical rationalization of sin, but any kind of rationalization of sin. **Richard Pratt writes,**

". . . the Scriptures do teach that God's law can become a curse in the hands of sinful people. If we try to earn our salvation by obeying the law, we find ourselves bound to the futility of legalism. The guidelines of Scripture bring only death to those who try to merit God's favor through compliance with the law.

Nevertheless, once our hearts are transformed by the saving power of Christ, we gain new attitudes toward God's law. We no longer try to earn our way to heaven; we receive our eternal destiny as a free gift. But with new hearts empowered by the Holy Spirit, we delight in the law and find blessings in it. I know a student who came to the United States a few years ago. As a child in his native country, he shared a one-room apartment with his parents and five brothers and sisters. He had absolutely no privacy; his bedroom amounted to a corner where he spread his pallet every evening. When this young man came to college in the States, he received his own private dormitory room. His new room was little more than a big closet, but by comparison with his home it was huge. 'I couldn't believe it,' he told me. 'I couldn't believe that the whole room was for me!' Once

he settled down and began to study, his small quarters became his castle. It made it possible for him to have a fruitful and productive life.

Ironically, just a few miles away a number of young men were living in quarters about the same size as my friend's dormitory room. They spent many hours in their rooms as well, but these men did not see their living space as castles. They were inmates in the state penitentiary. For them the same amount of space was a restrictive prison, not the opportunity for a fruitful life.

We can look at the law of God in both of these ways. If our hearts are hardened by sin, we will see God's rules as confining prison cells. But if our hearts have been renewed by God's grace, we will view the regulations of Scripture as wonderful guides to dignity.

*Designed For Dignity*, 106-107.

### **III. A third type of antinomianism is situation ethics.**

This type of lawlessness has greatly influenced the Christian community. I've talked with people about ethical issues and often the reply has been, "Before I could decide whether this was right or wrong, I would have to see what the situation is."

The main person associated with situationism is Joseph Fletcher who popularized this approach in his book *Situation Ethics*.

The main idea in this form of lawlessness is that there is only one law in Scripture, the law of love. The idea is that, even though God has commanded and prohibited certain things in his law, sometimes love is better served if God's law is ignored or disobeyed.

What Fletcher and other situationists miss is that, from a biblical perspective, doing what love demands is the same as doing what Christ demands. Scripturally, to follow the law of love, is simply to obey God in his specific commands.

**Eph. 5:1** - Verse 1 tells us to walk in love, but the following verses inform us what walking in love means. **Eph. 5:1-3**

The Scriptures tell us specifically that walking in love means that fornication is not to be named among God's people.

R. C. Sproul writes, "There is a principle in the biblical ethic that is rarely seen in the writings of the situationists. They fail to emphasize, as does the Bible, that doing what love demands, what Christ commands, often means the bearing of unspeakable suffering. It means to participate in radical humiliation and to count one's life as nothing for the exaltation of Christ. It may mean spending a life rotting in a cell in a concentration camp rather than to violate the commandment of Christ." (*Ethics . . .*, 48) For the Christian, doing what love demands is to obey the specific commands of God. Have you ever set aside the specific command of God because you were in a difficult situation? Christians have lost their lives on the mission field because they wouldn't compromise truth and the command of God. Christians have lost their jobs because they wouldn't violate God's law. They may have been asked to falsify something or bend the truth in sales. There is often pressure from a fallen culture to disobey God. Again, true faith and real justification will produce real obedience. Examine your life. Have you engaged in libertinism? Have you set aside the law of God through some mystical rationalization? Have you used difficult situations to excuse disobedience? If you have, the call of Scripture is to repent. **Rom. 6:1-2**

Rom. 6:1-5 Romans Series #22 4/26/09

Last week, as an introduction to Romans 6, we noted that Paul mentions at the end of Rom. 5 that where sin increased, grace much more abounds. This could raise the idea that since grace abounds when I sin, why don't I simply sin in order to receive grace. Romans 6 answers that particular distortion. Also, by way of introduction into Romans 6, we considered the issue of antinomianism or lawlessness. That is the attitude that the law of God has no bearing whatsoever on the Christian, the idea that we are under no obligation to obey Christ or submit to his Lordship in the Christian life. This morning we are going to begin looking more carefully at the text of Romans 6 and especially consider the idea of our spiritual union to Christ as it is presented in this chapter.

**I. In our union with Christ, we have died to sin.**



Rom. 6:1-2

This particular phrase has been interpreted in a variety of ways. I want to mention the more prominent of approaches before we consider what I think is the best way to understand the teaching of this phrase and the first part of this chapter.

**A. Errant ways the phrase, "died to sin" has been understood.**

**1. One of the popular interpretations of this phrase is that it means the Christian is no longer responsive to sin.** This view argues that a Christian no longer responds to the appeal sin. While it does take the Greek aorist tense at face value, this is a harmful and dangerous interpretation. It can make true Christians feel like they are either not saved or very second class Christians if they still have temptation and struggles in sin. This position also contradicts what Paul writes later in Rom. 6:12-13 in which Paul commands Christians to fight against sin. You don't urge someone who is unresponsive to sin not to be responsive to it.

**2. A second view is that it means that the Christian should die to sin.** This is a popular view in holiness movement groups. Christians are urged, through a series of spiritual exercises to "crucify the old man" so they will have a victorious Christian life. However, this position begins with man and not with God. Paul does not say in Rom. 6:2 that we should die to sin, but that we have died to sin.

**3. Third, some say this means that the Christian is dying to sin day by day.** In other words, the one who is united to Christ will grow in personal holiness or righteousness. It is true that we will grow daily in our sanctification, but that's not what Paul is addressing in verse 2. James M. Boice, in critiquing this view writes, "This interpretation takes 'died' as if it is an imperfect tense ('are dying' - [ongoing past tense]), rather than as an aorist ('have died'), which is what Paul actually says" (652). Again, this view misses the emphasize in Rom. 6:2 that it is not something we have done or something we do, but something that has been done to us in Christ.

**4. A fourth popular position is that this means we have died to sin's guilt.** In other words, this statement has to do with our justification and not our sanctification. But, the subject of Romans 6 is not the ideas that we have died to sin's guilt, but why we can no longer live in sin. This view misses the point of Paul's rhetorical question in verse 1 which he answers throughout the chapter.

While there are variations on these position and many other approaches, these seem to be the main ones that are discussed.

**B. What is the meaning of what Paul is setting forth in this phrase?**

**First**, it is important, as we have observed, to not that Paul uses the aorist tense in Greek. He is stating that at a certain point, in a punctiliar way, the Christian has died to sin.

**Second**, Paul uses the "dead to sin" or "died to sin" three times in Romans 6. He uses the phrase in verses 2, 10 and 11. It is sound principle in interpretation that when a phrase is used more than once in a particular context, it should be understood in the same way each time unless there is some compelling reason not to do that. The first and last references (vs. 2, 11) are to us, the middle reference in verse 10 is in reference to Christ.

Rom. 6:10 - Notice that Paul does not say Christ died for sin in the verse, but that he died to sin, once for all. When Jesus was on earth, he had a relationship with sin. He was tempted in all points as we are, yet with out sin (Heb. 4:15). After his death and resurrection, that phase of his life is past. It is done forever. When he died, he died to the realm and sphere of sin. **How does this apply to us? Rom. 5:12-19** brings out the idea that we are either in Adam and his sin leading to death or in Christ and his righteousness leading to eternal life. When a person is saved, Adam is no longer his spiritual or covenantal head. We have brought out of that spiritual relationship and brought into a new spiritual relationship in Christ.

**Martyn Lloyd-Jones comments** on the idea of being dead to sin: "The moment a man has been justified by God, God says to him, in effect: 'I am going to deliver you completely from the power of sin. I will start by taking you out of its realm and its

kingdom, and by putting you into the kingdom of my dear Son. Then progressively I will deliver you until finally you [in your glorification] are perfect and without blemish or spot or wrinkle or any such thing." In response to the objection, that the Christian still sins daily all of his life, he writes, "Paul is not saying that we are sinless; but he is saying that we are out of the territory, out of the kingdom, out of the realm, out of the rule and the reign of sin." Rom. 6 Exposition, 25.

**John Murray writes on Rom. 6:2:** "What the apostle has in view is the once-for-all definitive breach with sin which constitutes the identity of the believer. A believer cannot therefore live in sin; . . . . If we view sin as a realm or sphere then the believer no longer lives in that realm or sphere. . . . Failure to appreciate this premise upon which the subsequent argument rest and of which it is an expansion will distort our understanding of this chapter. The believer died to sin once and he has been translated to another realm." Romans, 213.

**This is really a summary of Rom. 5:21.** Col. 1:13; 2 Cor. 5:17

James Boice gives this illustration of this. Think of an elderly man who has lives most of his life as a Christian. He is thinking back on his life which is divided into two part, the time before his conversion to Christ and the time after his conversion. The old self which was his person in Adam before his conversion died through union with Christ. His new self rose from death a new man to live a new life to God in Christ. (655).

Paul elaborates on this idea in the verses which follow verse 2 and gives further understanding into what he means.

**Rom. 6:3-5** - These verses are also speaking of our spiritual union with Christ. These verses support the interpretation of Rom. 6:2 we've just considered. However, because the term "baptism" is used, often people simply think of this passage in terms of water baptism. So, before we consider how this text address our spiritual union with Christ, we need to consider the meaning of the term "baptism" in this context.

## **II. The meaning of the term "baptism" in light of the context of our spiritual union with Christ.**

### **A. The term "baptism" is not referring to water baptism.**

If Paul was speaking simply of water baptism, then this text would point toward baptismal regeneration. The text states that through the baptism mentioned, we are joined to Christ in his death and raised to newness of life.

**James Montgomery Boice comments:** ". . . for the vast majority of today's people, the mere mention of baptism immediately sets them thinking about the sacrament of water baptism and blinds them to what any text that mentions baptism may actually be saying. . . . Some have taught that the sacrament joins us to Christ and is therefore necessary for salvation. That view is called 'baptismal regeneration.' Some assume that Paul is thinking of our baptismal vows, other that it is a matter of coming under Christ's influence, still others that what is important is our public testimony to our faith in Christ. . . . But Paul is not thinking along these lines at all in these verses, and therefore any approach to them with the idea of the sacrament of baptism uppermost in our minds will be misleading" (658-659).

**Martyn Lloyd-Jones**, in talking about the popular view that baptism in Rom. 6 depicts our burial and resurrection with Christ writes, "To me this expression in verse 4, where we are told we are 'buried with Him by (or through) baptism,' seems to militate very strongly against this exposition. Paul does not say that it is a picture. Paul says that it is accomplished by or through baptism. He does not say that this is a wonderful picture or symbolic representation of it. He says that by or through your baptism this has happened to you. . . . [This position] says that it is merely a picture, a symbolical representation, a dramatic enactment only. That is one objection to it. But there are other objections. The doctrine of our union with Christ says that we are united with Him in all that happened to Him; and the first thing that happened to Him in this context was that He was crucified. Paul, in introducing this same idea elsewhere says, 'I have been crucified with Christ.'

Where is that represented in this pictorial representation? How does water baptism represent crucifixion? It is simply not there. And yet, it is a vital part, perhaps the most vital, of our union with the Lord Jesus Christ. . . . Indeed, I go further and suggest that to argue that the Apostle has water baptism in his mind in any shape or form here is to give a prominence to baptism that the Apostle Paul never gives to it. Take for instance what he says in the First Epistle to the Corinthians in the first chapter verses 13-17. . . . In this statement the Apostle is not depreciating baptism, but he certainly does not give it the central position which this [ explanation of Rom. 6] suggests. . . . I argue that it gives an undue prominence to water baptism, whatever the mode.

But there is yet a further objection. The Apostle in several other places deals with this question of our union with Christ. There is for instance Eph. 2:4-6, where he teaches that, having been quickened, we are risen with Christ, and seated with Him in the heavenly places. But he does not mention baptism at all at that point. Those parallel passages surely throw light on the interpretation of this passage." Romans 6, 33-35.

**B. Paul is stating in this section that we are in spiritual union with Christ.**

In Rom. 5:12-19, Paul has spoken of us being in spiritual union with either Adam or Christ. Here he elaborates on our being in Christ in our salvation. The direct application he gives of this truth is that we can't blatantly sin. The term "baptism" is used in the New Testament to describe a spiritual union and not always in terms of water baptism. **1 Cor. 10:1-2** - This is not referring to water baptism. It refers to the permanent identification of the people with Moses through the experience of the Red Sea crossing. **Gal. 3:26-27** - This is also not referring to water baptism, but to our being identified with Christ and being in spiritual union with him. **1 Cor. 12:13** - Here the term is used to describe the work of the Holy Spirit in spiritually joining us to the body of Christ. This is closely connected to the idea being presented in Rom. 6. **Martyn Lloyd Jones comments:** "As we were united to Adam, so we are now united to Christ - that is the doctrine. And we must realize that it is the Spirit who unites us to Christ. That is the baptism about which

the Apostle is speaking. The great thing in salvation is that we are not only justified, not only forgiven; in a sense the most glorious aspect of salvation is that I am 'in Christ,' and Christ is in me, - this vital union! And this we must never fail to realize. It is sad that preoccupation with modes and forms of baptism should have blinded certain people to this great truth, in the reading of these two verses [Rom. 6:3-4]. Let me ask a simple, practical question. Let everyone answer for himself or herself. As you read these verses at the beginning of Romans 6 what has been the chief impression on your mind? Has it always been our union with Christ, or has it been baptism? It is nothing short of tragic if the main impression left upon our minds is water baptism in any form. Baptism is important, baptism is a command which must be carried out; but do not go to the sixth chapter of Romans for it. There are other places in Scripture which teach it clearly. You can discuss and argue about it from other texts, but do not bring it in here. . . . It refers to this union and this incorporation." Romans 6, 36-37.

**Rom. 6:4** - Here again is the idea of our spiritual union with Christ. In this spiritual baptism, we are buried with him with the result that we are raised with him to newness of life. **James M. Boice writes**, "When theologians write about our being 'baptized into Christ' and how this is the equivalent of our being united to him by the Holy Spirit, they stress that we are identified with Christ in all respects. . . . But what I want to point out is that Paul does not say here [Rom. 6] that we have been identified with Christ by baptism in these other respects. He does not, for example, even say that we have been baptized into Christ's resurrection, though he goes on to say that 'just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life' (v. 4) and later that we have been 'united with him like this in his resurrection' (v. 5). In verse 3 he speaks of our baptism into Christ in one respect only: 'into his death.' And in the next phrase he shows what he has particularly in mind is Christ's burial: 'We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death.'" (661-62)

Notice that Paul emphasizes "burial with Christ." What is the significance of that?

Burial puts the deceased person out of this world permanently. The corpse is not even around anymore once it is buried. Paul uses this image to emphasize the finality of our being removed from the rule of sin and death and being joined to Christ and his rule.

**Illus.** - Two fields separated by a road. One is Satan's kingdom; the other is Christ's. In our salvation we are transferred from one side to the other. We live on the other side.

We may still hear the shouts of Satan from across the road (in this life), but he can't touch us and we belong in another realm. This is the foundation of why we can fight against sin. A radical breach has taken place. We are no longer sin's slaves. This reality makes the exhortation of Rom. 6:12-13 possible. Do you think of your Christian life in terms of spiritual union with Christ and of belonging to his kingdom?

### **Romans 6:5-11 Romans Series #23 5/3/09**

Last week we started examining this text which is Paul's answer to any attitude of antinomianism. Rom. 6:1-2. Paul says that we have died to sin in our spiritual union with Christ. We noted that this means that we have been taken out of the realm of slavery to sin and brought into spiritual union with Christ. That a once for all definitive breach with the mastery and realm of sin has taken place. In our salvation, we have been transferred from the kingdom of Satan to the kingdom of Christ as Col. 1:13 states. We noted that the term "baptism" in this passage refers to the idea of spiritual union with Christ. This morning we are going to look at the next section where these same themes are developed further. In terms of outlining this section, Romans 6:5 states the basic thesis and the following verses elaborate on it. Verse 5 presents two parts: we're united with him in his death and we're united with him in his resurrection. The first idea that we are united to him in his death is elaborated on in verses 6-7. The second idea of being united to him in his resurrection is elaborated on in verses 8-10.

#### **I. In Christ, we are united to him in his death to sin.**

**Rom. 6:5-6** - Paul's point in this section is to demonstrate that in Christ we have been set free from slavery to sin. Verse 6 contains two key phrases that are important to understand: Old self and body of sin. Paul first states that our old self was crucified with Christ. Some commentators have confused the term old self with the Christian's old nature. They argue that Paul is talking about the process of crucifying the old sinful nature. Since crucifixion is a long drawn out process, it is argued that this parallels our long drawn out fight against sin. The problem with this is that Paul is speaking in the past tense. Our old self was crucified with Christ. This is what Paul stated in Rom. 6:2 and in verse 5. The old self refers to what we were in Adam. That spiritual relationship to Adam has been crucified or killed as we are in union with Christ. **D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones writes**, "What then is this 'old man?' First, it does not mean the carnal nature and all its propensities. Paul is not teaching that our carnal nature with all its propensities was crucified together with Christ. Neither does it mean our moral being previous to our rebirth. Neither does it mean the flesh with its affections and lusts. . . . When then does Paul mean by 'old man?' It seems to me to be quite plain if we look at it in the context of the entire passage which begins in chapter 5 verse 12. The 'old man' is the man that I used to be in Adam. That has been the context since chapter 5 verse 12. I was a man in Adam; I am now a man in Christ. What then is the old man? It is the man I once was, but what I am no longer. . . . As a Christian I am no longer in Adam; I am in Christ. The old man that I can look back upon is that man that I was there in Adam: it is my old humanity." Romans 6, 62-63.

**The second important phrase is "The body of sin."** It would be tempting to think of this term as the same as the "old self. I think it is better to understand it as the old sinful nature. **James Montgomery Boice** makes a good comment on these two terms. He writes on Rom. 6:6 that the phrase "old self" refers to our old life, that is to what we were in Adam before God saved us. That old life is done for. We have died to it. That is why Paul says it 'was (or 'has been') crucified.'



. . . The old self (or old man) is not the old nature. The old self is the 'old me,' who has died. But, here, in talking about 'the body of sin,' Paul is talking about the old nature, mentioning - for the first time in Romans - the Christian's actual inclination to sin, which must be dealt with. That makes sense of verse 6, of course. For what Paul says in verse 6 is that God has taken us out of Adam and placed us in Christ, thereby causing us to die to the old life, in order that (1) our present inclinations to sin might be robbed of their power, and (2) we should be delivered from sin's slavery." 667-668.

**William Hendriksen agrees and writes,** "When the apostle now states that this old self was crucified with Jesus, it is clear that he again proceeds upon the basis of the believers' solidarity with Christ. Just as he considers all human beings as present 'in Adam' (cf. 5:12, 17, 19), so he views all believers as being present 'in Christ.' Therefore, in a sense, when Christ died on the cross, his true followers all died there with him. We are reminded of Gal. 2:20 (quote). . . ." **In commenting on the phrase "body of sin," he writes,** "It is clear that the reference is to human nature apart from regenerating grace" (197-198).

Paul is presenting the idea that in our spiritual union with Christ, we have died to the old self who was in Adam. As we noted last week, in this context, Christ is said to have died to sin, not for sin (Rom. 6:10). Other passages speak of Jesus dying for our sins. That is not the context in this chapter.

The idea is that any relationship he was to sin was ended in his death. Remember he was tempted in all points as we are yet without sin (Heb. 4:15). His death ended any relationship he had with sin in that phase of his life. In Adam, we are in a kingdom of sin, death, and condemnation. In our salvation we are taken out of that kingdom and placed in spiritual union with Christ. That old self in Adam died or was crucified in Christ. The result of that action is that body of sin or sinful nature might be done away with or nullified. Some translations (RSV, KJV) translate the Greek word *Katargeo* as "destroyed," but that misses the meaning of the word. It is used 27 times in the Greek

New Testament and has the meaning of nullify. For example, Rom. 3:3, 31; 4:14. The basic meaning of this word is the idea of something being made ineffective or no longer able to exert a controlling force or power. The ESV translates it "might be brought to nothing." That captures the idea of the Greek verb.

The idea is that our old self in Adam was crucified with Christ with the result that our sinful inclinations and characteristics will not rule over us. Therefore, real growth in sanctification is possible. *The Heidelberg Catechism* addresses this issue in **Question 43**: "What further benefit do we receive from the sacrifice and death of Christ on the cross? **Answer**: That by virtue thereof, our old man is crucified, dead and buried with him; (Rom. 6:6) that so the corrupt inclinations of the flesh may no more reign in us; (Rom. 6:6-7, 11-12) but that we may offer ourselves unto him a sacrifice of thanksgiving. (Rom. 12:1).

Notice how The Heidelberg Catechism rightly draws a distinction between the old man and the corrupt nature. The result is that we are no longer slaves to sin. After setting forth this reality of union with Christ, Paul addresses the result of this.

## **II. In Christ, we are united to him in his resurrection.**

### **Rom. 6:5, 8-10**

This is not referring to our future resurrection to a resurrection life in the present. Paul has said that we cannot continue in sin or take an antinomian attitude because, in our spiritual union with Christ, our old self in Adam has died. This means that we can have real progress in terms of Christian growth in righteousness. It is interesting that Paul places an emphasis in this section on "knowing" - Rom. 6:6, 9. Twice in this section he speaking about knowing the reality of what has happened to us in our spiritual union with Christ. **Augustine set forth an interesting construction concerning man's sin.** He said that before Adam fell into sin he was *posse peccare* (able to sin) and *posse non peccare* (able not to sin). After he fell into sin in eating the forbidden fruit, he became *non posse non peccare* (not able not to sin). That is part of man's depravity in sin. Fallen man

has no ability not to sin. Because we have a newness of life, a resurrection life in Christ, the regenerate person is *posse non peccare* (able not to sin). Paul is emphasizing that knowledge of this position is essential for growth in righteousness. Having made this point, Paul then gives an exhortation in Rom. 6:11. **James M. Boice** comments on this verse. **He asks the question:** "How many times in the letter up to this point has the apostle Paul urged his readers to do something? That is, how many exhortations have there been? More than ten? Thirty? Less than five? How many imperative statements occurred in chapter 1? Were there more exhortations in chapter 5 than in chapter 4? What do you think? How many exhortations has Paul made so far? The answer to this question is that there have been none at all!" (673)

**Rom. 6:11 is the first exhortation in the epistle.** This is the first time in the first five and a half chapters that Paul has urged his readers to do something. What are they to do? They are to count themselves as dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. Boice points out that we live in an age of self-help books and seminars. That is true even in the Christian community. Various formulas and quick fix plans are given to make you into a prayer warrior or move ahead quickly in your Christian life. **The exhortation part of Christian living is emphasized with a deep neglect of basic foundational teachings.** Paul's theological method in the book of Romans is instructive for us living in this culture. He was deeply concerned about the growth of the Roman Christians. But, instead of rushing ahead to tell them how to live as Christians, he first instructed them carefully on what God had done for them in Christ. This is because the work of Christ is foundational to everything else in the Christian life. Rom. 6:11

We are to consider or reckon ourselves to be dead to sin. We've examined this reality in our study of the first part of this chapter. It doesn't mean we are immune to sin or temptation. It means that our old life of sin and death in Adam is over and we are in a new kingdom and family, the kingdom and family of God. Rom. 6:2 - dead to sin; 6:3-4 - baptized into his death; buried with him through baptism; 6:5 - united to him in the

likeness of his death; 6:6 - old self crucified with him; 6:7 - died with Christ. **Martyn Lloyd-Jones said**, "Consider, and keep constantly before you this truth about yourself." Learn to think of yourself as one who has been delivered from sin's realm and slavery. **On the positive side**, this means that we are alive to God. **James Boice give five aspects of this.** 1. We are reconciled to God. We are justified and adopted into God's family. 2. We are new creatures in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17). We are regenerate and have new hearts. Our desires and priorities flow from new hearts. 3. We are freed from the bondage of sin. In Christ, we now have the ability not to sin. Real growth and victory over sin is possible. 4. We have a sure destiny set before us. We are citizens of heaven and the kingdom of Christ. We know that the full consummation of our salvation is sure and we wait for it. 5. We don't look to this world for our satisfaction. Lost people think this world and the things of the world will satisfy them. The Christian knows they will not and we know we are pilgrims and strangers in this world. All of this gives us a foundation for resisting temptation and growing in righteousness.

**Two contrasting illustrations** demonstrate these principles: First, a woman was contacting her high school classmates about their 40th reunion. Many were excited about seeing their old friends. One man wrote back to the woman, "I have the 5 Bs--baldness, bifocals, bridgework, bulges, and bunions." A woman quipped, "I wasn't half the woman then that I am today" (referring to her weight). But another woman said, "I can't wait to see everyone. I've changed completely. In high school I was the class `tramp.' I had no standards and everybody knew it. But a few years after high school I received the Lord Jesus as my Savior. My life was transformed. Because of Christ, I'm not the person I was, and I want my classmates to know about it." **In contrast to this is the story of a false profession of faith in which a person was not changed.** One of the more notorious gangsters in America in the last half of the 20th century was Mickey Cohen. He had a friend by the name of Bill Jones who had been involved in some unsavory things, but had become a Christian. Jones shared the gospel with Mickey and asked him

if he wanted to pray and trust in Christ as his Savior. To his surprise, Mickey said, "Yes." Jones rejoiced that apparently Mickey had been converted to Christ. But as the weeks and months went by, Mickey was spending less and less time with Bill Jones and Jim Voss, another gangster who had truly become a Christian. Mickey was concerned with his old friends. One time Jones went to Mickey and told him that as a new Christian he ought to be putting as much mileage between himself and his mob connections as possible. Mickey replied, " Jones, you never told me that I had to give up my career. You never told me that I had to give up my friends. There are Christian movie stars, Christian athletes, Christian businessmen. So, what's the matter with being a Christian gangster? If I have to give up all that - if that's Christianity - count me out." Cohen never really repented or believed in Christ. He made a temporarily outward profession which was seen to be false by the attitude of his heart.

Paul continues his practical exhortation in the next few verses, but the important point he makes in this section is that we cannot be antinomian because a true Christian is a changed person. He is no longer spiritually connected to Adam. His old self in Adam is dead. As a result of that the corruptions of the flesh no longer reign over us. We are no longer slaves to sin. We are to constantly consider and think about these realities when we approach Christian living. Starting point is true salvation - gospel.

**Rom. 6:12-14 Romans Series #24 5/1/09**

We have been working our way through this chapter which is Paul's answer to any attitudes of antinomianism in the Christian life.

The whole chapter is really an answer to the rhetorical question he raises in Rom. 6:1. His answer is that we cannot take a lawless perspective toward Christian living because we are now in spiritual union with Christ. We have been transferred from our spiritual union with Adam to a spiritual union with Christ. We have been taken out of the kingdom of darkness and transferred into the kingdom of Christ. Just as Christ died to the realm of sin, we also are to consider ourselves dead to sin. We observed last week

that Rom. 6:11 is the first exhortation in the book of Romans. **William Hendriksen comments on Romans 6:11:** "At this point doctrine makes way for exhortation. What has been established, namely, that believers are in principle dead to sin and alive to Christ, must become the abiding conviction of their hearts and minds, the take-off point for all their thinking, planning, rejoicing, speaking, doing. They must constantly bear in mind that they are no longer what they used to be. Their lives from day to day must show that they have not forgotten this" (201). Our text this morning continues that exhortation. It starts with the word "therefore" indicating that it is a logical conclusion to what Paul has said before in Rom. 6. Because we are in spiritual union with Christ and our old self in Adam has been crucified with him, we can fight against sin and make real progress in terms of our growth in personal righteousness. Paul continues his exhortation against continuing in sin. This next section is really a practical expression of Rom. 6:11. This morning we are first going to consider some important implications concerning progressive sanctification which can be drawn from this section and then consider some important areas of sanctification which are implied in this series of exhortations.

**I. This series of exhortations has important implications concerning the nature of sanctification. Rom. 6:12-13**

**A. First,** even though we are dead to our old self in Adam, we will still fight against sin all our lives. Being transferred into Christ's kingdom and being in spiritual union with him does not mean that we will never sin or be tempted by sin. The fact that Paul gives this exhortation means that sin is possible and it is something that the Christian must fight against. There is no point in telling us not to offer our mortal bodies to sin or instruments of unrighteousness if we have no tendency to do it.

This exhortation also speaks against any idea of sinless perfection in the Christian life. There are those who teach that the Christian can have a work of grace in their lives by which they will not sin anymore. I remember a man once telling me that he had received

a work of grace from God so that he didn't sin. I wondered if he had received this work of God since the morning because that morning I heard him yelling at his wife.

Scripture is filled with exhortations concerning Christian ethics and behavior that imply we have an ongoing battle with sin.

**Col. 3:9-14** - Here is another exhortation to believers which acknowledges that in Christ we have put off the old self in Adam. However, there is still an exhortation toward proper Christian living. We are exhorted to live in accordance with our new nature in Christ. **Gal. 5:13-17** - Again, here is an exhortation written to believers concerning an ongoing battle with sin.

**B. A second implication from this exhortation is that we are to be active in fighting against sin.** Paul exhorts his readers to actively not present the members of their body to unrighteousness and to actively present their members as instruments of righteousness to God. **Phil. 2:12-13**

This is an important statement on our sanctification. The "working out your salvation" is in the context of Christian growth or sanctification. We are to be active in our Christian growth. The Greek tense of the verb in verse 12 indicates the idea of a continuous, sustained effort. We are commanded to be constantly engaged in Christian growth. How do we do that? We are to apply ourselves to the means of grace, those means by which the Holy Spirit brings change and growth to our lives. It is the Holy Spirit that brings the growth, but he works through these means in our lives. We are to actively and consistently applying ourselves to these means. Verse 13 gives the foundation or basis of our activity. It is God who is at work in us both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

**Thomas Watson**, in commenting on Phil. 2:12-13, writes: As the teacher guides the child's hand, and helps him to form his letters, so that it is not so much the child's writing as the master's, so our obedience is not so much our working as the Spirit's co-working."

*A Body of Divinity*, 129.

Phil. 2:13 also shows that God can and does effect the will. **Gordon Clark comments on this verse:** "What then does God do in our process of sanctification? The verse says, God works in us. It is a very good thing that God works in us, for if he did not, we would have cause for a fear and trembling of quite a different sort. God works in us - that is clear enough. But the verse is more definite and tells us two things that produce sanctification. God works in us so that we sing a psalm, or comfort the sick, or apprehend a criminal, or preach the gospel. These are things we do because God works in us to do them. But there is something preceding this doing on which the doing depends. We would none of these things if we did not first will to do them. Now, the verse clearly states that God not only works the doing in us, but he first works the willing in us. God works in us both to will and to do" (*Predestination*, 120-121).

**C. A third principle we can derive from this text is that sin can easily manifest itself through bodily temptations.**

**Rom. 6:12-13** - Three times Paul makes a reference to our physical bodies. We can think of various areas in which sin connected closely to our mortal bodies - sexual sin, gluttony, drunkenness or drug use are connected to our physical bodies. Sinful anger can be associated with bodily pain. Have you ever had the experience of playing with a child and they accidentally pull your hair too hard or stick their elbow in your abdomen? Even though you know it's an accident, you might feel a rush or adrenalin and anger.

We are to be on guard in those areas in which sin comes through our physical natures.

**II. This exhortation also informs us of important areas for our sanctification. Rom. 6:12-13**

We observed a moment ago that Paul makes a reference to our physical bodies. We noted that various sins can occur through our bodies. Ultimately, all sin originates out of total person including body and soul. We could think of various parts of our bodies such as our minds, tongues, eyes, hands, and feet metaphorically as aspects of our whole person and consider how sin can come through these areas.



**A. First, our minds.** When Paul begins his practical exhortation section in Rom. 12:1-2, he quickly mentions the need for our minds to be renewed. James M. Boice writes, "Have you ever carefully thought through that what you do with your mind will determine a great deal of what you will become as a Christian? If you fill your mind with the products of our secular culture, you will remain secular and sinful. . . . On the other hand, if you feed your mind on the Bible and Christian publications, train it by godly conversation, and discipline it to critique what you see and hear elsewhere by applying biblical truths to those ideas, you will grow in godliness and become increasingly useful to God. Your mind will become an instrument of righteousness" (Rom. 684). A lot has been written about the disappearance of a Christian mind and worldview in the Christian community.

**Harry Blamires wrote in 1963:** "There is no longer a Christian mind. There is still, of course, a Christian ethic, a Christian practice, and a Christian spirituality. As a moral being, the modern Christian subscribes to a code other than that of the non-Christian. As a member of the Church, he undertakes obligations and observances ignored by the non-Christian. As a spiritual being, in prayer and meditation, he strives to cultivate a dimension of life unexplored by the non-Christian. But as a 'thinking' being, the modern Christian has succumbed to secularization. . . . Except over a very narrow field of thinking, chiefly touching questions of strictly personal conduct, we Christians in the modern world accept, for the purpose of mental activity, a frame of reference constructed by the secular mind and a set of criteria reflecting secular evaluations." **David Wells writes:** "The reality we have to face today is that we have produced a plague of nominal evangelicalism which is as trite and as superficial as anything we have seen in Catholic Europe. Now, why is this? Well, I would like to suggest that it begins with the crumbling of our theological character. I have spoken of this in my book, *No Place For Truth*, in terms of the 'disappearance of theology.' It is not that theological beliefs are denied, but that they have little cash value. They don't matter. I likened the situation to

that of a child who is in a home but who is ignored. It is not that the child has been abducted; the child is there. The child is in the home, but has no legitimate place in the family. And, again, research which I have conducted strongly points to the fact that where this kind of theological character is crumbling, there the centrality of God is disappearing. God now comes to rest lightly and inconsequentially upon the church. This, however, is just our own private, evangelical version of what we see more generally in the culture. In the broader culture we learn that 91% of people say that God is very important to them but 66% go on to say that they do not believe in moral absolutes, and 67% do not believe in absolute truth. So God rests inconsequentially upon their lives. An evangelical faith that is not passionate about truth and righteousness is a faith which is a lost cause. All that it will then be living for is simply its own organizational preservation."

This calls us to a consistent study of Scripture and the system of truth revealed in the Bible. Our minds are to be renewed through God's Word.

**B. Our eyes.** We receive information through seeing it. Coveting can easily come through seeing things that we want. One of the more graphic illustrations of this in the Bible is Achan who coveted the goods of Jericho and took some of the bounty of the city. Remember when he was exposed, he talked about seeing the goods of Jericho and coveting them.

**Joshua 7:20-21; 1 John 2:15-16**

**C. Our tongues.** The Bible says a lot about the words of our mouths. **The tongue has great destructive power.**

**James 3:3-6** - The tongue has great power for good or evil.

**One destructive use of our tongue is being cruel with the words of our mouth.** We can deeply hurt other people with cruel words or harsh criticism. Walter Wangerin, in his collection of short stories *Ragman and other Cries of Faith*, turns to nature for a chilling metaphor of the tongue's power. He explains that the female spider is often a widow for

embarrassing reasons - she regularly eats those who come her way. Lonely suitors and visitors alike quickly become corpses, and her dining room is a morgue. A visiting fly, having become captive, will appear to be whole, but the spider has drunk his insides so that he has become his own hollow casket. Not a pleasant thought, especially if you have a touch of arachnophobia.

The reason for this macabre procedure is that she has no stomach and so is incapable of digesting anything within her. Through tiny punctures she injects her digestive juices into a fly so that his insides are broken down and turned into warm soup. This soup she swills even as most of us swill souls of one another after having cooked them in various enzymes: guilt, humiliations, subjectivities, cruel [words] - there are a number of fine, acidic mixes. And some among us are so skilled with they hypodermic word that our dear ones continue to sit up and to smile, quite as though they were still alive. This is a gruesome but effective metaphor to describe the destructive power of evilly intended words. Words do not dissolve mere organs and nerves, but souls! This world is populated by walking human caskets because countless lives have been dissolved and sucked empty by another's words. **Jonathan Edwards wrote**, "In him that exercises the Christian spirit as he ought, there will not be a passionate, rash, or hasty expression, or a bitter, exasperated countenance, or an air of violence in the talk or behavior; but, on the contrary, the countenance and words and demeanor will all manifest the savour of peaceableness and calmness and gentleness. He may perhaps reprove his neighbor. This may clearly be his duty. But if he does, it will be without impoliteness, and without that severity that can tend only to exasperate; and though it may be with strength and reason and argument, and with plain and decided expostulation, it will still be without angry reflections or contemptuous language. *Charity and Its Fruits*,<sup>72</sup> **D. Hands and feet.** Scripture uses hands as way of speaking of our labor in more than one passage. Eph. 4:28; 1 Thess. 4:11-12

Our feet can take us into various situations. Rom. 10:15 speaks of the feet of those who bring the gospel. Our feet can also take us to places where Christ is blasphemed or sin is openly practiced. Again, all of these things relate closely to what we feed our minds. Are you actively pursuing the means of grace in your life? Do you read and study God's word? Are you consistent in prayer and worship? Do you seek to feed your mind the truths of God's Word through your own reading and through hearing it taught and preached? **Thomas Watston said**, "Get sound knowledge. We must know his will before we can do it; knowledge is the eye to direct the foot of obedience. The Papists make ignorance the mother of devotion; but Christ makes ignorance the mother of error. 'Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures.' Matt. 22:29. We must know God's will before we can do it aright. Affection without knowledge, is like a horse full of mettle, but his eyes are out." *The Lord's Prayer*, 165. **Jonathan Edwards said**, "Holy affections are not heat without light, but ever more arise from some information in understanding, some spiritual instruction that the mind receives, some light or actual knowledge. The child of God is graciously affected, because he sees and understands something more of divine things than he did before, more of God or Christ, and of the glorious things exhibited in the gospel. He has a clearer and better view than he had before, when he was not affected; either he receives some new understanding of divine things, or has his former knowledge renewed after the view was decayed. . . . Knowledge is the key that first opens the hard heart, enlarges the affections, and opens the way for men into the kingdom of heaven; Luke 10:52: "Ye have taken away the key of knowledge." Rom. 6:14 - Not under a principle of bare commands, but empowered by the grace of God.

**Rom. 6:14-23 Romans Series #25 5/17/09**

The last few weeks we have been working our way through Romans 6. We've given this chapter a lot of attention because it is such an important one in terms of how we approach Christian living. As we have observed, the whole chapter is answering the rhetorical question Paul sets forth in Rom. 6:1. Paul states that the Christian cannot be antinomian

or lawless in his Christian life because he is in spiritual union with Christ. His old self in Adam has been crucified with Christ and he has died to the realm of since in a similar to Christ. He has a new resurrection life in his spiritual union with Christ. He may still have some characteristics of the old nature, but he is now regenerate and a new person in Christ. Sometimes people have taken the position that people have both a new and old nature at the same time. This text brings out that we are new creatures in Christ as 2 Cor. 5:17 affirms. We are to put off the characteristics of the old sinful nature, but that no longer constitutes what we are. **John Murray writes,** "It is a mistake to think of the believer as both an old man and new man or as having in him both the old man and the new man, the latter in view of regeneration and the former because of remaining corruption. That this is not Paul's concept is made apparent here [Rom. 6:6] by the fact that the 'old man' is represented as having been crucified with Christ and the tense indicates a once-for-all definitive act after the pattern of Christ's crucifixion. The 'old man' can no more be regarded as in the process of being crucified than Christ in his sphere could be thus regarded." Commentary on Romans, 219-220.

As we noted last week, the second half of this chapter continues to address the issues of antinomianism, but it does it from the perspective of our new life in spiritual union with Christ. The first half of the chapter flows out of the discussion in Rom. 5 of our being in spiritual union with Adam. The second half flows out of the idea that we are now in spiritual union with Christ and have been set free from slavery to sin. **Rom. 6:14** makes the point that we are not under law as simply a bare command or under the condemnation of the law. We are under grace. That does not mean that the law does not command us or instruct us concerning the will of God. Paul's statement is not talking about the Mosaic economy because those who were in that covenant with God were recipients of grace and in that regard were also under grace. **The term "law," should be understood in a more general sense of a bare commandment.** Law, as a bare commandment, can do nothing to relieve the bondage of sin. It is this aspect of the law that Paul has in mind

in this context. Being under grace means that we are empowered through the grace of God to obey what God has commanded. **John Murray comments**, "Believers have come under all the resources of redeeming and renewing grace which find their epitome in the death and resurrection of Christ. . . . Grace is the sovereign will and power of God coming to expression for the deliverance of men from the servitude of sin" (Rom. 229). Rom. 6:15 applies this idea to the last half of Rom. 6. This idea of being set free from slavery to sin and made a slave to God is the focus of this last half of the chapter.

### **I. Christians are not to be antinomian because sin is slavery.**

#### **Rom. 6:16-17, 19, 20, 22**

Notice how the idea of being a slave to sin is reiterated over and over. This is exactly what Jesus said in John 8:34.

James M. Boice illustrates sin being slavery. In commenting that sin is slavery, he writes, "The difficulty here is that sin is rarely seen by us in this way, that is, in its true colors. Instead of being presented as slavery, it is usually described as the very essence of freedom. This was what the devil told Eve in the Garden of Eden when he argued, 'Don't be bound by God's word. Be free. Eat of the tree and become as God, knowing good and evil.' Years ago . . . some Christians in Hong Kong had an interview with an eighty-two-year-old woman who had come out of China just a short while before. She was a believer in Christ, but her vocabulary was filled with the terminology of communism, which was all she had been hearing for decades. One of her favorite expressions was 'the liberation.' The interviewers asked her, 'When you were back in China, were you free to gather together with other Christians to worship?' 'Oh no,' she answered. 'Since the liberation, no one is permitted to gather for Christian services.' 'But surely you were able to get together in small groups to discuss the Christian faith,' they continued. 'No,' she said, 'We were not. Since the liberation, all such meetings are forbidden.' 'Were you free to read your Bible?' 'Since the liberation, no one is free to read the Bible.' The conversation shows that 'freedom' is not in the word, but in the reality.

Remember that, the next time someone suggests that you have to sin to be free. Merely attaching the word freedom to sin does not make sin a way of liberation. The truth is that sin is bondage." Romans, Vol. 2, 691-692.

Oscar Wilde wrote of himself: "The gods had given me almost everything. But I let myself be lured into long spells of senseless and sensual ease. . . Tired of being on the heights, I deliberately went to the depths in search for new sensation. What the paradox was to me in the sphere of thought, perversity became to me in the sphere of passion. I grew careless of the lives of others. I took pleasure where it pleased me, and passed on. I forgot that every little action of the common day makes or unmakes character, and that therefore what one has done in the secret chamber, one has some day to cry aloud from the house-top. I ceased to be lord over myself. I was no longer the captain of my soul, and did not know it. I allowed pleasure to dominate me. I ended in horrible disgrace."

**Michael Horton comments** on the idea of the slavery of sin:

"It is curious that the vogue pursuit today is the knowledge - the experience - of good and evil. In fact, we have reached the point where the lines separating the two regions disappear altogether. We moderns talk about sexual liberation and yet, even without AIDS and a host of other sexually transmitted diseases, we know the morning after that 'when people are unfettered they are freed, but not yet free.' From what does such a sexual liberation free us? From homes where family members care about each other - turning them instead into places where selfish individuals constantly look after their own independence? Or how about the freedom to end the lives of unborn infants? How free is a jet-set (yuppie) [wealthy young man] who finds that he can't quit cocaine whenever he wants to? A corporate executive may have made his millions by breaking all the rules, but is he free?

'Your eyes will be opened,' Satan promised (Gen. 3:5). But then, he has always been a liar. I found the following lines written on a painting in one of my favorite cafes:

I have taken the pill./ I have hoisted my skirts to my thighs,/ Dropped them to my ankles,/ Rebelled at the University,/ Skied at Aspen,/ Lived with two men,/ Married one./ Earned my keep,/ Kept my identity,/ And frankly. . . / I'M LOST."

Those outside of Christ are in slavery to sin. **James Boice** gives an important exhortation in regard to this: "Do not listen to those who tell you that sin is harmless. Above all, do not trust your own judgment in these matters. You are not able to judge in such situations. You must trust God that to sin is to die."

The Christian has been set free from that slavery. We cannot be antinomian and go back into that slavery.

## **II. Christians cannot be antinomian because they have been delivered from sin's slavery.**

### **Rom. 6:17-18, 22**

An important aspect of Christ's work of redemption is that he redeemed us from the power and slavery of sin. **1 Pet.1:18-19; Titus 2:14; Acts 26:18; 1 Cor. 6:9-11** (note that homosexuals can change based on this passage). **Rom. 6:20-21**

### **William Hendriksen comments on Romans 6:20-21:**

"The meaning is clearly this: To be slaves of sin means to be enemies of righteousness; to be enemies of sin means to be friends of righteousness. To be devoted to both sin and righteousness at the same time is impossible. Compare the words of Jesus, "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and look down on the other (Matt. 6:24). As to the 'fruit' or 'benefit' those people formerly obtained from their slavery to sin, Paul says it consisted of things of which you are now ashamed. He was probably thinking of such things as evil thoughts leading to evil words, issuing in evil deeds, resulting in evil habits. Cf. 1:24f.

*Commentary on Romans, 207.*

I read the story about a believer who had been an alcoholic. Before he came to the Lord, his alcohol addition was so dominating in his life almost all of his money was wasted on



beer other forms of alcohol. He came to Christ and God set him free from that slavery.

An unbeliever challenged him to tell exactly how Christ had changed water into wine.

The believer answered,

"I do not know how Christ changed the water to wine. It was a miracle. I only know that in my case He did something more useful: He changed my beer into furniture."

### **III. Christians cannot be antinomian because they are now slaves of God.**

**Rom. 6:20** - Here is a similar statement to Rom. 3:10-12. The unbeliever does not have any righteousness according to the standard of God's law. In fact, they are slaves to sin and unrighteousness. In contrast to that, the believer is set free from slavery to sin and is a slave of God. **Rom. 6:17-18, 21-22.**

Being a slave of God actually brings true freedom. Roger Nicole said that true freedom is "the ability to fulfill one's destiny, to function in terms of one's ultimate goal." For the Christian, they do their vocational call to the glory of God. They understand that they are created to give glory to God in everything they do. In our salvation, we are set free from slavery to sin and made slaves of God. That gives us true freedom to live as God created us to live. A few minutes ago, I quoted Jesus' statement in John 8:34 that he who sins is a slave to sin. The context of that statement is interesting in regard to our text and subject.

**John 8:31-32** His listeners were incensed at this statement - **John 8:33**. Their answer is ludicrous answer in light of Israel's history. The Jews had been slaves in Egypt for around 400 years. During the period of the Judges, there were at least seven periods when they were under the rule of a foreign nation or power. They were captives in Babylon for 70 years. At the time they made this statement, they were under Roman occupation and rule. In answering them, Jesus didn't point out these obvious facts.

Instead, he answered them on a spiritual level. **John 8:34, 36** The freedom Jesus was talking about was not a freedom or license to do anything; it is a freedom to serve Christ and fulfill the purpose for which we were created in living to the glory of God. **James M. Boice comments on Rom. 6:18, 22:** "The only real freedom you are ever going to

know, either in this life or in the life to come, is the freedom of serving Jesus Christ. And this means a life of righteousness. Anything else is really slavery, regardless of what the world may promise you through its lies and false teaching" (Rom., 694). **Rom. 6:22-23** - Being enslaved to God results in our sanctification, our Christian growth. We are progressively changed and conformed more into the image of Jesus. We live with the assurance of having eternal life through faith in Christ. **Rom. 6:23** - Sin and death are always connected together in Scripture. Sin is slavery and ultimately brings death. This verse also emphasizes that salvation is a free gift from God through Christ's work and not in any way the result of our works. **Charles Spurgeon said**, "The cardinal error against which the gospel of Christ has to contend is the effect of the tendency of the human heart to rely on salvation by works. The great antagonist to the truth as it is in Jesus is that pride of man which leads him to believe that he can be, at least in part, his own savior. This error is the prolific mother of multitudes of heresies." Salvation only comes through faith alone in Christ's accomplished work. The result is that we are new creations in Christ and we are set free from slavery to sin. Because this is true of every believer, we cannot be antinomian in our Christian lives. I remember a T-shirt slogan during the 1970s. The front said, "I am a slave of Christ." The back asked, "Whose slave are you?" That captures the essence of this passage. We are either a slave of sin or a slave of Christ. Sin lead to death. Being in Christ brings justification and a life of fulfillment and satisfaction in living for Christ.

**Rom. 7:1-6 Romans Series #26 6/7/09**

When we started our exposition of Romans 6, I pointed that Paul raises two questions at the end of chapter 5 which he addresses in chapters 6 and 7. **Rom. 5:20**. This statement could raise the questions of whether we should sin to simply get more grace and is the law bad. Romans 6 and 7 are parenthetical chapters which address those questions. In Romans 6, Paul argues that we cannot be antinomian because we are in spiritual union with Christ and have been set free from the slavery to sin. In Romans 7, Paul argues that

the law is not bad, but has an ongoing purpose in God's plan of salvation. Our text this morning is a transitional type of text between the discussion of the law in **Rom. 6:14** and Paul's further elaboration of the law in Romans 7. In this first paragraph in Romans 7, Paul gives further insight into his statement in Romans 6:14. He brings out the point that, because we are in spiritual union with Christ and because Christ has fulfilled every demand of righteousness for us, then we are set free from any principle of works righteousness.

**I. Christians are set free from the principle of law as a way of salvation. Rom. 7:1 -**

Paul is not simply addressing Jewish Christians in this congregation, but is speaking more generally to all the brethren there. After giving an illustration in verses 2 and 3, Paul speaks of the law again in **verse 4**. The first question to address in this text is what does Paul mean when he speaks of the law? Is he referring specifically and only to the Mosaic economy or is he looking at the term "law" in a broader sense of God's moral revelation to all men?

**Rom. 2:14-15** speaks of Gentiles having the moral law of God written on their hearts. Those moral commands are set forth in written form in the Ten Commandments, the moral law of God. **Charles Hodge writes**, "It need hardly be remarked, that the law of which the apostle is here speaking, is not the Mosaic law considered as the Old Testament economy. It is not the doctrine of this or of similar passages, that Christ has merely delivered us from the yoke of Jewish institutions, in order that we may embrace the simpler and more spiritual dispensation of the gospel. The law of which he speaks, is the law which says, 'The man that doeth these things shall live by them'. . . . It is plain, therefore, that Paul here means by the law, the will of God, as a rule of duty, no matter how revealed" (217). Before the fall, God established a covenant with Adam. While the term "covenant" does not appear in the early chapters of Genesis, Hosea 6:7 calls it a covenant. There are also references in Jeremiah which indicate that God established a covenant relationship with Adam. Besides this all, the elements of a covenant are present

in God's relationship with Adam in the Garden of Eden. Historically, in Reformed theology, that covenant has been called the covenant of works. The focal point of that covenant was God's command to Adam not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. As we noted in our study of Rom. 5:12-19, Adam functioned as a covenant head for all his posterity just as Christ functioned as a covenant head for all his people, his elect. If Adam had been obedient, he would have merited for his posterity, full eschatological life.

He disobeyed God and his sin was imputed to his posterity. In contrast to Adam, Christ was perfectly obedient to God all through his life. In his preceptive obedience, he fulfilled all righteousness. That's the righteousness which is imputed to us when we believe in Christ. The principle of our needing to be perfectly and positively righteous in order to be justified is still in place. Christ fulfilled that demand for us. That's the law principle that Paul is talking about in the first part of this chapter. The term law, therefore, in this context is referring to a code which must be adhered to in order to obtain salvation. **Charles Hodge comments** on Paul's statement in Rom. 7:4: "So the law, as a covenant of works, ceases to bind us when death has loosed its bonds" (214). The idea is that Christ has fulfilled this demand of the law.

In considering this, it is also important to remember that the Christian is not free from the law in every conceivable sense. This is not a statement supporting antinomianism. The moral law of God is reiterated in the New Testament as a pattern for our sanctification. It is set forth as a revelation of the moral will of God. **For example**, Rom. 13:9-10; 1 Tim. 1:8-10; Eph. 4:28 (exposition of the 8th commandment). Psa. 119:18, 97, 136 - This is the heart of a redeemed person in reflecting on the beauty of God's moral revelation. The principle that Paul is setting forth is that we must be free from the law as a covenant of works or as way to salvation in order to be free to belong to Christ and his work. This again brings up a foundational point of the gospel. What do you trust in for salvation? Do you rely on some kind of works or personal performance for a right standing with

God? If you do, then you are under the law as a standard that demands absolute perfection and no one is perfectly obedient to God's commands. On top of that, we are all born as sinners because of Adam's sin imputed to us. **Charles Spurgeon said,** "Any attempt to keep the law of God with the view of being saved thereby is sure to end in failure. So contrary is it to the express warnings of the divine Lawgiver, and so much does it run counter to the whole gospel, that he who ventures to seek justification by his own merits ought to be ashamed of his presumption. When God tells us that salvation is not by the works of the law, art thou not ashamed of trying to procure it by thy obedience to its precepts? When he declares that by the works of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight, art thou not ashamed to go and seek after justification where he tells thee it never can be found? When he over and over again declares that salvation is by faith, and that it is a matter of grace to be received, dost thou not blush for thyself that thou shouldst give the lie to God, and propound a righteousness of thine own conceit, in which thou has vainly tried to keep up a respectable appearance, screening the palpable delinquencies of thy life under a thin veil of piety toward God and charity toward men? Eternal life is not to be earned by any trade you can carry on in works of the flesh; because, however estimable in the opinion of men, they are simply execrable in the sight of God."

**Rev. Joe Novenson,** at a Covenant Seminary commencement sermon spoke about the issue of what people trust in for salvation.

**In that context, he said,** "I asked each of my children to tell me what the most important thing I ever taught them was. Each one came in alone. The first son said, "To always do what is right." The second son said, "To always do what is right." His little girl said, "Jesus, loves me this I know." He thought to himself, "I've raised two pharisees and one Christian." May 20, 2002 **John Calvin writes,** "The Lord testifies that he recognizes no righteousness of works except in the perfect observance of his law. What perversity it is

for us, when we lack righteousness . . . to boast of some little bits of a few works and try through other satisfactions to pay for what is lacking?" Ins, 3,14,13.

## **II. Christian are set free from the law as a covenant of works in order to bear fruit to God. Rom. 7:2-4**

Paul give an illustration in verses 2 and 3. This illustration has been the focus of a lot of debate and confusion. It simply illustrates that believers have died to the law and are released from that principle in order to be married to Christ. Confusion has arisen because various commentators have tried allegorize the illustration and assign meanings to the husband and the wife. Sometimes it is argued that husband in the illustration represents the law. However, in the illustration, it is the husband that dies. But, the law does not die and Paul speaks of its ongoing value in Rom. 7:12. Also, in Rom. 7:1 and 4, Paul talks about the believer dying, not the law. He also speaks of the believer being joined to another. The answer to this is not to allegorize the illustration and to assign meanings to the husband and wife. Simply, take the main point of the illustration and apply that to what Paul is teaching. In Christ, the believer has died to the law as a principle of works salvation. Christ has fulfilled that demand of the law for us.

The principle Paul sets forth is that death dissolves the legal bond. Being dead to that law principle, we are joined to Christ.

**Rom. 7:4, 6** - In our Christian life, we are joined to Christ. We belong to him. He is the bridegroom and we are the bride of Christ. Our status in being in union with Christ produces fruit in us. Let me mention just a few of the privileges we receive in our union with Christ. **1. Justification.** We have a legal right standing with God. Our sins are forgiven and Christ's righteousness is imputed to us. Therefore, in our Christian living, we are not trying to earn God's favor. We know that we are at peace with God through faith in the accomplished work of Christ. We have assurance of salvation because we trust in Christ and not ourselves. **Rom. 4:1-8** In 1563, a German theology professor, Zacharias Ursinus, formulated his personal faith in Answer 21 of the Heidelberg

Catechism: True faith - created in me by the Holy Spirit through the gospel - is not only a knowledge and conviction that everything that God reveals in his Word is true, but also a deep-rooted assurance that not only others, but I too, have had my sins forgiven, have been made forever right with God, and have been granted salvation. These are gifts of sheer grace earned for us by Christ.

**2. Adoption.** We are adopted into God's family and belong to him. We can call God our Father and receive his fatherly protection and care. We have the blessing of his fatherly discipline and correction of us. **Rom. 8:15-16**

We serve God, not out of slavish fear, trying to earn his acceptance, but out of love, knowing we are his children.

**3. We have access into God's presence because of the work of Jesus. Heb. 4:15; 10:19f** We are invited to come before him in worship, prayer, and simply to enjoy being in his presence. **D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones said,** "A central message of the New Testament is that there is no possibility of prayer, or of entry into the presence of God, except in and through and by our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." **William Hendriksen** commented on Romans 5:2: ". . .it was indeed through the person and work of the Savior, appropriated by faith, that access into this state of grace - that is, the state of justification - had been effected. Moreover, access to this state of grace implies confident access to the Father (Eph. 2:18; 3:11-12) and to his throne of grace (Heb. 4:16)." Romans, 169.

**4. Jesus' personal presence and care.** Matt. 28:20b - "I am with you always even to the end of the age. In 1896, Glasgow University conferred on David Livingstone the degree of Doctor of Laws. As Dr. Livingstone rose to speak, he was received in respectful silence. He was gaunt and haggard as a result of hardships in tropical Africa. His left arm crushed by a lion, hung helplessly at his side as he announced his resolve to return to Africa, without misgiving and with great gladness. He added, 'Would you like me to tell you what supported me through all the years of exile among a people whose language I could not understand, and whose attitude toward me was often uncertain and

often hostile? It was this: "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the age." On these words I staked everything, and they never failed!"

A Christian man was struggling with despair as he slumped into the chair in a tiny hotel room in New York City. His world was falling apart, and he wondered to himself, "Does God really care?" He felt as if his faith was almost shipwrecked. As he sat in bewilderment, wondering why God would allow him to encounter the problems he was facing, he thought of his Bible. Pulling it from his suitcase, he opened it to John 11, and noticed two words: "Jesus wept" (v. 35). This two-word sentence awakened his heart. He said to himself that if this is the Son of God, here at Lazarus' tomb with these two brokenhearted sisters, and He is weeping, then God does care.

We could add many things to these privileges such as God's gift of his Word to us, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit constantly at work within us in our sanctification, the body of Christ to which we are spiritual joined with Christ as the head. All of these aspects of our union with Christ cause us to bear fruit for him. That fruit is always spoken of in the Bible as aspects of our Christian growth. **Gal. 5:22-23**. Therefore, we are not under law as a legal system for salvation. Our freedom in this regard is not for indulgence in sin, but in service to God and the fruit of the Spirit. The law is not set aside, but the demands of the law are satisfied in the work of Christ. We are joined to Christ. We belong to the family of God. He is our Father.

**Play write Moss Hart** once recalled a childhood Christmas when his father took him shopping hoping to buy the boy a present he would like. The two walked the New York streets inspecting the merchandise displayed on scores of pushcarts. Hart's eyes as a little boy were drawn to chemistry sets and printing presses, but the father, a very poor man, had less expensive things in mind. Each time they would find something the boy wanted, the father would ask the vendor's price, shake his head and move on. Occasionally, he would pick up a smaller less expensive toy, try to attract his son's attention, but there was no meeting of the minds. Eventually they came to the end of the line of pushcarts



without a purchase. Hart writes, "I heard my father jingle some coins in his pocket; in a flash I knew it all. He had gotten together about 75 cents to buy me a Christmas present and he hadn't dared say so in case there was nothing to be had for so small a sum. As I looked up at him I saw a look of despair and disappointment in his eyes that brought me closer to him than I had ever been in my life. I wanted to throw my arms around him and say, 'It doesn't matter! I understand. This is better than a printing press. I love you Daddy!' But, instead we stood shivering beside each other for a moment then turned away from the last two pushcarts and started silently home. I didn't even take his hand on the way home nor did he take mine. **We were not on that basis.** Nor did I ever tell him how close I felt that night that for a little while the concrete wall between father and son had crumbled and I knew that we were two lonely people struggling to reach each other." He couldn't express his love to his father; he couldn't embrace him because they were "not on that basis." I want you to know that God is on that basis with you, his child. God wants you to say, "I love you Daddy! Abba, Father." When you are experiencing the dark periods of your life, God wants you look to him and say, "I trust you. I cling to you. I adore you."

God wants you to experience the comfort of his love that embraces you securely; to trust him in regard to the future and the past, and to relate to him on the basis of grace in the present.

Rom. 7:7-13 Romans Series #27 6/14/09

As we have observed in this study, the last two verses of Romans 5 mention that the Law of God vividly shows us our sin and where sin abounds, grace also abounds. This presents two question: First, is the law bad and second, do we sin simply to receive more grace. Romans 6 addresses the idea of continual sin. Romans 6 emphatically says that if you are truly in Christ, you are in spiritual union with him and you cannot have a cavalier attitude toward sin. The regenerate heart loves Jesus and has a disposition toward obedience. This section in Romans 7 address the question of whether the law of God is

bad and presents some important truths on how the law functions to drive us to the end of ourselves and to Christ.

This passage in Romans 7 is a very important one in terms of revealing our need before a holy God. I think it is especially important in our culture where everyone is considered basically good and without need of the grace of God in salvation.

### **I. The Law strips away self-perceived righteousness.**

#### **Rom. 7:9 A. Paul thought he was at peace with God.**

How was Paul "once alive apart from the Law?" Paul was a pharisee, trained under Gamaliel, and one of the most brilliant students of the Law that ever lived in Judaism. How could he say he was alive apart from the Law? He knew the Law intellectually, but the core teaching of the Law that it is impossible to gain salvation through it was not in his thinking. He thought he was at peace with God, while, in reality, he was under the judgment of God. Paul was alive not in the sense that he had spiritual life, but in his own estimation, in his own self-evaluation. He thought he was safe from the judgment of God; he thought he was acceptable to God, but the reality was that he was deluded and had a false security.

This is the condition of a large percentage of people in our culture. They believe they are basically good people and that God will accept them because they are good.

This is where the Law of God comes to bear on our lives in salvation. It strips away from us our false security. It shows us that we are really sinners who have no hope apart from Christ.

**Rom. 3:19-20** - The Law tells everyone to shut up in regard to self-righteousness.

**Illus.** - Rich young ruler - Luke 18:18-23. This young man thought he had kept the law; he thought he was righteous and at peace with God. Jesus simply went to the first commandment and showed him his delusion.

*Newsweek* did a survey on whether Americans believe in the afterlife. **Seventy-six** percent believed that "they" were going to heaven, but far fewer believed that other

would be there to join them. From: Kenneth Woodward, "Heaven: This Is the Season to Search for New Meaning in Old Familiar Places," "Newsweek" (March 27, 1989): 52-53. Everyone thinks they are going to heaven. Like Paul they are alive apart from the Law. If people knew and believed two things, they would be banging on the doors of our churches crying out, "How can I be saved?" Those two things are essentially the instruction of the Law that God is holy, righteous, and just and man is a sinner. Our culture believes in justification by death - die and go to heaven.

**Becky Pippert, in her book, *Hope Has Its Reasons*, (14) writes:**

"Has it ever struck you as odd that, for all our sophistication, we modern people have a remarkably naive understanding of human nature? Living at the end of history's most murderous century, we flatter ourselves that we are basically good people who occasionally do bad deeds. The founders of our nation were not so naive. The very political institutions they constructed for us, founded on concepts like 'checks and balances,' are testimony to their assumption that human nature has a root of evil that unchecked can grow to terrifying proportions. People with power cannot be trusted too far. History hardly indicates that our problem has changed - rather, that it is we who have developed short memories. We are struggling with the symptoms of an age-old disease, which we have lost the capacity to diagnose." Most people believe they are good and acceptable before a holy God. They are alive apart from the soul-penetrating work of the Law of God. **One of the more sobering examples of feigned innocence can be found in Robert J. Lifton's *The Nazi Doctors*.** Lifton points out that the horror of Nazism were not perpetrated by the culturally deprived and uneducated, but by the physicians, lawyers, and the professional elite. The great philosopher Martin Heidegger, for example, signed up with the Nazis. Ezra Pound, the brilliant and sensitive poet, was eventually consumed with hatred and racism and became a propagandist for Hitler and Mussolini. Most chilling is Lifton's portrayal of how routine the lives of the doctors he interviewed were. Hannah Arendt described this aptly as "the banality of evil." The doctors were a part of

one of the most vile outbreaks of evil this planet ever witnessed. How could they do it? How could those trained in the name of healing torture and kill? How could they justify the kind of behavior where "ordinary people can commit demonic acts?" That is Lifton sought to find out. Lifton reported that, while the doctors occasionally betrayed pockets of guilt, they generally tried "to present themselves to me as decent people who tried to make the best from a bad situation. And they wanted confirmation from me in this view of themselves." They couldn't bear to face their guilt, so they denied it, feigned innocence, and projected their guilt by blaming it on the system: "the chaotic, complex conditions of Auschwitz." Such feigned innocence led to a depth of moral blindness that was staggering. Lifton writes, "Yet none of them - not a single form Nazi doctor I spoke to - arrived at a clear, ethical evaluation of what he had done, and what he had been a part of." This denial of responsibility, along with their projection of guilt onto the system around them, was part and parcel of the evil in which they participated. It was the means by which they were able to enter into it in the first place.

This denial of sin and responsibility is what Paul means when he says that he was "once alive apart from the Law."

**Rom. 3:23; 3:9-12**

If you see yourself as basically good before God with no real need for Christ, unless there is an awakening to your need before God ending in real faith and repentance, you will perish in hell forever. If you trust in your righteousness, you cannot be trusting in Christ's righteousness.

**B. The Law shows us our sin.**

Rom. 7:9, 13 - The commandment of God causes sin to come alive in the sense that it caused Paul and us to recognize guilt before a holy God. He then recognized that he was, in reality, spiritually dead and without hope. **John Murray, in his commentary on Romans says that the Law brings about the death of a complacent, self-assurance and calm before God.**

I've talked with a lot of people about issues of salvation. The majority of those people tell me they know they are going to heaven because they are basically good people.

The Law of God strips away that facade of self-righteousness.

Think about your life in terms of the Law of God's standard of righteousness.

Review ten commandments and ask rhetorical questions.

**Gal. 3:10-11; James 2:10-11**

Illus. - Hanging from a cliff by a ten linked chain.

Bowling pins and pane of glass.

Do you see your need before a holy God? Do you trust in Christ alone as your Savior? If your trust in yourself, you have no hope. The specific commandment and sin that Paul refers to in this passage is coveting. The sin of coveting is essentially the sin of discontentment. It is an internal sin that springs up in our heart almost before we are aware of it. **One commentator** (Becky Pippert) writes: It is a remarkable thought that only the human species spends so much money and time pretending it is other than it really is. The human species is the only form of life that feels insecure. For as G. K. Chesterton remarked, "Who has ever found an anthill decorated with statues of celebrated ants? Who has seen a beehive carved up with images of gorgeous queens of old?" Dogs do not put on airs because they are larger than squirrels. Nor do they become depressed because they are not as big as gorillas. Animals are content to be what they are. But that is no credit of theirs. The fact is, animals cannot imagine any other form than the one they have been given. They cannot, as we can, reach beyond their limits and pretend to be bigger or better - younger or older, more gifted or beautiful - than they are. . . . They don't walk around feeling incomplete and insecure. Our human imagination, however, is a double-edged sword. It enables us to anticipate the future, recall the past, turn all the universe into our here and now. But it is also what allows us to think our self-exalting thoughts and refuse to be content with what we are. *Hope Has Its Reasons*, 35.

## II. The Law calls us to self-examination.

2 Cor. 13:5 Do you realize that it is possible make a profession of faith in Christ, but not really be in a state of grace? There are many people who say they believe, but really do not trust in Christ. In Paul's pre-Christian life, he thought he was saved and at peace with God when, in reality, he was not in a state of salvation. **1 John 2:19; Matt. 7:21-23**

John Trapp, in speaking of Jesus' never knowing the false professors in Matt. 7:21-23 said, "I knew you well enough for 'black sheep,' or, rather, for reprobate goats: I knew you for hirelings and hypocrites, but I never knew you with a special knowledge of love, delight, and complacency. I never acknowledged, approved, and accepted of your persons and performances (see Psalm 1:6; Rom. 11:2)."

In terms of self-examination, ask yourself, "Do I trust in anything other than Christ from my salvation?" Second, ask yourself, "Do I really love Jesus?" How do you know if you love him? John 14:15 - This is where the Law of God comes to bear in our lives. Do you want to obey him?

If you are not concerned about sin and violations of the Law of God in your life, that attitude should give you pause. It should cause you to reflect on the state of your soul before God.

False professors often have some intellectual knowledge about Christ and the gospel, but trust in something in themselves for salvation. **Illus.** - EE in Memphis - trainer's testimony.

Examine your life. Do you trust in Christ alone? Do you want to obey him? Put yourself where the means of grace are present.

A United Press release in a midwestern city told of a hospital where officials discovered that the fire fighting equipment had never been connected. For 35 years it had been relied upon for the safety of the patients in case of emergency. But it had never been attached to the city's water main. The pipe that led from the building extended 4 feet underground - and there it stopped! The medical staff and the patients had felt complete confidence in

the system. They thought that if a blaze broke out, they could depend on a nearby hose to extinguish it. But theirs was a false security. Although the costly equipment with its polished valves and well-place outlets was adequate for the building, it lacked the most important thing - WATER.

Don't take this lightly. After almost thirty years of being either in full time ministry or involved in ministry, I've watched many people make professions of faith only to later fall into the category John describes as those who went out from us.

Has the Law done its work in your life in terms of salvation? Are you awakened to your peril apart from Christ and the fact that you cannot save yourself? Do you recognize that you have no hope of salvation apart from Christ? Do you rely on him alone for salvation?

A young man in Switzerland had been brought up in a home where God and the Bible were revered. Although the Gospel was often presented to him with loving urgency, he refused to believe and became increasingly rebellious. Finally he said, "I'm sick and tired of Christians. I'm going to look for a place where I can avoid them." His mother wept as he packed his suitcase and left home. He boarded a train, only to find that two passengers seated behind him were discussing the Scriptures. "I'm not going to stay here," he muttered. At the next stop he left the coach and entered a restaurant. To his dismay, some elderly ladies were talking about the return of the Lord. Knowing a ship was docked nearby, he decided it might be a way to escape the "religious chatter" he encountered at every turn. But when the steamer embarked, he discovered that it was filled with happy young students from a Bible academy. Thoroughly disgusted, he made his way downstairs to find the bar. Approaching the captain, he exclaimed, "Say, can you tell a man where he can get away from all these cursed fanatics?" The skipper looked up and said with a grin, "Yes, just go to Hell. You won't find any Christians there!" These startling words caused him to realize his eternal peril, and when he returned home, he soon found peace by receiving the Savior.

If anyone here is not in a state of grace through faith in Christ, I pray that you would come alive to the law of God and realize your need. Flee to Christ and rely on him.

**Romans 7:14-25 part 1 Romans Series #28**

The book of Romans has three chapters which have been the focus of controversy and debate. Romans 9 is at the top of that list with its teaching on the doctrine of election. Romans 11 has been a debated chapter over issues of eschatology. Our text in the last part of Romans 7 has also been much debated section. There have been four basic positions set forth concerning the identity of the man in Romans 7:14f: **First**, that the man in Romans 7 is an unsaved or unredeemed person; **Second**, that the man in Romans 7 represents a person who is not saved, but is under conviction of sin; **Third**, that the man in Romans 7 is an immature Christian and recently a subset of that which speaks about a "carnal Christian;" **Fourth**, that the man in Romans 7 is a mature Christian and that Paul is referring to himself at the time he is writing the book. The main arguments which have merit have been between the two views that this man in Rom. 7 is either unredeemed or under conviction or he is a mature believer. There have been good theologians on both sides of this issue. However, the overwhelming dominate view in Reformed theology has been that Paul is speaking of himself as a mature Christian. For example, that position was taken by Augustine, Luther, Calvin, Knox, Beza, Charles Hodge, Abraham Kuyper, more recently by Louis Berkhof, John Murray, William Hendriksen, R. C. Sproul, and James M. Boice. It is also the position taken in the *Westminster Confession*, *The Belgic Confession*, *The Heidelberg Catechism*, and in Lutheran creeds and confessions. There are a some Reformed theologians who take the unredeemed person or under conviction position, the most notable of these would be Herman Ridderbos and Martyn Lloyd-Jones. In more recent years, Dispensational positions have tended toward the "carnal Christian" position.



Because of these debates on this text, this morning we are going to focus on the various debate points of this text and then in a future sermon deal more with the application of this text.

### **I. The first view that the man in Romans 7 is unsaved.**

This position and the closely related one that it is a man under conviction of sin argues that Paul is speaking about is pre-Christian life. It is pointed out that Paul mentions that he is a sold into bondage to sin in verse 14. In Rom. 7:18, he says that nothing good dwells in him. In Rom. 7:24, he cries out, "Who will set me free from the body of this death?" It is argued that a redeemed Paul would know that he is set free in Christ.

There are several major problems with this approach.

**First**, there is a very dramatic tense shift in this section of Romans 7. In verses 7-13, the verbs are all in the aorist tense. See: verses 9, 11, 13. In Rom. 7:14-24, the present tense is used. **J. I. Packer comments on this**, "Paul's shift from the past tense to the present tense in verse 14 has no natural explanation save that he now moves on from talking about his experience with God's law in his pre-Christian days to talking about his experience as it was at the time of writing."

**Second**, the way Paul describes himself in Rom. 7:14-15 is not the way he describes his pre-Christian life in other passages. In Rom. 7, Paul is distressed about his disobedience to God's law. He is deeply aware of his personal sin and struggles with sin. He affirms that the law is good and he delights in it in his inner man (vv. 16, 22). However, in Phil. 3, when Paul describes his pre-Christian life as a Pharisee, he points out that he did not have this sense of disobedience to the law of God. He was a typical Pharisee who focused on external, legalistic righteousness. **Phil. 3:4-6** In his pre-Christian life, he was not distressed by his inability to obey God's law, but actually thought he was keeping it perfectly. James Montgomery Boice comments on this point: "Here is the problem in a nutshell: In Romans 7:18, Paul says, 'I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot

carry it out.' But when he was an unbeliever he would have said, 'I have the desire to do what is good, and I am doing it'" (Romans, vol. 2, 757).

**Third**, Paul states in Rom. 7:22 that he joyfully concurs with the law of God in his inner man. His spirit or heart joyfully concurs with God's law. Similarly, in Rom. 7:16, Paul states that the law is good. That is not the attitude of an unregenerate person. In fact, in Rom. 8:7-8, Paul argues that the unregenerate mind is hostile toward God and does not submit to the law of God. The unregenerate person does not have the moral ability to "joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man." This is a strong argument that Paul is speaking of his present state of being a mature Christian.

**Fourth**, Paul's language in Rom. 7:14 needs to be interpreted in this context. It is important to note the way he uses the language and makes the contrasts he does in this context.

**William Hendriksen comments on Romans 7:14** and the phrase, "I am carnal:" "Care should be exercised in defining this quality. The apostle does not say, 'I am in the flesh,' or 'controlled by the flesh' - see 7:5; 8:8 (cf. 8:5), but 'I am carnal,' which is something else. To be 'in the flesh' means to be basically controlled by one's sinful nature. A person so described is not a believer. To be fleshly or carnal, on the other hand, means to be the opposite of what the law is. The law of God is spiritual, perfect, divine. In a sense Paul is unspiritual, imperfect. As 1 Cor. 3:1, 3 indicates, such a carnal person can still be a Christian. . . . When Rom. 7:14 is interpreted in light of verses 22-25, it becomes clear that the one who in verse 14 deplors his sinful condition is the same person who in the chapter's closing verses expresses his delight in the law of God, looks forward with impassioned and irresistible longing to the day of his deliverance from his present momentous inner struggle, and is filled with the blessed assurance that Victory is bound to come; in fact, that 'in principle' it is here already!" (231-232) **Similarly, Charles Hodge comments** on the terminology in Romans 7:14: "As, however, even in the renewed, this control of the Spirit is never perfect, as the flesh even in them retains much

of its original power, they are forced to acknowledge that they too are carnal. There is no believer, however advanced in holiness, who cannot adopt the language here used by the apostle. In 1 Cor. 3:3, in addressing believers, he says, 'Are ye not carnal?' **In the imperfections of human language the same word must be taken in different senses.** Sometimes 'carnal' means entirely or exclusively under the control of the flesh. It designates those in whom the flesh is the only principle of action. At other times it has a modified sense, and is applicable to those who, although under the dominion of the Spirit, are still polluted and influenced by the flesh." 229.

## **II. A second position is that the man in Romans 7 represents an immature Christian.**

In recent years, dispensational theology has argued for a category of Christian experience they call the carnal Christian. They are not just meaning a young believer, but someone who does not acknowledge the Lordship of Christ. It sets forth a two-stage Christian experience. In stage one, a person believes in Christ as their Savior, but not as their Lord. In stage two, a person receives Christ as his Lord. That is a completely non-biblical understanding of the Christian life. The New Testament consistently presents a unified concept of salvation in which a person comes to Christ as Savior and Lord. A separation of those concepts simply does not exist. **Joseph Alleine**, the great Puritan preacher, spoke of the importance of a proper conception of salvation: "The unsound convert takes Christ by halves. He is all for the salvation of Christ, but he is not for sanctification. He is all for the privileges, but does not appropriate the person of Christ. This is an error in the foundation. Whoever loves life, let him beware here. It is an undoing mistake, of which you have often been warned, and yet none is more common. Jesus is a sweet name, but men do not love the Lord Jesus in sincerity. They will not have Him as God offers, 'to be a Prince and Savior' (Acts 5:31). They will divide what God has joined, the King and the Priest. They will not accept the salvation of Christ as he intends it; they divide it here. Every man's vote is for salvation from suffering, but they do not desire to

be saved from sinning. They would have their lives saved, but still would have their lusts. Indeed, many divide here again; they would be content to have some of their sins destroyed, but they cannot leave the lap of Delilah, or divorce the beloved Herodias. They cannot be cruel to the right eye or right hand. Oh be infinitely careful here; your soul depends upon it. The sound convert takes a whole Christ, and takes Him for all intents and purposes, without exceptions, without limitations, without reserve. He is willing to have Christ upon any terms; he is willing to have the dominion of Christ as well as deliverance by Christ. He says with Paul, 'Lord, what wilt thou have me do?' Anything, Lord. He sends the blank for Christ to set down His own conditions. In Rom. 8:5-8, the idea of being "in the flesh" describes those who are unregenerate. This is especially seen in Rom. 8:9.

As William Hendriksen and Charles Hodge point out, Paul is not speaking of being "in the flesh," but is talking about the struggle in himself between his new nature in Christ and the characteristics of the sinful nature. William Hendriksen states, ". . . according to Scripture it is exactly the more advanced Christian, the mature believer, who is most deeply concerned about his sin. The more a person has made progress in sanctification, the more also will he abhor his sinfulness" 227.

**Charles Spurgeon said,** "I believe the holier a man becomes, the more he mourns over the unholiness which remains in him."

**Charles Spurgeon also said,** "There are some professing Christians who can speak of themselves in terms of admiration; but, from my inmost heart, I loathe such speeches more and more every day that I live. Those who talk in such a boastful fashion must be constituted very differently from me. While they are congratulating themselves, I have to lie humbly at the foot of Christ's cross, and marvel that I am saved at all, for I know that I am saved. I have to wonder that I do not believe Christ more, and equally wonder that I am privileged to believe in him at all- to wonder that I do not love Him more, and equally to wonder that I love Him at all - to wonder that I am not holier, and equally wonder that

I have any desire to be holy at all considering what a polluted, debased, depraved nature I find still within my soul, notwithstanding all that Divine grace has done in me. If God were ever to allow the fountains of the great deeps of depravity to break up in the best man that lives, he would make as bad a devil as the Devil himself is. I care nothing for what these boasters say concerning their own perfections; I feel sure that they do not know themselves or they could not talk as they often do. There is tinder enough in the saint who is nearest to heaven to kindle another hell if God should but permit a spark to fall upon it. In the very best of men, there is an infernal and well-nigh infinite depth of depravity. Some Christians never seem to find this out. I almost wish that they might not do so, for it is a painful discovery for any one to make; but it has the beneficial effect of making us cease from trusting in ourselves, and causing us to glory only in the Lord."

**III. The dominate position historically and especially in Reformed theology is that Paul is speaking of himself in his present mature Christian position.**

We have already, in answering the previous positions examined some of the arguments for this view. The shift to present tense in Rom. 7:14 and the way Paul says he concurs joyfully with the law of God in his inner man in verse 22 are important in this position. As Paul brings out in Rom. 8:7-8, only the regenerate heart has that attitude toward the law of God. **Charles Hodge**, in arguing for the man in Rom. 7:14f being a mature believer writes, "It is not in accordance with the scriptural representation of the wicked, to describe them as consenting to the law of God; as hating sin, and struggling against it; groaning under it as a tyrant's yoke; as delighting in the law of God, i.e., in holiness. . . . This is not the scriptural representation of man, who does not received the things of the Spirit of God, and cannot know them,

1 Cor. 2:14. . . . Not only do these particular expressions show that the writer is a true Christian, but the whole conflict here described is such as is peculiar to the sincere believer." 242. **John Calvin** wrote concerning Augustine's views on this passage: "Augustine was for a time involved in the common error, but having more thoroughly

examined the passage, not only retracted what he had falsely thought, but in his first book to Boniface proves, by many forceful arguments, that what is said cannot be applied to any but the regenerate." Commentary on Romans, 264.

**Finally, look at Romans 7:24.** That's the cry of a Christian who feels this conflict very keenly. R. C. Sproul points out that it is possible that Paul uses an expression here that was known to his readers: the body of death. The Romans had a type of punishment for certain murderers. In the case of murderers who committed a particularly heinous murder, they would execute the murderer in a gruesome manner. They took the corpse of the murdered victim and chained it to the body of the murderer. The decaying body would eat into his flesh and kill him. **Virgil**, a philosopher of the day wrote of this and said, "The living and the dead at his command, were coupled face to face, and hand to hand; Till choked with stench, in loathed embraces tied, the lingering wretches pined away and died." Paul could be using that imagery here. The old sinful nature has been put to death, but he's still hanging on our necks - we still feel the pull of sin. **Paul cries out in verse 24.** But, he doesn't stop there. **Rom. 7:25 - 8:1.** I may still feel the pull of sin, but I'm a justified man now. My sins are forgiven and I have received Christ's righteousness. Luther had a phrase to describe this:

*Simul Justis et peccator*

Romans 7:14-25 Romans Series #29 7/12/09

This passage in Romans continues Paul's examination of the working and value of the law. The first part of Romans 7 sets forth how the law shows us our sin and drives us to Christ.

Rom. 7:9 - The law strips away self-righteousness and the delusion that it is possible to come to a holy God apart from Christ. The last part of Romans 7 continues the general theme that the law is good and has a good function. In this section, Paul speaks of struggles with sin and the fact that the law is

righteous and good. Just because we sin doesn't make the law of God bad. The law still shows believers their sin and need for Christ and serves as a pattern for our sanctification. A couple of weeks ago we discussed the debates for the identity of the man in Romans 7:14f. I gave the reasons why I think it is best to understand this as a description of Paul as a mature believer writing about his own struggles with sin. This passage has a direct application on the issue of Christian perfectionism. The theological perspective called Christian perfectionism has been embraced by many Christians in the last 200 years. Sometimes it is seen in an overt belief that a person can receive a work of grace that completely frees him from sin. However, often this idea manifests itself in the lives of Christians who feel that because they have a continual struggle with sin, somehow they are not real Christians. It is important to understand that the Christian has a ongoing, continual battle with sin all of his or her life. This text in Romans 7 touches on the issue of Christian perfectionism and because of that it has historically been a passage of controversy. I think that this is an extremely important passage for the Christian because it describes a very real experience that Christian people have in their Christian lives. It also gives us understanding into the nature of Christian growth and Christian living. People who believe in Christian perfectionism have tried to explain this passage in various ways. Some have argued that Paul is talking about his early Christian life before he was mature in the Lord. The problem with that is that it is written in the present tense all the way through. There is no indication that Paul is referring to another time in his Christian experience. Others have contended that Paul is describing his pre-conversion experience - the way he struggled with sin before he was a Christian. We have the same problem as before that it is written in present tense and makes no reference to pre-conversion experiences. **Also, look at verses 22-23.** What non-Christian experiences this kind of conflict and has this kind of desire to fight sin? What non-Christian delights in the law of God in the inner man? That's only the cry of the Christian heart.

In the 18th and 19th centuries, there was a growing movement in the United States called the holiness movement that emphasized the doctrine of the second blessing. This second blessing was said to be a work of God's grace where a person was delivered from all sin in this life. Through this experience, a person could become so complete in their sanctification that the power of sin was eradicated completely in their lives. I've talked with many Christians who hold that position or a variation of it today. That is a dangerous and devastating heresy!

I want us to consider this issue of Christian perfectionism in light of our text in Romans 7. As we do this, we are going to observe some aspects of Christian living and our battle against sin that are crucial to a healthy Christian life and relationship with the Lord.

### **I. Christian perfectionism denies that the Christian continues to struggle against sin.**

In Romans 7, Paul describes a very real battle that he has with sin. **Rom. 7:15, 18, 19, 22-24.**

**Gal. 5:17** says essentially the same thing: "For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want."

However, Christian perfectionism says, "Seek after and obtain an experience and then you don't have to think about fighting sin again." This teaching fits well into our society. We are a culture that likes instant gratification. We have instant everything. Yakoff Smernoth, the Russian comic, said that when he first came to America he went to a super market. As he walked through the store he saw instant pudding, instant oats, instant rice, and powdered milk. You just add water and instantly you have that food. Then he said, he turned down another aisle and saw, baby powder! He exclaimed, "What a country! Instant babies." We have instant everything else - why not instant Christian maturity? And yet, this passage demonstrates that the normal Christian experience is an ongoing battle with sin. The idea of instant maturity through a spiritual experience can have a



very deceptive effect. What does a person have to do in order to think they are sinlessly perfect?

They have to do two things: 1) They have to lower the law of God to their level of performance, and; 2) They have to lie to themselves concerning their own performance of righteousness. In either case, that mentality leads the person away from the dependance on God's grace that we need in order to grow in our Christian lives. **R. C. Sproul told** of an encounter he had with a 17 year old. This 17 year old told Dr. Sproul that because he had an experience of perfection from God, he didn't sin any more at all. This young man actually believed that he had passed beyond sin. Dr. Sproul took him to Romans 7 and explained to him that this was the classic passage that teaches that one cannot experience perfection in this life. Paul himself struggled with ongoing sin in his life. The young man quickly responded with the traditional holiness interpretation that this was Paul's pre-conversion experience. Sproul said that he spent some time showing how that doesn't do justice to the text and that Paul was talking about his present Christian experience. The young man finally agreed that Paul was speaking of his present Christian life. Sproul asked him, "Do you think that you, at age 17, being a Christian for just two years, have progressed to a higher state of sanctification that the Apostle Paul at the time he wrote the book of Romans?" He replied, "Yes I do." Sproul said, "That's theoretically possible, but I doubt it. It's possible that moon people live on the dark side of the moon that we just don't know about, but it's highly unlikely!" This is how deceptive this doctrine can be. It can lead a person to think that they have "arrived spiritually." Not only does that breed arrogance, but it also causes a person to be passive in their Christian struggle against sin. So, the heresy of Christian perfectionism can lead to self-deception and actually hinder the Christian's fight against sin.

**II. Second, Christian perfectionism can lead to feelings of condemnation and rejection.**

This is the problem that I have encountered more than any other in regard to this errant approach to the Christian life.

There are many people who believe that they can achieve Christian perfection in this life who don't deceive themselves concerning their sinful actions. They know they still have sin and faults. But, they hear other people giving their testimonies of sinless perfection and they begin to wonder, "Why hasn't God given me this experience?" They accept that there is a second work of grace by which they can be set free from sin once and for all and they ask God for it, but since they don't lower the law of God or deceive themselves about their performance, they realize they have not received that experience. I've watched people kneel in the front of church and plead with God in anguish for an experience of sanctification that will set them free from sin forever. When that experience doesn't come (because it's not biblical), they feel as if God doesn't love them as much as this person over here who claims to have had this experience.

They wonder why God doesn't give them this experience; they feel alienated from God; they feel like a second class Christian; and, tragically, some begin to doubt their salvation. Since they continue to struggle with sin and don't receive this tremendous experience of deliverance, they often lose their assurance of salvation. Has anyone ever experienced that or seen it happen?

Let's see what Paul says about this. **Romans 7:14-15.**

Now let me ask you this: In your Christian experience, do you feel that conflict between the flesh and the Spirit? That is a normal Christian experience. When you understand that this conflict and struggle is a normal Christian experience, then you are set free from those feelings of alienation or rejection from God because he hasn't given you a special work of grace that frees you once and for all from sin.

In fact, the more mature you become as a Christian, the more aware you be of that conflict. Why is that? Because as you mature, you understand better what sin is before God and you are more cognizant of your transgressions of God's law.

You see this in the great men of the Bible. For example, Job is pictured in Scripture as a paradigm of virtue (Job 1:1; Ezek. 14:14; James 5:11). Nevertheless, Job himself exclaimed in regards to his own heart, "I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes (Job 42:6).

Daniel confesses his sins and the sins of Israel, "Alas O Lord, we have sinned and done wrong . . . we are covered with shame because of our sin against you (Dan. 9:4,5,8). The more mature you are in the Lord, the more aware you are of sin and the more you hate it and want to fight against it. When you read the writings of notable Christian leaders in the history of the Church, this idea stands out strongly.

**Bishop Berkeley wrote**, "I cannot pray, but I sin; I cannot preach, but I sin; I cannot administer, nor receive the holy sacrament, but I sin. My very repentance needs to be repented of: and the tears I shed need washing in the blood of Christ (1670). **Jonathan Edwards**, one of the greater Christian leaders and thinkers in Church history wrote:

"When I look into my heart and take a view of its wickedness, it look like an abyss infinitely deeper than hell. And it appears to me, that, were it not for free grace, exalted and raised up to the infinite height of all the fullness and glory of the great Jehovah, I should appear sunk down in my sins below hell itself; far below the sight of everything. . . . And it is affecting to think how ignorant I was, when a young Christian, of the bottomless depths of wickedness, pride, hypocrisy and deceit left in my heart" (1743).

The more you grow in the Lord, the more aware you are of sin and the more aware you are that you are saved only by God's grace.

This is why Paul is quick to assert that there is no condemnation for those in Christ -

**Romans 8:1.**

Do you ever feel condemned and alienated from God because of your sin? Do you ever feel that you can't come to God in worship or prayer because of an ongoing struggle with a particular sin?

We have a very real and continual struggle against sin, but if we have placed our faith in Jesus, we can never come into condemnation. Again, do you ever feel like you are a failure as a Christian simply because you still have an ongoing battle with sin? Perhaps you have a certain area of weakness or a favorite sin that you find yourself committing often. Do you feel that you cannot come to God or do you feel rejected because of it? Remember how you are saved. It is by God's grace not your performance. We fight against sin. That conflict is a normal Christian experience, but when we fall, we are never rejected by God. **Romans 7:23.**

**Charles Spurgeon said,** "It is some comfort when we feel at war within the soul to remember that it is an interesting phase of Christian experience. Such as are dead in sin have never made proof of any of these things. These inward conflicts show that we are alive. There is some life in the soul that hates sin, even though it cannot do as it would. Do not be depressed about it. Where there is pain there is life."

### **III. Christian perfectionism discourages Christians from using the means of grace.**

The term, "means of grace" is used to refer to those Christian activities that are avenues by which we receive spiritual nurture and grace for growth. For example some means of grace are Bible reading and study, prayer, Christian worship and fellowship, witnessing, and Christian service. As we avail ourselves of these, God produces growth within us. In our Christian growth, we cooperate with the Holy Spirit in using the means of grace. This is where Christian perfectionism is so dangerous. It presents an instantaneous formula for Christian maturity. All you have to do is simply receive this experience and then you will be free from sin and mature as a Christian. I've seen people go from minister to minister trying to get this

experience. The idea is, "If I can get the right person to pray for me, then I will be instantly elevated from where I am now to a high level of maturity. That's a magical view of sanctification. In order to overcome sin, I have to love Christ more than my sin. But, how do I augment my love for Christ? That's where the means of grace come in. I read the Bible and have fellowship with God in prayer, I worship with other believers and hear the Word of God preached so that feed the new man. As you grow in this way, you will discover that when that temptation comes and that intensification of desire to sin rises, you will discover that your desire to please Christ has gone above the level of the desire to sin. I may still feel the pull of sin, but I'm a justified man now. My sins are forgiven and I have received Christ's righteousness. Rom. 8:1

*Simul Justis et peccator.* So, we have a conflict with sin. It can't be done away with through some instantaneous experience, but only through our applying ourselves to the means of grace. Avoid feeding the old man, feed the new nature in Christ. We do that in the context of no condemnation and in the empowerment of the Holy Spirit.

#### **Romans 8:1-4 Romans Series #30 7/19/09**

This morning we are going to start looking at Romans 8. This chapter is one of the more loved chapters in the Bible. Frederick Godet, the Swiss commentator, called the thirty-nine verses of Romans 8 great because they begin with "no condemnation" and end with "no separation." C. A. Fox added that inbetween there is "no defeat." Charles G. Trumbull, editor of the now deceased Sunday School Times, picked up on these earlier observations when he wrote: "The eighth of Romans has become peculiarly precious to me, beginning with 'no condemnation,' ending with 'no separation,' and inbetween, 'no defeat.' This wondrous chapter sets forth the gospel and plan of salvation; the life of freedom and victory; the hopelessness of the natural man and the righteousness of the

born again; the indwelling Christ and the Holy Spirit; the resurrection of the body and blessed hope of Christ's return; the working together of all things for our good; every tense of the Christian life, past, present, future; and the glorious, climactic song of triumph, no separation in time or eternity 'from the love of God which in Jesus Christ our Lord.'" Boice, Romans, vol. 2, 782.

Various commentators outline Romans 8 in different ways. The material in Romans 8 is so closely connected that the thoughts seem to blend into each other. That makes it difficult to divide out sections in the chapter. **James M. Boice**, following Martyn Lloyd-Jones and Charles Hodge suggests these divisions: 1) No condemnation from the law; 2) Deliverance from our sinful natures; 3) Adoption into God's family; 4) Hope of future glory; 5) The intercession of the Holy Spirit; 6) The purpose and character of God. With this basic outline in mind, let's begin looking at the first section of the chapter which addresses our sure standing with God through our justification.

### **I. A Christian, being justified by faith alone, can never come under condemnation from God. Rom. 8:1**

Many commentators writing about Romans 8:1 point out that there are four important words in this verse: "Therefore, now, no, condemnation."

**A. Therefore** - This is a word of conclusion. It is pointing back to something that Paul has previously said. To what does it refer? It could refer to Paul's immediate statements in Rom. 7, but most agree that it refers back to everything Paul has said up to this point in the book of Romans. Because of Christ's work of atonement, those who are in spiritual union with him cannot be condemned. **Charles Hodge writes**, ". . . if his argument is, that those in Christ are not exposed to condemnation, notwithstanding their imperfect sanctification, because Christ has died as a sacrifice for their sins, then the connection is with the main argument of the epistle. Since men, being sinners, cannot be justified by works; since by the obedience of one man, Jesus Christ, the many are made righteous; and since through him, and not through the law, deliverance from the subjective power of

sin is effected, therefore it follows that there is no condemnation to those who are in him." Romans, 249.

**B. Now** - This points to the change that has taken place concerning the person in Christ. We were all born in Adam and under condemnation because of his sin and we were under condemnation because of personal sin. But, that has now changed for the person in Christ. Christ's righteousness is imputed to him and his sins have been forgiven based on Christ's work of atonement.

**C. No** - This word emphasizes that there is no condemnation for those in Christ. In the Greek text, the "no" is strongly emphasized. First, it is not the simple Greek negative *ou*, but a stronger compound negative *oude*. Second, it occurs at the beginning of the sentence which intensifies its negation. Martyn Lloyd-Jones renders it: "Not only is the Christian not in a state of condemnation now, he never can be; it is impossible."

**D. Condemnation** - This is the heart of the statement. There is no condemnation for person who is in Christ. This refers to the legal condemnation of God's justice against those who have broken his law. Christ bore the all the penal sanctions of the law in his cross work for his people. In his life, he fulfilled all the precepts of the law for us. That is the righteousness which is imputed to us when we believe in Christ. The person in Christ can never be condemned because Jesus fulfilled all the demands of justice for him both in bearing the penal sanctions of the law and in keeping the law for us. We see this especially set forth in Rom. 8:2-3. In these two verses, we see the work of the Trinity in our salvation. William Hendriksen comments: "The law of the Spirit of life is the forceful and effective operation of the Holy Spirit in the hearts and lives of God's children. He brings spiritual life through the work of Christ. On the basis of Christ's atonement. Rom. 8:3 speaks directly of the law's inability to save and the fact that God brought salvation to his people through the work of Christ, the incarnate God, the Son. The phrase, "in the likeness of sinful flesh" points out the incarnation. The word "likeness" is important. It shows us the fact that Jesus was truly human and tempted in

all things as we are yet without sin (Heb. 4:15). He lived in a sinful world. He came to deal with sin to be a sacrifice for it. **Charles Hodge** brings out that the sacrifice or expiation must be done in the same human nature which sinned. **Heb. 2:14, 17**. It was in Christ's human nature that God condemned and punished the sins of his people. Again, this emphasizes that our good works do not contribute in any way to our salvation.

Notice that this statement of no condemnation is only to those who are in Christ Jesus. Remember when we looked at Romans 5 and 6 we observed that we are either in spiritual union with Adam or with Christ. We are either sinners in Adam or righteous in Christ. People think they are at peace with God because they are "basically good people who do the best they can." I've heard that phrase repeatedly through the years as people try to justify themselves.

A Peanuts cartoon shows Snoopy walking toward his dog house and thinking, "This has been a really good day." Next panel - Snoopy is sitting on his house and thinking, "I did everything right." Final panel - Snoopy thinks - "In my opinion." People evaluate their lives and conclude that they do everything right in their opinion. **Charles Spurgeon said**, "The man who clings to his own righteousness is like a man who grasps a millstone to prevent himself from sinking in the flood. Your righteousness will damn you if you trust in it as surely as will your sins, for it is a false, proud lie." This statement in Rom. 8:1 is a vital statement for the Christ to understand and make a foundation for his Christian living. **Martyn Lloyd-Jones writes** about this statement of no condemnation: "God's act of justification is the basis of our final assurance, of our absolute certainty that we can never again come under condemnation, and that God will go on with His work in us until we are glorified and complete, 'without spot or blemish or any such thing.' 'In Christ Jesus.' If you are in Christ Jesus, you will remain there, and nothing can ever take you out of Him. Nothing! That is the explanation of the 'no separation' at the close of the chapter." 273-274.



**He also said,** "We must cease to think of ourselves merely as forgiven, merely as believers, merely as holding on to Christ. The truth about us as Christians is that God by the Holy Spirit has put us 'into Christ,' 'implanted' us 'in him' - 'planted together' as we saw in chapter 6. so you do not go 'in and out' of that. You do not cease to be a Christian when you sin, you do not come under condemnation when you sin, you are not cast 'out of' Christ when you sin. No, you remain in Christ, and there is still no condemnation." 277.

Do you live your Christian life with a sense that God fluctuates in his love toward you - one day you seem to have a pretty good day in terms of your walk with the Lord and you feel like God loves you more that day than in a day when you had all kinds of sinful problems? We need to focus regularly and consistently on the fact that we are justified and that condemnation is an impossibility for us because we are in Christ.

Luther told the story of having a dream - Satan brought stacks of his sins to him. After three large stacks, he asked, "Is that all, devil?" "Yes, that's all your sins." In his dream, Luther took his quill, dipped it in ink, and wrote on the first stack, 1 John 1:7, "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses me from all sin." He said, "Now get out of here, Satan!" He could have just as easily written Rom. 8:1. It's the same truth.

One little point that someone may wonder about concerning this verse particularly if you have a KJV Bible. In that text, there is an addition to the verse, "who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." This phrase comes from the last part of verse 4 and it is not found in verse one in any early manuscript. No Christian living before approximately A. D. 1000 ever saw that line connected with Rom. 8:1. It also inserts a point of sanctification into the affirmation of justification. It makes the verse say that you will not be condemned as long as you lead a godly life. Most likely a Monk in copying that verse took his eyes away from the page and when he looked back, he put part of verse 4 into verse 1. Theologically, in verse 4, this phrase shows the result of no condemnation, not the cause of it.

## **II. A Christian, being justified by faith alone, is called to sanctification. Rom. 8:2-4**

In the opening verses of Romans 8, two important doctrines are presented: justification and sanctification. Rom. 8:1-3 address justification through the work of Christ. As a result of Christ's work being applied to our lives, we can never come under condemnation from God. Rom. 8:4 introduces the idea of sanctification. This doctrine is developed further later in the chapter. Both justification and sanctification are made possible because of the work of Christ. As we observed, Christ was made incarnate in order to deal with sin. God condemned and punished the sins of his people in Christ. In his propitiatory sacrifice, he bore the wrath of God against our sins. **Rom. 8:4** brings out that as a result of Christ's work, through the work of the Holy Spirit, God's redeemed people make real progress in obedience to God in their Christian lives. **A. W. Pink wrote**, ". . . justification and sanctification are never to be severed. The one in whom the Spirit graciously works desired not only an imputed righteousness, but an imparted one too; he not only longs for a restoration of God's favor, but to have God's image renewed in him." In terms of sanctification or Christian growth, **three patterns for our sanctification** are set forth in Scripture: the ethical holiness of God, the law of God, and the example of Christ (he was perfectly righteous). **1 Pet. 1:15; 2:21; John 13:15; Rom. 8:4** is an example of the law as a pattern for our sanctification. **Another place is Rom. 13:9-10**. The ethical exhortations in Eph. 4-5 and Col. 3 are mainly based on the moral law of God.

In the context of Rom. 8, those who walk according to the flesh are unregenerate people. Those who walk according to the spirit are those who are regenerate or made alive in Christ. **Rom. 8:9**

Those who are regenerate are to walk in obedience to God. They are to be on a path of growth in terms of personal righteousness.

**James M. Boice** points out that the Greek term used in Rom. 8:4 is *peripateo* which means to walk. NASB translates it that way.

The law is specifically mentioned in Rom. 8:4. **He comments:** "The word portrays the Christian life as a path along which we walk, following Jesus Christ who goes before us. The path has a direction, and it has boundaries. The direction is the character of God, which is expressed in the law but which we see fully in Jesus. The boundaries are the requirements God's law imposes. We must not cross over these requirements. If we do, we are not on the path. We are not following after Christ. On the other hand, if we do follow, our eyes are not fixed on the law primarily - that was the error of the Pharisees - but on Jesus, whom we love and desire to serve by our obedience. Can Christians sin? Of course, they can - and do. We all do. But there is all the difference in the world between stumbling on the path, getting up and then going on, and not being on the path of discipleship at all. Those who are on the path may fall, but they are following after Jesus Christ and are never fully content unless they follow him" (Rom. vol. 2, 801). So, we are justified and can never be condemned. Christ has taken all the penal sanctions of the law against his people. The Holy Spirit has made us alive in Christ and set us free from sin and death. As justified people, we are called to grow in grace and obedience before God. It is important to remember that the foundation of our sanctification is our justification and position of assurance which we have in Christ. **O. Palmer Robertson**, in commenting on Jonah fleeing from the face of the Lord (Jon. 1:3a) writes, "Life never stands still. Either you are running with the will of God, or you are fleeing from the will of God. Time puts you on the move, and you cannot stop. Every day you become more in the image of God or you regress from that image." *Jonah: A Study in Compassion*, 16.

**He also said**, "Turning away from childishness that obstructs spiritual growth does not necessarily take a long time. Growth may take a long time, but one can adopt a healthier attitude right away." *The Israel of God*, 56.

Rom. 8:5-9 Romans Series #31 7/26/09

As we've gone through the book of Romans in this series, we've encountered various passages where there has been debate on the meaning. This is a section in Romans 8 where, in recent years, there has been a debate concerning the nature of the true Christian. A few years ago, I remember standing in a line in the Kiev airport and a man behind me noticed that my luggage tags were for the United States. He was also an American who had been teaching the Bible at a school in Kiev. As we talked, he brought up that he had been teaching Romans, but he wasn't sure how to handle this text in Romans 8. He thought it might be talking about two classes of redeemed people. His conversation reflected

a position in Dispensational theology which holds that there are two possible states for true Christians: the spiritual Christian and the carnal Christian. This is a passage that is often used to defend that position. We're going to consider why that is a serious error as well as examine how this text contrasts the characteristics of the unregenerate and the regenerate. Remember the term regenerate is the same as being born-again or being made spiritually alive in Christ.

### **I. This passage contrasts the regenerate and the unregenerate.**

As I just mentioned, some dispensationalists hold that this passage presents two classes of Christians: carnal or worldly Christians and spiritual Christians. Often that distinction is set forth with the idea that one can be a true Christian and not have an attitude of submission to the Lordship of Christ. The result is that a person can be antinomian, disregard the commands of Christ, and have no concern for the Christian growth or Christian living, but still be a Christian. In other words, it is argued that they can have a true saving faith that does not produce any change in life. A claim to faith that does not produce any change in life is a false faith. James 2:14-26 especially brings out the fact that true saving faith will be seen to be real in the fruit that it bears. **Titus 2:11-14**

The description of those who are according to the flesh or sinful nature in this passage describes unregenerate people:

**Rom. 8:5** - set minds on things of the flesh.

**Rom. 8:6** - They are in a state of spiritual death.

**Rom. 8:7** - They are hostile to God and cannot submit to the law of God.

**Rom. 8:8** - They cannot please God. That would include having true faith and repentance.

**Rom. 8:9** - They do not have the Holy Spirit.

Those are all descriptions of the unregenerate. It is absolutely impossible to apply those descriptions to a redeemed person.

**Rom. 8:9 is especially important in this regard.** Notice Paul states that those who are in the Spirit have the Spirit of Christ or the Holy Spirit dwelling in them. Those in the flesh do not. That statement settles any debate concerning the spiritual condition of those in the flesh in this context. There is no teaching in the Bible that a person can be a Christian and not be in submission to the Lordship of Christ.

## **II. The characteristics of the unregenerate person.**

Let's consider more carefully the characteristics of the unregenerate.

### **A. His mind is set on fulfilling the desires of his sinful nature. Rom. 8:5**

The desire of the unregenerate heart is to sin continually. The affections and desire of an unregenerate nature is to fulfill the desires of the sinful nature. That is the focus of attention and thinking. **Jonathan Edwards** observed in *Religious Affections* that a man must first love God, or have his heart united to him, before he will esteem God's good his own, and before he will desire the glorifying and enjoying of God, as his happiness.

**David Jones comments**, "The real problem of ethics is not in finding the rule to direct us how to glorify and enjoy God but in having the will to make this our aim in the first place. Leopards are not in the habit of changing their spots. Something drastic has to happen for human beings to make God their goal, a change of heart so profound it is like being born all over again, this time from above." *Biblical Christian Ethics*, 37.

### **B. He is in a state of spiritual death. Rom. 8:6**

The Bible describes the unregenerate person as being spiritually dead. Like a dead person is unresponsive to anything around him, the spiritual dead person is unresponsive to God. In terms of the witness of God's existence which are revealed in nature, the unregenerate person represses it and creates idols. We saw this in Romans 1:18-23. Calvin called fallen man an idol factory.

In terms of the truths of the Bible, he either does not understand them or they are foolish to him. **1 Cor. 2:14**

It takes the Holy Spirit to understand and receive the truths of Scripture. **D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones** told this story to illustrate the lack of spiritual understanding in the unregenerate: William Wilberforce, the man who led the movement to end slavery throughout the British Empire was a strong Christian. His friend, William Pitt, the Younger, who was Prime Minister of England was only a formal Christian. He went to church, but had no real spiritual life. Wilberforce was concerned about his friend's salvation. At that time, there was a great preacher in London whose name was Richard Cecil. Wilberforce was thrilled by his ministry and was constantly trying to get his friend Pitt to go with him to hear Cecil. Pitt kept putting Wilberforce off, but after many invitations he finally agreed to go. Cecil was at his best and was preaching in a very spirited manner. Wilberforce was ecstatic. He couldn't imagine anything more enjoyable or wonderful. He delighted that Pitt was with him. But, as they were leaving the service afterward, Pitt turned to him and said, "You know, Wilberforce, I have not the slightest idea what that man has been talking about." Pitt was deaf to the truth of the gospel. Lloyd-Jones, Romans 8:5-17, 9-10.

**Eph. 2:1-3** uses the same terminology of spiritual death in describing the condition of the unregenerate. **Eph. 2:4-5** - Notice who acts first in our salvation. God is the divine initiator of our salvation. **Illus.** - A common illustration concerning salvation is that of a man drowning. A person throws a life-preserver (the gospel) to him and then it is said that it is up to the man to reach out and take it or refuse it and die. The problem with that

illustration is that the person is still alive. The better illustration in terms of the Bible's description of man is to put the man at the bottom of the bay. He's bloated, dead corpse. You can throw life preservers all day long and that corpse will not reach out and take them.

**Eph. 2:4-5** - God makes us alive in Christ. As the gospel is preached, the Holy Spirit works through that means and brings spiritual regeneration. After a person is regenerate through the sovereign work of God, then he believes and repents. Regeneration precedes faith. **John 1:12-13**

Jesus said the same thing in **John 3:3-5**. Jesus said a person could not see or enter the kingdom of God unless he was first born again. Arminian theology denies what we have just said. It argues that man is not dead in sin and has the ability to believe and repent on his own. **R. C. Sproul said**, "What you have in Arminianism is a man who is dead in sin, in bondage to sin by nature a child of wrath, who is altogether flesh, who hears the gospel preached and in his flesh and by his flesh and in his state of spiritual death, in which he is fleeing from the presence of God, turns around and chooses Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior and then is born again. Before he is born again, he sees the kingdom of God, he enters the kingdom of God, he chooses the kingdom of God. All of which Jesus said is impossible. Unless a man is born of the Spirit, he cannot see the Kingdom of God." **J. G. Machen said**, "Man, according to the Bible, is not merely sick in trespasses and sins; he is not merely in a weakened condition so that he needs divine help: but he is dead in trespasses and sins. He can do absolutely nothing to save himself. . . ."

### **C. The unregenerate person hates God.**

Rom. 8:7 - He is hostile toward God and does not have the moral ability to submit to God's law. **John Gerstner writes**, "Man as a sinner hates God, hates man, and hates himself. He would kill God if he could. He does kill his fellow man when can. [And] he commits spiritual suicide every day of his life." **James Montgomery Boice writes**, "Not

many people would admit that they hate God, choosing rather to think of themselves as rather tolerant of him. But nowhere do they show their hatred more than in their condescending attitudes. Scratch beneath the surface, allow something to come into their lives that they consider unwarranted or unfair, and their hatred of God immediately boils over. 'How could God let this happen to me?' they demand. If they could, they would strangle him!" Rom.1:189. **Rom. 8:7** - The unregenerate does not have the moral ability to submit to the law of God. In fact, he hates both God and his law.

#### **D. The unregenerate person cannot please God.**

**Rom. 8:8** - He had no desire to please God. His heart is hostile toward God, the gospel is foolishness to him, he is dead in sin, and his mind is set toward the gratification of his sinful nature. This statement is also an important one in terms of salvation being completely of God's initiative and grace. Are faith and repentance pleasing to God? God commands us to believe and repent. Jesus said the angels rejoice when a sinner repents so we could say yes faith and repentance are pleasing to God. **Rom. 8:8** declares that unregenerate man cannot do anything that is pleasing to God which includes faith and repentance. Again, regeneration must precede faith and repentance.

In contrast to this description of the unregenerate, this text also gives us characteristics of the regenerate.

### **III. The characteristics of the regenerate person.**

#### **A. His mind is set on fulfilling what the Holy Spirit desires.**

Rom. 8:5 - Because a Christian is one who has a regenerate heart, a heart that has been made alive in Christ, a heart that is born again, he desires the things of God. He wants to obey God and live in accordance with the truth of God Word. His mind is set on the things of the Spirit.

#### **B. He is in a state of life and peace. Rom. 8:6**

In contrast to the state of spiritual death in the unregenerate, he has spiritual life. He is at peace with God. **Rom. 5:1**



Because he is regenerate and in spiritual union with Christ, he can never come under condemnation as we observed from Rom. 8:1. He is a justified person. His sins are forgiven and Christ's righteousness is imputed to him. God's wrath is forever removed from him. Is that your state before God? Do you know you are at peace with God? The gospel calls us to throw ourselves on Christ and his work. The promise of Scripture is that everyone who believes in him is truly justified before God. **Jonathan Edwards preached,** "If we are in Christ, justice and the law have their course with respect to our sins, without our hurt. The foundation of the sinner's fear and distress is the justice and the law of God; they are against him, and they are unalterable, they must have their course. Every jot and tittle of the law must be fulfilled, heaven and earth shall be destroyed rather than justice should not take place; there is no possibility of sin's escaping justice. But yet if the distressed trembling soul who is afraid of justice, would fly to Christ, he would be a safe hiding-place. Justice and the threatening of the law will have their course fully, while he is safe and untouched, as if he were to be eternally destroyed. Christ bears the stroke of justice, and the curse of the law falls fully on him; Christ bears all that vengeance that belongs to the sin that has been committed by him, and there is no need of its being borne twice over. His temporal sufferings, by reason of the infinite dignity of his person, are fully equivalent to the eternal sufferings of a mere creature. And then his sufferings answer for him who flees to him as well as if they were his own, for indeed they are his own by virtue of the union between Christ and him."

**Martyn Lloyd-Jones said,** "There is no peace between man and God until a man grasps this doctrine of justification. It is the only way of peace."

**D. The regenerate person has the Holy Spirit dwelling in him.**

**Rom. 8:9** - Those in the flesh or the unregenerate do not have the Holy Spirit. Those who are regenerate have the Spirit of Christ or the Holy Spirit. Only those who belong to Christ, only those who are in a state of salvation have the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit keeps us and is constantly at work in our sanctification.

Part of that work is seen in the regenerate person's mind being set on the things of the Spirit, in his desire to please God, and in his confidence in the promises in the Word of God.

Martin Luther's struggle with the guilt of sin helped prepare him for the great freedom he found when the truth of justification by faith finally dawned on him. **This poem by Luther expresses it well:**

I do not come because my soul is free from sin and pure and whole and worthy of Thy grace; I do not speak to Thee because I've ever justly kept Thy laws and dare to meet Thy face.

I know that sin and guilt combine to reign o'er every thought of mine and turn from good to ill; I know that when I try to be upright and just and true to Thee, I am a sinner still.

I know that often when I strive to keep a spark of love alive for Thee, the powers within Leap up in unsubmissive might and oft benumb my sense of right and pull me back to sin.

I know that though in doing good I spend my life, I never could atone for all I've done; but though my sins are black as night, I dare to come before Thy sight because I trust Thy Son.

In Him alone my trust I place, come boldly to Thy throne of grace, and there commune with Thee. Salvation sure, O Lord, is mine, and, all unworthy, I am Thine, for Jesus died for me.

Romans 8:9-13 Romans Series #32 8/2/09

Last week we observed that in this context, those who are according to the flesh are unregenerate. Their minds are set on their sinful natures, they are spiritually dead, they are hostile toward God, cannot submit to his law, cannot please God, and do not have the Holy Spirit. In contrast to the unregenerate, those who have been regenerated by the Holy Spirit have their minds set on the things of God, they are at peace with God, and the Holy Spirit dwells in them. This morning we're going to continue looking that the

characteristics of the person who is regenerate or been born again. Our text this morning not only continues that contrast, but, based on who we are in Christ, gives an exhortation toward Christian growth and fighting against sin.

### **I. The Christian is spiritually alive in Christ.**

#### **Rom. 8:6, 9, 10.**

In verse 6 there is the statement that the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace. The regenerate person has spiritual life and is at peace with God. Verse 9 states that regenerate person is no longer in the flesh, but in the Spirit and has the Holy Spirit dwelling within them. Rom. 8:10 simply reiterates these ideas and emphasizes them. Verse 10 first mentions that our physical bodies have the principle of death in them because of sin. James M. Boice interprets the phrase as referring "to the fact that our physical bodies have the seeds of literal death in them and will eventually cease to live: 'For the wages of sin is death. . . (Rom. 6:23)' (816). The second phrase has been the object of debate. Some commentators argue that "spirit" refers to the Holy Spirit dwelling within the believer and point to the fact that the term "spirit" in the previous verses and in verse 11 refers to the Holy Spirit. Certainly, the idea of Christ dwelling in us by the Holy Spirit is present in Rom. 8:9 and the first part of verse 10. However, I think the contrast in verse 10 is between our physical bodies and our spirit which is made alive through our regeneration. **Charles Hodge comments:** "By *spirit* here, is not to be understood the Holy Spirit, but the human spirit, because it stands opposed to *body* in the former clause" (259).

Our bodies are daily moving toward physical death, but our spirits are alive in Christ. What does the idea of our spirits being made alive by the Holy Spirit mean? Paul is talking about the concept of regeneration or being born again. Therefore, the Holy Spirit in changing our hearts has made us alive to the things of God. **James M. Boice**, in his commentary on this passage, mentions three areas of our lives we are made alive to

through the work of the Holy Spirit: Alive to God, alive to the Bible, alive to other Christians.

**1. First, the regenerate heart is alive to God.** We noted that in **Romans 1:18f**, Paul makes the point that unregenerate man, those who are in a state of spiritual death, know there is a God. However, the universal response of lost man to the knowledge of God is to repress that knowledge and set up idols. The most intense form of that repression is when people claim to be atheists or agnostics. We also saw in **Rom. 3:10-12** that no one seeks for God. They will seek idols and false religions, but the unregenerate will not seek after the true and living God. One commentator said that fallen man doesn't seek after God just like a criminal doesn't seek for a policeman. **Rom. 8:7** states that the unregenerate is hostile toward God. The unregenerate heart hates God. **R. C. Sproul** told of being asked to speak to a college club named The Atheist's Club. After discussing the gospel and the biblical revelation of God, he said to them, "I think the real problem here that we are dealing with is not, in the final analysis, an intellectual problem; it's a moral one. I don't think that the reason you deny the existence of God is because you've had insufficient evidence to come to a reasonable conclusion that God exists. I think your problem is that you hate God and it's going to take more than this intellectual discussion to get you past that, but I'm willing to look at the intellectual questions all you want. But, I want you to know where I'm coming from; I'm standing here convinced that your problem is moral and you hate God because he stands as the ultimate barrier to your will and your pleasure." He said, "I was surprised how many of them stayed to carry on the conversation. . . ." "The whole drama of the Scripture is based on the assumption and presupposition that you are estranged from God; that you are God's avowed enemy; that you will do anything in your power to avoid collaborating with him or willingly giving your service to him because you are against him, you are opposed to him. I only say that, not because I know your personal history or know anything about you other than that you're human and that what the Scriptures reveal about our human character is that we

are people who are by nature at war. That's why the heart of the message of Christianity is a message of peace; it is a message of bringing ultimately peace with God."

When we are born again our hostility toward God changes.

The regenerate heart comes alive to the true and living God. The regenerate heart turns away from idols and false concepts about God and wants to receive God's self-revelation in Scripture.

## **2. Second, the regenerate heart is alive to the Bible.**

The ultimate reason a person does not believe the Bible is because he is unregenerate. **1 Cor. 2:14** - The message of Scripture is foolishness to him. Either he doesn't understand it at all or he thinks it is ridiculous. The reason you believe the Bible is because you are born again or regenerate.

**Robert Reymond writes**, ". . .my faith in the triune God and the self-attesting Christ of the New Testament is the result of the regenerating work of the Spirit of God that he wrought in my heart by and with the objective, revealed truth of the self-evidencing, self-validating Word of God. . . ." *Faith's Reason's Believing*, 333.

## **3. Third, the regenerate heart is alive to other Christians.**

Rom. 8:16f speaks about our adoption in to God's family.

Col. 1:13 - In our salvation, we are transferred from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of Christ. The redeemed in Christ are adopted into the family of God. They are truly brothers and sisters in Christ. The regenerate heart is drawn to other Christians.

John, in setting for a series of things that are concomitant with being born again, mentions that the person who is born again will love God's people (**1 John 4:7-11**).

This gives us confidence in presenting the gospel. As we communicate the gospel, we know that God will use that to bring regeneration and saving faith and repentance. **J.**

**Gresham Machen said**, "It is perfectly true, of course, that argument is quite insufficient to make a man a Christian. You may argue with him from now until the end of the world; you may bring forth the most magnificent arguments - but all will be in vain

unless there is one other thing: the mysterious, creative power of the Holy Spirit in the new birth. But because argument is insufficient, it does not follow that it is unnecessary. Sometimes it is used directly by the Holy Spirit to bring a man to Christ. But more frequently it is used indirectly." **Similarly, Gordon Clark writes,** "In evangelistic work there can be no appeal to secular, non-christian material. There is an appeal - it is an appeal of prayer to the Holy Spirit to cause the sinner to accept the truths of the gospel. Any other appeal is useless. If now a person wants the basic answer to the question, Why does one man have faith and another not, or, why does one man accept the Koran and another the Bible, this is it. God causes the one to believe."

Do you see those characteristics in your life. Are you drawn to God as he reveals himself in Scripture? Do you believe the Bible and as you read it do you recognize that it is the very Word of God? Do you want to worship and be with other believers? Those are characteristics which only belong to the heart that is made alive through the work of the Holy Spirit.

## **II. The Christian has the promise and assurance of a future resurrection. Rom.**

**8:11** - This is not speaking of some kind of moral resurrection in the Christian's sanctification, but of the future resurrection of the body. While our bodies are dying now, we look forward to a future resurrection. We have a sure hope, a sure expectation of the full redemption of our bodies. Notice that Paul points to the resurrection of Christ which was a bodily resurrection. In the same way, our bodies will one day be raised and glorified. Paul refers to this later in this same chapter:

**Rom. 8:23-25.** Notice that there is a time frame concerning the full consummation of our redemption. Right now we have the first fruits of the Spirit. We are regenerated, justified, adopted into God family, the Holy Spirit is at work in us in our sanctification, but our bodies are still aging and daily moving toward death. The Word of Faith theology argues that since the redemption of the body is in Christ's work of atonement,

then we should live in complete health now. However, there is a time order to the consummation of our salvation. Right now we still look forward to the full redemption of our bodies, but we don't have that now. One day we will all be raised and our bodies glorified. If we are alive when Christ returns, then our bodies will be glorified in the twinkling of an eye as Paul states in

1 Cor. 15:51-52 (Phil. 3:20-21). *Westminster Shorter Catechism* question 37: "What benefits do believers receive from Christ at death? A: The souls of believers are at their death made perfect in holiness and do immediately pass into glory; and their bodies being still united to Christ, do rest in their graves till the resurrection." One commentator said, "Death is not a period but a comma in the story of the life of a Christian." **Thomas Watson said**, "We are more sure to arise out of our graves than out of our beds."

### **III. Christians are to live in accordance with their new natures. Rom. 8:12-13**

The first part of Romans 8 has been describing the Christian in terms of his justification before God, his present experience, and his future hope of resurrection. Now Paul makes a conclusion and states that the work of God in us calls us to live for God and not according to our sinful natures. This exhortation is very similar to the exhortation in Rom. 6:11-13. In Rom. 6, the exhortation not to let sin reign in our mortal bodies based on the fact that we are in spiritual union with Christ. Romans 8 gives the same exhortation, but this time it is based on work of the Holy Spirit in our salvation. Paul is approaching our sanctification from two different, but closely related perspectives. The Holy Spirit joins us to Christ and dwells in us working sanctification in us. **Rom. 8:13** - Remember in our sanctification, God and the believer are both involved.

**Phil. 2:12-13** - We work out our salvation in terms of our Christian growth. The desire and ability to do it comes from God. **Thomas Watson**, in commenting on Phil. 2:12-13, writes: As the teacher guides the child's hand, and helps him to form his letters, so that it is not so much the child's writing as the master's, so our obedience is not so much our working as the Spirit's co-working." *A Body of Divinity*, 129.

The true Christian, because of the work of the Holy Spirit within him, all of his life he is putting to death the deeds and characteristics of the sinful nature. The contrast is also true.

**Rom. 8:13** - Those who live according to the sinful nature will die. **James M. Boice** comments on this phrase: "Paul is saying that if you live like a non-Christian, dominated by your sinful nature rather than living according to the Holy Spirit, you will perish like a non-Christian - because you are a non-Christian...."

On the other hand, if you really are a Christian, you will not live according to the sinful nature. Instead, you will acknowledge that you actually are in Jesus Christ and live accordingly" (826-827). Here again is the idea that true saving faith will be seen in what it produces. If a person is truly in a state of salvation, if their heart is regenerated, then that will be seen in their lives. **Charles Spurgeon gave a good summary of these principles:** "Any attempt to keep the law of God with the view of being saved thereby is sure to end in failure. So contrary is it to the express warnings of the divine Lawgiver, and so much does it run counter to the whole gospel, that he who ventures to seek justification by his own merits ought to be ashamed of his presumption. When God tells us that salvation is not by the works of the law, art thou not ashamed of trying to procure it by thy obedience to its precepts? When he declares that by the works of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight, art thou not ashamed to go and seek after justification where he tells thee it never can be found? When he over and over again declares that salvation is by faith, and that it is a matter of grace to be received, dost thou not blush for thyself that thou shouldst give the lie to God, and propound a righteousness of thine own conceit, in which thou has vainly tried to keep up a respectable appearance, screening the palpable delinquencies of thy life under a thin veil of piety toward God and charity toward men? Eternal life is not to be earned by any trade you can carry on in works of the flesh; because, however estimable in the opinion of men, they are simply execrable in the sight of God. If a man seeks to keep the commandments of God in order



that he may attain eternal life thereby, he will be ashamed and confounded. He had better once renounce the folly of attempting so insane, so futile, so impossible a task as that of defending his own cause and justifying his own soul.

But when a man is converted, when he has believed in Christ Jesus to the salvation of his soul, when he is justified by faith and his sin is blotted out, when he has obtained mercy, found grace in the eyes of the Lord, and entered into the rest of faith, because he knows that he is a saved man, then in keeping the precepts of the law he will gratify a strong inclination. In fact, it henceforth becomes his highest ambition to be obedient, and the great delight of his soul is to run in the ways of God's commandments out of gratitude for the great benefits he has received. And let it never be imagined that, because Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, there is therefore a complete removal of all moral constraints and restraints from Christian men." *12 Sermons on Commitment*, 25-26.

Romans 8:14-16 Romans Series #33 8/9/09

In the contextual flow of the book of Romans, this section both continues the themes of the previous section and adds new information. Verse 14 begins with a connecting word "for" or "because." We are regenerated through the work of the Holy Spirit and made alive to the things of God. As a result of that work, we have a desire to please God and live for his glory. Closely related to that is that we are adopted into his family. The highest privilege of our salvation is that we are adopted into God family.

**I. Adoption presupposes that man is not naturally a part of God's family. Rom. 8:14 - Doctrine of adoption.**

Ultimately, there are only two families and two father to whom we can belong. We are either a part of God's family or Satan's family. **Col. 1:13; John 8:32-44**

Jesus made it clear. Not everyone is a member of God's family. While it is true that we are all created by God, in a spiritual sense we belong to either the family of God or the family of the devil. In the 19th century, liberal theology became interested in studies in

comparative religion. Adolph von Harnach studied various world religions and synthesized all these various contradictory belief systems down to the phrase, "The universal fatherhood of God and the universal brotherhood of man." As I was growing up in a church that was moving toward theological liberalism, I heard that phrase many times, usually in reference to some social need that we were being encouraged to think about. I say think about because the church didn't do anything.

That phrase is as anti-Scriptural a slogan as you could imagine. Jesus certainly didn't hold that idea when he was talking to the religious leader in Israel. The lost person is not your brother or sister. They do not have God as their father. They belong to another family: the family of the devil. Again, the doctrine of adoption presupposes that, because of the fall into sin, we are not naturally a part of God's family. In our salvation, we are taken out of the family of Satan and adopted into God's family.

**Rom. 8:14** - Remember this verse flows out of the previous discussion on being made alive in Christ, on being regenerated by the work of the Holy Spirit. The context is especially speaking of our sanctification. I mention that because sometimes when people see a phrase talking about the Holy Spirit leading them, they immediately think of some kind of subjective or spiritual guidance. That's not what Paul is talking about in this context. Everything in this context is talking about sanctification and the internal work of the Holy Spirit. The person who is "according to the Spirit" in Romans 8 is the one who is made alive in Christ, whose mind is set on the things of God, whose heart has been changed so that it is not hostile toward God and he wants to please God. Immediately before this statement of putting to death the sinful inclinations of the body through the work of the Holy Spirit. **William Hendriksen comments:** "Those who are being led by the Spirit are the people who are described as being in Christ (8:1), walking according to the Spirit (verse 4), being Spirit-indwelt (verses 9, 11), and putting to death the disgraceful deeds of the body (verse 13). . . . What then does the leading of the Spirit . . . actually mean? It means sanctification. It is the constant, effective, and beneficent

influence which the Holy Spirit exercises within the hearts and lives of God's children, enabling them to more and more to crush the power of indwelling sin and to walk in the way of God's commandments freely and cheerfully" (256-257). **Charles Hodge** concurs and writes, "*To be led by the Spirit, and to walk after the Spirit, present the same idea, viz., to be under the government of the Spirit. . . . . the phrase refers to the constant and effectual influence of the Holy Ghost in regulating the thoughts, feelings, and conduct of believers*" (265).

**James M. Boice mentions three ways the Holy Spirit leads us or works internally in us in our sanctification.**

**1. The Holy Spirit renews our minds.** Paul directly speaks of this in Rom. 12:1-2. The only way our minds are renewed is through the Holy Spirit applying the teaching of Scripture to us. We've noted in the last two sermons that the person without the Holy Spirit cannot understand and receive the teaching of Scripture (1 Cor. 2:14). The regenerate person believes the Bible is the very Word of God and the Holy Spirit is at work in the lives of believers applying the teaching of Scripture to their lives. A crucial part of our sanctification is the renewing of our minds so that our worldview is in conformity to what God says is true. **2 Tim. 3:16-17 (sola Scriptura in v. 17).**

This means that we consistently read the Bible and study it. We get involved in Bible studies that encourage and motivate us to think through books or sections of Scripture. It also means that we read the great Christian thinkers in church history. We're not the first ones to read the Bible. Part of not forsaking the fellowship of believers is that we fellowship with the greatest Christian thinkers in history through reading their works. Most heresies and errors are recapitulations of similar heresies and errors from other periods in church history. As we see how truth was expounded and defended in the past, we are better equipped to deal with falsehood today. In general terms, when we read and study the works which have stood the test of time, we deepen our understanding of the Word of God. **R. Kent Hughes writes,** "Along with reading the Word, we ought to be

reading good books. The brilliant Jewish radio talk show host Dennis Prager, a man who makes sure he is well-informed, said in a recent interview in *The Door*: One thing I noticed about Evangelicals is that they do not read. They do not read the Bible, they do not read the great Christian thinkers. . . . If they're Presbyterian, they've never read the founders of Presbyterianism. I do not understand that. As a Jew, that's confusing to me. The commandment of study is so deep in Judaism that we immerse ourselves in study. God gave us a brain, aren't we to use it in His service? When I walk into an Evangelical Christian's home and see a total of 30 books, most of them best-sellers, I do not understand. I have bookcases of Christian books, and I am a Jew. Why do I have more Christian books than 98 percent of the Christian in America? That is so bizarre to me. It is bizarre - especially when a commitment to Christ is a commitment to believe in things that go far beyond the surface of life. *The Disciplines of A Godly Man*, 78.

**Jonathan Edwards preached,** "Christians ought not to content themselves with such degrees of knowledge of divinity as they have already obtained. It should not satisfy them, as they know as much as is absolutely necessary to salvation, but should seek to make progress. This endeavor to make progress in such knowledge ought not to be attended to as a thing by the bye, but all Christians should make a business of it. They should look upon it as a part of their daily business, and no small part of it neither. It should be attended to as a considerable part of the work of their high calling."

## **2. The Holy Spirit stirs our heart.** Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:6

The Holy Spirit creates a love in us for God. He gives us a desire for the Word of God, for prayer, for the people of God. He creates in us a hunger and thirst for righteousness. Just like the unregenerate is hostile toward God and cannot please God (Rom. 8:7-8), the opposite is true of the regenerate. The one who belongs to God's family loves God and is enabled to please him because the Holy Spirit has changed his heart.

## **3. The Holy Spirit directs our wills.** We discussed this last week when we considered the previous section. We are involved in our sanctification, but it is the Holy Spirit,

working within us gives us the will and desire to act according his good pleasure. Phil. 2:12-13.

## **II. In our adoption into God's family we are given a spirit of sonship. Rom. 8:15**

In our adoption into God's family, we receive a new status. We are transferred out of the kingdom and family of Satan and brought into the kingdom of Christ and into the family of God.

The mean of the double use of the term "spirit" in this verse has been an object of debate. The second use of the term obviously refers to the Holy Spirit. The first use of the term "spirit" is the one that raises questions. Some take it to refer to the person's own spirit or disposition in the sense that we used to be fearful, but now, after our adoption into God's family, we are joyful and have an assurance of our acceptance before God. Others see it as referring to the Holy Spirit bringing conviction of sin and an awareness of our need before God which leads to salvation. John Murray refers both to the Holy Spirit but in a particular way as meaning, "[You] did not receive the Holy Spirit as Spirit of bondage, but as a Spirit of adoption" (297).

The parallel passage in Gal. 4:5-6 is helpful in this. Here the bondage described is the bondage to law as a path to righteousness. Applying that idea to Romans 8:15, the idea would be that we are set free from a being slaves to legalism and fear and have the Holy Spirit who gives us an assurance of belonging to God's family. **William Hendriksen summarizes the verse:** "Having been adopted as children, you . . . are no longer filled with the spirit of slaves, that of dread. No longer are you oppressed with fear as you were when you were still living in paganism or in Judaism, with their emphasis on all the rules one has to keep in order to be saved. On the contrary, you have received the Holy Spirit, who transforms slaves into children."

### **Rom. 8:15 - Abba - intimate expression.**

The Old Testament certainly presents the concept of the Fatherhood of God to his people, but it is primarily seen in terms of his being a sovereign creator. In the Old Testament,

God is only referred to fourteen times as Father and then it is not very personal. In those fourteen references, the term was used in regard to the nation of Israel as a whole and not to specific individuals. For example, in Exo. 4:22, God refers to Israel as his "firstborn son" and David in Psa. 103:13 states, "As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him." It is interesting that in Jesus' ministry he only addressed God as Father. He never used any other description except in Matt. 27:46 when he cried out from the cross, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" However, there Jesus was quoting Psalm 22:1. The gospels record his using the term Father in regard to God more than sixty times. No one in the history of Israel had ever prayed like Jesus. Not only did Jesus use the term Father in reference to God, but he also instructed his followers to call God their Father also.

Even more dramatic is the fact that most New Testament commentators believe that Jesus used the aramaic word, Abba, as his term for Father. Abba is a close intimate address with a reverent aspect to it. We could render it "Dearest Father."

That's the word Paul uses here in Rom. 8:15 and in Gal. 4:6.

**James Kennedy**, in his book writes, "When our little girl, Jennifer, was about five years old, she passed through a phase where she began to call her mother and me by our first names - Anne and Jim (since she had heard others do this). After a few weeks of this, I sat her on my knee and said to her, 'Jennifer, darling, there are thousands of people in this world who can call me Jim, but there is no other person on this earth who can call me 'Daddy,' except you and to you, Jennifer, my name is - Daddy!'"

If you are in Christ, then to you God's name is Father, in the most intimate and loving sense of that word.

**Rom. 8:16** - How does the Holy Spirit bear witness to us that we are the children of God.

**William Hendriksen notes**, "According to some, the Spirit testifies along with our regenerated consciousness by exerting a direct influence on heart and mind. Others insist that he works by applying the Word to the heart and mind of individual believers and also

of the church viewed as a unit. Could not both position be true" (261)? I think a combination of those two ideas is certainly legitimate.

An important aspect of our adoption into God's family is the assurance of God's love that it gives to us. If you are in Christ, you belong to the family of God and you are an object of his eternal love. **Jer 31:3** - Omniscience - God never comes to knowledge. What he knows he has always known exhaustively and perfectly. That means he has always planned your existence, has always known you, and has always set his love upon you. There is a direct reference to this idea coupled with adoption in Eph. 1:4-5. **Zeph. 3:17** - Speaks of God's love toward us as his children. O. Palmer Robertson said that in the New Testament we have John 3:16 as a condensed statement of the gospel. Zeph. 3:17 is a similar statement in the Old Testament.

**We are loved by God. God rejoices over us as his children.**

Do you ever think of God as your Father rejoicing over you as his child? Imagine your earthly father saying to you, "I'm pleased with you. I delight in you. I'm so happy that you are my son or my daughter. That's what God proclaims in his adoption of us in his family. Adoption is the highest expression of God's love for you. **God rests in his love for you - his love is a contented love.** He is at peace setting his love upon you. Do you ever feel like God just barely tolerates you? You know you are redeemed, but you are also aware of your continued struggles with sin. Do you ever feel that God just puts up with you, but doesn't really embrace you as his child with joy? When you are adopted into God's family, God joyfully embraces you.

I've talked with many Christians who have had great struggles with their earthly fathers being unloving, harsh, or aloof.

Sometimes they project that same idea on to God. God rejoices over as his child.

**Herman Witsius**, the 17th century Dutch theologian wrote of this: "This Spirit differs from the spirit of bondage in this, that the spirit of bondage represents God as an austere master, and a tremendous judge; hence it is, that they, who are actuated by this spirit, so

far as they act thereby, perform the commands of their master from dread and terror. But the Spirit of adoption discovers God to the believing soul, as a kind and indulgent Father; and by giving him assurance of the love of God, and sweetly cherishing the hope of the future inheritance, makes him, with alacrity and generous emotions of a filial reverence, willingly obey God, as an affectionate parent." (*Economy of the Covenants* - vol. 1, p. 456. When you are experiencing the dark periods of your life, God wants you look to him and say, "I trust you. I cling to you. I adore you." God wants you to experience the comfort of his love that embraces you securely; to trust him in regard to the future and the past, and to relate to him on the basis of grace in the present.

Rom. 8:17-25 Rom. Series #34 8/16/09

Most parents here have had the experience of going on a trip with their children and hearing the questions, "Are we there yet? How much longer? How much farther have we gone now?" "Fifty feet farther than when you last asked," the frustrated father shouts. Then Mom tries to keep peace, "This trip will take a little while kids. You'll just have to hold on until we get there."

A long trip is hard for a child. They have to sit in their car seats and they can feel trapped in the back seat. We know, however, that the journey will not really be that long and we encourage them to hold on until we get there.

At times we look at our lives and we wonder, "How much longer until we get there? How much longer? How much more can I endure before either Christ comes or I go to him?"

Do you ever feel that way? Those are common emotions in the midst of trials or suffering of some kind. We see Moses enduring the grumbling of the Israelites and at one point praying for God to take his life. Job prays the same prayer in the midst of his sufferings. When we face struggles, grief, frustration, or suffering, we can often wonder, "How much longer until I get there?" Can you identify with those feelings? This passage gives us insight into the road that we are on as Christians. On the one hand, it tells us that



we will face suffering and on the other hand, it tells us that there is an ultimate glory that awaits us. There is tremendous encouragement in this passage for the believer.

We are informed that we have to deal with suffering, but we are also given a great hope and expectation.

### **I. Our call to suffering.**

Rom. 8:17; Rev. 6:9-11

As those who are adopted into God's family, we have a grand inheritance in Christ and a glorious future. We are co-heirs with Christ; Christ having earned heaven for us.

But, we are also co-heirs of his suffering. As strange as it seems, God has ordained suffering as part of our call of Christian living.

We can see in Scripture three main areas of suffering.

**First, we suffer because we live in a fallen world.** When Adam and Eve sinned, God cursed the created order. Death came into all of life. Not only does the natural order battle us, but we live with people who are sinners. The results of sin permeate our existence. We are victims of injustice; we endure the ravages of war; we encounter natural disasters; we age; we become ill and die. We live in a world that is cursed because of Adam's sin and we suffer in it. Frustration factor in all we do.

**Second, we suffer because of our personal sin.** When we break God's law, we bring misery into our lives. Adultery shatters families and brings horrendous grief and pain to those sinned against. Murder, unjust anger, slander, falsehood, discontentment all bring consequences to our lives that cause suffering. For believers, we also experience the discipline of God designed to bring us back to the right path of righteousness.

These troubles are hard enough, but Paul is concerned about a **third type of suffering - suffering that God has ordained for those who are in Christ.** Every Christian is called to suffer in at least two ways.

**1. First, we share the sufferings of Christ because our commitment to him enrages the world.**

**John 15:18-20**

If you stand for Christ you will be persecuted. Paul wrote to Timothy that "everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted (**2 Tim. 3:12**).

The history of the church is filled with the stories of people who have suffered because they were loyal to Jesus. In some parts of the world today, there is dreadful persecution of Christians. In our society, if you follow Jesus, if you seek to obey God, you will experience persecution. Family members reject us. Job opportunities are lost.

**Illus.** - Mrs. Jines - family proclaimed her dead - disinherited.

In fact, if you don't experience some kind of trouble from the world, you should wonder about the strength of your commitment to Christ. Those who follow the call of Jesus set themselves on a collision course with unbelievers. If you don't believe me, just speak out against abortion or homosexuality in a non-Christian setting. Mention that Jesus is the only way to heaven and you will not be a friend of the world. Conflict and persecution are inevitable if you follow Christ. **Matt. 5:10-12**

**2. Christians also suffer because God has called us to deny ourselves and adopt a life of sacrificial service.**

Paul wrote in **2 Cor. 1:5** that the sufferings of Christ are abundant in our lives.

When we think of our spiritual union with Christ, we often immediately think of participating in his death and resurrection, that we died to sin in him and are raised to newness of life.

That is true of us if we are in him. But, as we live on this side of glory, our union with Christ also entails continuing his earthly humiliation.

**Mark 10:45 - not be served, but to serve.**

He became obedient to the point of death (phil. 2:8).

Paul expressed this union with Christ in **Phil. 3:10** when he said, "That I might know him and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings." **Col. 1:24** -

Participate in Christ's sufferings for his church.

How does God want you and me to suffer in this regard?

Every person must decide that individually before the Lord. God calls some people into radical service: foreign missions, ministry, vocations that require self-denial. God calls some Christians to donate time in evangelism or service instead of filling their lives with their own projects. We can visit the elderly or the sick instead of staring at the television. We can make career decisions that honor Christ, instead of those that honor us.

Sometimes we simply honor Christ as we express trust to God in the midst of some form of suffering.

All soldiers that have fought for our country should be honored. We especially honor those who volunteer for dangerous missions.

Let's face it. Most of us are draftees of suffering, not volunteers. When events beyond our control force us to sacrifice, we try to bear the burden. But we seldom purposefully deny our own desires in order to take up the cross of Christ. We are naturally drawn to comfort.

Examine your life in this regard. When is the last time you set aside a personal goal for the sake of Christ's kingdom? Do you have the idea in your thinking of sacrificing your desires for Jesus? **Luke 6:22-23**

If this is our call, the question is, how do we endure hardship for Christ? This passage gives a strong word of encouragement.

## **II. Encouragement to endure suffering comes from looking toward the future.**

Encouragement from the future is strongly presented in

**Rom. 8:18f.** Not even worthy to be compared.

When Paul makes this statement, it is not just abstract theory to him. Remember the life of the Apostle Paul. He preached to angry crowds, was stoned, beaten, imprisoned, shipwrecked, and finally martyred. **2 Cor. 4:16-18; 11:24-28**

Paul said that the sufferings that are connected with self-denial for Christ are not worthy to be compared with the glory that awaits the Christian. **Richard Pratt**, one of my

professors at Reformed Seminary writes, "A fellow minister came to me one day with a heavy burden. His ministry was in a mess.

A group of disgruntled members had left his church and he was deeply discouraged. 'I don't think I can stand it,' he said. 'I give all I have and get no reward. It's just not worth it.'

This minister was closer to the truth than he realized. The sacrifices he made as a servant of the church were not worth the rewards he received in this life. He experienced a few high points here and there. His small successes brought moments of relief from his struggles, but every new day led him into situations that demanded more self-denial. So long as he focused his heart on the rewards of this world, he would have to conclude that the pain was not worth it. From time to time, all of us face this kind of discouragement. We devote ourselves to parenting. We sacrifice time and energy to one ministry after another. But what do we have to show for years of service? Only demands for more sacrifice. 'If this is all that comes from my suffering, I just can't continue,' we lament. The cost of sacrificial service to Christ is not worth the results we see in this life. We receive blessings that encourage us along the way: business successes, faithful children, and good health. But these gifts alone cannot sustain those whose lives are filled with voluntary suffering. **They are but sips of water along the Via Dolorosa.** To overcome the discouragement that often accompanies suffering, we must follow Paul's example by turning away from this life and focusing on our reward in the world to come." From: *Designed for Dignity*, 186-187.

One minister friend of mine said that he has received the worst pain in his life in regards to ministry. He continued in ministry because it was a call from God and he looked toward eternity. Pastors bear the sorrow of those in their church - funerals, grief, pain, struggles, anger. Sacrifice of following Christ - **Dr. Farmer** - father dying as she got on boat. Worked with liar.

**Rom. 8:18** - We get hope by looking toward the future.

We usually think of this in terms of our individual salvation, but this passage extends that. While personal salvation is a wonderful gift from God, this passage enlarges our hope in speaking of the cosmic redemption that will take place.

**Rom. 8:19-23**

When Christ returns, all of creation will be renewed. Harmony will replace discord.

Beauty will replace decay and destruction.

**Redemption of our bodies** - we look toward that sure future with hope. I think part of what encouraged Paul was that his thinking was occupied with thoughts of the grand redemption to come. In the midst of hardship, he had a vision of a new creation set free from futility and frustration. **Rom. 8:18; 2 Cor. 4:16-17**

One of my seminary professors told the story of a former student of who passed away. About two years ago earlier, the doctors gave him only a few months to live. He suffered from fatigue and pain, but he kept ministering to the very end. He and his wife came to visit day and I had the opportunity to ask him some hard questions. "How do you keep going when you know you're going to die soon?" I queried. I will never forget his answer. "Look," he said with a smile, "going home to Jesus is more real to me than it has ever been. I'm making it now because I see better than ever how good it will be when I go home." Those words have come back to me many times. They give me strength when I grow weary. You can make it a part of your life, too. When troubles get you down, look ahead and see how good it will be when you go home to the new heavens and the new earth.

The glory of the future is God's encouragement for all who suffer now. **Rev. 21:1-8**

Where is the point of suffering in your life now - grief, discouragement, illness, persecution, financial hardship because you are serving Christ?

Read through this passage and Revelation 21:1-8 Seek to cultivate an eternal perspective as you face and deal with the pain in your life now.

## **Rom. 8:18 – Present gospel**

Romans 8:23-29 Rom. Series #35 8/23/09

Last week we observed that in our spiritual union with Christ, we are called to suffer.

This passage mentions that we are not only co-heirs with Christ in his glory, but we also identify with him in his sufferings. Often in our Christian lives when we are going through times of suffering, we feel like God is very far off and we wonder how much we can endure. Do you ever feel that way? We are given encouragement and hope in the future that is set before us as God's people.

**Rom. 8:18** - Paul speaks in this passage not only of our individual future glory, but also speaks of the full redemption of all of the created order. That cosmic redemption gives us the encouragement to persevere in the present sufferings.

This morning I want to pick up in this passage where we left off last week and observe some further words of encouragement that are given to us in Romans 8.

### **I. We receive encouragement from the future.**

Last week we considered our future glory and the redemption of creation in general terms, but our text mentions a couple of specific ideas that are important not skip over too quickly.

#### **A. First, we wait for the full manifestation of our sonship.**

**Rom. 8:15-16; 1 John 3:1-2** - We are now children of God; we are now adopted into his family, but it does not yet appear what we shall be. In the final consummation of our redemption, we will be transformed. Our bodies will be redeemed. We will experience absolute freedom from the effects of sin.

**Phil. 3:20-21** - This is similar to John's statement.

Right now we enjoy the first-fruits of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit has given us a new heart, he's made us new creatures in Christ, we are justified, he comforts us, he moves our hearts to prayer and worship, he gives gifts to the church. The list of benefits goes on

and on of what the Holy Spirit does for us now. We have the riches of the Holy Spirit in our lives now and his promise to keep us **Eph. 1:13-14**

But, we still look toward the completion of our redemption.

What does that completion entail? Rom. 8:23 alludes to some of it - our full manifestation as children of God and the redemption of our bodies.

**WSC - Q38** - What benefits do believers receive from Christ at the resurrection? **A** - At the resurrection, believers being raised up in glory, shall be openly acknowledged and acquitted in the day of judgment, and made perfectly blessed in the full enjoying of God to all eternity.

**Illus.** - R. C. Sproul writes: "The French philosopher Blaise Pascal described man as a creature of profound paradox. Humans are creatures of the highest grandeur and the lowest misery, often at the same time (but not in the same relationship, of course). Part of our grandeur is located in our ability to contemplate ourselves. . . . This gift of contemplation is not without its downside: pain. Our misery is often enhanced by our ability to contemplate a better life than we presently enjoy, often coupled with the awareness that we are incapable of gaining or achieving the ideal life. This is the stuff of which dreams and nightmares are made. We may enjoy good health, but not perfect health. We can imagine life free of aches and pains, tooth decay, and crippling diseases, but no one has yet found a way to insure such physical freedom. We all face the certainty of agony and death. . . . Sick or healthy, poor or rich, successful or unsuccessful, we can be plagued by the vexing problem that life could provide a better state than we presently enjoy. . . ." This is especially true in regard to our redemption. The riches we have now cause us to yearn and groan for the culmination of our salvation.

The phrase "the redemption of our body" is an important phrase in light of the heretical teaching of the Word of Faith movement today. That false message proclaims that all the blessings of our redemption are ours now in the present. Therefore, if there is sickness in our bodies, we are simply not appropriating by faith what has been done for us. I've seen

many people hurt by that message. **Illus** - I've seen people scold sick people because they were not healed. Bad theology is a cruel taskmaster. It brings tremendous pain into people's lives with false expectations and condemnation. But, this passage says that the full redemption of our bodies will not occur until the final redemption of all things, until the resurrection.

**Illus.** - The story is told of a generation ago when an old farmer brought his family to the big city for the very first time. They had never seen buildings so tall or sights so impressive. The farmer dropped his wife off at a department store and took his son with him to the bank - the tallest of all the buildings. As they walked into the lobby, they saw something else they had never seen before. Two steel doors opened. A rather large and elderly woman walked in, and the steel doors closed behind her. The dial over the door swept to the right and then back to the left. The doors opened and a beautiful young lady walked out. The farmer was amazed. He turned to his son and said, "You wait right here. I'm going to get your mother and run her through that thing." One day we will experience a real transformation in the redemption of our bodies.

**B. Second, we wait with a sure expectation and with perseverance.**

Rom. 8:24-25 - Hope is a sure expectation. Paul's argument is simple. We have this hope and we look forward to it, but if we already had it, we wouldn't hope for it. We don't have this full redemption now, but we wait for it with perseverance.

Again, we receive comfort and encouragement in our present trials because we look with hope toward our future glory. We look toward our full manifestation as children of God, the full redemption of our bodies, the redemption of the entire created order. Those glories are not worthy to be compared with our present suffering.

**II. We receive encouragement from the Holy Spirit interceding for us.** Rom. 8:26-27 It is interesting that three times in this short passage we have a reference to groaning. The creation personified waits for its redemption. We groan within ourselves waiting for the full consummation of our redemption, and the Holy Spirit intercedes for us with



groanings. Richard Pratt illustrates this: We've all heard reports of the horrors faced by prisoner of war. Torture, deprivation, and disease all take their toll on captured soldiers. But one cruelty stands out in many accounts: the prison within the prison - solitary confinement. Separated from all contact with others, a POW has no means of support or encouragement. In solitary confinement, the POW is utterly abandoned, left to face his captivity alone. As Christians, we have been confined to a time of suffering before we enter into our final glory in Christ. We look forward to a day of release, but that day often seems far away. We need something here and now to lighten our burden. We have already observed that having an eternal perspective gives us encouragement, but here we are given a further encouragement: God, the Holy Spirit prays for us. We do not face this time of trouble in isolation. The Holy Spirit comforts us and intercedes for us. **John 14:16-17**

The necessity for the Holy Spirit praying for us is given in Rom. 8:26 - We don't know what we ought to pray.

The phrase, "the Spirit helps our weakness" should not be interpreted too narrowly referring only to prayer. The Holy Spirit helps us in our weaknesses whatever they may be including our weakness in prayer. **How does the Holy Spirit help us?** The Holy Spirit intercedes for us with unspoken groanings. Notice that it is the Spirit who prays and not we who are praying - "the Spirit himself intercedes for us." William Hendriksen suggests that the term "groaning" could be interpreted with idea that the Spirit loves the saints so exceedingly that he yearns for the great day when, delivered from every speck of sin, they will glorify God forever and ever in the perfection of holiness and joy (Romans, p. 276).

Romans 8 also teaches that Christ intercedes for us (**vs. 34**). We have two intercessors supporting us and guaranteeing that the eternal plan of God will take place in our lives. Christ intercedes for us in heaven and the Spirit on earth. Christ intercedes in a place outside of us; the Spirit from within us.

This intercession is a perfect intercession, in perfect accord with the eternal plan of God. The result of it is the security of our salvation; that nothing will ever separate us from the love of God in Christ.

When we consider these words, we may wonder how they bring comfort to those who are suffering. After all, the intercession of the Holy Spirit is imperceptible. We can't hear him praying for us or bearing our burdens. How can an abstract teaching like this offer us practical encouragement?

In an important sense, simply knowing this theological truth affords some measure of encouragement. It is important to know that the Holy Spirit is with us in our suffering. Understanding this invisible reality helps us properly understand the visible world in which we live.

In times of suffering, it is comforting to remember and focus on the fact that we are never alone, that the Holy Spirit is not only with us, but also praying for us. Even as abstract truths, these beliefs offer some help to those who suffer.

However, we can have trouble drawing comfort simply from an abstract truth. I think one of our problems in receiving comfort from this truth is that we don't actively and regularly consider the work of the Holy Spirit in the church and in our lives. If the Holy Spirit seems absent, it is only because we fail to appreciate the visible blessings he gives. When it comes to perceiving the work of the Holy Spirit today, many believers remind me of the old "Three Stooges" gag. Larry yells, "I can't see! I can't see!" "What's wrong?" Moe responds. "I've got my eyes closed" Larry answers.

That's the way it is in the church today. We complain, "I can't see the Spirit at work! I can't see him!" But the problem is not that he has vanished. We can't see him because we have closed our eyes. . . . We must open our eyes and take full notice of the countless gifts he has lavished on us. Insights in Scripture, conviction of sin, bringing people to salvation through his work of regeneration, success in evangelism, joy in our salvation, comfort in sorrow, love and fellowship among believers, gifts and leadership in the

church - the list is endless. These realities in the Christian life are not natural occurrences. They are visible manifestations of the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives. If we would open our eyes and consider the work of the Holy Spirit around us, start acknowledging his wonders, he would no longer be a stranger, but a dear friend. Then Paul's words of comfort in Romans would encourage us. Do you actively in your Christian living think about the Holy Spirit and what he does for you individually and for all of us as a church?

**III. We receive encouragement from God's eternal plan and providence. Rom. 8:28-30**

Rom. 8:28 is one of the most loved promises in the Bible. It is a tremendous statement of God's care and the fact that God is working out his eternal, perfect plan in history in general and in the particular history of our lives.

It affirms that God is all-powerful and all-knowing.

An important qualification in this verse is that God does not work all things together for good for everybody; this is a promise only to those who are called according to his purpose, only those in Christ.

Many people imagine that this passage is a general statement that applies to every person. "Everything eventually works out for everyone's benefit," they say. But this is not what Paul affirms. The promise of eventual goodness is only for those "who have been called according to his purpose." Good does not eventually come to those who remain apart from Christ. As sad as they are, present sufferings are but a foretaste of the eternal punishment facing men and women who are outside of Christ. Life can be a living hell for unbelievers; they endure many of the same trials as Christians. But the living hell of this world is nothing compared to actually living in the hell of eternity. But when believers suffer for Christ, they are not getting a taste of their future. (Pratt) Rom. 8:18 God uses our suffering and works it together for our good. The ultimate purpose of his plan is seen in Rom. 8:29 - That we would be conformed to the image of Jesus.

**Richard Pratt writes:** "Think of it this way. God calls us to troubles as surgeons invite us to their operating tables. Their knives inflict terrible pain. No sane person enjoys the ordeal of surgery. To deny the anguish is to lie. Nonetheless, we voluntarily submit to the knife. Why? We allow them to cut because the pain will bring about better health in the future. Paul tells us that the same thing is true of God. He tells us to submit to the knife of suffering for Christ for the good it will bring to us. God is working all our troubles into something wonderful for us. We can submit to his call because he promises to work the pain for our good. The ultimate goal is our glorification (Rom. 8:30). When experiencing trials or suffering, think of the future set before us, the presence of the Holy Spirit, the fact that you are not alone, and the fact that God is working out his perfect plan in your life. If you were able to do that, do you think that would encourage you in times of sorrow, grief, or suffering? Does a vision of your future redemption help you to remain faithful now? Ask God to build that perspective into your life. Throw yourself on God's perfect plan for you.

Romans 8:28 Romans Series #36 8/30/08

This morning I want us to continue our series on Romans and look at one of the greater promises in the Bible that God gives the believer. **Rom 8:28** - This is one of the most loved promises of God in the Bible. However, not only is it a wonderful promise to the believer, it also contains some important implications concerning the nature of God - especially his sovereignty.

This verse gives us a basis for trusting God in the midst of adversity or suffering. It also gives us a foundation for hope when we face persecution, suffering, or trouble in our lives.

**I. God promises he will order the events of your life so that the ultimate end is good.**

Rom. 8:28

**A. This verse does not declare that every event in and of itself is good.** We experience things that in and of themselves are not good. Christians often experience

persecution and hardship because of their faith. We also have to deal with sickness, financial hardship, and problems in every sphere of our lives.

Many of those things are not good in themselves. While there is a truth involved in this in that every situation we experience we can see the hand of God, that doesn't mean that every individual circumstance in and of itself is a good thing.

The point of this promise is that God will work all those circumstances together in such a way that the ultimate end for you is good. God will use every circumstance and event in your life to move you toward your ultimate destiny with him and use it to contribute toward your good.

**Watch the baking of a cake from scratch -**

First flour - this didn't appeal to me at all, for it was dry and unappetizing. Stick of butter, raw egg, sugar

Any of those ingredients, by themselves would be distasteful.

When they are brought together - a delicious cake.

**B. Another important qualification in this verse is that this is not a promise to all people.**

Rom. 8:28 - God only makes this promise to those who love him, to those who are called according to his purpose. This touches again on the doctrine of effectual calling. Fallen man is dead in sin and hostile toward God. We see the idea of an effectual call in Rom. 8:30. Everyone who is called is justified. In other words, the call is absolutely effective in bring a person to salvation. **1 Cor. 1:18f**

Rom. 8:28 - This promise is only for Christians.

**C. Practical applications of this promise.**

Have you ever wondered whether the ultimate end of your life will be bad? Are you ever afraid of what the future might bring?

In the last few weeks, we have considered the statement in Rom. 8:17-18 concerning suffering. We will experience various forms of suffering in this life - persecution,

physical illness, grief, adversity, frustration in our labor - the list goes on and on. We live in a fallen world that is under a curse. Thorns and thistles grow in our gardens. That's not just talking about agriculture. All of our labor has a frustration factor in it. We work by the sweat of our brow.

No matter how spiritual you are, it's hard to be spiritual when your body hurts or you are experiencing grief or when you are afraid. In fact, if you just look around and see the difficult situations people experience, it would be easy to assume the opposite of this promise and think that most things work together for bad. This is why this is such an important promise for the Christian. **James Russell Lowell** wrote of God's supervision when he wrote: "Truth forever on the scaffold,/ Wrong forever on the throne./ Yet that scaffold sways the future,/ And, behind the dim unknown/ Standeth God within the shadow,/ Keeping watch above His own." Echoing that same trust are the words of English clergyman wrote (John Nelson Darby): "God's ways are behind the scenes; but He moves all the scenes which He is behind. We have to learn this, and let Him work." No matter what negative things we see in the world or in our lives, this promise from God to his people is that he will order the events of your life so that their ultimate end is your good.

This promise from God is a foundation for trust in him; it is a foundation for courage in the midst of suffering and adversity; it is a foundation for confidence in living our lives to the glory of God.

In one short statement this verse proclaims that God will take all the circumstances of your life and make them turn out for good. Even the evil we face in life is under this promise.

God is sovereignly working out his eternal plan in every event in our lives.

**J. L. Dagg's in commenting on Rom. 8:28 writes:** "It should fill us with joy, that God's infinite wisdom guides the affairs of the world. Many of its events are shrouded in darkness and mystery, and the inextricable confusion sometimes seems to reign. Often

wickedness prevails, and God seems to have forgotten the creatures that He has made. Our own path through life is dark and devious, and beset with difficulties and dangers. How full of consolation is the doctrine, that infinite wisdom directs every event, brings order out of confusion, and light out of darkness, and, to those who love God, causes all things, whatever be their present aspect and apparent tendency, to work together for good."

This promise provides confidence that no matter what you experience, God will take all the circumstances of your life and work them together for your good. This means that every single episode, every aspect of your existence is orchestrated by divine sovereignty to work out for good. If this was all you knew concerning God's plan of salvation for you, wouldn't that be enough to illicit praise to God and confidence in him? Even when we don't understand the events of our lives, God is at work in those circumstances. We may not be able to imagine how God could work for good some of the things we experience, but he is all-powerful and promises that he does.

An apple farmer in Michigan, pruning his orchard, made a big pile of branches away from all his buildings. One morning he noted a bird with its beak full of materials, starting to make a nest in that heap of prunings. Returning that way at sundown, he reached into the pile and tore the nest apart. The bird flew around, chirping wildly, as if to say, "You cruel man!" The next day the farmer saw the bird again trying to build a nest at another place, but still in the same pile. Again that night he destroyed the nest. The bird's wild flutterings and chirpings seemed to say, "How terrible you are to destroy my nest!" The third day the farmer noticed that the bird was building in a rose bush quite a distance from the pile of prunings. Smiling, he let the bird alone. The nest was finished, and eggs were laid, but before the birds could leave the nest, all the branches in the pile where the bird had twice tried to build had been burned. The farmer who planned to burn the pile knew that if the bird were allowed to build there, the nest and its little fledglings would have been destroyed. Kindness motivated the farmer to tear the two earlier nests

apart. You may feel like God is tearing your nest apart in the things you are going through now, but God is at work in your life shaping all those things together for your good. One commentator said, "Trust his character even when you can't trace his plan." (Woodrow Kroll) Do you have that confidence in your life? This promise is immediately connected to the goal of our sanctification - conformity to the image of Jesus. **Rom. 8:29** Often it is the suffering and the trials that we experience that move us forward in this process. **Alexander Solzhenitsyn** after spending over ten years in the Soveit Gulag said, "Bless you prison, bless you prison for being in my life for there lying on rotting prison straw I came to realize that the object of life is not prosperity as we are made to believe, but rather the maturing of the soul."

God often takes us through the crucible, but he promises to work that together for our good, for our sanctification.

**Thomas Watson writes**, "Afflictions work for our good, as they conform us to Christ. God's rod is a pencil to draw Christ's image more lively upon us. It is good that there should be symmetry and proportion between the Head and the members. Would he be parts of Christ's mystical body, and not be like Him? His life, as Calvin says, was a series of sufferings, 'a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief' (Isa. 53:3). He wept and bled. Was His head crowned with thorns, and do we think to be crowned with roses? It is good to be like Christ, though it be by sufferings." From: *All Things For Good*, 28. This promise also tells us some important truths about God.

For this promise from God to be possible, it presupposes certain aspects concerning the nature of God.

## **II. This promise is based on the nature and character of God.**

### **A. First of all, for God to make this promise, it requires that he is all-powerful.**

Why would God have to be all-powerful to make this promise? If God were not all-powerful, he could not make this promise. **R. C. Sproul** said, "If there is one molecule in this universe running around free of God's all-powerful, omnipotent sovereignty, you



have no guarantee of a single promise that God has made for the future because that one anomaly, that one free falling atom is enough to ruin the whole plan of God's sovereign determination of human history. If God is not all-powerful, then you live in a universe in which you don't know whether Christ will prevail or your life will end in futility."

The doctrine of God's sovereignty is not just an intellectual exercise. That doctrine is the basis of all of the promises of God in Scripture. It is the basis of our comfort and trust in God. There are many passages that speak of God being all-powerful. Let's look at just a few of them.

Job 42:2; Dan. 4:34,35; Acts 17:26; Eph. 1:11.

**Gerhard Maier wrote:** "Because God gives history a purpose, each individual event and its respective form lie in more or less direct connection to that purpose. The purpose of events is not exhausted in their isolated occurrence; it rather reaches beyond them."

**Charles Spurgeon** said, "The keys of providence swing at the girdle of Christ. Believe it, Christian, nothing occurs here without the permit or the decree of your Savior."

**B. Second, for God to make this promise, it requires that he is all-knowing.** If God were not all-knowing or omniscient, there may be things in your life that he has the power to work together for good, but he just doesn't know about them. God would say, "I'm sorry, I have the power to work everything in your life together for good and I would have had I known, but I just missed it. It slipped by me. I'll try not to let it happen again."

**Psa. 139:1-12; 33:13-15**

**Prov. 15:3** - The eyes of the Lord are in every place watching the evil and the good.

**Jer. 17:10** - I, the Lord, search the heart, I test the mind, even to give to each man according to his ways, according to the results of his deeds. God's omniscience is a two-edged sword. For the believer, it is a doctrine of great comfort. God knows what is going on in your life and he promises to order those things so that the end result is good and his eternal plan for you will be fulfilled.

For the unbeliever, the reality of God's omniscience is a point of fear. God knows every motive, every sin, every evil intent and his judgment will be perfect. That's the context in which Jer. 17:10 speaks of the all-knowing nature of God.

If you have not trusted in Jesus as your Savior, you will stand before God and receive a perfect judgement for your sins. Nothing will escape God's sight. **Heb. 2:3** - Flee to Jesus!

**Illus.** - One of the best examples of this promise in Scripture is the life of Joseph.

Dreamed he would rule - sold into slavery. Falsely accused and imprisoned. **Gen. 50:20**

This promise from God calls you to a new trust in him. It calls you to turn over the hurt, the anger, the bitterness, and trust that God's plan for you and his working in your life will ultimately be good. Give it to him. Trust him.

**Charles Spurgeon said,** "Let us lean on God with all our weight. Let us throw ourselves on his faithfulness as we do on our beds, bringing all our weariness to his dear rest."

**J. I. Packer**, in *Knowing God*, writes, ". . . the statement 'God is love' means that His love finds expression in everything that He says and does. The knowledge that this is so for him personally is the Christian's supreme comfort. As a believer, he finds in the cross of Christ assurance that he, as an individual, is beloved of God; 'the Son of God. . . loved me, and gave himself for me (Gal. 2:20). Knowing this, he is able to apply to himself the promise that all things work together for good to them that love God and are called according to His purpose (Rom. 8:28). Not just 'some' things, note, but all things! Every single thing that happens to him expresses God's love to him, and comes to him for the furthering of God's purpose for him. Thus, as far as he is concerned, God is love to him - holy, omnipotent love - at every moment and in every event of every day's life. Even when he cannot see the why and the wherefore of God's dealings, he knows that there is love in and behind them, and so he can rejoice always, even when, humanly speaking, things are going wrong. He knows that the true story of his life, when known, will prove

to be, as the hymn says, 'mercy from first to last' - and he is content." Knowing God,  
111.

Rom. 8:29-30 Romans Series #37 9/6/09

Our text this morning is an extremely important text in understanding the grace of God in our salvation and the assurance of our ultimate salvation. Five concepts are presented in these two verses that grammatically link together: Foreknowledge, predestination, calling, justification, and glorification. Because these doctrines touch on the heart of our salvation, by necessity, this sermon will only be able to give an overview of them. We'll look at some of these more fully in future sermons.

In this list, everyone who is called is justified, everyone who is justified will be glorified. You could start at any point in the list and connect them in that way. Therefore, everyone who is foreknown in the way the term is used here will ultimately be glorified. This morning we are going to work our way through these five concepts and examine the relationship they have to each other. This has been called the golden chain of our salvation with each of these doctrines forming a link in that chain. Understanding this logical order of our salvation magnifies the grace of God and gives all glory to God for our salvation.

## **I. Our salvation began in the eternal council of God.**

### **Rom. 8:29 A. Foreknowledge.**

Predestination is also mentioned immediately in this context.

The term, foreknowledge, has become the focus of debates between Roman Catholic semi-Pelagianism, Arminianism, and Reformed theology. In Semi-Pelagianism and Arminianism, it is argued that God, in his omniscience, foresees what a particular person will do and then based on those foreseen actions, he elects them to eternal life. In Roman Catholic Semi-Pelagianism, it is said that God foresees a persons faith and good works and elects him because of those things. In the Protestant, Arminian version of this construction, it is argued that God looks down the corridors of time and sees that a

particular person will repent and believe in Christ and then, based on that foreseen faith and repentance, he is elected to salvation.

There are several serious problems with this construction. **First**, Rom. 8:29 does not say that God foreknew something that people would do. It does not say that God predestinated some based on foreseen good works or faith, or anything else. In fact, the object of the verb is a person himself. "For whom he foreknew. . . ." While God is omniscient and knows all thing, the focus of this text is not on a general omniscience of God, but on God knowing particular individuals. **Charles Hodge comments** on those who would add some extra idea or clause to foreknowledge in such as "Who he foreknew would repent and believe, or who would not resist his divine influence, or some such idea." He writes, "The addition of this clause is entirely gratuitous; and, if unnecessary, it is, of course, improper. There is no such thing said, and, therefore, it should not be assumed, without necessity, to be implied" (284).

**John Murray comments on Rom. 8:29:** "It should be observed that the text says, '*whom* he foreknew;' whom is the object of the verb and there is no qualifying addition. This, of itself, shows that, unless there is some other compelling reason, the expression '*whom* he foreknew' contains within itself the differentiation which is presupposed. If the apostle had in mind 'some qualifying adjunct' it would have been simple to supply it." *Commentary on Romans*, 316-317.

**Second**, every single person who is foreknown in the sense of it use in this passage is ultimately glorified. Therefore, it is not talking about God's general foreknowledge of all people.

In fact, the main idea of the Old Testament word "to know" (Yada) sets forth the idea of intimate knowledge. Robert Reymond comments on this: ". . . the Hebrew verb yada ('to know'). . . can mean something on the order of 'to know intimately,' 'to set one's affections upon,' or 'to have special loving regard for,' and . . . the verb *proegno* [foreknowledge] in Rom. 8:29 intends something approximating this meaning rather than

the sense of mere prescience" (466). For example - Gen. 4:1; Amos 3:2 (NASB and NIV translators reflect this meaning of the verb when they translate "chosen.").

**Third**, the Bible's teaching concerning the nature of fallen man makes the Semi-Pelagian and Arminian construction impossible. For that construction to be true, man would have to have the moral ability to believe on his own apart from God's grace.

Repeatedly, the Bible emphasizes that fallen man does not have the ability to believe and repent apart from God's divine initiative. **Eph. 2:1-5; Rom. 3:10-12; 8:7-8; 1 Cor. 2:14; 12:3; John 6:44-45, 63-65; 3:3-5; 1:12-13. Charles Spurgeon said**, "What a dreadful inability sin brings with it! That simple command of the gospel, 'Believe,' the sinner cannot obey in himself. He can no more repent and believe without the Holy Spirit's aid than he can create a world." Scripture also teaches that faith and repentance are gifts from God: **2 Tim. 2:25-26; Acts 13:48; 16:14; 18:27; Phil. 1:29; Eph. 2:8.**

Because of the nature of man's sin, there is no faith or repentance to foresee apart from the Divine initiative.

**R. C. Sproul said**, "What you have in Arminianism is a man who is dead in sin, in bondage to sin by nature a child of wrath, who is altogether flesh, who hears the gospel preached and in his flesh and by his flesh and in his state of spiritual death, in which he is fleeing from the presence of God, turns around and chooses Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior and then is born again. Before he is born again, he sees the kingdom of God, he enters the kingdom of God, he chooses the kingdom of God. All of which Jesus said is impossible. Unless a man is born of the Spirit, he cannot see the Kingdom of God."

**J. I. Packer wrote**: "Justification by faith only" is a truth that needs interpretation. The principle of *sola fide* is not rightly understood till it is seen as anchored in the broader principle of *sola gratia*. What is the source and status of faith? Is it the God-given means whereby the God-given justification is received, or is it a condition which is left to man to fulfill? Is it a part of God's gift of salvation, or is it man's own contribution to salvation? Is our salvation wholly of God, or does it ultimately depend on something that

we do for ourselves? Those who say the later (as the Arminians later did) thereby deny man's utter helplessness in sin, and affirm that a form of semi-Pelagianism is true after all. It is no wonder, then, that later Reformed theology condemned Arminianism as being in principle a return to Rome (because in effect it turned faith into a meritorious work) and a betrayal of the Reformation (because it denied the sovereignty of God in saving sinners, which was the deepest religious and theological principle of the Reformer's thought). Arminianism was, indeed, in Reformed eyes a renunciation of New Testament Christianity in favor of New Testament Judaism; for to rely on oneself for faith is no different in principle from relying on oneself for works, and the one is as un-Christian and anti-Christian as the other. In the light of what Luther says to Erasmus, there is no doubt that he would have endorsed this judgment. "Historical and Theological Introduction" in *The Bondage of the Will* by Martin Luther" by J. I. Packer and O. R. Johnston, 59.

**James White said,** "Arminianism is Roman Catholic semi-pelagianism transferred into a Protestant context, stripped of liturgy and sacrament, and placed before the high altar of the human free will."

**A fourth problem** with seeing foreknowledge as referring to foreseen faith, repentance, or good works, is that the addition of those concepts would make the statement contradict Paul's doctrine elsewhere in the New Testament: **2 Tim. 1:9; Eph. 1:4-5**

He chose us to be "holy and blameless before him" not because we were holy and blameless. He chose us "according to the kind intention of his will" and "according to the riches of his grace." **Eph. 1:11** - We are chosen, "according to his purpose who works all things after the counsel of his will."

**Charles Hodge writes,** "The foreknowledge therefore expresses the act of cognition or recognition, the fixing, so to speak, the mind upon, which involves the idea of selection" (284). **John Murray concurs and writes:** "It means 'whom he set regard upon' or

'whom he knew from eternity with distinguishing affection and delight' and is virtually equivalent to 'whom he foreloved.'"

*Commentary on Romans*, 317.

### **B. Predestination. Rom. 8:29**

This passage simply introduces the idea of predestination or election. We will examine the concept more fully in Rom. 9. The term is composed of two ideas: "pre," which means beforehand, and "destination" or "destiny." It refers to God determining a person's destiny beforehand. There are many questions that arise in studying this doctrine and there are mysteries involved in it. Obviously, we can't begin even to scratch the surface in one sermon. Our text, points to the destiny which God sets for his elect that they would be conformed to the image of Christ. **William Hendriksen** comments on these two terms in Rom. 8:29: "Whereas the first term directs our attention to the persons whom God elected and only in a general way to their final destiny (everlasting life, glory), the term [predestined] fixes our thought more definitely on the purpose for which they were elected and on means of attaining it. That goal is not just 'to enter heaven at last' but 'to be conformed to the image of God's Son' (282-283). Being conformed to the image of Christ begins in this life in our progressive sanctification and in our resurrection or glorification at the time of Christ's return is completed.

## **II. The Holy Spirit applies Christ's work of redemption to us. Rom. 8:30**

After speaking of the eternal council of God in the beginning of this chain, Paul sets forth aspects of our salvation that occur both now and will occur in the future - calling, justification, and glorification. Again, notice how every single person who is foreknown is predestined and every single person who is predestined is called and every single person who is called is justified and finally glorified. That unbreakable nature of this chain is important in considering the nature of these doctrines.

### **A. Calling. Rom. 8:30**

Notice that every person who is called is justified. Therefore, this is an effectual call. Everyone who receives this call is justified before God. When we think of the term calling in the New Testament, we can distinguish two ideas in it. First, there is the external call of the gospel. Somehow the message is communicated. Second, there is the effectual call of God which works with the general call of the gospel and makes it effective. **William Hendriksen defines it like this:** "By this inner or effective call is meant that operation of the Holy Spirit whereby he so applies the gospel to the minds and hearts of sinners that they become aware of their guilt, begin to understand their need of Jesus Christ, and embrace him as their Lord and Savior" (Romans, 47).

Everyone who receives that work of the Holy Spirit comes to Christ and is justified.

**1 Cor. 1:22-24; 2 Tim. 1:9; 2 Thess. 2:13-14.**

**Charles Spurgeon said,** "I take it that the highest proof of Christ's power is not that he offers salvation, not that he bids you take it if you will, but that when you reject it, when you hate it, when you despise it, he has a power whereby he can change your mind, make you think differently from your former thoughts, and turn you from the error of your ways."

**He also said,** "I do not come into this pulpit hoping that perhaps somebody will of his own free will return to Christ. My hope lies in another quarter. I hope that my Master will lay hold of some of them and say, 'You are mine, and you shall be mine. I claim you for myself.' My hope arises from the freeness of grace, and not from the freedom of the will. A poor haul of fish will any gospel fisherman make if he takes none but those who are eager to leap into the net. Oh, for five minutes of the great Shepherd's handiwork!" Again, this magnifies the grace of God in our salvation. If you are in Christ, it is not because you are smarter or more righteous than someone else. Like every fallen child of Adam, you were once dead in sin and hostile toward God. If you believe in Christ, God has sovereignly opened your heart, caused you to be born again. He has effectually called you to himself. Therefore, salvation is all of God's grace.



**B. Justification.** We examined this at length in earlier chapters in Romans so I'll just summarize it now. It is a legal declaration of God in which our sins are forgiven and Christ's righteousness is imputed to us and it is received by faith in Christ alone.

**C. Glorification.** This is the last item in our chain of doctrines. It refers to our future resurrection and redemption of our bodies. If we are alive when Christ returns, we will be transformed in the twinkling of an eye. It also refers to our complete sanctification. We will be perfectly conformed to the image of Jesus. The fact that it is written in past tense might puzzle you. William Hendriksen points out that this indicates the surety that this future event will take place. James M. Boice makes the same point. All of this is written primarily to give us assurance of our salvation. Everyone who is foreknown and predestined will ultimately be glorified. You will never be lost because of the immutability of the God's decree of election as well as his keeping you throughout your life. **Robert Reymond writes,** "Was God all-wise when he laid the foundations of the earth, when he spoke and the mountains and seas appeared? The Bible says he was. Then because he is immutable he is precisely the same all-wise God today in his dealings with you and will remain so forever. He is not less skillful. Neither has he become mentally senile nor does he have less knowledge now. Was he mighty when he spoke this world into existence out of nonexistence? The Bible says he was. Then because he is immutable he is precisely the same mighty God today in his dealings with you and will remain so forever. The arm of his strength has not palsied in the slightest; he is the same infinite Colossus of might today, and the strength of his power has not been sapped in the slightest degree. Was he just and holy in the past when he destroyed the antediluvian world by the Genesis flood, when he rained fire and brimstone from heaven on Sodom and Gomorrah, when he poured out his destructive plagues on Egypt? The Bible says he was. Then because he is immutable he is precisely the same just and holy God today in his dealings with you and will remain so forever. What he hated when he sent the flood he still hates and what he loved then he still loves.

What he hated when he destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah he still hates and what he loved then he still loves. Was he truthful in the past when he bound himself by covenant oath to save his elect? The Bible says he was. Then because he is immutable he is precisely the same truthful God today in his dealings with you and will remain so forever. He veracity is immutable; his Word is 'forever settled in the heavens' (Ps. 119:89). Was he good and kind, generous and gentle, benevolent and plenteous in mercy and pity, full of steadfast lovingkindness, and forgiving in the past when again and again and again he forgave backsliding Israel for its sins? The Bible says he was. Then because he is immutable he is precisely the same good, kind, generous, gentle, benevolent, forgiving God today in his dealings with you, plenteous in mercy, full of lovingkindness, and will remain so forever. . . . his mercies will never cease to be, for they too are everlasting (Ps. 100:5). Did he have a plan of redemption before the creation of the world that included you and me? The Bible says he did. Then because he is immutable he has precisely the same plan of redemption today that involves us and he will forever. You and I are still beneficiaries of it. Not one of its stipulations will he ever alter. Did he make us any promises in that plan? The Bible says he did. Then those promises are still binding upon him today and shall be binding upon him forever, for by 'two immutable things' - his eternal purpose and his binding covenant oath - he has confirmed and sealed his Word. His promises are not 'Yes and No,' affirms Paul. They are 'Yes,' and the gospel declares the 'Amen!' (2 Cor. 1:19). In sum, bring before me any attribute of God you choose and I will write on it *semper idem*-'always the same.' And you, my brothers and sisters, knowing and trusting this one living and true God who is 'always the same', can sing with complete confidence: 'Great is thy faithfulness,' O God my Father, there is no shadow of turning with thee; thou changest not, thy compassions, they fail not; As thou has been thou forever wilt be. Raymond, *What Is God?*, 107-109.

Rom. 8:30; John 6:37-40 Rom. Series #38 9/13/09

Last week we sang a classic hymn by William Cowper: "God Moves In A Mysterious Way His Wonders To Perform." That hymn has been a source of great comfort and blessing to God's people. It sets forth a trust in God's sovereignty and his keeping of his people. However, few know of the trying circumstances which led to its composition. The writer, William Cowper, had sunk to the depths of despair as the result of grief and disappointment. Apparently, he struggled with depression issues in his life.

Finally one foggy night, in a state of depression he called for a horse-drawn "taxi" and asked to be taken to London Bridge on the Thames River, intending to commit suicide. After driving around in the mist for 2 hours, the cabby reluctantly told his passenger he was lost. Disgusted by the delay, Cowper left the cab and determined to find his way on foot. Walking only a short distance, he discovered he was back at his own doorstep!

They'd been going in circles. Immediately he recognized the restraining hand of the Lord in this providential turn of events. Convicted by the Spirit, he realized that the way out of his troubles was to look to God for help, not to jump into the river. As he cast his burden on the Savior, his heart was comforted. With tears of gratitude he sat down and penned these words which have strengthened thousands on the brink of despair: "God moves in a mysterious way his wonders to perform; he plants his footsteps in the sea, and ride upon the storm. Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take; the clouds ye so much dread are big with mercy, and shall break in blessings on your head."

The Bible clearly teaches that God begins a work of salvation in us and he will finish that which he began. He keeps and protects his people and causes them to persevere until the end. Last week we looked at the grammatical connection between each of the doctrines in this text. It's been called the golden chain of our salvation with each of these doctrines being a link in that chain. This text is important in the Scriptural teaching that God will keep us in our salvation so that we will never be lost. All who are justified are glorified. This morning I want us to look at several passages that set forth the universal discourse of Scripture that a believer can never lose his or her salvation.

## **I. Our salvation is secure because of God's eternal purpose of election.**

### **A. God's sovereign will is immutable.**

Consistently through Scripture, it affirms that man cannot thwart or frustrate the will of God. **Job 42:2; Dan. 4:34-35**

**Prov. 21:1** - "The king's heart is like channels of water in the hand of the Lord; He turns it wherever he wishes."

**Psalm 115:3** - "But our God is in the heavens; He does whatever he pleases. **Psalm**

**135:6** - "Whatever the Lord pleases, He does, in heaven and in earth, in the seas and in all deeps."

**1 Chron. 29:11** - "Yours, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, for all that is in the heavens and in the earth is yours. Yours is the kingdom, O Lord, and you are exalted as head above all" (ESV)

**2 Chron. 20:6; Eph. 1:11**

### **B. It is God's sovereign immutable will that all of his elect will be saved.**

**Rom. 8:29-30** - Object of verb is "whom." Everyone foreknown, predestined, called, and justified, will be glorified. God, the

**John 6:37-40** - God, the Father gave a people to the Son to redeem and give them eternal life. **John 17:2**

**John 6:39** - It is God's immutable will that none of the people given to the Son will be lost.

**John 6:40** - It is God's will that everyone who believes will have eternal life. Eternal life is not eternal if it can be lost.

Those who hold that a Christian can lose his salvation can never say that they are going to heaven. They could say that "At this moment I'm going to heaven," but they don't know what tomorrow might bring. Tomorrow I might commit that sin that will cause me to lose my salvation. **Gordon Clark wrote**, ". . . our salvation is based on the active and passive obedience of Christ; but our assurance requires some reason to believe that the

benefits of Christ's work are permanently applied to ourselves. Small comfort it is indeed if we are saved at breakfast and lost at noon. Let us emphasize the fact: the Arminians can have no sure hope of entering heaven. They must always entertain the uncomfortable feeling that they will finally be lost. Obviously no man can depend on his own power to persevere in grace; for, first human nature is weak, and second, grace is not something we can earn or keep. And if the Arminian refuses to admit that God causes his elect to persevere, what reasonable expectation can he have of heaven?" *What Do Presbyterians Believe?*, 169-170.

**C. Present eternal life guarantees a future consummation of our salvation in the resurrection.**

**Rom. 8:30** - All who are foreknown, predestined, called, justified, are glorified. **John 6:39-40, 44; Phil. 1:6**

All of these passages connect our present salvation with a future resurrection or glorification. Do you ever wonder if you will persevere until the end? If you are in Christ, you will because it is God's sovereign will to save all his elect.

**II. Our salvation is secure because God will complete what he began in our salvation. Phil. 1:6**

Notice that it is God that began a good work in us and he will perfect until the day of Christ Jesus. The phrase "He who began" is an Aorist, middle, Participle in Greek. This indicates strongly that it is God himself who began your salvation and he will finish what he started. This is the doctrine that states that if you are truly saved, you will not lose your salvation.

The classic label for this doctrine of the perseverance of the saints and that label does reflect the idea that if we are truly saved, we will persevere in that salvation because of the power of God at work in our lives. However, it could also be called the preservation of the saints. It is God that keeps us.

**A. The first reason that our salvation is secure is that it is God who began it.**

### **1. God began our salvation from eternity.**

**Rom. 8:29-30; Eph. 1:3-6;** - As we just considered, election is an immutable decree of God. If God has elected you to salvation, it is impossible that you would be lost. His decree is immutable and God is all-powerful. The fact that he is all-powerful ensures that his eternal decree of election will be carried out. Not one of his elect will be lost.

**2. God gave his elect to his Son and the Son completely accomplished salvation for them.** John 6:37-40; **17:2** Christ's work was complete and perfect. He actually accomplished salvation for the people given to him by the Father. Every time the work of Christ is described in the New Testament it is in terms of an accomplished work, never in terms of potentiality.

He was actually a propitiation, sacrifice, reconciliation, and redemption for his people.

**Rev. 5:9-11; Acts 20:28** If you are in Christ now, for God to punish your sins would be an injustice. Christ has already paid for those sins and, therefore, condemnation is an utter impossibility for you. This gives you confidence in your salvation. If you are in Christ, you cannot be lost. **Charles Spurgeon said,** "What! Did Christ at one tremendous draft of love drink my damnation dry, and shall I be damned after that? God forbid! What! Shall God be unrighteous to forget the Redeemer's work for us and let the Savior's blood be shed in vain? Not hell itself has ever indulged the thought which has only been worthy of the men who are traitors to God's truth."

**3. God's divine initiative applied Christ's salvation in our individual lives.** Acts 13:48; 16:14; John 1:12-13; 6:44-45; 63-65; Eph. 2:1-5.

If you are in Christ now, it is because God has sovereignly brought you to salvation.

What God has begun, he will finish.

**III. Our salvation is secure because God will not allow us to fall away.** We are kept by the power of God in our salvation.

**John 10:26-30** - We are kept by the power of God, the Father and God, the Son. No one can snatch us out of his hand. That includes other people, any type of satanic attack, and we ourselves. God affects our hearts so we will never depart from faith - **Jer. 32:40; 1 Cor. 1:7-9**

**Eph. 1:13-14** - Illus. sphragos

Every person of the Trinity is mentioned in Ephesians 1. God, the Father has elected us to salvation; God, the Son has redeemed us with his blood; the Holy Spirit has applied that salvation and sealed us in it.

Phil. 1:6 - He who began it will perfect it and finish until the day of Christ. **Jude 24-25; 1 Pet. 1:3-5**

An objection that is often made to this is someone will say, "I know somebody who did all kinds of Christian work or service and then they rejected Christ. So, they were saved and then lost their salvation." Have you ever heard that?

**1 John 2:19 is instructive in this regard.** Notice that John affirms that if they had been a part of us they would have remained with us. While they were with us, it was impossible to tell the difference between them and a real believer. Their departure showed what they really were all along. **Matt. 7:21-23**

**Gordon Clark writes,** "One evening as I was conducting the mid-week prayer meeting, a white-haired gentleman asked for one of his favorite hymns: 'How Firm A Foundation.' The hymn has six long stanzas, and as the meeting was very informal I wondered aloud which of the six we could omit. Not the first, of course - it speaks of the Word of God as the foundation of our faith; not the second because we need the aid and strength of God's omnipotent hand; the third or fourth? The old gentleman interrupted my wondering by insisting that this was a good hymn and that we could sing it all. We did, as we reached the fifth stanza, everyone else in the room saw in it the picture of the grand old man who had requested the hymn: E'en down to old age all my people shall prove my sovereign, eternal, unchangeable love. And when hoary hairs shall their temples adorn, like lambs

they shall still in my bosom be borne. He sang it with vigor, and he sang the sixth stanza too: The soul that on Jesus hath leaned for repose I will not, I will not desert to his foes. Now it was a bit strange that this gentleman should have requested this hymn and should have sung it with such praise and devotion. For he did not like Calvinism; all his life he had been an Arminian; he did not believe in 'eternal security,' as he called it; and he had been telling his friends so for years. Even now he would have disowned the name of Calvinism. But could it be that without realizing it he had now come to believe, and that his earlier Arminian views had changed with the color of his hair? It is strange that this lovely Arminian saint could become at least somewhat of a Calvinist without knowing it, it is far more strange that anyone who bases his faith on the firm foundation of God's Word could ever be an Arminian. The Scripture verses are too numerous to mention.

*What Do Presbyterians Believe?*, 168-169.

Rom. 8:31-39 Romans Series #39 9/20/09

Last couple of weeks we have examined the doctrines set forth in what has been called the golden chain of our salvation. We noted that all of these doctrines are grammatically linked together. Everyone who is foreknown is predestined, everyone predestined is call, justified, and glorified. It is important to note that this verse does not say that election is based on God foreseeing what a particular person will do either have good works or faith and repentance. The object of the verb foreknown is "whom." It is talking about God knowing in a special way a particular person and then setting a pre-destiny for that person to be conformed to the image Christ. Our salvation began in the eternal council of God and the Holy Spirit calls us to salvation at a moment in our lives. It is also important to note that everyone who is justified is glorified. If you are truly in a state of grace now, you will be glorified. You will not be lost. The immutability of the decree of election is a foundation for assurance of our salvation. After Paul sets forth these great doctrines, he then asks a series of rhetorical questions. All of them touch on the assurance we have as God's people.



**I. As redeemed people we have assurance of God's protection, and care. Rom. 8:31-32**

The question, "What shall we say to these things" probably does not refer only to the immediate context of Rom. 8:28-30, but to everything Paul has written concerning our salvation in the book of Romans. **William Hendriksen notes that Paul**, ". . . has pointed out that the one thing a sinner needs above all else is right standing with God, and that this right standing is not obtainable by human exertion or merit. That inestimable blessing is God's free gift, and there is only one way to obtain it, namely, by faith. . . . The blessing of salvation has been earned for everyone, whether Jew or Gentile, who will, by God's power and grace repose his trust in the Savior. It was he who earned salvation for his people by the shedding of his blood. They are saved by his substitutionary death, his resurrection, his intercession" (286).

There are obviously many enemies which the Christian faces. They have been summarized as the world, the flesh, and the devil. The world is against us. Christianity is an offense to the world. The gospel proclaims the Lordship of Christ, the sinfulness of fallen man, man's moral inability to submit to God's law. At the heart of the world's hatred of the gospel is fallen man's hatred of God. **Rom. 8:7-8** The lost person hates God and everything associated with God which includes his people. Persecution against God's people flows from fallen man's hatred of God.

The flesh includes everything that our fallen condition would crave in opposition to God's commands. **1 Pet. 2:11** Satan and the satanic kingdom is in opposition to God's people. While Satan is a defeated foe, we are called upon to be on guard against him. **Eph. 6:11-12; 1 Pet. 5:8**

There are many enemies against us. However, the first part of this statement gives us assurance - "If God is for us. . . ." If the Creator and Lord of this universe is on our side and for us, then nothing can ultimately defeat us. **Rom. 8:28**

**John Stott** writes, "The apostle hurls these questions out into space, as it were, defiantly, triumphantly, challenging any creature in heaven or earth or hell to answer them or to deny the truth that is contained in them. But there is no answer, for nobody and nothing can harm the redeemed people of God."

The basis of this assurance is given in **Rom. 8:32**. If God has done such a tremendous thing for us as giving his Son as an atonement for our sins, is there any blessing that he would withhold. **James Boice comments**, "Wouldn't we be right to think that even God might have limits to his grace and generosity? That might be reasonable were it not for the fact that God has already given us his Son. Jesus Christ, the divine Son of God, is the greatest thing God has to give. Yet he gave him - not merely to be with us in some mystical way. He gave him over to death so that we might be rescued from the judgment due our sins. Paul is challenging us to look at the cross and reason as follows: If God did that for us, sending his own Son, Jesus, to die in our place, is there anything he can possibly be imagined to withhold" (954)?

**John Calvin**, in commenting on Rom. 8:31-32, writes, "If God is for us who is against us?' This is the chief and therefore the only support to sustain us in every temptation. If God is propitious to us, no sure confidence can be conceived, even though everything should smile upon us. On the other hand, however, his favor alone is a sufficiently great consolation for every sorrow and a sufficiently strong protection against all the storms of misfortune.

**Calvin** then cites several Bible texts: **Psa. 23:4**: "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me." **Psa. 56:11**: "In God I will trust; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?" **Psa. 3:6**: "I will not be afraid of tens of thousands drawn up against me on every side." Calvin concludes, "There is no power under heaven or above it which can resist the arm of God" (Rom. 183).

What difficulty are you face now? Are you going through a dark time in your life? God is with you and promises that he is at work in every circumstance in your life to work it

together for good (Rom. 8:28). **J. I. Packer**, in *Knowing God*, writes, ". . . the statement 'God is love' means that His love finds expression in everything that He says and does. The knowledge that this is so for him personally is the Christian's supreme comfort. As a believer, he finds in the cross of Christ assurance that he, as an individual, is beloved of God; 'the Son of God. . . loved me, and gave himself for me (Gal. 2:20). Knowing this, he is able to apply to himself the promise that all things work together for good to them that love God and are called according to His purpose (Rom. 8:28). Not just 'some' things, note, but all things! Every single thing that happens to him expresses God's love to him, and comes to him for the furthering of God's purpose for him. Thus, as far as he is concerned, God is love to him - holy, omnipotent love - at every moment and in every event of every day's life. Even when he cannot see the why and the wherefore of God's dealings, he knows that there is love in and behind them, and so he can rejoice always, even when, humanly speaking, things are going wrong. He knows that the true story of his life, when known, will prove to be, as the hymn says, 'mercy from first to last' - and he is content" (111).

When Martin Luther was in the throes of the Reformation and the Pope was trying to bring him back to the Roman Catholic Church, he sent a cardinal to deal with Luther and buy him with gold. The cardinal wrote to the Pope, "The fool does not love gold." The cardinal, when he could not convince Luther, said to him, "What do you think the Pope cares for the opinion of a German boor? The Pope's little finger is stronger than all Germany. Do you expect your princes to take up arms to defend you - you, a wretched worm like you. I tell you No. And where will you be then?" Luther's reply was simple: "Where I am now. In the hands of Almighty God."

If you are in Christ, then you are in the hands of Almighty God. **James M. Boice said**, ". . . nothing is more rational than to believe God even in the face of evidence to the contrary. . . . . faith stands always with God and his Word, even when doing so appears foolish from a human perspective." Romans, 1:482.

## **II. As redeemed people we have assurance of never coming under condemnation.**

### **Rom. 8:33-34.**

This is a restatement of Rom. 8:1 as well as the whole section in Rom. 3:21 through chapter 5 dealing with justification.

Rom. 8:33 - If you believe in Jesus, you are justified by God. Justification is a legal act of God in our sins are forgiven and Christ's righteousness is imputed to the believer. It is received by faith in Christ alone and not in any way merited by our works. **Rom. 4:1-8**

In Zechariah's night visions, there is a great Old Testament prophetic picture of our justification. Zech. 3:1-5 - The imagery is that of the day of atonement and Joshua, the high priest at that time after the exile is standing in the presence of God. Instead of having the proper priestly garments on he has on filthy garments. Think about the requirements given to the high priest for the day of atonement in Lev. 16. He is to wash himself, put on the priestly garments, and offer sacrifices for himself and his family before he enters into the holy of holies. Here is Joshua in God's presence covered in filth. The word used for "filthy" is the word used to describe human excrement. He is covered in the terrible filth. That is a vivid picture of our sin before a holy God. **Zech. 3:4-5** - Here is a picture of our justification. Our sins are forgiven, the filth is taken away and we are clothed with the righteousness of Christ. Therefore, no one can bring a charge against the elect of God.

**Rom. 8:34** - This verse simply continues the idea. No charge can be brought against us because Christ has fully and completely paid for the sins of his elect. He is risen from the dead and he makes intercession for us. Do you ever struggle with guilt?

Have you ever had the experience of asking God to forgive for a particular sin and then an hour later feel guilty over again. You may end up asking for forgiveness over and over. If you are a believer, then God promises you are forgiven and will never come under condemnation. That promise is based on Christ's perfect and accomplished work.

**Charles Spurgeon said:** Listen! "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth, who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again." It is a knock-down blow to fear when the apostle says that we cannot be condemned because Christ has died in our stead, but he puts a double force into it when he cries, "Yea rather, that is risen again." If Satan, therefore, shall come to any believer and say, "What about your sin?" tell him Jesus died for it, and your sin is put away. If he come a second time, and say to you, "What about your sin?" answer him, "Jesus lives, and His life is the assurance of our justification; for if our Surety had not paid the debt He would still be under the power of death." Inasmuch as Jesus has discharged all our liabilities, and left not one farthing due to God's justice from one of His people, He lives and is clear, and we live in Him, and are clear also by virtue of our union with Him. *12 Sermons on the Resurrection*, 146.

Christ is also interceding for his redeemed people. Your perseverance in faith is supported by Christ's prayers for you.

**Heb. 7:25 - Robert Murray McCheyne said,** "If I could hear Christ praying for me in the next room, I would not fear a million enemies. Yet distance makes no difference. He is praying for me: 'He ever liveth to make intercession.'"

### **III. As redeemed people we have assurance of God's love in Christ. Rom. 8:35-39**

As we noted last week, Paul lists 17 things which can never separate us from the love of God in Christ. **John Stott, in commenting on Rom. 8:35-39, writes,** "With this fifth and last question, Paul himself does what we have been trying to do with the other four questions. He looks round for a possible answer. He brings forward all the adversaries he can think of, which might be thought to separate us from Christ's love. We may have to endure 'tribulation,' 'distress' and 'persecution' - that is, the pressures of an ungodly world. We may have to undergo 'famine' and 'nakedness' - that is, the lack of adequate food and clothing. . . . We may even experience 'peril' and 'sword' - that is, the danger of death and actual death, by the malice of men; martyrdom, the ultimate test of our faith. It

is a real test, too, because (v. 36) the Scripture warns in Psalm 44:22 that God's people are for his sake 'being killed all the day long.' That is, they are continuously exposed to the risk of death, like sheep for the slaughter. Those are adversities indeed. They are real sufferings, painful and perilous, and hard to bear. But can they separate us from the love of Christ? No! Verse 37: far from separating us from Christ's love, 'in all these things' - in these very sufferings, in the experience and endurance of them - 'we are more than conquerors.'" Cited in Boice, *Romans*, 2:956.

**The hymn, *It Is Well With My Soul*, was written after two major traumas in Horatio Spafford's life.** The first was the great Chicago fire of October 1871, which ruined him financially. He had been a wealthy businessman. Shortly after this, all four of Spafford's daughters died while crossing the Atlantic with their mother. Another ship hit their ship they were drown. Spafford's wife, Anna, survived and sent him the now famous telegram, "Saved alone." Several weeks later, as Spafford's own ship passed the spot where his daughters died, he wrote the words to this him expressing his hope and trust in God no matter what pain and grief were in his life. **1.** When peace, like a river, attendeth my way, When sorrows like sea billows roll; Whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to say, It is well, it is well, with my soul.

Refrain: It is well, with my soul, It is well with my soul, it is well, it is well with my soul. **2.** Though Satan should buffet, though trials should come, let this blessed assurance control, That Christ has regarded my helpless estate, and hath shed His own blood for my soul. **3.** My sin, oh the bliss of this glorious thought! My, not in part but the whole, is nailed to the cross, and I bear it no more, Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul! **4.** And Lord, haste the day when my faith shall be sight, The clouds be rolled back as a scroll; The trump shall resound, and the Lord shall descend, even so it is well with my soul. **Charles Hodge writes,** "The conclusion of the chapter is a recapitulation of all his former arguments, or rather a reduction of them to one, which comprehends them all in their fullest force; God IS FOR US. He, as our Judge, is satisfied; as our Father, he

loves us; as the supreme and almighty Controller of events, who works all things after the counsel of his own will, he has determined to save us; and as that Being, whose love is as unchanging as it is infinite, he allows nothing to separate his children from himself."

From: *Commentary on Romans*, 287.

Rom. 9:1-5 Romans Series #40 9/27/09

We are now starting to examine another section in the book of Romans. Romans 9-11 is an extremely rich section in this book and in the New Testament. While this section has been the focus of debate concerning the sovereignty of God and issues concerning Jews and Gentiles, it is one of the more poignant sections in the Bible in term of magnifying the justice, grace, and freedom of God to be God. As we examine these chapters, we are going to see the deity of Christ affirmed, the doctrines of election and reprobation, the justice of God and the grace and mercy of God, the importance of preaching and missions, and the God's infinite wisdom. The first part of Romans 9 introduces the idea that large part of the Jewish community of Paul's day had rejected Jesus as the promised Messiah. Paul describes his deep concern and anguish for his fellow countrymen and his desire for their salvation. Some important point of Christian character and duty are set forth for us in this passage.

**I. We are to have a passion to reach the lost and faithfully communicate the gospel.**

**Rom. 9:1-3**

Paul, in expressing his deep concern for his fellow Jews, affirms the truthfulness of his concern for this with an oath. He calls upon God to bear witness to the truth of his deep sorrow and concern for the salvation his kinsmen. Paul makes a similar statement in

**Rom. 10:1-3.** Notice that the Jews are very religious and they have a zeal for God.

However, that zeal is not in accordance with knowledge or truth. They seek to establish their own righteousness rather than acknowledge Jesus as the Messiah and submit to God's plan of salvation. Paul states that he has great sorrow and grief over their spiritual condition. His desire and prayer to God is for their salvation. Those statements are

remarkable when you think about what Paul endured at the hands of many of his Jewish kinsmen. **Acts 14:1-2, 5; 14:19; 17:5, 10-13; 21:27-32; 22:22-23; 23:12-14; 2 Cor.**

### **11:24**

Even after experiencing intense resistance, hatred, and persecution from his fellow countrymen, Paul still had a deep and profound concern and desire for their salvation.

**Rom. 9:3** - This is an amazing statement. Paul knows that it is impossible that he would be accursed or damned so that his fellow Israelites would be saved, but he truthfully expressing that kind of concern for them. Remember he stated that he is not lying and the called the Holy Spirit to bear witness to the truthfulness of his statement in verse 1. **Rom. 9:3** demonstrates a remarkable level of Christian love. Paul states that he is ready to be damned if they could be saved. He knows that could not happen, but it is the true attitude of his heart. There are two applications I want to draw from this. **First**, it is a point of Christian character and Christian love that we have a concern for the lost. We know that God has an elect. There is a harvest out there and God has ordained to bring his elect to salvation through the means of the witness and prayers of his people.

**Rom. 10:14-15; 1 Cor. 1:21-24** **Charles Spurgeon said**, "If sinners be damned, at least let them leap to hell over our bodies. If they will perish, let them perish with our arms about their knees. Let no one go there unwarned and unprayed for."

The English evangelist John Harper was on the Titanic when it sank in 1912. Several survivors told of the last time they saw John Harper. All through the trip, he had been talking with everyone he could about the gospel. In fact, just when the Titanic hit the iceberg, Harper had been seen leaning against a rail speaking with a young man about Christ.

Four years after the Titanic sank, a young Scottish man rose in a meeting in Hamilton, Canada and said, "I am a survivor of the Titanic. When I was drifting alone on a spar that awful night, the waves brought John Harper, also on a piece of wreck, near me. "Man," he said, "Are you saved?" "No," I said, "I'm not." He replied, " Believe on the Lord Jesus



Christ and thou shalt be saved." The waves bore him away; but strange to say brought him back a little later and he said, "Are you saved now?" "No, I can't say that I am." He said again, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." Shortly after that he disappeared beneath the waves and there alone in the night, I believed in Jesus as my Savior. I'm the last person John Harper to whom John Harper presented the gospel and God saved me from that witness."

John Harper, in the face of his own death, didn't miss one final opportunity to present the gospel. Besides having a passion to reach the lost in our own communities, this principle extends to missions. We need to think beyond ourselves and our own town or even country. Jesus has commanded us to take the gospel to the world. **Hudson Taylor said,** "The Great Commission is not an option to be considered; it is a command to be obeyed." **John Piper**, in commenting on missions and evangelism, writes, "God is pursuing with omnipotent passion a worldwide purpose of gathering joyful worshippers of Himself from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. He has an inexhaustible enthusiasm for the supremacy of His name among the nations. Therefore, let us bring our affections into line with His, and for the sake of His name, let us renounce the quest for worldly comforts and join His global purpose." **Similarly, Robert Reymond writes,** "We should be willing, as was Paul, to endure loneliness, pain and suffering, loss of friends, persecution, insults, misunderstanding, physical affliction, even death itself, if necessary, for the cause of Christ. That is to say, we should be willing to go anywhere, at any time, at any cost for Christ's sake (see Acts 20:24; 1 Cor. 4:9-13; 2 Cor. 11:23-28; Phil. 3:7-9; 2 Tim. 4:6-8). Simply put, if Christ is God and if he died for us, then nothing he would demand of us should we regard as too great a thing for him to ask or too high a sacrifice for us to make in his service. *Paul*, 570.

Do you pray for the lost? Do you pray that God would bring the gospel to unreached people groups around the world? Do you pray that the gospel would go forth in our country? Do you pray for a great awakening in our land as well as a move of the Holy

Spirit to bring people to salvation around the world? You may not be able to go yourself, but you can pray and give to support the spread of the gospel. This text calls us to have a concern for the lost, a passion for their salvation, and a desire and prayer for the spread of the gospel.

Rowland Hill, noted preacher of England, once exclaimed, "Beware! I am in earnest; men call me an enthusiast, but I am not. Mine are words of truth and soberness. When I first came into this part of the country, I was walking on that hill. I saw a gravel pit fall in and bury three human beings alive. I lifted up my voice for help so loud that I was heard in the town below, a distance of one mile. Help came and rescued two of the poor men. No one called me an enthusiast then. And when I see eternal destruction ready to fall upon poor sinners, and about to entomb them irrevocably in an eternal mass of woe, and call on them to escape by fleeing to Christ, shall I be called an enthusiast?"

We are to have a deep passion and concern for the lost.

**A second application** is that this demonstrates our the need for Christ for salvation. The Jews were very religious and they were sincere in their religious beliefs. Paul was not a pluralist. He didn't think that all paths led to God. Because his kinsmen did not believe in Jesus, they were lost. **Rom. 10:1-2**

**Douglas Moo comments on Rom. 9:3:** "In offering to become himself 'cursed and cut off from Christ' for the sake of his fellow Jews, Paul implies that Israel herself stands under this judgment. By refusing to accept Jesus as the Messiah and the fulfillment of God's plan of redemption for them, most Jews have cut themselves off from God's people and from the salvation he promises to his people. The Greek word for 'cursed' is *anathema*, a word transliterated into English that describes someone who is excommunicated. In the New Testament, it refers to a person excluded from God's people and under the sentence of damnation" (292). **Illus.** - man and woman on a train - "Let me know when we get to the next town." He woke her up when the train stopped and told her it was her stop. . . .

He was sincere. He truly believed it was her stop, that they were in the next town. She sincerely believed him. Sincerity didn't make it true. The Bible proclaims repeatedly that the only way of salvation is through Jesus. **John 14:6; Acts 4:12; John 8:24 R. C. Sproul writes,** "A popular aphorism repeated *ad infinitum* (and indeed *ad nauseam*) in our day is this: 'It doesn't matter what you believe as long as you are sincere.' This 'credo' is on a collision course with Christianity. It preaches another gospel of 'justification by faith,' which reveals, after a momentary second glance, that it is the very antithesis of the gospel of *sola fide*. This reduces justification by faith along to justification by sincerity alone. The distortion is easy to see. It is a counterfeit concept that rests and depends on a genuine truth for its currency value. The genuine element is the element of sincerity in faith. An insincere faith justifies no one. It is a sham and has no redemptive value. Saving faith must be and is sincere faith. But it is sincere faith in a true object, in true content, not a sincere faith in false content. A person may believe that Baal is God. His faith is 'sincere' insofar as he truly believes the proposition 'Baal is God' is true. Yet my believing that a proposition is true does not make it true.

To say it does not matter what we believe as long as we believe it sincerely is to drive a sword into the heart of Christianity. It is the crassest form of relativism subjectivism. Salvation only comes through faith in Christ and his accomplished work.

**II. We are to faithfully communicate the gospel because religious advantages do not automatically bring salvation.**

**Rom. 9:3-5**

Paul's kinsmen had great advantages in terms of knowing God and the way of salvation. First, they are Israelites. They belonged to the people to whom God had revealed himself. They had the law, the types, the shadows, the direct prophecies concerning the Messiah. The adoption as sons does not refer to adoption in the sense of salvation, but the idea that externally, they, as a nation, belonged to God. **James Boice states,** "When it [adoption] is used of Israel, as here, it refers to God's selection of the Jews as an elect

nation through which he would bring salvation to the world" (1026). The glory, in the Old Testament refers to the divine radiance of God's presence with his people. It refers to the glory of the Lord which filled the Tabernacle and later the temple. It was the pillar of fire by night and the cloud by day in the wilderness. God made covenant promises concerning salvation through the Messiah to Israel. They received the moral law of God as well as the ceremonies which pointed to Christ's substitutionary work of atonement. The heart of God's promises to Israel was his promise of a redeemer, the Messiah. All the Israelites were descended from the patriarchs to whom God affirmed his covenant of grace and promised the Messiah. Finally, it was through the lineage of Israel that the Messiah came who is both God and man. To be born into that heritage was a great blessing and advantage. They had the Scriptures and the promises of the true and living God. They were not pagans living outside the special revelation of God through his Word. However, most of them had rejected the Messiah. The advantages they had did not automatically bring salvation. In the same way, a person born into a Christian home and being brought up in the covenant community in the church has great advantages. I was born into a Christian home and, by the grace of God, do not have a memory of not believing in Christ. I know there are several in our congregation that have a similar experience. However, just like the unbelieving Jews, it is possible for people to have those advantages and not be born again. The blessing of being born into a Christian home makes a person all the more accountable before God. **Luke 12:47-48**

All of you here have an advantage over those who have not heard the gospel. You have heard today that faith in Jesus Christ is the only way of salvation and God promises forgiveness and salvation to all who believe in him. Examine your heart. What do you trust in for salvation? Do you trust in some religious heritage, church membership, some religious activity or good works? If you do, you are in a state of damnation. The gospel commands us to throw ourselves on Christ alone for salvation. **Henry Ward Beecher said,** "Oh child of many prayers; Oh child of baptism and covenants; Oh child of the

Sabbath-school and the early Church - if you are going from glory to glory, how joyful is your lot! But if you are going on from insensibility to insensibility, if you sin more and feel less, if you are becoming harder and harder, if moral waste is more and more manifest in you, if death already begins to show itself in the supernal and superior part of your nature, if conscience ceases any more to speak and hope is gone, and faith is lost, and wreck and ruin have come upon the crystalline sphere of your being - then woe is you!" Again, examine your heart. Young people here ---

We are to have a passion to make the gospel known, to pray for the lost, and to pray and support missions. To parents here, remember that you are called to teach your children and to clearly present the gospel to them. You are called to live Christian lives before them.

**Robert Peterson concludes** his book, *Hell On Trial*, with this illustration: On 12 December 1984 dense fog shrouded M25 near Godstone, in Surrey, a few miles south of London. The hazard warning lights were on, but were ignored by most drivers. At 6:15 a.m. a lorry carrying huge rolls of paper was involved in an accident, and within minutes the carriageway was engulfed in carnage. Dozens of cars were wrecked. Ten people were killed. A police patrol car was soon on the scene, and two policemen ran back up the motorway to stop oncoming traffic. They waved their arms and shouted as loud as they could, but most drivers took no notice and raced on toward the disaster that awaited them. The policemen then picked up traffic cones and flung them at the cars' windscreens in a desperate attempt to warn drivers of their danger; one told how tears streamed down his face as car after car went by and he waited for the sickening sound of impact as they hit the growing mass of wreckage farther down the road. Robert Peterson writes this of the incident: "How does our urgency to warn the lost of the danger of hell compare to the policemen's efforts to spare the motorists from accident and possible death? May God stir us to be faithful to him and to our fellow human beings who need to know him who died to redeem sinners from hell. To God alone be the glory!"

*Hell On Trial*, 242.

**Rom. 9:5 Romans Series #41 10/4/09**

Last week we observed Paul's deep concern for the salvation of his fellow Jews. He mentioned that they had great advantages over the pagan world. They had the promises of God, the covenants, the glory of God's presence, and the Messiah came from their line. We noted that religious advantages make a person all the more accountable to God, but do not guarantee salvation. At the end of Romans 9:5, Paul makes an important statement concerning the deity of Christ. He directly calls him God. This is one of the eight places in the New Testament where Jesus is directly called God (*Theos*). This morning I want us to examine the deity and the humanity of Christ and how as the God-man who accomplished a perfect work of atonement for his people.

**I. Jesus is truly God.**

There are many ways in which the Bible affirms the deity of Christ. We're going to examine some the main Scriptural points concerning the fact that Jesus was God incarnate.

**A. The Bible directly calls him God.** The Greek word *theos*.

There are eight passages where Jesus is directly called God in the New Testament. Our text in Rom. 9:5 is one of those eight passages.

**John 1:1-3** - You are probably aware that the Jehovah Witnesses argue that this should be translated "a god" rather than "God."

They base their argument on the fact that the definite article is not present before the noun God in this passage. However, the syntax in the Greek makes it a proper noun which should be translated as God with a capital G.

**Robert Raymond writes**, "That the anarthrous noun does not connote indefiniteness as the Jehovah Witnesses contend is evident from the recurring instances of the anarthrous "theos" throughout the Johanne Prologue itself (vv 6, 12, 13, 18) where in each case it is

definite and its referent is God the Father. That "theos" is definite in meaning is suggested by its position in the clause. . . . **E. C. Colwell**, writes that 'definite predicate nouns which precede the verb usually lack the article. . . a predicate nominative which precedes the verb cannot be translated as an indefinite or a "qualitative" noun solely because of the absence of the article; if the context suggests that the predicate is definite, it should be translated as a definite noun. . . ' (20). In about 87% of such syntactical instances in the Greek New Testament, it does appear to be true that the predicate nominative preceding the verb should be construed as definite even though it is written without the article.

Therefore, John 1:1-2 is a clear statement that Jesus is God.

**John 1:18** - Some translations have "only begotten Son" here, but the earliest and best Greek manuscripts have "God." Again, here is a statement where Jesus is directly called God.

**John 20:28** - Notice that Jesus doesn't correct Thomas. He doesn't say, "Thomas I know your impressed by my resurrection, but don't get carried away. I'm not God." Rather, Jesus affirms Thomas and pronounces a blessing on those who will believe without seeing. **1 John 5:20; Titus 2:13; Heb. 1:8; 2 Pet. 1:1** (Granville Sharp rule).

#### **B. The New Testament ascribes Divine attributes to Jesus.**

1. Eternality (John 1:1-2; Rev. 1:8; 22:13).
2. Omnipresence (Matt. 18:20; 28:20).
3. Omniscience (John 2:24,25; 21:17; Rev. 2:23).
4. Omnipotence (Phil. 3:21; Rev. 1:8).
5. Immutability (Heb. 1:10-12; 13:8).
6. In general, every attribute of the Father is ascribed to the Son (Col. 2:9).

#### **C. The New Testament also depicts Jesus as exercising Divine prerogatives and works.**

1. Creation (John 1:3,10; Col. 1:16; Heb. 1:2,10).

2. Providence (Luke 10:22; John 3:35; 17:2; Eph. 1:22; Col. 1:17; Heb. 1:3),
3. The forgiveness of sins (Matt. 9:2-7; Mark 2:7-10; Col. 3:13),
4. Resurrection and final judgment (John 5:26-29; Matt. 25:31-32; Acts 10:42; 17:31; Phil. 3:21; 2 Tim. 4:1).
5. The final dissolution and renewal of all things (Eph. 1:10; Heb. 1:10-12; Rev. 21:5).

**D. The New Testament also affirms the deity of Jesus in calling him *Yahweh*.** Old Testament prophecies concerning *Yahweh* are quoted in the New Testament as being references to Jesus

**Psa. 102:1, 12, 19, 24-28** - The Psalm is clearly addressing the Lord - *Yahweh*. **Heb. 1:8-13** - Here the same statements are applied to Jesus.

Compare Mal. 3:1 and Luke 1:76.

There are many people today who will tip their hat to Jesus. They will talk of him as a great moral teacher or some kind of prophet or mystic, but they will not bow to him as God. They will not acknowledge his absolute Lordship over all his creation, including all people. When we speak of having faith in Jesus an aspect of true faith is to believe the biblical witness concerning who he is. Any concept of Jesus in which he is not God incarnate is false and idolatrous image or concept of Jesus. That's why the Jesus of the Jehovah Witnesses who is a created being and not God is an idol. That's why the Jesus of Mormons who is simply one of many pantheon of gods is an idol. While this sermon is not addressing the Trinity, this also touches on why the modalistic concept of the Godhead of the oneness Pentecostal movement is idolatry. Our faith must have a true object. To believe in the biblical Jesus is to believe in a Jesus who was truly God.

## **II. Jesus is truly human.**

When we think about the person of Christ, we affirm both is true deity and his true humanity. The classic statement from the Council of Chalcedon summarizes this well: Jesus is one person with two nature, the human nature and the divine nature. We just



considered his divine nature. Now let's examine the Scriptural statements concerning his human nature.

**Matt. 1 and Luke 3** - These genealogies affirm that Jesus had a human lineage. Both Matthew and Luke set forth the virgin birth of Christ and, therefore, affirm his human nature. **Rom. 1:1-4; Gal. 4:4; John 1:14; Luke 1:30-35** - Virgin conception and birth. **Luke 2:7** - He was born. **Luke 2:52; Luke 3:1-2** - His ministry began in a specific time. Human traits are ascribed to him throughout the gospels.

After a journey, he was tired and sat down by a well and asked for water (John 4). He slept during a storm on the sea (Mark 4:37-38). People knew his supposed father, Joseph and his mother, Mary (John 1:45; 6:42; 7:27). He spat on the ground and made mud with his saliva (John 9:6). He wept over Lazarus's death (John 11:35). A crown of thorns was pressed into his head (John 19:2). He was struck on the face (John 19:3). He bled when he was crucified and blood and water flowed from his side when the spear was thrust in his side (John 19:34). On the cross he was thirsty (John 19:28). After the resurrection, on two occasions, he showed his disciples the nail prints in his hands and feet and the place in his side (John 20:20, 27). He ate a piece of broiled fish before his disciples after his resurrection (Luke 24:42-43). He ate breakfast with his disciples by the Sea of Galilee after the resurrection (John 21:9-14).

**B. B. Warfield** points out that the gospel narratives depict Jesus with the full range of sinless human emotions: compassion (Matt. 9:36); Mercy (Matt. 9:37; Mark 10:47-48); Love (Mark 10:21); Anger (Mark 3:5; 11:15-17); Indignation (Mark 10:14); Joy (John 17:13); Grief (Mark 3:5; John 11:35).

**Heb. 2:14, 17** - The verse starts with the conjunction, "therefore." This makes it clear that there is a logical link with the preceding material. Also, the noun, "children" is reiterated from the quote of Isaiah in Heb. 2:13. The intention of the incarnation has been set forth in Heb. 2:9-10 - that he might taste death as a substitutionary atonement and that

he might bring many sons to glory. Those "sons" are the ones he has sanctified in verse 11.

The genuineness of Christ's humanity is affirmed in strong terms. He partook of the same flesh and blood as the children who are given to him by the Father. The Greek word that is translated as "likewise" means in identical fashion. The commentator Spiq says that it means, "a total similarity . . . it could be translated 'without any difference.'" This term, coupled with, "the same" gives a forceful double insistence that Christ was truly human. Remember that in the late first century there was an heretical teaching called docetism. This was a view that was associated with gnosticism which held that Jesus humanity was an illusion.

This point is even further emphasized through the Greek tenses used in the terms "share" and "partook." When the writer speaks of the children sharing in flesh and blood, he uses the Greek perfect tense which describes a constant human condition. Every human being in every generation has this condition - we are all flesh and blood in our humanity. When the writer speaks of Christ "partaking" of the same nature, he uses the Greek aorist tense. This tense is a puncticular past tense. This points to the unique historical event of the incarnation. At a moment in time, God, the Son took human flesh and, in the incarnation was genuine humanity. Therefore, he was one person with two natures, God and man. **Philip Hughes** states: "Only the assumption of human nature could qualify him to fulfil his function of Redeemer, for his human nature fitted him to suffer and die as Man for men, that is, vicariously to bear man's punishment and die man's death on the cross" (111).

This same idea is stated again in **Heb. 2:17a**.

It was man that had sinned against God and for Jesus to deliver his people from their enemies, death and Satan, he had to be a true man. He had to be truly human to set his people free.

By a true incarnation, Jesus took human flesh and blood and also all human feelings and sensibilities in order to redeem us.

**Charles Spurgeon said,** "He is not humanity deified. He is not Godhead humanized. He is God. He is man. He is all that God is, and all that man is as God created him."

**II. The purpose of the incarnation and Jesus being one person with two natures, human and divine, was for him to be a substitutionary atonement. Heb. 2:14**

This idea is immediately set forth. Immediately after stating that he is genuine humanity in the incarnation, the writer give the purpose for the incarnation - "that through death. . . ."

The Bible never presents the incarnation as some kind of sentimental identification of God with man. Some of the Renaissance writers saw the incarnation as a tribute to the dignity of man. Some modern Roman Catholic theologians have viewed the incarnation as a mystical means of raising human nature to a higher or highest level of existence. Scripture does not present the atonement in those terms. Neither is his incarnation and death set forth as just a demonstration of sacrificial love that is to be followed as a moral example.

None of those ideas is presented in the Bible. The incarnation was specifically that the Messiah would die a substitutionary death. His incarnation made possible the great cosmic drama which is a the center of human history.

Sin is defined in the Bible as a transgression of the law of God (1 John 3:4). All through Scripture the penalty for sin is death. **Gen. 2:17** - "the day you eat you will die." **Ezek 18:4** - "The soul who sins will die." **Rom. 5:12; 6:23.**

The first lie of the devil is that you can sin and not die. Remember in **Gen. 3:4** - "You will surely not die!"

All through redemptive history the devil has tried to drive a wedge between death and sin. Today, people think they can break God's commands with impunity. That it doesn't really matter and there is no temporal or eternal penalty for sin.

Death is a consequence of sin - both personal sin and Adam's imputed sin. Christ was sinless and he died as a substitute to redeem his people from their sins.

The idea of Christ dying a substitutionary death is set forth here in Heb. 2:14.

Jonathan Edwards preached, "If we are in Christ, justice and the law have their course with respect to our sins, without our hurt. The foundation of the sinner's fear and distress is the justice and the law of God; they are against him, and they are unalterable, they must have their course. Every jot and tittle of the law must be fulfilled, heaven and earth shall be destroyed rather than justice should not take place; there is no possibility of sin's escaping justice.

But yet if the distressed trembling soul who is afraid of justice, would fly to Christ, he would be a safe hiding-place. Justice and the threatening of the law will have their course fully, while he is safe and untouched, as if he were to be eternally destroyed. Christ bears the stroke of justice, and the curse of the law falls fully on him; Christ bears all that vengeance that belongs to the sin that has been committed by him, and there is no need of its being borne twice over. His temporal sufferings, by reason of the infinite dignity of his person, are fully equivalent to the eternal sufferings of a mere creature. And then his sufferings answer for him who flees to him as well as if they were his own, for indeed they are his own by virtue of the union between Christ and him."

From: *Jonathan Edwards on Knowing Christ*; sermon titled, "Safety, fulness, and sweet refreshment in Christ," 160-161. Understanding the person for Christ is necessary for our salvation. We must have faith in the biblical Jesus. The true Jesus who is the God-man who accomplished a substitutionary atonement for his people. The Bible does not allow any form of pluralism or just some so-called sincere belief.

**Illus.** - man and woman on a train - "Let me know when we get to the next town." He woke her up when the train stopped and told her it was her stop. . . . He was sincere. He truly believed it was her stop, that they were in the next town. She sincerely believed

him. Sincerity didn't make it true. The Bible proclaims repeatedly that the only way of salvation is through Jesus. **John 14:6; Acts 4:12; John 8:24**

**Rom. 9:6-12 Romans series #42 11/1/09**

Before I left for Ukraine and we considered Reformation themes last week, we were working our way through Romans 9. We observed that Paul is deeply concerned about the salvation of his fellow Jews. **Rom. 10:1-3** We noted that they had great religious advantages. They had the ceremonies, the prophecies, the shadows and types, the covenants - all pointing toward Christ, who was born of the line of David according to the flesh. However, these great advantages did not automatically save them. In the same way, people can be members of a church or grow up in a Christian family, but not be saved. Those are great advantages in terms of knowing and hearing the gospel, but they do not guarantee salvation. Paul has just spoken in Romans 8 of the eternal counsels of God and how everyone who is predestined is called, justified, and glorified. He has stated that no one can lay a charge against God's elect or condemn those who are in Christ. Nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ. The fact that a large number of Jews were not believing in Jesus as the Messiah could raise a question. Has the eternal plan of God been thwarted? Has the word of God failed? **Rom. 9:6** Paul answers this question by pointing to the fact that not everyone who is a part of ethnic Israel is a part of the spiritual Israel of God. This begins Paul's more elaborate teaching on the doctrine of election in the book of Romans. That doctrine is presented in the context that God's word has not failed and there has always been an elect or chosen people inside the general covenant community. In dealing with this question, Paul magnifies the grace of God in our salvation. Our salvation is purely of God's grace and mercy.

**I. God's sovereign purpose to save his elect never fails.**

**Rom. 9:6**

Paul states that God's redemptive purposes have not failed. The reason he gives is that not everyone who is descended from Israel or Jacob is an Israelite in the spiritual sense of the term. Paul makes the same distinction in **Rom. 9:7**. This idea is rooted in the Old Testament. Remember when Israel as a nation had gone into idolatry. The prophets often made a distinction between the nation as a whole and the remnant of true believers. This is essentially the same idea which Paul set forth in **Rom. 2:28-29**.

Paul was saying that God's promise had not failed because there is a true Israel comprised of those who, through God's election and grace, truly believe in the Messiah. What made a person a part of this spiritual or true Israel of God? There is only one thing that causes a person a true Israelite. They believe in Jesus Christ as their Savior. The true Israel in the Old Testament looked toward Jesus' coming and believed on him. Paul has already given two examples of this in Romans 4: Abraham and David. In fact, he states they were both justified by faith in Jesus, the Messiah and had his righteousness imputed to them. A question that I've often had asked is how were the Old Testament believers saved? They were saved the same way we are through faith in the Messiah. God applied the work of Christ, which was certain to occur, to them. Rom. 4 uses Abraham and David as prime examples of how a person is justified by faith alone. Besides those examples, **Gal. 3:8, 16; Heb. 11:24-26**

This spiritual or true Israel is made up of all who believe in Christ. **Gal. 6:15-16**

The Israel of God refers to the new creation, a new community of faith brought into existence by the cross of Christ that unites both Jews and Gentiles into one community. It is best to understand the Greek word *kai* which could be translated as "and," "even" or "also" as epexegetical (as explanatory) and translated as "even."

This makes verse 16 correspond to Paul's blessing in verse 15 on those who do not make a distinction between Jew and Gentle.

Therefore, the phrase "even the Israel of God" refers to the community of faith made up of believing Jews and believing Gentiles who do not make a distinction based on

circumcision. John Calvin in his *Commentary On Galatians* cites Justin Martyr: "We, who have been brought to God by this crucified Christ, are the true spiritual Israel, and the seed of Judah, and of Jacob, and of Isaac, and of Abraham, whose faith was attested and who was blessed by God, and called the father of many nations, while he was in uncircumcision." **Calvin comments:** "In a word, he gives the appellation of the *Israel of God* to those whom he formally denominated the children of Abraham by faith (Gal. 3:29), and thus includes all believers, whether Jews or Gentiles, who were united into one church." **O. Palmer Robertson writes,** "Contrary to much modern thought, it is not those who distinguish between Jews and Gentiles who are blessed by God, Instead, those who maintain this distinction are the very ones who have been denied God's blessing" (*The Israel of God*, p. 46). See: Gal. 3:28-29; Phil. 3:1-3; 1 Pet. 2:9-10 (compare with Exo. 19:5-6).

God's word has not failed because all who belong to the Israel of God, in other words, those who believe by God's grace, are saved.

An important application of this for us is that it is possible to be in the community of faith and not be truly a believer. There were many people in Israel who were a part of the covenant community. Ethnically, they were born into it, but they did not believe. **1 John 2:19; Matt. 7:21-23**

**James M. Boice** illustrates false profession of faith with this story: A woodcarver in Bavaria found a piece of wood in the mouth of a sack of grain. The wood was the same color as the grains of wheat, so he took it into his head to carve the wood into imitation grains. He carved a handful of them, mixed them with some real wheat, and the invited his friends to tell them apart. The woodcarver had done the work so well that no one could tell the difference. Even he was unable to tell the imitation grains from the true wheat. In the end, the only way to distinguish the true from the false kernels was to place the grains in water. After a few days the real grain sprouted, while the imitation grain remained exactly what it was before: dead wood. (1043)

Examine your heart. Do you trust in Christ alone for your salvation? That's the foundational point of the gospel.

In terms of Christian living, do you simply come to church out of habit or because of some social benefit? Some people come to church so their children can have decent friends or hear some Bible stories. When their children grow up, they quite coming. Do you come because you know and believe in Jesus? You rely upon him as your Savior and you want to worship him? You also have a desire to obey God and worship with his people.

## **II. God's sovereign purpose to save his elect is demonstrated through the example of three generations.**

Since they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel or Jacob, why do some believe and others do not. The reason Paul gives is that those who believe are recipients of divine grace.

Paul has already addressed this in **Rom. 8:29-30**. Remember we observed in that passage that the term "foreknowledge" does not refer to God foreknowing something the person does such as good works, or having faith or repentance. The object of the verb is the person himself. Everyone who is foreknown in the sense of the term in this verse is predestined, called, justified, and glorified. Since not every individual is justified and glorified, then not everyone is foreknown in the usage of the term in this passage. It is God's specific foreknowing of his elect. In this next paragraph in Romans 9, Paul develops this idea further. He brings out that the ultimate reason a person believes is because they were chosen by God for salvation. There is certainly a mysterious element in this. We are not given in Scripture the reasons God elects someone to salvation.

### **Deut. 29:29**

However, we do know from Scripture that none of us deserve salvation. If God had damned every fallen person, which includes all of us, there would have been no legitimate reason to complain. Remember, the principle that justice is owed and grace is



freely given. Grace is never owed to anyone. It is justice that is owed. This is an important principle to remember when we consider election. God does not owe salvation to anyone. Justice is owed; grace is a free gift.

**Rom. 9:6-9** - All through this section Paul anticipates and answers objections or arguments against election.

The first generation Paul points to in terms of election is Abraham. Abraham, then Abram, was simply another pagan living in Ur. His family worshipped idols. **Josh. 24:2** God sovereignly called Abraham and entered into a covenant with him. Abraham's salvation began with the sovereign election of God and God's divine initiative in the life of Abraham.

**Rom. 9:7** - A person is not automatically saved because they are descended from Abraham just like a person born to Christian parents is not automatically saved.

Remember that Abraham had Ishmael and Isaac. God chose Isaac. Someone might object and say, "Isaac was the child of Abraham and Sarah while Ishmael's mother was Hagar. That's why Isaac was chosen." Paul anticipates that argument and gives another example. He doesn't discount his first example, but simply gives another one in answer to that potential objection. **Rom. 9:10-11** - In this example, there are two children of the same parents and even conceived at the same time. There is the joke that they were womb mates. Especially notice the emphasis in Rom. 9:11 on God's election. They hadn't done anything good or bad. The only thing which made a difference between them was God's sovereign action. Arminian theology argues that election is based on God's foreknowledge. It argues that God before creation God looks down through the corridors of time and sees who, of their own will and ability will believe on Christ, and then on the basis of that elects those who will believe to salvation. The main problem with that is the Bible's teaching that fallen man, in and of himself, is dead in sin, does not seek God, represses the knowledge of God, is hostile to God, cannot please God, the things of God are foolishness to him and he cannot understand them apart from the work of the Holy

Spirit. In other words, there is no faith or repentance or good works in fallen man, apart from God's work, to be foreseen. Another problem with that position is that the Bible never says that. There is no statement in association with election that sets forth the idea that it is based on God foreseeing the faith, repentance, or good works of man and basing his election on that. In fact, **Rom. 9:11** emphasizes the opposite. The twins had not done anything before God's election took place. **Charles Spurgeon said**, "Pride is always inconsistent with the true doctrine of the gospel. You may use this test concerning any preaching or teaching that you meet with. If it logically leads a man to boast of himself, it is not true." Again, remember, that both of those twins were descendants of Adam and were born in sin. To one, Jacob, God's gives grace. He does not actively change Esau and, in Esau's life, he lives according to his fallen nature. That includes his unbelief and sin. As an unredeemed sinner, he is object of God's judicial wrath like all other unredeemed sinners. Esau simply receives the justice due for his sin. **Rom. 9:12-13**

If the Arminian position is correct, this is the place you would expect Paul to insert some idea of election being based on foreknowledge. However, he does the opposite and bases it on God's sovereign purpose. In fact, Scripture teaches that faith and repentance are the result of God's election, not the cause of it. **Acts 13:48; 16:14; 18:27; 2 Tim. 1:9; 2 Tim. 2:25-26**

Again, Paul anticipates an objection. Someone might say, "That's not fair. If God gives grace to Jacob, then he is obligated to give grace to Esau." **Rom. 9:14** - I might add, in the Arminian view, this objection would never arise. What is Paul's inspired answer to that object. It is the freedom God has to be God.

**Rom. 9:15-16** Thomas Bradwardine was John Wyclif's teacher and mentor. He died in 1348 from the Black Plague which he caught while taking care of plague victims. Through his study of Scripture, he had come to understand the grace of God in our salvation. He was a pre-Reformation, reformer. His life's verse was Rom. 9:16. This emphasizes that our salvation is completely of God's grace. **R. C. Sproul said**, "Very

rarely does anyone come to me and say, 'I have a theological problem: I can't understand why God redeemed me.' That question shows a proper understanding of grace. An understanding that the only way a person can enter into the kingdom of God is through God's mercy and grace because we are not holy. **Jonathan Edwards preached:** "The grace of God in bestowing this gift is most free. It was what God was under no obligation to bestow. He might have rejected fallen man, as he did the fallen angels. It was what we never did anything to merit; it was given while we were yet enemies, and before we had so much as repented. It was from the love of God who saw no excellency in us to attract it; . . . . And it is from mere grace that the benefits of Christ are applied to such and such particular persons. Those that are called and sanctified are to attribute it alone to the good pleasure of God's goodness, by which they are distinguished. He is sovereign, and hath mercy on whom he will have mercy." **Back in the 18th century,** a young boy was born into a Christian home. For the first six years of his life, he heard the truths of the gospel and he was loved. Sadly, though, his parents died. The orphaned boy went to live with his relatives. There he was mistreated and abused and ridiculed for his faith in Christ. As time went on, the boy fled and joined the Royal Navy. In the navy, the boy's life went downhill. He became known as a brawler, was whipped many times and participated in some of his comrades being keel-hauled. Finally, while he was still young, he deserted the Royal Navy and fled to Africa, where he attached himself to a Portuguese slave trader. There, his life reached its lowest point. There were times when he actually ate off the floor on his hands and knees. He escaped and became attached to another slave trader as the first mate on a ship. But the young man's pattern of life had become so depraved, he couldn't stay out of trouble. As the story goes, he stole the ship's whiskey and got so drunk that he fell overboard. He was close to drowning when one of his shipmates harpooned him and brought him back on board. As a result, the young man had a huge scar on his side for the rest of his life. After that escapade, he couldn't get much lower. He was a vile man working on a slave ship. In the midst of a great storm off

the coast of Scotland, the crew worked frantically to save the ship. After a series of repairs, the young man said to the Captain, "If this will not do, the Lord have mercy on us." He later reflected, "This (though spoken with little reflection) was the first desire I had breathed for mercy for the space of many years. I was instantly struck with my own words; and, as Jehu said once, 'what hast thou to do with peace!' so it directly occurred, 'What mercy can there be for me.'" This was the beginning of his conversion. They made it to port and he met a Captain of another ship who was a Christian. For nearly a month, he spent each evening with him. A short time later he came to real saving faith in Christ. He later said of himself, "I thought I was, above most living, a fit person to proclaim that faithful saying, 'That Jesus Christ came into the world to save the chief of sinners,' and as my life had been full of remarkable turns, and I seemed selected to show what the Lord could do, I was in some hopes that, perhaps, sooner or later, he might call me into his service." The man was John Newton who became a minister and later wrote over 300 hymns. His most famous Amazing Grace captures his salvation: Amazing grace! how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me! I once was lost, but now am saved. Was blind, but now I see.

**Rom. 9:14-26 Romans series #43 11/8/09**

**Charles Spurgeon said,** "If there is one doctrine in the world which reveals the enmity of the human heart more than another, it is the doctrine of God's sovereignty. When men hear the Lord's voice saying, 'I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy,' they gnash their teeth and call the preacher an Antinomian, a High Calvinist, or some other hard name. They do not love God except they can make him a little God. They cannot bear for him to be supreme. They would gladly take his will away from him and set up their own will as the first cause."

Last week we looked at the first part of Paul's discussion concerning election. We noted that he leads into this doctrine through affirming that God's word had not failed (Rom. 9:6). It had not failed in regards to the salvation of many Israelites because not everyone

descended from Abraham is a true Israelite in the full spiritual sense of the term. The ones who are the true Israel of God are those who have been chosen by God in accordance with this divine purpose of election. We noted that this is not based on foreseen faith, repentance, or good works. Rom. 9:11 especially emphasizes that point. God shows mercy to his elect and gives the justice due to the reprobate.

This morning we are going to continue looking at Paul's treatment of God's sovereignty in salvation. I want us to consider this under the general idea that the ultimate goal of everything is the glorification of God. God has ordered creation, history, salvation so that he is the most honored and glorified by them.

### **I. God magnifies his mercy and grace in election.**

**Rom. 9:11, 14-15** As we noted last week, Paul anticipates an objection that God's giving of grace to Jacob and passing over Esau and giving him justice for his sin is not fair.

That objection would never come up in the Arminian idea that election is based on God's foreknowledge of what man himself will do in terms of faith or good works.

Remember that God does not owe salvation to anyone. What is owed to sinful man is justice for his sin. That is an important principle to remember when we consider election.

A closely related concept is that God is free to be God in terms of giving mercy. God declares this concerning himself in Rom. 9:15 (Exo. 33:19). **Rom. 9:20-21**

When God gives mercy, it comes from his own sovereign purposes and infinite wisdom.

Anytime God opens someone's heart to believe in Christ, that demonstrates the grace and mercy of God. That mercy was not owed to that person. It simply flows from God's sovereign mercy. **Rom. 9:15-16, 22-23.**

The result is that salvation is completely of God's grace. We are not saved because we are smarter than someone else or more righteous than someone else. We believe in Christ and have salvation because God has sovereignly opened our heart to believe. It is from God's divine initiative that we are saved.

**Rom. 9:16.** This idea is taught consistently and repeatedly throughout Scripture. **Eph. 2:1-5; John 1:12-13; 6:44-45; 63-65**

Illus. - R. C. Sproul debating an Arminian NT prof. "Why do you believe and your neighbor does not?"

**Rom. 9:22-23** - God makes known the riches of his mercy in his election.

## **II. God magnifies his justice in reprobation.**

### **Rom. 9:17-18**

The first thing that is important to note about this statement is that a quote from Exo. 9:16 is introduced with the phrase, "The Scripture says." In Exo. 9:16, God is the one who is speaking. What God says, Scripture says. What Scripture says is God speaking. This is an important affirmation of the Bible being the very word of God. **B. B. Warfield** wrote concerning this in his work *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible*. Warfield has an entire chapter that focuses on the phrases "Scripture says" and "God says." He examines numerous examples of this including Rom. 9:17 and Exo. 9:16. **He writes**, "The two sets of passages, together, thus show an absolute identification, in the minds of these writers, of 'Scripture' with the speaking God."

**The context in Exo. 9:16** is helpful in considering this statement in Romans 9. The quotation is the word which God spoke through Moses to Pharaoh after the sixth plague (boils on man and beast). **Exo. 9:14-16 John Murray comments**, ". . . the quotation is best taken here as referring to the position Pharaoh occupied by the providence of God on the scene of history and to the role he played in connection with the redemption of Israel from Egypt. The adamant opposition of Pharaoh became the occasion for the display of God's great power in the plagues visited upon Egypt and particularly in the destruction of Pharaoh's hosts in the Red Sea and the passage of Israel on dry land" (27-28).

The raising up of Pharaoh and the hardening of Pharaoh were designed to demonstrate God's power throughout of the earth. It certainly did that. **Deut. 6:22** states, "Moreover, the Lord showed great and distressing signs and wonders before our eyes against Egypt,

Pharaoh and all his household." Rahab expressed faith through her knowledge of what God had done. **Josh. 2:9-10**

Later in Israel's history when they were fighting the Philistines, the Philistines indicated that they knew what God had done in Egypt. **1 Sam. 4:7-8**

**William Hendriksen points out:** "Even today when, in the home, in Sunday School, Christian School, or church, the story of the ten plagues is told, or when that story is read, is not God's name and greatness being proclaimed?" (326)

In terms of the hardening language. Pharaoh was a sinner. His heart was hard and he had hardened his own heart against God. However, the emphasis in Exodus is on God's hardening of his heart. **John Murray comments,** "The hardening, it should be remembered, is of a judicial character. It presupposes ill-desert, and, in the case of Pharaoh, particularly the ill-desert of his self-hardening. Hardening may never be abstracted from the guilt of which it is the wages" (29).

Paul has already introduced this idea in **Romans 1:18ff.** Fallen man suppresses the knowledge of the true God and substitutes idols for the true God. As a result of their sin, God turns them over to their lusts. **Rom. 1:24-28.**

In hardening, God removes any restraint concerning Pharaoh's sin. He let's him pursue the wickedness he wants to do. He does not intervene to change his heart or bring him to repentance.

**Psa. 81:11-12; 2 Thess. 2:10-14**

**Rom. 9:18** is a restatement of **Rom. 9:16** with the point of God sometimes giving justice. Again, here is God giving what sin deserves. He is giving the person what is owed - justice. We see the principle again that God does not owe salvation to anyone.

In doing this, he magnifies not only the demonstration of grace to his elect, but also demonstrates and magnifies his justice.

God has ordered his mercy and justice in election and reprobation in such a way that his attributes of mercy and justice are magnified. There is much talk about the freedom of

man in our culture and in the evangelical world as well. Here is the freedom of God to be God.

**Rom. 9:19** - Here Paul anticipates another objection. This objection misses the point that God simply gives justice to the reprobate or non-elect. **James M. Boice comments on this objection:** "The human heart is a deceitful but very resourceful thing, and two ways it expresses these characteristics are by dismissing God, on the one hand, or blaming him, on the other.

Quite a few years ago, my wife and I had a neighbor who seemed to have no interest in God. she had very little morality, was unfaithful to her husband and often boasted about it, explaining to me on once occasion how she was able to squeeze some of her affairs into her lunch hour. But then one day she discovered that her husband was having an affair, too, and she was devastated. The marriage ended in divorce. This woman came to me when she found out about her husband's affair because I was a pastor, probably the only one she knew. She had not been thinking of God before this, but now she abruptly brought God into the picture. 'Why is God doing this to me?' was her question. She considered God to be terribly unfair. That's the kind of thinking Paul is dealing with in Romans 9:19-21, as he continues to teach about the sovereignty of God in salvation. Romans, vol. 3, 1099-1100. Paul has already addressed this issue in terms of God giving justice to sinners. Now he points out another aspect of man's questioning God. He reminds us that God is the creator and we are the creation.

**Rom. 9:20-21** - Four main Old Testament passages present the idea that God is the Potter and we are the clay. **Isa. 29:16; 45:9; 64:8; Jer. 18:1-11.** This is where James White got the title of his book *The Potter's Freedom*. God is free to exercise his sovereign and infinitely wise will. Notice how that idea runs through this whole chapter. **Rom. 9:11, 15-16, 18, 20-21.**

**William Hendriksen** comments on this section: "The main idea Paul is putting across is this: If even a potter has the right out of the same lump or mass of clay to make one



vessel for honor, and another for dishonor, then certainly God, our Maker, has the right, out of the same mass of human beings who by their own guilt have plunged themselves into the pit of misery, to elect some to everlasting life, and to allow others to remain in the abyss of wretchedness" (*Romans Commentary*, 327).

**Rom. 9:22-24**

Again, we see an ultimate division in mankind between the elect and the reprobate. They are called "vessels of wrath" and "vessels of mercy." The emphasis is on God making that differentiation. He is the potter who has the right to show mercy or to give the justice that is due. **Rom. 9:15, 18, 21.**

R. C. Sproul illustrates God either giving mercy or justice in accordance with his divine will and freedom this way: Think of Caiaphas the high priest at Jesus trial.

After the resurrection and the spread of the gospel, he attacked the church and persecuted it. He imprisoned many Christians and was on his way to Damascus to do the same there when a light came from heaven and he heard a voice saying, "Caiaphas, Caiaphas, why do you persecute me?" Caiaphas was converted and became an evangelist and minister of the gospel. It didn't happen that way did it? But, God did that in the life of Saul of Tarsus who became the Apostle Paul. Paul was not any greater candidate for salvation than Caiaphas was. God sovereignly saved Paul and called him to his ministry as an apostle.

Five attributes of God are set forth in verses 22-23: wrath, power, patience, glory, and mercy. God has the purpose of demonstrating his wrath and power toward the reprobate and giving the riches of his glory and mercy to his elect. He is patient toward the vessels of wrath for the ultimate purpose of magnifying his justice and demonstrating his mercy to his elect.

**Rom. 9:22** - The "willing" in this statement has a two-fold reference. First, for God to show his wrath and make his power known. Second, that he would make known the riches of his glory on vessels of mercy. The best way to think of this statement is that

God "because God wanted to reveal his wrath, he endured the objects of wrath with patience." In other words, to have an even greater demonstration of his wrath when at last he does show it, he endures the vessels of wrath for a time. The demonstration of his just wrath magnifies the grace and mercy which the elect, the vessels of mercy receive. They deserve the same wrath and they are given mercy. **James M. Boice writes**, "God's chief end is to glorify God. Therefore, since God is all-powerful, this end will certainly be achieved. It will be achieved in every detail of history and in the destiny of every individual. Every person who has ever lived or will ever live must glorify God, either actively or passively, either willingly or unwillingly, either in heaven or in hell. You will glorify God. Either you will glorify him as the object of his mercy and glory, which will be seen in you. Or you will glorify him in your rebellion and unbelief by being made the object of his wrath and power at the final judgment. In fact, if you are rebelling, you are glorifying him even now, because even now his patience is displayed in you by his enduring your sin for a time, rather than sending you to hell immediately, which you deserve." (1108-1109). **Rom. 9:24-26** - Here again is the idea of an effectual call unto salvation. This is the same kind of effectual call which Paul refers to in Rom. 8:30. Everyone who is called is justified. Notice that the community of believers is called from both Jews and Gentiles. Peter uses very similar language in describing the non-elect or reprobate and the elect of God in **1 Pet. 2:7-10**. Peter even quotes the same passages from Hosea which Paul quotes.

If you are in Christ now, it is because you have received mercy from God. If God never did another thing for you, your only rational response the mercy you've received already in Christ, would be to fall on your knees in worship and gratitude and pour out your life for him. All of this magnifies the mercy and grace we've received in our salvation.

Mercy which was not owed to us, but freely given by God.

**Robert Murray McCheyne** wrote a hymn that expresses this well:

When this passing world is done/ when has sunk yon glaring sun,/ looking o'er life's  
finished story,-/ Then, Lord, shall I fully know,/ not till then, how much I owe.

When I hear the wicked call/ on the rocks and hills to fall,/ When I see them start and  
shrink/ on the fiery deluge brink, -/ Then, Lord, shall I fully know, not till then, how  
much I owe.

When I stand before the throne,/ dressed in beauty not my own,/ When I see thee as thou  
art,/ love thee with unsinning heart, -/ Then, Lord, shall I fully know, not till then, how  
much I owe.

When the praise of heav'n I hear,/ loud as thunders to the ear,/ loud as many waters'  
noise, sweet as harp's melodious voice, -/ Then, Lord, shall I fully know,/ not till then,  
how much I owe.

Chosen not for good in me,/ wakened up from wrath to flee,/ Hidden in the Saviour's  
side,/ by the Spirit sanctified, -/ Teach me, Lord, on earth to show,/ by my love, how  
much I owe.

**Rom. 9:22-33 Romans series #44 11/15/09**

The last two weeks we have examined Paul's discussion concerning election in Romans 9. He leads into this discussion with his statement in Romans 9:6 that the word of God has not failed. Even though many Israelites were not believing in Jesus as the Messiah, God's word has not failed because they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel. Not everyone who is ethnically descended from the patriarchs is a part of the spiritual Israel of God. Paul shows that this is the way it always was in the Old Testament period. Abraham was simply another pagan living in Ur and God sovereignly called him to salvation. God chose Isaac and later Jacob. The principle of God being free to give mercy or not to give mercy is emphasized throughout this chapter. Rom. 9:15-16 is really a great summary of what Paul is saying in this chapter. This morning we are looking at the last part of Romans 9 where Paul applies several passages from the Old Testament to demonstrate his point that God's word had not failed. He drives home the

point again that salvation is completely of God's grace and not in any way the result of our works. Many of Paul's fellow Israelites, in rejecting Jesus as the Messiah and way of salvation, are pursuing a works righteousness way of salvation.

**I. God's word has not failed because God has effectually called his elect to salvation.**

**Rom. 9:22-24**

Here we see a double predestination. There are vessels of wrath prepared for destruction which God endures with patience and there are vessels of mercy which God prepared beforehand for glory. Paul then points out that God has called those vessels of mercy to salvation and those who are called come from among Jews and Gentiles. Here again we see that important concept of calling in our salvation. Remember when we consider "calling" we think of it in two ways. First, there is the external call of gospel. That is simply the proclamation of the gospel. The message is communicated in some way. However, that call is not effective. People can hear that call and reject it. The second type of call is what Paul is talking about here. That is the idea of an effectual call. The external call of the gospel is made effective through the work of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit regenerates our hearts and effectively brings us to Christ. This is the call that Paul mentions in **Rom. 8:30**. Everyone who is predestined is called and everyone who is called is justified and finally glorified. Since everyone who is called is justified, then this is a call that produces salvation. It leads to faith and repentance. Again, this shows God's divine initiative in salvation. The concept is pervasive throughout the New Testament. **Rom. 1:6-7; 1 Cor. 1:22-24, 30-31; Gal. 1:15;**

**2 Thess. 2:13-14; 2 Tim. 1:9; 1 Pet. 1:3-4; 2 Pet. 1:1-3.**

**Charles Spurgeon, in speaking of effectual calling, said,** "I do not come into this pulpit hoping that perhaps somebody will of his own free will return to Christ. My hope lies in another quarter. I hope that my Master will lay hold of some of them and say, 'You are mine, and you shall be mine. I claim you for myself.' My hope arises from the freeness of grace, and not from the freedom of the will. A poor haul of fish will any gospel

fisherman make if he takes none but those who are eager to leap into the net. Oh, for five minutes of the great Shepherd's handiwork!" **He also said,** "A man is not saved against his will, but he is made willing by the operation of the Holy Ghost. A mighty grace which he does not wish to resist enters into the man, disarms him, makes a new creature of him, and he is saved."

**Similarly, J. Gresham Machen said,** "It is perfectly true, of course, that argument is quite insufficient to make a man a Christian. You may argue with him from now until the end of the world; you may bring forth the most magnificent arguments - but all will be in vain unless there is one other thing: the mysterious, creative power of the Holy Spirit in the new birth. But because argument is insufficient, it does not follow that it is unnecessary. Sometimes it is used directly by the Holy Spirit to bring a man to Christ. But more frequently it is used indirectly."

God is the divine initiator of our salvation. This emphasizes again that our salvation is purely of God's grace and mercy.

**Robert Reymond writes,** "With a gloriously monotonous regularity Paul pits faith against all law-keeping, viewed as its diametrical opposite. Whereas the latter relies on human effort of the law-keeper looking to himself to render satisfaction before God and earn merit, the former repudiates and looks entirely away from self and all human effort to the work of Jesus Christ, who alone by his obedient life and sacrificial death rendered full satisfaction before God and men" (*Paul: Missionary Theologian*, 425).

It is also important to note that Paul emphasizes that this community of believers is comprised of both Jews and Gentiles. This is consistent with Paul's statement in Rom. 9:6 that they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel. The Israel of God, the new covenant community of faith is made up of saved Jews and Gentiles. They are a part of the God's family because God sovereignly has called them to salvation in Christ.

Paul continues to develop this idea with two quotes from Hosea 2:23 and 1:10. The context in Hosea is important in regard to Paul's argument that the word of God has not

failed because they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel. God told Hosea to marry a woman who was going to prove to be unfaithful to him so he married Gomer the daughter of Diblaim (Hos. 1:2-3). She began to have children and God gave names to the children. The first son was named Jezreel. That is a Hebrew word which means to scatter something to the winds or throw it away. It pointed to God's judgment on the northern kingdom that he was going to scatter them to the winds or among the Gentile nations as a judgment for their sin and idolatry. That happened just a few years after this when the Assyrians invaded Israel. The second child was a daughter and God said to name her Lo-Ruhamah. That is two Hebrew words with mean not loved or not pitied. Lo means no or not. Again, this was prophetic because God would not show pity or compassion to Israel when he judged them and scattered them to the Gentile world. A third son was born and God told Hosea to name him Lo-Ammi. This means "not my people." God was declaring that the northern kingdom had embraced idolatry and falsehood and, because of their unbelief, they were not his people. Paul quotes the last half of **Hosea 2:23**. In this verse, all three names are mentioned, but now without the negative associated with them. Jezreel now has the meaning of sowing or planting. With the other two names, the negating word "lo" is removed. Paul applies this to all who called through the work of the Holy Spirit to Christ.

How does this apply to God calling his elect from ethnic Jews and ethnic Gentiles?

Hosea is talking about the rejection and restoration of Israel. How does that fit the Romans 9 context?

**James M. Boice comments on Rom. 9:24-26:** "What Paul's quotation does show is the way he understood the words spoken to Israel when God called the nation Jezreel, Lo-Ruhamah, Lo-Ammi. Particularly Lo-Ammi, which is the name he focuses on in his quotations. According to Paul's thinking, Lo-Ammi is not to be understood merely in the sense that the people were going to be treated *as if* they were no longer God's people when, in fact, they were. Rather it means that they actually ceased to be God's people in

a special sense. That is, they became 'Gentiles' so far as their relationship to God was concerned. So it is not actually of Jews that the words 'I will call them "my people" who are not my people' are spoken but those who have become 'Gentiles' by their rejection of God. It is from these Gentiles, both ethnic Gentiles and ethnic Jews who have thus actually become 'Gentiles' that the new people of God is formed."

**John Calvin**, in commenting on Romans 9:25-26 writes, "When the Jews were banished from the family of God, they were thereby reduced to a common level with the Gentiles. The distinction between Jew and Gentile has been removed, and the mercy of God now extends indiscriminately to all the Gentiles." Romans, 214. **Charles Hodge** says the same thing: "The ten tribes were in a heathenish state, relapsed into idolatry, and, therefore, what was said of them is, of course, applicable to others in like circumstances or of like character" (326).

Peter uses the same quote in reference to Gentiles coming to salvation. **1 Peter 2:7-10** - Notice how much this passage parallels Paul's statements in Romans 9. First, we see a decree of reprobation and a decree of election in verses 8-9. The ones who stumble and are offended by Christ are appointed to this doom. That is similar to the vessels of wrath expression Paul uses in Romans 9:22. The elect are set forth in 1 Pet. 2:9. Also, notice the idea of God being the initiator of our salvation in calling us out of darkness. 1 Pet. 2:10 has the same Hosea quotes and Peter applies them in the same way. The majority of the people Peter is addressing are Gentiles (1 Pet. 1:14, 18; 2:10). Both Paul and Peter are affirming that our salvation is completely of God's grace and that we are saved because of God's divine initiative. They both affirm that the covenant community of faith is comprised of both Jews and Gentiles who believe by the grace of God. Therefore, God's word has not failed because he is saving all his elect from both ethnic Jewish and Gentile origins. The community of faith is comprised of both groups and only of those who are in Christ. **Eph. 2:11-18**

**Rom. 9:27-28** - Paul quotes Isa. 10:22-23 and goes back to his original point that they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel. There has always been a remnant who are truly redeemed inside the broader Jewish community. The term "remnant" sometimes refers to the physical survival of a small number of Jews after a military defeat such as the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem. However, in the later prophets it especially refers to those who are truly saved within Israel. Paul refers to this later in **Rom. 11:2-5**.

**Rom. 9:28** - There will be a final judgment for those outside of Christ. **Rom. 9:29** - Here is the second quote from Isaiah (1:9).

If God has not saved a remnant, the all of Israel would have simply been like Sodom and Gomorrah. They all would have ceased to exist. The northern kingdom did cease to exist as a distinct people. God saved a remnant. Even at the time Paul was writing it was a remnant of his Jewish kinsman who were believing in Jesus as the Messiah.

## **II. God's word has not failed because the lost pursue falsehood and receive justice.**

### **Rom. 9:30-33**

Paul now makes the point that those who are not in a state of grace pursue a false way of salvation. Ultimately, they receive justice for their false religion. The Gentiles, who did not have the law and promises of God, believed in Christ. The Jews who had all those religious advantages did not. Instead, they pursued a path of self-righteousness. First, in denying that Jesus was the Messiah, they were also denying the prophecies and promises concerning Jesus in the Old Testament. **John 5:39, 46.**

Second, they created a false way of salvation through good works. This passage affirms again justification by faith alone. Justification is not by law-keeping or good works.

This is what have done all through history ever since Adam and Eve tried to cover their nakedness with fig leaf aprons. **Charles Hodge writes**, "No form of error is more destructive than that which leads to self-dependence; either reliance on our own powers, or on our own merit, ver. 32 [Rom. 9:32]. *Romans*, 332.



**John Calvin writes,** "The Lord testifies that he recognizes no righteousness of works except in the perfect observance of his law. What perversity it is for us, when we lack righteousness . . . to boast of some little bits of a few works and try through other satisfactions to pay for what is lacking?" 3,14,13.

**Robert Reymond said,** "While I trust that all of you here are genuinely converted and true Christians, I must urge you to examine yourselves to make sure that you are trusting solely in the preceptive and penal obedience of Jesus Christ for God's forgiveness and imputed distributive righteousness. For make no mistake about it, the day will come when you and I will stand naked before God, and in that day the issue of in whom or in what we trusted here for our salvation will be all-important. And 'though [we may] wish to dispute with him,' as Job states, 'we will be unable to answer one time out of a thousand (9:3), for you and I in that Great Day will be stripped of all the things in which we may have placed our confidence in this world. We will stand before the throne of the Judge of all the earth in that day without earthly title, without money, without property, without earthly reputation, without personal prestige - in utter poverty in ourselves. And unless we have been forgiven of our sins and are enrobed in the glorious dress of the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ, God will consign us to eternal perdition for our sins. Beloved friends, if you have never completely repudiated your own self-help efforts at self-salvation and have never totally trust in the Savior's righteous life and sacrificial death alone for your salvation, I beg of you, do both right now!

In 1662, David Dickson lay on his deathbed. He was a Presbyterian minister of the Church of Scotland who wrote a wonderful commentary on Psalms. He was a professor of divinity in Glasgow University and later in Edinburgh University. But at the end of his life at the age of seventy-nine, when he was visited by his friend, John Livingstone, it was not those things to which he was looking. No, this is what he said, "I have taken all my good deeds and all my bad deeds, and cast them through each other in a heap before the Lord, and fled from both, and betaken myself to the Lord Jesus Christ, and in Him I

have sweet peace." (From: A Commentary on the Psalms [ reprint, Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1959], xxiii.]). **John Carrick comments on this:** "My good friends, have you done that? Have you taken all your good deeds and all your bad deeds, and have you cast them through each other in a heap before the Lord and fled from both, and betaken yourself to the Lord Jesus Christ, and in Him do you have sweet peace?" *The Covenant*, 144-145.

### **Romans 10:1-4 Romans Series #45 1/3/10**

Today we are going back to our Romans sermon series and picking up where we left off at the beginning Rom. 10. I want to remind everyone that in this section of Romans, Paul is expressing his deep concern for his kinsmen, his fellow Jews who were not saved. He has pointed out that their rejection of Jesus as the Messiah does not mean that God's sovereign plan has failed or been frustrated. All through Romans 9 he pointed out that there was always a remnant or elect inside the broader people of Israel and that God is sovereign in making this distinction among men. Romans 10 starts with Paul saying that he fervently prays for his kinsmen. There are some lessons on the importance and nature of prayer that we can glean from Paul's statements.

#### **I. We are to pray for the lost because prayer is always worthwhile. Rom. 10:1-2**

Sometimes we can get so focused on the eternal counsel and decree of God that we forget that God has also decreed to work through means or secondary causes. Prayer is one of those means. **Carl F. H. Henry said**, "Prayer is one of the means God has etched into the cosmos for the advancement of His purposes."

**John Murray writes**, "In the preceding chapter [Rom. 9] the emphasis is upon the sovereign and determinative will of God in the differentiation that exists among men. God has mercy on whom he will and whom he wills he hardens. Some are vessels for wrath, others for mercy. And ultimate destiny is envisioned in destruction and glory. But this differentiation is God's action and prerogative, not man's. And, because [it is] so, our attitude to men is not to be governed by God's secret counsel concerning them. It is this

lesson and the distinction involved that are so eloquently inscribed on the apostle's passion for the salvation of his kinsmen. We violate the order of human thought and trespass the boundary between God's prerogative and man's when the truth of God's sovereign counsel constrains despair or abandonment of concern for the eternal interests of men." *Commentary on Romans*, vol. 2, 47.

In other words, since we cannot know the mind of God in regard to the salvation of sinners, we should always pray for them. If God has ordained to save a particular person, he has always ordained all the means. He has ordained prayers for the person and ordained to work through those prayers. He has ordained the communication of the gospel to the person. God has ordained the end and the means in his eternal decree.

**Dan. 9:1-3** - God's sovereign decree did not hinder Daniel from praying for God to carry out that promise. **R. C. Sproul, in his book, *Effective Prayer*** cites the "Roll Call of Faith" in Hebrews 11 and then speaks of heroes of prayer. He writes, "The Scriptures do not provide a similar catalogue of the heroes of prayer, but such a list could easily be compiled. Using the same format as does the writer of Hebrews, let us examine a partial list of the accomplishments of prayer: By prayer, Esau's heart was changed toward Jacob, so that they met in a friendly, rather than a hostile, manner (Gen. 32). By the prayer of Moses, God brought the plagues upon Egypt, and the removed them again (Exo. 7-11). By prayer, when Samson was ready to perish with thirst, God brought water out of a hollow place for his sustenance (Judges 15). By prayer, the strength of Samson was restored, and he pulled down the temple of Dagon on the Philistines, so that those whom he slew at his death were more than all he had slain in his life prior to that (Judges 16). By prayer, Joshua made the sun stand still (Joshua 10). By prayer, Elijah held back the rains for three and a half years, and then by prayer, caused it to rain again (1 Kings 17, 18). By the prayer of Asa, God confounded the army of Zerah (2 Chron. 14). By the prayer of Hezekiah, God sent an angel and slew in one night 185,000 men in Sennacherib's army (2 Kings 19). And time would fail me to tell of Abraham, who

prayed for and received a son at the age of one hundred years; and Moses who received help at the Red Sea; and the Israelites, who were delivered from Egypt after much prayer, and David who escaped the treachery of Saul by prayer; and Solomon, who received great wisdom as the result of prayer; and Daniel, who was able to interpret dreams, after prayer. People who were delivered from peril, healed from diseases, saw loved ones cured, and witnessed innumerable miracles as the result of fervent prayer. James, if anything, was understating the case when he wrote that the effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much." p. 68-70.

When we consider the answered prayers that fill biblical history, it should motivate us to pray. **Charles Spurgeon said**, "It is interesting to note how large a portion of Scripture is devoted to prayer. We are furnished many examples, precepts, and promises. We scarcely open the Bible before we read, "Then men began to call on the name of the Lord." (Gen. 4:26). And just as we are about to close the volume we hear the "Amen" of an earnest prayer( Rev. 22:20). Instances of prayer are plentiful: a wrestling Jacob; a Daniel praying three times a day; a David with all his heart calling on his God. On the mountain we see Elijah, and in the dungeon Paul and Silas. We have multitudes of commands and myriads of promises that teach the sacred importance and necessity of prayer. We may be certain that what God emphasized in His Word, He intended to be conspicuous in our lives. He has said much about prayer because He knows we have a great need for it. So deep are our needs, that until we are in heaven we must never stop praying. A prayerless soul is a Christless soul" (*Morning and Evening*, Jan. 2, Morning). Paul is deeply concerned about his fellow Israelites and he prays for their salvation. We can pray for many things that are important. For example, Jesus instructed us to pray for our daily bread in the Lord's prayer. However, the most important prayer we can pray for anyone is for their salvation.

**James M. Boice writes**, "When you pray for your children, pray that they might do well in school, that they might be kept from sin, that they will develop winsome personalities

and make worthwhile contributions in life. But do not fail to entreat God for their salvation. They can gain all these other things. Yet, if they are not saved, they will lose it all, and these other things by themselves may even be a hindrance to their turning from faith in themselves to trust Jesus. Learn to think biblically and then pray biblically, too. And do that, not only for your children but for your parents, friends, and whomever else God puts it upon your mind to pray for" (Rom. 11:52-11:53).

Remember Jesus warning, "What does it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul" (Matt. 16:26).

## **II. We are to pray for the lost because religious zeal does not equal salvation. Rom. 10:1-3**

They have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge.

Think about the zeal they had at that time. They were so religiously zealous that they even had a professional group of people whose life's goal was simply to try to obey the law of God. In fact, there was one faction in the pharisees that believed if they could obey perfectly the law of God for one complete day, they would usher in the reign of the Messiah. Some commentators have felt that when Paul calls himself a "pharisee of the pharisees" in Phil. 3, that he is saying that he was a part of this extra zealous group before he was miraculously saved by God on the road to Damascus.

Here were a group of people that were fervent in their religious zeal and activity. But, what does Paul say about them?

They were zealous, but not in accordance with knowledge.

It is possible for people to be religious, to engage in all kinds of dramatic religious activities, but not be engaged in something that is truthful or accepted by God.

The main way a false religious zeal is seen is in people trying to establish their own righteousness before God through their own good works. This is what the Israelites were trying to do at the time Paul wrote this. In fact, in every religious system in the world

apart from Christianity, man is trying to earn favor or merit with God through his own performance.

**Romans 10:2-3** - Notice that they are seeking to establish their own righteousness. I remember seeing a graphic example of people trying to establish their own righteousness about 20 years ago when I was on a trip to Mexico City. During part of a tour, we were taken to the Cathedral of our Lady Guadalupe. As we approached this temple/shrine, hundreds of people could be seen walking up to it on their knees. The tour guide informed us that many of these people had walked on their knees for miles in order to merit a blessing from the holy mother. I observed that the knees of some of the people were bleeding and leaving bloody marks on the court yard that approached the cathedral. Inside the cathedral was a large gold-plated statue of Mary surrounded by a large crowd of people on their knees trying to earn some kind of blessing.

These people had religious zeal, but it was not in accordance with knowledge. It was based on crass idolatry and deception.

This is why Martin Luther at the time of the Reformation said that the issue of justification by faith alone is not a trivial matter. It is the article upon which the church stands or falls.

**Charles Spurgeon said,** "Any church which puts in the place of justification by faith in Christ another method of salvation is a harlot church."

### **III. We are to pray for the lost because truth and knowledge is needed for salvation.**

#### **Rom. 10:3**

Paul prayed for his fellow Jews because they were ignorant of the truth of the gospel. They were ignorant of the justice and righteousness of God and they were ignorant of how they could be accepted as righteous before God through faith in Christ alone. Paul prayed for them and throughout his ministry he tried to communicate the truth of the gospel to them. Since they lacked knowledge, he sought to teach God's Word. **James M. Boice writes,** "Evangelism is to teach the Word of God. Not just a certain

evangelistic core, or only certain doctrines, or only truths that will move or motivate the ungodly. It is to teach the Bible and to do this as carefully, consistently, and comprehensively as possible, while looking to God (and praying to God) to give new life. **Gordon Clark expressed it by saying quite succinctly,** 'Evangelism is the exposition of the Scripture. God will do the regenerating.'" Romans, Vol. 3, 1090.

**Gordon Clark also writes,** "In evangelistic work there can be no appeal to secular, non-Christian material. There is an appeal - it is an appeal for prayer to the Holy Spirit to cause the sinner to accept the truths of the gospel. Any other appeal is useless. If now a person wants the basic answer to the question, Why does one man have faith and another not, or, why does one man accept the Koran and another the Bible, this is it. God causes the one to believe" (*Three Types of Religious Philosophy*, 123).

Here is where the importance of prayer comes to bear in preaching, teaching, and any presentation of the gospel. We are to communicate the truth of justification by faith alone, but it must be accompanied by prayer that God would use that message to save sinners. It is the Holy Spirit that makes our witness and our preaching effective.

Therefore, prayer is essential in every aspect of ministry. **Martyn Lloyd-Jones in writing on preaching said,** "Always respond to every impulse to pray. The impulse to pray may come when you are reading or when you are battling with a text. I would make an absolute law of this - always obey such an impulse. Where does it come from?

It is the work of the Holy Spirit; it is a part of the meaning of 'Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure' (Philippians 2:12-13). This often leads to some of the most remarkable experiences in the life of the minister. So never resist, never postpone it, never push it aside because you are busy. Give yourself to it, yield to it; and you will find not only that you have not been wasting time with respect to the matter with which you are dealing, but that actually it has helped you greatly in that respect. You will experience an ease and a facility in understanding what you were reading, in thinking, in

ordering matter for a sermon, in writing, in everything, which is quite astonishing. Such a call to prayer must never be regarded as a distraction; always respond to it immediately, and thank God if it happens to you frequently" (*Preaching and Preachers*, 171).

One final point which is taught in this passage is that Jesus is the only way of salvation. They were zealous for their religion, but they were wrong. They did not know the truth of how to be right with God. **John 14:6; Acts 4:12**

R. C. Sproul writes, "Nothing is more 'un-American' than to have an exclusive understanding of God. Yet nothing is more fundamental to the biblical concept of monotheism than the exclusivity of the God of heaven and earth. In 1 Kings 18 we read of the prophet Elijah engaging in a contest with the priests of Baal on Mount Carmel. But try to imagine Elijah giving an interview to the media assembled to watch this contest. Imagine him speaking into a microphone, saying, 'Well, you know at the end of the day, I and the prophets of Baal really worship the same God. We believe in the same religion. We just do it differently. Our religious activity is not the same. There are elements in the religion of Baal that are different from the elements of the religion of Israel, but surely the God of Israel doesn't mind. In fact, He's honored when we celebrate our religious unity.' Can you imagine anything more foreign to the teaching of sacred Scripture than that? It has been said by biblical scholars and that the greatest weakness that led to the destruction of the Jewish nation in the Old Testament was not military weakness but a theological weakness. What got the people of Israel into trouble with God over and over again was the blending and mixing of their God-given faith with pagan religion" (*When Worlds Collide* [Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2002], 18-19).

This text emphasizes that there is only one way of salvation through faith in Christ alone.

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**Romans 10:4-10 Romans Series #46 1/10/09**



About 45 years ago when I was a little child, my older brother had a pet dog named Toby. Toby was a large, male Doberman pincer. My mother's description of Toby was, "Toby was not a Christian." Toby would get along fine with other dogs as long as they didn't growl, however slight, at him. If they did, he would attempt to eat them. But, Toby's main mission in life was to eliminate from his world every house cat. In Toby's life, he managed to make strides toward fulfilling his *raison d'etre*, his reason for being. One time a skunk got into our back yard and to Toby that was just a foul smelling cat, he dug it out from under his dog house and tore it to pieces. This was in the days before air-conditioning and Toby conditioned the air in our house with a heavy fragrance. It was an impossibility for Toby and cats to live together. In a similar way, just as Toby and cats were natural enemies, the idea of man working for his salvation or earning merit before God through good works is a natural enemy to the idea of God's free grace in our salvation.

**I. A theology of salvation by good works diminishes the demands of the law of God.**

**Rom. 10:5**

This is a quote from Lev. 18:5. Paul applies this same verse in a similar context in Gal. 3:12. In both Rom. 10:5 and Gal. 3:12, Paul contrasts justification by faith alone with any kind of works righteousness or salvation. In Paul's application of this text, he is not thinking about morality or having a good life because you keep certain commands of God. He is talking about the essence of salvation. The idea of a living in this text points toward eternal life. If a person would keep the law of God perfectly and not have Adam's sin imputed to them, then they would have eternal life based on their perfect obedience to the law of God. However, that is impossible. We are born with original sin. We are born sinners because of Adam's sin imputed to us. On top of that we daily. **Rom. 3:23.** If a person is going to rely on their own works or law-keeping for salvation, the standard is absolute perfection. **John Calvin writes,** "The Lord testifies that he recognizes no righteousness of works except in the perfect observance of his law. What perversity it is

for us, when we lack righteousness . . . to boast of some little bits of a few works and try through other satisfactions to pay for what is lacking?" 3, 14, 13.

**Charles Spurgeon said,** "The poor sinner trying to be saved by law is like a blind horse going round and round a mill, and never getting a step further, but only being whipped continually. The faster he goes, the more work he does, the more he is tired. The better legalist a man is, the more he may rest assured of his own final rejection and eternal portion with Pharisees.

Paul references another Old Testament passage as he continues to develop his argument against any kind of works righteousness.

**Rom. 10:6-7**

This is not an exact quotation and Paul introduces it differently from the previous quote. When he introduces Lev. 18:5, he states that Moses writes and then quotes the passage. In the second reference, he simply states that the righteousness which is by faith speaks like this and then references **Deut. 30:12-14 (read)**.

In the passage, Moses tells the people of Israel that God had given them the revelation of his and that's all they needed. When Paul references this passage, he inserts references to Christ. How does this apply to Paul's argument against kind of works based salvation? James M. Boice makes the point that there are several aspects to this that layer over each other.

**First,** Israel did not need an additional word from God. Paul adds a specifically new covenant application to it, but the principle is true for both old and new covenant believers. The law contained the promise of the Messiah and the all the principles of the gospel. The ceremonial law vividly set forth the principle of substitutionary atonement. The offices of prophet, priest, and king which found their fulfillment in the Messiah are formalized in the law. Old Testament believers were justified by faith in the promised Messiah just like we are. Rom. 4 uses Abraham and David as prime examples of people who were justified by faith in Christ alone. In the same way, we have the New

Testament Scriptures which elaborate on the gospel which was presented in the Old Testament promises, ceremonies, types, and prophecies. We don't need anything else either.

**Second,** Israel did not need to do something in order to bring the Messiah to them.

Moses told them they did not have to ascend to heaven to get a new word from God or cross the sea to get it. The Danish New Testament scholar, Johannes Munck points out from ancient rabbinical texts that "the Jews held that it would require an effort to bring the Messiah down from heaven. Israel must repent before the Messianic age can begin." In other words, the Jews believed they had to do some kind of righteous work in order to bring the Messiah. They were saying they had to earn their salvation. Paul states that the Messiah has come so there is no need to do anything to bring him or try to merit favor with God through your works. The Messiah has come from heaven so there is no need to do anything to bring him down. He died for sin and has been resurrected so there is no need to descend into the world of the dead to bring him back.

Paul says that faith speaks in this way. What way? There is nothing we can do to merit or earn salvation.

This reflects an important principle and that is the more people express trust in their own righteousness or good works, the more they reveal their ignorance of the character and nature of God and the nature of their own sin. Think about it. If a person would think that he could do enough good works to earn salvation before God, then he is ignorant of God's holiness and man's sinfulness. The Bible proclaims that God is absolutely holy and righteous and, therefore, God is absolutely just. This is why Romans 1:18 states that God's wrath is being poured out against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth of God in unrighteousness.

R. C. Sproul - Seminary test - True or false - The work of Christ is the only way God clears the guilty. False! Exo. 34:7 - God will by no means clear the guilty. On the cross, Christ took the punishment due to us as lawbreakers. Justice was fulfilled, but God didn't

just clear the guilty. Jesus had to die and take the justice of God for those sins. The more people insist that they are good people and can work their way to heaven, the more they proclaim their ignorance of the nature of God and the offence sin has to a holy God.

It is interesting that in the history of the church there has never been a real spiritual awakening without two ideas being prevalent: That God is holy and that man is sinful and under his judgment. That's the foundation for understanding that our own attempts at earning merit before God are useless. It is also the foundation for understanding that the work of Christ is the only way of salvation.

## **II. A theology of salvation by faith in Christ alone confesses and believes in Jesus as Lord and Savior. Rom. 10:8-13**

**Illus.** - Rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31). **Read. vs. 29-31.**

That is what Paul is saying as he quotes Moses from Deut. 30:14. The gospel was near them. It was in their mouths and in their hearts through the proclamation of it in the revelation they had received in the law. Remember Jesus words in John 5:39: "You search the Scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is these that bear witness of me.

### **John 5:45-46 -**

Sometimes people have been bothered by the sequence Paul gives in Rom. 10:9 - Confession with the mouth followed by belief in the heart. It seems like the order is reversed from what we would expect. We believe internally before we outwardly confess Christ. I think the easiest explanation of this is that Paul is simply following the order as it is presented in Deut. 30:14 - "in your mouth and in your heart." Rom. 10:10 puts it in the more natural order.

The confession of Jesus as Lord and the belief that God raised him from the dead are essential parts of the content of faith.

**A. Jesus is Lord. First,** the confession of Jesus as Lord addresses the person of Christ. The use of this term affirms the deity of Christ. The word, "Lord" is the Greek word

*Kurios*. This is the word the LXX translators used to translate the Hebrew name for God, Yahweh. In the book of Romans, Paul uses the term Lord or *Kurios* 44 times. In thirty usages it refers to Jesus. In eight usages it refers to God, the Father. The rest of the time it refers generally to God. The term is used interchangeable with God, the Father and with Jesus Christ. Therefore, the application of the term to Jesus is an affirmation of his deity. In fact, in several New Testament texts, an Old Testament text speaking of Yahweh is applied to Jesus and, therefore, affirming his deity. For example, Heb. 1:10-13 applies Psa. 102:25-27 to Jesus. Psalm 102 is specifically speaking of Yahweh.

**Second**, the confession that Jesus is Lord affirms his complete and perfect work of atonement. **John Stott writes on this:** "The title 'Lord' is a symbol of Christ's victory over the forces of evil. If Jesus has been exalted over all the principalities and powers of evil, as indeed he has, this is the reason why he has been called Lord. If Jesus has been proclaimed Lord, as he has, it is because these powers are under his feet. He has conquered them on the cross, and therefore our salvation - that is to say our rescue from sin, Satan, fear and death - is due to that victory" (Boice, Rom. 1192).

**Third**, the confession that Jesus is Lord affirms his sovereign rule over our lives. In the approximately the last 25 years, a movement arose inside Dispensational theology that argued that people could come to Christ as Savior, but not submit to his Lordship. That perspective argued that any demand for repentance and submission to Christ as Lord over our worldview, ethics, careers, was a legalistic approach to the gospel. It argued for salvation by profession of faith only without any change of live whatsoever. **J. I.**

**Packer wrote in 1991**, "If, ten years ago, you had told me that I would live to see literate evangelicals, some with doctorates and a seminary teaching record, arguing for the reality of an eternal salvation, divinely guaranteed, that may have in it no repentance, no discipleship, no behavioral change, no practical acknowledgment of Christ as Lord of one's life, and no perseverance in faith, I would have told you that you were out of your mind. Stark staring bonkers, is the British phrase I would probably have used. But now

the thing has happened. In "The Gospel Siege"(1981) and "Absolutely Free!" (1989), Zane Hodges, for one, maintains all these positions as essential to the Christian message, arguing that without them the Gospel gets lost in legalism. Wow." *Tabletalk*, 1991, 15, **Charles Ryrie** removes any connection between true saving faith and sanctification. **He writes**, "Normally one who has believed can be described as a believer; that is, one who continues to believe. But. . . a believer may come to the place of not believing, and yet God will not disown him, since He cannot disown himself." **John Gerstner comments** that, for Ryrie, it is apparently too much to require that a person believe in Christ as a condition for salvation. Ryrie tends to focus on how little a person can do and still be saved. Van Lees, RTS dissertation, 55. The Reformers argued that we are saved by faith alone, but never by a faith that is alone. True saving faith will be seen in what it produces. For example, **John Calvin responded** to Canon 11 of the Counsel of Trent: "I wish the reader to understand that as often as we mention Faith alone in this question, we are not thinking of a dead faith, which worketh not by love, but holding faith to be the only cause of justification (Gal. 5:6; Rom. 3:22). It is therefore faith alone which justifies, and yet the faith which justifies is not alone. . . ."

#### **B. Jesus rose from the dead.**

The resurrection demonstrates a variety of theological points. It is a vindication of Jesus' person and ministry. He gave his resurrection as the main sign to authenticate his work. The main point of the resurrection is that it proves that Christ's work is complete and perfect. **Rom. 4:25**

**D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones writes**, "The resurrection is the proclamation of the fact that God is fully and completely satisfied with the work that his Son did upon the cross."

The promise is that all those who believe with true faith are redeemed. If a person truly relies on Christ alone, then he is justified. **J. Gresham Machen said**, "To say that we are justified by faith is just another way of saying that we are justified not in the slightest measure by ourselves, but simply and solely by the One in whom faith is reposed."

**Robert Reymond said,** "While I trust that all of you here are genuinely converted and true Christians, I must urge you to examine yourselves to make sure that you are trusting solely in the preceptive and penal obedience of Jesus Christ for God's forgiveness and imputed distributive righteousness. For make no mistake about it, the day will come when you and I will stand naked before God, and in that day the issue of in whom or in what we trusted here for our salvation will be all-important. And 'though [we may] wish to dispute with him,' as Job states, 'we will be unable to answer one time out of a thousand (9:3), for you and I in that Great Day will be stripped of all the things in which we may have placed our confidence in this world. We will stand before the throne of the Judge of all the earth in that day without earthly title, without money, without property, without earthly reputation, without personal prestige - in utter poverty in ourselves. And unless we have been forgiven of our sins and are enrobed in the glorious dress of the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ, God will consign us to eternal perdition for our sins. Beloved friends, if you have never completely repudiated your own self-help efforts at self-salvation and have never totally trust in the Savior's righteous life and sacrificial death alone for your salvation, I beg of you, do both right now! You need a righteous Advocate who can legitimately say to the Father on your behalf, like Paul said to Philemon on Onesimus' behalf (Philem. 17-19). From: *What Is God?*, 227-228.

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**Rom. 10:9-15 Romans series #47 1/17/09**

The last couple of weeks we have examined the first part of this passage in which Paul addresses the issue of people trying to establish their own righteousness before God. We observed that salvation is completely of God's grace and that we can, in no way, work our way to heaven. Good works and the biblical gospel of salvation through faith in Christ alone are natural enemies.

We also observed that when we believe in Jesus our sins are forgiven and Christ's righteousness is imputed or credited to us. That is legal declaration from God that we are accepted before him because of Christ's work.

This morning I want us to continue looking at this key passage concerning our salvation and examine what it says about the nature of truth saving faith. This is important because faith is the means by which we receive the redemption that was accomplished for us by Christ.

### **I. True faith in Jesus has cognitive content.**

Rom. 10:9-10 - Notice that we are called to believe that Jesus is Lord and that he rose from the dead.

**Rom. 10:14** - For true faith to be present, there must be a certain amount of knowledge concerning God, Christ, man's sin, and our redemption in Jesus.

**Rom. 10:17** - The Holy Spirit uses the proclamation of truth to effect regeneration and give faith.

Each of these verses speak of faith having a knowledge base. We don't just have a hope that is based on feelings or wishful thinking.

At the time of the Reformation when justification by faith alone was a central issue, the Reformers defined the idea of faith very carefully. They said that true saving faith was comprised of certain elements. These are usually set forth as knowledge, assent, and trust. If there is true knowledge and assent, the trust in Christ and his work flow from that.

When our text uses the term heart, it is not speaking of our emotions. The term is used interchangeably in Scripture with our spirit or soul. **Gordon Clark** argued that since the biblical use of the term "heart" is not semantically equivalent to a person's emotions, but to their deepest self with an emphasis on the intellect, then even the trust element is essentially intellectual. **Robert Reymond comments on this**, "With this I concur, but I would urge that this intellectual *fiducia* [or trust] includes affective and volitional



dimensions, since Paul insists that the saved must not simply know about and believe in but also *love* the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 16:22)" (systematic, 728, n. 30). Reymond notes with respect to the trust element that "as assent is cognition passed into conviction, so *fiducia* (trust) is conviction passed into confidence." (728).

The Reformers started with knowledge because they recognized that the Scriptures do not present faith as some kind of ambiguous hope. In our culture today, which has been influenced by existential philosophy, often the idea of faith is simply wishful thinking or positive thinking. The Bible, however, says that real faith is built upon certain truths that are revealed from God and it has its object in Christ's work of redemption.

**Rom. 10:9** - Notice that real faith must acknowledge the Lordship of Christ and affirm his resurrection. Last week we considered that confessing Jesus as Lord affirms his deity, his victory over sin and Satan in his cross work, and our submission to his Lordship in our lives. Notice that confessing not only these aspects of his person are essential, but also the confession of his resurrection. You cannot be a Christian and deny the resurrection of Christ. Until the mid-19th century, unbelievers for the most part stayed out of the Christian churches. Philosophers who did not believe the truth claims of Christianity pursued their agendas outside of the church. However, in the mid-19th century, many unbelievers began to come into the church and use it as a means of carrying out their particular social or philosophical agenda. The rise of liberal theology in the 19th century is an example of people who blatantly denied all the central truths of Christianity, but simply used the church and seminaries as a means toward disseminating their views. For example, liberal theology denies the virgin birth of Jesus, all of his miracles, most of the statements of Jesus in the New Testament, his resurrection, the doctrine of hell, and the inspiration and authority of the Scriptures. In this century, liberal theology has swept a majority of the mainline denominations. Real faith must assent to certain essential truths. If a person denies the resurrection or the deity of Christ,

they cannot be a Christian. It is impossible for a person to be justified if he does not believe in the resurrection of Jesus.

**1 Cor. 15:13-19** - This is not just a little theological error.

Similar to this is the importance of having an accurate understanding of Christ's person and work and how we are justified. An essential aspect of the gospel is that we are justified by faith in Christ alone. That is theological shorthand for saying that we are justified by Christ alone.

In recent years, N. T. Wright has argued against the doctrine of justification by faith alone. In one of his arguments he attacks the Reformed position as says that no one us justified by believing in the doctrine of justification by faith alone. R. C. Sproul points out that this is a strawman argument. He writes, "I am aware of no theologian in the history of the Reformed tradition who believes or argues that a person can be justified by believing in the doctrine of justification by faith. This is a pure and simple distortion of the Reformed position." He elaborates on the doctrine and states, "The protestant view, following Paul's teaching in the New Testament, is that faith is the sole instrument by which we are linked to Christ."

His concluding point directly relates to our belief and confession of the gospel: He writes, "The New Testament declares Christ to be our righteousness, and it precisely our confidence in the righteousness of Christ as the grounds for our justification that is the focus of the doctrine of justification by faith. We understand that believing the doctrine of *sola fide* will save no one. Faith in a doctrine is not enough to save. However, though we cannot be saved by believing in the doctrine of justification by faith, the denial of that same doctrine can indeed be fatal because to deny the doctrine of justification by faith alone as the apostle Paul indicated in Galatians is to reject the gospel and substitute something else for it, which would result in what Paul declares to be anathema." Feb., 2010.

For example, I've spoken with people who have read the Bible and have told me that the Bible clearly teaches that a person is justified by faith in Christ alone. They know what it says, but they don't believe it is God's Word. They don't believe it is true. They are not redeemed because they intellectually understand what the Bible says. Robert Reymond writes, "It is important to realize that it is entirely possible for an unregenerate person to know the propositions of the gospel and to have a keen comprehension of how they contribute to the gospel proclamation as a whole and yet still not believe they are factually true or that they address his deepest spiritual needs. Rudolph Bultmann, for example, had as good an intellectual grasp of the content of the Christian gospel as the most orthodox of theologians, but he denied that Jesus was actually born of a virgin, performed the mighty miracles ascribed to him, died on the cross as a sacrifice for sin, and rose from the dead" (Systematic, 728).

Believing and confessing Christ means that they believe the message is true and rely on it. However, any denial of the deity of Christ, his work of atonement and resurrection, or the fact that we are justified by faith in Christ alone is a rejection of the gospel. The person who denies those truths cannot be in a state of grace.

## **II. True faith openly confesses Christ.**

Rom. 10:9-10

There is no such thing as a secret Christian. You cannot claim to have true faith in Jesus without openly identifying yourself with him. Jesus said this strongly. **Matt. 10:32-33** We are to openly let it be known that we belong to Christ. Many Christians think that if they simply live a Christian life in front of people with no verbal witness or identification with Jesus, it is enough. However, if you do not identify yourself as a Christian, you simply bear witness to yourself. People may look at your life and see a quality in it that is admirable, but if they don't know the source of that admirable life, they simply think you are an exceptional person. You bear witness to yourself and not Christ.

What are some of the ways we confess Christ? James M. Boice suggests a variety of ways we confess Christ.

### **1. We confess Christ in public worship.**

When I was growing up, everyone in my neighborhood went to church somewhere. Forty to fifty years ago a large percentage of the populace went to church. Obviously, some churches were better than others, but there was a sense in which going to church didn't really distinguish a true believer from someone who simply went out of habit or to do the socially acceptable thing. That's not the case today. While there are some who still go to church just out of habit or tradition, most unbelievers don't bother to go. This makes your regular attendance in worship a stronger profession of your faith. It makes a statement to your neighbors and to your family of your confession of Christ. Of course, you are also obeying God when you worship. **Heb. 10:25**

Dr. Robert Rayburn, in his book, *O Come, Let Us Worship*, writes, "God has so created man that there are deeper delights and more intense inspiration in the worshipping congregation than in individual devotion. Martin Luther spoke of his own appreciation for this fact when he said, 'At home in my own house there is no warmth or vigor in me, but in the church when the multitude is gathered together, a fire is kindled in my heart, and it breaks its way through.' It is not just that we might receive instruction in His Word that God has commanded us not to forsake 'the assembling of ourselves together (Heb. 10:25). He knows that every one of us needs the high experience of true corporate worship continually." p. 30.

### **2. We confess Christ in the sacraments of the church.**

When a person comes to faith and is baptized, he confesses his faith. When we partake of the Lord's supper, we proclaim that we belong to Christ.

### **3. We confess Christ through our association with God's people.**

Not all our associations with other Christians are formal or in worship services. We also enjoy fellowship with each other in a variety of settings - Bible studies, prayer times,

social events, and simply friendship with other Christians. As believers, we share the same worldview. We love God's Word. We have the same Lord and God is our Father since we are all adopted into his family. We also remember 1 Cor. 15:33: "Do not be deceived: 'Bad company corrupts good morals.'" Our associations make a statement concerning our commitment to Christ to those who know us.

#### **4. We confess Christ by how we conduct our business.**

Whether we own our business or work for somebody else, the fact that we are ethical in our business practices confesses Christ. This is especially true when we make it known why we are ethical. My dad graduated from high school in 1934. In his second job, working in a grocery wholesale business, he was put in charge of invoice correction. He corrected any mistake he found. The manager told him that he was only to correct the invoices that were against them. When he refused, he lost his job. That was a hard thing to do in the middle of the depression when jobs were rare. In his business, he always said, "We will do what is right even it costs us money." It was an accident that when employees got into some kind of trouble they came to him for help and many of them came to Lord.

#### **5. We confess Christ in reaching out to others in evangelism.**

Watch for opportunities to identify with Christ and make the gospel known to someone. **Charles Spurgeon said,** "I believe, my brethren, that a Christian man can hardly carry out his confession with his mouth, unless he goes a little out of his way at times to bear testimony." Lorne C. Sanny in an article in "Discipleship Journal" writes, "Some years ago when I was with the Billy Graham team in a crusade, a businessman came forward one night and received Christ. The following Sunday night he went to a church that he sometimes attended. After the service he walked up to one of the elders in this church and told him, 'I was at the Billy Graham meeting last night out at the ball park. I went forward and received Christ.' 'I heard about it and I am delighted,' the elder replied. Then the businessman asked the elder, 'How long have you and I been associated in business?'

'About twenty- three years, I think.' 'Have you known Christ as your Savior all those years?' the man asked the elder. 'Yes I have,' he answered. 'Well, I don't remember your ever speaking to me about Christ during those years,' the man said. The elder hung his head, and the man continued, 'I have thought highly of you. In fact, I thought so highly of you that I felt if anyone could be as fine a man as you and not be a Christian, then I didn't have to be a Christian either.' The elder had lived a good life before his friend, but he had not taken the added step of openly identifying with the One who enabled him to live that kind of life."

We believe through the work of the Holy Spirit regenerating our hearts and real saving faith openly confesses Christ in life and in verbal confession. There is no such things as secret discipleship.

James M. Boice writes on this, "We do not have long to live. Let us use our time well and wisely, above all by trusting wholly in Jesus Christ and confessing him boldly with our mouths. Let us stand with him, bearing his reproach, knowing that if we do, one day we will be with him in glory and will reign with him forever" (Rom. 12:12). That statement is all the more poignant when you remember that James Boice died fairly young.

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Rom. 10:9-17 Romans Series #48 1/23/09

Our text this morning speaks about the results having faith in Christ and being justified by that faith alone. I want us to consider two main ideas concerning the results of our justification. First, that we will never be disappointed or put to shame. Second, that we rejoice in the gospel and the proclamation of the gospel.

**I. The person who is justified by faith in Christ alone will never be put to shame.**

**Rom. 10:11** - The Greek word that is translated as "disappointed" in NASB has the idea of intense disappointment or being let down or being humiliated. It also has the meaning

of shame. That's why various translations use either disappointment or shame to translated the term. Before we consider this idea, I think it is important to note that our culture has lost much of its sense of same. Sin and evil has become so relative that people are not ashamed of the sin and evil in their lives.

James M. Boice, in his commentary on Romans said that when he was studying this, he discovered that the subject of shame was almost non-existent in 20th century literature. He looked at the Oxford English Dictionary and found pages of definitions of shame and scores of quotations by English writers. However most of them came from previous centuries with the latest one coming from 1896. However, when he ran a word search of the NIV in his computer Bible he found that the word occurred 181 times in that translation (149 in the OT; 32 in the NT). He observed that much of the ethical and psychological thinking in the last hundred years or so had dismissed the concept of shame.

This is similar to Judah when Jeremiah pronounces God's judgment against them - **Jer.**

### **3:2-3**

**NIV** - Jer. 3:3 - "Therefore the showers have been withheld, and no spring rains have fallen. Yet you have the brazen look of a prostitute; you refuse to blush with shame."

For example, David Dinkins, New York City mayor, in answering accusations that he failed to pay his taxes said, "I haven't committed a crime. What I did was fail to comply with the law." Many people rationalize their breaking of God's law in the same way.

They think they are good people who haven't broken God's law; they just haven't complied with it. **Francis Schaeffer said**, "I have come to the conclusion that none of us in our generation feels as guilty about sin as we should or as our fore-fathers did. I think this basically is the problem of living in a psychologically oriented age."

Remember the name Anna Russell? If you lived in the 60's or if you sang songs of the 60's you may remember a little song she made popular strumming her guitar singing

around Berkley campus and other campuses. The words of the song are sort of interesting, they tell a story as those ballads often did.

"I went to my psychiatrist to be psychoanalyzed to find out why I killed the cat and blacked my husband's eyes. He laid me on a downy couch to see what he could find and this is what he dredged up from my sub-conscious mind. When I was one my mommy hid my dolly in a trunk and so it follows naturally that I am always drunk. When I was two I saw my father kiss the maid one day and that is why I suffer now from klepto-men-e-a. When I was three I had the feeling of ambivalence toward my brothers and so it follows naturally I poison all my lovers. But I am happy now that I have learned the lesson this has taught that everything I do that's wrong is someone else's fault." If you do what's wrong, it is your fault. If I do something that is wrong, it is my fault.

Rom. 10:11 addresses the issue of real shame and guilt before God. Remember after man and woman sinned in the Garden, they felt shame and tried to cover themselves with fig leaves. When God came to them in the garden, they hid themselves. Our culture may try to suppress it or explain it away, but fallen man has real guilt and shame before a holy God.

Rom. 10:11 states that those in Christ are free from that shame because they are justified. Their sins are forgiven and they have Christ's righteousness imputed to them.

To see how important this statement is, it is helpful to consider some of the aspects shame. James M. Boice gives a nice summary of these elements. **The first element** is acute disappointment. The idea is being let down by someone or something. Paul uses the same Greek word in Rom. 1:16 when he says he is not ashamed of the gospel. He doesn't just mean he is not embarrassed by the gospel, although that is true. He is emphasizing that the gospel will never let him down or fail in what it promises. In terms of Rom. 10:11, this means that the one who relies on Jesus will never be let down or disappointed. God's promises of redemption will be fulfilled.



**Second is the idea of being confounded.** This is the idea in which a person is left speechless. Job 10:15; Ezek. 16:62-63.

For the lost, in that final day of judgment every mouth will be closed. There will be no rationalizations or excuses for sin. Every motive of the heart will be exposed.

**Third is exposure.** This is an important aspect of the biblical concept of shame. Adam and woman hid themselves from God.

**Rev. 6:15-17** - Here is a description of the lost trying to hide from the presence of God and judgment against their sin. Here is the dread of ultimate exposure.

**Fourth is disgrace.** The biblical concept of shame contains disgrace from extreme humiliation. **Dan. 12:2** - "Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt.

**Rom. 10:11** states that whoever believes in Christ will not be put to shame. If you believe in Christ, through the work of the Holy Spirit, then you are justified before God. Your sins are forgiven. You stand before God as righteous because of Christ's righteousness imputed to you. Condemnation is an utter impossibility for you and you will never experience everlasting contempt or disgrace. **This idea is captured**

**beautifully in the Heidelberg Catechism** (1563, Zacharias Ursinus) in Answer 21:

"True faith - created in me by the Holy Spirit through the gospel - is not only a knowledge and conviction that everything that God reveals in his Word is true, but also a deep-rooted assurance that not only others, but I too, have had my sins forgiven, have been made forever right with God, and have been granted salvation. These are gifts of sheer grace earned for us by Christ." **Donald Grey Barnhouse said it this way:**

"Christianity can be expressed in three phrases: I deserved Hell; Jesus took my Hell; there is nothing left for me but his heaven."

This also speaks strongly against any kind of works righteousness. Many people trust in something in themselves for salvation. It is only in Christ that we will never be put to shame. **Charles Spurgeon said,** "It will be a sorry business if we have been trusting in

our good temper, our charity, our patriotism, our courage or our honesty, and when we come to die shall be made to feel that these cannot satisfy the claim of divine justice or give us a passport to the skies. How sad to see robes turn to rags, and comeliness into corruption."

**Isa. 64:6** - Righteousness is like a filthy rag. **Charles Spurgeon also said**, "The man who clings to his own righteousness is like a man who grasps a millstone to prevent himself from sinking in the flood. Your righteousness will damn you if you trust in it as surely as will your sins, for it is a false, proud lie."

The propensity of the sinful human heart is to sew fig leaves together and try to cover sin and shame with something man does. It could be good works or some kind of self-punishment, but not of those things are acceptable before God. God's commands demand absolute perfection and all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. On top of that we are born with Adam's sin imputed to us. **O. Palmer Robertson**, in writing about current attacks on justification by faith alone, wrote: "The resurgence of this issue [justification by faith alone] attests to the correctness of Luther's judgment that justification by faith alone is the doctrine of the standing or falling church. For why else would this single doctrine become the point of dispute throughout the generations?"

**Rom 10:11** - In light of what we've just considered, do you see what a fantastic statement this is? This is a statement of assurance for those in Christ.

**Rom. 10:12-13** - Whether Jew or Gentile, we are all saved in the same way.

## **II. The justified person rejoices in the proclamation of the gospel. Rom. 10:14-15**

This statement is closely related to what has just been said about the fact that the person in Christ will never come under the condemnation of God. If you believe in Jesus, you know and rejoice in the truths we have just considered. You recognize that salvation through faith in Christ is the most important and greatest message which can ever be proclaimed. **Martin Luther said**, "The godly rejoice when the Gospel is widely spread."

**Rom. 10:14** - This verse affirms the importance of the knowledge content of faith.

People have to have the content of the gospel communicated to them before they can believe it. It also affirms that God uses means to make the gospel known. In the Great Commission, Jesus commanded us to take the gospel to the world and make disciples of all nations (Matt. 28:18-20). This verse mentions people who are sent to do that task. So, it also is an implicit command to churches to be involved in evangelism and missions. When a young William Carey, the acknowledged founder of the modern missionary movement, first applied to his church board to be sent to India, he received a classic reply. "Young man," said one of the older church leaders, "when God chooses to save the heathen of India, he will do so without your help." Carey knew better than that. He knew that when God determines that something is to happen, he also determines the means to make it happen. In this case, the first step toward the evangelization of India was the pioneer work of William Carey. Carey persevered, and the rest, as they say, is history.

**John Murray comments on Rom. 10:14-15:** "The main point is that the saving relation to Christ involved in calling upon his name is not something that can occur in a vacuum; it occurs only in a context created by the proclamation of the gospel on the part of those commissioned to proclaim it." Romans, 2:58. (Rich Greer)

We know the greatness of the gospel as well as the command of Christ. Therefore, we are called to communicate the gospel ourselves, pray for missions here and around the world, and support missions and evangelism. **Charles Spurgeon said,** "If sinners be damned, at least let them leap to hell over our bodies. If they will perish, let them perish with our arms about their knees. Let no one go there unwarned and unprayed for."

**Rom. 10:15** - The quotation of Isa. 52:7 may sound strange to our modern ears. The imagery comes from the use of messengers who would run from a battle or war campaign and bring news back to the city. Remember it could sometimes be weeks or months before the outcome of a battle was known to a city. The spotters in the city could look

out and see the messenger running to the city. A good spotter could tell by the way he was running if he was carrying good or bad news. If his feet were shoveling along, it was bad news. If they were lively and pumping up and down, it was good news. **Rom. 10:15** Again, a characteristic of someone who knows Christ and is justified is that they eager to make the gospel known and they rejoice when it is proclaimed.

**One final point** about this is that in our day, there has been a movement against preaching as the primary way of communicating the gospel and biblical truth. Plays and skits are replacing preaching in many settings. On top of that, much preaching is not communicating biblical truth, but simply reflects some perspective of the culture.

**Robert Reymond writes,** "The problem in our day, which gives rise to highly questionable church growth methods, is two-fold: On the one hand, we are seeing a waning confidence in the message of the gospel. Even the evangelical church shows signs of losing confidence in the convincing and converting power of the gospel message. That is why increasing numbers of churches prefer sermons on family life and psychological health. We are being overtaken by what Os Guinness calls the managerial and therapeutic revolutions. The winning message, it seems, is the one that helps people to solve their temporal problems, improves their self-esteem and makes them feel good about themselves. In such a cultural climate, preaching on law, sin and repentance, and the cross has all but disappeared, even in evangelical churches. The church has become 'user friendly,' 'consumer oriented,' and as a result evangelical churches are being inundated with 'cheap grace' (Bonhoeffer). Today's 'gospel' is without discipleship, and thus 'another gospel' and accordingly no gospel at all, all traceable to the fact that this is how too many people today have come to believe that the church must be grown. **On the other hand,** we are seeing a waning confidence in preaching as the means by which the gospel is to be spread. As a result, preaching is giving way in evangelical churches to multimedia presentations, drama, dance, 'sharing times,' sermonettes, and 'how to' devotionals. Preaching is being viewed as outdated and ineffective. . . . And once a

person joins such a church, conventional wisdom has it, the church and the minister must meet his every felt need. Accordingly, ministers have become managers, facilitators, and motivators - everything but heralds of the whole council of God - and this all because they have lost confidence in the preaching of God's Word as the primary means for the growth of the church and the individual Christian." **1 Cor. 1:21-24 Rom. 10:11-15** is a magnificent statement concerning our assurance of never being put to shame before God if we believe in Jesus. It also calls us to be active in evangelism and missions because we know we have the greatest message ever proclaimed. This text also calls us to make sure we are truly in Christ. **James M. Boice gave this pastoral warning:** "I tell you as a minister of the Word of God that the day is coming when you will stand in God's court. You will stand there in either one of two ways. Either you will stand clothed in the righteousness of Jesus Christ as one for whom he died, whose sin and shame have been taken away. Or you will stand in the horror of your own spiritual and moral nakedness, in shame, and you will be condemned for your sin." From: *Romans*, vol. 3, 1227.

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Rom. 10:12-15 Rom. Series #49 2/14/10

We have observed that wonderful statement in Rom. 10:11 that the one who believes in Christ will not be disappointed or put to shame. If you believe in Jesus, if you rely on him as your Savior, the promise God in Scripture is that you are justified and condemnation is utter impossibility for you. We also saw that we know the greatness of the message of the gospel and rejoice when it is proclaimed and widely spread. I want to pick up on that point today and consider our call to make the gospel known.

### **I. The essence of the gospel.**

**Rom. 10:13-14** - These verses present important steps of coming to Christ. However, they do it in regressive order. They work backwards through the steps proceeding from effect to cause. The pattern is like the series of 5, 4, 3, 2, 1. Paul speaks first of a person

calling upon Christ in faith. He then mentions belief in Christ, hearing Christ, preaching about Christ, and a preacher being sent to proclaim Jesus and the gospel. All of these things are necessary for a person to be saved.

First, Paul states that if a person calls on Christ, they will be saved. Second, Paul states that a person must believe in Christ in order to call upon him. John Murray writes, "The faith referred to in the first part of verse 14 is the faith of trust, of commitment to Christ, and the proposition implied in the question is that there must be this trust in Christ if we are to call upon his name." Calling on the name of Christ means that we abandon every hope of salvation we would have in something other than Christ. James M. Boice points out that this distinction between calling on Christ and believing in him points out that true saving faith "is more than mere intellectual assent to certain truths about Jesus. . . . There must be personal trust or commitment to him as Lord and Savior" (1239). However, intellectual content is essential. You cannot call upon or trust in Christ if you don't know anything about him. You must know that you are a sinner in need of a Savior and you must know enough about the person and work of Christ to know that he is the Savior.

The third thing Paul mentions is that a person must hear Christ. The NIV is somewhat misleading in their translation of this. NASB translates it more accurately. It is Christ who speaks through the proclamation of the Word of God. **John Murray comments**, "A striking feature of this clause is that Christ is represented as being heard in the gospel when proclaimed by sent messengers. The implication is that Christ speaks in the gospel proclamation. . . . The personal commitment which faith implies is coordinate with the encounter with Jesus' own words in the gospel message. And the dignity of the messengers, reflected later, is derived from the fact that they are the Lord's spokesmen" (2:58). Leon Morris said it this way, "The point is that Christ is present in the preachers; to hear them is to hear him." Jesus said the same thing when he sent out the seventy disciples ahead of him to preach in his name (**Luke 10:16**). When a minister of the gospel does his job correctly, he teaches and preaches the Word of God. He delivers the

word of Christ to his people and to those who do not know him. This leads to Paul's fourth idea: the preaching of the gospel. For a person to hear Christ, there must be a proclamation of the gospel. As we have noted in our study of Romans, God's uses means or secondary causes to carry out evangelism and missions. He has commanded us to take the gospel to the world and make disciples of all nations. The apostles were those directly commissioned by Jesus and sent with his authority. In the fullest sense of the statement, those who received them received Jesus and the Father. As they wrote Scripture through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, they proclaimed the very Word of God. Preachers today are to preach that Word. **J. I. Packer writes**, "A true sermon is an act of God, and not a mere performance by man. In real preaching the speaker is the servant of the Word and God speaks and works by the Word through his servant's lips. . . . The sermon . . . is God's ordained means of speaking and working. The divine commission to ministers is a commission to preach and teach, and the accompanying promise is that, if they preach the word faithfully, they will not preach in vain." The final step Paul addresses is the sending of Christ's messengers. In these steps Paul has states that a person must believe in Christ before they can call on him for salvation. They must hear Christ before they can believe. There must be preachers of the Word if people are going to hear Christ. Now, he concludes that for Christ and the gospel to be proclaimed to those who do not know him, preachers must be sent to them. Ultimately, it is God who sends preachers and missionaries. Jesus addressed this in **Matt. 9:38**. This should be one of our prayers. A means that God uses in this is that the messengers are sent by the churches. Remember that the church in Antioch sent Paul and Barnabus on their first missionary journey (Acts 13:1-3). **Rom. 15:24** - Paul wanted to go to Spain and wanted to enlist the help of the church in Rome for that missionary goal. **II. We are commanded by Christ to take the gospel to the world.**

**Matt. 28:18-20 Hudson Taylor said**, "The Great Commission is not an option to be considered; it is a command to be obeyed." **James M. Boice said**, "A strong missions

program is mandatory for an obedient church." Jerry Bridges writes, "On seven different occasions in his letters to the various churches, Paul either requested prayer for his ministry or acknowledged that his readers were praying for him. . . . Paul requested prayer for such things as boldness in sharing Christ, for the right words to speak, for open doors to proclaim the gospel, and for the rapid spread of the gospel (Eph. 6:19, Col. 4:3-4, 2 Thess. 3:1). Today's missionaries have the same ministry needs as did Paul. They also need boldness in sharing Christ, wisdom for the best way to do it, and open doors of opportunity. . . . William Carey of England, who has been called 'the father of modern missions,' went to India in 1793. At that time there were no organized missionary societies, but as Carey prayed over the needs of an unreached world, God laid India on his heart. At a 'commissioning' service for Carey and his colleague in March, 1793, one of Carey's friends exclaimed, 'There is a gold mine in India but it seems almost as deep as the centre of the earth!' to which Carey replied, 'I will venture down but remember that you must hold the ropes.' How did Carey expect his friends to 'hold the ropes'? It was to be through a partnership in prayer and in giving. Those who hold the ropes are just as important in the partnership as those who go down into the mine. Holding the ropes for others is a significant part of biblical fellowship; it is essential for the spread of the gospel."

*The Crisis of Caring*, 99-100, 102-104.

Even if you can't go to some particular mission field, you can hold the rope in prayer, giving, and encouragement. This applies to our witnessing and making gospel known wherever we are. Dr. Farmer, the retired missionary who influenced me, said, "A missionary is simply someone who overflows with the Word of God and the geography is God's business."

However, we need to have a willingness to give of our lives in missions if God were to call us to that service. **Robert Reymond writes**, "We should be willing, as was Paul, to endure loneliness, pain and suffering, loss of friends, persecution, insults,



misunderstanding, physical affliction, even death itself, if necessary, for the cause of Christ. That is to say, we should be willing to go anywhere, at any time, at any cost for Christ's sake (see Acts 20:24; 1 Cor. 4:9-13; 2 Cor. 11:23-28; Phil. 3:7-9; 2 Tim. 4:6-8). Simply put, if Christ is God and if he died for us, then nothing he would demand of us should we regard as too great a thing for him to ask or too high a sacrifice for us to make in his service." *Paul: Missionary Theologian*, 570.

These principles apply not only to foreign missions, but also to our own person witnessing and making the gospel known. We know the greatness of the gospel as well as the command of Christ. Therefore, we are called to communicate the gospel ourselves, pray for missions here and around the world, and support missions and evangelism. **Charles Spurgeon said**, "If sinners be damned, at least let them leap to hell over our bodies. If they will perish, let them perish with our arms about their knees. Let no one go there unwarned and unprayed for."

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What is your mission in life? What do you see as the primary purpose of your existence? If you know Christ, your main focus should be to live to the glory of God. This should be reflected in your life and in your witness.

During the first half of the 20th century in India, Vednayakam Samuel Azariah, an Anglican minister, became bishop of Dornakal, the smallest diocese in the subcontinent. By the time he died at the end of World War II, the diocese had become the largest in all India. What made the difference? Many things. Azariah stressed the importance of Bible knowledge being systematically imparted in all the churches. He focused on leadership training, regular evangelism, vital God-centered worship. He insisted that every church member get their identity straight. He stressed continually that each congregation was Christ's and distinct from the world. He stressed that the church belonged to God for his glory and for the proclamation of the gospel.

Often Azariah would dramatize the need for outgoing witness when he arrived at a congregation by asking every Christian in the church building to stand up and put his hands on their heads and say, "I am a baptized Christian. Woe is me if I preach not the gospel!" No wonder church members took seriously their calling to witness and live for God's glory.

Cited in Neil S. Braun, "Laity Mobilized: Reflections on Church Growth in Japan and other Lands."

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Rom. 10:16-17 Romans series #50 2/21/10

Commentators have debated whether these verses are a conclusion to the previous section or the beginning of a new paragraph. The ideas certainly flow into the next paragraph, but I think they are best understood as a summary of what Paul has just said in Romans 10. He has spoken of the necessity of preachers being sent to proclaim the gospel. As the message is proclaimed, people hear Christ and call on him for salvation. In Rom. 10:16, however, Paul cites Isa. 53:1 and observes that not everyone believes the message of the gospel. We should understand that the gospel is offensive to fallen man and, apart from the work of the Holy Spirit, he will not believe it. Rom. 10:17 especially summarizes the previous section when it states that faith comes through hearing the Word

of Christ. This is an important statement concerning the necessity of a person hearing the gospel in order to be saved.

### **I. The proclamation of the gospel is rejected by fallen man.**

#### **Rom. 10:16**

Paul has traveled all over the Roman world preaching the gospel. He has seen many people come to salvation, but not everyone who has heard the gospel has believed. In terms of Israelites who have not believed, Leon Morris calls Paul's statement of "not all have believed" a "masterly understatement." "Hardly any have believed" is an accurate assessment. Not only did many of Paul's fellow Jews not believe, but they actively persecuted Paul. They often followed him from city to city and stirred up the crowds against. He was beaten, stoned, and imprisoned. During the time when Paul was arrested in Jerusalem, a group of them swore an oath that they would not eat or drink anything until they had killed Paul. James M. Boice suggests three reasons for Paul's quotation of Isa. 53:1 in terms of Jewish unbelief and by extension unbelief in general. **First**, the quotation comes close to Isa. 52:7 which Paul has just quoted about how beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news. Eight verses later in Isa. 53:1 there is a statement that this ultimate good news of the gospel would be rejected by many. **Second**, the verse introduces one of the more important messianic chapters in the Old Testament. Isa. 53 sets forth the Messiah's substitutionary atonement. This means that there is a connection between the unbelief of the Jews and the message of Christ's work. It states that many people will disbelieve and reject the gospel. It also informs us the message of the gospel is not the kind of message they want. The gospel has a built in offense. It tells people that they are sinners and have no hope of salvation apart from Christ. It tells people that Jesus is the only way of salvation and that all other methods of salvation are false. It warns that apart from faith in Jesus, a person will face the judgment of God for an eternity in hell. That has never been a popular message. **James M. Boice writes**, "[This text] tells us that the people disbelieved (or would disbelieve) the message. On the other

hand, it tells us that the nature of the message was the very reason for their unbelief. It was not the kind of message they wanted. So what's new? Today, if we preach a message suited to our listeners wants or felt needs, we can gain a wide hearing. If we tell them that Jesus will give them treasure on earth rather than treasure in heaven, people will line up at the trough. If we tell them that Jesus will make them feel good rather than make them holy, people will clamor for the fix. If we tell them that Jesus died to cure them of their low self-esteem rather than their sins, they will pay for our glass cathedral. Much of the modern church-growth movement is built on exactly that reasoning. And it works! It works well. It builds mega-churches, and it makes the bearers of the 'mega-gospel' rich - because it is what sinful people want to hear. But it is not the gospel. The true gospel is a gospel of a crucified Savior suffering in our place for sins. That gospel is repugnant to the natural, unsaved man, and because it is, it will be rejected by him unless God first does a work of grace to turn him from his sin and error to the truth. Romans, Vol. 3, 1256.

**R. C. Sproul wrote:** "I once knew a pastor who frequently expressed his philosophy of ministry by saying, 'We must scratch people where they itch. We must address their felt needs.' Scratching people where they itch and addressing their 'felt needs' is a stratagem of the poor steward of the oracles of God. This was the recipe for success for the false prophets of Old Testament Israel. The problem with focusing on felt needs is that people often do not feel the real needs they have. For instance, people really need to know the true character of God. They may not particularly feel like they need to know that God is holy, but there are few things, if any, that human beings need to know more desperately than that.

The whole counsel of God is not always popular. This was the problem for Jeremiah in his day. The false prophets were popular while Jeremiah languished in ignominy."

Tabletalk, 9/99, 7.

**A third reason** Paul quotes this text is that it is a prophecy about the preaching of the gospel by Christ's messengers. Paul is applying this statement to the sad reality of his own day in which many of this Jewish kinsmen did not believe. **Rom. 9:27** touches on this same point. Paul mentioned his deep concern and consistent prayers for this salvation at the beginning of this chapter and at the beginning of Rom. 9. It is helpful to understand that God said unbelief will be present throughout church history.

This unbelief is the natural response of fallen man to the gospel. It is foolishness or a stumbling block to him.

**1 Cor. 1:18-24; 2:14; John 6:44-45, 63-65; Eph. 2:1-5**

Illus. - Person in hospital bed - The person is still alive.

Ultimately, a person does not believe because they are dead in sin and have no desire for gospel or the things of God.

Earlier in the book of Romans, Paul makes this same point.

**Rom. 3:10-12; 8:7-8**

We should not be surprised when fallen, sinful people reject the gospel. Apart from the work of the Holy Spirit, fallen man hates God and God's plan of salvation. This emphasizes the grace of God in our salvation. If you believe in Christ, that is a testimony to the grace and mercy you have received from God. The result is that God gets all the glory.

## **II. God uses the proclamation of the gospel to save sinners.**

**Rom. 10:17**

Rom. 10:16 might seem discouraging, but here we have a word of great encouragement. While fallen man, apart from the work of the Holy Spirit, rejects the gospel, God does use the gospel message to bring people to true saving faith. This statement follows naturally from what Paul has been saying in the section about the necessity of people being sent to preach the gospel. Unless a person hears the gospel, he cannot call upon

Christ for salvation. The means that God uses to bring people to salvation is the proclamation of gospel. The Holy Spirit works through this means. **1 Cor. 1:21-24** This stresses the importance of preaching. As God's Word is preached and taught, the Holy Spirit uses that to open people's hearts to the gospel and grant them faith and repentance.

**Charles Spurgeon said,** "I do not look for any other means of converting men beyond the simple preaching of the gospel and the opening of men's ears to hear it. The moment the Church of God shall despise the pulpit, God will despise her. It has been through the ministry that the Lord has always been pleased to revive and bless His Churches."

**Asked about his accomplishments as a Reformer, Martin Luther said,** "I simply taught, preached, wrote God's Word: otherwise I did nothing. . . . The Word did it all." *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church* by Mark Dever, 36.

This is a word of great encouragement to us in our witnessing and proclamation of the gospel. We know that when we communicate the truth of the gospel, that God will use it to save sinners.

**Robert Reymond writes,** "The problem in our day, which gives rise to highly questionable church growth methods, is two-fold: On the one hand, we are seeing a waning confidence in the message of the gospel. Even the evangelical church shows signs of losing confidence in the convincing and converting power of the gospel message. That is why increasing numbers of churches prefer sermons on family life and psychological health. We are being overtaken by what Os Guinness calls the managerial and therapeutic revolutions. The winning message, it seems, is the one that helps people to solve their temporal problems, improves their self-esteem and makes them feel good about themselves. In such a cultural climate, preaching on law, sin and repentance, and the cross has all but disappeared, even in evangelical churches. The church has become 'user friendly,' 'consumer oriented,' and as a result evangelical churches are being inundated with 'cheap grace' (Bonhoeffer). Today's 'gospel' is without discipleship, and

thus 'another gospel' and accordingly no gospel at all, all traceable to the fact that this is how too many people today have come to believe that the church must be grown. **On the other hand**, we are seeing a waning confidence in preaching as the means by which the gospel is to be spread. As a result, preaching is giving way in evangelical churches to multimedia presentations, drama, dance, 'sharing times,' sermonettes, and 'how to' devotionals. Preaching is being viewed as outdated and ineffective. . . . And once a person joins such a church, conventional wisdom has it, the church and the minister must meet his every felt need. Accordingly, ministers have become managers, facilitators, and motivators - everything but heralds of the whole council of God - and this all because they have lost confidence in the preaching of God's Word as the primary means for the growth of the church and the individual Christian."

*Systematic Theology*, 882-883.

**Martyn Lloyd-Jones writes**, "The church is not a place where people are to be entertained, or where people come to sit and listen either to singing or to the accounts of other people's experiences coupled with a brief, light, comfortable message."

There are three important applications concerning this. **First**, this underscores the idea that people can only be saved by hearing the message of the gospel. We're going to consider more about this in the next section, but faith comes from hearing the Word of God, not just through general revelation.

**Second**, since this is true, we have a call from God to make the gospel known. Down through church history, everyone who has been saved was saved through the means of some Christian communicating the gospel to them. We are to cultivate a perspective of making the gospel known to those we encounter, pray for the spread of the gospel throughout the world, and support mission work at home and in the world.

**Third**, if you are not a Christian, put yourself in a position where you will hear the Word of God.

**Charles Spurgeon said,** "Oh, if the damned in hell could come to earth, they would let you know what solemn work it is to hear the gospel. Think not that you can hear the gospel without having your salvation or damnation affected thereby."

**Charles Spurgeon also gave this exhortation,** "Will you do me a favor? I asked it once, and it was blessed to the conversion of several. Will you take a little time alone this evening, and after you have weighed your own condition before the Lord, write down one of two words? If you feel that you are not a believer, write down condemned. And if you are a believer in Jesus and put your trust in him alone, write down forgiven. Do it, even if you have to write down the word condemned.

We received into church fellowship a young man who said, 'Sir, I wrote down the word condemned, and I looked at it. There it was. I had written it myself - condemned.' As he looked, the tears began to flow and the heart began to break. And before long he fled to Christ, put the paper in the fire, and wrote down forgiven. This young man was about the sixth who had been brought to the Lord in the same way. So I ask you to try it. Remember, you are either one of the other - condemned or forgiven. Do not stand between the two. Let it be decided. And remember, if you are condemned today, yet you are not in hell. There is still hope! *Spurgeon At His Best* #189

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Rom. 10:18-21 Romans Series #51 2/28/10

We have now come to the last paragraph of Romans 10. Paul began this chapter with expressing his deep concern and his prayers for his fellow Israelites. He prayed for their salvation. After setting forth the basic tenets of the gospel and the importance of communicating it, he continues to deal with the unbelief of his fellow Jews. In this section, he makes the point that those who do not believe the gospel and believe in Jesus have no excuse. The message has been clearly communicated to them and they have understood that message. Gentiles, who do not have the Jew's rich prophetic revelation



from God, have believed and become a part of the believing covenant community of faith.

### **I. The unbelieving Jews heard the gospel.**

#### **Rom. 10:18-19**

Someone could offer the excuse that the Jews were not believing the gospel because they had not heard it. Paul counters that with the assertion that they had heard it. He quotes from Psalm 19:4 in making this point. Psalm 19 has two parts. The first half of the Psalm speaks about general revelation. That's the type of revelation which comes through the created order. This is what Paul addresses in Rom. 1:18f. He states there that the general knowledge of God which comes through seeing creation leaves all people without excuse. He does not say that general revelation is sufficient to bring people to a saving knowledge of Christ. The second half of Psalm 19 speaks about the law of God or the special revelation of God. That's the revelation we have in the Scriptures. Some have argued that Paul has misused Psalm 19 when he applies it to the gospel. Inclusivists, who content that a person can be saved from general revelation alone without the preaching of the gospel, argue that Paul is saying that general revelation is sufficient for salvation. They argue that since Paul refers to Psalm 19:4, then he is meaning that general revelation is sufficient for people to come to salvation.

However, Paul is probably thinking of the whole Psalm not just an isolated section of it. He sees a connection between general and special revelation. He makes an analogy that just as general revelation is continuous, the revelation of the Bible is also continuous and abundant. It is also important to note that this is applied specifically to Jews who have the special revelation of the Scriptures. It is not applied to the gentile world that does not have special revelation. **Douglas Moo, in his commentary on Romans**, writes, "The implied object of the verb 'heard' in Paul's question must be 'the word of Christ;' 'their voice' and 'their words' in the Psalm verse must then refer to the voices and words of Christian preachers. . . . His application probably rests on a general analogy: as God's

word of general revelation has been proclaimed all over the earth, so God's word of special revelation in the gospel, has been spread all over the earth" (666-667). **John Murray concurs and writes**, "Since the gospel proclamation is now to all without distinction, it is proper to see the parallel between the universality of general revelation and the universalism of the gospel. The former is a pattern now followed in the sounding forth of the gospel to the uttermost parts of the earth" (2:61).

The idea of salvation by general revelation only is not a part of the flow of thought in this passage. In fact, the Bible is clear that general revelation universally condemns people. It does not and cannot save them. According to Scripture, all people have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23) and the wages of sin is death. Despite the fact that all peoples and cultures have received general revelation and have an innate knowledge of God's eternal power, divine nature, and deity (Rom. 1:19-20), they repress that knowledge and create idols (Rom. 1:18f). They do not honor God as God or give thanks and exchange the glory of God for various kinds of idolatry. They have his moral law written on their hearts (Rom. 2:14-15) and they know that all sin is worthy of death (Rom. 1:32). They do not love God and his Christ, but rather hate him and the light of the gospel. They love darkness because their deeds are evil (John 3:19-20). There is no one righteous and no one who does good (Rom. 3:10-12). They do not seek for God (Rom. 3:11) and they are dead in sin (Eph. 2:1). They are, by nature, children of wrath (Eph. 2:3). They are alienated from the life of God (Eph. 4:18), hostile to God and unable to submit to his law or please him (Rom. 8:7-8). **Robert Reymond writes**, "From the biblical perspective, . . . there is really no such thing as the 'noble savage,' Rahner's 'anonymous Christian' or the 'holy pagan.' Such concepts exist only in the minds of unbelieving anthropologists and sociologists and certain Roman Catholic and evangelical inclusivists. In short, men are lost and under God's judgment, not only because they may have heard about and then rejected Christ as some point in their lives, but also and more

primarily because they are sinners by nature and by practice, who have failed to live in accordance with the light of the law of God which they all possess" (*Contending For The Faith*, 380).

The context of this verse is important. This whole section in Romans 10 is emphasizing the need to hear and believe the gospel in order to be saved.

**Robert Peterson comments on this passage:** "Romans 10:9-18, as strongly as any passage of Scripture, emphasizes the necessity of all sinners believing in Jesus to be saved. Confessing Jesus' lordship and believing that he (died and) lives again saves (Rom. 10:9). This is God's way for persons to receive salvation (Rom. 10:10). And this is consistent with Old Testament revelation (Rom. 10:11). It is the same for both Jews and Greeks - there is one Lord Jesus Christ who blesses all who call on him for salvation (Rom. 10:12). For sinners to experience salvation, God must send a preacher, who must preach to them, they must hear of Jesus, must believe in him, even call on him for salvation. This too coincides with the Old Testament (Rom. 10:14-15). In sum: 'faith comes from hearing and hearing through the word of Christ (Rom. 10:17)" (*Faith Comes By Hearing*, 197).

Paul's fellow Jews had the special revelation of the Old Testament (**John 5:39, 45-46**). Besides having the Old Testament, they had an abundant preaching of the gospel to them, not only in Jerusalem and Judea, but throughout the Roman world. Remember how Paul reasoned with them regularly in the synagogues showing from the Scriptures that Jesus was the Messiah. Sometimes, when we think of these themes, we emphasize the need to take the gospel to the world. That is an appropriate application of this text as well as other passages like the great commission in Matt. 28. However, there is also an important application to everyone who has heard the gospel. Even if you had never heard before today, you just have. You have just heard that there is only one way of salvation through faith in Christ. Do you trust in Christ alone for salvation? Is he your only hope? The command of Scripture is to repent and believe in Jesus. Throw yourself on him and

his perfect and accomplished work of salvation. If you believe in him as a result of the work of the Holy Spirit, the promise of God's word is that you will be saved from the wrath and justice of God. **Rom. 10:11-13**

## **II. The unbelieving Jews understood the message of the gospel.**

### **Rom. 10:19-21**

The argument might be made that while the Jews heard the message, they did not really understand it. Paul quotes from Deut. 32:21 and Isa. 65:1-2. Some commentators have understood this as saying, "Didn't the Jews understand that the gospel was to be preached to the Gentiles? They should have because the Old Testament prophesied it. **James M. Boice** doesn't agree with that approach. He writes, "I think Paul means: Didn't the Jews understand the gospel? They did, because they were provoked to jealousy when the Gentiles, upon whom they had often looked disparagingly, believed it. Do you see how this works? If Paul's countrymen did not understand the gospel of salvation by grace through the work of Christ - if it was utter foolishness to them - why would they have had such an emotional reaction when it was proclaimed among the Gentiles? It would have been just another example of Gentile foolishness in religious matters. 'Who cares what the Gentiles believe?' they would say. 'Let them believe anything they like, as long as we have our Judaism, which, as we know, is superior in every way.' But that was not the reaction Paul was seeing. Instead of detached indifference and smug superiority, there was jealousy and anger on the Jew's part. This indicated that they understood very well what was happening. They knew the message being received by the Gentiles was a message of salvation by the grace of God apart from keeping the law and that it was being taught not as a contradiction of Judaism, but as a fulfillment of it. That is what made it so offensive" (Romans 3:1274).

**William Hendriksen**, in his commentary on Romans, makes a similar point. He writes concerning this section, "It shows that not ignorance but unwillingness was the cause of Israel's lack of faith" (352).

Each of the items mentions in these quotations has an offense to Paul's Jewish kinsmen.

**First**, "those who are not a nation." This does not mean that the Gentiles had no national organization. It refers to the Gentiles as not being a part of the special people of God.

God had worked exclusively with the Jewish nation since the time of Abraham.

However, all through the Old Testament, what made a person a true part of that special covenant community was faith in God's covenant promises. In other words, faith in the Messiah. Now that the Messiah had come and they had rejected him, this "non-nation" was replacing them.

**Second**, "those without understanding." The Gentiles were ignorant pagans. They had philosophy and learning, but they knew nothing of the true and living God. They did not have the special revelation of God's law, the covenants, or the promises and the Jews did.

**Rom. 9:4-5; 2:17-20**

Now the gospel is being given and received by these formerly ignorant Gentiles. Think about the amazement that was expressed when the Gospel first went to the Gentiles and they received the Holy Spirit just like the Jewish believers did on the day of Pentecost.

Peter defends his actions in going to Cornelius in Acts 11. **Acts 11:13-18** There was more consternation about the Gentiles coming into the church as Gentiles later, but here was an acknowledgement that God has granted them repentance also.

**Third**, "I was found by those who sought me not." The Jews would have described themselves as those who sought God. The pharisees devoted their lives to trying to obey the law of God. The Gentiles didn't do any of that. One commentator describes them as "happy-go-lucky pagans" (Boice). Here is God's sovereign right to grant salvation on whomever he wills. This demonstrates again that man cannot claim any merit that demands salvation before God. God left much of Israel in its sin and gave mercy and grace to Gentiles. You can see how offensive this message would be to Paul's Jewish kinsmen. **William Hendriksen** points out that this action of God is in keeping with what Jesus said in his parable of the landowner and his vineyard. **Matt. 21:33-43**

Paul does mention later that God uses this envy to bring Jews to salvation (Rom. 11:11, 14).

In a similar way, there are people today who are offended by God's plan of salvation.

They offended by God's grace.

I remember explaining the gospel to woman one time and she told me great anger at the idea of salvation by grace, "I've been good enough to go to heaven." The gospel says no one has any merit before God. **Becky Pippert wrote:** "The core of human religion has always been moralism and legalism. We like the 'I must try harder' approach to religion because it is rooted in pride and control. It believes that by self-effort alone we can make ourselves good. We favor this kind of religion because that way we do not really need God, we just need to live up to the standards we choose (which of course we cannot do either!)." *Hope Has Its Reasons*, 110

**John Newton said,** "If I ever reach heaven I expect to find three wonders there: first to meet some I had not thought to see there; second, to miss some I had thought to meet there; and third, the greatest wonder of all, to find myself there."

That expresses the Christian perspective and attitude toward the grace of God. The wonder that we who deserve damnation have received mercy and grace in Christ.

**Robert Murray McCheyne** wrote a hymn that captures this idea well:

1. When this passing world is done/  
when has sunk yon glaring sun,  
looking o'er life's finished story,-  
Then, Lord, shall I fully know,  
not till then, how much I owe.
2. When I hear the wicked call/  
on the rocks and hills to fall,  
When I see them start and shrink/  
on the fiery deluge brink,  
-/  
Then, Lord, shall I fully know,  
not till then, how much I owe.
3. When I stand before the throne,  
dressed in beauty not my own,  
When I see thee as thou art,  
love thee with unsinning heart,  
-/  
Then, Lord, shall I fully know,  
not till then, how much I owe.

4. When the praise of heav'n I hear,/ loud as thunders to the ear,/ loud as many waters' noise, sweet as harp's melodious voice, -/ Then, Lord, shall I fully know,/ not till then, how much I owe.

5. Chosen not for good in me,/ wakened up from wrath to flee,/ Hidden in the Saviour's side,/ by the Spirit sanctified, -/ Teach me, Lord, on earth to show,/ by my love, how much I owe.

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Rom. 11:1-6 Romans Series #52 3/7/10

We are now starting a new chapter in our study of Romans. It is important to remember that the chapter divisions were added much later and the flow of thought continues from chapters 9 and 10. Remember in Rom. 9:6, Paul states that the word of God had not failed in regard to Israel. He points out in Romans 9 that there has always been an elect remnant in Israel and that not everyone who was descended from Israel or from the Patriarchs was a part of the spiritual Israel of God. In chapter 11, Paul is continuing the point that God's word has not failed. Again, he is going to point to a remnant that is saved by God's grace. There is in Romans 11, however, a greater focus on ethnic Israel and ethnic Gentiles coming to faith in Christ. While this chapter deals with both ethnic groups, it also emphasizes that there is one way of salvation through faith in the Messiah. This morning we are going to focus on the first part of this chapter in which Paul discusses the concept of a remnant being saved by God's sovereign grace. This section strongly sets forth once again that salvation is a sovereign action of God and it is purely by God's grace.

**I. God's word had not failed because he had, by his grace, saved a remnant of Israelites. Rom. 11:1**

Since a large part of ethnic Israel had rejected Jesus as the Messiah, the question again could be raised if God's purposes had failed. Paul particularly addressed with point in

Rom. 9-10. A closely related question would be has God rejected his people? When you think about the abundance of Old Testament passage which speak of God's faithfulness to his people Israel, the idea of many Jews being rejected for their lack of faith seems inconsistent with God's Word. **Psa. 94:14:** "For the Lord will not abandon his people, nor will he forsake his inheritance."

Paul answers this problem by showing that the rejection of the Jews was not total and that the promise was never to the Jewish nation as large, but to the elect of God within that nation. Paul first points out that the rejection of the Jews is not total because he is a Jew and he is saved. **Rom. 11:1** Not only was a he Jew, but he was a descendant of Abraham of the tribe of Benjamin. He wasn't a proselyte nor had any in his family joined the community of faith in that way. He came from one of the more favored tribes. Benjamin and Judah were the two tribes of the southern kingdom that became the main representatives of the people of Israel after the north was taken in into exile by Assyria. Paul also shows that God has not forsaken his people whom he foreknew. There is a debate among commentators as to whether this "foreknowledge" refers to the Jewish nation as a whole or specifically to his elect within Israel. Commentators are pretty evenly divided as to the best way to take the phrase. Charles Hodge makes a good argument for it applying to the elect of God within Israel, or the spiritual Israel. He gives three points to support this approach. 1) It is precisely the distinction which Paul had made, and made for the same purpose in Rom. 9:6-8. The promises did not look toward the natural seed, but spiritual Israel or all the elect of God. 2) Paul develops the point in that way when he speak of a remnant according to the election of grace in the next paragraph. 3) Paul illustration from the Old Testament of Elijah and remnant that hadn't bowed to Baal fits this approach to the term foreknowledge. Therefore, he makes a distinction between the nation as a whole and the remnant or elect of God within that nation. I would add that it also fits the way Paul begins to answer the potential question in Rom. 11:1. He points out that God has not rejected all of Israel because he is a Jew



and he is saved. He is a part of that remnant which is foreknown of God. Remember also when we examined this term in Rom. 8:29, that we pointed out that it does not refer to foreknown faith, repentance, or good works. The object of the verb are people whom God foreknew not things about them. The same is true here. **Charles Hodge comments,** "The people whom God foreknew, were a people distinguished by that foreknowledge from all other people. . . . God knows those who are his, and in the midst of general apostasy, preserves and saves those whom he thus foreknows as his own" (354).

A remnant of Israel is saved by God's grace, Paul being a part of that remnant. **Rom. 11:5**

## **II. The principle of a remnant being saved is in keeping with Old Testament history. Rom. 11:2-5**

The term "remnant" refers to a surviving part of something. It can refer to people themselves, customs or objects. For example, a remnant of fabric is what is left over from a bolt of cloth when most of it has been sold. In the Old Testament, it usually refers to a small group of Jews who survived one of the invasions of the Assyrians or the Babylonians. The term is used sixty-two times in the Old Testament, but only three times in New Testament and each of those occasions is a reference to an Old Testament text. It is used in **Romans 9:27** quoting Isa. 10:22-23 in a similar way as Paul uses it here.

The Old Testament history Paul refers to is the time in Elijah's life when he had just defeated the prophets of Baal. However, King Ahab and Queen Jezebel were still trying to kill him and idolatry was rampant in Israel. In a time of discouragement, Elijah lamented that he was the only faithful person left. God told him that he had reserved for himself 7000 who had not bowed to Baal. Even though 7000 seems like a large number, it was a small percentage of the population of Israel. However, Elijah wasn't the only faithful person alive at that time. Paul uses this historical event to show that God's saving of a remnant is not an anomaly, but follows the pattern of Old Testament history.

**In a sense, the days of Elijah had returned.** Unbelief among the Jews was the majority position. In Elijah's day, the Lord's prophets had been killed. In Paul's time, shortly before he wrote this, the Jews had killed the ultimate prophet, the Messiah who was the prophet as well and priest and king. However, just like there were true believers in the time of Elijah, the same was true at that time in early church history. It is also important to note that it was God who had kept for himself the 7000 who had not bowed to Baal. It wasn't credited to Elijah's activity. He didn't know anything about them. Again, here is the sovereign will of God saving a remnant out of the midst of a nation in apostasy. In the same way, God was preserving a remnant at the time of Paul. **Rom. 11:5** This remnant is kept in accordance with God's gracious choice or his gracious election. An important application of this for us is similar to what was spoken to Elijah. It is easy to look at evil and the disregard for God that surrounds us and become discouraged. Most of us have had the experience of witnessing to people who have rejected the message of the gospel. Think about Paul's missionary efforts. He would often begin his mission in a city by going to the synagogue and presenting Jesus as the Messiah to his Jewish kinsmen. While some believed, the majority did not and often attacked Paul. In 2 Cor. 11:24-26, Paul mentioned that he had been beaten five times by the Jewish authorities and he was in constant danger from them. Paul remained faithful in the midst of this opposition because he knew that God would use his witness to save his elect. **1**

**Cor. 1:21-24**

Just like God used Paul's preaching and missionary work to save people, in the same way, God will use our witness to bring people to salvation. This also means that we do not put our confidence in anything other than God to bring people to salvation. It is not particularly clever sales presentation of the gospel that saves someone; it is the power of God. It is God that raises a person dead in sin to newness of life in Christ.

**Charles Spurgeon said,** "I have often been surprised at the mercy of God to myself. Poor sermons of mine, that I could cry over when I get home, have led scores to the

cross; and, more wonderful still, words that I have spoken in ordinary conversation, mere chance sentences, as men call them, have nevertheless been as winged arrows from God, and have pierced men's hearts, and laid them wounded at Jesus' feet. I have often lifted up my hands in astonishment, and said, 'How can God bless such a feeble instrumentality?'"

It is God who preserves a remnant for himself. Our call is simply to make the gospel known. A story from the life of missionaries Robert and Mary Moffat illustrates this truth. For 10 years this couple labored faithfully in Bechuanaland (now called Botswana) without one ray of encouragement to brighten their way. They could not report a single convert. Finally the directors of their mission board began to question the wisdom of continuing the work. The thought of leaving their post, however, brought great grief to this devoted couple, for they felt sure that God was in their labors, and that they would see people turn to Christ in due season. They stayed; and for a year or two longer, darkness reigned. Then one day a friend in England sent word to the Moffats that she wanted to mail them a gift and asked what they would like. Trusting that in time the Lord would bless their work, Mrs. Moffat replied, "Send us a communion set; I am sure it will soon be needed." God honored that dear woman's faith. The Holy Spirit moved upon the hearts of the villagers, and soon a little group of six converts was united to form the first Christian church in that land. The communion set from England was delayed in the mail; but on the very day before the first commemoration of the Lord's supper in Bechuanaland, the gift arrived.

### **III. The salvation of a remnant emphasizes God's sovereign grace in salvation.**

#### **Rom. 11:5-6**

Once again we see an emphasis on the grace of God in our salvation. In Rom. 11:6, Paul simply gives a simple point of logic. If our election and salvation is by God's grace, then works have no place in it. Good works are in no way a basis of our salvation. This is exactly what Paul said in **Rom. 4:2-5**.

God is the divine initiator of our salvation. We are saved purely by his grace and mercy in Christ. Our election is not based on God foreseeing good works, faith, or repentance in us. In fact, those things don't exist in us before God's grace changes our hearts.

**Charles Hodge comments on Rom. 11:6:** "If the election spoken of be of grace, it is not founded on works, for the two things are incompatible. It evidently was, in the apostle's view, a matter of importance that the entire freeness of the election of men to the enjoyment of the blessings of the Messiah's kingdom, should be steadily in view. He would not otherwise have stopped in the midst of his discourse to insist so much on this idea." *Romans*, 356.

The grace of God in our salvation is set forth over and over in the New Testament. There are 128 references to God's grace in the New Testament. **Acts 20:24:** "I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me - the task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace. **Rom. 3:23-24; 5:15; 1 Cor. 15:10; Gal. 1:6; Eph. 1:5-8; 2:4-5, 8-9; 2 Tim. 1:9.**

**Robert Reymond writes,** "With a gloriously monotonous regularity Paul pits faith against all law-keeping, viewed as its diametrical opposite. Whereas the latter relies on human effort of the law-keeper looking to himself to render satisfaction before God and earn merit, the former repudiates and looks entirely away from self and all human effort to the work of Jesus Christ, who alone by his obedient life and sacrificial death rendered full satisfaction before God and men."

*Paul: Missionary Theologian*, 425.

In light of this, it is amazing that anyone professing belief in the Bible would say that works contribute to our salvation. However, the sinful human heart is always ready to claim some merit before God. James Kennedy illustrated this with this story: It was a dark night on the Mississippi highway from Jackson to Vicksburg. The sky was overcast, but at least the heavy rains of the last few days had stopped. The truck driver relaxed in

the cab of his truck and watched the broken line of the road disappear monotonously beneath his cab, thankful that at least now the roads were dry and much safer.

Suddenly the twin tail lights of the car in front of him melted into the road and disappeared! He sat bolt upright in his cab. That was inexplicable. It could not happen, and yet it just had. That thought went through his mind in a fraction of a second. In the next fraction of a second he saw the gaping black hole where a bridge had stood over the river. He slammed on his brakes. The wheels stopped instantly, but there was no longer any road beneath them. His truck sailed silently and eerily into the black void. Breaking glass, he extricated himself and managed to swim to shore. He scrambled up the embankment, all the while hearing one car after another zoom smoothly into the gap, and disappear, followed by shrieks and a booming splash. Finally, he reached the road and frantically waved his hands at oncoming cars. They were no doubt surprised by this dripping scarecrow, but at least three passed him before he was able to stop a driver from speeding over the edge. Sixteen people died that night. Each had faith in a bridge that the swollen river had torn away - a bridge that was out.

Many suppose that by the bridge of good works- morality, piety, church membership, good character, and religiosity - they can somehow make their way across that dark river safely into paradise. That bridge is out. The abyss is real, and it is eternal. I cannot imagine how frightening it must be to feel yourself, at the end of life, silently slipping over the edge into eternity without heeding God's call - without being justified, adopted, and sanctified.

*How Do I Get To Know God?* By James Kennedy, 114-115.

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When I was in preaching classes in seminary and we were talking about ways to structure sermons, Dr. Rayburn, the homiletics professor told us that it was helpful to people to hear brief summaries of your main points before you go on to a new point.

Paul does that in this next section of Romans 11. As a good teacher, Paul, knew that it was important occasionally to summarize what he had been teaching. This section in Romans 11 starts with a rhetorical question, "What then?" This question introduces a summary of what Paul has been setting forth. However, as is often the case in Paul's writing, when he summarizes, he also adds some new thoughts to what he has been saying. We will see that is the case here. In this section, Paul gives a great summary of the doctrines of election, reprobation all under the main idea of the grace of God in our salvation. While he has addressed the issue of reprobation in Romans 9, here he adds to what he has said and applies the teaching to unbelieving Jews.

### **I. The grace of God is the basis of election.**

#### **Rom. 11:6-7**

Last week we considered the important statement concerning God's grace in Rom. 11:6. It is a simple point of logic. Grace and works are incompatible with each other and they are opposite concepts. Our salvation is completely by God's grace and mercy found in Christ. Our election is not based on God foreseeing anything in us. If it were, then election would be based on works and "grace would no longer be grace." As Paul summarizes these themes, he emphasizes again that our salvation stems completely from God's grace. **Rom. 11:7**

**The first point** Paul summarizes is his teaching on election. He addressed this subject in Rom. 9 under the idea that God's word had not failed because they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel or from the Patriarchs. There is a remnant or an elect which makes up the true spiritual Israel. He especially applies this to ethnic Israel in this chapter. He points out that Israel failed to obtain what it was seeking. This language parallels the language of Rom. 9:31. This parallel informs us as to the meaning of the

"it" in Rom. 11:7. What Israel failed to obtain through its attempts at law keeping and self-righteousness was right standing with God. Israel was trying to earn salvation through good works or some form of obedience to God. That is the opposite of grace. **Charles Hodge writes**, "No form of error is more destructive than that which leads to self-dependence; either reliance on our own powers, or on our own merit, ver. 32 [Rom. 9:32].

**Second**, Paul sets forth two categories of people among his fellow Jews - the elect and the reprobate who have been hardened. The elect is the remnant. These are the believing Jews like Paul himself and the remnant Paul likens to those who had not bowed to Baal in the days of Elijah. These are the spiritual Israel (Rom. 9:6) and the "remnant chosen by grace" (Rom. 11:5). These Jews, called the elect in Rom. 11:7 have obtained this right standing with God through faith in Jesus, the Messiah. The other larger portion of the Jews have rejected the Messiah and have been hardened. Paul has given the reason for this hardening in the previous two chapters. Out of their own sinful condition they have rejected the gospel and tried to establish their own righteousness. Once again this touches on the crucial doctrine of man's total depravity. Boice 1308.

Notice that the elect did obtain this while the rest were hardened. The concepts of election and reprobation are tied to the doctrine of man's sin. It is crucial to understand the biblical teaching concerning man's fallen condition in order to understand the doctrines of election and reprobation. There are three approaches to man's sin. First, there is the Pelagian view which gets its name from a monk named Pelagius. Pelagius held that Adam's sin is not imputed to his posterity, but that everyone is born perfectly innocent and only sin because they have bad examples around them. He argued that man can earn salvation through his obedience to God's commands. Augustine opposed him and he was condemned as a heretic by the Council of Carthage in A. D. 418. This would be the view of modern liberal theology. The second position, known as semi-Pelagianism, says that Adam's sin is imputed to his posterity, but sin does not affect the total person. There is

some area of the heart that is not affected by sin and can take the first step toward God and faith in Christ. This the position of modern Roman Catholicism and Arminianism. The third view, which I think is the biblical position, is that Adam's sin is imputed to all of his posterity who descended from him by ordinary generation. This sin affects the totality of his being. It affects his mind, desires, will, and attitude toward God. This is the position set forth by Augustine and later the Reformers. The Bible affirms this position. **Eph. 2:1-5; 4:17-19; Rom. 3:10-12; 8:7-8; 2 Cor. 2:14; 12:3; John 6:44-45; 63-65.** Man, left to himself, hates God and has no desire for God. He is dead in sin and, apart from a spiritual resurrection effected by God, remains in that condition. **The Russian author Turgenev wrote,** "I do not know what the heart of a bad man is like, but I do know what the heart of a good man is like, and it is terrible." This is why our salvation is completely of God's grace. In light of this, remember that grace is freely given and justice is that which is owed. God does not owe salvation to sinful man. In terms of our election and subsequent salvation, God is the divine initiator of our salvation. He sovereignly opens our hearts to believe in Christ. **Charles Spurgeon said,** "A man is not saved against his will, but he is made willing by the operation of the Holy Ghost. A mighty grace which he does not wish to resist enters into the man, disarms him, makes a new creature of him, and he is saved."

## **II. Unbelievers receive the retributive justice of God.**

**Rom. 11:7** - When we speak of hardening, we are speaking of the decree of reprobation. James M. Boice points out that election and reprobation are similar in at least two ways. **First,** they both originate in the eternal counsels or will of God and not the will of man. **Second,** they both have the glory of God as their objective. However, they are also different in important ways. **First, there is a difference in the cause.** The reason some are saved is that God intervenes and changes their hearts, bringing them to Christ. God actively causes them to be born again or regenerate. In reprobation, God does not create



unbelief or sin. They do that themselves. God simply does not intervene to change their hearts. The Westminster Confession uses the term that God "passes them by" (3.7).

**Second**, the reprobate are judged because of their sin. God gives them the justice which they deserve for their sins.

**Third**, the way God hardens them is that he does not restrain the evil they want to do.

**Rom. 1:24, 26, 28**

**Rom. 11:8-10** - The Old Testament quotations which Paul uses come from all three parts of the Jewish canon: the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings. The quotation in verse 8 is a composite. Most of it comes from Deut. 29:4, but the phrase "spirit of stupor" is from Isa. 29:10. **Rom. 11:9-10** comes from one of the famous imprecatory psalms, Psalm 69. In this Psalm, David laments the unjust persecution in his life and asks God to bring judgment and disaster on his enemies. (Psa. 69:22-23). Paul applies that prayer to the majority of Jews living in his day. What David prayed concerning his enemies God has brought on the unbelieving Jews at that time. **William Hendriksen** comments on these verses: "Verses 7-10 establish the following facts: a. The elect have obtained salvation. b. God hardens those who have hardened themselves. c. They get what is coming to them (365).

This statement about hardening is essentially the same thing Paul said in Romans 9. However, in Romans 9 he gives the examples of Esau and Pharaoh. No Jew would argue with that. Esau and the Edomites and the Egyptians were a part of Israel. In Romans 11, Paul applies the same principle to the unbelieving Jews. That is an arresting application of God's judgment. An important application of this for us is not to take lightly the proclamation of the gospel. If you do not know Christ, right now God has given you an opportunity to hear the gospel and to hear the command to believe and repent. Do not think that presume on that the grace of God will always be there. **Aaron Burr, the third Vice President** of the United States, was reared in a godly home and admonished to accept Christ by his grandfather Jonathan Edwards. But he refused to listen. Instead, he

declared that he wanted nothing to do with God and said he wished the Lord would leave him alone. He did achieve a measure of political success in spite of repeated disappointments. But he was also involved in continuous strife, and when he was 48 years old, he killed Alexander Hamilton in a duel. He lived for 32 more years, but through all this time he was unhappy and unproductive. It was during this sad chapter in his life that he declared to a group of friends, "Sixty years ago I told God that if He would let me alone, I would let Him alone, and God has not bothered about me since." Aaron Burr got what he wanted. **Rom. 2:4-6**

### **III. God's blessings cause unbelievers to harden their hearts.**

#### **Rom. 11:7-10**

Think about the blessings from God which the Jews had received. Paul mentions some of them in Romans 9:4-5. Of all the peoples on the earth, God chose Abraham and his descendants. The people of Israel were given the law of God, the promises concerning the Messiah. God sent them prophets who gave them a revelation of God and his plan of salvation. They had the covenants, the law, the types and shadows, and all the various messianic prophecies. God did not give those blessings to the Philistines or the Assyrians or the Babylonians or any other people on the face of earth. However, the Jews rejected the Messiah. **James M. Boice** writes, ". . . if the blessings of God are misused - and they always are misused unless we allow them to lead us to faith in Jesus as our Savior - they will inevitably harden our hearts, propel us into further sins, and eventually lead to even greater judgment" (1316).

What are some blessings of God that can be misused and lead to spiritual stupor and hardness of heart?

**1. Preaching.** It is a great blessing from God to hear his Word preached and taught. It is a great privilege to hear the gospel and the call to believe in Christ for salvation. But, if someone hears that message and does not believe, they are all the more accountable to God and will have a greater judgment in the last day. **John Calvin**, commenting on

Heb. 2:1 said of the gospel: "God wishes his gifts to be valued by us at their proper worth. The more precious they are, the baser is our ingratitude if they do not have their proper value for us. In accordance with the greatness of Christ, so will be the severity of God's vengeance on all despisers of the Gospel." *Hebrews* by Hughes, 76.

**Charles Spurgeon said**, "If you once hear the gospel you can never be indifferent to it; you must either be its friend or its foe, its disciple or its opposer." *Spurgeon's Gold*, p. 112.

**He also said**, "Oh, if the damned in hell could come to earth, they would let you know what solemn work it is to hear the gospel. Think not that you can hear the gospel without having your salvation or damnation affected thereby."

## **2. The sacraments of baptism and the Lord's supper.**

Both of these signs are given as a blessing for God's people. Baptism is God's covenant sign. As we consider the sign of our baptism, we remember God's promises of salvation to those in Christ. However, there are those who trust in baptism for their salvation.

They may not have any faith in Christ and his work, but simply trust in the fact that they were baptized. I had a man on his death bed tell me that he knew he was going to heaven because he was baptized, but he didn't seem to have the slightest understanding of the gospel. He trust in his baptism and not in Christ as far as I could tell. The same thing is true of communion. There large populations under the general umbrella of Christianity who believe that taking communion conveys salvation. If a person does not trust in Christ, the sacrament can actually become a point of judgment. It is possible for people to become pagan in practice when they simply trust in an outward ceremony or rite for salvation apart from true faith in Christ.

**3. Material possessions.** Whatever we have in the material realm comes from God. It is easy for people to trust in their possessions rather than depend on God. **1 Tim. 6:17-19** This calls us to examine our hearts. How do you know if you are the elect of God? If you believe in Christ, then God has opened your heart to believe. If you do not believe in

Christ, at least you are not dead yet. There is still hope, but don't presume on the next moment of life. Repent and believe now!

**James M. Boice writes,** "God's chief end is to glorify God. Therefore, since God is all-powerful, this end will certainly be achieved. It will be achieved in every detail of history and in the destiny of every individual. Every person who has ever lived or will ever live must glorify God, either actively or passively, either willingly or unwillingly, either in heaven or in hell. You will glorify God. Either you will glorify him as the object of his mercy and glory, which will be seen in you.

Or you will glorify him in your rebellion and unbelief by being made the object of his wrath and power at the final judgment. In fact, if you are rebelling, you are glorifying him even now, because even now his patience is displayed in you by his enduring your sin for a time, rather than sending you to hell immediately, which you deserve." *Romans*, vol. 3, 1108-1109.

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Romans 11:11-16 Romans series #54 3/21/10

In our study of Romans 11, we have observed that Paul is still addressing the issue he presented in Rom. 9:6. Since so many of his fellow Jews had rejected Jesus as the Messiah, the question idea could be raised that God's purposes had failed. Paul showed in Romans 9:6f that God's purposes had not failed because not everyone who was descended from Israel or the Patriarchs was of the spiritual Israel of God. Ethnic descendancy didn't automatically equal election and salvation. He continued this theme in Rom. 10 in showing that they heard and understood the message of the gospel, but rejected it. In Romans 11, he continues to address this issue. In Rom. 11:1 he asks the question, "God has not rejected his people, has He?" He answers that question by pointing out that he is a Jew and he is saved. He then gives the illustration of Elijah and that fact that at that time of great idolatry in Israel, God reserved for himself 7000 who

had not bowed their knees to Baal. Paul again emphasizes a present application of this principle in **Rom. 11:5**.

In this context, Paul especially emphasizes the grace of God in our salvation. It is God's gracious election and mercy that issues in our salvation and not our works in any way.

Paul speaks of the unbelieving Jews receiving the retributive justice of God in their hardening in sin and unbelief. Our text this morning continues this theme and addresses the providence of God in using the unbelief of the Jews to bring salvation to the Gentiles as well as a reciprocal idea of elect Jews coming to salvation through observing God's blessings on Gentiles.

This text is a great encouragement for us in evangelism and in terms of trusting God's wisdom in his providence.

### **I. God used Israel's rejection of the gospel to bring the gospel and salvation to the Gentiles. Rom. 11:11**

Think about early Christian history. All the first believers were Jews, but as the gospel spread, persecution arose against it. In Acts 4 and 5, the Sanhedrin commanded Peter and John and the apostles not to preach Jesus. Acts 5:29 - "But Peter and the apostles answered and said, 'We must obey God rather than men.'"

In Acts 7, Stephen was stoned to death. **Acts 8:1, 4**

Philip, one of the newly elected deacons went to Samaria and preached the gospel to that group of people. After that he presented the gospel to the Ethiopian eunuch on the road to Gaza. That man took the message back to Ethiopia. In Paul's missionary journeys, the persecution and attacks of the Jews repeatedly caused Paul to move to a new city or region.

Pisidian Antioch - Acts 13:45-50; Iconium - Acts 14:4-6; Lystra - Acts 14:19-20;

Thessalonica - Acts 17:5, 10;

Berea - Acts 17:12-14 (Paul went to Athens). Corinth - Acts 18:5-6. This is the pattern that Paul points to in Rom. 11:11. Rejection of the gospel and persecution have always

led to the spread of the gospel. **Tertullian said**, "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church." That was true in Paul's life and down through church history. **Jim Elliot** was martyred in 1956. At the time of his death he was trying to reach the Auca Indians of South America for Christ. Just 3 years earlier, after watching an Indian die in a jungle hut, he had affirmed his willingness to serve God and die if necessary among these people. Then he added this petition: "Lord, let me live until I have declared Thy works to this generation." I don't imagine Jim Elliot expected God to answer his prayer by letting him be speared to death before he was 30 years old. But neither did he have any idea that within 3 years his name would be known all over the world, and that his journals would challenge many to give themselves to the Lord's service. He's been in heaven now for over 50 years, but he is still "speaking" to hundreds of thousands of people.

In a similar way, the Jews' rejection of Jesus as the Messiah caused the gospel to go to the Gentile world. However, we see a reciprocal effect in this.

## **II. God uses the salvation of the Gentiles to bring elect Jews to salvation. Rom. 11:11, 13-14**

**O. Palmer Robertson comments on this passage:** "Clearly the apostle is describing a temporal sequence in these verses. The Jewish people reject their Messiah; then the Gentiles believe; then the Jews are provoked by jealousy and return in faith; then the world receives even richer blessing as a consequence of this return of the Jews. . . . This whole cycle could be considered as having fulfillment in the present era of gospel proclamation" (*The Israel of God*, 173).

The envy or jealousy in this text has a positive result. This is not a universal response. The only people who will desire God and the blessings of God in the gospel and, therefore, be jealous for them are those whom God has regenerated. It is the elect Jews or the remnant who will observe God's blessings on the Gentiles and want God and those blessings which come only through Christ. This statement is similar to Rom. 10:19.

**William Hendriksen comments:** "To reconcile these two passages (Rom. 10:19 and

11:11b) we must assume that God causes their envy to be the means of their salvation. These people take note of the peace that passes understanding in the hearts and lives of the Gentiles who, by God's sovereign grace, have embraced Christ as their Lord and Savior. The elect Jews then become envious, yearning to participate in this peace of God and in all the other blessings God is bestowing on the converted Gentiles. Result: the Holy Spirit uses envy to save these Jews" (367).

One debate concerning this passage is when this conversion of the elect Jews occurs. Dispensational theology and some in various other eschatological perspectives have argued that the conversion of Jews spoken of here will take place at some future date just before the second coming of Jesus. However, as O. Palmer Robertson pointed out, "This whole cycle could be considered as having fulfillment in the present era of gospel proclamation."

We will consider this issue more fully in a future sermon on the later part of this chapter, but for right now, let me mention a couple of reasons why I think it is best to see this as a cycle that occurs throughout church history right up until the second coming of Jesus.

**First**, Paul's answer to the question of whether God has forsaken his people is answered in a present tense idea all through this chapter. **Rom. 11:1** - "I'm a Jew and I've saved." This is an argument from the present, not from some future conversion. After speaking about the time of Elijah, **Rom. 11:5** - Again, here is a reference to the present. **Rom. 11:14** - Paul speaks about his present ministry and the dynamic of some Jews coming to salvation through observing Gentiles. He does not look toward something in the future, but is talking about his present ministry. **Rom. 11:30-31** - The threefold use of the term "now" indicates Paul is thinking of a dynamic that occurs all through the era of gospel proclamation.

**Second**, when Paul uses the term, "their fullness" he is not referring to the salvation of a physical unit such as every person in the nation of Israel, but the sum of all Israel's remnants. **Louis Berkhof writes on Rom. 11:** "In . . . [Romans] chapters 9-11 the

apostle discusses the question, how the promises of God to Israel can be reconciled with the rejection of the greater part of Israel. He points out first of all in the chapters 9 and 10 that the promise applies, not to Israel according to the flesh, but to the spiritual Israel; and in the second place that God still has His elect among Israel, that there is among them still a remnant according to the election of grace, 11:1-10. And even the hardening of the greater part of Israel is not God's final end, but rather a means in His hand to bring salvation to the Gentiles, in order that these, in turn, by enjoying the blessings of salvation, may provoke Israel to jealousy. The hardening of Israel will always be only partial, for through all the succeeding centuries there will always be some to accept the Lord. . . . 'All Israel' is to be understood as a designation, not of the whole nation, but of the whole number of the elect out of the ancient covenant people."

From: *Systematic Theology*, 699.

Therefore, this continues the same idea of a remnant or elect out of Israel. There are elect people out of both groups who come to Christ through the sovereign grace of God. In terms of the Jews being jealous or envious of the blessings of God on the Gentiles, here is another example of how God uses means or secondary causes to accomplish his purpose. God uses this cycle to bring salvation to a Jewish remnant and this becomes a blessing the whole body of Christ, comprised of saved Jews and Gentiles.

1 Cor. 1:21-24 - God uses preaching to make the gospel known and call people to himself.

This principle of God uses various means calls us to be passionate about presenting the gospel. **John Piper said**, "God is pursuing with omnipotent passion a worldwide purpose of gathering joyful worshippers of Himself from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. He has an inexhaustible enthusiasm for the supremacy of His name among the nations. Therefore, let us bring our affections into line with His, and for the sake of His name, let us renounce the quest for worldly comforts and join His global purpose."



I have often found the stories of how people came to the Lord encouraging in this regard. Often we see that God greatly uses even our meager efforts. A Christian traveling on an ocean liner offered a Gospel tract to a passenger. The man accepted the literature with a scowl and then with a flourish tore it into tiny pieces, cradled the fragments in his hand for a moment, and finally tossed them overboard. The Christian went away with a heavy heart, while the unbeliever headed for the ship's bar. As he lifted a drink to his lips, however, he noticed a small piece of paper adhering to his coat lapel. Quickly plucking it off, he inspected it and discovered it was a tiny scrap of the discarded tract. Only one word appeared - "God." As he turned it over, he was startled to read on the other side - "eternity." Suddenly the Holy Spirit winged the arrows of conviction into his soul. The man tried get those words out of his mind. For the next few days on the ship he tried every form of entertainment available: gambling, dancing, and conversation, but wherever he went, those two solemn words haunted him. To his troubled mind they seemed etched in letters of light! Finally in desperation, seeking relief, he looked up the tract distributor. The "sower of righteousness" was delighted to open the Scriptures to this seeking soul, and some time later joyously led him into a redemptive relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

**Rom. 11:15** - The result of salvation coming to the elect Jews is a type of life from the dead. Think about Paul's conversion. After God saved him on the road to Damascus, Paul loved what he had formally hated. He hated what he had formally loved - every form of works righteousness and attempts to merit favor with God apart from Christ. The persecutor of the church became an apostle to the Gentiles. It was truly a spiritual resurrection or life from the dead. A 20th century Jewish man who used to hate the gospel had a dramatic conversion to Christ. After his conversion, he said, "The change from darkness to day is great, but the change brought about in me is greater by far."

**Augustine**, before his conversion, was a very immoral man, but after his conversion his entire outlook on life began to change because of his new nature. One day he had to

attend to some business in his old haunts in Rome. As he walked along, a former companion saw him and began calling, "Augustine, Augustine, it is I!" He took one look at the poor, disreputable woman whose company he had formerly enjoyed, and he shuddered. Reminding himself of his new position in Christ, he quickly turned and ran from her, shouting, "It's not I! It's not I!" He was right, he was a different person. He had experienced a spiritual resurrection.

This text informs us that there is an elect among Jews and Gentiles. That means there is harvest out there. We are called to make the gospel known and we know that God will use that to bring people to salvation.

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Rom. 11:17-24 Romans Series #55 4/11/10

In our study of Romans 11, we have observed a present tense emphasis throughout this first part of the chapter. In Rom. 11:1, Paul answers the question of whether God has rejected his people by pointing out that he is a Jew and he is saved. After giving the illustration concerning Elijah and a remnant existing at that time of severe idolatry in Israel, he states that there is also a remnant at the present time (v. 5). After speaking of God's mercy in election and justice in reprobation, he points out that there is a reciprocal effect between the salvation of Gentiles and Jews. Through the work of the Holy Spirit, elect Jews become Jealous and desire the blessings of God given to the Gentiles. They come to salvation and then become a blessing to the church as it becomes one covenant community comprised of redeemed Jews and Gentiles. In that context, Paul also has present tense emphasis (v. 14). This leads to our text today. It would be easy for Gentiles to become arrogant toward Jewish believers and Paul presents an illustration against arrogance toward each other and toward God. I want to approach this text by first examining the illustration Paul uses and addressing some points of difficulty some have

had with the illustration. Then, I want us to apply the illustration to our own Christian lives and some important doctrinal points which come from it.

### **I. An examination of Paul's illustration.**

In this text, Paul uses an illustration of an olive tree. There is one olive tree with a root and trunk which supports the branches. The root and trunk of the tree represent the covenant community or church along with the promises of God which were given to the Patriarchs. The Patriarchs are the root this the Old Testament church. These are the promises concerning the Messiah who would save his people from their sins. The natural branches represent Israelites. They are natural branches because they are the descendants of the patriarchs and were born into the covenant community. When they did not believe in Jesus as the Messiah, they were broken off. The unnatural or wild branches are Gentiles who are grafted in when they believe. Paul gives this illustration to people who were aware branches being grafted into olive trees so it would not be a strange illustration to them. A couple of points are helpful to keep in mind as we consider this illustration. Sometimes people think of the branches only as individuals. If you do that, then the illustration can be used to argue that a person can lose their salvation. If the branches are understood as nations, then it could be argued that either all Gentiles are saved or all Israelites are saved. That also makes the illustration confusing and misapplies it. James Boice points out that it is best to think of the branches as masses of Gentiles and masses of Jews. At that time, most Jews had not believed on Jesus and so they were cut off. The many Gentiles who were believing were grafted in to the olive tree or covenant community and promises of God. Therefore, as far as God's covenant with Israel is in view, Paul says that it is being fulfilled not through every individual Jew or through the nation of Israel at large, but through the masses of believing Jews and believing Gentiles. Both groups comprise one covenant community or church. What made a person a partaker in the covenant promises of God was faith in the Messiah. That is not a new idea. It was that way all through the Old Testament. When the

northern tribes reached a point where they were given to idols and had forsaken the Lord, God declared through the prophet Hosea that they were "Lo Ami" (not my people).

When the Assyrians captured them, they transplanted them back into the region of Ur - right where Abraham was when God originally called him. It was faith in the promises of God, i.e. the Messiah that made them keepers of the covenant and partakers in the covenant community.

Paul has been criticized rather harshly for this illustration.

In the practice of olive cultivation in Paul's day it was the opposite of Paul's illustration. Usually cultivated branches were grafted into a wild stock. For example, C. H. Dodd wrote, "Paul had the limitations of a town-bred man. . . . He had not the curiosity to inquire what went on in the olive-yards which fringed every road he walked." However, some historians have pointed out that sometimes a wild branch was grafted into a cultivated stock or root. Rom. 11:24 gives a good answer to these objections.

Apparently, Paul was well aware that what he had described was the unnatural practice. That is precisely his point. God, in his grace, has saved Gentiles. That would not have been the normal expectation in the Jewish community. It is also important to remember that Paul is talking about the grafting in the spiritual realm. Therefore, this is really an imagined difficulty. I wanted to mention this because it has been an attack of many biblical critics.

## **II. Application of the illustration.**

There are several important application of this illustration.

**A. First**, since Paul has just spoken about the Gentiles coming to faith and many Jews rejecting the Messiah, it was possible for Gentile believers to look with contempt on their Jewish fellow-believers. At first, the tension may have been between Gentiles and unbelieving Jews outside the church. However, there are indications in the book of Romans that the Gentile believers had developed feelings of superiority toward their Jewish fellow-believers. These tensions often went both ways among these two people

groups. For example, there are several references which reflect that Gentile had a condescending attitude toward Jewish believers. **See: Rom. 14:1, 3-4, 10; 15:5-7.**

**Charles Hodge** comments on Paul's illustration: "The object of these verses is to make such an application of the truths which Paul had just taught as should prevent any feeling of exultation or triumph of the Gentile Christians over the Jews" (367-368). How does this illustration drive home this point? Paul reminds the Gentile believer that he had come from the outside and had been spiritual grafting in to a covenant community which began in the Old Testament. **Rom. 11:17-18** The promise of the Messiah, the Old Testament ceremonies, types, shadows, and prophecies all came through the Jewish community of faith. Paul is saying to any proud Gentile member of the church, "Remember you were grafted in and, by God's grace, you share in those covenant promises originally made to the Jews. **Rom. 11:18** - The root supports us. Our standing as being justified by faith alone comes only through God's grace and mercy in Christ. We stand only by God's grace. Apart from Christ, we are all wild and worthless trees. Think about how the root supports the gospel we have received. The Old Testament with all its messianic witness and promises came through the Jewish covenant community. It was the Jewish scribes who faithfully and meticulously copied and preserved these documents for us. The line of the Messiah was through the Jews. Jesus was a descendant of Abraham through the tribe of Judah. He was a descendant of David according to the flesh. The gospel came to the Gentiles through the preach of the apostles all of which were Jews. Without that faithful witness, the gospel would not have come to either Jews or Gentiles.

**James M. Boice** makes a good application of this: "It follows, too, that there is no 'good' in Gentile religion. People today think in terms of all religions bringing their little bit of truth to the whole, each one adding its part, but this is utterly at odds with Paul's illustration. Asians do not contribute their little bit of yin and yang. Africans do not contribute their little bit of superstition from their tribal religions. Indians do not

contribute their little bit of folk wisdom or dances. Americans do not contribute their democracy . . . . According to Paul's illustration, Gentiles are a 'wild olive', one of the most worthless of all trees" (1348).

Therefore, Gentiles are saved by becoming true Jews, people who believe God's covenant promises in Christ. Understanding that we are saved only through God's mercy and grace makes us humble. We recognize that we are sinners who deserve judgment, but we've been given mercy in Christ. **John Flavel, the puritan writer said,** "They that know God will be humble and they that know themselves cannot be proud."

An important application of this for us is that we cannot look down on anyone who belongs to Christ. In every church, there are people who are not like us. We all come from different backgrounds and have different experiences. But, if we belong to Christ, we are all adopted into the same family and we are commanded to love each other. **Dr. Joseph Stowell said,** "We have such a tendency to categorize people and put them out to pasture if they don't fit our categories. Remember the children's book, Old Hat, New Hat? A monkey like creature goes into a hat store to buy a new hat. he sets his old beat-up hat on the counter and starts trying on various hats. The whole book is a running commentary on the various hats he tries on. It goes like this: 'Too spotty, too dotty, too lumpy, too dumpy, too silly, too frilly, too tall, too short, too broad, too mod.' Finally he picks up his old hat and says, 'Just right.' We're prone to do the same thing - we categorize people. Too city, too country; too rich, too poor; too spiritual, too carnal; too smart, too dense; too deep, too airy; too loud, too quiet; too sloppy, too neat. Then we meet one or two and we say, 'just right.' We wrap ourselves up in people that are the most like us because that does something for us. There's nothing wrong with having friends that are like us, but make sure you don't reject someone in the body of Christ because they are different from you. We are so easily given to putting people into various categories and then rejecting them if they don't fit the category that we are comfortable with. . . . We have to repent of factionalism because you can't hold faith

toward Jesus Christ and be into divisions and discounting people and putting people out to pasture; being condescending, to let them sit on the footstool in the sanctuary of your mind and heart."

**B. Another important application of this illustration is that there is only one people of God.** There is only one olive tree in this illustration. There is not a Gentile tree and a Jewish tree. In Romans 4:11-12, 16, Abraham is presented as the father of all who believer whether Jew or Gentile. He is the root of the tree. All who are saved, whether Jews are Gentiles, are all saved in the same way as Abraham through faith in the Messiah. **William Hendriksen comments,** "The apostle recognizes *only one (cultivated) olive tree!* In other words, the church is *one* living organism. For Jew and Gentile salvation is the same. It is obtained on the basis of Christ's atonement, by grace, through faith. The notion according to which God recognizes two objects on which he bestows his everlasting, saving love, namely, the Jews and the church, is contrary to Scripture. Here in Romans Paul has expressed himself on this subject again and again (3:29, 30; 4:11, 16; 5:18, 19; 9:22f; 10:12, 13). *One olive tree* represents *all* the saved, regardless of their origin" *Commentary on Romans*,(376).

There is one people of God comprised of saved Gentiles and saved Jews and they are all saved the same way through faith in Christ.

**C. A third application is that we are not to presume on God's grace. Rom. 11:19-23**

Sometimes this passage is used to say we can lose our salvation. However, remember that this illustration is looking at masses of people not individuals. **Charles Hodge commenting on the importance of individual perseverance in faith, comments:**

"This passage, however, has no legitimate bearing on this subject. Paul is not speaking of the connection of the individual believer with Christ, which he had abundantly taught in chap. viii and elsewhere, to be indissoluble, but of the relation of communities to the church and its various privileges. There is no promise or covenant on the part of God, securing to the Gentiles the enjoyment of these blessings through all generations, any

more than there was any such promise to protect the Jews from the consequences of unbelief. The continuance of these favours depends on the conduct of each successive generation. *Rom*, 370. There is an application to the individual professor of faith. **Rom. 11:22** - God is merciful and kind, but he is also perfectly just and righteous. Many Jews believed they were right with God because they were born into the covenant community. There are people who grow up in Christian homes and in the church who may presume that they are right with God because of that background.

That is a great privilege and advantage, but it does not automatically guarantee salvation. If you've had that advantage, you are all the more accountable before God because of the great opportunity and privilege God has given you. Do not think lightly of the kindness and mercy of God in that.

Don't neglect this great salvation.

**Charles Spurgeon told the following story:** A lady, who heard Whitefield, in Scotland, preach upon the words "And the door was shut," being placed near two young men, but at considerable distance from the pulpit, witnessed their mirth; and overheard one to say in a low tone, to the other, "Well, what if the door be shut? Another will open." Thus they turned off the solemnity of the text. Mr. Whitefield had not proceeded far when he said, "It is possible there may be some careless, trifling person here today, who may ward off the force of this impressive subject by lightly thinking, 'What matter if the door be shut? Another will open.'" The two young men were paralyzed, and looked at each other. Mr. Whitefield proceeded: "Yes; another will open. And I will tell you what door it will be: it will be the door of the bottomless pit! - the door of hell! - the door which conceals from the eyes of angels the horrors of damnation!"

Don't presume that you will have grace in the future. Repent and believe now.



There are three sections in the book of Romans that have been especially debated. Various perspectives on Rom. 7 and Rom. 9 have been debated. This section in Romans 11 also has been a passage which has not only been debated, but has generated very passionate emotions in those debates. We're going to examine this text under the general idea that God is providentially in control of history and orders the affairs of man in such a way that his eternal purposes are accomplished. In the course of doing this, we will examine three approaches to this text and I will give the reasons why I favor a particular interpretation of it.

**I. God has sovereignly ordered history so that all his redemptive purposes are fulfilled.**

**Rom. 11:25** - Here Paul uses the term "mystery." In using this term, Paul is not referring to some pagan mystery religion. Remember the Roman Empire had many of these secret mystery religions. Paul is using the term to indicate a truth which would not have been known except God had revealed it. What is this mystery? It is the pattern that he has been describing concerning how Gentiles come to salvation and then Jews come to Christ. **William Hendriksen summarizes** this mystery like this:

"... Israel stumbles and is rejected because of its unbelief. Result: The gospel is proclaimed to the Gentiles. The elect Gentiles are saved. **Result:** God uses this salvation of Gentiles in order to arouse the envy of the Jews. **Result:** The Jewish remnant accepts Christ, in accordance with God's eternal plan. In connection with each item, it is God himself who brings about these results. . ." (377). The redeemed of each of these ethnic backgrounds become a part of the one olive tree and also take the gospel to the world.

Paul states that part of Israel has been hardened. **O. Palmer Robertson comments on this phrase:** "The phrase "in part" is often interpreted as having temporal meaning. The passage is thus read, "For a while hardening has happened to Israel." But this interpretation has little to support it. It is doubtful that the phrase has a temporal meaning

anywhere else in the New Testament. . . . Probably the apostle is saying that part of Israel has been hardened. . . . Paul uses the terminology of hardening earlier in the chapter. He asserts that the elect in Israel obtained salvation, but the rest 'were hardened' (v. 7) (176-177). Also, remember when Paul poses the question concerning God rejecting people in Rom. 11:1, he answers that he is saved. He is a Jew and he is saved. This also fits the idea of some being hardened and other having their hearts opened to believe. All the other apostles as well as all the first converts were Jews who believed. Therefore, we see in these first statements the sovereignty of God in election, reprobation, and in ordering the flow of redemptive history in such a way as to bring salvation to all elect Gentiles and all elect Jews. **Charles Spurgeon said**, "The keys of providence swing at the girdle of Christ. Believe it, Christian, nothing occurs here without the permit or the decree of your Savior."

## **II. God will sovereignly save all his elect.**

**Rom. 11:25** - Paul uses a phrase "the fullness of the Gentiles." In Rom. 11:26 he refers to "all Israel" being saved. These phrases have been the focus of the debate I mentioned earlier.

There are three main approaches or interpretations to the idea of "all Israel" being saved. I want to give these three approaches and critique them as we go through them.

**The first interpretation** is that the phrase "all Israel" being saved refers to the mass of Jews living on the earth at the end-time or just before the second coming of Christ. This position argues that just after all elect Gentiles are saved, then there will be a large scale conversion of the Jews who are living at that time. While this position is found in other eschatological perspectives, it is an especially popular approach to this passage in dispensational theology. There are some important points of critique of this approach:

**1. The Greek work "houtos" translated "thus" in NASB** does not mean "then" or "after that." **Hendriksen writes**, "In none of the other occurrences of this word in

Romans, or anywhere else in the New Testament, does this word have that meaning. It means *so, in this manner, thus*." The ESV translation captures the meaning of this word well when it translates it, "And in this way, all Israel will be saved." **Anthony Hoekema** concurs and writes, "The text does not say, 'And *then* all Israel will be saved.' If Paul had wished to convey this thought, he could have used a word which means then (like *tote* or *epeita*). But he used the word *houtos*, which describes not temporal succession but manner, and which means *thus, so, or in this way*."

**2. The illustration of the olive tree** does not support the idea of a separate future for the Jews apart from Gentile believers. **Anthony Hoekema** writes, "What is significant here is that Paul speaks not of two but of only one olive tree; Jews and Gentiles are not only saved in the same way (by faith), but also, when they are saved, become part of the same living organism, here called an olive tree. Every thought of a separate future, a separate kind of salvation, or a separate spiritual organism for saved Jews is here excluded. Their salvation is here pictured in terms of becoming one with the saved totality of God's people, not in terms of a separate program for Jews! It should also be noted that Paul does not say that the ingrafting of Jewish branches must necessarily follow the ingrafting of Gentile branches; there is no reason for excluding the possibility that Gentile branches and Jewish branches can be grafted into the olive tree simultaneously" (*Bible and the Future*, 143).

Robert Reymond makes the same point in his systematic theology (1028).

**3. A third critique** is that equating the phrase "all Israel" with the last generation of Jews before the second coming of Jesus does not do justice to the term. **William Hendriksen** writes, "Does not 'all Israel' sound very strange as a description of the (comparatively) tiny fraction of Jews who will still be living on earth just before, or at the moment of, Christ's return? (379).

**Anthony Hoekema** writes, "The last generation will be just a fragment of the total number of Jews who have lived on this earth. How can such a fragment properly be

called 'all Israel?' 144). **4. A fourth critique** is that this chapter has a present era focus, not some future salvation of the last generation of Jews. **Rom. 11:1, 5, 13-14, 30-31 (3xs "now")**. All through this chapter Paul has been speaking of remnant being saved. There is no hint throughout the chapter of a future mass conversion of Israelites. **5. A fifth critique of this view** is that it would be contrary to God's normal manner of bringing salvation throughout the gospel era. **William Hendriksen writes**, " Would it not be strange for God to single out for a very special favor - nothing less than salvation full and free - exactly that generation of Jews which will have hardened its heart against the testimony of the longest train of Christian witnesses, a train extending all the way from the days of Christ's sojourn on earth - in fact, in a sense, all the way from Abraham - to the close of the new [covenant era]" (379).

**6. A sixth critique is that** extends from the previous point. This position radically changes the way salvation normally comes to people. **O. Palmer Robertson writes**, ". . . God has never obligated himself to save every single individual in any group of people. God has always saved individuals in and among those externally organized into a covenant community. So a distinction was made between Isaac and Ishmael (Rom. 9:6-9), between Jacob and Esau (9:10-13), between those spared and those destroyed around the golden calf in Moses' day (9:14-16, citing Exo. 33:19), between the faithful remnant and unbelievers in Elijah's day (Rom. 11:2-4), between enemies and companions in David's day (11:9-10), between believers and disobedient in Isaiah's day (9:29; 11:8), and between the saved and the lost of Israel in the present day (11:5, 7). If this pattern were changed in the future, it would introduce a principle foreign to all of God's previous redemptive activity, including activity under the gracious new covenant" (*Israel of God*, 184).

**7. The immediately following context (Rom. 11:26b-27)** refers to a coming of "the Deliverer" who will turn away godlessness and remove sin from Jacob. That was the purpose of Christ's first coming, not the second.

These are the main reasons for rejecting the idea that this speaks of a future mass conversion of the last generation of Jews living just before Christ's return.

**B. A second interpretation of this passage** is that "all Israel" refers to all elect, both Jews and Gentiles. This was Calvin's approach to the passage. It is true that in Rom. 9:6, there is a spiritual interpretation of the term "Israel." However, in the context of especially Rom. 10 and 11, the terms "Israel, Israelite, and Jew all refer to ethnic Jews in contrast to Gentiles. All through Rom. 11, Paul speaks of an interaction between Jews and Gentiles in terms of their responses to the gospel. Therefore, it is better to keep that distinction in the interpretation of this passage.

**C. The third interpretation to this passage** and the one I favor is that the term "all Israel" refers to the total number of elect Jews down through redemptive history. In other words, it refers to the remnant of Jews who are saved in every generation until the coming of Christ. This fits well with the phrase "Kai houtos" ("and in the same manner" or "thus," ESV - "And in this way"). Just as all elect Gentiles are saved down through history through the preaching of the gospel and the work of the Holy Spirit, "in this way" or "in the same manner" all elect Jews down through history will be saved. Therefore, the two phrases are parallel to each other. William Hendriksen comments, "For Jew and Gentile the way of salvation is the same. In fact, their paths run side by side. Opportunity to be saved will have ended for both when Christ returns" (381). Therefore, "all Israel" refers to the sum total of the remnant of saved Jews throughout every generation until the coming of Christ. **Anthony Hoekema**, in support of this position, writes, "The gathering of the fullness, or full number, of the Gentiles takes place throughout history, not just at the end-time. Why should the gathering of the fullness of the Jews be different" (146)? He also notes that Rom. 11:26-27 supports this position. The quotation is a composite of Isa. 59:20 and 27:9. **Anthony Hoekema** notes that this quote "commonly applied by dispensational writers to the Second Coming of Christ, does not need to be so interpreted, but makes perfectly good sense as a description of Christ's

first coming and of the taking away sin which follows his first coming. As a matter of fact, if this quotation was intended to be a description of the Second Coming of Christ, one would have expected the prophet to say, 'the Deliverer will come *from heaven*' (rather than 'from Zion')" (146).

One objection which is often raised to this position is that it diminishes the concept of the mystery. It makes the mystery simply that all elect Jews are saved. That doesn't do justice to the idea of some special revelation from God. In answer to this, **William Hendriksen writes**, "No so! The mystery of which Paul speaks has reference to the marvelous chain of events that results in Israel's salvation. It point to seemingly contradictory factors which in God's loving and overruling providence are so directed that ultimate salvation for 'all Israel' is effected" (382).

This brings us back to our original point that God is sovereign and is providentially working in history to bring about the salvation of all his elect - those from Gentile and from Jewish backgrounds. This has some important applications for us.

**First**, when we evangelize, we know there is an elect out there. Arminian theology doesn't know if anyone is going to be saved. We know there is a harvest and that God is using a variety of means, including our witness, to further his kingdom.

**Second**, it is a point of encouragement for us. We may feel very small and may think our particular Christian witness or work is of little value. Our witness is not insignificant. You may feel like a small piece of yeast in the dough, but God uses that for expand his kingdom.

**Third**, this means that all peoples need to hear the gospel whether Jew or Gentile. Some dispensational writers have argued in recent years that we should not evangelize Jewish people since they are saved by their covenant. That is contrary to the New Testament. In fact, Paul was concerned to go to his people in the synagogues and in Rom. 9 and 10 he is deeply concerning about their salvation. We are called to take the gospel to every people group in the world.

**James Kennedy writes:** I have never forgotten the words missionary and explorer David Livingstone wrote in his diary after suffering incredible hardships and personal loss, "My Jesus, my Christ, my God, my King, my All, I again consecrate my life entirely unto Thee. I will place no value upon any thing or any relationship except as it relates to Thy kingdom and Thy cause." A great hero of faith, Livingstone opened up Africa to the gospel, bringing it to millions of people who had never heard it before. His words and actions exemplify what it means to seek first the kingdom of Christ- to be a success. *Delighting God*, 123.

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Rom. 11:28-36 Romans Series #57 4/25/10

This morning we are coming to the end of Paul's discussion about God's eternal plan and purposes in salvation and how that relates to Jews and Gentiles. Our text presents a summary of the principles Paul has set forth and then Romans 11 ends with a great doxology. We're going to examine the summary and then look at some of the great statements about the attributes and work of God which are set forth in this doxology.

**I. First, we have a great summary of Paul's argument in Rom. 11. Rom. 11:28-32**

Rom. 11:28 - Many Jews were enemies of the gospel. Their opposition to the gospel caused it to go to the Gentiles.

Acts 13:46-48.

However, many of the Jews who once rejected and hated the gospel, through the work of the Holy Spirit, were brought to salvation. They saw the blessings of God on the Gentiles and the Holy Spirit used that to create a jealousy or desire in them for those same blessings. All through this chapter, the ultimate reason that a Jew or a Gentile is saved is God's grace in election.

**Rom. 11:5-6; Rom. 11:28** states that again. Because of God's choice or election, they are loved. Their fathers, the patriarchs are mentioned, but remember that their salvation is also based on God's grace and unconditional election.

**Rom. 9:10-11**

The result is that these elect Jews who had once been hostile to the gospel are now fellow-believers and are a part of the one covenant community of faith.

**Rom. 11:29** - Here again is that effectual inner call of God which is always efficacious in bringing a person to Christ. Remember when we talk about calling a distinction between an external call and an internal call is made. The external call is the communication of the gospel in some form. It might be a sermon or someone's personal witness or a gospel tract. The inner call is a sovereign work of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit uses the external call as a means and effectively brings a person to salvation. **Louis Berkhof** points out that this internal call "is a calling by the Word, savingly applied by the operation of the Holy Spirit." It is a powerful calling in that it is effectual unto salvation and it is without repentance, that is, it is a call that is not subject to change and that is never withdrawn. Berkhof cites Rom. 11:29 on this point (469). The gifts mentioned in Rom. 11:29 are in keeping with this idea. They are the products of God's special grace in salvation such as faith, repentance, and assurance of being at peace with God. God eternal plan of salvation is never thwarted. He will absolutely save all his elect whether they are Jews or Gentiles.

**Rom. 11:30-31** - Here again is the reciprocal pattern Paul has discussed in Rom. 11:11, 14. The Jews reject the gospel and this causes the gospel to go to the Gentiles. The Gentiles receive mercy and the elect Jews are moved to jealousy. Through the work of the Holy Spirit, they also come to salvation. Therefore, Gentiles and Jews are shown mercy in Christ. The three-fold use of the word "now" emphasizes that this pattern takes place throughout the new covenant era and not just at some future time before the coming of Christ (three uses in Sinaiticus and Vaticanus).



**Rom. 11:32** - Here is the result. The disobedience of each group at first leads to them receiving mercy and grace. The pattern we've discussed takes place and both elect Jews and Gentiles come to salvation. The "all" at the end of this verse is not a statement of universalism that everybody is saved in the end. In this context, it is best understood as referring to the "fullness of the Gentiles" and "all Israel" in Rom. 11:25-26. In other words, it refers to all the elect from both groups. **William Hendriksen** comments that the "best commentary on these triumphant words is certainly Paul's own" - **Rom. 3:24**.

## **II. God deserves all admiration, adoration, and awe for his eternal and sovereign plan. Rom. 11:33-36**

After speaking of election, reprobation, and God's providence in the gospel going to Gentiles and Jews, Paul proclaims a doxology giving glory to God. This doxology contains some profound theology about God's attributes and his eternal decree or purpose.

This passage is one of the passages that speaks of God's decree. The Greek word used for judgments is *krimata*. That word is often used to speak of God's judicial decisions such as his judgments on the wicked. However, it is also used to describe decisions or determinations, especially in a verbal form (Rom. 14:13; 1 Cor. 2:2; 7:37; 11:13; 2 Cor. 2:1; Titus 3:12). **Charles Hodge** explains this usage of the word: "As of old, the ruler was also the judge - to judge often means to rule - [therefore] the same word is used for the decisions of the judge and the decrees or ordinances of the ruler" (Rom., 378). Also, the term "judgments" is parallel with "ways" or "paths" in this context. This indicates that Paul is thinking of the acts of God and not simply judicial judgments. We also see Paul expressing praise of God's knowledge and wisdom in this verse. **Rom. 11:36** - At the end of the passage, Paul speaks of all things being under God's sovereignty. All of the factors indicate that Paul is especially setting forth the idea of God's eternal decree as he reflects on God's plan in salvation.

When we think about the decree of God, there are some important points to keep in mind. James M. Boice gives a good outline of some of these important aspects of God's decree.

**A. God's decrees are one.**

We often speak of God's decree in the plural - God's decrees. The Westminster Confession of Faith expresses the biblical language on God's decree or purpose when it titles the chapter on the subject: Of God's Eternal Decree. **Charles Hodge writes**, "It is inconsistent with the idea of absolute perfection, that the purposes of God are successive, or that he ever purposes what he did not originally intend; or that one part of his plan is independent of other parts. It is one scheme, and therefore one purpose." *Systematic Theology*, 1:537.

This idea is reflected in the biblical language. **Psa. 2:7; Rom. 8:28; Eph. 3:9-11; Acts 2:23; 4:27-28**. Notice how decree, plan, and purpose are all in the singular in these passages. God has an eternal purpose and plan that is being worked out in his works of creation and providence.

**B. God's decree is eternal.**

God is omniscient. He knows all things exhaustively always. He does not come to knowledge through durational sequence or learn things like we do. Therefore, as history progresses, there are no circumstances which are unknown to God. It is not a situation where something occurs that God did not know about and because of that he has to change his plan. Not only would that make God no omniscient, but it would also make that particular thing or circumstance greater than God. In terms of election, we were chosen before the foundation of the world (**Eph. 1:4**). Also, God purpose is eternal (**Eph. 3:9-11**).

**C. God's decree is wise. Rom. 11:34-36**

God's understanding, knowledge, and wisdom are infinite. His eternal purpose is in keeping with his infinite wisdom and, therefore, perfect. Some people look at the world around us and see the various examples of evil and pain in it and wonder how God could

have created such a world or, at the least, allow such a world to continue to exist.

**Robert Raymond writes,** ". . . to those who would respond by asking why God, if he is a God of compassion, made men in the first place if he knew beforehand (not to mention decreed) that some of them would insult him and cause him grief, resulting in his own eternal hostility toward them and in their eternal hurt, I say that before they find fault with God's wisdom and love *vis a vis* a world that actually exists, they must be able to show that another world in which evil could not come to actuality would be richer in moral and spiritual values, would better accomplish his same ends, and would more accord with the entire range of his divine attributes. In light of the ultimate end God has wisely determined to accomplish, namely, the glorification of his beloved Son as the 'Firstborn' among many brothers (Rom. 8:29) and thereby to glorify himself, it appears impossible that any such imagined world could meet these criteria and thus justify itself." *Systematic Theology*, 183-184.

**Psa. 104:24** - "O Lord, how many are your works! In wisdom you have made them all."

**Rom. 11:36**

**Thomas Schreiner**, in commenting on the wisdom of God in Rom. 11:33-36, writes, "Of course, human beings perceive the course of history and events as they occur. Paul would hardly deny that we see events as they take place. The point is that the mere observation of these events does not translate into an understanding of what God is doing in history. Human beings see the bare events as they transpire, but they do not perceive the saving plan of God that is being accomplished in and through these events. To us the events of history may simply be 'sound and fury, signifying nothing,' since we are unable to perceive on our own God's wise plan for history. To perceive meaning in events in history we need God's interpretive binoculars that will enable us to see aright what his is up to. The logic of the verse progresses from God's wisdom and knowledge to his activity in the world. God's wisdom is infinite and immeasurable, and this wisdom is

expressed in the way he guides and superintends the history of the world." Romans, 634-635.

An important application of this is that we are to trust God even in the midst of pain and suffering. We may not understand a particular circumstance, but we are to trust that there is a perfect plan which is being worked out in our lives.

When Dr. John Gerstner was pastoring a church, he had a woman in the congregation who was attending many of the Bible studies and was an excellent student of the Bible. She was growing in her understanding of God and salvation dramatically. One point of pain in this woman's life was that she and her husband had been unable to have children. They prayed earnestly for a child. When she became pregnant, she and her husband were overjoyed. However, when the baby was born, it was still-born. Dr. Gerstner went to her bed in the hospital to pray with her. In her grief, she began to express intense anger toward God. Dr. Gerstner stopped her in mid-sentence and said, "How dare you question the wisdom and goodness of your Creator!" That shocked her back into rationality and she began to deal with her grief in terms of trusting God. Cited by R. C. Sproul in Job cassette series.

#### **D. God's decree is free.**

When God sets his eternal purpose, he is above influences outside of himself. **Rom.**

#### **11:34-35; Quote of Isa. 40:13-14**

**A. W. Pink wrote,** "God was alone when he made his decrees. He was free to decree or not to decree, and to decree on thing and not another. This liberty we must ascribe to him who is supreme, independent, and sovereign in all his doings."

*Gleanings in the Godhead*, 17.

#### **E. God's decree is absolute, unconditional, and immutable.**

Since God is infinitely wise, then it follows that his decree is absolute and immutable. To change it would imply that it was not perfect. That it is free also means that it is

unconditional. It is not conditioned on some response of man. God does not react to something we do and then change his plan. James M. Boice writes, ". . . what God determines to do is not suspended upon any condition that may or may not come to be, or upon any act that you and I may or may not do. God is infinite in knowledge and perfect in power. Therefore, nothing can arise to cause him to do things differently or thwart his design.

**Job 42:2; Dan. 4:35; Psa. 33:11; James 1:17; Isa. 46:10b** - "My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please."

Again, this call us to trust God. You may not understand your particular point of suffering or pain, but because God is sovereign, you can know that it has meaning and is not futile. If God were not sovereign, then some point of suffering may be meaningless. Since he is working out a perfect and eternal plan, then what you experience has meaning.

When Elizabeth Elliot was a young woman she went to the jungles of Ecuador to be a missionary. After studying Spanish for a year, she was invited to work with two other lady missionaries who were trying to reduce the language of the Colorado Indians to writing so they could translate the Bible into it. Elizabeth Howard (her maiden name) prayed for an informant who knew the Colorado language to help her learn it. The Lord supplied what seemed to be the perfect individual. A man named Macario was fluent in Spanish and Colorado. He was delighted to have the translator's job, but one day shortly after he began to work with them, he was murdered. It was a terrible setback for their spiritual endeavor. Elizabeth went on with the work and at the end of a year she had accumulated thousands of vocabulary cards and one a preliminary analysis of the Colorado language. She had reduced it to a phonemic alphabet and was teaching the other missionaries to use it. One day when she was away, all her material were stolen. The women prayed, of course, but the materials were never recovered. The year's work was lost. The next part of this story is more well known. Elizabeth Howard married Jim

Elliot, who in a similar manner had been trying to rebuild a missionary outpost called Shandia station, but his work had been washed down a river one night in a surprise flood. The couple worked with the Quichua Indians. After only twenty-seven months of marriage, Jim Elliot was speared to death by Auca Indians, whom he and four other missionary companions had been trying to reach with the gospel. Again, it all seemed pointless and painful. That was not all that happened in her life. After some years, Elizabeth married Addison Leitch, a former president of Pittsburgh Theological Seminary. But not long after, he died slowly and painfully from cancer. After all this, what is Elizabeth's testimony? She says, "The experiences of my life are not such that I could infer from them that God is good, gracious, and merciful necessarily. To have on husband murdered and another one disintegrate [in] body . . . through cancer, is not what you would call a proof of the love of God. In fact, there are many times when it looks like just the opposite. But my belief in the love of God is not by inference or instinct. It is by faith." [It must come through a faith in God's self-revelation in Scripture. VL]. Boice, *Romans*, vol. 3, 1441-1442.

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Rom. 12:1 Romans Series #58 5/23/10

This morning we are starting a new chapter and a new section in the book of Romans. Sometimes this section is labeled the "practical" section of Romans. James Boice makes a good comment on this perspective: ". . . I do not like this way of talking about the material in chapters 12-16. This is because to call these chapters practical suggests that the doctrinal sections are not practical, and whenever we find ourselves thinking along those lines we are making a mistake and contributing to great misunderstanding. Doctrine is practical, and practical material must be doctrinal if it is to be of any help at all. A far better way to talk about Romans 12-16 is to say that these chapters contain applications of the very practical teaching Paul presented earlier" (Rom. vol. 4, 1483).

I think that is a good way to approach this last section in Romans. Often I hear people speak disdainfully of doctrinal teaching from the Bible and say they want something "practical." I can't think of anything more practical in the Christian life than to know how you are justified before God, or adopted into his family, or teaching concerning any aspect of our salvation. The pattern in Paul's epistles is that he presents doctrinal material first and then applies it. For example, Eph. 1-3 presents profound material concerning our salvation. Eph. 4-6 applies that material to Christian living and ethics.

Our text this morning starts with the word "therefore." This word looks back at what has been said previously in the book. I think it is best understood as referring to everything Paul has written before this in the book of Romans. In light of all that God has done for us, we are to respond in a certain way.

**I. As recipients of God's mercy, we should offer ourselves to God. Rom. 12:1**

Paul begins his exhortation by providing the basic motivation for the Christian life. Since we have received such tremendous mercy from God, it is reasonable and proper for us to offer our lives to God. Christians are sometimes motivated by unbiblical means. For example, I've seen Christian groups that are very legalistic. They add legislation to the commands of God and then treat their added commands as though they were the very word of God. People are expected to conform to those commands and patterns. If they do, then they are accepted by the group and considered "good Christians." If they don't, then they are looked down upon by the group or excluded from that particular sub-culture. Similar to this is the use of guilt to motivate people. I remember being in a worship service where the pastor looked at his watch for about ten seconds and then announced how many people in the world had died in that ten seconds. He then said, "How many of those people did you witness to about the gospel? If you haven't been actively witness to Christ, then their blood is in your hands." He followed that up by urging people to come to an evangelistic outreach the church was doing that weekend. The Bible does not approach motivation in the Christian life from that kind of

perspective. Paul starts by focusing on the mercy of God we have received in Christ.

**John Calvin comments on Rom. 12:1:** "Paul's entreaty teaches us that men will never worship God with a sincere heart, or be roused to fear and obey him with sufficient zeal, until they properly understand how much they are indebted to his mercy." Commentary on Romans, 263.

The book of Romans dramatically sets forth the idea of God's mercy and grace. It is always important to remember that God does not owe us salvation. Grace is freely given to people who have committed cosmic treason in God's universe. Fallen man hates God and despises his rule. **Rom. 1:18-25, 32; 3:10-12;**

**8:7-8; Eph. 2:1-3.** When man was in this condition Christ died to save sinners. **Rom. 5:6-11 - vs. 6 - helpless and ungodly; vs. 8 - sinners; vs. 10 - enemies.**

When you hated God and saw him as a mortal enemy, God demonstrated his mercy and love and redeemed you through Christ's work of atonement. **In 1736, in Northhampton, Mass., Jonathan Edwards preached a sermon titled, "Men Are Naturally God's Enemies."** This was a lengthy exposition of Romans 5:10. The basic thesis of the sermon was that man hated God. He said, "They are enemies in the natural relish of their souls. They have an inbred distaste and disrelish of God's perfections. God is not such a sort of being as they would have. Though they are ignorant of God, yet from what they hear of Him, and from what is manifest by the light of nature of God, they do not like Him. By His being endowed with such attributes as He is, they have an aversion to Him. They hear God is an infinitely holy, pure, and righteous Being, and they do not like Him upon this account; they have no relish of such kind of qualifications; they take no delight in contemplating them. It would be a mere task, a bondage to a natural man, to be obliged to set himself to contemplate these attributes of God. They see no manner of beauty or loveliness nor taste any sweetness in them. And upon the account of their distaste of these perfections, they dislike all the other of His attributes. They have greater aversion to Him because He is omniscient and knows all things; because His omniscience



is a holy omniscience. They are not pleased that He is omnipotent, and can do whatever He pleases; because it is a holy omnipotence. They are enemies even to His mercy, because it is a holy mercy. They do not like His immutability, because by this He never will be otherwise than He is, an infinitely holy God." Jonathan Edwards, "The Works of President Edwards," Vol.4 (New York: Robert Carter and Brothers, 1879), p. 38. Quoted in *If There Is A God, Why are There Atheists?*, 145-146.

Edwards provides an insightful summary of the problem. He lists several points of tension between God and man: 1) By nature we have a low esteem of God. We count Him unworthy of our love or fear. 2) We prefer to keep a distance from God. We have no natural inclination to seek His presence in prayer. 3) Our wills are opposed to the law of God. We are not loyal subjects of His sovereign rule. 4) We are enemies against God in our affections. Our souls have a seed of malice against God. We are quick to blaspheme and to rage against Him. 5) We are enemies in practice. We walk in a way that is contrary to Him. The enmity we have by nature is neither mild nor slight.

Edwards calls it a "mortal" enmity. This was man's condition when God showed him mercy. We hated God and we despised his commands. God was under no obligation to give us anything other than the justice which was owed to us. We were under the judgment and wrath of God and our sin was an infinite offense to a holy God. **Robert Reymond, in commenting on the atonement writes,** ". . . Anselm argued that man's sin, as failure to render to God that conformity to his will that the creature owes him, insults the honor of God and makes the offender liable to render satisfaction. Since dishonoring God is worse than destroying countless worlds, even the smallest sin has infinite disvalue for which no created good can compensate by way of satisfaction. "Why Must Jesus Be God and Man" in *Contending For The Faith*, 129-130.

However, if you are in Christ, you have been given mercy.

**1 John 4:10** That is the foundational motivation for Christian worship and service. **J. I. Packer writes,** "The secular world never understands Christian motivation. Faced with

the question of what makes Christian tick, unbelievers maintain that Christianity is practiced only out of self-serving purposes. They see Christians as fearing the consequences of not being Christians (religion as fire insurance), or feeling the need of help and support to achieve their goals (religion as a crutch), or wishing to sustain a social identity (religion as a badge of respectability). No doubt all these motivations can be found among the membership of churches: it would be futile to dispute that. But just as a horse brought into a house is not thereby made human, so a self-seeking motivation brought into the church is not thereby made Christian, nor will holiness ever be the right name for religious routines thus motivated. From the plan of salvation I learn that the true driving force in authentic Christian living is, and ever must be, not the hope of gain, but the heart of gratitude." *Rediscovering Holiness* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: Servant Publications, 1992), 75.

That's the point with which Paul starts his exhortation.

## **II. As recipients of God's mercy, we offer ourselves to God as living sacrifices.**

Rom. 12:1

In this statement Paul states that our sacrifice is not dead, but living. We offer our lives to God. This is the idea Paul expresses in 2 Cor. 5:15, "that they who live should no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf." It is important to note that the sacrifice of ourselves is a "living and holy sacrifice." Thomas Schreiner comments that this reflects the spiritual state of believers. Believers are now alive to God in Christ Jesus (Rom. 6:11). The sacrifice of believers is holy, living, and well-pleasing or acceptable to God through the redemption they have in Christ (644).

**William Hendriksen summarizes this idea:** "Paul states that these sacrifices must have the following characteristics: they must be 'living,' that is, must proceed from the new life within the believer; 'holy,' the product of the sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit; and, accordingly, 'well-pleasing' to God, not only accepted by, but most heartily welcome to, the One to whom believers dedicate themselves" (402). The sanctifying work of the

Holy Spirit in regard to our offering of ourselves to God was illustrated nicely by Chrysostom. Child picking flowers and weeds to give father present. Mother takes out weeds and makes it a beautiful bouquet.

The phrase "present your bodies" is best understood as presenting your whole self to God. Some commentators have applied this phrase particularly to the physical body, but I think Calvin's comment is the best way to apply it. **He states:** By bodies he means not only our skin and bones but the totality of which we are composed. He adopted this word that he might more fully designate all that we are, for the members of the body are the instruments by which we carry out our purposes."

Therefore, Paul is exhorting us to live a life of wholehearted commitment to God. This idea is summarized well by Isaac Watts in the line in his hymn "When I Survey The Wondrous Cross:" "Love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all."

### **III. Offering ourselves to God is a reasonable or rational act of worship and service.**

#### **Rom. 12:1**

The Greek words in the last phrase have been translated in different ways. The noun translated as "worship" (*latreia*) can mean either "service" or "worship." The adjective is *logikos* which can mean either spiritual or rational. The more literal translation of the word is "reasonable" or "rational." **Thomas Schreiner comments:** ". . . Paul used a term with the meaning 'rational' or 'reasonable,' as was common in the Greek language. His purpose in doing so was to emphasize that yielding one's whole self to God is eminently reasonable. Since God has been so merciful, failure to dedicate one's life to him is the height of folly and irrationality" (645). Giving our lives to the Lord is reasonable for a number of reasons.

#### **1. It is reasonable first of all because God is the Creator and we are the creation.**

We owe God perfect obedience and worship in our lives. The heart of our sin against God is our failure to render to him that which we owe to him as God.

**2. It is reasonable because of what God has done for us and what he continues to do for us.** As we observed earlier, we are just objects of his justice and wrath. We have been shown mercy in Christ. In our salvation, we have also been promised God's ongoing care and work in our lives as well as a glorious future.

R. C. Sproul has pointed out that if God never did another thing for us other than our salvation in Christ, our only rational and reasonable response would be to give him the totality of our lives. However, he promises do continually give us grace upon grace and mercy upon mercy. That should motivate us to love, worship, and service.

**3. It is reasonable because this life is temporary and only spiritual things will last.**

Unbelievers live their lives for themselves and for the things of this world only.

Christians seek to carry out their particular calling in life to the glory of God and they have an eternal perspective. We know that we are pilgrim and strangers in this world and that our citizenship is in heaven. We live our lives with a view toward eternity. We know that this life and this reality is transitory and we live in light of that perspective. **1**

**John 2:17; Rev. 14:13; Psa. 1:4-6**

**Charles Spurgeon** commented on Psalm 1:6 and said, "But the way of the ungodly shall perish. Not only shall they perish, but their way shall perish too. The righteous carves his name upon the rock, but the wicked writes his remembrance in the sand. The righteous man ploughs the furrows of earth, and sows a harvest here, which shall never be fully reaped till he enters the enjoyments of eternity; but as for the wicked, he ploughs the sea, and though there may seem to be a shining trail behind his keel, yet the waves shall pass over it, and the place that knew him shall know him no more for ever. The very 'way' of the ungodly shall perish. If it exist in remembrance, it shall be in the remembrance of the bad; for the Lord will cause the name of the wicked to rot, to become a stench in the nostrils of the good, and to be only known to the wicked themselves by its putridity. May the Lord cleanse our hearts and our ways, that we may escape the doom of the ungodly, and enjoy the blessedness of the righteous!" **Heb. 11:24-26** - He looked toward Christ

and evaluated the temporal things of this world in light of the lasting things in eternity. This attitude has often been expressed throughout church history. **William Borden** came from a wealthy privileged family, was a graduate of Yale University, and had the promise of a wonderful and lucrative career before him. But he felt a call to serve God as a missionary in China and left for the field even though his family and friends thought him a fool for going. After a short time away and even before he reached China, Borden contracted a fatal disease and died. He had given up everything to follow Jesus. He died possessing nothing in this world. But Borden of Yale did not regret it. We know this because he left a note as he lay dying that said, "No reserve, no retreat, and no regrets." Like so many others, he found the service of Christ to be eminently reasonable, and he gained a lasting reward. **Jim Elliot**, as a young missionary wrote, "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose." Cited in Boice, *Romans*, Vol. 4, 1521.

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Romans 12:2 Romans series #59 5/30/10

Last week we began this section where Paul applies the doctrine he has set forth in the first eleven chapter of Romans. We noted that he gives the basic motivation for Christian living as gratitude to God for the mercy we have received. Based on the mercy we have received from God, we are to offer ourselves to God. We noted that often unbiblical means is used to motivate Christians. For example guilt is sometimes employed to recruit Christian workers for some type of service or ministry. Also, legalistic additions to the commands of God are often set forth as the standard of righteousness. Those who conform to the added rules or regulations are viewed as "good Christians" as accepted by the group. Those who do not conform are ostracized. Again, Paul directs our attention toward the mercy we have received from God and uses that as the basic motivation for Christian living. This exhortation continues with an admonition not to be conformed to

this world, but to be transformed through the renewing of your mind. We are going to focus on Rom. 12:2 this morning.

**I. Christians are not to be conformed to the patterns of this culture. Rom. 12:2**

The idea conveyed in this statement is that we are not to be conformed to age or culture in which we live. The paraphrase of J. B. Phillips captures the idea of this well: "Don't let the world around you squeeze you into its own mold." When we think about the pattern of the world or age in which we live and being on guard against it, we are talking about the issue of what is commonly called worldliness. Often this concept of not being worldly has been corrupted by legalistic approaches to Christian living. One of the more common forms of legalism which we mentioned earlier is the adding of legislation to the commands of God and then treating these man-made rules as though they were the very Word of God. When that happens conformity to those rules is said to be godly and a lack of conformity to those rules is often labeled as worldliness. That corrupts the concept and actually creates a false righteousness. For example, a series of external behaviors can be set forth as the standard for righteousness: Wear a particular style of clothing, get up a certain hour of the day, pray for so much time each day at a set time, don't wear makeup, don't own a TV or go to the movies, don't dance, don't play cards, pray in a certain style and use particular language in your prayers, the list goes on and on. I heard a sermon once where the congregation was told that they had to pray 60 minutes every day - not 59 minutes or 61 minutes, but exactly one hour each day. One time I was told that "no man of God would be in bed after 7:00 in the morning." In fact, if you got eight hours of sleep that was not living faithfully before the Lord. I heard it said that the only effective prayer is the one that is said with great enthusiasm and in a loud voice. Often various Christian sub-cultures put together lists of items like this that become the standard of righteousness. **R. C. Sproul writes,** "The elevation of human preferences to the level of divine mandate is not limited to an isolated group of moralistic Pharisees in the first century. The problem has beset the church ever since. Not only do traditions

develop which are added to the law of God, but in many cases they become the supreme tests of the faith, the litmus test by which people are judged to be either Christians or non-Christians. It is unthinkable in the New Testament that a person's Christian commitment would ever be determined by whether or not that person engaged in dancing or in wearing of lipstick and the like. Unfortunately, so often when these preferences become tests of faith, they involve not only the elevation of non-biblical mandates to the level of the will of God, but they represent a trivialization of righteousness. When these externals are elevated to the level of being measuring rods of righteousness, we begin to major in minors and obscure the real tests of righteousness. . . . Why do we have a perpetual struggle of majoring in minors? Certainly we as Christians want to be recognized for our growth in sanctification and for our righteousness. Which is easier to achieve, a mature level of the practice of mercy and righteousness, or the paying of tithes? To pay my tithes certainly involves a financial sacrifice of sorts, but there is a certain sense in which it is cheaper for me to drop my money into the plate than it is for me to invest my life in the pursuit of justice and of mercy. We tend to give God the cheapest gifts. Which is easier, to develop the gift of the fruit of the Spirit, conquering pride and covetousness, greed and impatience, or to avoid going to movie theaters or dancing? We also yearn for clearly observable measuring rods of growth. How do we measure our growth in patience or in compassion? It is much more difficult to measure the disposition of our hearts than it is to measure the number of movies we attend. It is also our inclination as fallen creatures to emphasize as being most important those virtues in which we have achieved a relative degree of success. Naturally, I would like to think that my moral weaknesses are limited to minor matters. It is a short step from this natural inclination to a widespread distortion of where God places the emphasis." *Ethics and the Christian*, 35-37. **James M. Boice** makes the same point: "To think of worldliness only in those terms is to trivialize what is a far more serious and far more subtle problem." Rom., 4:1524.

Again, this trivializes real righteousness and gives people a false sense that they are not being worldly. In reality, they are simply conforming to a set of man-made rules within a particular Christian sub-culture (and it might not be Christian).

**If simply a set of external patterns are not worldliness, how do we properly define it?** I think a good approach to this subject is to think about it in terms of our worldview. How do we view life and what are the organizing principles that affect how we think and live? What is the mental framework by which we structure our lives and understand the world in which we live?

**Secularism** - One of the main ways we see a non-Christian worldview expressed is in secularism. **R. C. Sproul provides a good definition of secularism:** "For secularism, all life, every human value, every human activity must be understood in light of this present time. . . . What matters is now and only now. All access to the above and the beyond is blocked. There is no exit from the confines of this present world. The secular is all that we have. We must make our decisions, live our lives, make our plans, all within the closed arena of this time - the here and now." *Lifeworlds: Understanding the Ideas that Shape Society Today* (Old Tappan, N. J.: Fleming H. Revell, 1986), 35.

**Harry Blamires gives a similar definition:** "To think secularly is to think within a frame of reference bounded by the limits of our life on earth; it is to keep one's calculations rooted in this-worldly criteria. To think Christianly is to accept all things with the mind as related, directly or indirectly, to man's eternal destiny as the redeemed and chosen child of God."

*The Christian Mind: How Should a Christian Think?* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: Servant Books, 1978), 44.

One of the better statements in popular form which expresses secularism is the statement Carl Sagan made on the television series "Cosmos." He was pictured standing before a spectacular view of the heavens with its many swirling galaxies, saying in a hushed, almost reverential tone of voice, "The cosmos is all that is or ever was or ever will be."



**James Boice comments,** "That is bold-faced secularism. It is bound up entirely by the limits of the material universe, by what we can see and touch and weigh and measure. If we think in terms of our existence here, it means operating within the limits of life on earth. If we are thinking of time, it means disregarding the eternal and thinking only of the here and now." Boice, *Romans*, Vol. 4, 1525.

**Closely related to pure secularism is secular humanism.** This worldview sees man as the center of all of life. The idea of God and eternity is often considered a harmful or primitive concept.

*The Humanist Manifesto* of 1933 states, "Traditional theism, especially faith in the prayer-hearing God, assumed to love and care for persons, to hear and understand their prayers, and to be able to do something about them, is unproved and outmoded faith. Salvationism, based on mere affirmation, still appears as harmful, diverting people with false hopes of heaven hereafter. Reasonable minds look to other means for survival. The 1973 *Humanist Manifesto II* said, "We find insufficient evidence for belief in the existence of the supernatural" and "There is no credible evidence that life survives the death of the body."

Boice, *Rom.*, 1526-1527. These positions lead to the deification of self and often the disregard for other people. The irony of secular humanism is that it often portrays itself as a champion for human rights. It makes those arguments with its philosophical feet planted on thin air. If man comes from nothing and goes to nothing, why is he suddenly important in between those states of nothingness. If man is simply a grown up germ, then why does it matter if one germ kills or tortures another germ?

**Another expression of worldliness is relativism.** If there is no God and, consequently, there is no revelation of truth from God in Scripture, then there is no basis for truth. This makes every contradictory idea equally valid. In his best-selling book, *The Closing of the American Mind*, professor Allan Bloom relates that when he asked a class of students to list people whom they considered evil, the students were unable to name one person.

According to Bloom, evil as a category simply did not exist for these young people - and he feared that this did not speak well for our future as a nation. Bloom writes: "There is one thing a professor can be absolutely certain of: almost every student entering the university believes, or says he believes, that truth is relative." *The Closing of the American Mind* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1987), 25.

In 30 years of college teaching, Prof. Robert Simon has never met a student who denied that the Holocaust happened. What he sees increasingly, though, is worse: students who acknowledge the fact of the Holocaust but can't bring themselves to say that killing millions of people is wrong. Simon, who teaches philosophy at Hamilton College, says that ten to twenty percent of his students are reluctant to make moral judgments - in some cases, even about the Holocaust. While these students may deplore what the Nazis did, their disapproval is expressed as a matter of taste or personal preference, not moral judgment." Of course I dislike the Nazis," one student told him, "but who is to say they are morally wrong." Overdosing on nonjudgmentalism is a growing problem in our schools. Christina Hoff Sommers, author and professor of philosophy at Clark University, says that many students come to college "committed to a moral relativism that offers them no grounds to think" about cheating, stealing and other moral issues. *Reader's Digest*, Feb. 1998, 75 in "That's Outrageous!" **Isa. 5:20f** - Without revelation from God, ethics turn upside down.

**Another common expression of worldliness is materialism.** If the material universe is all that exists, then value in life is only found in material terms. People with this perspective live for this life only and often for the acquisition of material things. Illus. - Rich man at funeral being buried in his expensive car. Person watching said, "Man, that's really living."

**T. S. Elliot** wrote an epitaph for a materialistic generation:

Here were decent godless people: Their only monument the asphalt road  
And a thousand  
lost golf balls. T. S. Elliot, "Choruses from 'The Rock,'" *The Complete Poems and  
Plays: 1909-1950* (New York: Harcourts Brace and Company, 1952), 103.

**Heb. 11:24-26** - Passing pleasure or lasting treasure.

We are told not to be conformed to the non-Christian patterns of our age. The only way  
not to be conformed to them is through the renewing of our minds. The way our minds  
are renewed and protected from falsehood is through the revelation of truth which comes  
from God. Scripture informs us concerning the true nature of the universe, who God is  
and what he is like, and the purpose for our existence. Scripture gives us a revelation of  
what God says is right and wrong in his universe. **James M. Boice writes**, "The doctrine  
of God is the specific Christian answer to secularism. Revelation is the specific answer to  
relativism. If God has spoken, then what he has said is truthful and can be trusted  
absolutely, since God is truthful. This gives us absolutes in an otherwise relative and  
therefore ultimately chaotic universe. . . . . without a sure word from God all words are  
equally valid, and Christianity is neither more certain nor more compelling than any other  
merely human word or philosophy.

But notice this: If God has spoken, there will always be a certain hardness about the  
Christian faith and Christians. I do not mean that we will be hard on others or insensitive  
to them. Rather, there will be a certain unyielding quality to our convictions. For one  
thing, we will insist upon truth and will not bow to the notion however strongly it is  
pressed upon us, that 'that's just your opinion.'"

**Example** - Woman on plane using that phrase. Boice replied, "You're right; that is my  
opinion, but that's not really what matters. What matters is: Is it true?" *Romans*, 4:1542.

**2 Tim. 3:16-17**

Last week we looked at the first part of Rom. 12:2. We are going to look at the last half of this verse today. I'm taking extra time on the first two verses of Romans 12 because these verses are foundational for the ethical exhortations which come in the last section of the book of Romans. We have observed that we offer ourselves to God in a response to the great mercy we have received in Christ. The basic motivation for Christian living is gratitude. We also considered the idea of not being conformed to this world, but being transformed by the renewing of our minds. Often Christians create a false concept of worldliness and righteousness. They create a series of external rules, often adding to the Word of God, and then present those added commands as the basis of righteousness. To break the added rules is to be worldly. That creates a false concept of both worldliness and righteousness. In fact, it trivializes both concepts. We noted last week that worldliness is better understood in terms of our worldview and the principles by which we organize and structure our lives. We observed that our minds are renewed through the application of God's truth as it is given to us in Scripture.

This morning we are going to consider a little more about renewing our mind through the application of Scripture and look at the idea of the will of God as it is presented in the last part of this verse.

**I. Our minds are to be renewed through the application of the Word of God. Rom. 12:2**

Last week, I quoted James M. Boice on this idea.

**James M. Boice writes,** "The doctrine of God is the specific Christian answer to secularism. Revelation is the specific answer to relativism. If God has spoken, then what he has said is truthful and can be trusted absolutely, since God is truthful. This gives us absolutes in an otherwise relative and therefore ultimately chaotic universe. . . . .

without a sure word from God all words are equally valid, and Christianity is neither more certain nor more compelling than any other merely human word or philosophy."

Romans, 4:1542.

Calvin begins his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* with the point that the beginning of theology and a proper understanding of the universe in which we live starts with acknowledging that God is the Creator and we are the creation. As Boice observed, that is the answer to secularism. As Christians we don't view the universe as all that there is. We know that God is the Creator and sustainer of all things. We also know that since God is the Creator and sustainer of all things, that this is his universe and what he declares to be right and wrong is the absolute standard of righteousness and truth. This is also why it is so heinous to add legislation to the commands of God and elevate our human rules to the standard of divine mandate. We usurp God's place as the sovereign ruler of his creation. Last week, we didn't have time to elaborate further on the use of God's special revelation in the Bible so I want us to look at another area where our minds are renewed through the truth of God's Word. **A. The biblical view of man is an important aspect of mind renewal.** Last week we mentioned that the secular humanists argue for human dignity and human rights with their feet planted on thin air. If man comes from nothing and goes to nothing, it doesn't matter what happens to him in between nothingness. **The humanist philosopher Bertrand Russell** expressed the ultimate end of humanist philosophy well: "That man is the product of causes which had no prevision of the end they were achieving; that his origin, his growth, his hopes and fears, his loves and his beliefs, are but the outcome of accidental collocations of atoms; that no fire, no heroism, no intensity of thought and feeling can preserve an individual life beyond the grave; that all the labor of all the ages, all the devotion, all the noonday brightness of human genius are destined to extinction in the vast death of the solar system, and that the whole temple of man's achievement must inevitably be buried beneath the debris of a universe in ruins - all these things, if not quite beyond dispute, are yet so nearly certain that no philosophy which rejects them can hope to stand. Only within the scaffolding of these truths, only on the firm foundation of unyielding despair can the soul's habitation henceforth be safely built" ("A Free Man's Worship," *Why I Am*

*Not A Christian and Other Essays on Religion and Related Subjects*, 107). However, the biblical view of man is that he has value and dignity because he is made in the image of God. This is an extrinsic dignity derived from being made in God's image.

**Gen. 1:26-27** - In ancient writings, the repetition of a phrase was used to emphasize a particular idea. In this text, the idea of man being made in the image of God is repeated three times. Man is not in the same category as the animals. **Matt. 10:29-31**

The same idea of man being made in the image of God is reiterated in **Gen. 9:6**. The murder is to be punished with death because to attack another man is implicitly attacking the image of God in man.

Pessimism and despair are the logical outgrowths of humanism as well as the stripping from man all dignity, worth and value.

Only the biblical view of man elevates man to a position of dignity and worth. Only as created in the image of God does man possess a foundation of self-worth; only as created in the image of God does man's life have meaning. **Francis Schaeffer writes:** "For twentieth century man this phrase, "the image of God," is as important as anything in Scripture, because men today can no longer answer that crucial question, "Who am I?"

In his own naturalistic theories, with the uniformity of cause and effect in a closed system with an evolutionary concept of a mechanical, chance parade from the atom to man, man has lost his unique identity. . . . In contrast, I stand in the flow of history. I know my origin. My lineage is longer than the Queen of England. It does not start with the Battle of Hastings. It does not start with the beginnings of good families, wherever or whenever they lived. As I look at myself in the flow of space-time reality, I see my origin in Adam and in God's creating man in His own image"

*Genesis in Space and Time*, 48, 53-54.

The meaning of man being made in the image of God has been debated, but I think there are three points which are important for us to consider.

1. First, being made in God's image means that we have the ability to think and understand the universals and particulars of the creation in which we live. We can acquire knowledge and have memory. We can love, worship, make use of the created order through creative inventions. This also includes the idea that God has placed within us a *sensus deitatus* or sense of deity. We know God exists. Fallen man represses that knowledge, but that awareness is present.

2. Second, we have a sense of morality. God has given us a sense of right and wrong. Rom. 2:14-15. God has given us a conscience which gives us a sense of moral oughtness. Again, that is corrupted in the fall. Through repeated sin, some people's conscience is described as being "seared" as with a branding iron (1 Tim. 2:2). Part of being made in God's image is the ability to discern between right and wrong.

3. A third aspect of being made in God's image is that we are spiritual beings who can have fellowship with God. Since the fall, we can only enter into God's presence through the work of Jesus and through having Jesus as our mediator, but we have the capacity for worship and fellowship with God. WSC - "Man's chief end is to glorify God and enjoy him forever."

That man is created in the image of God is an important point concerning a true understanding of who we are. We have a dignity and value because God has created us in his image.

**Illus. - Raymond's class** - Question raised and started, "Since man is worthless. . . ." He interrupted the student, "Stop right there. While the Bible says we are sinful, it does not say we are worthless. In fact, God determined that we were valuable enough in his sight for Christ to die for us."

**B. Another crucial aspect of the biblical view of man is that we are fallen in sin.**

**1. Adam's sin is imputed to the race.** We have already considered this in our examination of Romans 5:12-19, but it is a vital point in terms of understanding both the nature of our sinfulness and the extent of grace we have received in Christ.

**Rom. 5:12** - At the moment Adam sinned, all his posterity, descending from him by ordinary generation, were counted as sinners. This text presents an analogy between Christ and Adam. Just like Christ's righteousness is imputed to us when we believe in him, in the same way Adam's sin was imputed to his posterity.

It is not just that everyone is born with a corrupt nature. That is true, but it is more than that. We are not born neutral or innocent. We are sinners first of all through the imputation of Adam's sin. **Rom. 5:13-14** especially emphasize this point - "even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of the sin of Adam."

**Psa. 51:5; 58:3; Gen. 6:5; 8:21; Jer. 17:9-10; Mark 7:19-23; Eph. 4:17-19; 1 Cor. 2:14; Eph. 2:1-3.**

R. C. Sproul said, "What you have in Arminianism is a man who is dead in sin, in bondage to sin by nature a child of wrath, who is altogether flesh, who hears the gospel preached and in his flesh and by his flesh and in his state of spiritual death, in which he is fleeing from the presence of God, turns around and chooses Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior and then is born again. Before he is born again, he sees the kingdom of God, he enters the kingdom of God, he chooses the kingdom of God. All of which Jesus said is impossible. Unless a man is born of the Spirit, he cannot see the Kingdom of God."

**Charles Spurgeon said**, "What a dreadful inability sin brings with it! That simple command of the gospel, 'Believe,' the sinner cannot obey in himself. He can no more repent and believe without the Holy Spirit's aid than he can create a world."

*Spurgeon At His Best*, #701, 107.

**He also said**, "If God requires of the sinner, dead in sin, that he should take the first step, then he requires just that which renders salvation as impossible under the gospel as it was under the law, since man is as unable to believe as he is to obey."

*Spurgeon At His Best*, #368, 62.

**Divine initiative - Eph. 2:4-5; Col. 2:13.**



This is in direct contrast with the thinking of our culture which says that man is basically good and occasionally does bad things. An important part of the renewal of our minds is to understand the nature of man from God's revelation concerning man in Scripture. This also magnifies the grace of God in our salvation. We recognize that it is purely and only because of God's grace that we are redeemed. **Thomas Schreiner summarizes this well:** "The downward spiral of thinking traced in Rom. 1:18-32 is reversed in those who are redeemed from sin. Their minds are not given over to futility but are renewed to understand truth. The means of transformation does not bypass the human personality or the brain. Human beings are transformed as their thinking is altered. 2 Cor. 3:18 suggests that our thinking is altered as 'we behold the glory of the Lord.' Gradual transformation 'from glory to glory' . . . occurs as believers meditate and reflect on the beauty and splendor of the Lord." *Commentary on Romans*, 647-648.

**II. As our minds are renewed, we delight in, approve, and practice what is good and acceptable to God. Rom. 12:2**

The last phrase of Rom. 12:2 has two possible translations. The words, "good, acceptable," and "perfect" could be considered predicates of the term "will." This would have the meaning that we show that God's will is good, acceptable, and perfect. **Charles Hodge** notes that "the expression 'acceptable will of God' is unnatural and unusual" (385). For this reason, the majority of commentators take the terms to be substantives. This gives the meaning, "that you may approve what is good, acceptable, and perfect, in other words, the will of God." Therefore, the idea is that Christians should know, delight in, and practice, whatever is good and acceptable to God. We are able to do this as our minds are renewed through the Holy Spirit applying the Word of God to our minds. One other point on this is that this phrase is not referring to people finding the will of God in their lives such as a particular calling or direction. **James M. Boice comments on Rom. 12:2:** "In this verse "Will" is to be interpreted in its context, and the context indicates that the will of God that we are encouraged to follow is the general will of offering our

bodies to God as living sacrifices, refusing to be conformed to the world's ways, and instead being transformed from within by the renewing of our minds. It is this that we are to pursue and thus find to be good, pleasing, and perfect, though, of course, if we do it, we will also find ourselves working out the details of God's specific will for our lives." *Romans*, Vol. 4, 1558.

**Martin Luther** commented on the idea of the renewing of the mind in this text: "In this way the Apostle describes [Christian] progress; for he addresses those who already are Christians. The Christian life does not mean to stand still, but to move from that which is good to that which is better."

*Commentary on Romans*, 167-168.

The starting point is to know we are in a state of grace through faith in Christ. Do you trust in Christ alone? If you do, the promise of God's Word is that you are justified by faith in Christ alone. That means your sins are forgiven and Christ's righteousness is imputed to you.

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Rom. 12:3-5 Romans Series #61 6/13/10

Robert S. Candlish outlines Romans 12 in three parts: (1) the Christian's relationship to God (vv. 1-2), (2) the Christian's relationship to the church (vv. 3-13), and (3) the Christian's relationship to a hostile world (vv. 14-21). This morning we are going to start looking at the second section of Romans 12: The Christian's relationship to the church. In this section, there is an admonishment not to be arrogant and to think rightly about ourselves. There are also some important statements about the Christian's call and duty to be a part of the church, the body of Christ and use his gifts for the edification of the body. Implied in this is the idea that we need each other in the body of Christ. You cannot live the Christian life in isolation from other believers or in isolation from Christ's church.

## **I. We are to think properly about ourselves as we function in the body of Christ.**

### **Rom. 12:3**

Remember that this epistle was written from Corinth. Because of condition which existed there as well as the general need for this exhortation, Paul admonishes the recipients of his letter not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think. At Corinth, there were those exalting themselves as great spiritual leaders and causing factions in that church. Paul warns against that type of self-promotion and spiritual pride. It is easy for Christian people to fall into pride or attempts to make themselves seem to be more than they are. There can be many expressions of this. If a group of pastors are together at a pastors' luncheon, it is common to hear comments about how big the Sunday school budget is, or how big their building is, or how many people they have in their church. One pastor friend of mine told me that in his Baptist circles there are the three Bs - building, budget, baptisms. How big is the building, the budget, and how many baptisms did you have last year. Sometimes Christians name-drop. They know a particular well-known Christian leader and they take pride in that. I knew one man who was very enamored with the Christian music industry and he liked to tell people how he met and know certain Christian musicians. He like to show off their autographs that he had collected.

It is also possible for all the same points of pride that exist in the world to exist in the Christian community. People take pride in wealth, achievement, or educations they've received. The list of things people focus and use to build themselves up in the eyes of others can seem almost endless. Often this is coupled with a sense of spiritual competition. Paul instructs them to think soberly. In Greek, it is play on words which is difficult to reproduce in English. It is something like "not to overestimate himself beyond a true estimate." How do we address this problem in our own lives? **First**, we need to constantly remember that it is only by God's grace that we are saved and have any

gifts in our lives. The Corinthians were looking for spiritual prestige and power in that church. Paul reminded them of God's grace in their salvation. **1 Cor. 1:26-30.**

**Second,** we need to remember that any gift we have and anything we accomplish in our Christian lives is also by God's grace.

**1 Cor. 15:10** - Paul recognized that his salvation and his apostleship was of God's grace. Any work he accomplished for God was empowered by the grace of God.

**Third, remember that we are called to be servants.** Christian leaders are the servants of God's people. We are to have an attitude of servanthood, not self-aggrandizement.

**Matt. 20:20-28; John 13:12-17; 1 Pet. 5:1-3.** A Christian leader is a servant to the people of God. Again, there must be a recognition that whatever gifts we have are from God's grace and for the purpose of building up the body of Christ not for any kind of personal glory. There is always a temptation to have personal pride in God's gifts. Once a man came to Charles Spurgeon after he had finished preaching a sermon and said, "Let me be the first to tell you that was the best sermon ever preached from this pulpit." Spurgeon replied, "You're too late to be the first. Satan whispered that in my ear as stepped down from the pulpit."

**C. S. Lewis commented,** "When I first became a Christian, about fourteen years ago, I thought that I could do it on my own, by retiring to my rooms and reading theology, and I wouldn't go to the churches and Gospel Hall; . . . I disliked very much their hymns, which I considered to be fifth-rate poems set to sixth rate music. But as I went on I saw the great merit of it. I came up against different people of quite different outlooks and different education, and then gradually my conceit just began peeling off. I realized that the hymns (which [often] were just sixth-rate music) were, nevertheless, being sung with devotion and benefit by an old saint in elastic-side boots in the opposite pew, and then you realize that you aren't fit to clean those boots. It gets you out of your solitary conceit. *God in the Dock* (1944), 61-62. Quote book #202, 105.

**Rom. 12:3b** - The phrase, "the measure of faith" can be understood three ways. First, it could mean our confidence or trust in God. Second, it could mean our knowledge of God and the gospel. Faith would then mean "the faith" as a shorthand reference for the gospel itself. Finally, it would refer to the faith by which we receive our individual spiritual gifts. This approach to the term is the one I prefer. **John Murray writes on Rom. 12:3:** "It is called the measure of faith in the restricted sense of the faith that is suited to the exercise of this gift, and this nomenclature is used to emphasize the cardinal place which faith occupies not only in our becoming members of this community but also in the specific functions performed as members of it."

John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 2 vols. in 1 (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1968), 2:119.

This would also fit the statement made concerning the use of the gift of prophecy in Rom. 12:6. God has given us various spiritual gifts and we are to use those for the edification of the body and not for any kind of personal glory. **1 Cor. 12:11**

**Jonathan Edwards**, in his advice to Young Converts, writes: "Remember that pride is the worst viper that is in the heart, the greatest disturber of the soul's peace and sweet communion with Christ. It was the first sin that ever was, and lies lowest in the foundation of Satan's whole building. It is the most difficult to root out, and it is the most hidden, secret, and deceitful of all lust, and it often creeps in, insensibly, into the midst of religion and sometimes under the disguise of humility." *Advice to Young Converts*, #8, in *Resolutions and Advice to Young Converts*, 32.

**II. We are not to be arrogant in thinking we don't need the body of Christ. Rom. 12:4-5.**

This statement is similar to Paul's statement in **1 Cor. 12:12-14**.

In our salvation, the Holy Spirit brings us into spiritual union with Christ and with the body of Christ, the church. It is common in our individualistic culture for Christians to think they don't have to be a part of the church or worship with other believers. I've often

heard people say statements like, "I can worship God anywhere." It's true they can and believers do worship in various settings, but God also commands us to be a part of his church. **Heb. 10:25**

**Dr. Robert Rayburn**, in his book, *O Come, Let Us Worship*, writes, "God has so created man that there are deeper delights and more intense inspiration in the worshipping congregation than in individual devotion. Martin Luther spoke of his own appreciation for this fact when he said, 'At home in my own house there is no warmth or vigor in me, but in the church when the multitude is gathered together, a fire is kindled in my heart, and it breaks its way through.' It is not just that we might receive instruction in His Word that God has commanded us not to forsake 'the assembling of ourselves together (Heb. 10:25). He knows that every one of us needs the high experience of true corporate worship continually" (30).

Besides the idea of the command to worship together, there is also the idea that God gives different gifts to people in the church for the edification of the body of Christ. Not everyone has the same gifts and, therefore, we need each other.

**Rom. 12:6a; 1 Cor. 12:14-27** - This passage in 1 Cor. 12 elaborates on what Paul states more succinctly in Rom. 12. There is never a concept in the New Testament of living the Christian life in isolation or apart of an active participation in the church. **Daniel E. Wray writes**, "No wise man will say: 'I do not need or want what God has given.' It would simply be pride to think or speak in such a manner! Yet all men who stand aloof from the churches of God set themselves in judgment against the wisdom of God. It is God who established the church and its true local manifestation. Can we ever be justified in treating lightly what he has founded? Furthermore, it is a sin against God and our own souls to deprive ourselves of the blessings and means of grace which God has provided for our good. Yet this is what we do by neglecting the functions of the local church.

Consider the overall potential effect of neglecting God's church. If it is right for one to remain aloof and non-committal, then why not two? And if two, why not three; and if

three, why not everyone? But if everyone were to do so, where would be the visible witness of the kingdom of God in this crooked and perverse world? It is always good to ask ourselves, when considering any particular course of behavior: What would happen if everyone thought this way? If we are compelled by such reflection to say: 'It would have very bad effects if everyone neglected the church in the way that I am doing,' then we must ask ourselves: "Then why should I treat myself as an exception?" *The Importance of the Local Church*, 12.

**R. Kent Hughes writes:** "Astute observers are becoming increasingly aware that the doctrine of the Church has become progressively weakened and in some cases abandoned by American evangelicals. Robert W. Patterson, associate to the executive director of the National Association of Evangelicals, voiced his concern in the March 1991 issue of *Christianity Today*:

'When President Dwight Eisenhower became a Christian, he made a public profession of faith in Christ, was baptized, and was extended the right hand of fellowship in at the National Presbyterian Church in Washington D. C., the second Sunday after his inauguration in 1953. Had the former President expressed interest in becoming a Christian a generation later under more consciously evangelical auspices, he might never have been challenged to identify with the body of Christ through baptism and church membership. A personal relationship with Jesus, he would have been told, is all that really matters.'" **Hughes continues,** "Of course, we must wholeheartedly agree that without a saving relationship with Jesus Christ all is lost. But we must not mistakenly reason that one's relationship with Christ minimizes the importance of His Church. Yet this is precisely what multitudes of evangelicals assume and act out."

*The Disciplines of a Godly Man*, 151.

**Charles Spurgeon said:** I know there are some who say, "Well, I have given myself to the Lord, but I do not intend to give myself to any church." Now, why not? "Because I can be a Christian without it." Are you quite clear about that? You can be as good a

Christian by disobedience to your Lord's commands as by being obedient? There is a brick. What is it made for? To help build a house. It is of no use for that brick to tell you that it is just as good a brick while it is kicking about on the ground as it would be in the house. It is a good-for-nothing brick. So you rolling-stone Christians, I do not believe that you are answering your purpose. You are living contrary to the life which Christ would have you live, and you are much to blame for the injury you do." *Spurgeon At His Best* #164, 33-34.

One of the points Paul makes both in Rom. 12 and 1 Cor. 12 is that we need each other. God has given various gifts to the members of the body of Christ and we are called by God to function together for mutual edification and for the mission of making disciples of the nations. **W. Paul Bowers writes**, "It is hardly accidental that Paul did not picture himself as a maker of bricks, but as a builder of buildings (cf. 1 Cor. 3:10). His mission was focused on corporate achievement. . . . A distinguishing dimension of the Pauline mission is that it found its fullest sense of completion neither in an evangelistic preaching tour nor in individual conversions but only in the presence of firmly established churches." "Mission" in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* by W. Paul Bowers, 609-610. Quoted in *Paul: Missionary Theologian* by Robert Reymond, 572.

Again, there is no concept in the Bible of a Christian life lived in isolation from other Christians or outside the church. We are not to be arrogant in thinking we do not need something God established and commanded us to be a part of. Do you neglect corporate worship? Do you come to worship out of obedience to God and having that principle established in your life? Often Christians let almost everything else that comes into their lives hinder them from corporate worship. If you do that, then that means that all those other activities have a priority in your life over the command of God to be with his people in worship.

You also deprive yourself of the means of grace and it is very easy to drift in your Christian life. Heb. 2:1.



Lucy once demanded that Linus change TV channels, threatening him with her fist if he didn't. "What makes you think you can walk right in here and take over?" asks Linus. "These five fingers," says Lucy. "Individually, they're nothing, but when I curl them together like this into a single unit, they form a weapon that is terrible to behold." "Which channel do you want?" asks Linus. Turning away, he looks at his fingers and says, "Why can't you guys get organized like that?"

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### **Romans 12:6-8 Romans Series #62 6/20/10**

Last week we examined the first part of this section dealing with life in Christ's Church. We noted that we are not to be proud or arrogant toward each other, but to understand that we are saved by God's grace and every gift and achievement we have in our Christian lives is by God's grace and empowerment. 1 Cor. 15:10

We also observed that we are all members of the body of Christ in our salvation. The Holy Spirit gives various spiritual gifts to different people for the edification of the body. Therefore, every member is important. We also observed the crucial point that the New Testament nowhere presents the idea of a Christian life lived in isolation from other believers. We are commanded to be a part of Christ's Church and use our particular gifts for the building up of the body of Christ. This morning we are going to look at the next paragraph in Romans 12 where Paul lists seven spiritual gifts. There are five places in the New Testament where Paul and Peter list spiritual gifts (Rom. 12:6-8, 1 Cor. 12:8-10, 28-30; Eph. 4:11; 1 Pet. 4:10-11). Nineteen different gifts are listed in these five passages. All of the gifts are given by God's grace for the building up of the body of Christ.

This morning we are going to work our way through this list in Romans 12.

**I. Since the Holy Spirit gives spiritual gifts for the edification of the church, we are not to neglect using our gifts. Rom. 12:6; 1 Cor. 12:7, 28; Eph. 4:11; 1 Pet. 4:10-11**

Notice in all these passages that it is God who gives the gift and there is an exhortation that we use those gifts for the mutual building up of the church. **John Murray writes of Christians**, "They have property in one another and therefore in one another's gifts and graces." **James M. Boice** similarly write, "It would be correct to add that you, as a Christian, have a right to the gifts the other members of the body have been given, and they have a right to your gift. You cheat them if you do not use it, and you are poorer if you do not depend on them."

From: John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 2 vols. in 1 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1968), 2:120.

James M. Boice, *Romans*, 4:1582.

We have the obligation to be active in Christ's church and to use whatever gifts he has given us for the benefit of others in the church. This also means that we are edified in our Christian lives through the gifts of other. Once again, this emphasizes the important of active participation in the church. The New Testament sets for a pattern of Christian living as redeemed people being together in worship and being mutually edifying to each other through the use of the gifts God has given.

In Rom. 12:6-8, Paul lists seven gifts which are given in accordance with God's grace.

## **II. Various spiritual gifts for the edification of the church.**

### **A. The first gift listed is prophecy. Rom. 12:6**

Remember that at this time in redemptive history the New Testament canon was not yet complete and God used apostles and prophets and vehicles of revelation. Those two gifts and offices were considered foundational for the church. **Eph. 2:20**

The foundational aspect of these gifts and offices is one of the reasons they are considered extraordinary offices that do not continue beyond the period of the early church. Once a foundation is laid and the walls of a building are going up, you don't lay another foundation. Heb. 1:1-2 - Contrast between old and new covenants. This contrast is intensified in that it was "long ago" or in "former times" that God spoke through his

prophets. It is in this "final age" that he has spoken through his Son. Throughout this epistle this contrast between the former times and this final age are set forth. The old covenant expectations, prophecies, levitical priesthood and sacrifices are all fulfilled in the coming of the Messiah who is the eternal Son. **F. F. Bruce rightly states**, "The story of divine revelation is a story of progression up to Christ, but there is no progression beyond him." (Commentary, 3) The revelation that comes in Christ is unique, final, and complete. That revelation is communicated through his apostles and prophets.

In 1 Cor. 12:28 and Eph. 4:11, the gift of prophecy and office of the prophet is mentioned right after the office of apostle. The question is sometimes raised as to why Paul did not mention the function of an apostle in this list since he does mention prophecy. Various speculations have been given, but I think the best answer is given by William Hendriksen. He notes that Paul has already alluded to his own apostolic office in 12:3 and also at this time there was no apostle in Rome. If there had been an apostle there, it seems likely Paul would have named him in his greetings in Rom. 16. **Charles Hodge comments on Rom. 12:6**: "The point of distinction between them [prophets] and the apostles, considered as religious teachers, appears to have been that the inspiration of the apostles was abiding, they were the infallible and authoritative messengers of Christ whereas the inspiration of the prophets was occasional and transient. The latter differed from the teachers (*didaskaloi*), inasmuch as these were not necessarily inspired, but taught to others what they themselves had learned from the Scriptures or from inspired men."

*A Commentary on Romans*, 389.

In terms of the New Testament prophet, his ministry was similar to the Old Testament prophet. Both received infallible revelation from God. The message of the prophet included both foretelling and forthtelling. Besides predictive prophecy, there would be infallible revelation consisting of instruction, exhortation, or consolation. Some examples of New Testament prophecy are: **Acts 11:27-30; 21:10-11; 13:1-3.**

The prophet is to speak in according to faith. There are three possible approaches to that particular phrase. First, faith may mean inward confidence or belief. This would make the phrase mean, "Let him prophesy according to his internal convictions."

The second possibility is it would mean the gift received, that which is confided. This would make the phrase mean, "Let him prophesy according to the proportion of the gifts which he has received." The third possibility is that it means that which is believed, truths divinely revealed. This would refer to the object of faith or the truths to be believed. This would make the phrase mean that prophets are to prophesy according to the standard of the faith. All of their prophecies are to conform to the rule of faith and not contradict the doctrines which have been delivered through previous inspiration. This is the view which I think best fits the passage. Charles Hodge favors this view and gives several points to support this approach. First, the amount of faith did not determine either the gift of prophecy or the extent to which it was exercised. In the Old Testament, there were some prophets who did not have any saving faith at all. Second, there are similar directions in other passages dealing with prophecy (**1 Cor. 14:37**). Apostolic authority was the standard. Charles Hodge writes, ". . . no man had a right to consider himself inspired, or to require others so to regard him, who did not conform himself to the instructions of men whose inspiration was beyond doubt" (391). The apostle John sets forth the same standard (**1 John 4:1, 6**). Again, Hodge comments, "It was obviously necessary that Christians, in the age of immediate inspiration, should have some means of discriminating between those who were really under the influence of the Spirit of God, and those who were either enthusiasts or deceivers. And the test to which the apostles directed them was rational, and easily applied. There were inspired men by whose divine mission and authority God had borne abundant testimony by 'signs and wonders, and diver miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit'" (391).

Third, this interpretation also fits the context. After Paul gives instruction concerning the use of gifts. Those who had the gift of prophecy were to be careful to conform themselves to the standard of Scripture. The prophet is bound by prior revelation. The application for us is that we are to submit to the authoritative Word of God found in Scripture.

**B. The second gift mentioned is practical service.**

Rom. 12:7. The word that Paul uses is *diakonia*. We get our word deacon and diaconate from that Greek word. The service mentioned can refer to the service of deacons, but not only that. It refers to any type of practical ministry people give to each other in the church. We are all called to serve each other and some have a gift and call of God to especially function in this way.

**C. Teaching. Rom. 12:7** By one word or another, this gift occurs in each of the five New Testament lists of gifts. There is a great need for the teaching of the Word of God.

**B. B. Warfield wrote in 1887:** "A mutilated gospel produces mutilated lives, and mutilated lives are positive evils. Whatever the preacher may do, [his] hearers will not do without a system of belief; and in their attempt to frame one for the government of their lives out of fragments of truth which [the indifferent] preacher will grant them, is it any wonder if they should go fatally astray? . . . it is not given to one who stands in the pulpit to decide whether or no he shall teach, whether or no he shall communicate to others a system of belief which will form lives and determine destinies. It is in his power only to determine what he shall teach, what system of doctrine he shall press upon the acceptance of men; by what body of tenets he will seek to mold their lives and to inform their devotions. . . . And this is but another way of saying that the systematic study of divine truth . . . is the most indispensable preparation for the pulpit. Only as the several truths to be presented are known in their relations can they be proclaimed in their right proportions and so taught as to produce their right effects on the soul's life and growth.

Warfield, "The Indispensableness of Systematic Theology to the Preacher," *Selected Writings of Benjamin B. Warfield*, edited by John E. Meeter; Nutley: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1973, II, 287-288.

**D. Exhortation. Rom. 12:8**

Acts 13:15 indicates that in the synagogue, after a portion of the Law and the Prophets had been read, the rulers of the synagogues invited Paul and Barnabus to speak a word of exhortation. That was the custom. A pastor should not only teach the Bible, but also apply it to life. Some Christians, in general, are given a gift to exhort others. **Gal. 6:1** **Jonathan Edwards** gave important instruction in this area: "In him that exercises the Christian spirit as he ought, there will not be a passionate, rash, or hasty expression, or a bitter, exasperated countenance, or an air of violence in the talk or behavior; but, on the contrary, the countenance and words and demeanor will all manifest the savor of peaceableness and calmness and gentleness. He may perhaps reprove his neighbor. This may clearly be his duty. But if he does, it will be without impoliteness, and without that severity that can tend only to exasperate; and though it may be with strength and reason and argument, and with plain and decided expostulation, it will still be without angry reflections or contemptuous language. *Charity and Its Fruits*, p. 72

**E. Contributing to the needs of people. Rom. 12:8**

Again, while all Christians are to be generous in their giving, some are given a spiritual gift of giving. This is to be done with generosity and pure motives. This is not just for people who are wealthy. Statistics on giving show that people with lower economic status are the ones who give the most. "The Sunday School Times" carried the account of a Christian school for the children of "untouchables" in India prior to World War II. Each year the students received Christmas presents from children in England. The girls got a doll, and the boys a toy. On one occasion the doctor from a nearby mission hospital was asked to distribute the gifts. In the course of his visit, he told the youngsters about a village where the boys and girls had never even heard of Jesus. He

suggested that maybe they would like to give them some of their old toys as presents. They liked the idea and readily agreed. A week later, the doctor returned to collect the gifts. The sight was unforgettable. One by one the children filed by and handed the doctor a doll or a toy. To his great surprise, they all gave the new present they had just received several days earlier. When he asked why, a girl spoke up, "Think what God did by giving us His only Son. Could we give Him less than our best?"

#### **F. Leadership. Rom. 12:8**

The word for "leadership" which is used here occurs in other places in reference to overseers or ruling elders. The office of priest in the Old Testament best corresponds to the office of teaching elder or pastor in the New Testament. The elders who ruled in the Old Testament correspond to the office of ruling elder in the New Testament church setting. **1 Tim. 3:5; Acts 20:28.** Paul exhorts them to carry out this call with diligence.

#### **E. Showing mercy. Rom. 12:8**

The sick, the dying, those who are grieving need the care of Christian who give understanding and sympathy with cheerfulness. Illus. - R. C. Sproul and Bob Greasy's wife dying from cancer. "She just wanted you to hold her hand."

The main point of this passage is that we are to use our gifts for the edification of the body of Christ. That means we are active participants in Christ's church. Starts with being true members of the church through faith in Christ.

Romans 12:9-13 Romans Series #63 7/4/10

This morning we are going back to our series on Romans. When we started this chapter, I mentioned that Robert S. Candlish outlines Romans 12 in three parts: (1) the Christian's relationship to God (vv. 1-2), (2) the Christian's relationship to the church (vv. 3-13), and (3) the Christian's relationship to a hostile world (vv. 14-21). This morning we are continuing our study of the second section dealing with the Christian's relationship to the

church. I consider our text this morning one of the more important exhortations in the New Testament concerning Christian living and life in the body of Christ. It is very similar to 1 Cor. 13. Both passages deal with the nature of true Christian love. They present exhortations that are vital for proper and healthy Christian relationships. I think it is interesting that more ink is given in the New Testament concerning Christian loving each other and being kind to each other than is given to the Lord's Supper. I think that reflects how much we need these exhortations in our Christian lives.

### **I. Christian love is to be genuine or sincere.**

#### **Rom. 12:9; 1 Cor. 13:1-3**

In Rom. 12:9, Paul states that love must be genuine or sincere.

The Greek word that is translated as genuine is *anupokritos*. The root of the word is where we get our word hypocrite and hypocritical. The word used here means without a mask and refers to the way masks were worn in Greek theater. The actors would carry tragic, comic, or melodramatic masks to depict the role they were playing. Paul states that love is to be "*an upokritos*"

or not hypocritical. We are not to play act at loving each other. Our Christian love is to be sincere and genuine.

In a similar way, 1 Cor. 13 addresses the fact that people can do all kinds of spiritual things with improper motives. People might give to charity out of benevolent self-interest. They give so they look good in the eyes of other or so they feel good about themselves. They don't give out of love for God and love for their neighbor. Paul states that any kind of spiritual activity is meaningless unless it is done with the right motive of love.

**Jonathan Edwards wrote:** "God abominates the greatest things without sincerity, but he accepts of and delights in little things when they spring from sincere love to himself. A cup of cold water given to a disciple in sincere love, is worth more in God's sight than



all one's goods given to feed the poor, yea, than the wealth of a kingdom given away, or a body offered up in the flames, without love." *Charity and Its Fruits*, 60-61.

John Calvin observed how easy it is for Christians to put on masks of false or hypocritical love. **John Calvin**, commenting on Rom. 12:9, writes that "it is difficult to express how ingenious almost all men are in counterfeiting a love which they do not really possess. They deceive not only others, but also themselves, while they persuade themselves that they have a true love for those whom they not only treat with neglect, but also in fact reject." *Commentary on Romans* (12:9).

We see a similar exhortation in **Rom. 12:10**.

Sometimes, when we think of love, we only think of certain emotional feelings.

1 Cor. 13 serves as a commentary on this passage and gives us a series of statements about the character of true Christian love. **1 Cor. 13:4-7**

**Fifteen characteristics** concerning true Christian love are listed in this short paragraph.

Each one of these could be a sermon in itself, but let's do a quick overview of them.

**1. Love is patient.** People can be difficult and hard to bear at times. True love extends grace to others and gives and is patient toward them.

**2. Love is kind.** There are numerous exhortations in Scripture for us to be kind. It is very easy to be unkind. To speak a harsh or sharp word to someone. I've spoken with many people through the years who were deeply hurt by an unkind statement.

Sometimes it was a statement made years earlier. **R. C. Sproul** tells the story of a woman who came to see him because her marriage was in trouble. When she entered his office, he said that he could not help but notice that she was an extraordinarily attractive woman. She began to tell him about the troubles she was having with her marriage. She said she could not respond to her husband because she knew that she was not attractive. He began to explore into her past. She said that when she was a young teenager, just growing into adolescence, that she struggled with her appearance for several reasons. First of all, she was afflicted with teenage acne. In addition to that, when her adult teeth

came in, they came in all crooked. And, she was one of the first girls in her class to have to wear glasses and her prescription was so strong that her glasses were like the bottoms of coke bottles. She gets braces on her teeth, she's got clearasil on her zits, and she's got bottoms of coke bottles for glasses. However, at the same time nature endowed her with a very beautiful body. She was one of the first to develop and the boys noticed it. And one day she was walking across the school yard when she was 13 or 14 years old and the guy who was the super athlete, the big man on campus, saw her coming, laughed and said to another fellow within her hearing, "Look at so-and-so, put a bag over her head and she'd be terrific." Now what happened in the ensuing years? The braces did the job; her teeth straightened out. She out grew the adolescent acne. Contact lenses replaced the coke bottle glasses. And, the ugly duckling emerges as a beautiful young woman and everyone who saw her noticed her beauty, except her. Twenty-five years later she was still convinced that all she lacked to be a good wife was a bag over her head. He concludes, "The human tongue can devastate a person." "Christian Marriage Series" Tape 5

**3. Love does not envy.** It is not jealous. Love is able to rejoice in the accomplishments and honors of others because true Christian love trusts God and his providence. Only a believer can have true contentment through a trust in God's direction and providence in his life.

**4. Love does not boast.** The world is filled with people who draw attention to themselves. They are constantly calling attention to how great they are, who they know, how much they have achieved. **Rom. 12:10**

**5. Love is not proud.** Love is gracious and humble.

**6. Love is not rude.** This is closely related to love being kind. Love thinks of others. It doesn't dominate social gatherings and works to build up a neighbor. **Dale Carnegie told the story** of being a guest at a dinner party. The host at his table told a humorous story that hinged on a quote from Shakespeare: "There's a divinity that shapes our ends,

rough-hew them how we will." He mentioned that the quote was from the Bible. Carnegie said he knew it wasn't from the Bible and so "to get a feeling of superiority and display my importance, I appointed myself as an unsolicited and unwelcome committee of one to correct him." The man insisted it was from the Bible. A friend of theirs, Frank Gammon, who was an expert on Shakespeare was at the table and they asked him to settle the argument. He kicked Carnegie under the table and said, "Dale, you're wrong. It is from the Bible." On the way home, Dale said, "Frank, you knew that quotation was from Shakespeare." "Yes, of course," he replied, "*Hamlet*, Act 5, Scene 2, but we were guests at a festive occasion. My dear Dale, why did you feel the need to prove to the man that he was wrong." **R. C. Sproul** commented on this, "God's eternal truth was not at stake at that moment. Kindness overlooks petty error and does not go out of the way to make people look bad. The kind person cultivates and works against pettiness and works to preserve the integrity and dignity of his neighbor. The kind person overcomes pettiness and treats other people with a concern for their well-being." Dev. Christian Character Series - Love.

**7. Love is not self-seeking.** True Christian love doesn't look at something and immediately ask, "What's in it for me?" Love looks out for the well-being of the other person.

**8. Love is not easily angered.** This is similar to love being patient. **D. James Kennedy** in addressing this point made application of to our families. **He said**, "We often treat our children worse than we do our visitors. A guest spills coffee on your rug and you say, 'Don't worry about that. Coffee doesn't stain. Besides, I can always buy a new rug. I know where I got that one. It was in a little rug shop in Tunisia. I probably won't ever go back there, but if I wanted to, I know where I could get a new rug. Don't worry about it at all.' But if one of your children spills his coke on the rug, you are immediately filled with gall. And, as Julius Caesar said, "All of Gaul is divided into three parts." Past,

present, and future - 'You've always done things wrong; you are always messing up; you'll never do anything right.'" Love is not easily angered.

**9. Love does not keep records of wrongs.** Some people are experts at remembering past transgressions against them. Love is not resentful or vindictive. Husband and wife in counseling - He said, "Every time we have a fight she becomes historical." "You mean hysterical?" "No, historical. She brings up everything I ever did wrong."

**10. Love does not delight in evil or wrongdoing.** True Christian love loves God and one's neighbor. Therefore, it does not rejoice in that which is cosmic rebellion against God or harmful to someone else.

**11. Love rejoice with the truth.** This is the other half of only two-part description in this section. This indicates that a focus of the evil Paul is thinking about is falsehood. True Christian love loves God's Word. It delights to read it, study it, and speak about it.

**12. Love always protects.** Love protects the other person. It doesn't quickly receive slander or gossip.

**13. Love always trusts.** Love thinks the best of the other person and doesn't arbitrarily assign bad motives to them.

Illus. - Best case analysis and worst case analysis. Best case - I give you the benefit of the doubt and believe the best about you. Someone comes to us and says, "You really hurt me when you said or did such and such." What's our common response? "I'm sorry; I didn't mean to." Worst case - I think the worst about a person's motives.

**14. Love always hopes.** Love hopes for the best for the other person. It wants to believe the best and it hopes for the best.

### **Rom. 12:12**

**15. Love always perseveres.** Love does not give up. It continues to extend mercy and grace even when it is difficult.

All of this does not negate legitimate justice and working for it.

## **II. Christian love abhors what is evil.**

**Rom. 12:9; 1 Cor. 13:6**

**R. C. Sproul** writes on Rom. 12:9: "We are to hate one thing and to love something else. The hatred about which Paul writes is hatred of the highest dimension. He uses one of the strongest words for hatred found anywhere in the Bible. The word implies not a mild displeasure or mere dislike; Paul is commanding in the name of the Lord that we loathe evil. We are to see evil as an unveiled assault on the character of God and on his sovereignty. As we seek to grow in grace, we seek to gain the mind of Christ, which is to think like Jesus, to love what Jesus loves, and to hate what Jesus hates. Hatred is one of the strongest emotions that can inhabit the heart of a human being. Hatred is destructive and demeaning, but not when it is directed against evil."

**Sproul** then applied this principle to an ethical issue in our society. He continues: "I believe that the greatest ethical issue today is that of abortion. In recent years many have come to see terrorism as more concerning than abortion. I am baffled by that, because more people were killed on September 10 in the womb of U. S. women than were killed on 9/11 in New York City. More babies were slaughtered on September 12 than adults were killed on 9/11. . . . If there is one thing I know about God, it is that he hates abortion. The German ethicist Helmut Thielicke indicated something unusual in his massive mid-twentieth-century work on Christian ethics. This appeared before *Roe v. Wade*; that is, before Western civilization had embraced abortion on demand. In his book Thielicke wrote that abortion has always been considered a monolithic evil in Christian thought among both liberals and conservatives. That is clear from the first century, in the *Didache*, which called abortion 'murder.' Abortion is an unspeakable evil that God abhors, one that the American church tolerates and winks at. That troubles me deeply, and I do not understand it. St. Andrews Expository Commentary: Romans (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2009), 422.

Love also means that we affirm God's truth, work for justice, and abhor what he abhors. The other exhortations in this section are extensions of these principles of love. Love is presented in Scripture as the summary of God's law. **Rom. 13:8-10; Gal. 5:14**

**Jonathan Edwards** wrote in *Charity and Its Fruits*: ". . . what a watch and guard should Christians keep against envy, and malice, and every kind of bitterness of spirit toward their neighbors! For these things are the very reverse of the real essence of Christianity. And it behooves Christians, as they would not, by their practice, directly contradict their profession, to take heed to themselves in this matter. They should suppress the first beginnings of ill-will and bitterness and envy; watch strictly against all occasions of such a spirit; strive and fight to the utmost against such a temper as tends that way; and avoid, as much as possible, all temptations that may lead to it. A Christian should at all times keep a strong guard against everything that tends to overthrow or corrupt or undermine a spirit of love. That which hinders love to men, will hinder the exercise of love to God; for, as was observed before, the principle of a truly Christian love is one. If love is the sum of Christianity, surely those things which overthrow love are exceedingly unbecoming to Christians. An envious Christian, a malicious Christian, a cold and hard-hearted Christian, is the greatest absurdity and contradiction. It is as if one should speak of dark brightness, or a false truth!" p. 23

Love for someone else begins with caring for them enough to present the gospel to them. Gospel.

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Rom. 12:14-16 Romans Series #64 7/25/10

We've been considering these exhortations concerning Christian character. As we've observed, Rom. 12 addresses the Christian's relationship to God, the church, and the world. This last section of Romans 12 particularly addresses the Christian's relationship to a hostile world. However, it sets forth exhortations which apply to our relationships

with other Christians as well. Paul's exhortations in these section are extremely important aspects of Christian character. Often Christian growth or righteous is presented as a series of external actions or patterns. Hair and dress styles, whether a person watches a TV show or not, whether they dance or play cards, or take a nap, etc. are presented as the standards of righteousness. I mentioned a few weeks ago that when we do that we trivialize true righteousness. This passage touches on core issues of Christian character. It addresses issues of having genuine love, abhorring evil, being humble, kind, caring for each other, and having a proper response to persecution and attack from an unbelieving world.

### **I. We are to bless those who persecute us.**

**Rom. 12:14** The first thing we need to observe in this statement is that we will be persecuted. Unbelievers are hostile to Jesus. They hate God and they hate God's people.

**John 15:18-21; 16:1-3; Rom. 8:7;1 John 3:11-14** **A. W. Pink** wrote, "The wicked hate God's holy image and those who bear it, His holy Truth and those who walk in it. This pronouncement of Christ signifies, Blessed are the spiritual which the carnal detest; blessed are the gentle sheep, whom the dogs snap at. *Exposition of the Sermon on the Mount*, 40. **John Murray** concurs with this and writes, "The reason for persecution is that 'the mind of the flesh is enmity against God' (8:7) and is provoked to animosity against those who are God's witnesses to truth and godliness. It is the unreasonableness of this persecution that is liable to provoke resentment in the minds of believers and with resentment thoughts of vindictive retaliation. Herein lies the difficulty of compliance with the injunction. For if we refrain from retaliatory actions, how ready are we to indulge in vindictive thoughts" (Commentary on Romans, 2:134).

The term "bless" can have different meaning in accordance with its context. If we speak of blessing God, then we are ascribing to him the praise that is due to him. When we ask God to bless us, he is extending his mercy and grace, or some kind providence to us. When we bless others, we are asking for God's mercy and grace to be on them. The basic

aspect of this blessing of others would be praying for their salvation. A good illustration of this idea is seen in the stoning of Stephen. He prayed for the mob that was enraged against him: "Lord, do not hold this sin against them" (Acts 7:60). We don't know what happened in the lives of the others that were there, but we know that God saved one of them: Saul of Tarsus. Augustine said, "The Church owes Paul to the prayer of Stephen" (Boice, 1609). **Rom. 12:17**

This does not mean that we can't pray for God to bring civil justice to evil. Rom. 13 addresses the proper function of the state in punishing wickedness and affirming the good. This addresses the heart attitude we are to have in not seeking personal revenge or harboring hatred. While this is particularly addressing our attitude and response to those who persecute us, it also has an application concerning other believers. Often our fellow Christians hurt us or slander us. It is very easy to harbor resentment and bitterness toward our brothers and sisters in the Lord.

Old Joe was dying. Realizing that time was running out, he wanted to make everything right. But something bothered him. He was at odds with Bill, formerly one of his best friends. Joe had often argued with him over the most trivial matters, and in recent years they hadn't spoken at all. Wanting to resolve the problem, he sent for Bill, who graciously consented to visit him. When Bill arrived, Joe told him that he didn't want to go into eternity with bad feelings between them, and he wanted to make things right. Then he reached out for Bill's hand and said, "I forgive you; will you forgive me?" Everything seemed fine. Just as Bill was leaving, however, Joe shouted after him, "But remember, if I get better, this doesn't count!"

## **II. Our attitudes toward others are to be in accordance with Christian character.**

### **Rom. 12:15-16**

The way these verses are written, they could apply to relationships with other Christians as well as with the lost. However, Rom. 12:15-16 seem to be primarily focused on relationships inside the body of Christ. **First**, we are to have empathy. We are to



identify with the other person's joys and sorrows. Therefore, this is an exhortation to stop thinking simply about ourselves. We are to consider the interests and needs of others.

**John Murray comments**, "The point of the exhortation is that we are to enter into this rejoicing as if the occasion were our own. If we love our neighbor as ourselves, if we appreciate the community within the body of Christ, the joy of others will be ours" (135).

**1 Cor. 12:26**

This is not our natural tendency. We are prone to jealousy and envy. We are to be sensitive to the joys and pains of others. This is a crucial aspect of good Christian character.

**Prov. 25:20**

This also commands us not to practice the opposite of this, to be glad in the calamities of others (Prov. 17:5).

**Second**, we are to be of the same mind toward each other.

**Rom. 12:16** - This addresses the idea of living in harmony with each other. As we have discussed in the previous sermons on this subject, we are to be humble, kind, and patient with each other. Those traits are to characterize our relationships with each other. This is not simply talking about doctrinal unity. In this context, it also applies to affection believers have for one another. We are not to love only a small group or clique within the church or those who are simply the easiest to get along with. **R. C. Sproul**, in his Ephesians Interact Series (Ephesians 4:2-8 tape) said, "The opposite of longsuffering, a shortsuffering person, is a person with a hair trigger temper who explodes in fury, in rage, and in rejection at the slightest provocation. I met a counselor once who made this analogy. He said that every human being in his personality has certain mine fields - mines that are hidden beneath the surface. You know how dangerous it is for soldiers in times of war to go across terrain where there are hidden exploding devices hidden just beneath the surface that will go off and throw shrapnel everywhere if one footstep falls upon them. At the slightest disturbance, severe wounds, perhaps even death will follow.

This counselor used this idea and said that all of us have within our personalities a certain number of hidden mines. That is, sensitive points that we respond out of proportion, as it would seem, to the situation because we have these areas wherein we are easily provoked. He said some people's field only has one or two mines for every ten acres of ground. These people are rather easy to get along with. With other people, there is not a safe passageway through their field because its wall to wall mines. They are so touchy and so sensitive that they are always getting angry and upset and causing problems. And, it seems as if when you get a group of ten people together for any reason - work, church - it only takes one person who is a walking wall to wall mine field to destroy the moral of everyone else in the group. Some people are short with us and every church will have members who are not charitable in their judgments of other people and who are not patience and longsuffering. They are the opposite. They are abrasive, combative, rude, insensitive. Those are the works of the flesh. Not only are we to be gracious toward others, but we are to examine our responses so that we are not the abrasive ones who cause difficulty for others.

**On March 16th, 1742**, the congregation of Northhampton, under the leadership of Jonathan Edwards, entered into a covenant. On a day of fasting and prayer, everyone above fourteen years of age made the covenant as an act of public worship. It touches on a variety of issues concerning ethics and Christian character. One part of it states: "[We]. . . with the greatest strictness and watchfulness will avoid all unchristian bitterness, vehemence, and heat of spirit; yea, though we should think ourselves injured by a contrary party; and in the time of the management of such affairs will especially watch over ourselves, our spirits, and our tongues, to avoid all unchristian inveighings, reproachings, bitter reflectings, judging and ridiculing others, either in public meetings or in private conversation, either to men's faces, or behind their backs. . . . And furthermore we promise that we will not tolerate the exercise of enmity and ill will, or revenge in our

hearts against any of our neighbors; and we will often be strictly searching and examining our own hearts with respect to this matter. *Jonathan Edwards On Revival*, 156.

**Third**, we are not to be arrogant. **Rom. 12:16**

Two expressions of arrogance are mentioned in this verse. First, we could be arrogant in who we associate with in the church. Second, we could be intellectually arrogant and proud. **John Murray comments**, "Just as there is to be no social aristocracy in the church, so there is to be no intellectual autocrat" (137).

Paul is exhorting us not to be snobbish. A variety of things can cause us to be snobbish toward others. It can be economic conditions and that's what we often think about in this regard. However, almost anything can become the basis of arrogant, snobbish behavior. Educational advantages or background, how long a person has been a Christian, age, dress style, personal accomplishments, list goes on and on of things that people take pride in and use to set themselves above others in their own minds. Remember the rebuke James gives in **James 2:1-9**.

We also see an exhortation not be wise in our own estimation. In other words, not to rely only on ourselves for every point of understanding. **John Murray writes**, "Apparently the conceit in view is that self-sufficiency by which our own judgment is so highly esteemed that we will not have regard to wisdom that comes from another source. It strikes at the opinionated person who has no regard for anyone else's judgment" (137).

**R. C. Sproul** applied this statement to theological teaching and preaching. **He writes**, "The preacher who stands in the pulpit should study the text of Scripture diligently and examine as much as possible the original languages in a effort to get an understanding of the text. If he relies solely on his intellect, he is doomed. He must also allow the wind of the ages to blow through his mind. When he comes to a text, he will want to know what the greatest minds in the history of the church have understood about it. If he relies only on his own understanding, he will miss the insights and counsel of those who might be far more knowledgeable and wiser than he. We all must examine our opinions and see if

they are just that - opinions - or whether they have some solid foundation in truth" (*The Righteous Shall Live By Faith*, 432).

The same principle applies to every believer. Part of not forsaking the fellowship of other believers is to study historical theology. Just like we are not to isolate ourselves from present day believers, we are also not to isolate ourselves from those who have come before and rob ourselves of their insights in to Scripture. We may not come to the conclusions they did about some particular text or doctrine, but in interacting with them, we sharpen our thinking and sometimes our errors are corrected. This is also why the great confessions and creeds of the church are important to know and study. They reflect the thinking of our fellow believers and have stood the test of time.

**Augustine said**, "For those who would learn God's ways, humility is the first thing, humility is the second, and humility is the third." That may sound like an unwarranted exaggeration, but it is surely an echo of the words of the Old Testament - "God has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and walk humbly with your God." **1 Cor. 13:4-7**

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Romans 12:17-21 Romans Series #65 8/1/10

Throughout Romans 12, we have examined a series of ethical exhortations which are directed to us as the people of God. We are to have a sincere love for each other. We are to abhor evil. We are to be kind, merciful, and empathetic toward others in the body of Christ. We are not to be arrogant, but have a humble and teachable disposition. We are to actively cultivate and pray that the Christian love would characterize our lives. This morning we have come to the last paragraph in this series of exhortation. It especially addresses our relationship with a hostile world. We have already touched on this subject

in the statement in Rom. 12:14 where we are instructed to bless those who persecute us and not curse them. This section extends and elaborates on that idea.

### **I. We are to live for God's glory in pursuing what is good.**

#### **Rom. 12:17**

This exhortation has two parts. First, do not repay evil for evil. We'll discuss that more fully along with the next section dealing with personal revenge. Second, we are to do what is right or honorable in sight of men. This last phrase is difficult to translate and capture the full import of the idea. Various translations reflect one or two ideas contained in it. The Greek word translated as "right" (*kalos*) is defined in one lexicon as good, right, proper, fitting, better, honorable, honest, fine, beautiful, and precious. Therefore, it is more inclusive than what is found many translations. Usually, translators will pick one or two of the ideas.

**James Boice** comments on this: "The way to understand *kalos* is to know that it was a word used by the Greek philosophers, especially Plato, to describe the goal of sound thinking. Usually we think of this goal as 'the good,' which Plato proposed as the right pursuit of all rational beings. But if we are working in the area of aesthetics, the 'good' that we are pursuing becomes 'the beautiful.' In philosophy, it is 'the truth.' If we are thinking of morals, it is what is 'right.' If we are thinking of character, it is what is 'honorable'" (Rom. 16:14). Therefore, when Paul makes this statement, he is exhorting us to lead the way in doing what is right, good, and beautiful. **Leon Morris**, in his commentary on Romans says that Paul, "is calling on them to live out the implications of the gospel. Their lives are to be lived on such a high plane that even the heathen will recognize the fact. They will always be living in the sight of non-Christians, and the way they live should be such as to commend the essential Christian message" (452). We are to be known as those who always pursue the best in all areas. One of the points that came out of the Reformation was that every vocational call was a call from God. Before the Reformation, only those who were involved in ministry were viewed as having a call

from God. Luther and the other Reformers made the Scriptural point that every vocation is a call from God and is to be done to the glory of God. This means that whatever our labor, we view it as a divine call and we do it to the best of our ability. As Christians, this means we do it honestly and we seek to do it well. This also means that we are quick to verbally identify with Christ so that anyone who notices the excellence in our lives knows that it flows from our relationship with God through Christ. **WSC Q1** - What is the chief end of man? Man's chief end is to glorify God and enjoy him forever. Every aspect of our lives is to be organized around that principle.

**John Murray, in writing about the sanctity of labor, writes,** "The principle that too often dictates our practice is not the maximum of toil but the minimum necessary to escape public censure and preserve our decency. As we think of the extent to which this attitude has pervaded thought and practice, we get some insight of the degeneracy into which our abandonment of biblical canons of thought has led us. It is openly discernible in industry. But so far has our thinking diverged from the biblical patterns of thought on the divine institution of labor, and to such an extent has the concern for ease and entertainment come to prepossess us, that sloth and lassitude have invaded the most sacred vocations. How may we expect the social and economic structure to be permeated with the conception of the obligation, the dignity, the pleasure of honest and conscientious labor if the church itself shows so little of blood, sweat, and tears in fulfilling its vocation?" *Principles of Conduct*, 85.

The story is told of a man whose work habits impressed his co-workers. At the end of the day one man said to him, "Mike, you've sure been working hard!" Mike winked. "I'm just foolin' the boss. I've been carrying the same load of bricks up and down the stairs all day!"

**II. We are to live for the glory of God in our response to those who injure us. Rom. 12:18-21**

James M. Boice outlines this section under three headings: realism, forbearance, and active goodness. I think that is a helpful outline.

#### **A. Realism. Rom. 12:18**

Paul recognizes that other people will attack us and hurt us. He has already addressed that in terms of persecution in **Rom. 12:14**.

Sometimes of the actions of other people negate peace and there's nothing we can do about it. However, Paul states that if possible, as far as it depends on us, we are to live peaceable. There are many things we do that contribute to conflict. **Proverbs lists many of these kinds of things:**

Prov. 15:1: "A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger."

Prov. 17:9: "He who covers over an offense promotes love, but whoever repeats the matter separates close friends."

Prov. 17:14: "Starting a quarrel is like breaching a dam; so drop the matter before a dispute breaks out."

Prov. 29:22: "An angry man stirs up dissension."

Prov. 12:16: "A fool shows his annoyance at once, but a prudent man overlooks an insult."

Prov. 12:18: "There is one whose rash words are like sword thrusts, but the tongue of the wise brings healing."

Prov. 19:11: "Good sense makes one slow to anger, and it is his glory to overlook an offense."

These are just a few examples of wise admonition. There are many exhortations against slander and gossip and having a short temper. We are not to be the instigators of quarrels and conflict. We are not to be quick to be offended and then cultivate the offense in our minds. Do you do that? However, since we live in a fallen world, even when we do our best, we can't avoid all conflict. In addition to this, there are also issues that, from a

Christian perspective make peace impossible. The truth of the gospel cannot be sacrificed just to maintain peace.

**Illus.** - When I was in class with R. C. Sproul, a Navy chaplain mentioned that they were receiving pressure not to pray in the name of Jesus. He asked Sproul about that issue. Sproul answered him by pointing out that he was a Christian chaplain. He wasn't a Muslim chaplain or a Jewish chaplain and a foundational point of Christianity is that Jesus is the only mediator between God and man. As a Christian chaplain to pray in the name of Jesus was not a point that could be compromised. He told him that if it became an absolute that he was not to pray in the name of Jesus, then he would have to resign his commission. There are also points of justice where we cannot compromise.

**A. W. Pink**, in commenting on the beatitude "Blessed are the peacemakers" writes, "To be a lover of and worker after peace is one of the distinguishing marks of those who are followers of the Prince of Peace. That miracle of grace which has made them at peace with God causes them to regard their fellows with sincere benevolence, desiring to promote their best interests, both here and hereafter. It is their care, so much as in them lies, to live peaceable with all men, and therefore do they abstain from deliberate injury of others. In each relationship they occupy - domestic, social, ecclesiastical - it is their desire and endeavor to prevent and allay strife. They are lovers of concord, promoters of unity, healers of breaches. They delight to pour oil on troubled waters, to reconcile those who are estranged, to right wrongs, to strengthen the kindly ties of friendship. As the sons of peace they bring into the fetid atmosphere of this world a breath from the pure and placid air of heaven. How much the world is indebted to their presence, on the Day to come will show. Let it be pointed out that this lovely Christlike disposition is a vastly different thing from that easy-going indolence which is so often naught but cowardice of selfishness. It is not peace at any price with the Christian loves and aims to promote. No, indeed, that is a false peace, unworthy to be called peace at all. The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and



good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy' (James 3:17): note well the words 'first pure' - peace is not to be sought at the expense of righteousness. . . . We are to avoid all needless occasions of contention, yet not to the point of sacrificing the Truth, compromising principle, or forsaking duty - Christ Himself did not so: Matt. 10:34.

**B. We are to exercise forbearance.**

Rom. 12:19 - We are not to seek our own revenge, but we are to leave room for the wrath of God.

**Chrysostom said** that a patient man is one who, having the resources and opportunity to avenge himself, chooses to refrain from the exercise of these.

In the Greek text the literal statement is: "Give place to wrath." Most translations insert the phrase "of God" into this verse. I think they do this properly because of the reference to Deut. 32:35 concerning God's vengeance which follows this statement. However, there have been various approaches to interpreting this phrase. One view is that we are to give place to our own wrath. That is give our wrath time to expend itself. Don't do anything right away. This is like the idea of counting to ten before you get angry. I think we can discard that view. There is nothing in the context to support that idea.

Another view is that we are to give place to the wrath of the magistrate. While it is true that Romans 13 speaks of the function of state and the punishment of evil in a civil setting, that's not the context of the admonition.

**A third view** is that we are to give place to our enemy's wrath. We are to simply absorb the wrath and attack of an enemy.

**The last position** is to give place to God's wrath. This is the position set forth in most translations. This has the best support from the context because of the quotation from Deut. 32:35 concerning the wrath of God. **John Murray writes**, "Here we have what belongs to the essence of piety. The essence of ungodliness is that we presume to take the place of God, to take everything into our own hands. It is faith to commit ourselves to God, to cast all our care on him to vest all our interests in him. In reference to the

matter at hand, the wrongdoing of which we are victims, the way of faith is to recognize that God is judge and leave the execution of vengeance and retribution to him. Never may we in our private personal relations execute the vengeance which wrongdoing merits." Romans, 2:141-142.

**R. C. Sproul** comments, "In the final analysis vengeance belongs to God. There will be payback. Our offenses will be avenged, but the one who is to do it is God. When God brings vengeance, he brings it perfectly. His justice never punishes more severely than the sin. If vengeance were left to us, our fallen condition is such that we would not be satisfied unless we could inflict more pain than the crime deserves" (*The Righteous Shall Live by Faith*, 436). We tend to want ten eyes for an eye.

**2 Thess. 1:5-10; Matt. 25:46** - **Alexander Nisbet, the puritan minister**, wrote in his commentary on 1 and 2 Peter, "So dear are the Lord's people to Him, and so exact is He in his justice, that there is not a thought in wicked men's hearts, nor a word in their mouths contrary to Him or His people, but he takes notice of it and will exact a strict account thereof from them: for here the Spirit of God signifies His notice-taking of their admiring [astonished] thoughts of the godly and their ill speeches of them, and assures His own that for these they shall give account to Him who is ready to judge the quick and the dead." *An Exposition of 1 and 2 Peter*, 162.

### **C. We are to practice active goodness.**

Rom. 12:20 - This quotation is from Prov. 25:21-22.

The question that arises in this phrase is what does it mean to heap burning coals on your enemy's head? Charles Hodge points out three possible interpretations of this phrase.

**First**, it could refer to our response of kindness increasing our enemy's guilt and eventual punishment. That is not the focus of this passage and it amounts to using good as weapon. This view essentially says, "Be good to your enemy because in the end your good will harm him more than if you did something bad to him" (Boice, 1626).

**Second**, it could mean that kindness will cause your enemy to feel shame and guilt.

Again, this makes inflicting some kind of pain on our enemy the goal of our goodness.

This doesn't fit what Paul says in Rom. 12:14.

**Third**, doing good to one's enemy is the best way of winning him over. This fits well with the statement in Rom. 12:21. **Charles Hodge comments**, "Men whose minds can withstand argument and whose hearts rebel against threats, are not proof against the persuasive influence of unfeigned love" (402).

During the 19th century a dispute erupted between Rev. Newman Smith and a Baptist minister Robert Hall. In a religious controversy with Hall, Smith wrote a bitter pamphlet denouncing Hall. He was unable to select a title for his pamphlet and gave it to a friend to read. Sometime before this, Smith had written an article titled, "Come to Jesus."

When his friend read his tirade against Hall, he sent the pamphlet back to his friend and suggested the title should be "Go to Hell" by the author of "Come to Jesus." That's not the attitude commanded in this passage. Can only do this if we have a regenerate heart.

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### **Rom. 13:1-8 8/8/10 Romans Series #66**

This text flows naturally out of the previous discussion on not taking personal revenge. While we are not to seek personal revenge, God has established government for the restraint and punishment of evil. This text is one of the more important passages in the New Testament dealing with the establishment of government and government's use of force to restrain evil.

The battle cry that is sounding in our land is separation of church and state. In one sense, it is true that the state and the church have different functions before God. But, what is being argued in the cry the separation of church and state is not the idea that each party has a different role function under God, but rather the separation of the state from God. A total secularization of the state is the passion of the day.

The state is never to be separate from God.

I want us to look at three biblical principles of government and some practical applications of them.

### **I. The state receives its right to govern from God.**

**Rom. 13:1, 3, 4, 6** - the state is established by God for a specific purpose - preserving good and restraining evil.

**Charles Hodge writes on Rom. 13:1:** “This is a very comprehensive proposition. All authority is from God. No man has any rightful power over other men, which is not derived from God. All human power is delegated and ministerial. This is true of parents, of magistrates, and of church officers” (Rom., 406).

Augustine in the 4th century - *The City of God* - He described the tension Christians experience by living in two kingdoms. We are citizens in the city of man and the city of God. In this work, he argues that government should not be viewed as a necessary evil, but rather necessary because of evil. It is because of sin that human beings injure each other, murder, steal, and in other ways violate each other. The biblical teaching is that God established government as a gift to man to restrain evil and make society possible. The strong implication of this is that the state is to be viewed as under God.

### **John 19:12; Job 12:23-25; Dan. 4:34-35; Rom. 9:17**

All governmental authority ultimately comes from God. Remember that Paul wrote this when Nero was Caesar over Rome. God raised up Pharaoh for his purposes in that time. When we speak of the separation of church and state, that does not mean that the state is free from the moral obligations to rule justly in accordance with the commandments of God.

Though the founding fathers of the United States were not all Christians, they did acknowledge the existence of God. Neither the Declaration of Independence nor the Constitution claims autonomy or ultimate sovereignty for the state. The foundational premise of American government is that the state receives its right to govern from the

Creator. We were conceived to be a nation under God, not over God or independent of God.

The establishment clause in the first amendment - "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof. . ." - was originally intended that no national church would be established. It was not intended as a basis for the total separation of the state from God. Listen to some of the statements concerning the fact that the founding fathers considered the state to be under God and derive its authority from God. William Renquist, in commenting on the 1st Amendment said: "There is simply no historical foundation for the proposition that the founders intended to build a wall of separation between church and state."

John Quincy Adams, the sixth president of the U. S. said this of the American Revolution: "The highest glory of the American Revolution was this: it connected, in one indissoluble bond, the principles of civil government with the principles of Christianity." **Samuel Adams said:** "Let divines and philosophers, statesmen and patriots, unite their endeavors to renovate the age, by impressing the minds of men with the importance of educating their little boys and girls, of inculcating in the minds of youth the fear and love of Deity."

**Rom. 13:1.** Government is established by God and it functions as a vice-regent for the rule of God. It is to reward and preserve good and punish evil. It is never to be independent of God.

**In church history, there have been four responses to secular government.**

**1) God alone has the authority.** This position argues that the state does not have any legitimate authority. It essentially denies Rom. 13:1. This position has been embraced at times in history when the state has been corrupt or oppressive. In the early church, some people who called themselves anchorites went off into the desert in order to separate themselves from all social contacts as secular government. They believed they were serving God in doing this. This was the beginning of the monastic movement. This was

also the position of many of the Anabaptist groups at the time of the Reformation. They withdrew from the culture and sought to establish isolated Christian communities that would be free from the influence of secular governments or anyone outside of their perspective. **James Boice comments on some modern evangelicals in this regard:** "Monasticism is also the practical approach of evangelical Christian who so separate themselves from the secular world that they withdraw from the surrounding culture, refuse to participate in elections, have only Christian friends, or will work only for Christian companies" (Boice, Rom., 1649).

**2) A second position is to say that government alone is the authority.** This is the most secular of all the positions and it leaves God out of the picture. This would be the position which states, "My country right or wrong." The film "Chariots of Fire" introduced many of us to Eric Liddell, the Scottish track champion who said no to royalty. At the 1924 Olympic Games, Liddell learned that his race was to be run on a Sunday. He refused to participate, making it clear that his refusal was based on Christian convictions. Liddell's announcement caused great consternation, but neither intense media pressure nor a personal visit by a member of the British royal family could change Liddell's mind. He would not compromise his principles - even if it meant saying no to royalty. An older man in the film made a statement which characterizes this position, "In my day it was country first, then God or religion." Liddell answered, "And the war to end all wars was the result of that thinking" (WW I).

**3) A third position is the authority of God and the state, but the state has the dominant position.** Often this position is held by those who are simply afraid to resist an unjust law or to take a stand for what God commands.

**4) The last position is the Christian ethical position that God has established government and so it has authority, but God has the dominant position. Matt. 22:21**

If the state commands us to do that which God has prohibited or forbids us from doing what God has commanded, then we are to disobey. Acts 5:29; Exo. 1:15-21; Daniel 3 (Shadrach . . .); Dan. 6 - Lions. (Boice, Rom., 1649-1650)

**II. The second principle of government is that government is given the right of the just use of force. Rom. 13:4**

The entire concept of government could be reduced to the idea of legalized or authorized force. It is to restrain evil by use of force. The fact that it bears the sword indicates that it has nothing less than capital authority. **R. C. Sproul** said that he once had dinner with a well-known senator. In the course of the conversation, the senator said, "I do not believe that any government ever has the right to coerce any of its citizens to do anything."

Sproul replied, "Do you mean, then, that no government ever has the right to govern?"

The senator admitted that he had not considered the foundational premise by which governments exist. His oversight is astonishing. If, as the senator suggested, no government ever has the right to coerce its citizens to do anything, then it follows logically that no government has the right to enforce its laws. Laws are reduced to suggestions or advisory council. If we felt like murdering somebody, no one could arrest us. If we felt like stealing someone's car, no government force could stop us. After the senator thought about it, he amended his original statement. He said, "No government ever has the right to coerce its citizens to do anything unjustly." Then he got to the heart of the matter. The legitimacy of law enforcement presupposes that the laws themselves are just. Any unjust use of force is evil. It is a sign of tyranny. It is a fundamental responsibility of government to rule justly. No government has the right to be immoral or unjust. **1 Pet. 2:13-14**

Government is to justly use force to preserve good and restrain evil. It is for this reason that as Christians we are to bend over backwards to obey civil government. We are to pay our taxes. We are to obey the laws of the land. This does have the exception if the state forbids us from doing what God commands or commands us to do what God

forbids. Then we have the moral obligation to disobey. So, we've seen that the state receives its right to govern from God with the specific purpose of preserving and rewarding the good and restraining evil. It is granted the use of force to carry out those purposes. We will discuss that dimension of governmental authority in a future sermon because it touches on issues of capital punishment and warfare.

**III. The third principle of government is that the state and the church have different role functions. Rom. 13:3-4, 6**

From what we've just considered, we can see that the state has the task to provide law enforcement, provide for national defense, forcibly protect the individual rights of its citizens. For example, many of our laws protect us from murder, robbery and theft, personal attack, etc. Conversely, it is not the task of the state to preach the gospel or administer the sacraments. Each party has a distinctive role to play under God. Both are under God in the carrying out of these functions. Sometimes they interact strongly. For example, if a church is guilty of misappropriation of funds, the state has the right and the duty to become involved. Likewise, if the state becomes involved in unjust actions, the church has the right and the duty to exercise prophetic criticism of the state and to call the state to account before God. **What are some practical implications of this?**

**First**, the state has the duty before God to legislate moral behavior. Many people today use the phrase, "You can't legislate morality." Originally, this phrase meant that you can't make people want to be moral by the passing of a law. Today, however, this phrase is used to argue that it is wrong to enact legislation that restricts moral behavior. This is a ridiculous notion. If it were applied consistently, government could enact very little legislation. Congress could debate the colors of the flag or name an official national insect. Virtually every law has moral ramifications. Laws against stealing, murder, perjury, even how you drive your car on the highway have moral mandates.



When the church calls upon the state to pass and enforce laws that protect human life or property, it is not asking the state to be a church, it is simply asking the state to be the state.

If the role of the state is to protect, sustain, and maintain human life and liberty, it is simply carrying out its God-ordained function when it does those things.

Perhaps the most vivid area where this principle applies today is in the area of abortion laws. When the church calls upon the government to prohibit abortion, it is asking the state to carry out its God-ordained function of protecting human life. From a theological perspective, abortion is a common grace issue; it involves the common welfare of humanity. There is no greater arena of common grace and common concern than human life. A fundamental concern of government law is to protect the weak from the strong and powerful. This is strongly seen in the utter helplessness of the unborn. The unborn have no voting rights and no physical power to avert their destruction. If their lives are to be protected, it must be by adults in general and government in particular. **R. C. Sproul writes:** "By denying the unborn the fundamental right to live, the state has reneged on its solemn duty." The fact that the state has the duty to legislate moral behavior means that we have the duty as the church to call upon the state to uphold the law of God. In our society we are to work for just laws that uphold God's law. We are to fight against laws that legislate immorality or that which is abhorrent to God.

**A final aspect** of this is that we each have the moral responsibility before God study his law so that we can properly discern what is good and evil. **Rom. 13:5; Isa. 5:20-21.**

Our worldview must be in accordance with God's law and God's view of reality. Study the ethical sections of Scripture and, if you do not agree with something God has commanded, it is time to repent and acknowledge God as God.

**This text** provides Christians with a higher motives for obeying the just laws of their land than non-Christians have. We are to obey secular authorities because God has established them. Paul argues that we are to do this as a matter of conscience because it

is right. **Rom. 13:5** We are to bend over backwards to obey the just laws of our country. **However**, this text also gives Christian a strong motive for disobedience if the laws of the land prohibit what God has commanded or command what God had prohibited. The government does not have the right to compel Christians to commit unjust acts or to violate a Scripturally informed conscience. Again, this means that our ethics are to flow from a deep and profound knowledge of Scripture and not from just personal, subjective feelings.

If the state commands us to violate the commands of God, then we have the moral obligation to disobey. But, under normal circumstances, we are to be the best citizens.

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Rom. 13:1-7 Romans Series #67 (Just war)

Last week we considered some principles of government which are set forth in this text. God has established government for the restraint of evil and for there to be a structured and orderly society. God is sovereign over all of creation and no government exists except through his ordination. God is the one who raises up rulers and empires and removes them. We also saw that we are to obey the laws of the land. However, if the state commands us to do that which God has forbidden or forbids us to do that which God has commanded then we have the moral duty to disobey. A basic principle of government is that God gives it the right to exercise force. Government carries the power of the sword indicating that it exercises capital force. This touches on issues of capital punishment and warfare. This morning we are going to consider the issue of warfare and government's use of force. Historically, there have been three main approaches in regard to war and the Christian's participation in war:

**1) Activism; 2) pacifism; 3) selectivism.**

**Activism** holds that all wars are permissible and that the subjects of states are to give absolute obedience to the civil magistrate no matter what the situation. Therefore, there

is to be active participation in war anytime one's country enters a conflict. This uncritical position does not reflect the Christian position on war.

The other two positions are the ones that are primarily debated in Christian ethical analysis and so we will give examine those in detail.

### **I. An analysis and critique of pacifism.**

The main biblical argument for pacifism is found in a particular approach to some of the sections in the sermon on the Mount. Matt. 5:38-48 is especially important in this argument. The pacifist position takes these statements as a literal prescription for Christian conduct and, therefore, this becomes the main basis for pacifism. This pacifist interpretation usually argues that a Christian is precluded from military combat and certain offices in government. For example, Myron Augsburger writes, "Thus, Christians should only serve at governmental levels where they can honestly carry out the functions of their office without compromising their fidelity to Jesus Christ as Lord.

There are some major problems with this approach to Matt. 5.

**First**, such a hermeneutical approach is difficult to maintain consistently since it overlooks the hyperbolic mode of speech Jesus deliberately used to make his points. Jesus also said in the same sermon and very close context that the lustful hand or eye was to cut off or torn out (Matt. 5:29-30). He was not advocating personal mutilation which would violate the law of God. In a forceful and memorable way, he was teaching the gravity of sin in a believer's life. In a similar way, Luke 14:26 cannot be interpreted in a literalistic way. If it was interpreted literally, then it would not only violate the 5th commandment, but also 1 Tim. 5:8. Jesus, while on the cross, provided for his mother (John 19:26-27).

Jesus point in Luke 14 is that one's loyalty for family is not to usurp a supreme loyalty to God. That Jesus is speaking in a hyperbolic manner concerning turning the other cheek and never resisting evil is supported by his own actions when he was on trial. He

challenged the unjust striking of him and did not literally turn the other cheek (John 18:22-23). (*Evangelical Ethics*, 232)

**A second problem** with the pacifist interpretation of these passages is a confusion between private and public duties. As a private individual, I am not to take personal revenge. When attacked or abused, I may absorb that abuse and turn the other cheek. However, when I stand in a relation of guardianship to third parties, as a civil magistrate, a parent, or a husband, then the responsibilities of Christian love have a different application. Because of my love for those under my care and my responsibility for their welfare, I must protect them. **John and Paul Feinberg write:** "Because I am responsible for their lives and welfare, I must resist, even with force, unjust aggression against them. Moreover, loving my neighbor or enemy does not mean I must stand idly by as my child is kidnapped and murdered. I am to use whatever force is necessary to protect his or her life and safety. The state stands in this third party relationship to its citizens. Texts that pacifists typically cite for nonresistance are verses that have to do with private or personal duties not public duties" (*Ethics For A Brave New World*, 356). Similarly, John J. Davis, in his work *Evangelical Ethics*, writes, "My divine obligation to provide for the needs of my own family (1 Tim. 5:8) certainly includes, as an irreducible minimum, protecting them from deadly assault" (234).

**Illus.** - Gerald - Wouldn't help my wife if case of rape.

We see in Rom. 12:19-21 the exhortation not to take personal revenge. That exhortation leads directly into the duties of government to punish evil and reward the good in Rom. 13:1-7. As we have observed Rom. 13:4 states that government has the power of the sword in carrying out this duty and call from God.

**Helmut Thielicke** has added his judgment that pacifism is a moral cop-out. He draws a parallel between pacifism and a situation where the Christian is witness to a murder and stands by and allows it to happen without interference. Thielicke argues that it is not only our responsibility to minister to a man mutilated by robbers, such as the man going

down to Jericho, but we are to love our neighbor by preventing the crime as well (cited in: *Ethics and the Christian* by R. C. Sproul, 75).

**R. C. Sproul writes,** "A sophisticated argument by pacifists who are Christians is based on the ethical mandates Christ gave his people, whereby He prohibited the Christian from the use of retaliatory violence and uttered a clear prohibition against building His kingdom with the sword. The pacifist transfers these prohibitions from the sphere of the church to the sphere of the government. Here not only is the private citizen or the ecclesiastical authority forbidden the use of the sword but the state is forbidden as well. Some divide the question by admitting that the state has the power of the sword, but Christians are not to participate in the state's function. The question raised immediately is, 'On what grounds would a Christian refuse to obey a civil magistrate who calls the Christian to do something that is within the scope of righteousness?' If God commands the state to bear the sword and the state conscripts the Christian to help him with that task, on what moral grounds could the Christian refuse to comply? *Ethics and the Christian*, 74.

**Another common argument for pacifism** comes from an application of the death of Jesus. The pacifist tradition focuses on an "exemplary" theory of the atonement. This is the idea that the life and suffering of Jesus is primarily an example for believers. The argument then runs that Christians should never resist evil because Jesus did not resist the cross. The cross is a demonstration of patient suffering in the face of injustice.

**1 Peter. 2:21-25** applies it in that way. However, the pacifist approach and application of the cross exclusively in this way to support pacifism presents a truncated view of the cross. It overlooks the penal, substitutionary dimensions of the cross which are the heart of the New Testament teaching on the cross work of Christ. **John J. Davis comments:** "It should also be observed that there are limits to the 'exemplary' understanding of the life and death of Jesus, because such a theory overlooks the utterly unique vocation of Jesus to be a vicarious sin-bearer for his people - a calling that is shared by no other

Christian. Jesus' death was unique and unrepeatable in its design and purpose; it was never intended to be the sole and comprehensive model for dealing with questions of civil justice in the temporal order" (*Evangelical Ethics*, 233). Again, we come back to our text in Rom. 13:4. **Emil Brunner**, the Swiss theologian has remarked, "To deny on ethical grounds the elementary right of the state to defend itself by war simply means to deny the existence of the state itself. Pacifism of the absolutist variety is practical anarchy. Cited in: *Ethics and the Christian*, 75.

## **II. The main historic position is the just war theory.**

This position is sometimes called selectivism because it calls Christians to make an ethical determination or selection concerning participation in a particular war.

This theological approach to war and the Christian's relationship to the state was first developed by Augustine in response to a Roman general who asked him if he should lead his troops into battle or retire to a monastery. In the 13th century, Thomas Aquinas restated Augustine's work. The Reformers followed the same position. In Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, he wrote that "both the natural equity and the nature of the office dictate that princes must be armed not only to restrain the misdeeds of private individuals by judicial punishment, but also to defend by war the dominions entrusted to their safekeeping, if at any time they are under enemy attack (4,10,11 - *On The Right Of Gov. To Wage War*)

This position holds that under some circumstances Christians may participate in war for the preservation of justice. It holds that some, but not all wars are morally justifiable. Augustine, and Aquinas following him set forth three basic requirements for a war to be just. **1)** The war must be declared by a legitimate authority and by private individuals. Under this heading there is also the idea that war is the last resort. Negotiations and compromise have failed. **2)** A just cause is required, namely that those who are attacked should be attacked because of some fault. A war of aggression is condemned; only

defensive wars are considered just. **3)** The war must be fought with the right intention which is to secure a just and lasting peace.

Revenge, conquest, economic gain are not proper motives.

Therefore, the intention must be the advancement of the good or the avoidance of evil.

This means that a war cannot be for hatred or the desire for vengeance. Also included in this is the principle the cost of war must be evaluated. A war is not just if the cost of going to war to secure justice is greater than the cost of allowing an unjust state of affairs to persist. In other words, the cure (war) should not be worse than the disease (injustice).

**Once a government goes to war, the war must be conducted in a just way.** First,

there must be a limited objective in wage the war, namely the restoration of peace.

Second, the indirect effects on civilians must be justified by the principle of proportionality, in other words, the evil averted or the good attained. Attempts are to be made not to attack noncombatants or inflict unnecessary suffering.

**WW II is a good example of a war that met these requirements.**

**The Biblical support** for the just war position usually begins with Rom. 13:1-7, particularly verse 4. This is why we are considering this subject in association with Romans 13.

All human government is ordained by God (Rom. 13:1; Dan. 4:32, 34-35; 5:21). The main purpose of the state is to restrain evil and reward the good (Rom. 13:3-4; 1 Pet. 2:13-14). The state is given the power of the sword for this God ordained task (Rom. 13:4). **George Orwell said,** "We sleep in our beds at night because rough men are ready to do violence in our behalf."

**Second,** the Old Testament clearly presupposes that warfare can be a legitimate activity for the believer. Abraham is set forth throughout Scripture as an example of faith. He led a military force to rescue his nephew Lot (Gen. 14:13-16). Moses, Joshua, the Judges, and David all engaged in wars that were either approved for commanded by God.

**John and Paul Feinberg, writing on this rightly observe:** ". . . whatever is binding in

the OT continues to apply in the NT era, *unless the NT explicitly or implicitly abrogates it*" (355). In **Heb. 11:32-34**, the Judges' and David's actions in war are set forth as demonstrations of faith. Their faith was manifested in military valor. God clearly approved their use of arms in the enforcement of justice. Therefore, from a New Testament perspective, the use of armed force is not inconsistent with true faith in God. In the divine scale of values, the enforcement of justice has a higher priority than non-violence when these two values conflict.

**Third**, the response of John the Baptist, Jesus, and the apostles to soldiers when they encountered them.

**Luke 3:14** - John gave them ethical instructions, but he did not say that entering the kingdom of God required leaving the army or that being a soldier was incompatible with true repentance and faith in God. Jesus encounters with the Roman centurion are also notable in this regard (**Luke 7:9**). When Peter went to Cornelius' home and preached the gospel to him, he never suggested that it was necessary for him to leave the Roman army in order to be a Christian (**Acts 10:1** - Centurion).

**Fourth**, Jesus did not exercise a pacifist position in regard to evil. For example, twice he drove the money changers out of the temple (John 2:13-22; Mark 11:15-18). In Rev. 19:11, Jesus is portrayed as returning and judging the nations. This action is set forth in martial terms.

**Sometimes the objection** is raised concerning loving one's enemies. God's love and God's justice are not in opposition to each other. The cross is a vindication of God's justice. God never sets aside his justice. **John J. Davis writes**, "An emphasis on love to the exclusion of the sterner dimensions of God's wrath and justice soon leads to a concept of love that is sentimental and humanistic, quite different from that revealed in Scripture *Evangelical Ethics*,(239). **Illus. – Reformed Theological Seminary** - man giving presentation on pacifism. Ended his presentation with an emotional appeal: "Can you



imagine Jesus screaming out of the air in an F-15 shooting rockets at the enemy?" R. C. Sproul commented, "Yes, I can. I can envision him coming with the armies of heaven and laying waste to the whole planet. **This position** calls us to evaluate every war in light of these biblical principles. The Christian influence in the founding of our country is why the idea of conscientious objection was in our law. Change during the Vietnam era. Supreme Court ruled that one has to oppose all war at all time to be a conscientious objector to a particular conflict. That is a violation of the biblical ethic.

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### **Rom. 13:8-10 Romans Series #68 8/22/10**

This next paragraph in Romans 13 moves away from the obligations we have to the state and discusses the obligations we have toward our neighbor. This transition from the statement in verse 7 that we are to render to the state what is owed to it as part of the principle of obeying government. Paul now moves to the debt we have to love each other. He addresses the second table of the Ten Commandments in giving practical application to our obligation to love our neighbor as ourselves. The statement about not letting a debt remain outstanding leads into the main idea that Paul sets forth concerning Christian love. However, I do want to examine that statement briefly before we look at the main point of this section.

#### **I. We love our neighbor is paying our debts.**

##### **Rom. 13:8**

Some translations do not capture the essence of this statement. Often it will simply be translated as "Owe no man anything." I've heard that used to argue that no one should ever incur any kind of debt whatsoever. I met a man years ago who have a very good income, but lived in a small apartment with his family because he didn't think he could

ever take out a mortgage in order to buy a house. His reasoning was based on this verse. However, the word used in the Greek is either a present, plural, indicative or imperative (both have the same form). Either approach gives it a linear idea. Therefore, this is stating, "Don't keep owing any debt." It is not a blanket statement against having any kind of debt or obligation whatsoever.

**The NIV** captures the thought the best when it translates, "Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another. . . ." **John Murray comments:** "This cannot be taken to mean that we may never incur financial obligations. . . . But it does condemn the looseness with which we contract debts and particularly the indifference so often displayed in the discharging of them" (Romans, 2:158-159).

As I mentioned the main thought is that we have an obligation to love our neighbor, but I think it is important touch on the principle of paying our debts properly and on time.

**Rom. 13:9**, in listing some of the Ten Commandments, lists the command not to steal. Not paying our debts is a form of stealing. It is not a sin to borrow, but it is a sin not to pay it back. **R. C. Sproul comments on this:** "When Christian incur debt, they, above all others, must move heaven and earth to honor their obligations as a matter of principle and conscience. If you owe somebody something, pay what you owe. Pay your bills and pay them on time. If you enter into a contract, fulfill the terms of the contract. That is basic integrity. All of this is wrapped . . . in the overarching principle of love. If we borrow our neighbor's rake and do not return it, we are failing to love our neighbor. All the practical applications of righteousness and justice Paul gives us here are rooted and grounded in that overarching responsibility we have to love our neighbor as ourselves"(*The Righteous Shall Live By Faith*, 461). I've mentioned before the sad reality that I saw when I was working in my father's loan company. Some of the worst credit risks were professing Christians. In fact, in the loan business, there was a general axiom not to make a loan to pastors because so many were notorious at not paying their debts. I remember when we sold a living room full of furniture to a local pastor. He never made

one payment and we finally after a little more than a year of trying to collect something, we had to repossess the furniture. While I was carrying furniture out of his house, he rebuked me saying, "I thought your family were supposed to be Christians." I replied, "Did you ever hear, you shall not steal." We are to be scrupulously honest in our financial obligations. On a basic level this means that we live within our means so that we do not become over extended and cannot pay our bills on time.

## **II. We have a perpetual obligation to love our neighbor.**

**Rom. 13:8-10** - This echoes Jesus' statement about the law being summarized in two great commandments - Loving God and loving one's neighbor. **Matt. 22:34-40 (Deut. 6:5; Lev. 19:18 [fellow Israelites], 34 [stranger])**. Sometimes the question has been raised why Paul only focused on the second great commandment to love one's neighbor. More critical scholars have suggested that Paul didn't even know about Jesus' statement. **Thomas Schreiner responds**, "The exclusion of any reference to God is probably not due to ignorance of the Jesus tradition. The whole of Romans is radically God-centered. the probable reason for this omission is that Paul concentrates here on social and horizontal relations within the Christian community (Romans, 693).

In setting forth the nature of Christian love, Paul cites specific commandments from the second table of the Ten Commandments. He doesn't cite the 5th and 9th commandments, but includes them in his summary statement, "and any other commandment" (v. 9). Paul makes the point that by loving one puts the law into practice. **This statement demonstrates that the moral law summarized in the Ten Commandments is the basis of Christian ethics.** There are specific statements in the New Testament abrogating the ceremonial law such as Jesus declaring all foods clean in **Mark 7:19**. The statement in **1 Tim. 4:4** that all food is to be received with thanksgiving (**Rom. 14:14**). Circumcision as the sign of the covenant abrogated and was replaced by baptism (1 Cor. 7:18-19; Col. 2:11-12). The sacrificial system was fulfilled in Christ and was, therefore, ended. The typological functions of the judicial law were also fulfilled in Christ.

However, the moral law expressed in the Ten Commandments is never abrogated and, in fact, reiterated in the ethical commands in New Testament. The idea that the law of God is fulfilled in loving our neighbor reflects **1 Cor. 13:1-3** where Paul emphasizes the importance of love being the motivation for Christian actions. **Jonathan Edwards wrote:** "God abominates the greatest things without sincerity, but he accepts of and delights in little things when they spring from sincere love to himself. A cup of cold water given to a disciple in sincere love, is worth more in God's sight than all one's goods given to feed the poor, yea, than the wealth of a kingdom given away, or a body offered up in the flames, without love. *Charity and Its Fruits*, 60-61.

Again, it is important to note that Paul refers to the second table of the Ten Commandment when he addresses the issue of Christian love. **Thomas Schreiner** makes an important point on this: "The specific commands cited help Christian discern how love expresses itself in specific situations. . . . If love is cut free from any commandments, it easily dissolves into sentimentality, and virtually any course of action can be defended as 'loving'" (Rom., 694). This point is very important in light of an ethical system which became very influential in the 1960. In 1966, Joseph Fletcher published his work *Situation Ethics*. The main premise of situation ethics is that there is only one, absolute normal ethical principle: the law of love.

"The situationist treats with respect the traditional principles of his heritage, but he is always prepared to set them aside if, in that situation, love seems better served by doing so."

(Sproul, *Ethics And The Christian*, 41-42)

The question is what does Fletcher mean by "love?" He sets forth at least ten different definitions of love in *Situation Ethics*.

It is: "An action or a way of behaving" (p. 61);

"A characteristic of certain human actions and relationships" (p. 63); "The motive behind the decision to act" (p. 155); "An attitude of persons" (p. 79); "A disposition to act in

certain ways" (p. 61); "A preference for certain values" (p. 104); "Good will or a conative predisposition to take certain attitudes" (p. 105); "A relation" (p. 105); "A formal principle" (p. 60) "A regulative principle" (p. 61).

Within this ethical system, how does one decide what love demands and when to set aside traditional principles? Fletcher sets forth four questions to consider:

1. The end: for what result are we aiming?
2. Means: how may we secure this end?
3. Motive: why is that our aim?
4. Consequences: what foreseeably might happen?

**The focus is on the end result.** This is why it is usually called a form of consequentialist ethics.

Situationism is reductionistic in that it isolates the law of love from all of the rest of God's commands. There is no justification in Scripture for this practice.

At the heart of the problem of situationism is the question of how to determine what love demands. To Fletcher, what love demands is determined by the situation and what the possible

consequences of an ethical decision might mean to the people involved. What Fletcher and situationists miss is that, from a biblical perspective, doing what love demands is the same thing as doing what God commands. Scripturally, to follow the law of love, is simply to obey God in his specific commands.

**A common text cited in this system is Eph. 5:1-2** Verse 1 tells us to walk in love, but following verses inform us what walking in love means. **Eph. 5:3f** For example, a young couple in the back seat of a car may begin to feel that love indicates they should have premarital sex; in fact, after a while love may seem to demand it. One of the oldest lines used by a young man to pressure a young woman into sex is, "If you love me, you will."

But, Scripture tells us specifically that walking in love means that fornication is not to be named among God's people.

**Illus.** - My senior Sun. School class - pre-marital sex is okay under certain situations. What would those be? Couple engaged, but going to different colleges - make best of their time when together. Situationism, with its ambiguous call to doing what love demands, simply becomes another expression of pragmatism and relativism. Therefore, it is a form of antinomianism. (Sproul, ethics,41-48). This text in Romans 13 is an important text against situationism and similar relativistic systems of ethics. Christian love is defined in terms of the specific commandments of God. **William Hendriksen comments**, "This proves that every negative command ('You shall not') is at bottom a positive command. The meaning, therefore is: 'You shall love, and therefore not commit adultery but preserve the sacredness of the marriage bond. You shall love, and therefore not murder but help your neighbor keep alive and well. You shall love, and accordingly not steal anything that belongs to your neighbor but rather protect his possessions. You shall love, and as a result not covet what belongs to your neighbor but rejoice in the fact that it is his.'" *Commentary on Romans*, 439. Therefore, this passage not only commands us to love our neighbor as ourselves, but also presents some concrete ways in which true Christian love is to be expressed. Adultery is an expression of hatred for our neighbor. It is an expression of selfishness and hatred for one's spouse and children as well as hatred for the other family involved. It brings devastation to families - spouses, mothers, fathers, children, friends. Murder is the opposite of loving our neighbor. **Charles Spurgeon said, "Murder is hate ripened into deed."** Besides physical murder, Jesus said that to have unjust anger is a violation of this commandment. If we harbor hatred and unjust anger toward someone, we are violating the sixth commandment. **Jonathan Edwards wrote**, "Anger may be unsuitable and unchristian with respect to its measure. . . . First, when it is immoderate in degree. Anger

may be far beyond what the case requires. And often it is so great as to put persons beyond the control of themselves, their passions being so violent, that, for the time, they know not what they do, and seem to be unable to direct and regulate either their feelings or conduct. . . . But the degree of anger ought always to be regulated by the end of it, and it should never be suffered to rise any higher than so far as tends to the obtaining of the good ends which reason has proposed. . . . Second, when it is immoderate in its continuance. It is a very sinful thing for persons to be long angry. The wise man not only gives us this injunction, 'Be not hasty in thy spirit to be angry,' but he adds, that 'anger resteth in the bosom of fools' (Eccles. 7:9); and, says the apostle, 'Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath' (Eph. 4:26). If anger be long continued, it soon degenerates into malice, for the leaven of evil spreads faster than the leaven of good. If a person allows himself long to hold anger towards another, he will quickly come to hate him. And so we find that it actually is among those that retain a grudge in their hearts against others for week after week, and month after month, and year after year. They do, in the end, truly hate the persons against whom they lay up anger, whether they own it or not. And this is a most dreadful sin in the eye of God. All, therefore, should be exceedingly careful how they suffer anger long to continue in their hearts." *Charity and Its Fruits*, 195-196. **In an old monastery** near Babenhausen, Germany, one may see two pairs of deer antlers permanently interlocked. They were found in that position many years ago. Apparently the animals had been fighting fiercely, and their horns became so tangled that they could not be disengaged. As a result, both deer perished from hunger. A pastor commented, "I would like to carry those horns into every home and school as a warning against fighting to the last ditch to have your own

way! I would also bring them into every church so that their silent message might sink deep into the hearts of those who seem to delight in 'locking horns' with other Christians at the least provocation." Of course, if we love our neighbor, we don't covet or steal his possessions.

**Rom. 13:10a** - If we love our neighbor, we don't steal from him, slander him, covet his goods and achievements, seek to destroy his or her marriage, and hurt them physically and emotionally.

I want to make one final application concerning Christian love - **Eph. 5:25**. There is a lot of focus on wives submitting to husbands and little attention on this point. Husbands are to have sacrificial love for their wives. That means that you are to put her needs above your own, not just in providing in the home, but in helping and enhancing her life.

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**Rom. 13:11-14 Romans Series #69 8/29/10**

**James M. Boice writes**, "My favorite radio station has a unique feature on its early-morning programming called the 'sousalarm.' They play a lively Sousa march at 7:15 a.m. sharp to rouse listeners out of bed and get them started on the day. In this text we have a 'gospel alarm,' taken from Paul's call to the Christians in Romans 13. It is an insistent wake-up call: 'The hour has come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed' (*Romans* 13:11).

*Romans*, 4:1705. This last paragraph of Romans 13 gives us an important exhortation concerning Christian living. We are to have a proper perspective in regard to the time God has given us in our lives, we are to understand the nature of the present era, and we are to guard against guard against spiritual slumber.



This text gives specific exhortations against particular sins and warns us not to make provisions for the flesh.

We are going to consider this passage under the general idea that we are to be spiritually awake in the Christian lives.

### **I. We are to be spiritually awake in our Christian lives because of the nature of the present time. Rom. 13:11**

What is the "present time" in this context? Since there is an eschatological idea in this paragraph when speaks about the final consummation of our salvation, it is best to think of the phrase "present time" as the last epoch in world history. In terms of redemptive history, the new covenant church lives in the period called the last days (Heb. 1:1-2; 1 John 2:18). This period is also called the "fullness of time" (Gal. 4:4; Eph. 1:10), "the end of the ages" (1 Cor. 10:11), and "the consummation of the ages" (Heb. 9:26). **John Murray comments**, "With this perspective in reference to the reader's place in history Paul assumes they are familiar and he is reminding them of its meaning for practical godliness" (2:166). **Gal. 1:4** describes the present era as "the present evil age." **We live our Christian lives with a tension between the "already" and the "not yet."** Right now we have the first fruits of the Spirit. We are justified and adopted into God's family through faith in Jesus. The Holy Spirit dwells in us and is at work in our sanctification. We experience God's fatherly care, provision, and protection. We have the promise that God is working all things together for our good (Rom. 8:28). All of those things are present blessing we have now. However, there is also a "not yet" aspect to our Christian lives. We are still tempted to sin and we sin daily. We are not perfectly sanctified. We are not glorified yet. Our bodies are still aging, we experience various aches and pains and diseases. If Jesus does not return in the next 100 years, every one of us in this room will have passed through the veil of death into the presence of God. We also experience various kinds of emotional pain in our lives - grief, disappointment, depression. As a result of the fall, we live in a fallen world and have thorns and thistles in all of our labor.

On top of all of this, we live in a world and culture that opposes God and his rule.

**However, we are closer to the consummation of our redemption than when we first believed. History is moving toward the second coming. We are also aging and closer to death.**

**Rom. 13:12** - The present time is described as being a time of night. Conversely, the eschatological day of the Lord is called the day. An important aspect of understanding the present time is to realize that we live in a world that is hostile to God and is opposed to any desires of godliness on the part of God's people. **John 15:18-19; 17:15; 1 John 3:11-13**

Another aspect of this present time is that it is a time for the proclamation of the gospel. **Matt. 28:18-20; Acts 1:7-8** (This verse outlines the book of Acts as the gospel goes forth into the world). While we don't know the day of Christ's return, we do know that during this era, we are to actively take the gospel to the world. We have been given the most significant task in world history - to take the gospel to the world. **Hudson Taylor said,** "The Great Commission is not an option to be considered; it is a command to be obeyed."  
**James Kennedy writes:** I have never forgotten the words missionary and explorer David Livingstone wrote in his diary after suffering incredible hardships and personal loss, "My Jesus, my Christ, my God, my King, my All, I again consecrate my life entirely unto Thee. I will place no value upon anything or any relationship except as it relates to Thy kingdom and Thy cause." A great hero of faith, Livingstone opened up Africa to the gospel, bringing it to millions of people who had never heard it before. His words and actions exemplify what it means to seek first the kingdom of Christ. . . . *Delighting God*, 123. The attitude of David Livingstone is seen in this account: "In 1896, Glasgow University conferred on the famous missionary the degree of Doctor of Laws. As Dr. Livingstone rose to speak, he was received in respectful silence. He was gaunt and haggard as a result of hardships in tropical Africa. His left arm crushed by a lion, hung helplessly at his side as he announced his resolve to return to Africa, without

misgiving and with great gladness. He added, 'Would you like me to tell you what supported me through all the years of exile among a people whose language I could not understand, and whose attitude toward me was often uncertain and often hostile? It was this: "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the age." On these words I staked everything, and they never failed!'" **James M. Boice writes**, "The ultimate goal is to glorify God, and the reason for that is that the glorification of God is the chief goal of everything, of life, history, creation, and our own existence. The first question of The Westminster shorter Catechism asks, 'What is the chief end of man?' It answers, 'Man's chief end is to glorify God and enjoy him forever.' The goal of life is God's glory. So, that is evangelism's chief end too. Let's ask it as a question: 'What is the chief end of evangelism?' The answer would be: 'Evangelism's chief end is to glorify God.' But in the case of evangelism, that happens in two ways: (1) The grace and mercy of God are glorified in the saving of those who will be saved, and (2) The justice and power of God are glorified in the case of those who are not saved, but are instead judged for their sins." *Romans*, Vol. 3, 1092.

This present age is a time for us to carry out the great commission.

This present age is also a time for people to believe and repent.

There is an urgency to the gospel message. I've spoken with many people through the years who say they will believe in Christ sometime in the future. They assume they will have a future and they will have an opportunity and desire to believe and repent in that future. **2 Cor. 6:1-2** **Simon Kistemaker comments on 2 Cor. 5:18-6:2**: "The last few verses of chapter 5 and the first two of this chapter [2 Cor. 6:1-2] reveal urgency. Paul pleads with his readers to be reconciled to God and exhorts them to accept God's message of salvation now. Paul uttered the same appeal to the Athenian philosophers when he said, 'In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent' (**Acts 17:30**). The urgency of repentance is due to the time limit that God has set. For us, that limit begins at the time the good news of salvation is heard

and ends when we die. We know the time when we first heard the gospel, but we do not know when we will leave this earthly scene. God has set the date of our departure, for 'man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment' (Heb. 9:27). The call to repentance goes forth within the limits God has set for us. Beyond death there is no salvation." *Commentary on 2 Corinthians*, 211.

**Merle Messer said**, "The very first time someone asked me to preach was before I went to seminary. An event happened that has shaped every sermon and lesson I have delivered. A couple who were vacationing from another state decided to visit our church and they left quickly as we were concluding the service. The man, while attempting to walk across the street was hit by a car and killed instantly. Within a minute of hearing my sermon his soul was cast into eternity, and he met Jesus in judgment."

You cannot presume upon time or the grace of God. Repent now!

**II. We are to be spiritually awake in our Christian lives because of God's call on our lives. Rom. 13:11-12** - In our Christian lives, we are to seek the kingdom of God.

**Matt. 6:33- Jonathan Edwards said**, "The seeking of the Kingdom of God is the chief business of the Christian." The form of the verb could be translated as "be constantly seeking." The exact same verb form is translated with this idea in Col. 3:1, "If then you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God." Also, notice that we are to seek first the Kingdom of God. This addresses the issue of priorities in our lives. Our relationship with God and our Christian growth is to be the number one priority in our lives. We are to apply ourselves diligently toward knowing God better and having our character changed so that we live more to his glory. The Greek word for "first" in this passage implies our relationship with God is not just to be the first in a list of other activities, but to be the number one concern of our lives. Think about your life. Do the living patterns of your life reflect this command of Jesus?

Are you asleep in your pursuit of the kingdom of God?

**Matt. 11:12** - This is a difficult passage to translate. This statement of Jesus is almost cryptic and sounds strange to our ears.

**KJV** - And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.

**NIV** - "From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing, and forceful men lay hold of it."

**Williams** - "The Kingdom of heaven is continuously taken by storm and those who take it by storm are seizing it as a precious prize."

The idea in this statement of Jesus is that we are to pursue the kingdom of heaven, we are to pursue our relationship with God in a forceful, dynamic manner. We are not to be casual or cavalier in our pursuit of the things of God.

**ILLUS.** - King Arthur movies. Knights rushing the battlements of a castle and taking it by force. Arrows sailing through the air, swords flashing. That is a picture of how we are to approach our relationship with God. We are to pursue knowing him and growing in our Christian lives in an active, aggressive manner.

**William Hendricksen**, in his commentary on Matthew emphasizes this point and writes, "It (the Kingdom of God) is not won by means of deferred prayers, unfulfilled promises, broken resolutions, and hesitant testimonies. It is for strong men like Joseph, Nathan, Elijah, Daniel and his three friends." Are you willing to engage in the pursuit of God in an aggressive, active manner? **1 Cor. 15:10** **We are also called to live to the glory of God.** Therefore, we are not to be asleep in terms of Christian growth. **Phil. 2:12-13** We are to actively put aside the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. **John Murray writes**, ". . . what the apostle is pressing home is the incompatibility of moral and religious slumbers with the position which believers now occupy in the great drama of redemption" (2:169). We are to be engaged in the great commission. We are to actively fight against sin and not make provision for the flesh. **Rom. 13:13-14**

An old country preacher said that if we want to overcome drunkenness, we best not tie our horse to the post in front of the saloon. **Martin Luther put it this way**, "I cannot keep sparrows from flying about my head, but I can keep them from making a nest in my hair." We are not to make provision to accommodate our sinful desires. **Apply ourselves to the means of grace. This text occupies an important place in church history.** Augustine was born November 13th, 354 of mixed pagan and Christian parentage. His mother was a Christian, but his father was not. His father wanted him to have a superior education which would be the pathway to becoming a wealthy man. At age 16, he was very promiscuous. At 17, he met a young woman with whom he had a long relationship. They did not marry, but lived together for 14 years. They were forced apart to make way for a proper legal marriage and Augustine in his Confessions, writes very moving passage concerning his heartbreak when they were forced apart. His philosophical mind led him to the philosophy of the Manichaens, who were the rationalists of their age. He drifted away from their teaching and became skeptical about everything. He was appointed government professor of rhetoric in Milan and was in contact with the most influential people in Italy, even members of the Roman court. When he arrived in Milan he came under the influence of Ambrose, bishop of that city. Ambrose was a man of great intellect, learning, and godliness. He was also an outstanding preacher. Augustine, who loved the technical aspects of good speaking went to hear him. Ambrose was a great expositor of Scripture and teacher of Christian doctrine. In spite of himself, Augustine was led into a deeper understanding of the gospel. Augustine wrote of this time in his life, "To thee, showing me on every side that what thou saidst was true, I, convicted by the truth, had nothing at all to reply, but the drawling and drowsy words: 'Presently, lo, presently'; Leave me a little while.' But, 'presently, presently' had now present; and my 'leave me a little while' went on a long while." He had a good friend Alypius and they were in a garden in an estate reading the Bible together. Augustine became so distressed at his own lack of spiritual resolution

that he withdrew to a distant part of the garden so he could give vent to his emotion and Alypius would not see his tears. He heard children chanting and repeating a phrase in the neighboring house, "Take up and read; take up and read." He returned to Alypius, picked up the volume of the apostles and opened it. His eyes fell on Romans 13:13-14. He writes in Confessions, "No further would I read, nor did I need; for instantly, as the sentence ended - by a light, as it were, of security infused into my heart - all gloom of doubt vanished away." Alypius was also converted at this time and both of them went to tell Augustine's mother, Monica who had been praying for her son for years. Augustine became the most influential theologian after the apostles in the first thousand years of church history. He died on August 28th, A. D. 430.

**Urgent exhortation** - Don't slumber in your pursuit of God and growth. **R. C. Sproul said,** "A static Christian is a contradiction in terms. Christ demands growth - growth to maturity, greater service, and obedience." (From a Ligonier brochure)

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**Rom. 14:1-12 Romans Series #70 9/5/10**

**James M. Boice writes,** "If someone spends a lot of time talking about a particular subject, it is usually because the person is interested in it and thinks it is important. So apparently Paul is very interested in the way Christians treat other Christians, since he writes on this subject at length. Romans 14 begins a new section (Rom. 14:1-15:13), and it is one of the book's longest parts - certainly the longest single part of the closing application portion of the letter (Rom. 12:1-16:27)." Boice then points out that the section about developing a Christian mind was completed in two verses. Paul discussed having a proper estimate of oneself in six verses. A call to love one another took thirteen verses. The material on church and state was seven verses. The section on a proper approach to the Christian life in light of the shortness of life and Christ's return was another seven verses. Now his discussion on how Christians are to accept and relate to other Christians when they do not think or behave as they think they should fills all of

Romans 14 and half of Romans 15 for a total of 35 verses. This is also the last major subject Paul addresses before he speaks about his future plans and sends his final greetings. "Apparently this is the matter he wants to leave before their minds in closing." Romans 4:17-24.

In terms of church life and Christian relationships, this section in Romans is one of the more important exhortations in the New Testament. It addresses the most common source of conflicts between sincere believers. Paul addresses issues which are called *adiaphora* which means matter of no importance or no weight. They are issues which are easily made into litmus tests of spirituality and legalism. For a healthy church and good Christian relationships, it is vital that we understand and apply these principles to our lives.

### **I. Every church contains weaker and stronger believers.**

#### **Rom. 14:1-3**

The weaker Christian is the one whose conscience is not as mature or biblically informed. Since we all have different backgrounds and starting points as well as different areas of sensitivity, most of us are mixture of weak and strong in various areas.

In our text, there are concerns about the eating of food and the honoring of special feast days. Commentators have debated who these factions were in the Romans church.

However, the best arguments support a conflict between Jewish and Gentile believers.

Thomas Schreiner gives several reasons for this. **First**, the conclusion to this section in Rom. 15:7-13 stresses the inclusion of both believing Jews and Gentiles. If the tension Paul addresses is between these two groups, then emphasis on unity between Jewish and Gentile believers fits the context. **Second**, the use of the Greek terms *koinos* (common) and *katharos* (clean) "reflects Jewish concerns over whether foods were clean or unclean." The noun *koinos* (14:14) is used elsewhere in Jewish writings and the NT to refer to clean or unclean foods (Mk 7:2, 5; Acts 10:14-15,28; 11:8-9). Similarly, *katharos* (Rom. 14:20) refers to pure and impure foods in the LXX and NT (Gen. 7:2-3,8;



8:20; Mark 7:19; Lk 11:39,41). **Third**, the reference to the observance of days (Rom. 14:5-6) best fits a Jewish background. **Fourth**, Paul's tolerance of these practices and perspectives suggests a Jewish source. If they came from paganism, Paul would probably not have been as tolerant. It may have been hard for Jewish Christians to get kosher meat. The Jews had been expelled from Rome in A. D. 49. They returned with the accession of Nero in A. D. 54. Because of this, it might have been difficult to obtain clean meat in Rome (708-709). Josephus pointed out that some of the Jews at Rome lived on fruits exclusively, out of fear from eating something unclean (Hodge, 417). Those who Paul calls "weak in faith" apparently believed that one would be a better and stronger Christian if one observed particular precepts. **Thomas Schreiner comments**, "Weakness in faith and inadequate understanding go together. . . . Their faith is genuine, but it is weak, precisely because they still believe that the law should be observed in terms of its ritual obligations. Such ritual observance does not nullify the authenticity of their faith, but it does indicate a certain deficiency in it" (714). The weaker believers did not understand the biblical concept of liberty.

**R. C. Sproul comments**, "They thought they were being devout, when, in fact, they were being infantile and immature in their reasoning" (Faith Alone, 474).

## **II. We are not to judge one another on issues of *adiaphora*.**

**Rom. 14:2-3** - These are matters of *adiaphora*, that is things that don't matter in terms of our salvation or sanctification. Paul is not saying that we should be indifferent toward real sin. He argues that the weaker believer has a misinformed understanding of what God allows and forbids. However, that weaker believer is still our brother or sister in the Lord. Just as we have received grace from God, we are to extend grace to those who have a less mature understanding of a particular issue. Paul affirms that these foods are clean and could be eaten in **Rom. 14:14**. Remember that Jesus abrogated the dietary laws in **Mark 7:18-19**. Paul does the same thing both here and in **1 Tim. 4:3-4**. When

addressing a similar subject to the Corinthians he makes a similar statement in **1 Cor.**

**8:8.**

**Rom. 14:5-6a** - The same thing is true concerning various Jewish sacred days. Many of these special days were Jewish traditions and not necessary prescribed in the law. **Col. 2:16-17**

These various views could be tolerated and grace extended to these fellow Christians because they did not make these things the basis of salvation. If they had done that, Paul would have passionately resisted those views as he did when the Judaizers made circumcision and elements of the ceremonial law requirements for salvation. Then the issue becomes one of the sufficiency of Christ's work and our being justified by faith alone. Paul points out that those who follow certain dietary laws and observe particular days do so for the Lord (**Rom. 14:6-9**). For this reason, the strong were not to pass judgment on the weak because the weak also belonged to the Lord. Christ died and lives again in order to redeem his people. The weaker and stronger both belong to him and are precious in his sight. **Rom. 14:8-9**

It is to the Lord they will give account - **Rom 14:4, 10-12.**

**III. Our consciences are to be informed and governed by Scripture and not our traditions or personal preferences.**

Near the end of this chapter, when Paul discusses not causing a weaker believer to stumble, he addresses the issue of personal conscience (**Rom. 14:20-23**). He alludes to this idea in **Rom. 14:5.**

All of this opens up the issue of legalism and Christian liberty. The issues Paul addresses are not usual ones that we confront in our churches today. I have encountered arguments for the OT dietary laws in Ukraine, but only once in ministry in the U. S.

The most crass form of legalism is when people trust in their own works in order to merit salvation. That is distinctly non-Christian. However, in the Christian community, two common expressions of legalism are often present. One expression of legalism is when

people add laws to the commandments of God and then treat their added laws as the very commandment of God. Often these man-created laws are then made the test of spirituality. Closely related to this is another expression of legalism which is when people major on minors. Sometimes those minor issues are those which may or may not be a command from God. Often they are *adiaphrous*, but they are made into the test of spirituality and Christian maturity. Through the years in ministry I've encountered many things in these categories. Let me mention just a few of them. Maybe I'll step on some toes, but in this regard, our consciences are to be biblically informed and directed. Remember the person who is the most enslaved to his traditions is the person who doesn't know what his traditions are or if they are biblical or simply a man-made tradition. Here are some of the things I've seen made the test of Christian maturity and spirituality: Dancing, wearing makeup, hair length of men and women, only wearing dresses in church and sometime overall. Do you go to movies or own a TV. I've heard discussions about "devilvision, hellavision, the Babylon box." Family size has been used as a test for spirituality. How many hours do you pray each day? I knew a man on a college dorm floor who would let all the Christians know how long he prayed in order to present himself as very spiritual. He would come into our dorm room and announce in great pious tones, "I just had the most wonderful three hours with the Lord in prayer." After lots of that kind of thing, a friend of mine told him, "Well, praise your name. Glory, laud, and honor to you. That's what you want isn't it?" That stopped that, at least with us.

Another common test of spirituality is how much do you witness? I've seen people actually keep a log book of how many people they presented the gospel to in a week and then, of course, they let everyone else know about it. Listening to any music other than distinctly Christian music is another test of spirituality in some circles. Not following the Christian calendar so that we don't celebrate Christmas or Easter is sometimes presented as the height of spiritual maturity. Never having your young children in nursery is

another area like this. A church not having a Sunday school is sometimes presented as a higher level of maturity.

Whether you homeschool or not homeschool is another one.

How loud do you pray. I worked with ministry once where the test of whether a person was really praying was if they prayed loudly - shouting, pacing, using great emotion in prayer.

If someone prayed softly, then they were "breaking through to God." These are just a few of the things that easily become of the focus of righteous living. While there can be legitimate biblical principles behind some of them, when they are reductionistically made the whole focus of Christian maturity and then used to evaluate other Christian's spirituality, then they are trivializing real righteousness. Many of these are simply personal preferences. The problem is when they are made a rule that must be followed in order to be a mature or spiritual Christian. **R. C. Sproul writes**, "The elevation of human preferences to the level of divine mandate is not limited to an isolated group of moralistic Pharisees in the first century. The problem has beset the church ever since. Not only do traditions develop which are added to the law of God, but in many cases they become the supreme tests of the faith, the litmus test by which people are judged to be either Christians or non-Christians. It is unthinkable in the New Testament that a person's Christian commitment would ever be determined by whether or not that person engaged in dancing or in wearing of lipstick and the like. Unfortunately, so often when these preferences become tests of faith, they involve not only the elevation of non-biblical mandates to the level of the will of God, but they represent a trivialization of righteousness. When these externals are elevated to the level of being measuring rods of righteousness, we begin to major in minors and obscure the real tests of righteousness." *Ethics and the Christian*, 35-36.

**R. C. Sproul also writes**, "Why do we have a perpetual struggle of majoring in minors? Certainly we as Christians want to be recognized for our growth in sanctification and for

our righteousness. Which is easier to achieve, a mature level of the practice of mercy and righteousness, or the paying of tithes? To pay my tithes certainly involves a financial sacrifice of sorts, but there is a certain sense in which it is cheaper for me to drop my money into the plate than it is for me to invest my life in the pursuit of justice and of mercy. We tend to give God the cheapest gifts. Which is easier, to develop the gift of the fruit of the Spirit, conquering pride and covetousness, greed and impatience, or to avoid going to movie theaters or dancing? We also yearn for clearly observable measuring rods of growth. How do we measure our growth in patience or in compassion? It is much more difficult to measure the disposition of our hearts than it is to measure the number of movies we attend. It is also our inclination as fallen creatures to emphasize as being most important those virtues in which we have achieved a relative degree of success.

Naturally, I would like to think that my moral weaknesses are limited to minor matters. It is a short step from this natural inclination to a widespread distortion of where God places the emphasis." *Ethics and the Christian*, 37.

I've often seen Christians treat each other with harshness or disdain over personality differences and personal preferences. Their personal likes or dislikes are made into the test of faith. **James M. Boice writes**, "What about personality differences? Does every Christian have to be grim like an undertaker, or always smiling like a stand-up comedian? Charles Spurgeon was the greatest preacher of his age, but he was frequently criticized for being funny. When one woman objected to the humor he inserted into his sermons Spurgeon told her, 'Madam, you would think a great deal better of me if you knew the funny things I kept out.' Spurgeon was character. A young man asked what he should do about a box cigars he had been given. Spurgeon solved his problem. 'Give them to me,' he said, 'and I will smoke them to the glory of God.'" **Boice concluded**, "Let's stop dumping on one another, and let's allow God to deal with each of his servants how, when, and as kindly as he will. And while we are at it, let's be thankful that he has dealt as kindly as he has with us. If he had not, we would all be in deep trouble." *Romans*,

4:1728 Remember that the weaker believer is convinced that he is acting in accordance with the commands of God. We are to be gracious toward that person, but at the same time the entire character of ministry of a church cannot be governed by those whose consciences and theology are not knowledgeable in certain areas.

We'll consider more how we are to relate to each other with grace and love in the next section of this chapter.

Examine your thinking in terms of ethics and Christian worldview. Is your conscience biblically informed? Are there areas where you have been blindly following traditions or things you were taught when you first came to the Lord. We are to be constantly evaluating these areas in light of Scripture.

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#### **Romans 14:13-23 Romans Series #71 9/12/10**

Last week we looked at the first part of this chapter in which Paul addresses issues of adiaphora. Remember adiaphora are matters of no weight or issues that were morally neutral. There were Jewish Christians in the church at Rome who still held to the Old Testament dietary laws. Since kosher meat was most likely difficult to obtain, many of these believers only ate vegetables. Paul seeks to correct this misunderstanding, but also gives important instructions to those who had better informed consciences. He calls these people the strong believers and urges them not to treat the weaker believers with contempt because of their convictions over food and special days. As an application of this, we considered issues of legalism in which people add human commands to the law of God and then treat those commands as if they were the very commands of God. We can also major on minor issues and trivialize true righteousness. The last part of this chapter continues to deal with these issues. It gives instruction concerning Christian conscience and commands believers to be kind and patient with each other in these areas of adiaphora. Remember that a person who is convinced in conscience concerning a particular issues does not think it is an adiaphrous issue.

**I. We are to pursue the spiritual well-being of our fellow believers. Rom. 14:13-15, 19-21**

First, Paul reiterates the point he made earlier in the chapter that we are not to judge or treat harshly fellow believers who have a less biblically informed conscience in some area. We are to be gracious and kind to each other.

Second, we are not to put a stumbling block in another believer's way. If a fellow believer is convinced that something is wrong before God, we are not to flaunt our understanding of liberty in that area in front of that believer. **Charles Hodge comments**, "Though the thing is right in itself, yet if indulgence in it be injurious to our Christian brethren, that indulgence is a violation of the law of love" (Romans, 424). One of the main ways our fellow believer would be harmed in this way is if they were encouraged to act against their conscience. We are not to encourage a fellow believer to act against his conscience. Paul seeks to inform the consciences of those dealing with food issues.

**Rom. 14:14, 20** - Paul is not guessing as to what is clean or unclean. He gives an apostolic proclamation based on the revelation he has received from the Lord Jesus that no food is unclean. This is similar to Jesus' statement in Mark 7:19 when he declared all foods clean. However, in these same statements, Paul makes an crucial point concerning the conscience. **Rom. 14:14, 20, 23** He states that no food is unclean, but he states that if a person thinks it is unclean, it would be a sin for him to eat it. Why is that? If a person perceives something to be a violation of God's commands even if it is not, for them to do that particular thing is sinful. It is not inherently sinful in itself. It might be perfectly permissible in the commands of God. But, if they think it is sin and do it, the sin lies in the attitude of heart. They think it is breaking God's commands and they do it anyway.

**1 Cor. 8:7-13** gives the same principle in a similar context. In the case of the Corinthians, the issue was concerning eating meat that had been offered to idols. **R. C. Sproul comments**, "The principle here is clear: if we believe that something is a sin,

even if it is not, yet we participate in it, then we have committed a sin because we have done something we believe to be wrong, whether or not it actually is wrong. . . ; the sin is doing something we think is evil" (*The Righteous Shall Live By Faith*, 482). **Illus. -** Young woman is raised in a Christian home where she is taught that it is a sin to wear lipstick and makeup. There is not biblical command in this regard. However, she is taught that because it is a part of the tradition of that home and she believes it is a sin to wear lipstick or makeup. She goes to college and has some Christian friends who wear lipstick and makeup. She is still convinced in conscience that it is wrong to do that, but does it anyway because she wants to fit in. She sins in that action. Not because she has violated a biblical principle, but because she believes she is breaking God's commands. It is a sin involving the attitude of her heart.

**Donald Grey Barnhouse said,** "We may advise, we may cite our own experiences, we may pray, we may point to the Word of God, we may seek to enlighten, but *we may never command the conscience of another believer*" (*One Lord, One Master*, booklet 84 in radio series on Roman [Philadelphia: The Bible Study Hour, 1959], 13.

If someone is convinced in conscience that something is a sin before God, we may try to help them have a better understanding of the biblical teaching in that area, but we should not encourage them to act against conscience. We should also not flaunt our understanding or liberty in front of them bringing them distress. **Rom. 14:21-22; 1 Cor. 8:11-13**

**Rom. 14:16-18** - Conflicts in the body of Christ can bring dishonor to the gospel. Paul again affirms the issue that these dietary issues are adiaphora (v. 17). We are to seek the kingdom of God and a righteousness based on the truth of Scripture in our Christian growth. That is acceptable to Christ and healthy for the body of Christ.

**Before we move to the next point,** I want to mention an issue that arises from this text. Rom. 14:15 is a classic Arminian proof text. It is used to argue for a universal and only potential atonement against the Reformed and biblical concept of an accomplished and



specific atonement. Arminian theology argues that Christ did not actually save anyone in his cross work, but only made people saveable. This text is used to say that Christ paid for the sins of people and then they ultimately perish or go to hell. It also is used to deny the perseverance of the saints and the immutability of God's decree of election. The Arminian argument focuses on the use of the Greek word *apollymi* which is the word translated as "destroy" in Rom. 14:15. That word is used in other contexts to refer to eternal perdition (Matt. 10:28; 1 Cor. 1:18; 2 Cor. 4:3). However, this context is not speaking about eternal salvation. The entire chapter addresses issues of sanctification and our relationships with other believers. In fact, in the close context, there is an affirmation of the keeping power of God in our salvation (Rom. 14:4, 8). In fact, the book of Romans contains some of the stronger statements in the New Testament concerning the accomplished aspect of Christ's work and the security of our salvation (Rom. 5:6-11; 8:30-39; election in rom. 9).

1 Cor. 8 has the same context. 1 Cor. 8:12 speaks of wounding a weak conscience.

**Robert Reymond comments**, "'Hurting' and 'wounding' a weaker brother's conscience are extremely serious matters, no doubt, but these verbs suggest conditions that fall short of actual perdition" (Systematic, 699).

## **II. We are to pursue peace and the building up of one another.**

**Rom. 14:19** - This statement is a great summary of the entire chapter. As we mentioned last week, every church has people who are sensitive in different areas. People have different backgrounds and traditions in their Christian experiences. Some of those traditions are based on Scripture and some are not. Christian people have different levels of knowledge and understanding in the areas of Christian ethics. Most Christians are mixture in this regard. We have areas where we have good understanding and practice in our Christian lives and other areas where we are weaker in conscience. Paul's exhortations tell us to be patient and kind toward each other.

**R. C. Sproul comments on Romans 14:19-20:** "The opposite of peace is war; it is conflict. God's people are not to chase after fights and look for conflict. We are to search for things that make for peace. . . ." *The Righteous Shall Live By Faith*, 487.

While we are to be discerning and have a deep concern for truth, we are not to be constantly on a heresy hunt. I've met many Christians whose main focus in their Christian lives was to find something to complain about concerning another believer. Certainly, we are to be discerning and seek to have a solid, good theology, but often the matters that cause people to be agitated are of a more trivial nature. Sometimes they are even *adiaphora* issues. **F. F. Bruce said**, "Some people remind me of the inhabitants of Assynt, in the northwest of Scotland, of whom it used to be said that while others went to church to hear the gospel preached, they went to hear if the gospel was preached or not."

**Having said that, there is another side to these issues.** Paul gives instructions to the strong believer not to be a stumbling block to the weak in matters of *adiaphora*. However, he also seeks to teach the weak and assist them in having a better understanding of these particular issues. We've already observed his statements concerning food and drink (**Rom. 14:14, 17, 20**). He makes similar statements in 1 Cor. 8. Realize how radical those statements would be to a Jewish believer living with a long heritage of dietary laws. Paul also instructs the weak not to be judging and reacting harshly to the strong. The moral tone and practice of a church cannot be governed by the weakest or least informed conscience in that church. The strong are to exercise patience, but also seek to instruct and there are times when the weak are going to have to accept the strong.

**R. C. Sproul writes**, "We walk a very thin line. The weaker brother is not to destroy the freedom of all in the church. At the same time, we can forego our freedom for a time out of consideration for our weaker brother. Paul is opposing a spirit of arrogance that leads us to insist on our rights to do whatever we please no matter what. That is the wrong approach. The stronger brother has to be willing to forego his strength for the sake of the

weaker brother, yet the church must never allow the weaker one to establish his weakness as law for the Christian community" (*The Righteous Shall Live By Faith*, 475).

**Illus.** - No drinking in school. Jesus and the apostles couldn't be students here.

Paul clearly taught that circumcision was no longer necessary to be a part of the covenant community. The counsel in Acts 15 affirmed the same thing. However, Paul practiced what he instructs in this passage. **Acts 16:1-3** - When it was not a matter of salvation, but just a matter of not giving offense to Jewish people in that region, Paul circumcised Timothy. However, when the Judaizers argued that circumcision was necessary for salvation, then Paul vehemently opposed them. The Judaizers compromised the heart of the gospel and the sufficiency of Christ. As a general principle, we are to pursue peace and seek to build up our fellow believers. Behind all of this is the need for us to have a biblical informed conscience. It is important in our Christian lives to study the ethical teaching of Scripture. It is also important to read and study the ethical teaching of great theologian in the history of the church.

There are very few ethical issues today which have not been studied and taught on in church history. We cannot cut ourselves off from the fellowship of past believers by refusing to read their works. In the same way we listen to sermon and Bible study lesson today, we also listen to the greatest minds God has raised up in church history. That is a great help in developing a biblically accurate Christian conscience.

The main point of this is that we are each be an instrument of edification to our fellow believers. That includes exercising patience and kindness as well as giving instruction. We do that with the vision that God is building his church and the Holy Spirit is at work bringing people to salvation and bringing growth to those people.

**James M. Boice**, commenting on Rom. 14:19-15:2, writes, "Is all this worth it? Is it worthwhile sharpening our skills and developing our Christian character so that others might grow to be like Jesus Christ? Of course, it is. The problem is not that we doubt the ultimate value of the work we are given to do but that we get bogged down in the hard,

daily task of fashioning the stones of this building and fitting them to the overall structure.

It helps to remember that what God is building is a temple. Here is an illustration. We are told in 1 Kings 6:7 that when the great temple of Solomon was constructed 'only blocks dressed at the quarry were used, and no hammer, chisel or any other iron tool was heard at the temple site while it was being built.' To my knowledge, no other building in history was ever built in this way. Its construction was so well done it was almost silent. Silently, silently the stones were added, and the building rose.

So it is with the church. We do not hear what is going on inside human hearts as the Holy Spirit creates new life and adds individuals to the temple he is building. We do not even fully realize the part we are playing as we seek to build these other people up by focusing on the important matters, laying aside petty differences, and teaching the Word of God to each of them faithfully. But God is working, and the temple is rising. In the days of the apostles God was adding Gentiles to his church. Paul was his chief instrument in carrying the gospel to them. God added the high and the low, slaves and freemen, Greeks, Romans, and barbarians. He added many at the time of the Reformation and in the days of the Great Awakenings and revivals. He is still building his church today, and we are his workmen, laborers together with Jesus Christ. We have a responsibility to do the work well." *Romans 4:1793-1794.*

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**Rom. 15:1-6 Romans Series #72 9/19/10**

The last couple of weeks we have been examining this section in which Paul deals with morally neutral issues which can cause division between believers. Remember the technical term for those issues is adiaphora. That means things which don't matter. In the church at Rome there were Jewish and Gentile believers. Apparently, many of the Jewish believers still followed the Old Testament dietary laws. Since kosher or clean meat was difficult to obtain in Rome, these believers only ate vegetables. In speaking to

these issues, Paul addresses what he calls the weaker and the stronger brothers. The weaker brothers are those who have a less biblically informed conscience. In the church at Rome the weaker are those who do not understand that the OT dietary laws have been abrogated in the new covenant. Paul urges the believers to extend mercy and grace to each other. He does seek to instruct the weaker brethren and he declares that all foods are clean. However, he also makes the point that no one is to act against their conscience. If they do, the sin would be in the attitude of heart that is expressed in a person violating what they perceive to be the law of God. The strong are not to flaunt their more correct understanding of liberty and encourage someone to act against conscience. However, it is also important that the moral tone of a church is not set by the person who has the least biblical informed congregation in a particular body. Our text this morning continues this discussion. Paul reiterates some of what he has said already, but adds information concerning the example of Christ and the unity of Jews and Gentiles in the one body of Christ. I want to mention again that this is an extremely important topic in regard to having healthy Christian relationships in a church. Every church has weaker and stronger brethren in a variety of areas. Often people take a true biblical principle and extend it beyond the command of Scripture. That ends up adding legislation to the law of God. Part of the teaching ministry of a church is to provide ethical instruction so that we have a biblical informed conscience. We are all to be growing in these areas.

#### **I. We are to bear with each other and not simply please ourselves. Rom. 15:1-2**

Numerous commentators point out that "bearing the failings of the weak" does not simply mean tolerating or putting up with them. Certainly, we are to patient with each other, but this has more of the meaning of helping the weak brethren. **William Hendriksen** writes, "It means, 'We should put our shoulders under these failings, and meaningfully help our weak fellow-believers to carry them'" (Romans, 469). **Thomas Schreiner comments**, "The sense is akin to Gal. 6:2, where Paul calls on believers to bear each other's burdens, which does not mean 'endure' each other as a burden, but help each other with the things

that oppress us. Similarly, the thought here is that the 'strong' should come to the aid of the 'weak' and help them with their deficiencies" (Romans, 746). In Rom. 14, Paul has stated that the strong are not to flaunt their liberty and encourage the weak to act against conscience. That is one aspect of helping the person with a less biblically informed conscience. Another aspect of this is seen in how Paul seeks to instruct the weak. **Rom. 14:14, 20; 1 Cor. 8:8-9.** We should be sensitive and patient with each other, but we should also seek gently to instruct and teach a true biblical ethic. Of course, we are always to be examining our own ethical thinking and bringing it under the light of Scripture. As I mentioned a moment ago, it is easy to take a true biblical principle and add commands to it. Often people make their personal preferences into the standard of righteousness.

These same principles are set forth in Paul's discussion concerning meat offered to idols. We've looked at 1 Cor. 8.

**1 Cor. 10:23-33** also gives helpful exhortations. Again, we walk a very fine line. On the one hand we bend over backwards not to purposefully offend a fellow believer.

However, we cannot let the person with the least biblically informed conscience control the ethics of a church. Then we would have the tyranny of the weakest member of the church. **1 Cor. 10:29-30** The weak must also accept that they may not have a full understanding of some area. In this regard, the weak must also extend grace to the strong.

## **II. We are to bear with each other just like Christ bore the reproach of sinners.**

### **Rom. 15:3-4**

Paul uses Jesus as an example of someone who did not please himself. Just like he did not please himself in his work of atonement, we should be willing to extend grace to our fellow believers and not always please ourselves. **James M. Boice makes an important comment on this:** "For many years it has been common in the evangelical church to play down the importance of Jesus Christ as an example. This is primarily a reaction to

the liberal church's focus on Jesus as an example to the neglect of his deity and atoning work on the cross. Evangelical have responded by saying, 'It is not an example we need; it is a Savior.' That is correct, but it is also true that the Bible presents Jesus as an example for those who have been saved by him, telling us that we must be increasingly like Jesus, whom we profess to love and serve" (Romans 4:1795). If we don't deny the atoning work of Christ, it is perfectly acceptable to consider his life as an example for our sanctification. In fact, Jesus, after he washed his disciples feet said, "For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you" (John 13:15).

Jesus endured and absorbed constant attacks from the religious leaders in Israel. **Donald Grey Barnhouse writes**, "The first time that Jesus ever spoke in public, even before the Sermon on the Mount, his message on salvation by the simple grace of God aroused in the Pharisees the utmost of fury. He had not spoken twenty lines before they were filled with wrath, and rose up and led him to the brow of the hill on which the city was built, intending to push him over the precipice (Luke 4:28-29). His reminder that God saved the Gentile widow and her son and healed Naaman the Syrian, both examples of his sovereign grace toward undeserving sinners, drew the greatest wrath from the people. Men do not want grace from God, they want him to acknowledge that what they find in themselves he also counts as good. This he can never do, and they hate him for it, and they hated his Son when he came with the same message." *God's Glory: Exposition of Bible Doctrines, Taking the Epistle to the Romans as a Point of Departure*, vol. 10, Romans 14:13-16:27 (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1964), 42. Cited in Boice, Romans 4:1800.

**William Hendriksen summarizes Paul's point:** "If Christ, the Holy One, was willing to take upon himself so much suffering, in the form of insults hurled at him by his enemies, then should not we be willing to sacrifice just a little eating-and-drinking pleasure for the sake of our fellow-believers" (470)? Paul quotes the last half of Psalm 69:9 exactly as it is found in the LXX (Psa. 68:10). Psalm 69 is one of the six Psalms

most often referred to in the New Testament. The others are Psalms 2, 22, 89, 110, 118. The first part of Psa. 69:9 refers to Christ's zeal for the house of God. It is applied to Jesus when he cleansed the temple of the money changers (John 2:17). The implied lesson is that the strong believers should be so filled with zeal for the church that they are willing to make sacrifices for the sake of the weak. They should also be willing to invest time and effort to instruct the weak and to assist the church grow into a mature body.

**John Murray comments,** "It is noteworthy how the apostle adduces the example of Christ in his most transcendent accomplishments in order to command the most practical duties. . . . He 'pleased not himself' to the incomparable extent of bearing the enmity of men against God and he bore this reproach because he was Jealous of God's honour. He did not by flinching evade any of the stroke. Shall we, the strong, insist on pleasing ourselves in the matter of food and drink to the detriment of God's saints and the edification of Christ's body? It is the complete contrast between Christ's situation and ours that enhances the force of the appeal" (Romans 2:198-199). **Rom. 15:4** - This is a great statement by itself, but it is not just a parenthetical statement. Paul basis his previous argument on a quote from Psalm 69:9. The "for" at the beginning of the Rom. 15:4 shows the basis for this appeal to Scripture. All Scripture is written for our instruction and edification. The Scriptures are the basis of every aspect of our faith and practice and produce in us perseverance, encouragement, and hope. This verse presents some important points concerning Scripture. **First**, we see the inspiration of the Bible. Rom. 15:4 states that the Scriptures produce in us perseverance and encouragement. Rom. 15:5 states that it is God who gives perseverance and encouragement. He does that through the revelation he has given in the Word of God and the work of the Holy Spirit enabling us to understand and receive the Bible as God's Word. This is similar to the statement in 2 Tim. 3:16-17.

**Second**, this points out that everything in the Bible is profitable for us. **2 Tim. 3:16** - "All Scripture is God-breathed and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for



training in righteousness." Nothing in the Bible is superfluous. The Old Testament is just as important as the New Testament as God's propositional revelation to us. **John Calvin comments on Rom. 15:4:** "This notable passage shows us that the oracles of God contain nothing vain or unprofitable. . . . It would be an insult to the Holy Spirit to imagine that he had taught us anything which it is of no advantage to know.

Let us also know that all we that we learn from Scripture is conducive to the advancement of godliness. Although Paul is speaking of the Old Testament, we are to hold the same view of the writings of the apostles. If the Spirit of Christ is everywhere the same, it is quite certain that he has accommodated his teaching to the edification of his people at the present time by the apostles, as he formerly did by the prophets." Rom, 304-5. This is one of the reasons I like to preach through books. That makes it impossible to neglect or gloss over a controversial text or subject. In Acts 20:27, Paul states that he taught them the whole purpose of God. Of course, this implies that we must read and study the Bible as important means of grace. The applying of Scripture to our lives produces perseverance, encouragement, and Christian hope. The better we know God and attributes and actions through redemptive history, the more confidence will have in him in our lives. **During World War II**, Winston Churchill and General Montgomery tended to disagree on various points. In one discussion with Montgomery, Churchill urged him to study logistics. Montgomery was more interested in war strategy and had little interest in logistics. Churchill could tell that Montgomery was disinterested and pressed him all the harder to become familiar with logistics. Montgomery, in disgust said, "Familiarity breeds contempt." Churchill, with his quick wit replied, "And lack of familiarity breeds nothing." Lack of familiarity with the teaching of the Scriptures will breed nothing in your life. If you are going to grow in Christ, you must know the Word of God.

Again, Paul makes this point in light of his application of Psalm 69:9 to the life of Christ. Just as Jesus did not live only for himself, we are not to live just for ourselves. We are to

extend grace and kindness to each other in the body of Christ. One important application of this is that it should start in our homes. Husbands and wives need to extend grace to each other as fellow Christians and heirs of the grace of life. Often we are the harshest with those in our family. Examine your heart and life in this area.

### **III. We are to bear with each other so that we would live in harmony to the glory of God. Rom. 15:5-6**

The two ideas of perseverance and encouragement which Paul mentioned in verse 4 are mentioned again. Paul offers a prayer and desire that everyone in this church and, by extension, all Christians through the application of Scripture to their lives may reach the goal of living in harmony with each other. Notice that this goal is only reached through the enabling power of God. Phil. 2:12-13; 1 Cor. 15:10 - To be of the same mind toward each other reiterates the focus of this whole section beginning at Rom. 14:1. The arrogance of the strong and the stumblings of the weak can cause dissensions and strife in the church community. All the exhortations Paul has given have the goal of drawing believers attention to the importance of extending grace, love, and kindness toward each other. Rom. 15:5 - "according to Christ Jesus" - This phrase has been the focus of some debate. Some interpret the phrase to mean "in accord with the will of Christ." Other interpret to mean "in accord with the pattern or example of Christ." John Murray makes a good point that the phrase is broad enough to encompass both ideas because "what is after Christ's example must always accord with his will" (2:201). The goal in this is that we would glorify God as a church. **John Murray states**, "To glorify God is to exhibit his praise and honour" (2:201). **James M. Boice writes**, "According to this verse, the purpose of our unity is not so much that the church might be a pleasant place to be or that weak Christians might be encouraged and strong Christians channeled into useful work. Rather, it is that God might be glorified. God must be made known as the great and wonderful God he is" (Romans 4:1817). An important aspect of all of this is that we are

to be evaluating traditions, Christian heritage, theology in light of Scripture. Our ethical perspectives are to come from the Word of God. It is very easy to hold an position on something simply because it was taught to us when we were young Christians or we had a particular tradition in our Christian heritage. This is why it is important to know historical theology. We need to know the source of our traditions. Some of them are biblical, others need to be corrected. This is why the fellowship of believers past and present is so important. The fellowship from the past comes from the writings, expositions, and sermons of great leaders God raised up. We may disagree with some of their conclusions, but they should be a part of our study. **Richard Pratt, Jr. writes,** "Why should we let the beliefs of the past inform us? Why not simply read these texts for ourselves? In a word, ignoring heritage is the first step toward heresy. Consider some modern heretical groups. Jehovah's Witnesses, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints and other heterodox groups ignore the theological heritage of historical Christianity. Although for the most part they do not blatantly deny the authority of Scripture itself, they refuse to draw upon the Spirit's work in the church. To disregard heritage as we read Scripture invariably leads to serious error" (*He Gave Us Stories*, 71-72).

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**Romans 15:8-12 Romans Series #73 9/26/10**

The last few weeks we've been examining this section dealing with weaker and stronger believers. In this context, the weaker believers are those with less biblically informed consciences. We've noted that all of us can areas where we are weaker and stronger at the same time. We are commanded to exercise great patience and kindness toward each other in these areas. Paul specially addresses Jewish dietary laws and feast days and points out that these particular things are abrogated in the new covenant. However, while we try to help weaker believers have a better understanding in these types of issues, we

are not to encourage them to act against conscience. We've mentioned that the main way we see this occurring today is in areas of legalism where people elevate a human preference to the level of the command of God. People add to the commands of God and then make those added laws the litmus test for spirituality or Christian maturity. Often these are external matter such as dress style and entertainment activities. These kinds of things might be easy to see or keep track of, but they have little to do with the fruit of Spirit and real Christian maturity. Our text today is a conclusion to this section. Since Jew and Gentile relationships are the heart of this problem in this particular church, Paul gives some crucial teaching about the work of the Messiah and the fact that we are one Christian community comprised of redeemed Jews and Gentiles. God's covenantal faithfulness to Israel is vivid in the coming and work of the Jesus, the Messiah. The Gentiles also praise God's mercy and grace because they are included in these promises.

**I. Christ became a servant to the Jews to fulfill God's covenant promises. Rom.**

**15:8 First,** we see that Jesus came to serve. Many Jews expected the Messiah to be a king who would establish his kingdom and drive out the Romans. The idea of a suffering servant was not the prominent concept of the Messiah. Jesus proclaimed the purpose of his coming in Matt. 20:28. In fact, there were times when the Jews wanted to make him king and he withdrew from the crowds. **Second,** Jesus came to fulfill God's covenant promises. In Gen. 3:15, right after the fall, God promised that a singular hero would come who would have the power and authority to crush the head of the serpent. He would be the seed of the woman, but his power implied his deity. Later Messianic promises and prophecies presented more information about his person and work. The coming of Jesus was in keeping with entire flow of redemptive history. The New

Testament repeatedly affirms this idea. Jesus affirmed this on different occasions: **John 5:39, 45-46; Luke 24:25-27, 44-47**. Jesus declared that Isa. 53 must be fulfilled in him: **Luke 22:37; 18:31; Matt. 26:24, 31, 54, 56**. **Robert Reymond** writes, "Christians today often wish that they could have heard Jesus' interpretation of the Old Testament on that occasion. But they can be assured that both the apostles' sermons recorded in Acts - Luke's 'second work' - and the apostolic letters themselves, in the very way in which they interpret the Old Testament Christologically, reflect major features of Christ's Emmaus road exposition" (*A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith*, 521-522). Peter stated that all the prophets speak of Jesus and the fulfillment of the old covenant promises in him and the new covenant: **Acts 3:17-24**. Peter made a similar statement when he preached to Cornelius and his household: **Acts 10:43**. Besides the numerous quotes from the Old Testament which fill Paul's epistles, on his missionary journeys, Paul reasoned with the Jews from the Scriptures that Jesus was the Messiah: **Acts 17:2-3**. Consider also: **Rom. 1:2-3; 1 Cor. 15:3-4; Acts 26:6-7; 28:20**. **Illus. - Gen. 15:9-18a** - Explain - Only God walked between the pieces. Self-maledictory oath. If I can cease to be, then the promise will not take place. Also, took upon himself the curse of the covenant breaker. A common question associated with this subject is how the Old Testament people were saved. **Robert Reymond comments on this:** The requisite condition for salvation is identical in both the Old and New Testaments: the elect were saved, and will be saved only by grace through faith in the (anticipated or accomplished) work of the Messiah. Dispensational scholars maintain that no Old Testament saint could have been saved through conscious faith in the Messiah's death work, simply because knowledge of this event was "as yet locked up in the secret counsels of God" (Scofield Reference Bible,

996). The Westminster Confession, on the other hand, affirms that the Holy Spirit employed "promises, prophecies, sacrifices, circumcision, the paschal lamb, and other types and ordinances . . . , all foreshadowing Christ to come," in his Old Testament saving operations "to instruct and build up the elect in faith in the promised Messiah, by whom they had full remission of sins, and eternal salvation" (VII/v). The Scriptures alone should decide this issue. . . . Systematic, 528. Starting with the NT, we can see numerous references to the OT teaching concept of an atonement accomplished by the Messiah.

**2 Tim. 3:15** - Paul obviously believed that the Old Testament contained information about salvation through faith in the Messiah. **Rom. 4:1-8** - Paul cites the examples of Abraham and David as examples of Old Testament believers who were justified by faith in Christ alone. He cites Psa. 32:1-2 concerning David's faith in this regard. **John the Baptist** was the last of the old covenant prophets (Matt. 11:9-14 - Elijah who was to come). John called Jesus the "Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29) which is a clear proclamation of the Messiah's work of atonement. This information is most likely based on Isa. 53:7, 10-12. **Simeon's** pronouncement concerning Jesus being a "light for revelation to the Gentiles" (Luke 2:29-32) alludes to Isa. 42:6 and 49:6 and indicates that there was an understanding among some in Israel that the Servant of Isaiah was the Messiah. **Luke 2:34-35** - Indicates there was also an understanding of his work of atonement. **Zech. 12:10 and 13:7** both refer to the Messiah's work of atonement and are cited in the New Testament in reference to Jesus (John 19:37; Rev. 1:7; Matt. 26:31; Mark 14:27).

**Isa. 7:14; 53** - What Isaiah wrote, he also preached in the marketplace. While not everybody had the same understanding of what this meant. The Holy Spirit would use this information to create faith in the hearts of the elect of God.

**David** - Psa. 2 (Acts 4:25-28) - prophesied the rebellion against the Lord and his Messiah. Psa. 16 - The resurrection (Acts 2:25-31 - Peter used it; Paul cites Psa. 16:10 in Acts 13:35-37).

**The Levitical legislation** pointed to the Messiah work of substitutionary atonement. Moses looked toward Christ (Heb. 11:24-26; John 5:46-47). The passover lamb also taught substitutionary atonement.

**Abraham** looked toward the Messiah. The promised seed was not just Isaac (Gal. 3:16). Jesus said Abraham rejoiced to see his day (John 8:56). Gal. 3:8 states that the gospel was preached to Abraham in anticipation that God would justify the Gentiles by faith. Heb. 11:9-10 - Abraham looked to "the city having foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God."

**Abel** offered a sacrifice by faith (Heb. 11:4). The death of the animal was in keeping with the principle of substitutionary atonement. **Finally, Adam and Eve** received the promise in Gen. 3:15. **Rom. 3:25-26** - The Holy Spirit would use the revelation which existed in a period to create faith in the elect of God. Salvation is same in both the old covenant and new covenant eras. The difference is that we look back on the accomplished work of Christ and the Old Testament believer looked forward and trusted in him through the prophecies and promises of God.

All of these promises, prophecies, shadows, and types were fulfilled in Jesus' person and work. The truthfulness of God's promises made to the patriarchs and all the Old Testament saints were confirmed in Christ. **Thomas Schreiner comments**, ". . . Christ came as a minister to confirm the saving promises that God made to the patriarchs. The verb 'confirm' (*bebaiosai*) is a legal term, denoting the certainty with which the promises would be fulfilled" (Romans, 755). I want to point out a couple of applications of this.

**First**, this is a strong affirmation concerning the truthfulness and faithfulness of God.

What God has promised, he will do. **Timothy Cruso**, the Puritan writer said, "The being of God may as well fail as the promise of God."

**A. W. Pink** writes, "Everything about God is great, vast, incomparable. He never forgets, never fails, never falters, never forfeits his word. To every declaration of promise or prophecy the Lord has exactly adhered, every engagement or covenant or threatening he will make good, for 'God is not a man that he should lie; neither the son of man that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?' (Num. 23:19)." *Attributes of God*, 52.

**Second, this is a call for us to trust God's promises.** In terms of our daily living and various struggles, we have God's promises that he is working them together for our good and our Christian growth (**Rom. 8:28**). In regard to our salvation, we have a promise from God that those who believe in Jesus are justified before God. Their sins are forgiven and Christ's righteousness is legally imputed to them. They are adopted into his family and belong to God. Nothing can separate them from the love of God in Christ.

**Phil. 1:6** promises that God who began a good work in us will perform it until the day of Christ Jesus. **John 6:37-40**

We all sin daily, but some days are worse than others. We all have those times when we may even wonder if we're saved. The next time you experience failure in your Christian life, remember these promises of God. **Charles Spurgeon said**, "If you believe in Jesus, that is to say, if you trust him, all the merits of Jesus are your merits, are imputed to you: all the sufferings of Jesus are your sufferings. Everyone of his merits is imputed to you. You stand before God as if you were Christ, because Christ stood before God as if he were you - he in your stead, you in his stead. Substitution! that is the word! Christ the substitute for sinners: Christ standing for men, and bearing the thunderbolts of the divine opposition to all sin, he "being made sin for us who knew no sin." Man standing in Christ's place, and receiving the sunlight of divine favour, instead of Christ.



From: Sermon: Justification by Faith on Rom. 5:1-2.

## **II. Christ became a servant so that the Gentiles might glorify God. Rom. 15:9-12 -**

Paul states that believing Gentiles will be a part of the covenant community with believing Jews and this one body of believers will glorify God. As is his usual pattern, Paul appeals to Scripture for the corroboration of what he has just said. He quotes four passages from the Old Testament. The first and the third are from the Psalms; the second is from the Law; the fourth is from the prophets. Therefore, Paul quotes from each of the three main divisions in the Old Testament: The Law, The Prophets, and The Writings. These quotations are not selected at random. In the first quotation, the Psalmist states that he will declare God's name among the Gentiles. In the second, the Gentiles are summoned to join in praising God. In the third, the Gentiles are called upon to independently praise God. In the fourth, the attention is on the Root of Jesse, the Messiah, who will rule over the Gentiles and in whom they will have hope. Paul demonstrates that the idea of Gentiles being a part of the one covenant community runs throughout the Old Testament. In fact, remember in the covenant God made with Abraham, that God told him the nations would be blessed through him. **Gal. 3:8 Robert Reymond writes,** "Was God all-wise when he laid the foundations of the earth, when he spoke and the mountains and seas appeared? The Bible says he was. Then because he is immutable he is precisely the same all-wise God today in his dealings with you and will remain so forever. He is not less skillful. Neither has he become mentally senile nor does he have less knowledge now. Was he mighty when he spoke this world into existence out of nonexistence? The Bible says he was. Then because he is immutable he is precisely the same mighty God today in his dealings with you and will remain so forever. The arm of his strength has not palsied in the slightest; he is the same infinite Colossus of might today, and the strength of his power has not been sapped in the slightest degree. Was he just and holy in the past when he destroyed the antediluvian world by the Genesis flood, when he rained fire and brimstone from heaven on Sodom

and Gomorrah, when he poured out his destructive plagues on Egypt? The Bible says he was. Then because he is immutable he is precisely the same just and holy God today in his dealings with you and will remain so forever. What he hated when he sent the flood he still hates and what he loved then he still loves. What he hated when he destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah he still hates and what he loved then he still loves. Was he truthful in the past when he bound himself by covenant oath to save his elect? The Bible says he was. Then because he is immutable he is precisely the same truthful God today in his dealings with you and will remain so forever. He veracity is immutable; his Word is 'forever settled in the heavens' (Ps. 119:89). Was he good and kind, generous and gentle, benevolent and plenteous in mercy and pity, full of steadfast lovingkindness, and forgiving in the past when again and again and again he forgave backsliding Israel for its sins? The Bible says he was. Then because he is immutable he is precisely the same good, kind, generous, gentle, benevolent, forgiving God today in his dealings with you, plenteous in mercy, full of lovingkindness, and will remain so forever. . . . . his mercies will never cease to be, for they too are everlasting (Ps. 100:5). Did he have a plan of redemption before the creation of the world that included you and me? The Bible says he did. Then because he is immutable he has precisely the same plan of redemption today that involves us and he will forever. You and I are still beneficiaries of it. Not one of its stipulations will he ever alter. Did he make us any promises in that plan? The Bible says he did. Then those promises are still binding upon him today and shall be binding upon him forever, for by 'two immutable things' - his eternal purpose and his binding covenant oath - he has confirmed and sealed his Word. His promises are not 'Yes and No,' affirms Paul. They are 'Yes,' and the gospel declares the 'Amen!' (2 Cor. 1:19). In sum, bring before me any attribute of God you choose and I will write on it *semper idem* - 'always the same.' And you, my brothers and sisters, knowing and trusting this one living and true God who is 'always the same', can sing with complete confidence: 'Great is thy faithfulness,' O God my Father, there is no shadow of turning with thee; thou

changest not, they compassions, they fail not; As thou as been thou forever wilt be."

*What Is God?*, 107-109.

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### **Romans 15:13 Romans Series #74 11/7/10**

Before I went to Ukraine, we came to this verse in our Romans series. We did a short three part series on justification by faith alone and now we're going back to the Romans series. The epistle to the Romans essentially concludes with this verse. After this verse, there are a series of personal greetings, some of Paul's plans, and some final brief exhortations. Some of the information concerning when and where this epistle was written are gleaned from this last section. We considered that material when we first started this study. This benediction sets forth some important truths about our salvation and the work of the Holy Spirit in our Christian lives. **Donald Grey Barnhouse** devoted six studies to this verse in his radio series on Romans. **He says,** " This verse is a great summary of the blessed life in the brotherhood formed by our oneness in Jesus Christ. The source of that life is the God of hope. The measure of that life is that we shall be filled 'with all joy and peace.' The quality of that life is joy and peace which he desires for us. The condition of that life is faith - we enter it by believing. The purpose of that life is that we might abound. The enabling of that life is divine power. And the director of that life is the Holy Spirit." Donald Grey Barnhouse, *God's Glory: Exposition of Bible Doctrines, Taking the Epistle to the Romans as a Point of Departure*, vol. 10, Romans 14:13-16:27 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), 72-73.

We are going to work our way through this verse simply looking at each of the concepts presented in the verse as the outline.

#### **I. God is the source and object of our hope. Rom. 15:13**

Paul speaks of God as the God of hope. This is a genitive in the Greek and it can be understood as a subjective genitive which would mean God is the source of hope, or it

can be an objective genitive which would mean God is the object of hope. Both are true. God is the source of hope because he is sovereignly ordering our lives. God is also the object of hope because we look to him and not to the transitory things of this life and world. **John Murray comments**, "God is the God of hope because he generates hope in us. It is, however, difficult to suppress the thought in this instance that the title points also to God as the object of hope. God himself is the ultimate hope of the people of God because he is their portion, their inheritance, and their dwelling-place (cf. **Psa. 73:24-26; 90:1; Eph. 3:19; Rev. 21:3**)" (Romans, 2:207). We can think about this hope which we have from and in God from a couple of perspectives. First, in terms of our salvation, we have a sure hope of salvation. This is not a type of hope where we want something to happen and may or may not occur. It is a sure expectation based on the promises of God. **Rom. 8:23-25** In contrast to the sure hope the Christian has, the unbeliever does not know God or have any hope. **Eph. 2:11-12**

If you believe in Jesus, you have a sure hope. You don't have to speculate or wonder about eternity. You have the promise of eternal life from God's word. **John 6:37-40; 10:26-30**

**Charles Spurgeon said:** Listen! "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth, who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again." It is a knock-down blow to fear when the apostle says that we cannot be condemned because Christ has died in our stead, but he puts a double force into it when he cries, "Yea rather, that is risen again." If Satan, therefore, shall come to any believer and say, "What about your sin?" tell him Jesus died for it, and your sin is put away. If he come a second time, and say to you, "What about your sin?" answer him, "Jesus lives, and His life is the assurance of our justification; for if our Surety had not paid the debt He would still be under the power of death." Inasmuch as Jesus has discharged all our liabilities, and left not one farthing due to God's justice from one of His people, He lives and is clear, and we live in Him, and are clear also by virtue of our union with Him. Is

not this a glorious doctrine, this doctrine of the resurrection, in its bearing upon the justification of the saints? The Lord Jesus gave Himself for our sins, but He rose again for our justification” (*12 Sermons on the Resurrection*, 146).

**Martin Luther wrote:** “For feelings come and go, and feelings are deceiving; My warrant is the Word of God, Naught else is worth believing. /Though all my heart should feel condemned For want of some sweet token, There is One greater than my heart Whose Word cannot be broken. /I'll trust in God's unchanging Word Till soul and body sever; For, though all things shall pass away, His Word shall stand forever.”

**We also have hope because of God's providence.** The Bible declares repeatedly that God is sovereign and his working out his purposes in our lives. **Robert Reymond writes,** “The one living and true God, the Bible says, is the absolutely sovereign Ruler of the universe (Psa. 103:19; 115:3; 135:6). Beside the fact that it is God who created the universe according to his eternal purpose in the first place, the Bible teaches that by his providence he oversees both it and all things in it. He works all things after the counsel of his will (Eph. 1:11). He causes all things to work together for good (conformity to Christ's image) for those who love him, for those who are called according to his purpose (Rom. 8:28). From him and through him and to him are all things (Rom. 11:36; 1 Cor. 8:6) - from the raising up and deposing earthly kings to the flight and fall of the tiny sparrow (Dan. 4:31-35; Matt. 10:29), from the determination of the times and boundaries of the earth's nations to the number of hairs on a man's head (Acts 17:26; Matt. 10:30)” *Systematic*, 356-357.

God's sovereign purposes in our lives includes our joy and our pain. In terms of times of pain, grief, or suffering, we are called to trust God's infinite wisdom and plan for our lives. Even when we don't understand the whys and the wherefores of something, we know that God is at work and carrying out a perfect plan for us. That means that our pain is not futile or meaningless. There is meaning and purpose even in the things we suffer. During the time of Job's afflictions, his friends told him that he was suffering because of

his sin. Job had to defend himself to his friends. In the midst of answering his friends he made one of the more heroic statements in Scripture - **Job 13:15** - Though he slay me, yet will I hope in him. The only answer Job ever received concerning his trials and suffering was a revelation of God himself. He didn't receive a detailed explanation of why he was called to suffer, but he did receive a tremendous revelation of the person and power of God. Essentially, God said, "Job, I am your answer."

**He wasn't asked to trust an impersonal plan, but a personal sovereign God who is wise and good and does everything for a reason.** If my affliction is simply caused by impersonal fate or chance, then my pain is meaningless. That fact that God is at work in every nuance and aspect of my life means that whatever I experience has meaning and purpose and is not futile.

**Corrie ten Boom** and Betsy - in prison - "We cannot say why, but we trust in the goodness of God." "No pit is so deep that God is not deeper still." **A. W. Pink wrote**, "There are seasons in the lives of all when it is not easy, no not even for Christians, to believe that God is faithful. Our faith is sorely tried, our eyes bedimmed with tears, and we can no longer trace the outworkings of His love. Our ears are distracted with the noises of the world, harassed by the atheistic whisperings of Satan, and we can no longer hear the sweet accents of His still small voice. Cherished plans have been thwarted, friends on whom we relied have failed us, a professed brother or sister in Christ has betrayed us. We are staggered. We sought to be faithful to God, and now a dark cloud hides Him from us. We find it difficult, yea, impossible, for carnal reason to harmonize His frowning providence with His gracious promises. Ah, faltering soul, severely tried fellow pilgrim, seek grace to heed Isa. 50:10, 'Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of His servant, that walketh in darkness and hath no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God.'"

*The attributes of God, 53-54.*

God asked Job to trust him in the midst of suffering because he was enlightened with a vision of the character and nature of God.

When Job declared, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust him," he was revealing that though his knowledge of God was limited, it was still profound. He knew enough about God's character to know that he was trustworthy even when he didn't understand the why's and wherefore's of his situation. **God deserves our trust.**

**Remember since God is sovereign and is working out a perfect plan in your life, nothing touches you that does not go through the hand of God first. One commentator (Woodrow Kroll) said "Trust his character even when you can't trace his plan.** We have hope because we trust God's providence.

## **II. God is the source of our joy. Rom. 15:13**

Joy is one of Paul's great themes. Leon Morris points out that Paul uses the term more than any other New Testament writer. Paul uses the term 21 times in his epistles. John uses it next to the most, but only uses it nine times. Paul links joy with faith in Phil. 1:25 and with the other fruits of the Holy Spirit in Gal. 5:22-23. The idea of our having a joy from God comes first from the teaching of Jesus: **John 15:11; 16:22; 17:13.**

This joy is based on the hope we have in God. As we just discussed, even when we are dealing with trials or suffering, we know that God is still in control and carrying out his eternal purposes. As we trust him, we can have a sense of joy and peace. A Christian's joy is not a matter of human endowments or positive circumstances. It is a supernatural work of God in the life of the believer. Paul prays that believers would be filled with this joy as they trust God.

## **III. God is the source of our peace. Rom. 15:13**

Two kinds of peace are addressed in the Bible. There is Peace with God which is what we have as a result of our justification and there is the peace of God which we have as a result of trusting him. Again, this flows from our understanding of God's providence and sovereignty. In the midst of trials and difficulty, we can have peace because we know

God is wise and carrying out a perfect plan. **William Barclay writes**, "H. G. Wells tells how in New York harbor he was once on a liner. It was foggy, and suddenly out of the fog there loomed another liner, and the two ships slid past each other with only yards to spare. He was suddenly face to face with what he called the general large dangerousness of life. It is hard not to worry, for man is characteristically a creature who looks forward to guess and fear. The only end to that worry is the utter conviction that, whatever happens, God's hand will never cause his child a needless tear. Things will happen that we cannot understand, but if we are sure enough of love, we can accept with serenity even those things which wound the heart and baffle the mind" (*The Letter To The Romans*, 218-219). **James M. Boice states**, "A person who really trusts God's sovereignty will have a peace that others cannot even comprehend" (Rom. 4:1839).

#### **IV. We have these benefits of our salvation as we believe God.**

**Rom. 15:13** - It's not just believing things about God, although that is important; we also believe God and trust his Word. Think about the myriad of promises we have from God. Not only the promises of salvation to those who believe in Christ, but also all the promises concerning God's fatherly care and sovereign working of all things together for good for his people (Rom. 8:28). **The hymn writer Thomas Kelly** (1769-1855) captured this well in a hymn: "Trust in him, ye saints, forever; He is faithful, changing never; Neither force nor guile can sever those he loves from him."

#### **V. Finally, we are empowered in our Christian lives through the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit. Rom. 15:13**

This verse begins and ends with God. We can do nothing in and off ourselves. **In John 15:5**, Jesus said, "Apart from me you can do nothing." Joy and peace come from God as a fruit of the Spirit. **Phil. 4:6-7**. Without God hope is impossible (**Eph. 2:12**). **Rom. 11:33-36**



Richard Pratt points out: When It comes to perceiving the work of the Holy Spirit today, many believers remind me of the old " Three Stooges" gag. Larry yells, "I can't see! I can't see!" "What's wrong?" Moe responds. "I've got my eyes closed" Larry answers. That's the way it is in the church today. We complain, "I can't see the Spirit at work! I can't see him!" But the problem is not that he has vanished. We can't see him because we have closed our eyes. . . . We must open our eyes and take full notice of the countless gifts he has lavished on us. Insights in Scripture, conviction of sin, bringing people to salvation through his work of regeneration, success in evangelism, joy in our salvation, comfort in sorrow, love and fellowship among believers, gifts and leadership in the church - the list is endless. These realities in the Christian life are not natural occurrences. They are visible manifestations of the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives. If we would open our eyes and consider the work of the Holy Spirit around us, start acknowledging his wonders, he would no longer be a stranger, but a dear friend.

*Designed for Dignity*, 192-193. **James M. Boice writes**, "Everything in this whole universe begins with God, is accomplished by God's agency, and exists for God's glory. But if that is true of the inanimate universe - the world of plants and trees, of suns and planets, of quasars, quarks, and black holes - it is certainly true of salvation. It is true of you. If you are a Christian. You exist because God created you. You believe because he worked faith in you and sustains it in you by the power of his Holy Spirit. He does this that you might live to his glory now and indeed forever. Left to ourselves we can do nothing. Even as saved people we would fall at the first wisp of temptation or the first blast of Satan's death-dealing blows. But because God is for us we can stand firm and triumph. That is why Thomas Kelly [writes in the hymn]: Keep us Lord, O keep us

cleaving; To thyself and still believing,/ Till the hour of our receiving/ Promised joys  
from thee. *Romans* 4:1840-1841.

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### **Romans 15:14 Romans Series #75 11/14/10**

As we considered last week, the main doctrinal section in Romans concludes in Romans 15:13. The last section of Romans is not just an appendix which we can ignore without any loss. This last section contains important information we considered previously concerning the place and time of the writing of this epistle. It also contains personal greetings which give us insight into the kind of person Paul was. This section also contains some important statement concerning aspects of Christian living. Our text presents some important truths concerning important characteristics of a healthy church. Some commentators have suggested that Paul was just being political here since he had just given a series of ethical exhortations. However, Paul is writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and so what he says reflects the character of the church at Rome. Rom. 15:14 mentions three elements that were present at the church of Rome which should be present in every church and in individual believers - they were full of goodness or rich in kindness, generosity and caring action; they had a strong knowledge base concerning the truths of God; and they were competent to instruct and admonish each other.

#### **I. A healthy church is a place of kindness and mutual care.**

**Rom. 15:14-** The first thing Paul mentions is that they are "full of goodness." The Greek word Paul uses, *agathosune*, refers to moral or ethical goodness as well as kindness, thoughtfulness, and charity toward one another. **John Murray comments**, "'Goodness' is that virtue opposed to all that is mean and evil and includes uprightness, kindness, and beneficence of heart and life" (Rom. 2:209). This touches on the idea of Christian love. We are commanded to be kind and merciful to each other.

**Eph. 4:31-32.** "Goodness" is listed as one of the fruit of the Spirit in Gal. 5:22-23. **1 Cor. 13:1-7** - That's a picture of what should characterize our Christian relationships both in the church and our homes. **Jonathan Edwards wrote in** his work *Charity and Its Fruits*: ". . . what a watch and guard should Christians keep against envy, and malice, and every kind of bitterness of spirit toward their neighbors! For these things are the very reverse of the real essence of Christianity. And it behoves Christians, as they would not, by their practice, directly contradict their profession, to take heed to themselves in this matter. They should suppress the first beginnings of ill-will and bitterness and envy; watch strictly against all occasions of such a spirit; strive and fight to the utmost against such a temper as tends that way; and avoid, as much as possible, all temptations that may lead to it. A Christian should at all times keep a strong guard against everything that tends to overthrow or corrupt or undermine a spirit of love. That which hinders love to men, will hinder the exercise of love to God; for, as was observed before, the principle of a truly Christian love is one. If love is the sum of Christianity, surely those things which overthrow love are exceedingly unbecoming to Christians. An envious Christian, a malicious Christian, a cold and hard-hearted Christian, is the greatest absurdity and contradiction. It is as if one should speak of dark brightness, or a false truth" (23)! Paul was essentially affirming the believers in this church concerning their Christian character and the character of that church. This is a vital characteristics for a healthy church. In my early twenties, I was in a church community in which the opposite of this was true. Harshness and guilt motivation characterized the group. Legalistic standards of righteousness were set forth and anyone who did not conform to the group's particular set of rules was not accepted or looked at as spiritually inferior. For example, there was an early morning prayer meeting twice a week. Anyone who came to that was considered more spiritual than those who either didn't or couldn't come because of their work or family schedules.

The Christian community we are in affects and influences us for good or bad. The tone of that church community stimulated harshness, a lack of kindness and patience with each other. Paul says that the church of Rome had a goodness, kindness, gentle character. That is an important characteristic of a healthy church. **Eph. 4:1-3, 28-32; Col. 3:12-14; Gal. 5:13-15, 22-23; 6:1-2.** An old Arabian description captures the essence of friendship and is a good description of how we are to relate to each other in the body of Christ: "A friend is one to whom we may pour out the contents of our hearts, chaff and grain together, knowing that the gentlest of hands will sift it, keeping what is worth keeping, and with a breath of kindness blow the rest away!"

**Jonathan Edwards wrote,** "In him that exercises the Christian spirit as he ought, there will not be a passionate, rash, or hasty expression, or a bitter, exasperated countenance, or an air of violence in the talk or behavior; but, on the contrary, the countenance and words and demeanor will all manifest the savor of peaceableness and calmness and gentleness. He may perhaps reprove his neighbor. This may clearly be his duty. But if he does, it will be without impoliteness, and without that severity that can tend only to exasperate; and though it may be with strength and reason and argument, and with plain and decided expostulation, it will still be without angry reflections or contemptuous language."

*Charity and Its Fruits, 72.*

**II. A healthy church has a good understanding of Christian truth and the application of it. Rom. 15:14** - "Filled with all knowledge" can be understood comprehensively to include doctrine and the application of truth in the Christian life. One of the stronger rebukes in the New Testament is found in **Heb. 5:11-14.** The writer has just mentioned Melchizedek in verse 10. He states in verse 11 that he would like to say more about Melchizedek and how his priesthood relates to Christ. However, it is hard to communicate with these Jewish Christians about this subject, not because it is hard to explain, but because they have become dull of hearing. Notice the language that

is used. They have become dull of hearing. The implication is that this was not the case with them originally. They have become apathetic and spiritually dull and that has reduced their attentiveness and capacity to receive and retain solid instruction. In this context, the emphasis is on growth in theological understanding. Tragically, in the American evangelical world, systematic learning and study of Scripture is not emphasized.

**David Wells writes:** "The reality we have to face today is that we have produced a plague of nominal evangelicalism which is as trite and as superficial as anything we have seen in Catholic Europe. Now, why is this? Well, I would like to suggest that it begins with the crumbling of our theological character. I have spoken of this in my book, *No Place For Truth*, in terms of the 'disappearance of theology.' It is not that theological beliefs are denied, but that they have little cash value. They don't matter. I likened the situation to that of a child who is in a home but who is ignored. It is not that the child has been abducted; the child is there. The child is in the home, but has no legitimate place in the family. And, again, research which I have conducted strongly points to the fact that where this kind of theological character is crumbling, there the centrality of God is disappearing. God now comes to rest lightly and inconsequentially upon the church. This, however, is just our own private, evangelical version of what we see more generally in the culture. In the broader culture we learn that 91% of people say that God is very important to them but 66% go on to say that they do not believe in moral absolutes, and 67% do not believe in absolute truth. So God rests inconsequentially upon their lives. An evangelical faith that is not passionate about truth and righteousness is a faith which is a lost cause. All that it will then be living for is simply its own organizational preservation. *The Bleeding of the Evangelical Church*, 8-9. Numerous times I've had Christians tell that they don't want to know any more than they need to know to be saved. That is a sinful attitude. It is also a dangerous one because it easily opens a person to theological error and lack of discernment.

Today, in the evangelical world there are many therapeutic sermons and a variety on current events and cultural issues, but there is little expository preaching.

It was a part of God's kind providence to me that I was able to have Dr. Rayburn as a professor in almost all my homiletics and worship classes. He repeatedly hammered the point to preach the Word God, not your own opinion or the latest fad in preaching.

He emphasized that the congregation needed to hear the Word of God. Notice the description that is given concerning the recipients of his letter. **Heb. 5:11-13** - They are dull of hearing; they need spiritual milk; they are called spiritual babies. **Heb. 5:12** - They weren't brand new Christians. They had been Christians long enough that there was an expectation that they would be teaching others. However, they needed to hear again the elementary principles, the most basic truths of God's Word. **Heb. 5:13** - What kind of babies need only milk? Brand new babies, the youngest of babies. A baby is not very old when he or she begins to eat cereal and baby food. This is a strong indictment on their spiritual condition; it is a harsh rebuke.

The phrase "the word of righteousness" is best interpreted in this context as referring the teaching about righteousness in our salvation. How are we declared righteous before God? This is addressing the idea of our justification, the idea of how Christ's righteousness is imputed to as opposed to all self-righteousness or works-righteousness.

**The commentator Ceslaus Spicq says,** "the first Christian instruction involves initiation into justification by faith." He's right. It is on this foundation that the whole structure of the Christian faith is built. It is this foundation that the Hebrew readers are in danger of abandoning. **Thomas Watston said,** "Get sound knowledge. We must know his will before we can do it; knowledge is the eye to direct the foot of obedience. The Papists make ignorance the mother of devotion; but Christ makes ignorance the mother of error. 'Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures.' Matt. 22:29. We must know God's will before we can do it aright. Affection without knowledge, is like a horse full of mettle, but his eyes are out." *The Lord's Prayer*, 165.

### **III. A healthy church has a concern for growth and teaching of the Word of God.**

#### **Rom. 15:14**

The were able to teach and admonish one another. The phrase is broad enough that we don't have to distinguish between admonition and rebuke and theological instruction. It can include every dimension of teaching. The idea is that the average members of the church are so strong and equipped in good theology that they are able to discern falsehood and protect the younger believers from falsehood. They are also able to minister to those who have been deceived by bad theology. God has established pastors/teachers in the church for the purpose of equipping the saints for the work of ministry. **Eph. 4:11-15** This not only emphasizes the importance of the teaching ministry in a church, but also that believers are to be growing so that they can help each other as well as new believers to grow. This is presented as a protection against falsehood. Of course, if God gave teachers to the church, that implies that we are all called to have learning as a part of our regular Christian life and to avail ourselves of opportunities to learn and grow.

**Acts 20:17-21, 26-28; 2 Tim. 2:2** - Teach T. I. M. - Theology, Integrity, and Ministry. Elders are called to be able to teach and put down falsehood (**Titus 1:9-11**). We have a goal in our church to provide opportunities for learning and growth. Our goal is that if a person is in our church for five years, they will have had the opportunity to be exposed to most if not all of the foundational Christian doctrines. Calvin said that the best defense against heresy is a well-education congregation.

**R. C. Sproul writes**, "Every Christian is a theologian. We are always engaged in the activity of learning about the things of God. We are not all theologians in the professional or academic sense, but theologians we are, for better or for worse. The 'for worse' is no small matter. Second Peter warns that heresies are destructive to the people of God and are blasphemies committed against God. They are destructive because theology touches every dimension of our lives. . . . No Christian can avoid theology.

Every Christian has a theology. The issue, then, is not, do we want to have a theology? That's a given. The real issue is, do we have a sound theology? Do we embrace true or false doctrine?" *Essential Truths of the Christian Faith*, vii.

Good theology and good discernment are important part of Christian maturity and a healthy church.

**B. B. Warfield wrote in 1887:** "A mutilated gospel produces mutilated lives, and mutilated lives are positive evils. Whatever the preacher may do, [his] hearers will not do without a system of belief; and in their attempt to frame one for the government of their lives out of fragments of truth which [the indifferent] preacher will grant them, is it any wonder if they should go fatally astray? . . . it is not given to one who stands in the pulpit to decide whether or no he shall teach, whether or no he shall communicate to others a system of belief which will form lives and determine destinies. It is in his power only to determine what he shall teach, what system of doctrine he shall press upon the acceptance of men; by what body of tenets he will seek to mold their lives and to inform their devotions. . . . And this is but another way of saying that the systematic study of divine truth . . . is the most indispensable preparation for the pulpit. Only as the several truths to be presented are known in their relations can they be proclaimed in their right proportions and so taught as to produce their right effects on the soul's life and growth. Warfield, "The Indispensableness of Systematic Theology to the Preacher," *Selected Writings of Benjamin B. Warfield*, edited by John E. Meeter; Nutley: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1973, II, 287-288.

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**Rom. 15:15-19 Romans Series #76 11/21/10**

Last week we considered Paul's statements about the church at Rome in verse 14 and noted some of the characteristics of a healthy church. In this next section, Paul speaks about his ministry to the Gentiles and how he views and approaches ministry. We can see in this section the characteristics of good ministry. This not only addresses how



ministers should view and approach ministry, but what expectations congregations should have concerning pastoral ministry. Often congregational expectations of ministry are not in keeping with the primary call of pastoral ministry. This text sets forth important marks and priorities of the ministry.

**I. First, we see the minister's task. Rom. 15:15-16, 19-20** - All through this text, Paul emphasizes that he preached the gospel. He does that because of the call of God on his life. It is by God's grace that he is an apostle and minister of the gospel and it is by God's grace that he has any effectiveness in ministry. This brings us back to **Rom. 1:1, 5**. Paul mentions the same idea in **1 Cor. 15:10** and **Eph. 3:6-8**. Paul recognizes that everything in his ministry is of God's grace. The same is true for anyone who dares to preach or teach the Bible. We also see in these statements that the essential and primary task of the minister is to proclaim the gospel. That includes teaching and preaching the whole counsel of God from the Bible. **R. C. Sproul** in a sermon at Covenant Seminary in 1997 said, "I was thinking of the number of hours and hours I have spent with doctor of ministry candidates who are required in the seminaries where I taught to have had at least five years of experience in the pastorate before they can qualify for the D. Min. program. And every single class I've had with doctor of ministry students I have encountered a group of men who are on the rim of despair, who are profoundly discouraged, and who are having second thoughts about continuing in the pastoral ministry. And when I listen to them, pour out their hearts, one of the common themes I hear again and again is their frustration of trying to fill all of the roles and all of the expectations that the church has imposed upon them. They say, 'We're expected to be administrators, managers, CEOs, psychological counselors, theologians, dynamic speakers, and therapeutic discussion leaders' and on and on and on. They feel completely unprepared to meet all these expectations. And yet, the church is demanding of them that they meet these expectations. And there comes a time in every person's ministry where they have to back off and shut their ears to the cacophony of demands from the pews. And on their knees

before God, they ask the question, 'Lord, what do you want me to do? What is my ministry supposed to be? What is your priority?' And that's why I direct you to this text. Because our Lord is revealing himself in the glory of his resurrection and the days are few before he will ascend into heaven and leave his disciples who will become apostles to their ministries. And what I find as the accent in this encounter is not so much the question what kind of love Peter has for Jesus, but I hear Jesus saying to Simon, 'If you love me, feed my sheep. Simon if you love me, take care of my flock. Simon if you love me, feed my lambs.' Beloved, no matter what demands or expectations are imposed upon you in the days to come, your primary responsibility before the Lord Jesus Christ is to feed his sheep. And that means feeding with every word that comes forth from the mouth of God. You want to know what the ministry is supposed to look like at the end of the 20th century and into the 21st century, close all the cultural analysis books and get on your face before God, leap over the cultural limitations of the present day and ask yourselves what the God of eternity and all of history has given as his chief task to the church. If you want to know what a model of ministry should be in this age as opposed to former generations, look at John Calvin and his ministry in the city of Geneva - preaching the word, teaching the word, visiting the sick, and the rest he fit in when he could. But, his primary responsibility was to get the content of this book into the heads and into the hearts of the people. Everywhere I go in this country, I have people coming up to me and saying, "Where can I go to church; I'm starving. Our church is exciting, it's interesting, it's not boring. We have all kinds of fabulous new innovations, but I'm not hearing anything about the character of God. My soul is not being fed.' Jesus said, 'If you love me, Peter, feed my sheep.' Don't let the sheep tell you what they want because they don't know what they need, but they need to eat or they're going to die. **Asked about his accomplishments as a Reformer, Martin Luther said,** "I simply taught, preached, wrote God's Word: otherwise I did nothing. . . . The Word did it all." *Nine Marks of A Healthy Church* by Mark Dever, 36. **David F. Wells writes,** "The

fundamental requirement of the Christian leader is not a knowledge of where the stream of popular opinion is flowing, but a knowledge of where the stream of God's truth lies."

**Acts 20:20, 27** - Paul preached the whole counsel of God. In terms of evangelism and making the gospel known, the minister is also to proclaim the whole counsel of God.

**James Boice writes**, "Evangelism is to teach the Word of God. Not just a certain evangelistic core, or only certain doctrines, or only truths that will move or motivate the ungodly. It is to teach the bible and to do this as carefully, consistently, and comprehensively as possible, while looking to God (and praying to God) to give new life. Gordon Clark expressed it by saying quite succinctly, 'Evangelism is the exposition of the Scripture. God will do the regenerating.'" Romans, Vol. 3, 1090. Clark quote from: *Today's Evangelism: Counterfeit or Genuine?* (Jefferson, MD: The Trinity Foundation, 1990), 122.

**John Murray writes**, "The main point is that the saving relation to Christ involved in calling upon his name is not something that can occur in a vacuum; it occurs only in a context created by the proclamation of the gospel on the part of those commissioned to proclaim it. *The Epistle to the Romans*, 2 Vols. in 1 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968), 2:58. Another important aspect of preaching and teaching is also mentioned in this text that of reminding God's people of the great truths of the gospel. **Rom. 15:15** We need to be reminded of truths we have heard before. We need that constant reinforcement. We are regularly exposed to falsehood as we live in a fallen world and a sinful culture. Part of the function of preaching is continually to remind of the teaching of Scripture. This is a regular idea throughout the New Testament. **2 Tim. 1:6; 2:8, 14; Titus 3:1; 2 Pet. 1:12-13; 3:1-2; Jude 17.**

**II. The minister's goal. Rom. 15:16-18** - Paul states that his goal in ministry is "that the Gentiles might become an offering acceptable to God, sanctified by the Holy Spirit." Paul uses the term "priest" in a metaphorical sense of offering the Gentiles to God as the fruit of his ministry. Some churches today practice what is called sacerdotalism. That

means that salvation is mediated through the sacraments, and, therefore, through a priesthood in the church. The church in this concept is viewed as the mediator between God and man and the instrument that brings people to salvation. This was a central issue at the time of the Reformation. Christ is our great high priest who offered himself as a perfect and complete sacrifice on the cross. He is the only mediator between God and man. Therefore, ministers of the gospel are not priests. They do not offer an ongoing sacrifice for sin. **Charles Hodge comments**, "It is well worthy of remark, that amidst the numerous designations of the ministers of the gospel in the New Testament, intended to set forth the nature of their office, they are never officially called priests. This is the only passage in which the term is even figuratively applied to them, and that under circumstances which render its misapprehension impossible. They are not mediators between God and man; they do not offer propitiatory sacrifices. Their only priesthood . . . is the preaching of the gospel, and their offerings are redeemed and sanctified men, saved by their instrumentality" (439). Paul does not call himself a priest, but simply uses that language in a metaphorical sense. In his ministry, he is offering the Gentiles to God. Paul had been called to take the gospel to the Gentiles and he had done that. As Paul proclaimed the gospel to the Gentiles, the Holy Spirit had empowered that message and brought Gentiles to salvation. Paul's offering to God was the fruit of his ministry to the Gentiles which he offered to God. **Thomas Schreiner comments**, "Paul likely saw this as a fulfillment of Isa. 66:20, which envisions an eschatological offering of the Gentiles. Just previously (66:18-19) the prophet says that God's glory will be declared to the nations. Paul presumably saw this as coming to fruition in his ministry. What Paul emphasizes here is his divine commission to bring the gospel to the Gentiles" (767). Paul recognized that whatever he accomplished was by God's grace and all fruit in his ministry was presented to God for God's glory. Every ministry should have the goal of bringing glory to God through the fruit of that ministry. So often we see ministers and evangelists building personal empires or presenting themselves as the focus of ministry. Paul always

pointed toward God and God's glory. Any fruit in ministry is a result of God's work and is for God's glory. **Robert Murray McCheyne wrote in his journal:** "July 8 - . . . I see a man cannot be a faithful minister, until he preaches Christ for Christ's sake - until he gives up striving to attract people to himself, and seeks only to attract them to Christ. Lord, give me this!" *Memoirs*, 45.

That's the attitude of a God-centered and God-honoring ministry.

Notice that the Gentiles are sanctified by the Holy Spirit. It is through the work of the Holy Spirit that we are set apart unto God. God is the divine initiator of our salvation. **Eph. 2:1-5; Titus 3:3-5; 1 Cor. 1:21-24, 30-31.**

Not only are Gentiles (and any person who is saved) saved by God's grace and set apart to God, but in our Christian lives, the Holy Spirit is at work causing growth so that our lives are increasingly to the glory of God.

### **III. The minister's glory.**

**Rom. 15:17-18** - Ministers glory in Christ Jesus. Ministers, as well as every Christian, should only see themselves as a means or instrumentality that God uses in his eternal purposes. Whatever results we see in ministry, witnessing, or any Christian work, it is all of God and to God's glory. That's the proper perspective for ministry and Christian living. We just considered that God is the divine initiator of salvation. That means that salvation is purely and entirely of God's grace and mercy. We do not contribute any merit whatsoever to our salvation. Apart from the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit, the things of God are foolishness to us (**1 Cor. 2:14**) and we are hostile to God and his law (**Rom. 8:7**). Unless we are born again through the monergistic work of the Holy Spirit, we cannot see or enter the kingdom of God (**John 3:3-5**). This means that God receives all the glory for salvation no matter how the message came to us. God has ordained the use of means or secondary causes to bring about his purposes. As we present the gospel to people or give some Christian instruction to a younger believer, God uses that means to bring salvation or growth. **R. C. Sproul writes,** "The only thing Paul

has to talk about is what Christ has done. Paul is not just being humble; he is being truthful, accurate, and theologically sound." *The Righteous Shall Live By Faith*, 497.

**Charles Spurgeon said**, "I have often been surprised at the mercy of God to myself. Poor sermons of mine, that I could cry over when I get home, have led scores to the cross; and, more wonderful still, words that I have spoken in ordinary conversation, mere chance sentences, as men call them, have nevertheless been as winged arrows from God, and have pierced men's hearts, and laid them wounded at Jesus' feet. I have often lifted up my hands in astonishment, and said, 'How can God bless such a feeble instrumentality?'" **R. C. Sproul writes**, "Good preachers work hard with the text. They want to make the sermon as accurate as possible. They also want to make it as interesting as possible. They want to persuade, admonish, and exhort, yet nothing happens as a result of their skill. Nothing can happen - at least, nothing good. The Holy Spirit, who attends the preached Word, is the only one who moves people to changed lives and growth. The Word is where the power is. It is not in programs or human skills. We can preach this Word till we are blue in the face, but if the Holy Spirit does not work through the Word preached, nothing happens. Paul is looking at the results of his ministry, and he understands that those results have been wrought by God. . . . *By Faith*, 497.

**Rom. 15:19** - The two terms signs and wonders refer to the miraculous. A sign is a miracle that points beyond itself to truth about God or the gospel. A wonder is the same event regarded from the point of view of the awe it evokes in the human observer. Paul only used these two words in two other places -

**2 Cor. 12:12 and 2 Thess. 2:9**. In 2 Cor. 12:12, they the marks of a true apostle. In 2 Thess. 2:9, they are associated with the lawless one. Therefore, miraculous signs can point to demonic powers. In terms of the apostles, they authenticated the apostolic message (**Heb. 3b-4**). The geography Paul mentions is a large area in the Roman Empire. Illyricum was in Asia Minor, far north of Jerusalem. Paul ministry extended far and wide. This brings us back to his main point that whatever he accomplished, it was by

God's grace and empowerment and for Christ's glory. That's the perspective that should dominate our thinking in terms of any ministry or work for God. **Ligon Duncan wrote**, characterized by love for expository preaching, passion for worship, delight in truth, embrace of the gospel, the Spirit's work of conversion, a life of godliness; robust family religion; biblical evangelism, biblical discipleship, biblical church membership, mutual accountability in the church, biblical church leadership, and a desire to be a blessing to the nations. Along with this all, there will be an unapologetic, humble, and joyful celebration of the transcendent sovereignty of the one, true, triune God in salvation and all things" (*Tabletalk*, October, 2007, 15, "The Ordinary Means of Growth").

A believer gave his testimony of how he as saved in an evangelistic meeting. The new believer spoke of Christ and His work, but said nothing of any efforts of his own. The leader in charge was very Arminian in his thinking, so he gently reproved the happy convert by saying, "Brother, you have told us only of the Lord's work in your heart, but you didn't relate how you did your part first." The man was on his feet in an instant. "Yes," he replied, "I did forget to tell you about that. Well, my contribution was to run away from God for over 30 years as fast as my sins could carry me! Then Jesus took out after me until I was finally caught and rescued. That was His part!"