

A Devotional Study of
ROMANS

Robert Charles "*Bob*" Jennings

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For my beloved children
Jared, Bethany, Zachary, Evangeline, and Evan

EDITORS NOTE

Bob wrote this book from 1992 to 1994 as he preached through Romans. He went on to be with Christ in November of 2012. Shortly before his death, I (James) had asked him about his Romans commentary that at the time was scatted about on old typewriter paper and in a filing cabinet. His response was, "others have written better." The primary purpose of his writing was for it to be a book for his children. We trust this devotional book will help the believer understand Romans more deeply. This is not an in-depth commentary full of Greek analysis for a preacher. The book starts on Romans 1:16; this is because we could not locate Romans 1:1-15.

Let me mention a few biographical comments about Bob.

First, why is this book saturated with Scriptural references? As a new believer, Bob drove a gravel truck on the rural roads of Iowa. On his dashboard was a miniature New Testament. Over those years, Bob put the vast majority of the entire New Testament into memory. He was mighty in the Scriptures.

Secondly, he was known for living out Acts 24:16 and always taking pains to have a clear conscience both before God and man. Let me give an example. Shortly before his death, he had preached a sermon and was afterward convicted that he made a point too strong. So the next Sunday, he apologized to the congregation for the way in which he said his point. The humility he manifested greatly knitted your heart to his.

Our prayer is that this book will point the lost to the Lord Jesus Christ and the Christian to the sound doctrine of the faith.

We also want to thank God for Mary Claire Castleberry's diligent proofreading and help in this publication, as well as Kevin Woodell.

James Jennings, *son-in-law*

Terri Jennings, *wife of Robert Jennings*

JESUS CHRIST

Existed as deity, *Philippians 2:6*

Predated eternity, *John 1:1*

Created universally, *Colossians 1:16*

Became humanity, *Galatians 4:4*

Lived perfectly, *John 8:29*

Died substitutionarily, *Isaiah 53:6*

Raised powerfully, *Romans 1:4*

Appeared convincingly, *1 Corinthians 15:5*

Ascended triumphantly, *1 Peter 3:22*

Seated in authority, *Hebrews 1:3*

Rules sovereignly, *Matthew 28:18*

Intercedes effectively, *Hebrews 7:25*

Coming again surprisingly, *Matthew 25:31*

Will judge with equity, *Acts 17:31*

Will banish some to hell with finality, *Matthew 10:28*

Will receive some to heaven wonderfully, *Hebrews 9:28*

Commanding all to repent and believe sincerely, *Acts 17:30*

Forgiving those who do, so mercifully, *Ephesians 2:4*

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CHAPTER 1

FOR I AM NOT ASHAMED

1:16-17

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, *but the righteous man shall live by faith.*

At the start of this letter Paul had been on the walk to the house (the salutation of vv. 1-7) and the porch (the personal explanations of vv. 8-15), but now the door, now the very theme of the whole letter, the substance of the matter, the cornerstone of all apostolic preaching, the anthem of the Protestant Reformation. When Luther saw it he exclaimed, “I’ve found the Gateway to Paradise.”

Paul was *eager to preach* (1:15) because he was not ashamed of his message. Why not ashamed? Here are four reasons:

Paul is not ashamed because of what the Gospel does—for it is the power of God for salvation.

When the fire of God is put to this powerful message, hardened hearts are split, sin-chains are broken, and the devil’s hold is loosened. The dead letter, the *word only*, accomplishes nothing, but when the gospel preaching is accomplished with power (Isa. 55:11; 1 Cor. 2:2; 1 Thess. 1:5), souls are saved.

And it is the power of God *for salvation*, not education, information, but salvation. Salvation presupposes we are saved *from* something. If something is salvaged it suggests that it was wrecked, wasted, damaged or lost. So, that word takes us back to the fall—to sin, death and hell. The gospel saves from all the effects of the fall.

No other information, teaching, message, or philosophy will free the sexually immoral, the drunkard, or the religious hypocrites. Paul is not ashamed—this is gospel.

Paul is not ashamed because of what the Gospel is—it is a “revealing of the righteousness of God.”

Luther first thought it meant that it reveals how holy and righteous God is. But there’s no good news in that for a miserable sinner. Some say the meaning is instruction as to how to live righteously before God.

But still there's no good news there. Comparing this with Romans 3:21; 5:17; 9:30; and Philippians 3:9; we have conclusive reason to understand it to mean a righteousness *from God* in contrast to man. The gospel tells how a man can obtain a righteousness from God Himself, a God-given righteousness. Do you have it? Or is yours a righteousness based on self-effort, performance, ability, qualification, faithfulness, and merit?

Before the New Covenant was brought in at Calvary, the gospel was indeed contained in the Old, but not clearly understood (Rom. 1:2; 3:21; 4:6, 7; 16:25; Eph. 3:1-8; 1 Peter 1:10-12). Now it is *revealed*, it is made clear as to how a guilty man can stand entirely accepted before a righteous God. He Himself provided that righteousness through sending His Son who satisfied the law's demands. Jesus fulfilled the conditions of the law by His righteous life and He fulfilled the condemnations of the law by His substitutionary death. This is the most important, the most glorious, message man ever heard and Paul is not ashamed.

Paul is not ashamed because of who the Gospel is for—the Jews first and also the Greek—both wise and unwise.

The Mormons ought to be ashamed for they used to exclude the black man. But the gospel is for all, anyone, anywhere, any age, any position, any sex, no matter the number or character of his sins.

The Jews first? Yes, salvation was from the Jews (John 4:22). Jesus was a Jew and came ministering to His own. Then after Pentecost, still the gospel went first to the Jews (Acts 1:8; 3:26). Even Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, went first to the synagogues and then, upon rejection, *lo, we turn to the Gentiles.*

To the Gentiles? It was a new thought, and hard for the Jews to accept. Look at Peter's resistance in Acts 10. The Samaritans exclaimed, *we know You are the Savior of the world* (John 3:16; 4:42), as well as Savior of the Jews. Most of the world had been born and lived and died and went to hell not knowing their Creator. Those were the *times of ignorance* (Acts 14:16, 17; 17:30). Now, all are coming into the kingdom and that is something to glory in, unashamedly.

Paul is not ashamed because of how the Gospel is received – it is *by faith.*

Yes, the gospel is for all without distinction, but not for all without exception. It is only the power of God for salvation *to everyone who*

believes. Four times in the text we have it—*believe, faith, faith, faith*. But is believing itself a form of works? No, by its very definition it eliminates that, for it is a looking away from self to put confidence in another—trusting the finished work of Christ.

What does *faith to faith* mean? It is difficult and many could be the suggestions—justifying faith to sanctifying faith, weak faith to strong faith. But comparing the parallel of Galatians 3:22 and Romans 3:22 with this, I am constrained to think it is saying, (1) *by faith* (note: *from* can be translated *by*), that is how one receives the gospel, and (2) *to faith*, that is, to whom or for whom it is effectual.

By quoting Habakkuk 2:4, *but the righteous will live by his faith*, Paul shows, (1) that this is no new way of salvation after all, and (2) wherever you find a righteous, a justified man, he is one who functions by faith, faith from the start to the end.

Do you think you can make it? The question might be whether you are empty enough to cut loose and look entirely to Jesus, for this great salvation is only for failures. It requires no smarts, no money, no qualifications, period. It is faith in another entirely and Paul is not ashamed, for that is such good news.

Not ashamed? Paul used a literary device called a litotes to emphasize a point by stating the negative of the contrary. (For example: not a bad meal.) Thus, Paul is saying that he glories, he boasts, he rejoices in the gospel.

There was much reason to be tempted to be ashamed. After all, it was Rome, the capital of the world with all the pomp. The world hates the gospel and Paul had felt it as he was driven out of Pisidian Antioch, fled from Iconium, stoned at Lystra, beaten and jailed at Philippi, mobbed at Thessalonica, laughed at in Athens, judged at Corinth, smuggled out of Damascus, and counted a lawbreaker at Jerusalem.

Why the hatred? The gospel is contrary to everything in fallen man. It counters his pride.

1. It says, man is bad—his righteousness is rags, dung.
2. It says man is helplessly bad. If circumcision or baptism or some other human ritual could put man right, the offense of the cross would cease (Galatians 5:11), but the cross speaks of another dying to save me.
3. It says that God is sovereign. Proud man wants to be in charge.

4. It says that God is righteous and puts people in hell for sin.

That tends to threaten the proud man's security!

If your gospel does not offend, you should question the faithfulness of your message. But there is no reason for the Christian to be ashamed. The unbeliever is the one who ought to be ashamed. The believer has done only that which a man should do. It is only right to become a Christian and live for the glory of God. We should rejoice when counted worthy to suffer shame for His name (Acts 5:41). The only thing that would make the Christian ashamed is for him to not live up to his profession, to entertain some sin, some doubtful practice, some point of resistance. Psalm 119:6 says, *Then I shall not be ashamed when I look upon all Thy commandments.* Hebrews 11:16 says, *Then God will not be ashamed to be called our God.* Amen.

THE WRATH OF GOD

1:18

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.

Entering the gospel door (vv. 16, 17) we now come into a dark room called the wrath of God. Through it alone, however, can we come to the living quarters.

What is this wrath of God?

Just as real and precious as the love of God, so the wrath of God is one of his attributes. It is God's hatred for sin, and his hatred for all that is contrary to his nature and his dealing with it. Consider these verses:

The boastful shall not stand before your eyes; *you hate all who do iniquity.* (Psalm 5:5)

God is a righteous judge, and a *God who has indignation every day.* If a man does not repent, He will sharpen His sword; he has bent His bow and make it ready. He has also prepared for Himself deadly weapons; He makes His arrows fiery shafts. (Psalm 7:11-13)

The sinners in Zion are afraid; *fearfulness has seized the hypocrites:* "Who among us shall *dwell with devouring fire?* Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?" (Isaiah 33:14 NKJV)

We tend to have a low and reluctant view of the wrath of God perhaps for these four reasons:

1. We tend to think of the wrath of God in comparison to the wrath of men and that is often distorted by selfishness, excess, imprudence and hypocrisy.
2. Sinful man just does not like the idea of God being wrathful. It means that he is in big trouble.
3. As Christians we don't want to be persecuted because of a negative doctrine.
4. As Christians we don't want to turn people off. We've got to *get the people*, you know. The truth of the matter is: God is big enough to get the people and furthermore, if we bring people

in with a shallow message, they will be found to be wood, hay, and stubble anyway.

The Importance of God's Wrath.

The text reads *for the wrath of God is revealed. For!* The very reason one needs this good news of verses 16 and 17 is because of the bad news of verse 18. Why run for cover if there is no storm? Who needs a life boat unless the ship is sinking? Who needs medicine but those who are sick? The gospel seed can't grow in soil not plowed by the law. Without the travail of conviction there is no birth.

Thus, the shallow, bright, breezy, cool, friendship message of modern evangelicalism has produced false conversions. The sheepfold is full of goats. The lonely narrow way is now crowded. One of the most hurtful doctrines today is not psychology, not Alcoholics Anonymous, but "*Smile, God loves you.*" The love of God is not the message for the happy sinner.

Look at the New Testament emphasis:

But the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. (Matthew 8:12)

And will throw them into the furnace of fire; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. (Matthew 13:42)

And will throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. (Matthew 13:50)

On and on it goes, (Matt. 22:13; 23:32; 24:51; 25:30; Luke 3:7; John 3:16, 36, 16:8; Rom. 2:5, 8; 3:5; 4:15; 5:9; 9:22; 12:19; 13:4; Acts 17:31; 1 Cor. 16:22; 2 Cor. 5:11; Eph. 2:2; 5:5; 1 Thess. 1:9; 2:14; 5:9; 2 Thess. 1:9; Heb. 2:3; 10:31; 12:26; 2 Peter 3:10-12; Jude 14; Rev. 6:16; 14:10).

The Source of God's Wrath—from heaven.

Heaven is the place of God's authority and special presence (Ps. 103:19; Isa. 66:1; Dan. 2:18). This wrath did not originate from the sheriff's office but heaven above.

How is the Wrath of God Revealed?

It is revealed externally. We see God's wrath in the *weather*: the

thunderstorm, the earthquake, the lighting. Who does not tremble and run for cover? We see it in *history*: the Fall, the Genesis flood, Babel's confusion, Sodom's destruction, Israel's fall in the wilderness, the deportation to Babylon, etc. But most strongly we see God's wrath revealed in *death*—that is in spiritual death (Gen. 3), physical death (Ps. 90:7), and eternal death (Rev. 21:8). Death is common, but nevertheless not natural. Man is too noble, too precious to be maimed, withered, slaughtered, and finally laid in a hole with dirt thrown on his face. Sure, there are other causes for death, but ultimately all this is God's wrath on sin. Sure, the lava of a volcano kills, yet really it is the fire in the mountain that is the source of the trouble. So, all misery goes back to the wrath of God on a fallen humanity. Look at the curse of weeds, the pain of childbirth, the constant presence of disease, and the general futility of civilization. God is against the human race.

We see God's wrath *internally*, that is, in the conscience (Rom. 2:15). The feeling of regret, remorse, and guilt are tokens of God's wrath.

We see God's wrath *scripturally*. Josiah found the law and concluded *great wrath* was upon them (2 Kings. 22:13).

We see God's wrath *morally* (v. 21f). God shows His displeasure with sin by letting us have more of our miserable sins. So God's wrath is constantly revealed.

The Objects of God's Wrath.

It says *against all*. It does not matter what race or place, God is speaking to all. Some don't appear to experience much of wrath. They are quite bold and happy in their sins and hypocrisies. Yet their foot treads in slippery places (Psalm 73:2), like on a creek bank they are storing up wrath, just like a worker stores up his due wages, they are fattening their hearts with lust like beasts for the slaughter.

All of this behooves us to *flee from the wrath to come* (Luke 3:7). The tornado, the volcano, the lighting—nature offers but glimpses of the wrath of God. What will it be when Jesus returns in flaming fire? Even the sun will be like a match thrown into a blast furnace. The present revelations of God's wrath are but a few flames leaping out of the furnace, just rumblings, just specimens, just previews of hell and the great day of wrath (Revelation 6:17). Yes flee! Flee to where? As a fugitive from divine justice, flee to the *city of refuge*, to Calvary, to Christ. There was the greatest display of wrath when God made His holy Son to be sin and

then judged Him. The story is told that to escape a prairie fire the old settlers started a fire to burn the ground near them and then stood in the place where that fire had already burned. If we'll be delivered from the wrath to come we must stand where the fires of divine wrath have already been executed, that is, in Christ. Who shall be able to stand in the presence of an angry God on the day of wrath? Only those dressed with the righteousness of Christ, the *righteousness of, from God* (v. 17). So believe on Him now. Today is the *day of salvation*. Then is the *day of wrath*. Then there will be no time for appeal (Proverbs 1:28). The case is closed. The deadline is the *deadline*. But the just will *live* by faith.

REASONS FOR WRATH

1:18-20

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.

God is not like a horse that bucks without a cause, not like a dog that attacks the strolling pedestrian without a cause. He has reasons for wrath. *So a curse without cause does not alight* (Proverbs 26:2). If my unbelieving loved one ends up in hell, there is a reason.

God's wrath is against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.

There are many activities that might not be unrighteous in and of themselves, but yet they are ungodly. God is not in it. For example, there was nothing intrinsically wrong with the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil except that it was forbidden. Thus it was ungodly to eat the fruit. There are many who are quite moral by human standards, yet not regenerate, not indwelt by God, and thus they are ungodly.

But notice the sequence—ungodliness and unrighteousness. Sooner or later, in one way or another, unrighteousness will result from ungodliness. Idolatry leads to immorality. And this nation is adrift. Why? We have a bad rudder. The nation is sick. Why? Bad blood. The jails are full. Why? The false preachers, the ungodly preachers have effected unrighteousness.

There is a specific aspect of unrighteousness that incurs wrath—*suppressing the truth* (NASB), *holding back the truth* (KJV). Like the baby with a ball in the tub, like a jack-in-the-box, we try to push down the truth. Like a criminal in flight, we try to avoid the searching spotlight of truth. God demands honesty and objectivity (Ps. 24:4; 51:5; Luke 8:15; Acts 17:11), but he finds universal dishonesty, cowardice, evading, avoiding, not squaring off with the truth. God is angry in

that we sin against light. Note: Romans 1:19—*known, evident, evident*; verse 20—*seen, understood, darkened* (they had some truth and light); verse 22—*became fools* (they had some wisdom), etc. What light do we sin against?

Man sins against the truth revealed by creation.

Creation reveals something of God. The physical universe reveals something of God. Things seen tell you something of the unseen, the visible of the invisible. That which is made tells you something of the Maker (Ps. 19:1-6). No, the book of nature is not as clear a message as the book of Scripture, just as a drum is not as clear a message as a trumpet. But nevertheless, it is substantial.

The order and design of creation reveals the existence of God. The moon spins around the earth, the earth while spinning on its own axis moves swiftly at 1000 miles per minute around the sun, and the sun at a half million miles per hour around the center of the galaxy and then the Milky Way around something only God knows. All of this suspended on nothing! And all so perfectly fixed. Elgin used to boast that they set their clocks by the stars. But you say, the ancients had no telescope. History books say the Persians in 600 B.C. had detailed tables of the movement of the sun, moon, and stars. And moreover, it takes no telescope to observe the webbed foot of the duck, the shell of the turtle, the foot hump of the camel, and the thumb on our hand. Such obvious deliberate design reveals a Designer. We don't have fingernails on our earlobes!

The immensity of the physical universe reveals God. David felt this (Ps. 8). The sun is 93 million miles away. The closest star is eight light years away. It is estimated that there are 10 billion galaxies and 30 billion to one trillion stars per galaxy. At Mt. Polomar with the 200 inch diameter telescope astronomers can see 4 billion light years away and they are still seeing stars. No, they have not seen the invisible God but they are seeing the work of His hands.

The intricacy of creation is evidence of God. There are flies so small that many could fit on the head of a pin. If every molecule in one drop of water were the size of a grain of sand, there would be enough to build a road one-half mile wide, one foot deep from Los Angeles to New York.

The diversity of creation is evidence of God. Ten million species of insects! How about the variety of fingerprints and snowflakes—none alike! Incredible. This is God. All the details of who we are at

conception! This is God. Various colors, shapes, and sizes reveal an incredible wisdom and skill.

The unity of creation speaks of God. The land and sea, the wolves and rabbits, the bugs and birds, it can be no accident.

The beauty of creation magnifies God. The flaming sunsets, the glorious clouds, the majestic mountains, the scales of the fish, the wonder of the flowers, it all speaks of infinite imagination.

The existence of creation cries out, *Behold your God*. Why is something here rather than nothing? From where did the first particle come? From where did life come? Man without God has no explanation. Fools they are who say evolution and chance. You might as likely throw letters in the air and then pick up a dictionary.

Creation may not reveal the saving grace of God, but most *clearly* we see the wisdom, the greatness, the power, and even the goodness of God (Acts 14:17). The average Minnesota farmer receives one-half million gallons of rain water every year—from God, free.

Men are inexcusable; they have suppressed the truth.

The Hindus know the filthy Ganges River is not God. The Babylonians, if they'd been honest, knew the sun was not God. All men knew there was a difference between them and the common house fly.

Is the man without the Bible to be condemned? Yes. The Sodomites, the men at Babel's tower, those of the old world in the Genesis flood, they all perished. Admittedly, it was a *time of ignorance* (Acts 17:30). Men, outside of Israel, did not have the written revelation but they did have a witness from God and they sinned against that light. They never heard of Jesus but they heard of God and sinned against the living God. Why didn't God send them a missionary? They sinned against the light they had and thus who shall complain? If they had obeyed the light they had, God might well have sent them a missionary as he did the Ethiopian Eunuch and Cornelius.

So we see the condemning nature of sinning against light, especially those of us who have the Bible (Luke 12:48). There are many ways of suppressing the truth—not welcoming reproof, changing the conversation, not searching out a matter until it is resolved to be right or wrong, refusing to make restitution, etc. In view of such unrighteousness in man, surely we need the *righteousness from God* (v. 17) revealed by the glorious gospel and obtained by true saving faith in the Son of God.

A SHORT HISTORY OF THE HUMAN RACE

1:21-22

For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools.

The 21st and 22nd verses of Romans, Chapter 1 are a summary of the last half of the chapter and, in a way, a short history of humanity. First...

Men start out knowing God—*they knew God.*

Of course, natural, unregenerate man does not know God savingly, personally, intimately—*O righteous Father, the world hath not known Thee*—but nevertheless, they know about God having seen His fingerprint on all of creation. Just as Civil War buffs have studied the War so well that they speak as if they personally knew the leaders and heroes of the War, so it is with God and man. And this is evidenced everywhere. From the South Pacific cannibals to the American Indians, they all acknowledge a higher power. They have their sanctuaries—high places, pyramids, towers, and groves. They have their sacrifices— if not animals then children. The masses of humanity are religious.

This should affect our approach when we talk with others about the Lord. They say, “You can’t prove to me there is a God.” Our reply, “It is already proven but you won’t receive the evidence.”

Men know God but do not glorify Him—*they did not glorify Him as God or give thanks.*

Here is the crime of all men’s crimes. They creep into the sanctuary and steal God’s glory. They come before His throne and intercept His praise. They change the address on the revenue and take the credit themselves. We have no problem paying our rent but who will give God the glory due? Men are like dogs—when thrown some food they growl and run with it as if they owned it. How many are the close calls from which we have been spared, the disease that God has healed and yet nine out of ten do not turn back to give thanks (Luke 17:17). We ascribe it to luck, to fortune, to our own foresight or industry. We *profess ourselves to be wise.*

Does this self-glorification anger God? Remember Belshazzar—

when he was praising the gods of gold, judgment fell (Dan. 5:23-27). Remember Herod—when the crowds cried, *the voice of a god*, judgment fell (Acts 12:22). Remember Nadab and Abihu—when they failed to honor God in their priestly duties, judgment fell (Lev. 10:1-3). Consider further...

The results of rejecting God—they became futile in their speculations... their foolish heart was darkened... they became fools.

If we will put away reality then what is left but vanity? If we put aside God's wisdom, we are left with foolishness. If we put aside truth, we are left with lies, with wrong concepts, especially on the very most important issues of life.

Origins? Carl Sagan says that the cosmos is all there is or was or shall be. He has made himself a fool for he has no answer as to the origin of the cosmos itself, or life, or personality. In 1859 Charles Darwin advanced the idea of natural selection. It gave a naturalistic explanation to the various forms of life and thus further promoted the naturalistic explanation of the origin of life. Thus the Nobel Prize winner, Jacques Monod, says, "chance alone is the source of all things." But you see, the hammer he swings knocks the foundation out from under his own feet. If his mind is the product of chance then logically the product of his mind is chance and thus his words are meaningless. Even Darwin admitted to a horrid doubt—"can I trust the convictions of a monkey's mind?" The atheist's philosophy is a sword that comes around full swing and takes off his own head. His ideas self-destruct. They are fools.

Morality? The psychologist tells the mass murderer Richard Speck in 1966, "you are no more responsible for what you did than a man for sneezing."

Purpose of life? Vanity! Some try to sound noble saying they want to live to help others. But why is help better than hurt? There is only one valid purpose in life—to glorify and enjoy God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Curing societies ills? They put more money into the education system and serve the children breakfast, too! What foolishness. And crime abounds. There is no solution but to build bigger barns to hold the lawless. The USA has a greater percentage behind bars than any other nation.

Their foolish heart was darkened. You throw away the flashlight and

look what darkness is the result. And this is the course of individuals, societies, nations, and civilization itself. Look at the USA. It used to be shooting paper wads in school, now it is guns. Divorce was rare, now common. Thirty percent of children are born into illegitimacy. Some high schools have day care service. Look at the music. In the 50's it was good times, the 60's—lawlessness, the 70's—violence, the 80's—perversion, and the 90's—death and Satan. We have abandoned God and he has abandoned us.

This should affect our **upward** look. Have we been saved from the incredible folly of godless disobedience? Adoration should be no taxation. What thanks we should render as a bird a song.

This should affect our **inward** look. We who know the Lord savingly should keep our hearts and stay away from sin like a rattlesnake. You don't know the end of sin. You don't know where it will stop. Apart from divine intervention it won't. It is a greased slide, it is quick sand, it is poison gas, it is sleeping at the wheel with no reason to think you'll snap out of it before calamity. We don't have the luxury of toying with sin.

This should affect our **outward** look. The world is seething in trouble and there is, apart from revival, no hope. There is no new era, no golden age coming. Civilization is sinking deeper in depravity. The only hope for our fellow man is the timeless, changeless, glorious gospel of the Son of God. May God help us to preach with power and with tears.

Are you an unbeliever, outside the saving grace of God, a stranger to the true and living God? Start crying out to God for mercy and forgiveness by the blood of the Lamb. Flee from the wrath to come. Flee to God as a sinner, a loser, a fool. Jesus died to save such and only such.

ABANDONMENT: THE WRATH OF GOD REVEALED

1:23

Exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God.

Two themes stand out in the last half of Romans, Chapter 1—the *rejection of God by man and the rejection of man by God*.

The rejection of God by man.

And exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures... For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator who is blessed forever. Amen.

Consider the great exchange.

Man has exchanged the glorious for that which is inglorious. Will a ball team exchange their star player for an unknown rookie? Will a man exchange his unique arrowhead collection for a box of sand from the seashore? Will a man exchange a handful of million dollar bills for a handful of pennies? No! Yet man has exchanged the living God with all of His glories for that which is cheap, little, and inglorious—birds, beasts, and bugs. Even Israel *exchanged their glory for the image of an ox that eats grass* (Ps. 106:20). Eats grass! It does not eat trees or metal or people, but only grass. Man has exchanged God with all His perfections, attractions, and satisfactions for that which is less than man himself. Incredible!

Man has exchanged that which is incorruptible for the corruptible. We are in a world of rot. *Death and decay in all around I see.* Man has an endless trouble with rot, rust, and age. Yet man has exchanged the endless, eternal, everlasting, incorruptible God and eternal life through union with Him, for corruptible things. Incredible!

Man has exchanged reality for image—not even the false god itself but an image of it. Buddah is long gone but millions are satisfied with and venerate his image. Man is an image-idolater. The Hindus boast 330 gods. The Buddhists have in their Temple of the Tooth in Sri Lanka a tooth of Buddha supposedly taken from Buddha's funeral pyre in 543 B.C. From Nebuchadnezzar's golden image to Jeroboam's calves

to the Roman Catholic cathedral to almost every kitchen in China to the American Indian totem poles, we have images, demons, and flesh like images. The TV—the image machine—is on seven hours a day in the average household. We are eager to see the new pictures we had printed, but the person, the pictures are of, is right there in the room with you. You have the reality, why do you want the pictures?

Man exchanges the truth for a lie. In every other area we demand to be told the truth. But when it comes to the truth about God, we prefer the lie.

Man has exchanged the creator for the creature, the carpenter for the house, the handiwork for the hand, the gift for the giver, the blessing for the Blessed One. Man spends his days dealing with and pursuing earthly things, just things—tools, cars, lands, houses. Paul gives examples: (1) Man—movie stars, heroes, leaders, even religious leaders. Note how many denominations are named after a man. (2) Birds—I remember a college professor who was hooked on birdwatching. The American Indian's thunderbird is still common. (3) Beasts—sacred cows, monkeys, and pets. (4) Crawling creatures—I know a fellow who unwisely brought a venerated scarab beetle image back from Egypt. Some vegetarians wear a scarf over their mouth to not breathe in a bug and thus kill it. What are the results? Is God silent on all of this?

God rejects man—*He gave them over*”(vv. 24, 26, 28).

Will a man leave off a dog? Will a woman abandon her child? Yes, and God will abandon a man. Not without reason, it is his *due penalty* (v. 27). God leaves us to have more of our miserable sins. When the Spirit of God draws back, evil spirits come in. When the gardener is gone the weeds take over.

First is abandonment to sexual impurity—fornications and adultery (v. 24). The only hope of being spared from being caught by the eyelids of a woman is the nearness of God. Remember David. He was not on the front line for God and got caught. Amaziah resisted Amos' prophesy (Amos 7:12) and his wife became a harlot (Amos 7:17). Apostasy leads to immorality. The *body is dishonored*. The drink, the drugs, the cigarettes, the sports, the daring feats, and the sexually transmitted diseases are all hard on the body. The devil is a hard task master (1 Cor. 5:5).

Second is abandonment to sexual perversion. Women leave the natural sexual function and men likewise turn to homosexuality. The

demons pour gas on the fires of this lust and they burn. It is commonly reported that a homosexual will have 300 partners per year. They commit indecent acts, shameless deeds, things unmentionable. Many die violent deaths. They *receive in themselves that due penalty of their error*. Hell is no tragedy; it is their due.

Third is abandonment to a depraved mind—utter, deliberate, vicious violence. And they take as many as they can down to hell with them. They *give hearty approval of those who practice* these vices listed in Romans 1:29-31.

We see then the depravity of man. He suppresses the truth of God and holds to a lie, he loves the darkness rather than the light, he does not want to *retain God in his knowledge* (Romans 1:28). Like a piece of waste that is thrown into the trash, humanity rejects God and tells him to depart from them (Job 21:14)!

If we are regenerate, we ought to be infinitely thankful, for such we were and where would we be right now if God had not intervened and stopped us on our wild career.

We ought to beware of sin and guard ourselves from idols (1 John. 5:21). Sin puts gravel in our bread and wormwood in our drink (Thomas Watson).

And can we, when we had the message of life, be smug in our personal peace and affluence while the world perishes? Let's do all we can to snatch them from the fire and hold them back from the slaughter and be as salty as we can be to stop the putrefaction.

Are you a lost man? Remember, your sin is inexcusable. Your sin is hurtful. Your sin is ugly—like vomit and filthy rags. Remember, you can't be satisfied without God any more than a flower without sunshine. Remember, you will not be more savable next week than now. The lights are going out on the road to hell. What can be worse than to be forsaken by God. That is hell itself—*Depart from me* (Matt. 7:23) and *away from the presence of God* (2 Thess. 1:9). But God has made a way of escape through the gospel of his Son who died for rebels. Repent and believe. Fear God and give him the glory. It is only right and sane.

CHAPTER 2

GOD JUDGES THE GOOD FELLOW TOO

2:1-2

Therefore you have no excuse, everyone of you who passes judgment, for in that which you judge another, you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things. And we know that the judgment of God rightly falls upon those who practice such things.

Over there to the side stands someone listening to Paul as he breathes out the threatenings and the judgments of God on those gross sinners of Chapter 1. This good man says, "Amen, Paul, that's right, preach on, they deserve it." Suddenly Paul turns on his heel and points his finger in that man's face, "You are in trouble too. You pass judgment on them but you are doing the same thing, although in a more subtle way, and thus you have condemned yourself" (v. 1).

It is subtle. It is hypocrisy. You condemn those who talk on the job and waste the employer's time, but you *practice the same thing* when you evangelize on the job. You abhor the adulterer and the things that go on down there in the local lounge but you *practice the same thing* when you watch it on television. You vilify the street fights but you *practice the same thing* in your kitchen with words. You condemn those idol worshipers but you *practice the same thing* in your spirit with your stubbornness (1 Sam. 15:23). You condemn the Satanists but you *practice the same thing* in your spirit when you are insubordinate to your husband. You condemn the bank robber but you may *practice the same thing* as a preacher by robbing the widows' estates through your appeals for money. You don't murder but still you *practice the same thing*, heart murder, when you fly off the handle.

The moral man is condemned and under the judgment of God also. Why? He *practices the same thing*. (Note the repeated phrase: Romans 1:32; 2:1, 2, 3) No, it is not as gross a form; but it is the same sin. It is inward. It is secret and God will also judge the secrets (Romans 2:16). This man condemns these things in others yet does the same. He is *without excuse*.

God does not judge one man with one standard (even though a Christian) and another by another standard. His judgment is according to truth (Romans 2:2). It is according to the facts of the case. A law officer may have to employ a lie detector to try to arrive at the truth,

but not God. A judge may twist the truth, he may be bribed, or he may honestly misjudge a case, but not God. He judges righteously (Gen. 18:25; Deut. 32:4; Ps. 96:10,13; Acts 17:31; Rev. 16:5).

God will justly judge everything and everyone. None will *escape* (v. 3). Some criminals have been hauled in and yet escaped at the very jail door. But not so with God. All will be there to stand before that awful throne (Matt. 25:31)—Cyrus, Nebuchanezzar, Abe Lincoln, the popes, the prostitutes, the preachers, and the paupers. None shall escape. You may have escaped car accidents, deadly disease, and slaughter on the battlefield, but you will not escape the judgment seat of God. Even though you are a Jew (which Paul likely has primarily in mind, verses 9, 10, 11ff), even though you have a Bible, even though you teach the Bible, even though you are baptized, if you *practice* these things, you are in trouble with God. There is no escape, except one.

Yes, bless God, he has provided a way of escape in sending his own Son to die on the cross for sinners. Don't harden your heart. Flee from the wrath to come. Repent and flee to Christ. Believer, search your own heart, put aside your hypocrisies (1 Peter 2:1). God will judge you too (Rom. 14:10) and eternal rewards are at stake.

WHAT WILL GOD DO WITH YOU?

2:4-5

Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance? But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.

“What do you mean that I am in trouble with God? What do you mean that I shall not escape His judgment (v. 3)? I have been blessed by God. God has been good to me.” Paul goes on to tell this man that that does not necessarily mean that he is alright with God. The truth of the matter is that he has still not repented of his sins. He has not responded to God’s goodness. He has been despising God’s goodness, making light of it, taking it for granted. And all these manifestations of God’s kindness were not to confirm a man in his sin, but rather to bring him to repentance.

Consider God’s *kindness*, his *goodness*. Do you think your utility bill is high? What if God charged us for the BTUs of sunshine and the gallons of rainwater? What if God billed us for the healings from colds and all manner of cuts and diseases? What a blessing is good health! I did not deserve healthy children. They could have had many disabilities. Who can count the many blessings—family, friends, entertainments, enjoyments, the various satisfactions, such as, sleep, work, etc. He *did good...filling our hearts with food and gladness* (Acts 14:17).

Consider God’s *forbearance*. God gave us the gift of life and what have we done with it but served him with our splendid sins. We have eaten his food and used that energy in rebellion. We have walked on his dirt only to make crooked paths. We have breathed his air not for praises but blasphemies. And God could have dropped us in hell anytime. He could have cut off the human race along with Sodom, or at the Flood or way back at the Tree. God is very forbearing.

Consider God’s *patience*. He waters and fertilizes our soul patiently waiting for the fruit of holiness. “Maybe when he is ten he will bring forth fruit, maybe when a teen, maybe when married and blessed with children, maybe when retired with the blessing of extra time.” But

nothing. God was so patient during the preparation of the ark (1 Peter 3:20). Why? *He does not wish for any to perish, but for all to come to repentance* (2 Peter 3:9).

These are not meager matters. They are called *riches*. And think of the Jew, of whom Paul is primarily speaking, who beyond all has been a partaker of God's *rich* goodness (9:4). To the Jews was committed the written revelation. To them was sent the Messiah. But ten times they sinned in the wilderness, repeatedly they *pained the Holy One*, finally they crucified the very Son of God. Through it all God was forbearing (Ps. 106:46) and made them objects of compassion until *wrath came upon them to the utmost* (1 Thess. 2:16).

But men despise and treat lightly all these rich blessings. It is like a father who tries to win the loyalty of the son by giving him a new car. The son despises it and uses it as a beer wagon. "Low thoughts of God's goodness are the bottom of much sin" (Matthew Henry).

No, these blessings of kindness and patience were to be incentives to repentance, but like a man shown mercy at court, he takes the lenience as weakness and goes out producing yet more crime. God's kindness is intended to *lead* us to repentance. It was to show how desirable God is. But what is the problem? The *heart*. It is hard; it is stubborn. The Greek word is *skleerotees*. It is rather familiar as we have in English arteriosclerosis, that is, hardening of the arteries. Here is the problem. Look at the emphasis in Mark alone:

And after looking around at them with anger, grieved at their *hardness of heart...* (3:5a)

For they had not gained any insight from the incident of the loaves, but their *hearts were hardened.* (6:52)

And Jesus, aware of this, said to them, "Why do you discuss the fact that you have no bread? Do you not yet see or understand? Do you have a *hardened heart?*" (8:17)

But Jesus said to them, "Because of your *hardness of heart* he wrote you this commandment." (10:5)

Afterward He appeared to the eleven themselves as they were reclining at table, and He reproached them for *their unbelief and hardness of heart*, because they had not believed those who saw Him after He had risen. (16:14)

Like leather shoes, like clay, the heart of man is hard and inflexible,

not impressionable. Man does not respond to God until regeneration when the *heart of stone is replaced with a heart of flesh* (Ezek. 36:26).

Repentance is foremost in God's economy (Matt. 3:2; 4:17; Mark 6:12; Acts 2:38; 20:21; Heb. 6:1; 2 Peter 3:9). It means to change your mind, to change your thinking on God, *that He is right and good and number one*, on self, *that we are dependent and sinful*, on our existence, *that we are only strangers and pilgrims here on earth and must live for eternity*. Repentance is turning my back on a life of sin and all known sin.

What happens to those who will not repent? There is a *day of wrath* coming (Isa. 2:12-22; Matt. 3:4; 7:22; 10:15; 12:36; Luke 21:34; Acts 2:20; 17:31; 1 Cor. 3:13; 1 Thess. 5:2, 4; 2 Thess. 1:10; Heb. 10:25; 2 Peter 2:9; Rev. 6:16). Man has had his days (New Year's, Memorial, Independence, Labor, Birthday, Wedding, Groundhog), but God will have his. *Wrath!* God will let his anger loose and rip the stars out of the sky, pull the plug on the sun, and shake the world like a rug. And it will be a *day of revelation* of the righteous judgment of God. Then he will reveal in full how he really views that word I spoke, that money I spent, that decision I made. His judgments will be revealed (Rev. 15:4).

Are you unrepentant? Like a farmer storing corn for the day of shelling, like a steer storing up fat for the day of slaughter, like a wage earner storing up pay for the day of pay, like a thief storing up stolen goods adding to his condemnation when caught and judged, you are *storing up wrath for yourself*. Of all things, don't be deceived by God's goodness and forbearance. Sure, you might be fairing well. You might not be seeing any recompense for your sin, but God has a day when accounts will be settled.

You flee from an oncoming storm, you flee from a plague, you flee from a wild animal, you flee from the path of an oncoming car, you flee from a burning house. Won't you flee from the wrath to come (Luke 3:7)? You would flee from falling into the hands of a robber, how much more from falling into the hands of an angry God (Heb. 10:31)? Prepare to meet your God (Amos 4:12). How? There is one safe place. That is under the blood of Jesus Christ. Wrath was poured out on him entirely for all those who repent and believe entirely on him with utter, absolute, unconditional surrender to his lordship. If you are a believer, what a privilege is yours—not storing up wrath for hell but rather laying up treasure for heaven. What sort of people ought we to be?

THE DEEDS AND THE JUDGMENT

2:6-11

...who will render to every man according to his deeds: to those who by perseverance in doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life; but to those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, wrath and indignation. There will be tribulation and distress for every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek, but glory and honor and peace to every man who does good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For there is no partiality with God.

Having just asserted the righteous judgment of God, Paul now gives more detailed criteria of that judgment. In these verses, titled and summarized so well by verse 6, *who will render to every man according to his deeds*, consider first...

The equity (fairness) of the Judgment, as depicted by the words, *according to*. It is likely a quote from Psalm 62:12, but the Scriptures are replete with this thought (Job 34:11; Ps. 28:4; Prov. 12:14; 24:12; Jer. 17:10; Matt. 16:27; 25:35; John 5:29; 1 Cor. 3:8; 13:2; 2 Cor. 5:10; Gal. 6:8; Eph. 6:8; Col. 3:25; Rev. 2:23; 20:12, 13). What is printed on the paper printer is *according to* what you put in the computer. What the farmer harvests is *according to* what he sows. So it is with God's judgment of us. It is rendered to *every man*, there are no fugitives from divine judgment, *according to his deeds*. Now the camera may miss a deed done in the football game, but not so with God—every deed and word shall be brought into judgment.

The question arises: are we then saved by works, by our deeds? No. First, this passage is not about salvation but condemnation (1:18 through 3:20), and it is our deeds that have us in trouble. Second, comparing Scripture with Scripture, it is clear that we are not saved by works (Eph. 2:8; 2 Tim.1:9; Titus 3:5). We are saved by grace, but the point is this: the deeds are an accurate index of the life. The deeds are an infallible gauge, a sure indicator of what we are.

The evidences of the Righteous and of the Unrighteous?

A. Consider the deeds of the righteous. He *perseveres in doing good*. He

is not like the seed sown on rocky soil or on thorny soil that made a start but never brought forth fruit. He is not like a runner that started and quit. No, the Christian is one who, through many tribulations, testings, afflictions, adversities, sufferings and struggles, perseveres. He had many opportunities to turn back like Pliable, from John Bunyan's *Pilgrims Progress*, at the Slough of Despond or like Formalist and Hypocrisy at the Hill of Difficulty. He could have turned back upon the cruel jeerings in Vanity Fair. He could have fainted under repeated battles with Apollyon, but rather he rises again, *Do not rejoice over me, O my enemy. Though I fall, I will rise* (Mic. 7:8). He sees no bridge behind, no detour around, but just keeps plodding on, pitching his tent a little closer to the Celestial City.

He *seeks for glory*. Is this God's glory? Yes, that is always there, but here the immediate meaning (comparing with other qualities) is that of the glory that comes to the Christian himself. The perfect commentary: John 5:44, *How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another, and you do not seek the glory that is from the one and only God?* (Rom. 2:29; 8:18, 30; 1 Cor. 4:5; 2 Cor. 10:18; Col. 3:4; 1 Peter 1:7; 5:1). How can this glory that comes to man be pure? It is still God-centered, the glory that comes *from* God. Truly, the fear of losing the glory that comes from men keeps back many from the gate of heaven.

He *seeks for honor*. Again, this is the honor from God. Eli did not honor God so God did not honor him but replaced him (1 Sam. 2:30). Daniel was a man of high esteem in God's view (Ps. 91:15; Prov. 27:18; Heb. 2:7). Is this pure or self-seeking? Again, it is indeed pure, for it is obtained only by those who humble themselves in obedience to God (Luke 14:11).

He *seeks for immortality*. Death has reigned since the fall. All men seek to avoid death and live forever. They seek immortality but they are looking in the wrong place. Only Christ conquered death. He alone possesses immortality (1 Tim. 1:17; 6:16) which he *brought to light through the gospel* (2 Tim. 1:10). Only those who come in union with him, those who receive from him right now eternal life, will in that day *put on immortality*.

B. Consider the deeds of the unrighteous. They are *selfishly ambitious*. The Greek word indicates "hireling." Just as a hired man is in it only for the wages for himself, so also the unrighteous centers his life, even religious life, around self.

They *do not obey the truth*. Truth always crosses the path of proud Adam, but they side-step it.

They *obey unrighteousness*. No one is neutral. We obey one or the other and the unregenerate is a slave to sin.

The End of the Righteous and the Unrighteous

A. God will render to the unrighteous: Wrath. Have you felt the terror of an angry dog. Then infinitely more will be the wrath of God toward the sinner. Peter calls it, *the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men* (2 Peter 2:3).

Indignation. God will reveal His utter disgust with the disobedience of man.

Tribulation. It means to press. A tribulum was a threshing sledge that was pulled around to rub the seed out of the grain ears and chop the straw up into chaff.

Distress. Its root meaning has to do with the feeling of confinement in a narrow place. Surely the solitary confinement of prison is a foretaste of hell. No more striking and terrible language could be set before us, not the mad man in his insanity, not the sickman in his delirium has experienced the torments of God's hell.

B. God will render to the righteous:

Eternal life. (Matt. 25:46; Gal. 6:8; 1 John 5:11). This is eternal, full fellowship with God (John 17:3); who is life Himself.

Glory. Many will be the despised Lazaruses that shall shine like the sun, like the stars forever in the kingdom (Matt. 13:43; Dan. 12:3).

Honor. Shall we rule over the nations? Shall we sit with Jesus on His throne? This is honor above the angels (Heb. 2:7).

Peace. The struggle shall be over and we shall have peace, in contrast to the torment of the wicked.

What will the day of God be for you—a day of coronation or a day of perdition? You can tell if you will now judge your life honestly by these evidences. Notice God does not look for perfection, but pursuit. It says the Christian is one who *seeks for*, pursues, these aforementioned qualities. So which way are you headed? Don't be like the Pisidians—they *judged themselves unworthy of eternal life* (Acts 13:46). Choose Christ. Death is everywhere but in him is life.

NO PARTIALITY IN THE JUDGMENT

2:11-16

For there is no partiality with God. For all who have sinned without the Law will also perish without the Law; and all who have sinned under the Law will be judged by the Law; for not the hearers of the Law are just before God, but the doers of the Law will be justified. For when Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves, in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness, and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them, on the day when, according to my gospel, God will judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus.

There is a lot of concern over racial partiality and media bias. But there is *no partiality* with God. It is a great Bible emphasis (Deut. 1:17; 10:17; 16:19; 24:17; 2 Chron. 19:7; Prov. 24:23; Matt. 22:16; Acts 10:34; Gal. 2:6; Eph. 6:9; Col. 3:25; James 2:9; 1 Peter 1:17). It means to favor one part or party above another. The KJV says, *no respecter of persons*. The Greek word means to regard the face. The symbolic statue of Justice is blindfolded. Justice must not take into consideration the face of man. So God will not judge with regard to position, rank, popularity, physical appearance, or race. And race is the issue here—the Jew will receive no special immunity in the judgment.

How will God then judge? Verse 12 explains it for both the Gentile, those without Law, (1 Cor. 9:21) and for the Jew, those with the Law.

The man who has sinned, even though he has no Bible, *will perish*. The Greek word *apollumi* means to destroy, like Apollyon, and so, not their being, but their well-being will be destroyed in hell. Noah's sorry generation was hosed off the face of the earth and perished. The self-exalters at Babel were confounded and perished. The perverts of Sodom were consumed with fire from heaven and perished. The proud Egyptians were washed away in the sea of God's wrath and perished. The idol worshipers of Canaan were driven out and then driven away to hell and perished. The masses of humanity were born, they lived, they died and perished in their sins. What an incentive to preach the gospel, for the world is in darkness and the Christian has the only hope.

Yet, they will not be judged as strictly as the man with the Bible.

The heathen will perish *without the law*. That is, he won't be judged by the Bible which he never had. The servant who did not know his master's will but committed things worthy of stripes will be beaten with few stripes (Luke 12:48). It will be more tolerable for the sodomite than the hypocrite church-goer (Matt. 11:24).

But someone might say, "Is it really fair that the Gentile should perish at all? He had no law. The text says, '*Where there is no law there can be no wrath* (Rom. 4:15)'. How can the officer give a speeding ticket if there was not a speed limit sign?" Paul takes up this objection in verses 14 and 15. They did have a law. *They are a law to themselves*. It is a different method of revelation than the Jew had (Mt. Sinai), but they do have law. Their own persons are the medium of revelation. They have the *law written on their hearts*, of course not in the new covenant sense (Heb. 8:10), but yet moral consciousness and awareness, in contrast to animals, is woven into their very constitution. Proof? Paul gives two ways that they *show the workings* of the Law on the heart. First, they *do instinctively* by nature in some degree the *things* that the Law prescribes. The Gentiles know something of kindness (Ezra 7:27; Luke 6:32; Acts 28:2). The Gentiles see murder as being wrong (Acts 28:4). They know the rightness of self-control (Acts 19:40). Non-Christian businessmen want diligence on the job. There are non-Christian crime fighters. The non-Christians see the virtue and value of pursuing lawful vocations, of procreation, and of family affections. Second, they show the workings of the Law on the heart by the operations of a *conscience*. It is an inward moral monitor and it bears witness through the *thoughts* of the mind as to what is right or what is wrong—either *accusing or defending* the various actions of self or others. Sure the conscience can be seared (1 Tim. 4:2) and is not very effectual until quickened by the Spirit in regeneration (Rom. 8:1, 2), but yet it does give the non-Christian a *witness*. As Christians, obedience to our conscience is a life or death matter (1 Tim. 1:19).

Now going back to the Jew, Paul is telling them to banish any thought of immunity in the judgment because of external privileges. Not the *hearers* (John 12:34; Acts 15:21; 2 Cor. 3:14) but the *doers* shall be found to be the justified ones.

Paul sums it all up in verse 16. According to *his Gospel* (he knew he had the truth), God would judge the *secrets*. How foolish for any Jew to hide behind ceremonies and rituals. God's eye goes deeper than that. He weighs the motive, the heart, the spirit. Many offered

sacrifices—Ananias and Sapphira, Saul, Balaam, Absalom, Jezebel and the Pharisees, but their gifts were an abomination to God because the altar was bad. The young ruler was rich and looked good to men but the Lord probed the secrets and he was found to be poor with God. He had an inner stronghold of sin. How we need Holy Spirit empowered preaching to search the *thoughts and intents* of the heart (Heb. 4:12).

God will judge *through Christ Jesus*. He is the appointed one (Acts 17:31). Why him?

First, his judgeship is the reward of his humiliation (Phil. 2:10).

Second, it is fitting to his humanity (John 5:27). Who will complain at the judgment that he does not understand their case—he is the Son of Man.

Third, it is in keeping with the honor of his headship (John 5:23).

So, the unregenerate is better on the outside than on the inside. But, the regenerate is better on the inside than the outside. There will be many surprises on that day. When the Lord returns, he will examine “*the motives (the secrets) and then each Christian’s praise will come to him from God*,” (1 Cor. 4:5)—there will be no partiality.

THE FALSE SECURITY OF THE JEW

2:17, 29

But if you bear the name 'Jew'...
But he is a Jew...

No doubt Paul had the Jew in mind at the beginning of Chapter 2; the Jew was included in his *O man* (v. 3). Now like a detective Paul begins to unmask the Jew—like a prosecutor he exposes his lie; like a farmer he plows up his weed patch; like a carpenter he tears down his house built on sand; like a warrior he scales the high wall in which he trusts and pulls it down; like a prophet he puts his finger in the face of the Jew and describes his hypocrisy, his false security, and his trouble before God—*how will you escape the judgment of God?*

We have,

1. the Privileges of the Jew (vv. 17-20),
2. the Hypocrisies of the Jew (vv. 21-27),
3. the Definition of a true Jew (vv. 28-29).

The Privileges of the Jew.

He bore the name "Jew." The Jews had various names. They were called *Hebrews* possibly going back to the great, great, great, great grandfather of Abraham, Eber (Gen. 11:16). They were called Israelites from Israel. They were called Jews from Judah whose tribe was predominate in the Southern Kingdom and then the name came to represent all Jews anywhere after the captivity. It was a distinguishing title like Green Berets, Anderson Windows, or Makita tools. They were set apart unto God. Salvation was from the Jews alone (John 4:22). But alas, they had a name, but were dead.

They *relied on the Law*. Sometimes the Law meant the first five books of the Old Testament (Luke 24:44). Here, no doubt, it refers to all the Old Testament Scriptures. They had the written revelation of God. What a privilege (Ps. 147:19; Rom. 3:2; 9:4)! It would be like being on a trip in caravan with other cars and only the front one had the directions to the destination. But this privilege became to them a stumbling block. It was a point of pride (John 9:28) like someone with a big library; it was a false security as they relied on it (John 5:45) but

did not obey it.

They *boasted in God*. That's good (Jer. 9:24). They were not idolators but knew the one and only God. But again, it was an empty profession (Jer. 7:3f; Mic. 3:11).

They *knew God's will*. Can you imagine what it would be like to not have a Bible? You might build a tower like the Babylonians or offer your son thinking it was pleasing to God. What would it be like to not know of a Savior sent from heaven?

They *approved things essential*, or better, were able to *distinguish between things that differ* from the will of God (Phil. 1:10; Heb. 5:14).

They were *instructed out of the Law*. The word instructed comes from the Greek *katecheo* from which we have catechize which means to systematically and repeatedly teach the doctrine. And so from childhood they knew the Scriptures.

They were to be a *light* to those in darkness and a *guide* to the blind, that is, to the Gentiles. But alas, how lacking was this attitude as seen in the case of Jonah. They were blind guides (Matt. 23:16). But in the New Covenant, Paul, now a true Jew, holds up this promise from Isaiah 49:6 in Acts 13:47 as a defense of his ministry.

They were to be *correctors of the foolish and teachers of the immature*. Amazing! One can have a big ministry and miss it all himself.

They had *the embodiment of knowledge and of the truth*. The same idea is in 6:17—not just a doctrine here and there but the whole body, the whole set of truth.

Now Paul grows hot in overt rebuke describing....

The Hypocrisies of the Jews.

They *taught others but didn't teach themselves*. It is possible to clean others' houses and not your own. Just to be a teacher is to incur a stricter judgment (James 3:1) but how much worse to be a hypocritical teacher. They sat in Moses' chair and taught but did not do. Paul gives examples...

They *preached that men should not steal but yet did it themselves*—through covetousness (Mic. 2:1, 2) and through false scales (Amos 8:4). Jesus reproved the sacrifice merchants in that they had made the house of God into a robber's den (Matt. 21:13). It is easy for a preacher to steal others' words (Jer. 23:30).

Adultery. They were putting away their spouse for any cause (Matt. 19:3). But Jesus said it could be only for infidelity. Anything else was

adultery. And he drew the line yet stronger—lust is adultery. I wonder how many carry around a Bible under their arm and under that Bible is a vile heart with evil imaginations?

Ever since Babylon they *abhorred idols but robbed temples*. What is the connection? It seems to go back to Deuteronomy 7:25. They were not to take to themselves the silver and gold from the pagan idols in conquest, like Achan. Whatever it was, there must have been a problem (Acts 19:37). But it is possible for a minister to rob widow's estates through his long appeals for contributions. It is possible to rob God (Mal. 3:8) by holding back tithes, which are to go to those who minister to you, and offerings, which go to those who minister to others, and alms, for the poor and needy.

They *actually dishonored God and caused the non-Christians to blaspheme* (Exo. 32:12; 2 Sam. 12:14; Neh. 5:9; Ps. 115:2; 1 Tim. 5:14; 6:1; Titus 2:5, 8). More than once I have heard the jail inmates say, "Why should I try if the preachers can't make it?"

Now Paul takes one more crack. He pursues them to the end of their false securities, their last refuge—circumcision. It was given to Abraham (Gen. 17:10) and his children as a distinguishing mark of the people of God. God was so angry with Moses for not circumcising his children that He sought to kill him (Ex. 4:24). Here Paul makes three points regarding circumcision...

If the Jew didn't keep the covenant obligations, it was valueless. (v. 25; Gal. 5:6; 1 Cor. 7:19)

If a Gentile did, like Cornelius, he was received. (v. 26)

The Gentiles' example of true obedience would judge the Jew, in all things. (v. 27; Matt. 12:41, 42; Heb. 11:7)

What is a True Jew?

We are given four couplets in contrast.

1. Not the *outer* but the *inner* man is important to God. (Ps. 51:17; 1 Peter 3:4).
2. Not the *flesh* but the *heart* is important to God. Even Jeremiah in the Old Testament preached that (Jer. 4:4), and then Stephen preached it to the Jews in the New Testament (Acts 7:51; Gal. 6:15; Phil. 3:3; Col. 2:11.) It is possible to come to a meeting with your heart *far off* having some sin fluttering around in

your conscience. The sin must be forsaken, the issue must be settled to be acceptable to a holy God.

3. Not the *letter* written on stones like the Ten Commandments, but the *spirit's regenerative* work in the heart makes one a true Jew (John 4:24; Rom. 7:6; 2 Cor. 3:3; Heb. 8:10).
4. Not *man's praise*, accommodating to outward acts (Matt. 6:1); but *God's praise* defines a Christian (1 Cor. 4:5). Wanting the approval of men nullifies true faith; it is impossible to believe this way (John 5:45).

Conclusions.

This is a *warning* against hypocrisy and false security. The Bible declares war on it. Much of our Lord's teaching was on this very thing, such as, the beloved Sermon on the Mount—more righteous than the Pharisees (Matt. 5:20), obedience before God not men (Matt. 6:21), the two builders (Matt. 7:24-29). So, are you born again? Has the Spirit of God done a life-changing inward work?

See the worthlessness of trusting in *religious externals*—circumcision, baptism, etc. Most of the mainline churches teach baptismal justification or baptismal regeneration—Methodist, Lutheran, some Presbyterian, and of course, Roman Catholic. Generally, the more that apostasy sets in on a church or even a soul, the more ceremony and liturgy is used.

Note that the Old Covenant economy was temporal, it was *shadow*. The true Jews are those Jews and Gentiles with a new heart (Gal. 6:15), invaded by the Spirit of God.

How much emphasis God puts on the *heart*, the motives, the spirit. This is what the Lord had to say to Simon (Luke 7:40-50) who condemned the immoral woman. The repentant woman whose heart was broken and devoted was more pleasing to God than the Pharisee.

CHAPTER 3

NO ADVANTAGE FOR THE JEWS?

3:1-8

Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the benefit...

“Paul,” says the Jew, “you have been saying in Chapter 2 that we Jews are in trouble with God too, that we are on the same condemned ground as the Gentiles? Then I might as well have been born a far-off Mongol or a jungle spiritualist or some big-city atheist. I mean, what is the advantage then of circumcision, of Abraham’s call and covenant? Our history is one of humiliation and hardship, a path of persecution, anyhow. We have had no security on earth and now you are saying we have none in heaven either. What about the promises for us Jews?” (Ex. 19:6; Deut. 10:15; 14:2; Isa. 43:21).

Paul here anticipates the first objection. He is used to that (Acts 21:28). Yes, there is advantage—great in every respect, especially that they were made stewards of the oracles, the sayings, the utterances, the messages of God. The Gentiles had no verbal, propositional revelation. They were left in darkness to worship in ignorance the unknown God. But the Jews were given “the transcript of the Eternal Mind.” The Bible is Jewish. Now which would you rather have, to be born in a Christian family or to be born to cannibals? Admittedly, if you don’t ever obey the oracles of God, you indeed will be worse off and receive a greater punishment in hell if not on earth as well.

That brings up the second problem. They had the word preached but it did not profit them because it not being mixed with faith. Some did not believe and it looks like that nullified the faithfulness of God, it frustrated his purposes. No, Paul asserts, God will be found faithful and true even though all men are liars. He will be justified in all he says. If you will call God in the courtroom and judge him, he will prevail. He will come out looking good.

That brings up the third problem. It looks like Paul is saying that the Jewish unfaithfulness only magnified God’s faithfulness, their *unrighteousness only demonstrated and set off God’s righteousness*. If that is the case then how can God condemn the Jew? Is God righteous in *inflicting wrath*? (Paul apologizes for such a suggestion). Paul says, forget it, God will judge and you Jews of all people know that he will judge in righteousness. But still, says the objector, if my lie, my living a

life of falsehood and unfaithfulness, only more magnifies the truth and faithfulness of God, how can I be judged for it? My sin benefited God and now he is having his cake and eating it, too, (Note: 9:19). Really, I might as well sin all the more so more good goes to God. No, Paul says, that is a wrong understanding and some are so slandering us. But they will be justly condemned too.

Conclusions:

We ought to be very thankful to have a Bible and for every Christian and, at the least, the Scriptures are a good moral influence upon the lost. Most people that have walked the face of the earth were born and lived and died never knowing their origin, their purpose, nor their destiny. We ought to cherish the Bible and especially a quickened word, lest we be like those who go down to the pit (Ps. 28:1). We ought to consider a word from God to be very precious—Saul had no word from God and went to the witch. Amos spoke of a famine of having a word from God (Amos 8:11). In the days of Eli, a word from God was rare (1 Sam. 3:1). We ought to be good stewards of the mysteries of God (1 Cor. 4:1). The Jews were so careless of their trust that they had lost the law in the days of Josiah (2 Chron. 34:14-31).

God is big enough to get sin to magnify himself, to get sin to work for his glory. Look at Pharaoh (Rom. 9:17). Look at the Jewish unbelief (Rom. 11). He makes the wrath of man to praise him (Ps. 76:10). They mean it for evil and God means it for good (Gen. 50:20; Acts 4:28). Satan will find out he has only furthered God's purposes unwittingly.

God will judge sinners nevertheless. Men are not puppets, but real in their folly. Sin is inexcusable and infinitely wicked.

Christians and preachers are often slandered. Be ready to answer objections.

Does your gospel lay itself open to the charge of slanderous antinomianism— let us do evil that good may come? If not, you don't have Paul's gospel.

NO DIFFERENCE, ALL UNDER SIN

3:9-20

Both Jews and Greeks are all under sin.

Paul continues again to address the issue of the condemnation of the Jews – Is there no way in which we Jews are better than the Gentiles? No, he says, we have already charged that they both are in deep trouble with God. Then Paul goes on to give a chain of Scripture quotations (Ps. 5, 10, 14, 36, 53; Prov. 1; Isa. 59) which would speak most powerfully to the Jew as nothing else could. Here we have an assertion of the total inability and depravity of man. It must be important. Is there anywhere else in the New Testament where such a barrage of Bible is used? Yes, this truth is important, for if one never sees himself to be a zero, he will never find in Christ his *all and all*.

A General Description of Mankind.

First, Paul gives a general description of man (vv. 10-12). Then he gives some particular manifestations of his depravity (vv. 13-18).

There is none righteous. At the county court house some of the accused go in and come out justified; they were right. But God parades the whole human race before the judgment seat of heaven and all are condemned; they are all found guilty! *Not even one* comes out clean.

There is none who understands (1 Cor. 2:14; Eph. 4:18). Man is like an unplugged lamp—no life and thus no light. Spiritual ignorance and darkness prevails over the natural man until regeneration. He does not understand his origin, purpose, or destiny. He does not understand God's goodness—that he was created by skill, clothed by kindness, fed by love, sustained by power, gifted by purpose and called to serve. He does not understand the secrets of self-denial nor the worthiness of God. If any man understands, it is because God has opened the eyes of his understanding (Eph. 1:18).

There is none who seeks for God. All men are selfishly neglectful of God. They seek their own interests (Phil. 2:21)—their food, clothing, leisure, pleasure, and treasure. Like a hog, they keep their eyes to the earth and never look up to heaven to seek unseen things above. But what about the monk who leaves society? Isn't he seeking God? No, rather, he is trying to do everything he can to avoid God. He is trying

to be as religious as he can be without coming to God on his terms. If any are found truly seeking God, it is a case of God being found by those who did not seek him. (Rom. 10:20). It is only the regenerate who hunger and thirst for righteousness, who seek first the kingdom. Natural man hates God.

All have turned aside, like a crooked arrow, like a foolish driver down the wrong road, or like sheep we have gone astray. When I was in eighth grade, a teammate got the basketball, and confused, ran for the wrong goal. So we have done in the business of God—the broad way instead of the narrow way, our way instead of God's.

Together they have become useless. Who wants a car without a motor? What is there to do with spoiled milk but pour it down the drain? So man is no good to God, *worthless for any good deed* (Titus 1:16). Like a cow, man exists only to be captured and killed (2 Peter 2:12).

There is none who does good. Wait. What about non-Christian organizations that have built hospitals, what about false cults that have helped children, etc? The answer: God defines goodness in terms of his glory and the natural man ultimately does not function for the glory of God but self. Two trees side by side have leaves that overlap, but if you follow them down, they have separate roots.

Particular Manifestations of Depravity.

The throat is an open grave. The grave is to be closed to cover the rotten stench and putrefaction. But we can't keep it closed and out comes the foul words, the rotten communication, the arrogance and puff.

The tongue keeps deceiving. We get caught lying and still keep on. It is *an unruly evil, a world of iniquity, set on fire by hell* (James 3:6).

The poison of asps is under their lips. That is biologically correct, for so it is with the snake. And we wound spiritis, hurt souls, assassinate character with words.

Their mouth is full of cursing and bitterness. Man is mad, mad at God.

Their feet are swift to shed blood. The USA was formed with bloodshed. It had not been in existence for fourscore years before we were at one another's neck— about one-half million killed in the Civil War. Now, over 20 million babies have been killed by their mothers since 1973. Animals get along better together than people.

Destruction and misery are in their ways. Their heroes are those who get most “wasted.” Broken relationships, wasted years, mounting guilt—that is the man without God.

The path of peace have they not known. No pills, thrills, or frills can give inner peace.

There is no fear of God before their eyes. Just as one looks out on the horizon and sees no clouds, so there is no fear of God in the natural man’s mind. He fears the disfavor of man not God. This is the root of all sin and Paul’s summary statement on all the above.

Conclusions.

This is God’s portrait of the human race. It ought to shape our world view. The police have no explanation for crime. We do.

This ought to tell us something about evangelism—the law must precede the gospel just as the plow the planter. Paul takes a good part of three chapters to prepare for the gospel.

This ought to strip us of any proud garment, any idea that we have got something going for us, that we in some way are better or in some way exceptional or any way not as bad as another. Whether a fairly harmless bobcat or a man-eating tiger, lion, or leopard; all have the same nature. There is none more cute, clever, courageous, consecrated, or contrite than another before God. Sure, not all are as bad as they could be—God graciously restrains some more than others (Gen. 20:6)—but nevertheless, all have sinned and love it, in their natural state. There is none, none, not one better than another, as stated six times in the text.

This thirteen count charge brought upon us by the Prosecutor of heaven ought to *stop our mouth* (v. 19) from any self-justification, put us to admitting our guilt before God, and bring us without one plea to Christ to receive a divine righteousness provided by him for all who do.

Behold the grace of God. Out of a fallen humanity, God saves some.

HOW TO GET RIGHT WITH GOD

3:19-24

But now apart from the Law, righteousness...

Paul's intent was to talk about the gospel (1:1, 16), but now, after laying a backdrop for the gospel, that is condemnation, he begins to introduce the glories, the grandeur, the greatness of the gospel.

Paul spent most of the first three chapters putting the whole human race back into a corner with a sword to its face. The only reasonable question is now, "How can I be right with God?" That is the supreme problem of the human race. The man you meet on the sidewalk ought to be asking it.

To be right with God one must first have *his mouth closed* (Romans 3:19) by the Law. If you are still chattering, excusing, justifying, explaining, complaining, and changing the subject, you are no candidate for saving grace. The Pharisee of Luke 18 had too much to say; it was the tax-gatherer, who taking the place of a hell-deserving sinner who had no plea but mercy, was the one who went down to his house justified (Luke 18:14). Instead, one must see that *by doing the works of the Law*, by merit, by performance, by ability, by qualification, no one will enter heaven and stand *in God's sight*. *For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God* (v. 23). If two fellows were attempting to jump the ocean and one was an Olympic long jumper who could quite outdo the other, nevertheless they would both fall entirely short. So it is when it comes to attaining the glory of God, we all are far short; we are sinners. Man was created in the image of God spiritually. He had the glory of God, perfect holiness, stamped upon his soul. After the Fall of the human race, the glory departed. We lack *the divine nature*. We are more like beasts than deity. We are worse than animals—many rabbits in a cage get along better than two people in a place.

How can I be right with God? How can a sinner, a worm, a maggot be right with God (Job 25:1-6)? I have to be as righteous as God to be right with him. He does not grade on the curve. He demands perfection. The Law, a reflection of his nature, must be satisfied—its conditions must be fulfilled and its condemnations must be meted out.

To be right with God I must look away from self entirely to God alone and receive the righteousness that he alone provides. The

righteousness of God!

It is *of* God. Fathers may give their sons a car, a house, an education, a job. God gives righteousness!

It is *through faith*, not a self-wrought righteousness but a faith-received righteousness. Faith is stretching out an empty hand and receiving the *gift by grace*. That is why so few become true Christians. It is hard on the pride to be unable to do it ourselves and receive help.

It is through faith in *Jesus Christ*. He was the only man that lived a perfect life. Behold the dignity of his person, behold the glory of his works! And fulfilling the Law in its every demand, *he* earned a title to heaven for all who believe. Satisfying the Law's penalty, he died substitutionarily for all who believe. He cried, "It is finished." We get his righteousness, he got our guilt.

This was no new scheme of salvation. It was *witnessed by the law and the prophets*. Genesis 3:15; Exodus 12:13; Psalm 22; Isaiah 53; Zechariah 12:10 all told of the coming Messiah and the redemption he would accomplish. Now at last it is *manifested* by Jesus' coming and work.

HOW A JUST GOD JUSTIFIES THE UNJUST

3:24-26

...that He might be just and the justifier of those who believe.

Having shut our mouths and put us with our back to the wall as a guilty race, Paul finally introduces the gospel. And now, in these verses we have something more of the glorious gospel— beautiful words, wonderful words! Justification! Redemption! Propitiation! Someone has called it the Acropolis of the Christian faith. It is a very jewel box of doctrinal terminology. Look at this text, term by term.

Being Justified.

This term belongs in a court of law. It is a legal term, a declarative term. It means to pronounce righteous in terms of the law. It is the opposite of condemnation. It has nothing to do with the inner man but rather our relationship to the law, our legal standing. It is not something God does in us, but rather for us.

See Luke 7:29. They justified God. How could you make a just God just? You can't. It means rather that they acknowledged and declared Him to be that. So, justification is God declaring the repentant, believing sinner to be OK in the eyes of the law. He *justifies the ungodly* (4:5).

The beauty of justification is that *the highest judicial official in the universe is making the decision*. In human courts some judges' rulings are overturned by a higher judge. But not here. There is no judge higher.

God is a righteous judge and makes no mistakes. In human courts there are mistrials. Not here.

This is more than mere pardon. The guilty is not only forgiven his wrong but is declared right in the eyes of the law.

As a Gift by His Grace.

Not too many gifts are really truly free. Even a birthday gift has a cause. It is because it is my birthday. But this is a free, unmerited, unconditional, unasked for gift. It is an award at the beginning of the race and thus quite unearned. It is a gift.

This is one great difference between Christianity and all other

world religions. They are on the merit system, but Christianity is in the realm of gift and grace. In other religions, one must work up to heaven. Here, God comes down from heaven.

This is one reason why the Gospel is offensive to proud man. It is humbling to be successful because of a gift, not having made it on our own.

Gifts are wonderful. I remember when my dad gave me a jack knife for my eighth birthday, a toboggan for Christmas, a tool box, etc. But this infinitely excels them all—the gift of free, full, forgiveness forever. An inheritance called heaven! How would you feel if some prince came through prison and gave you, a condemned criminal awaiting execution, a pardon, even a title to live in his palace forever?

Why does God do this? He is gracious. Grace! A charming sound! You maybe know how you feel when you're late renewing your driver's license. "I'll have to take the test." But, lo, come to find out there is a grace period. Before God we have to take no test for heaven. How does God work this? It is...

Through the Redemption Which is in Christ Jesus.

We leave the courtroom and go to the slave market to talk about redemption. It means to buy back by means of the payment of a ransom price. If the plane is hijacked, it can be redeemed by paying the ransom. If an Israelite fell into debt, unable to pay, enslaved, he could be redeemed. So we have broken God's laws and are in the debtor's prison. Jesus redeemed us by paying the ransom in his own blood (Matt. 20:28; 1 Tim. 2:6). He died...

As a Propitiation in His Blood.

We leave now the slave market and go to the temple, into the Holy of Holies, and there we find the mercy seat, the propitiatory, where the blood of the sacrifice was sprinkled, propitiation was made and mercy secured.

It means to appease, to satisfy an offended party. If I hit a ball through my neighbor's window, my apologies would not satisfy his anger. I must pay for the window. So what will remove God's wrath? The wages of sin is death. Without the shedding of blood there is no remission. Either I must die in all aspects, especially hell, or find a substitute. Will rabbits, doves, lambs, rivers of oil or my own children substitute to propitiate God? Will they pay my infinite penalty for my

crimes against an infinitely holy God? The only substitute is the one God himself provided—the Lamb of God, Jesus.

He shed his *blood*. He did not die of sickness, but his death was by the shedding of blood like the Old Testament sacrifices. The precious blood of Jesus, he was the one whom God...

Publicly Displayed.

Like a merchant who sets out his wares for all to see, God set forth Jesus. His death did not occur in some far off Eskimo village, not in some obscure Hebrew dwelling, not behind the thick veil of the Holiest, but out in the open in Israel on the Mediterranean in the midst of the Greek culture and the Roman rule, the center of civilization and with the accompanying fanfare of a shaking earth, split rocks and a darkened sun. What was the purpose of his death? It was...

To Demonstrate God's Righteousness.

God had *passed over sins* for many centuries without fully judging it. God had even justified many—Abraham, Moses, David. How could that be right? Judicial iniquity is an abomination (1 Sam. 8:3; 1 Kings 21:13; Ps. 82:2; Prov. 17:15; Isa. 5:23.) How can God justly justify the unjust? The justice of God was indeed satisfied by the substitutionary death of Christ. How can I know this blessing of justification? I am called to...

Have Faith in Jesus as a Sacrifice.

Faith occurs repeatedly in this context. Faith—it is looking away from self unto Jesus, slain for sinners to secure our forgiveness by a substitutionary death and to secure our title to heaven by his righteous life.

To the orthodox Jew the slain Lamb says, “quit expecting and believe on Jesus.” To the devout Muslim it says, “quit cutting yourself,” the atoning blood is shed. To the demonized animist it says, “there is peace through the blood of God’s lamb.” To the miserable Hindu it says, “get out of the holy river and be washed in the blood of the Lamb.” To the loyal Buddhist it says, “get off your Noble Eightfold Path and get on the highway of holiness through the gate of imputed righteousness.” To the Roman Catholic it says, “forget your Masses, one sacrifice once for all time has satisfied.” To the lost church goer it says, “renounce away your baptisms and confirmations and trust entirely in Jesus’ blood and

righteousness for your title to heaven.” To the unbelieving believer it says, “forget your imperfections, the weakest saint shall win the day. You will never stand as a condemned criminal before an angry judge, but always, a beloved son before a loving heavenly Father.”

RAMIFICATIONS OF THE LAW OF FAITH

3:27F

...but by a law of faith.

Having again set forth the way of salvation through faith in verses 24-26, Paul takes up three questions, three ramifications, three consequences, three characteristics of the *law of faith*.

It excludes boasting and glorifies the Grace of God.

There are only two options, two possibilities when it comes to attempting to attain heaven or favor with God—the way of works and the way of faith. Works is simply do and receive—go to work, put in a hard day and come home with the paycheck. If you don't work, you incur the loss or penalty. Faith is trusting another.

Can you see that works-righteousness is grounds for boasting in self? He who builds the house gets the credit. Those who win the game can have as big a head as the trophy.

Faith, however, excludes boasting. Faith is a self-despairing look to another, that is, looking to God's provision in salvation. You might think that faith is just another work. No, for two reasons it is not. First, by definition, it is self-despairing. Second, saving faith is a gift (Phil. 1:29).

God intends to exclude pride from the kingdom, like a leper from the camp, like a dog from the city, it will not enter. God declares war on boasting and pride. The men of Babel waxed proud to make a name and build their way to heaven and thus were judged. They became babbling fools. Hear Pharaoh boasting, "*who is the Lord?*" But we find his bloated belly sticking out of the water on the Red Sea shore. Proud Nebuchadnezzar thought he had built Babylon but was reduced to a beast. Proud Sennacherib said he was invincible but we find that his own son killed him. Proud Uzziah entered the house of the Lord but ends up in a separate house. David got caught in pride and counted the people, but ends up losing 70,000 of them. Peter crows like a rooster that he would not deny the Lord but he denied Him three times. Proud Herod let the people think his was the voice of God, but he was brought down by worms. When pride comes, then shame.

And more subtle is religious pride. It hides under the *religious*

devotion robe like Ananias and Sapphira. It hides under a *grateful-to-God robe* like the Pharisee of Luke 18. It hides under the *ministry robe* like those who say, “Lord, we have done miracles in your name” (Matt. 7:22). It hides under the *cautious robe* like the man of Matthew 25 who hid his gift. It hides under a *zealous robe* and will call down fire yet not knowing what kind of spirit it is.

Pride is at the root of the natural man. All he does is for self—self glory, self preservation, etc. It is an abomination to God. Yet God has found a way to get man from earth to heaven without boasting. Faith gives grace the credit and not self.

Faith excludes all distinctions or includes all without distinction.

Paul hits hard at this distinction thing (Rom. 1; 2; 3:9; 22). It is the great lie to say “*I am better.*” The Jews had a problem with pride. Remember Jonah and his attitude about the Ninevites. Remember the Pharisees of Luke 4, when Jesus spoke that God sent Elisha to a Syrian for healing, they attempted to throw Jesus off the cliff. Peter had a hard time seeing it (Acts 10) and then even fell back into it (Gal. 2). God made it abundantly clear that the difference was gone when he sent the Roman army to destroy Jerusalem, the temple, and the whole system in 70 A.D.

The Jews should have known—there were the Ruths, the Rahabs, the Ninevites in their history. There were the Old Testament promises like Joel 2:28.

And, the reasoning is this. There is only one God (Deut. 6:4) who made all men. Obviously, there is only one way of salvation. Faith is the greater leveler. It puts all in a place of need, looking away to another.

Faith excludes lawlessness or fulfills the Law.

It would sound like the preacher of faith is saying that it does not matter then how you live, for we are not saved by works. It sounds like the law is nullified. Remember what they said of Stephen (Acts 6:13) and Paul (Acts 21:21) and then Jesus says, too, “*I did not come to destroy the law.*”

Faith, that is, the way of salvation through faith, establishes the law, rather. How? First, it fulfills the *condemnations* of the law, in that Jesus fully took the punishment of the criminal and died to satisfy divine justice. Second, it fulfills the *conditions* of the law. Through Jesus’ perfect life a title to heaven was earned for the believer. Third, it fulfills the *character* of the law. The law is written on the heart of the

believer and he is able to substantially, increasingly, obey the law as he is conformed to the law, the very character of God.

Conclusion.

Have you ever come to God with a bare outstretched hand. “Lord, I have no reason you should take me to heaven. But I trust Jesus’ blood and righteousness entirely.”

Do you see yourself as something special? Or, do you see you have no distinction?

Do you see God’s law so holy and iron-clad that it had to be fulfilled and is fulfilled in Christ?

CHAPTER 4

OLD TESTAMENT EXAMPLE OF JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH

4:1-8

What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, has found?

After a dark journey through human depravity, we have broken into gospel light beginning in Romans 3:21. You might think now Paul would take us on to something of sanctification, something more practical. No, rather the foundation must be laid well. Paul fortifies the doctrine of justification yet more, especially for the Jews, with the case of Abraham—appealing to something from Scripture itself.

Why Abraham? He was the Jewish *forefather*. He was the progenitor, the source and founder, of the race. Paul's statement of *according to the flesh* was used in different ways:

- the human, organic level (Heb. 12:9; Eph. 6:5)
- human qualifications (Phil. 3:3), and
- fallen, sinful humanity (Rom. 8:4; 2 Cor. 1:17; 10:2).

I would think the first usage is the one here in view of the context and also 1:3 and 9:3. Abraham was called the "friend of God" (Isa. 41:8). He was so esteemed that some Jews thought he was sinless. They viewed their good standing with God as being their relationship to him (Matt. 3:9). So how did he find favor with God?

If he had been *justified by works* he could *boast*. If you win that race, if you build that house, if you earn that degree, you can boast. You did it! But we know boasting is excluded (3:27). Who can boast *before God*? No rather, Abraham *believed God* and it was reckoned to him as righteousness (Gen. 15:6). That is what *the scripture says*.

Furthermore, to give an example from daily life, if one works then the benefit that comes to him is not grace but *debt*. If you do a job for someone for an agreed price, you don't consider your paycheck a gift. If one finds favor with God by works, then God is indebted to pay off. Never! And furthermore how could it be—man who is justified is *ungodly*. He has no claim on God.

Listen to David's testimony from Psalm 32—that man of God, that great king of Israel—listen to what he says in his time of wretchedness.

Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man against whom the LORD counts no iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit. For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer. Selah I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not cover my iniquity; I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD," and you forgave the iniquity of my sin. Selah (Psalm 32:1-5)

He really felt the blessedness of having *sins forgiven*. It is a blessing to have good health, to find an excellent wife, to be out of debt, but there is no blessing like having our sins forgiven.

Paul takes it positively—*righteousness apart from works* (v. 6). It is an imputed righteousness; it is put to our account. It is called a righteousness from God (Phil. 3:9) since God is the source. It is called a righteousness *of God* (Rom. 1:17; 3:21) since it is divine in nature. It is *of our Lord Jesus Christ* (2 Peter 1:1) since he is the one that earned it. It is called *of faith* (Rom. 4:13) since that is the means it is received.

Have you believed? Have you come to God as one ungodly, convinced you deserve nothing but hell? Have you trusted Jesus' righteousness to be your only ticket to heaven? This salvation is for the one who does not work but instead believes in the God who justifies the ungodly. If so, you will end up in Abraham's bosom.

RELIGIOUS RITUALS DON'T SAVE

4:9-12

How then was it (the blessing) reckoned? While he (Abraham) was circumcised or uncircumcised?

Every twelve years, thousands—maybe the world's largest religious festival—of Hindu worshippers, led by a number of naked holy men called Fakirs (fakers they are), gather at the junction of the Ganges and Yamuna Rivers in India to be baptized with the assurance that that will gain them their heaven. To gain yet more favor, they may shave off their hair in a nearby booth provided and throw it into the water, too, each hair earning a million years in heaven. Some, for extra points yet, walk on coals or glass and sit on nails. Can they get right with God by ritual?

In the religion of *Jainism*, one of the offspring of Hinduism, you are expected to carry a brush to whisk the path before you lest you step on an insect. You must not drink water before daylight lest there be an insect in the cup. And full salvation is only obtained by self-starvation. Can they get right with God by ritual?

The *Buddhists* have their Noble Eightfold Path—right views, right intentions, right actions, right speech, etc. Can they get right with God by such works?

The *Mohammadans* have their five duties of prayer, giving, fasting, pilgrimage and belief in the creed. Can they get right with God by ritual?

The *Roman Catholic* and mainline *Protestant* churches have their baptism, even infant baptism. Can they get right with God by their ritual?

The *Jews* have their circumcision—no salvation without circumcision (Acts 15:1-3). Can they get right with God by their ritual?

The Timing of Circumcision

Paul gives the answer to this in Romans 4:9-12 by pointing out that Abraham found favor with God at least fourteen years before he was ever circumcised at 99 years old (Gen. 15:6; 16:16; 17:10). It was simply a matter of history. It is amazing the Jews missed it. Really, Abraham exercised saving faith 25 years before circumcision (Gen. 12:4, 8; Heb. 11:8).

The Purpose of Circumcision

Circumcision was a *sign*. Just as an employee wears the company sign on his jacket, so also circumcision pointed to the covenant people and also to the spiritual reality, the circumcision of the heart (Deut. 10:12; Jer. 4:14).

Circumcision was a *seal*. Just as you get a stamp on your hand when you pay at the gate of the county fair, so circumcision was a mark, a proof, of authenticity that one was a Jew.

Conclusions

Religious rituals such as baptism, Lord's Supper, and circumcision gain no favor with God. How did Abraham get in with God? "Abraham believed God and it was reckoned to him as righteousness" (Gen. 15:6).

1. Abraham lived a life of faith. Follow his *steps*.
2. He had faith for conversion—he left his old life.
3. He had faith for justification—he saw a coming Messiah.
4. He had faith for self-denial—he gave Lot the choice.
5. He had faith for loving others even when disadvantaged by them—he went to war for Lot.
6. He had faith for the supernatural fulfillment of the promises—Isaac.
7. He had faith to die to his attainments—he offered up Isaac.
8. He had faith to continue regardless his failures—in spite of the blunder before Abimelech, Pharaoh, and then his producing an Ishmael, he kept on.
9. He had faith to look for another world—(Heb. 11:13).

Are you walking in Abraham's steps? If so, then he is your father. He is the first classic example in the Scripture of a believer.

Proud man always wants to do it himself, but God's way is faith—a helpless look to God for sheer mercy and grace. Unbelieving man wants something he can see, but God's way is believing and beholding the invisible.

"Lord, there is no reason that you should receive me into heaven, but you have every reason to put me in hell. Yet, I believe you graciously provided your Son to die in the place of sinners. I'm trusting Jesus died for me and that his substitutionary death and righteous life alone are my ticket to heaven."

THE BLESSING OF GOD: NOT BY LAW, BUT FAITH IN THE PROMISE

4:13

For the promise to Abraham or to his descendants that he would be heir of the world was not through the Law, but through the righteousness of faith.

Verses 1-8: the blessing of God not by works but by faith.

Verses 9-12: the blessing not by ritual but by faith.

Verses 13f: the blessing not by Law but by faith in the promise of God.

Reasons Why the Blessing of God is Not Through the Law (v. 13).

It is astonishing that the Jews missed a simple matter in their own history. It should have been so obvious to them that Abraham obtained the blessed promises from God 430 years before the Law was ever given on Mt. Sinai. And why is the way of salvation not through Law keeping?

First, faith is made void. Faith is a self-despairing look of confidence to another. But Law speaks of performance and merit. Well, if I can reach the desired object, I don't need to trust a ladder.

Second, the promise is nullified. If Abraham could produce that child himself then there was no need to look to another who promised him the same. Or to look at it another way, law means failure, for who can keep the holy Law of God? So, if Abraham was counting on the promise and yet operating in terms of Law, what God had given with one hand was taken back by the other.

Third, law works wrath. If there were no speed limit signs there would be no violations. But if the government put up limits, many would be the violations and great would be the troubles. God gave the Law to make transgression abound and thus to show our need of grace (5:20).

Reasons Why the Blessing of God is Indeed Received by Faith.

First, the blessing, salvation, the promise is by faith that it may be in accordance with grace (v. 16). God intends to magnify his grace (Eph. 2:7) and faith and grace yoke up perfectly in God's chariot of salvation. Faith says I'm looking to another for handouts.

Second, faith and grace make our welfare certain, sure. Law keeping is risky. It is open to failure. But if I am trusting another whose word is infallible, I can have assurance. The promise to the Christian that he will inherit the earth (Matt. 5:5) is certain.

Consider Some Characteristics of Faith as in the Case of Abraham.

First, in faith there is the element of trusting God for *life from the dead* (v. 17). Abraham and Sarah were both dead in regard to procreation. He contemplated this but did not regard it an obstacle and looked to God for miraculous provision. It was in hope against hope—there was no human hope. He was assured that God would perform what he had promised (v. 21). “Faith, mighty faith, the promise sees, and looks to that alone; laughs at impossibilities and cries it shall be done.” (Charles Wesley) So we also are called to look to God to provide a table in the wilderness, honey out of the carcass, windows in heaven, life for our dead neighbors, dead situations, dead areas of our lives.

Second, faith trusts God’s word, His faithful promise, His *calling or designating things that do not exist as though they did exist*. Abraham trusted he had children like the stars—*so (many) shall your seed be*—although he had them not. The ten lepers went off as though they were healed (Luke 17:14), and we too go on in faith trusting that we are *seated in heaven* although we are not.

Third, true faith *grows* (v. 20). He did not grow weak or waver but grew strong. There may be lapses like Abraham’s Ishmael or Peter’s sinking, but true faith grows stronger in spite of obstacles (Luke 17:5; 2 Thess. 1:3; Heb. 10:22; Jude 20). As our faith grows we are more able to pass tests, respond aright, complain less, submit quicker, etc.

Fourth, faith brings *glory* to God (v. 20). Jericho’s fallen walls, Gideon’s little band, and Isaac’s supernatural birth brought glory to God. It magnified his powerful provision and his faithful word.

Application.

This specimen of faith from Abraham’s life *was written for our sake* (v. 24) to teach us justification by faith. Just as a sweet sample from a stream would prove its source is sweet, so also this sample from Abraham’s life of faith proves that it is also faith back in the beginning that pleases

God. We are called on to believe in God having raised up Jesus from the dead. Why did he die? It was to pay for our transgressions, not just a good example of one's devotion to God. What did his resurrection prove? It showed he was God as he claimed. Who else died and was raised once and for all? It showed that his work was accepted by God. With his vindication, so we then are justified.

Are you believing God? Believe him in spite of what you know about yourself, what God knows, what the devil knows. Sure it is impossible that, I, a child of hell should in His image shine, but remember Abraham who believed against impossibilities. Will you be an heir of the world with Abraham? Yes, there shall be a new heaven and a new earth and the believers, the meek, shall inherit it. Amen.

CHAPTER 5

RESULTS OF SAVING FAITH AND PEACE BY BELIEVING

5:1

Therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with
God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Remember, the main purpose of Paul's letter was to further the gospel (1:1, 9, 16). Having explained the need for it (1:18 – 3:20), he then at last comes back to where he started and goes into the mechanics of the gospel, especially justification by faith (3:21 – 4:25). Now, like a farmer, having built his machine, he takes it to the field for some harvesting, as indicated by the word *therefore*.

D. M. Lloyd-Jones says, "In a sense, the whole Christian life is learning how to use the word *therefore*."

Chapter 5 is the beginning of the conclusions, the results, the applications, the ramifications of the doctrine of justification by faith, namely the assurance and the security of the believer. The first application is that we have peace with God. Consider:

The Great Need of Peace with God.

Man and God are at war with one another. Man is mad at God. He kicks against God's sovereign providence, rebels against his holy commands, rejects his gracious tokens of love, resists the blessed Spirit of God (Rom. 5:10; 8:7; Col. 1:21; James 4:4). Like sheep, we have turned to our own way. Like the prodigal, we want to do our own thing. Like citizens, we will not have this Man to rule us. Like Satan, we want to be like God. Like Adam and Eve, we want to be our own God. Man is in a fallen condition. Things are not the way they were originally. All is twisted and stained. World civilization is not in a state of normalcy. It is a war zone. Man is out to dethrone God. Why? No cause! God is entirely desirable and attractive. But man is fallen and duped. He has a bad heart.

Also, God is mad at man. His wrath abides like a guillotine over the head of the unbeliever. Why all the disease, deficiency, divorce, disaster, and death? It is the wrath of God upon a sinful world. We are called children of wrath (Eph. 2:3). What a lie—"Smile, God loves you." The very thought of God being angry ought to arouse terror like

Belshazzar. We know what it is like to have a fly mad or a bee or a dog or a bull or a person mad at us, but this is God! Many have forfeited their lives by committing treason against some powerful monarch, but this is the Creator with whom we have to do!

Is there any way to reconcile these two warring parties? Is there any way to make peace?

The Wonderful Way of Peace.

There is only one way to get a car license and that is through the license bureau. There is only one way to get an audience with the president and that is through the proper authorities. There is only one way for the angry employer and employees to get together and that is through the mediator. So there is only one way for heaven and earth to have any interchange—through our Lord Jesus Christ.

How is it that the Lord Jesus makes peace? He justifies, *he* makes things right. If a farmer's cows got out and destroyed the neighbor's crops, how would the farmer make peace with his neighbor? *He* would have to make it right. Thus we have the word *justify*. Can we justify ourselves, can we make right our violations against God's holy laws, our damages against the kingdom of God? No, it is an infinite debt, but such is satisfied *through our Lord Jesus Christ* for he made peace through the blood of his cross (Rom. 5:10; Col. 1:20) and restitution has been made. Divine justice has been satisfied. Jesus paid it all for those who believe.

From man's side since redemption has been accomplished now, redemption can be applied and thus the Holy Spirit is sent out to break down the rebellion in the sinner's heart and bring him to submissive peace.

How do we obtain this blessed peace? *Faith*—a self-despairing look of confidence to another. Think of the marvelous exploits of faith in Hebrews 11. But this justifying faith will put us in the kingdom of God. It is the hand that puts on the spotless robe of Jesus' righteousness.

What is this Blessed Peace with God?

It is peace with *God*. Not peace with the neighbor, not settlers having peace with the Indians, but peace with heaven.

It is peace *with God*. Notice it is not the peace *of* God, the tranquility that is characteristic of God himself, but peace *with* God. It is not subjective but objective, not conditional but positional. It has to

do with our standing.

It is *peace*. Not only has the Judge forgiven your debt but he has made you a son and an heir of all he has. That is how pleased he is with us because of the work of Christ.

It is *once-for-all*, past tense, for the believer, *having been justified by faith*. Never will you be more acceptable to God than you are now. Why? Because your acceptance is not based on something you are or do but on the perfect everlasting merits of Jesus Christ.

And this is the thrust of Chapters 5–8. The emphasis is the believer's security, his assurance of salvation. Wonderful! We can walk, work and war from a position of acceptance. (*Note the flow of Chapter 5 and then after the interruption of Chapters 6 and 7, he returns again to assurance in 8:1 to the end.*)

Do You Have This Blessed Peace?

False peace comes from mere intellectual assent, but true peace is based on heartfelt faith (Rom. 10:9, 10).

False peace comes from faith in faith, but true peace is based on faith in Christ.

False peace is never troubled by doubts. It is glib, light and presumptuous. But true peace is carefully humble.

False peace is interested in forgiveness but not holiness. True peace sees the character of sin and wants to be done with it and be ready for heaven.

False peace takes a fall too lightly, heals too quickly, saying that without repentance the blood of Jesus will cover it.

True peace wants to learn the ways of God and the devices of the devil that he never fall again. Those who have peace with God want to know more of the peace of God. (*D. M. Lloyd-Jones.*)

ACCESS BY FAITH INTO GRACE

5:2

...through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand...

This is now the second blessing from justification by faith that Paul urges—an introduction, an access, a way into grace by faith.

The need for access.

In the beginning, when Adam and Eve sinned, they were driven out of Paradise and barred from reentry by a cherubim and flaming swirling sword. Since man fell, he has been shut out of favor with his Creator.

We know what it is like to be shut out of our house. Some know what it is to be shut out of their city due to floods. Some may want to see the President, but they find no access. They need an introduction. But what is it to have no access to the living God, this God whose nearness is our good, this God who alone can calm the soul, this God with whom we have to do?

Man realizes somewhat his need and conjures various devices to get into the spiritual realm—deep meditation, drugs, church attendance, etc. A man may have an introduction to the Queen of England, but who will introduce one to the King of Heaven? We are strangers by nature.

How then is this access possible?

Who would dare to risk his life to approach God? (Jer. 30:21). Can we come on our own as we are—sinful and vile? The answer is given through whom, that is, through our Lord Jesus Christ. He died for sins, once for all, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God (1 Peter 3:18).

Now the way is opened to enter the holy land. The draw bridge is connected to cross the great gulf between God and man. Our high priest has made access into the holiest by the blood of the Lamb.

What are the blessings of this access?

We have access into grace. This is not like a foreigner coming into the USA and back out on a visa permit. It is living in the land of grace with

open access to the throne of grace to obtain yet more help in the battle against the world, the flesh and the devil. The throne of grace is where grace reigns and conquers, where grace is dispensed. We now know God. We are no longer outsiders but we are insiders.

How is this access obtained?

It is by faith, a self-despairing look of confidence to another, our Lord Jesus Christ. If you learned that some great person were in town and you wanted to go meet him, but upon entering the gate you find that it will cost \$100 to get in, which fare you did not have; and, upon turning away someone comes and places before you a ticket saying “that will get you in, the price is paid,” whereupon you stretch out your hand and receive it—that is faith.

Applications.

Behold, the security, the assurance, the sure acceptance the Christian has. You can worship, walk, work and war from a position of victory, a position of acceptance. Do you feel unworthy to approach God? Remember, the golden scepter is extended from the King of kings. Come boldly to the throne of grace through the Lord Jesus Christ.

BOASTING IN HOPE

5:2

And we exult in hope of the glory of God.

We are looking at the third “therefore,” the third benefit of justification by faith. We have had...

1. Peace by believing (past)
2. Access into grace, (past and present) and now
3. Exulting in hope (future).

Exultation

This is not exaltation, but exultation, sometimes translated rejoice, sometimes glory, sometimes boast (1 Cor. 1:29; Gal. 6:14; Phil. 3:3). It means jubilation, great gladness, overflowing joy, boasting confidence. Christian joy is a great theme—*rejoice in the Lord always, again I say rejoice.*

Hope

This does not mean wishful thinking—“I hope it will rain today.” Rather, it is confident expectation based on certainties. Sometimes it is used with reference to the expected thing itself (Col. 1:27; 1 Tim. 1:1; Titus 2:13).

The Glory of God

What did D. M. Lloyd-Jones mean, when dying he said, “*don’t pray for me, don’t hold me back from the glory*”?

The primary meaning is surely seeing the glory, secondly, obtaining the glory, both ultimately summed up as heaven.

Glory is manifested excellence. An athlete might play both baseball and football but baseball is where he really shines; that is his glory (Ex. 33:18; Luke 9:31, 32; John 2:11; Acts 7:55; 2 Cor. 12:1).

1. We exult, we boast in hope of *seeing* the glory of God manifested at the second coming, in heaven when the skies are rolled back and the veil is taken away and we see him as he is (Matt. 5:8; 16:27; 24:30; 25:31; John 17:24; Titus 2:13; 1 Peter 4:13; 5:1; Jude 24). Day of days, moment of moments, the beginning of the eternal order!

2. We exult, we boast in hope of *sharing* the glory of God upon our

glorification—heaven (Rom. 8:18, 30; 9:23; 1 Cor. 15:43; Phil. 3:21; 1 Thess. 2:12; 2 Tim. 2:10; Heb. 2:10; 1 Peter 5:1). Really, the two can not be separated (John 17:22; Rom. 8:17; Col. 3:4; 2 Thess. 2:14; 1 Peter 5:10; 1 John 3:2). When Stephen saw the glory of God, his own face was lit up like an angel. The bridegroom and the bride can not be separated, nor the head from the body, nor the firstborn from the brethren. When the sun shines, the earth is beautified too. And when the boss shares his glory with his workers, it is all the more to his glory. Show me your glory.

Application.

We have this boastful joy in view of God's glory. Consider all the spectacular sights—Niagara Falls, Yosemite, etc. They are nothing compared to the revelation of God in glory. We shall see him as he is, face to face. We look forward to the day when wrong concepts are routed from the minds of men. We look forward to the day when God will be vindicated and receive the glory due. We have this boastful joy in view of our sharing God's glory, when the church *in all her glory shall be presented* (Eph. 5:27). We rejoice in hope of victory at last—a *crown of glory* (1 Peter 5:4). This joyous hope is:

1. *Effectual in our perseverance.* It is an *anchor to the soul* (Heb. 6:19) in the storms of life. It will be worth it all when we see Jesus (Rom. 8:18; 2 Cor. 4:17). Heaven! The work is done, the battle over, Satan defeated, journey ended, home at last, Paradise regained, the mystery finished, innumerable angels, perfected saints, all things ours. Heaven! Wedding day of all wedding days, the summation of all good, forever with the Lord. Comfort one another with these words. *The joy of the Lord is your strength* (Neh. 8:10).

2. *Assuming assurance.* How can a ball team say “we’ve got ‘em beat” in the fourth quarter unless they are sure of victory? If we are partakers of grace, we can boast of glory, for grace is glory begun (Ex. 33:18f; Eph. 1:6). Our success depends ultimately and entirely on Another. Thus we can boast.

3. *Diminished or increased by our walk.* Sin will squelch our joy. It will turn our wine into water. While it may not take away our salvation, it will rob us of our song. Righteousness will advance it (Heb. 1:9). If you want songs on the radio, you must take time to recharge the batteries. In God's presence is fulness of joy (Psa. 16:11). The Holy Spirit is the administrator of this joy in hope (Luke 1:44; 10:21; Acts

2:13; 13:52; Rom. 14:17; Gal. 5:22; 1 Thess. 1:6).

4. *Only found in Christ.* Christ is our hope (1 Tim. 1:1). *Christ in you the hope of glory* (Col. 1:27). Are you the same you have always been? Or, has Jesus invaded your heart? The essence of salvation is seeing here and now *the glory of God in the face of Christ* (2 Cor. 4:6).

BOASTING IN TRIBULATIONS ALSO

5:3

And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations,
knowing that tribulation brings about...

We have seen three fruits of justification—peace, access, boastful hope. Yes, says an objector, you can rejoice in the future blessings but what about the present curses, the tribulations that the Christian must go through until he arrives in heaven. Does Christianity help me make it through real life here—the afflictions, the adversities, the persecutions, the distresses, the miseries, the sufferings? Tribulum in the French or Latin means treshing sledge. It means to bring pressure. You take a hammer to a walnut for some pressure. Such God does to His people. Consider...

The certainty of tribulations for the Christian.

Tribulations are a very real part of our lives. They are a major theme in the Bible (Matt. 5:10f; John 16:33; Acts 14:22; 2 Cor. 4:8; 6:4; 12:10; Phil. 1:29; Col.1:24; 1 Thess. 3:3; 2 Tim. 3:12; 1 Peter 4:12; Rev. 1:9).

We must conclude that the Lord has called us to battle, a sword not peace (Matt. 10:34). We should not be surprised at the fiery ordeal. Sometimes we must do everything we can to make it through (Eph. 6:13).

What stands out in the biographies of great saints? What do you think of when you think of Job, of Daniel, etc.? It is the trials they encountered, their response, and their victory.

What is our response to tribulations?

It says exult, rejoice, boast (Matt. 5:12; Acts 5:41; 2 Cor. 12:9; Col. 1:24; Heb. 10:34; James 1:2; 1 Peter 4:13).

We are not called to some philosophical resignation in encountering trials. We are not expected to ignore the hardships. We are called to more than 'grin and bear it'. It says rejoice.

But how can we rejoice when we are slandered? And some trials are severe losses that would rip one apart right down the middle.

What is the reason we can boast in tribulation?

We rejoice not because of the trial itself, but because of what the trial produces, what it brings about.

Tribulation brings about *perseverance*—patience, endurance, steadfastness, constancy, strength. The colt will spook at every little thing, but the old mare has been around enough and seen enough that she stays right there and keeps on grazing. If the body builder will increase his strength he must increase the weight, the resistance, the tribulation against his muscles. If a runner will gain endurance, he must put his body through more tribulation. The sisal plant from which we get the fiber for twine is grown in the hard, coral soils of the Yucatan. When transplanted to the lush soils of Florida, it turned to mush. If we will be tough spiritually, we must be exercised.

And this perseverance brings about *proven character*—experience, provenness. We might look for a doctor that has experience, that has proven character. For steel to have the stamp of approval, it must be strong (perseverance); if strong it must be put through the fire (tribulation). Thus, a man will grow in favor with God and men (2 Cor. 8:22; Phil. 2:22) as he is strengthened in his soul and grows in grace.

This proven character brings about *hope*. The more one is conformed to Christ (proven character), the more assurance (hope) he has that he is indeed a real Christian and really going to heaven. Behold, he did not burn out by the tribulations like the false professor (Mark 4:17).

An example of this whole process? Here's a man who goes overseas for a year of missionary work in high expectation. The tribulations set in. He didn't realize the culture was so strange, the work was so hard, the fruit so small, the diseases so distressing, and the loneliness so tormenting. He is tempted to take that round trip ticket to the airport and fly home. But rather, he rises up and draws near to God in a way as never before. When he does return, he finds his soul stronger than ever before. Others see that he passed the tests (proven character). His conformity to Christ through it all has increased his assurance.

Application.

This doctrine ought to be tremendously encouraging. God turns our curses into blessings. Our tribulations are like the wind on the sailboat—they will serve to bring us even further upstream. The eagle can not climb so fast or high without the winds of adversity. The superheated fires actually strengthen the steel. I know of a Christian man who lost

his wife. This was the toughest thing he had ever experienced, but yet he can now testify it was the most life-changing experience.

We need tribulations, it seems, just like the fruit needs the sun for sweetness. You can't get the meat from the nut without applying tribulation. If the wheat kernel will be of use in making up part of the loaf, it must be crushed and ground.

These tribulations will chase us from our laziness and stir us up. They waken the stronger qualities of the soul. They bring into activity the slumbering forces. Being in the sound of the enemies' guns keeps the soldier on the alert. To prevent the corruption of the early church, Jesus sent persecution. These tribulations purge us from our cockiness and bring us low. They force out the self-sufficiency and make us cry out for help—*when I am weak, then I am strong*. They put us hanging on the arms of Omnipotence. We realize we aren't running the chariot of God, but are only a fly on the wheel.

This ought to change our outlook. It ought to deliver us from fear. This is the truth that will let us sing at midnight in the Philippian jail. It will dissolve bitterness for we see that we are not victims of men or circumstances but "it is the Lord" chastening us for our profit. "He sanctifies to us our deepest distress. The flame will not hurt, his only design, our dross to consume and our gold to refine" (Richard Keene).

Thus, you see, there is another source of hope. There is the hope from justification and also sanctification via tribulation. These tribulations initiate a sanctifying process which ends in increased hope and assurance of heaven, the glory of God.

THE SPIRIT'S WITNESS OF THE LOVE OF GOD

5:5

And hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

Certainty.

Hope occurs in verses two and four. Speaking of hope, then, Paul wants us to know that this Bible hope is more than wishful thinking—it will not lead to disappointment. Even though the tribulations are fierce, in the end you will not be ashamed.

Many a worlding has hoped his newlywed spouse would bring great joy to his life but was quite disappointed. Many have hoped they would win the Olympics but were quite disappointed. Many have hoped the physicians would effect a cure and were disappointed. Many have hoped their religion would land them in heaven, but they shall awake to shame and everlasting contempt.

But true Bible hope does not disappoint. How do you know?

Cause.

If you are a Christian, God has or will pour out the Holy Spirit in your heart personally to tell you he loves you. If some wealthy man announced that he would release many slaves, that would offer little comfort to you unless you knew that your name were on the list. So, God comes to us just like to Jesus, *You are My beloved son*.

What is this *pouring out*? I put forward that it is not (as some say) a reference to regeneration. What we have here is a personal Pentecost. Look at the other usages of the term *poured out* (Acts 2:17, 18, 33; 10:45; Titus 3:6). This is something that happens at conversion (Acts 19:6; Eph. 1:18) or after conversion (Acts 8:17).

Notice that it does not say drip, leak, trickle or sprinkle. Pouring out speaks of abundance, free full flow. It is one thing for the child to spill some milk; it is another thing for him to take the pitcher and pour it all out. D. L. Moody had to ask God to stay His hand; he could not take anymore.

For instruction, notice the synonymous terms: Luke 24:49—endued with power; Acts 1:5—baptized with the Holy Spirit; 1:8—

comes upon; 2:4—filling; 2:38—receiving the gift; 8:16—falling upon; 10:38—anooint; Romans 8:16—witness; 2 Corinthians 1:22 and Galatians 4:6—sent forth; Ephesians 1:13—seal. In other words, God comes to the Christian at or after conversion and powerfully tells him that He loves him.

God's *love* for me is the one thing I must know. It is the underlying tide that will carry me on toward the desired haven despite the storms of life. It is the perfume that will overcome every foul odor that comes out of my heart. It is the seed that keeps cropping up despite the toughest crust of sin. It is the one ally that will assure me ultimate victory against all my foes. It is the balm that will heal the wounds of every bitter and fiery dart. Other gods are not loving but the true God is. And the love of the living God, this Creator, this God with whom we have to do, is wonderful. It is one thing to have the love of a pet, another the love of a girlfriend, another the love of parents, and some are loved by the nation. But what about being loved by the great God of heaven!

The witness occurs *within our hearts*. It is not an anointing upon the beard or robes but within. It is more than just a touch; it is within our hearts.

HOW THE LOVE OF GOD WAS DEMONSTRATED

5:6-8

For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died
for the ungodly.

By way of review:

1. The theme of Romans: the gospel.
2. Chapters 1:1 – 3:20: Wrath, condemnation, the need for the gospel.
3. Chapters 3:21 – 4:25: The way to get right with God—justification by faith.
4. Chapter 5: The fruits of justification
 - full peace
 - free access
 - boastful hope, even in tribulations
 - this hope is not imaginary, for God has told you personally that he loves you by the Spirit's witness.

Now, speaking about the love of God in (5:5), consider more about the quality and character of that love. What is it? How has he loved us? What is the nature, the elements, the evidence of that love?

The love of God as seen in the nature of its recipients.

Our text says the recipients are the *helpless*. It is a term we use of a little child or of a cripple or of a person in a state of emergency like when out cutting wood and a tree falls on him. This is man in his natural state since the fall. He is powerless to dissolve the *guilt* of his sin. Who could pay off this infinite debt to divine justice? He is powerless to break the power of and *tendency* to sin. Sin, like a tyrant, sits on the throne of our hearts reigning (5:21). Fallen man is powerless to escape the grave; it takes all in its path. He is powerless to escape the devil's chains—we are taken captive by him to do his will (2 Tim. 2:26). Man is powerless to please god.

Our text says the recipients are *ungodly*. Many go through this world without cars, houses, and families. But think of going through life without God. Or, ungodly means not like God. The image of God

on the soul of man is marred.

Our text says (v. 8) *sinner*s. How about an army that always missed the mark. That is what man has done with God.

Our context says (v. 10) *enemies*. It is not that we were on God's side and messed up, but we were actually on the opposing side.

So behold the love of God—He extends his infinite favors not to friends or good folks, but to infinite debtors, enemies, bad folks, splendid sinners, monsters of iniquity. What manner of love!

The love of God as seen in the timing of its display.

Our text says *at the right time*. God does things at the right time. Man often misses the timing. We talk too long and concrete sets up. But God has everything on schedule. The grapes of wrath are ripening on one hand and the wheat is ready to be harvested on the other.

Historically, Jesus came and died at the right time. (1) Politically, great empires, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece (and soon Rome) had risen and fallen. There were no answers in politics. It was time for the kingdom of God not man, the kingdom of heaven not earth. (2) Philosophically, there were the Platos, the Aristotles, etc. God made their wisdom foolishness; what good did it do? Their wise sayings were proverbs of ashes. They had no basis to say anything. (3) Religion? Hinduism, Buddhism, etc., had produced no explanation for cruelty, pain and death. They offered no satisfactory worldview. Even Judaism which had the word of God was collapsing. Thus, man needed a savior and man's extremity was God's opportunity. It was loving of God to send a Savior at the right time. And it was the right time. (4) Geographically, the Roman roads went everywhere making it easy for the gospel to spread and the Greek language was a vehicle to carry it.

Just as redemption was accomplished at the right time, so also it was applied at the right time *personally*. If God had come to us sooner, we'd not felt our need, if later we'd maybe committed suicide and taken our place in hell. Why didn't God save me earlier so I could have been a witness in high school? I don't know but he knows and it was the right time for shaping my life's story.

The love of God as seen in its very action.

Our text says *Christ died for the ungodly*. Jesus did not merely come as an example (that was loving too), he did not merely come and die as martyr (that is beyond our appreciation), but Christ came to die for

us, substitutionally. He bore our sins in his body on the tree. He was wounded for our transgressions. He satisfied the laws demands and thus the unjust are justified, the ungodly are reconciled.

Summary.

We tend to think that Jesus made God loving. No! Redemption was God's plan and he sent his Son to die. We are talking about the love of God in contrast to the love of Jesus (John 3:16, 1 John 4:10).

We are talking about the love of God in contrast to man. Natural human love is almost always based on the attractiveness of the object loved as with a man and woman. And we are inclined to love those who love us (Matt. 5:46). But this is not so with God. He comes to us as to Saul of Tarsus while breathing out our threatenings against him. Jesus came to a generation that spit in his face. You see, (v. 7) men might, although it is rare, die for a good man, but who would die for an enemy? This is God's love. He kisses the hand of the one who killed his Son.

And, this is the point for our assurance. If God loved us because we loved him then he would love us as long as we loved him and then our salvation would depend on the constancy of our treacherous hearts. But here we see that our salvation depends not on our loveliness or our lovingness but on the certainty of the love of God.

And, this is the message we hear when baptized in the Spirit—God loved me by sending his Son to die for me, even me, an ungodly wretch.

*The worst unto My supper press,
Monsters of daring wickedness.
Tell them my grace for all is free,
None can be too bad for Me.*

Charles Wesley

Do you know this love of God? Have you seen yourself as a helpless, hell-deserving sinner? Are you a candidate for saving grace? Jesus died for the publican, not the Pharisee. Come by faith and trust in Christ's death as the payment for your sins.

MUCH MORE — SAVED FROM WRATH

5:9

Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him.

What are the fruits of justification? Count your many blessings. The believer has...

1. full peace,
2. free access,
3. boastful hope, even from the tribulations,
4. the personal assurance of divine love, and now
5. deliverance from wrath.

Here is a salvation message—*saved from wrath*. However, it is not so much for the unsaved as for the saved. It is yet a further assurance statement for the believer, as is the whole of Romans 5.

The theme is the cross of Christ—justified by His blood. It is as though Paul was not satisfied that he had said enough on it in verses six and eight—*Christ died for the ungodly, Christ died for us*.

The new thought is deliverance from the wrath of God. It had not been stated this clearly yet. However, it is really the reverse way of saying *we have peace with God* (v. 1). It was suggested as propitiation, that is appeasing wrath, in 2:8-10 and 3:25.

Consider the Meaning of Justification.

We use the term justification in everyday talk. Some typewriters justify the margin, that is, they line it up with the standard. We might ask someone how they justify themselves, that is, how do you reckon yourself right in doing such (Luke 10:29). It is, moreover, courtroom terminology, that is, the judge either justifies or condemns the criminal. And we see from that, it is a declarative, forensic act (Isa. 5:23, Prov. 17:15). Justification is the pronouncement God makes on the sinner, upon his exercise of saving faith, that he is righteous because of his imputing to him the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

True or False: *Upon saving faith, we know our past sins are forgiven and now we must tow the line?*

No, justification is more than forgiveness. Rather, it is an imputation of Christ's righteousness to our account. Thus, we have a positive,

infinite, eternal, divine righteousness, the righteousness of the Son of God. It is one thing to have your debt paid down at the grocery store, but how about having the grocery bill paid forever.

But how can God justify the unjust and yet be just? Isn't that abominable to him (Prov. 17:15)? That brings us to...

The Basis for Justification.

The believers are justified *by His blood*. Justice was executed.

The blood takes us back to those Old Testament Jewish altars. Written, as it were, around those altars were words like, *the wages of sin is death, the soul that sins must die, without the shedding of blood there is no remission, and I have given you the blood on the altar to make atonement for your souls*. We could go back further to the doorway of Egypt where we see the Jewish fathers slaying the Passover lamb and sprinkling the blood. We could go back to Mt. Moriah and there find a lamb was slain in the place of a little boy. We could go back to the garden and find the guilty pair clothed with, not fig leaves, but animal skins—blood had been shed.

Why the altars? God was teaching substitutionary blood atonement. But is it possible for animals to atone for men (Heb. 9:9)? No, they rather foreshadowed a Lamb sent from God who could. Now we, like they, by faith, lay our hands on that dear head of his and confess our sins trusting that he bore the guilt of our sins in his body on the tree and we have *peace through the blood of his cross*. When a person savingly believes, our guilt is put on Jesus' back and His righteousness is put on ours. What is the basis for our acceptance in heaven? Not penance, good works, hard works (all of which are dead works), but the blood of Christ.

Note: In 3:24 we have *justified by grace*. In 3:28 we have *justified by faith*. Here we have *by blood*. The first is the source, the second the means and the third the basis or grounds for justification.

The Ultimate End or Fruit of Justification.

We shall be *saved from wrath*. Man has had his days—New Year's Day, Valentine's Day, Ground Hog Day, April Fools Day, Independence Day, etc. God has a day, a day of wrath, a day of judgment on all unrighteousness. He has fixed that day (Acts 17:31) and no one can stop it. All will be there—presidents, popes, princes, preachers, politicians, paupers, and prostitutes.

It will be the calamity of all calamities to meet this angry God unprepared. Tough verdicts have been handed down by judges but who will be able to bear those words from the judge of all the earth, *you fool, depart from Me, cast him out*. It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of muggers, but how about the living God (Heb. 10:31)? We've seen the haystacks burn, houses burn, cities burn, forests burn, but here we are talking about a cosmic holocaust. Was there wailing in Egypt when the death angel went through? Yes, but what shall it be when on the Day of Wrath? *Weeping and gnashing of teeth*.

This is what the Christian is saved from! We were formerly children of wrath (Eph. 2:3). We walked around under the sword of divine judgment (John 3:36).

What is the application? The security of the believer. If you have on the robe of Christ's spotless righteousness, the flames of hell won't touch you. But you ask, much might happen before I get to glory? No, all justified shall be glorified (8:30). But what about remaining sin? No condemnation! But what about my blind spots? Who shall charge the elect, it is God that justifies (8:33)! But what about the devil's accusations? Who is he who condemns, it is Christ that died (8:34)! But what about the devil's devices? They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb (Rev. 12:11)! What about my conscience? Much more shall the blood of Christ cleanse your conscience (Heb. 9:14). But is this redemption lasting? Will I fall? He entered into the holy place by His blood and obtained eternal redemption for us (Heb. 9:12). But who can stand when He appears? When I see the blood I will pass over you (Ex. 12:13). But won't God possibly be at odds with me? Call out to Zion, her warfare is ended, her iniquity is pardoned (Isa. 40:1).

Believer, Jesus' shed blood has quenched the fires of wrath. He has drained the cup of wrath and none remains. The sword of divine justice has found its victim and looks no further.

No wrath! If God has begun such a work, *much more*, he will finish it. If he began the work at the expense of his Son, *much more*, he will finish it. If he dug so deep to lay the foundation, *much more*, he will finish it (Matthew Henry). Our destiny is decided, no wrath, but glory (1 Thess. 5:9). No wrath *through him*. All Christ's virtues are our fire-proof robe.

What are you trusting to get you through the eternal flames? *How shall you escape the sentence of hell?* Will you keep on in sin, storing up wrath (2:5) like the criminal storing up stolen goods in the back of

his house, only to further condemn himself? Flee, as from a storm, the wrath to come. Make quick steps to the mercy seat where the blood of the Lamb was spilled. Jesus died, not to make good folks better, but to save sinners. Are you bad enough?

MUCH MORE — SAVED BY HIS LIFE

5:10

For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.

We have another...

1. Salvation message, not for the lost so much as for the already saved—a word regarding their preservation, *saved by His life*.
2. The message on the cross of Christ, *by His death*. Note: verses 6, 8, 9.
3. *Much more*, that is, logical deductions regarding assurance.

First, we must understand our previous condition—we were enemies.

It does not say that we were on God's side and messed up a little, a few mistakes, wrong judgments, got in with the wrong crowd, etc. No, we were *enemies*. It does not say we became enemies, we *were* enemies right from the start, from the origin of the human race. When Adam fell he did not just break his finger, he broke his neck, he broke communication with God and thus the race became degenerate, reprobate, and rebellious. The finest fellow around is a God-hater. Self is sovereign in the soul of man and will tolerate no rivals. It will not yield. It stoutly maintains, "*I am and there is no other.*"

Man is at war with God and God is at war with man. God intends to put sinners in hell. Man is dangling over a bottomless pit.

Thus, we ought to remember the background, how we were when God found us.

Second, we ought to remember what God has done for our souls—we are reconciled through the death of His Son.

To reconcile means to bring into agreement. We reconcile the checkbook with the bank statement. Husbands and wives can be reconciled after an argument. God and man can be reconciled. Jesus calls the Christians, friends. The father and son relationship is just a little picture of this spiritual reality. How did it happen?

Death, *the death of his Son*. Restitution is necessary. If a farmer's

cows get out and eat off the neighbor's corn, his being sorry is hardly enough to satisfy the irate neighbor. Restitution must be made. But how can we make restitution when we have done so much damage to the kingdom of God in transgressing his holy laws? The *death of His Son* paid all in full. The wages of sin is death and Jesus' death was enough. Yes, it was of the infinite value of the death of the Son of God that satisfied the sword of justice.

Third, we have a logical conclusion regarding our security—*much more, saved by His life.*

The first *much more* contrasts enemies with friends. If God has so favored us when enemies, now *much more* he will favor us when friends, when sons. If sin was not a barrier to God in initiating our redemption, *much more* how could it become a barrier to the completion of our redemption? If sin in the greater degree did not prevent my reconciliation, *much more* how could sin in the lesser degree prevent our staying reconciled? If God's grace covers for the sins of enemies, surely *much more* it will cover the sins of children. The argument is from greater to lesser. If God has done the greater, *much more* the lesser. *It is a greater work in bringing sinners to grace than bringing saints to glory. Sin is farther from grace than grace is from glory.* Note God did not favor us when we were converted and became friends; it was while we were yet enemies. The reconciliation here is from God's side based on the atonement.

The second *much more* contrasts the death and the life of the Son of God. Death was the inglorious part of his ministry and work; it was his humiliation. The resurrection is the exaltation. If, as a testator, he went so far as to work up a legacy for such unworthies, *much more*, as an executor, by his life he will apply it.

The third *much more* contrasts Jesus' death for us with his life *in us*. Reconciliation was outward and legal. Now we are saved, preserved, by Jesus' life *in us*. So, the One who breathed worlds into existence is now breathing in our soul. An over-powered truck or tractor might tear up its own gears. So, it is a wonder that we are not torn up by the mighty power of Christ dwelling in us. So much greater is he who is in us than he who is in the world that surely we shall be preserved by his life. If some surface wind could reverse the mighty ocean current, then some sin or trouble could keep us from arriving at the desired haven. If some school boy could knock down the Statue of Liberty with

his pebbles, then some Satan-inspired sin could keep us from being more than conquerors through him who loved us. What adversity is too great for the indwelling Christ? We are members together with him; we have a new nature, a propensity to holiness through his life within. The Son of God is fitting a people for glory. We ought to be flooded with assurance. Amen.

WE ALSO EXULT IN GOD

5:11

And not only this, but we also exult in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.

Another blessing of justification is exultation in God, boastful rejoicing in God. This verse could be outlined with four selected words: (1) *also* (2) *exult* (3) *in God*.

Also.

The word “also” tells us that there is a connection with the previous verse—“not only this, but also.” Verse ten said that if we are reconciled (even when enemies) then surely we will be preserved. But verse eleven is saying, “not only this, but there will *also* be joy all along the way.”

It is such a contrast! Not only are we reconciled to the King with whom we were once at war, and with that, an assurance to be kept from all of his wrath, but *also* here we are promised the blessing of enjoying fellowship with the king himself. We are on that good of terms with the king. To put it another way, if the Lord has purchased our entrance into the celestial city, much more he will preserve us until our arrival (v. 10), but not only this, he *also* gives us a spring in our step all along the way.

You might be asking what is the difference between this and verse two, *exulting in hope of the glory of God*? Verse two is talking about heaven and this earth. Verse two is talking about the future and the present. Verse two is talking about our rejoicing in the prospect of our benefiting *from* God and this is talking about present joy *in* God.

Exult.

Our God is not a kill-joy. This call is to joy. There is joy in serving Jesus. Other so-called gods are cruel. One thing that led a Brahmin priests conversion from Hinduism was his dissatisfaction at the cruelty of his gods. The God who is there *could be* cruel and what could we say? Could we complain if he did not meet our standards? But, also, he is not cruel, rather joyful. Think of the warm affection that existed between the Father and the Son before the world began!

The blessing here is not only salvation but a song and a smile. A family might return from vacation and realize that they made the trip but it was not an enjoyable one. Never so here.

Also exult in God.

What is it that makes a marriage so happy and desirable? It is the partner. What is it about Christianity that is so desirable, so attractive, so satisfying, so wonderful? It is God himself.

Yes, God is big enough to satisfy you. We should not be surprised that we do quite well with our Maker. We should not be surprised that the All-sufficient God is sufficient for us, that the Infinite would have enough to meet our finite personal needs.

Rebellion is insanity. Depression is folly. Bitterness is so heinous—am I upset with God? Worldliness is such an insult to God, the One who is so entirely desirable and satisfying. We ought to joy in him!

The world has no such support as we have. They have no friend or companion like we have. They have no comforter. They have no answer. We have every reason to joy in God. Yet we sometimes lack this “joy unspeakable.”

What are some causes for this lack of joy?

1. First, the unbelief of the lost person. The unbeliever has no joy for he has not *received the reconciliation*. God has hammered out the terms of peace but he won't accept them.
2. The unbelief of the believer strips you of joy. Note that joy and faith are tied together: 1 Peter 1:8; Romans 15:13. If you don't fully believe the doctrine of reconciliation, you can't lay back and rejoice. Some start out in the Spirit and then began to think that there is some burden they must carry to really be accepted with God. Remember, you have the righteousness of Christ on your books.
3. Known sin in the life of the believer will take your joy away.
 - a. Self-preservation, fearing the cost, and following at a distance from him who is the joy-giver will cut you short on joy.
 - b. Laziness, not enough time in prayer and meditation will short your joy.

- c. Fear of man will remove your joy. If we are not willing to be persecuted, we will not have the joy of being persecuted for righteousness sake (Matt. 5:10). All sins are grievances to the Holy Spirit and hinder your joy, for the Holy Spirit is the author of joy (Luke 10:21; Acts 2:13; 13:52; Gal. 5:22). Joy is a companion of righteousness (Rom. 14:17; Heb. 1:9). We find David, because of his sin crying out to the Lord to *restore to me the joy of your salvation* (Ps. 51:12).
- d. An overreaction against false joy will take away your genuine joy. You see the fleshly religious excitement and overreact in the opposite direction. But joylessness is not humility either.

Think! Heaven is characterized by joy *enter into the joy of your Master* (Matt. 25:21). (Also: Ps. 16:11; John 16:22; Heb. 12:2). In this life our joy is mixed with sorrow, as the Puritan said, “The Lord in wisdom mixes our wine with water to keep us from becoming loose and arrogant.” Yet, right now we can have enough to turn a prison into a palace. Outer circumstances may be miserable, but Habakkuk says, *yet will I exult in the Lord*. He is God, *our exceeding joy*, (Psalm 43:4). And *rejoice in this, that our names are recorded in heaven*, our sins are forgiven, we have been reconciled.

ADAM'S SIN AND THE REIGN OF DEATH

5:12-14

Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned.

Paul has given us the need of the gospel in Chapters 1 – 3:20. In 3:21 – 4:25 he has given us an explanation of the gospel, namely justification by faith, and in 5:1-11, the blessings of justification and the security of the believer.

Now to emphasize yet more of the security of the believer, note the continued use of *much more*, in verses 15, 17, 20. Paul uses an analogy, a comparison of contrasts between Adam and Christ, for Adam, he says, *was a type of Him who was to come* (v. 14).

Further security? Yes, our right standing with God comes through *one Man Jesus Christ*. Notice the repeated use of *through* in Chapter 5, even up to 5:12. Now, *therefore*, just as through one man we have sin and death, so also through one Man we have justification and life. So first, in verses 12-14, the dark side of the comparison is established.

The entrance of sin and its universality.

It says *through one man sin entered*. We would be concerned if a thief entered our house, if a snake entered our house, or if ants entered our house. Then surely we ought to be concerned if sin entered the world, yes, even our hearts. Sin was crouching at the door of the human race and entered. How? One man, Adam.

This takes us back to creation, to the garden. Man's problem with sin goes back to the origin, back to Adam's original sin. Yes, Satan was the ultimate originator of sin, but amongst the world of humanity, it was Adam in his willfulness and Eve in her deception—Adam being ultimately responsible.

We ought to feel it—the world is not normal. An enemy is here. All was calm on the sea of humanity until this meteor of sin crashed in and made ripples forever. Now man is deformed spiritually. He is fallen. He has a propensity to sin like a hog desires to root in the mud. He loves darkness. An infant need not be taught to sin. He does what is natural being a child of the devil.

The entrance of death and its universality.

God told Adam, *in the day you eat of it you will die*. And he did die. He immediately died spiritually, being cut off from the life of God. Adam went on to live a total of 930 years, yet *Adam died*. Death is not natural. It is a consequence of penal punishment that is justly deserved. (Rom. 6:23, 1 Cor. 15:22).

There are various kinds of death:

1. Spiritual death—separation from the life of God (Eph. 2:1; 4:18).
2. Physical death—the body separated from the soul (Gen. 35:18).
3. Eternal death—man separate from God entirely, the second death, hell (Rev. 20:14).

Death in all its levels and aspects: broken homes, hurt relationships, marred characters, spoiled reputations, ill health, etc. It is sin that has put weeds in our fields, sweat on our brow, war on our borders, and cemeteries on our hills.

Death is universal. It has spread to the pauper and the prince, the tinker and the tyrant, the slave and the sovereign, the metal worker and the monarch, the fetus (yes, some die before they are born), and the pharaoh. It has spread to the beast and the bird and the bee and the bug and the trees and the house and the car. Creation is rotted by sin (Rom. 8:20).

Death is an undisputed tyrant, it *reigns*. With all our achievements and advancements, who can conquer this *enemy* (1 Cor. 15:26)? Man, noble man, made in the image of God, is reduced to dust!

The ultimate reason for the spread of death.

The text says, *because all sinned*. There are various positions as to what that means:

1. All sinned personally ratifying Adam's decision (Rom. 3:10).
2. All are sinners inherently, by nature (John 3:19).
3. All are sinners legally, they sinned in Adam (Romans 5:14).

I think the Bible teaches the third position for these reasons:

1. Greek scholars say this is the aorist tense which indicates a

once-for-all past action.

2. It fits the context, such as, verse nineteen, *made (constituted) sinners by one man's disobedience*.
3. It is the only explanation for the death of infants or the fetuses who never sinned personally (Rom. 9:11). Yet, sin had to be on the scene somewhere or they would not die.
4. Number two would not agree with the analogy emphasized in this context, namely, imputed guilt/imputed righteousness.

Incidentally, what about the aforementioned infants who die? Do all children who die go to hell? I don't think the Bible will let us conclude one thing or another. They are in danger of hell but yet God might save some. John the Baptist was regenerate from his mother's womb.

Conclusion, application, summary.

1. This should greatly affect our worldview:
 - a. Adam was surely a historical person, not some made-up story. If you deny Adam, you must deny Christ.
 - b. There are only two races of humanity: cursed/blessed, dead/alive, in Adam/in Christ.
 - c. We see the plight of man, dying like flies at the rate of about two per second.
 - d. We see how hateful and hurtful sin is, what awful wages it pays.
 - e. What a liar Satan is (Gen. 3:4) *you shall not die*. That's all we've done.
 - f. God deals with man on the basis of a covenant-head, a representative. Just as we are condemned by one, Adam, so we are justified by One, the second man, the last Adam, Christ.
2. You might ask, "is this fair," this business of being condemned by another man's sin? Remember:
 - a. God did not ask you what you think is fair.
 - b. If he wanted to be fair, you might be in hell now, or, there might not have been a race after Adam or Noah.

3. This representative principle contains also the glorious gospel—just as I am condemned by the sin of one, so also I can be justified by the obedience of another man.
4. We ought to ask ourselves, am I in Adam or in Christ? If you are the same you have always been, you are in Adam. You need to repent and believe. If you are in Christ, you are in, never in and out. Amen.

CHRIST'S GRACE MUCH MORE ABOUNDING

5:15

But the free gift is not like the transgression. For if by the transgression of the one the many died, much more did the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abound to many.

Paul, having established the groundwork for an analogy, now proceeds with his comparison of opposites. Remember the target is the security of the believer, assurance of salvation. He is using the Fall to prove the regeneration, the work of Adam to prove the work of Christ. First, consider...

The first man, Adam, and his transgression.

Adam transgressed. "Trans" means across. A transmission transmits the power across from the motor to the wheels. Adam transgressed by going across the lines of God's command. One act of disobedience! The result? "The many died." That one transgression put us to building hospitals and jails; it put tears in our eyes and handkerchiefs in our pockets to catch those tears and to catch the sneezes of our diseases; it put glasses on our face; it put us to buying clothing because of the shame and the winter; it rotted the trees and our cars and our houses; it put weeds in our fields and sweat on our brow; it started the wars and released the plagues; it took away our loved ones; it put cemeteries on the hills; it reduced nobleman to dust and the creation of God to vanity. Worst of all, that one act cut us off from God. It is reported that one act started the famous Chicago fire. This one act plunged the human race into incredible misery.

Who are "the many?" It is all mankind (v. 12). Now consider...

The second man, Jesus Christ — his gracious gift and how it differed.

What is the "gift"? We have the Greek word *karisma*. Sometimes the gift of God is with reference to eternal life (Rom. 6:23). Sometimes it is Christ himself (John 3:16). Sometimes it is the Holy Spirit (John 4:10). Sometimes it is gifts of the Spirit (Ephesians 4:8). Here it is defined in the context two verses later: *righteousness*.

How is this gift not like the transgression? *First, it is a "gift by*

grace,” a gracious gift. God could have left us in our fix; it was sheer grace that he made a way out. If my father communicated a disease to me from his sinful lifestyle, no one is obliged to help me. How gracious of God to send his Son to earn a righteousness for me! Grace! A charming sound! Yet it is reported that of those professing Christians who actively share their faith, 88 percent believe in works-salvation. We do well to remember that the incarnation was by grace (2 Cor. 8:9), Christ’s perfect life was by grace (Luke 2:40), and his substitutionary death was by grace (Heb. 2:9). We should remember that our election was by grace (Rom. 11:5), our regeneration was by grace (Eph. 2:5), our call was by grace (Gal. 1:15), our saving faith is by grace (Acts 18:27), our justification was by grace (Titus 3:7), our sanctification was by grace (John 1:16), our supplication is from grace (Heb. 4:16), our resurrection is by grace (1 Peter 1:13), our glorification is a declaration of grace (Eph. 2:7), all our expectation is grace (2 Thess. 2:16), and the Bible is called “the word of grace” (Acts 14:3; 20:32).

Second, this gift is given, not by a mere man, but by One, Jesus Christ, the Messiah, the Son of God, the God/man. Such a one is He who took Adam’s place—the second man, the last Adam. When one man fails in accomplishing God’s purpose, God raises up another. Joshua replaced Moses, David replaced Saul, and Elisha replaced Elijah. But who could replace Adam? Who could undo the massive effects of Adam’s sin? Who is competent to start a new humanity? Christ Jesus, it is he! He is the one who could dethrone sin and death. He is the one who could lift the penalty on a guilty race. He is the one who could go into hell’s bottomless pit and come up again. He is the one who could enter Satan’s stronghold and spoil his goods. After all, the first man was from earth, the second from heaven.

Third, the free gift is not like the transgression in that it “much more abounds.” Note it does not say “more,” but “much more,” no, *much more abounds*. It much more abounds...

1. In the type of results—not death but life, abounding life;
2. In the certainty of results—Adam’s life was broken but Christ’s life is eternal;
3. In the extent of the result—Christ’s work...
 - a. Does not merely bring us back to neutral, but gives us a positive righteousness,

- b. Brings us back not to a position of probation, but a title to Paradise,
- c. Makes us not merely sons of God by creation, but sons of God by adoption and regeneration.

Surely we must conclude that if we are “in,” we are “in.” But are you in? Are you one of *the many*? Are you one of those who have *received this abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness* (v. 17)?

MORE ABOUT THE MUCH MORES

5:16-17

...much more those who receive the abundance of grace.

What brought up the parallel of Adam and Christ? It is the word *through*. Paul had been delineating the blessings of justification—they are all *through* Him. Now, see how *through* Adam what results were effected, and moreover now *through* Christ see what results were effected.

The results are like lines going in opposite directions—*not like* the free gift (vv. 15, 16). And Christ's line is infinitely bolder—*much more*. Having made the general statement in verse 15, now Paul gives us two great explanations in verses 16, 17.

The free gift much more abounds in view of the setting in which each had to work (v. 16).

The condemnation arose from one sin, the free gift in the face of many. It had to work out of a setting of much opposition, much cause against it.

When Christ came to accomplish redemption, darkness, gross darkness was on the face of the earth. Idolatry, superstition, pride, murders! Sin, over the generations, had piled up to heaven—wicked acts, words, thoughts. He came into the world he made and it knew him not. They spit on him and killed him. And when Jesus came to your heart to apply redemption, you had sins more in number than the hairs of your head. See the largeness of the pardon and the greatness of Christ's work. It is as though the man with the broken feet won the race.

The free gift much more abounded as to the extent and the power of the results (v. 17).

1. Consider that the free gift much more abounded in that those who *receive* it obtain a positive *righteousness*. Adam had merely innocence and neutrality. The Christian has *much more*—a righteousness, a divine righteousness. The Christian is on better ground, for he is no longer on probation but has a title to heaven. He is not merely a son of God by creation but a

son by adoption and regeneration.

2. Consider that the free gift much more abounds in that it conveys a power to overcome all the effects of the fall—*shall reign in life*. Through Adam's one transgression, *death reigned*. Death, down through the ages, has stalked, has marched as an invincible tyrant. The Hitlers, the Napoleons, the Casears, the great conquerors, at last, were themselves conquered by death. The world is a scene of death. 75 million perished under the Black Plague in four years; 9 million perished by famine in China about a hundred years ago; 6 million Jews were exterminated seventy-five years ago. One way or another this *last enemy* gets us all. With all our advances and technology, death stands as the one single failure of mankind. Who can turn it around? None, expect the other man appointed by God, Jesus Christ.

Jesus Himself conquered death. He went down into the grave and came up again. He abolished death (2 Tim. 1:10). By his death, death died. By his death, he destroyed the devil, who had the power of death (Heb. 2:14). Jesus' death was a ransom to God whereby the death sentence on believing sinners is lifted whereby the jailor, the devil, has no right or power over his captives.

The reign of life! Jesus bestows his life on poor sinners dead in sin, and that infusion of life is so mighty that it takes us right through the grave and it also breaks the power of sin. The reign of grace and life will overcome all the effects of the fall. *Much more!* The Christian will enjoy a Paradise in the hereafter *much more* wonderful than Adam had before he fell. The Christian will serve righteousness and God *much more* than he ever served sin and the devil.

Adam acted for us. Jesus cared for us—if you have repented and received him then you are in him. This is pure gospel. This is sovereign, all-conquering grace. The reign of grace.

THE OBEDIENCE OF THE ONE

5:18-19

For as through one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous.

Before verse 19, there are some considerations from verse 18. First, it is a fine summary of the whole section. Through the action of one—imputed guilt, and through the action of another—imputed righteousness or justification, justification of life, for when the criminal is justified from his crime he does not die for it but goes free, he lives. Second, what is the *one act*? It would seem to be the crowning act of a life of obedience when Jesus offered himself up in death at Calvary (Heb. 10:10). Third, who are the *all men*? We know that the first is indeed every man without exception. But the second can mean some. We know from countless other scriptures that some are going to hell. We must conclude that the second *all men* are those in Christ (1 Cor. 15:22), they are those that *receive grace* (v. 17). Notice that sometimes “all” does not mean all without exception but rather, all without distinction (1 Tim. 2:4). Now from v. 19, consider the *obedience of the One*.

Our Lord's commitment to a life of obedience.

Why did Jesus come down from heaven? Was it to call the twelve disciples, to feed the hungry, to heal the sick, to raise the dead, to defeat the devil, to die on the cross? No, the ultimate motive that he had was simply to obey God, to do the Father's will. This was what brought him down from heaven (John 6:38). This was the reason he appeared on the scene (Heb. 10:7). The will, the matter that occupied him (Luke 2:49) was the sum total of his plans and program (John 5:19). This was the spring that drove him (John 4:34). This was the source of his doctrine (John 7:16). This was the distressing burden of his heart (Luke 12:49). This was the shield of his soul (Matthew 4:4). This was his confidence (John 8:29, 46). This was his anchor in the storm (Matt. 26:39). This was the pillow on his death bed (John 17:4). And finally, obedience unto death (Philippians 2:8)!

The course of our Lord's obedience.

Jesus' obedience took him from heaven to earth, from eternity into time, and from the realm of holiness into sin. Like a king, he lays aside his robes, like a son he leaves home. The infinite becomes finite, the All-sufficient becomes all-dependent, the Author of light enters the darkness of the womb and of the tomb. He who teaches man knowledge becomes a learner (Heb. 5:8). His obedience took him to the waters of Jordan to identify with sinners, it took him to the place of temptation, and it took him preaching all roundabout in a zeal that consumed him. Finally it took him to Jerusalem to die a felon's death.

The consequences of our Lord's obedience.

It says, *many will be made righteous*. He fulfilled all righteousness and thus earned a title to heaven for the believer.

Other men of God had their failures. Moses, Abraham, and Noah had failure and alas, Adam. It was Adam's single hand that lifted the latch and let sin and death leap through the door. It was his single act that broke the first link in the chain and let all humanity fall into condemnation and depravity.

But Jesus' righteous life reversed the effects of the Fall. His passive obedience (his death) paid the debt of hell for us, but his active obedience (his life) earned a title to heaven for us. The first satisfied the condemnations of the Law but the second satisfied the conditions. The first brought us back to zero but the second gave us a positive righteousness. We generally think of the substitutionary death of Christ, but this is emphasizing the substitutionary life of Christ.

What about the word "made" righteous? Is it experiential or legal? It is true that experiential always accompanies the legal, or, regeneration accompanies justification. However, the context surely suggests we should take it to be legal, and also the very word is used that way (Luke 12:14, 2 Cor. 5:21). When boys go out to play ball, they "make" that tree first base, etc. So, by Christ's obedience, we are appointed, constituted, regarded as righteous.

Conclusions and Applications.

Have you laid aside your own righteousness and then submitted yourself to the righteousness from God? If search were made through heaven, earth and hell would there be found only one reason for your acceptance into heaven and that being Jesus' righteousness for you?

If you are in Christ because you have believed with all your heart, what assurance and security is yours! Another has acted for you. Your acceptance into heaven has nothing to do with your manner of life. Jesus' obedience not only took us out of the position of condemnation but also out of probation and has given us a title to heaven. This is pure gospel to the glory of his grace. Amen.

THE SUPER-ABOUNDING REIGN OF GRACE

5:20-21

And the Law came in that the transgression might increase; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, that, as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

These verses seem to be a summary of Chapter 5 and a climax of all Paul has said thus far in his epistle. Paul's purpose is still to put forward the security of the believer. He sets forth grace in all its beauty.

The Reign of Sin.

Adam's single hand lifted the latch and let this tyrant Sin enter the city of Mansoul and there it has *reigned* perpetually with none whatsoever able to overcome it apart from grace. Good works has tried but only was sucked in and made a helper to its cause. Religion has tried but only was brainwashed and made to be one of its best secret agents. Civil government has tried but it can't even get close to its throne room. Natural man is ruled by sin—babies, teens, elderly, kings and preachers. Man is dead in sin (Eph. 2:1)—he has no sensitivity to life and reality. He is an internal captive—he loves darkness (John 3:19). If the prison gate was opened, the sinner would not step out. It is an abomination for him to depart from evil (Prov. 13:19). All are under sin's dread sway. Many have gone out conquering and to conquer but never conquered all. Sin did. It gets them even before they are born.

Sin reigns in *death*. It is so ugly, so cruel, so corrupting, so degenerative, so destructive—death! Every sin yields some form of death. Look what it has done to your car, your house, your body. This world is an Hakeldama, a field of blood.

Sin increased by the *Law*. Paul had mentioned the Law back in verse 13—it did not condemn anyone, for sin and death already existed back in Adam's day. The Law did not save anyone either (3:20). Then why the Law? It was given to make sin increase to make the need for a Savior all the more apparent. The Law (1) *defines sin* (3:20), as a speed limit sign. Now there is no doubt about what speed is too fast to take that corner. The Law (2) *deploys sin* (7:5, 8, 11). The speed limit sign tempts one to a violation, for such is sin's rebellious nature. So, the

Law entered, came in alongside (Greek: *para*), to show the Jews and the whole world that they need a Savior. The perfect Law of God only further showed up the imperfections of the heart.

The Reign of Grace.

By definition grace is no mushy force. Here it is portrayed as a king, a conqueror. Grace is always sovereign and free. Grace high-handedly ousted sin from its throne. It did what medicine could not do and conquered drunkenness. It did what the department of corrections could not do and restrained the Gadarene internally. It did what the civil government could not do and transformed nations. It did what wealth could not do and produced happiness. It did what religion could not do and wrote the Law on the heart.

Consider the reign of grace historically.

1. God's design was to get us out of our fix before we got in the fix. God planned salvation before the fall and creation (Matt. 25:34; 1 Peter 1:20, 2 Tim. 1:9).
2. Sin brought on the fall yet grace raised up a promise (Gen. 3:15).
3. Sin slew Abel yet grace raised up Seth.
4. Sin brought on a flood yet Noah found grace.
5. Sin scattered them at the Tower of Babel yet grace raised up Abraham for a holy nation.
6. Sin sought to destroy God's people in Egypt yet grace raised up a Joseph and a Moses.
7. Finally after all the long waiting for the fulfillment of the gracious promises, a Savior arrives, brought down from heaven by grace (2 Cor. 8:9).
8. It was grace that caused him to persevere and stay true (Luke 2:40).
9. It was grace that gave him the words to preach (Ps. 45:2; Luke 4:22).
10. It was grace that appointed and enabled him to die (Heb. 2:9).
11. It was grace that created Pentecost and sent the Spirit (Heb. 10:29).

12. The church age is described as a dispensation of grace (Ephesians 3:2).
13. The completed Bible and especially the gospel message is grace (Acts 14:3).
14. The Lord's return will bring grace (1 Peter 1:13).

Consider the reign of grace personally.

1. Election (Rom. 11:5).
2. Predestination (Eph. 1:5-6).
3. Calling (Gal. 1:15). Sure, there is a resistable grace. But when God purposes to get the job done, he turns up the power (Eph. 1:19).
4. Regeneration (Eph. 2:5).
5. Saving faith (Acts 18:27).
6. Justification (Titus 3:7).
7. Forgiveness (Eph. 1:7).
8. Beginning of life of self-denial (Titus 2:12).
9. Progressive sanctification (John 1:16).
10. Strengthening (Heb. 13:9).
11. Sustained in trials (2 Cor. 12:9).
12. Used of God (1 Cor. 15:10).
13. Spiritual gifts (Rom. 12:6).
14. Answers to prayer (Heb. 4:16).
15. Glorification in heaven (Eph. 2:7).
16. Conclusion: all of grace; manifold grace, rich, surpassing (Eph. 1:6, 18; 2:7; 1 Peter 4:10).

Consider how the reign of grace has super-abounded above the reign of sin.

The Greek word has the prefix "*hyper*" or hyper which means beyond measure. A hyperbole is an extravagant exaggeration. How was grace super-abounded?

In the cosmos: With all the floods, famine, quakes, epidemics, crime, injustice, pain, loss and death, yet grace will restore all the effects of the fall to an even better setting. The Paradise lost will not compare to the Paradise regained (Isa. 11:9; 2 Peter 3:12, 13).

a. In the believer: Not only no condemnation but a divine

righteousness for the believer—*through righteousness grace reigns.*

- b. Not only turned from sin but serving righteousness better than we ever served sin.
- c. Not only delivered from death but possessing a glorified body— eternal life!

Have you been to the mighty throne of grace and submitted yourself as a sinner in need of grace? Have you submitted as a subject willing to be reigned by grace? Fall into the pierced hand, for it is all *through Jesus Christ our Lord* that we are more than conquerors!

CHAPTER 6

CONTINUING IN SIN?

6:1-2

What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace might increase? May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it?

Chapter 6 of Romans—an old friend's house to which we may continually turn in on the road to heaven, a great help and a guiding light through the waste howling wilderness of sin, a jewel box full of exceedingly great and precious promises, an armory where the soldier of Christ may find some of the best armor in the battle of the ages.

Do we have a new section? Yes, now we are talking about sanctification, not justification; now we are talking about freedom from the power of sin, not the penalty of sin. But no, it is not exactly new. Romans 5:17 already talks about reigning in life. And the word “then” shows it is an outflow of what was said.

We have seen the outline:

Chapter 1-3: condemnation,

Chapter 4-5: justification,

Chapter 6-8: sanctification,

Chapter 9-11: separation of the Jews,

Chapter 12ff: exhortation.

But is that accurate? Notice that Chapter 8 is much the same as Chapter 5.

Chapter 8:

- assurance of salvation
- security of the believer
- no condemnation
- witness of the Spirit
- all for good
- more than conquerors

I am persuaded that D. M. Lloyd-Jones has a good point—that Chapters 6 and 7 are to be viewed as a parenthesis. For, Paul draws aside to deal with what he just said in Romans 5:20, particularly, about the increase

of grace with sin and about the Law increasing sin.

Why did Paul ask this question?

Paul anticipated the objection to what he had said—the more sin, the more grace is manifested and magnified in overcoming it. The adversary might reason this way: the greater the storm, the greater the sea-worthiness of the ship is displayed; the greater the enemy, the greater the valor of the warrior is displayed; the more I sin, the more forgiving grace is displayed. “After all, Paul, you have been saying that I can get to heaven apart from performance, apart from how I live, apart from the law. I might as well then live lawlessly.”

Paul’s response and reason

Paul says, *may it never be*. The KJV says, *God forbid*. It was the strongest expression of abhorrence in those days. And why? We died to sin and can’t live in it.

Died to sin! If you are a Christian this ought to ring your bells, it ought to put steel in your will and confidence in your God. Sin is my great enemy. There is the one that put aches in my heart, wrinkles on my brow, that is reducing me to dust, that is ruining the world. But we have died to sin. That old tyrant is dethroned. Its awful power is broken. I no longer have a deep desire to go against God.

Died! No stronger language could be used. I might be comforted a little if my enemy became sick, or moved away, or was imprisoned, but much more if I learned that he died.

Died! It does not say “shall be dead.” It does not say “ought to be dead” like the crucified life and Keswick teaching. It does not say “can be dead” like the Wesleyan perfection teaching. It does not say “used to be dead” as if backslidden. But it says *has died*. The Greek tense means a past tense, once for all action.

Thus, the Christian can not *live in it*. *A fish can live in water but not a man*. He may fall in it but live in it he cannot. Lot, David, and Peter fell into sin but they did not live in it. God will chasten the sin out of him or take his life and get him out of it, but one way or another, he can’t live in it.

Conclusion and Application

1. First, if the gospel does not throw us open to the charge of

- antinomianism (lawlessness), we are not preaching the pure gospel. Justification by grace through faith in the merits of another could elicit that accusation.
2. Second, there is no such thing as a carnal Christian. Paul is saying that a person who is justified will surely be sanctified (Chapter 6).
 3. Third, there is a truth that should be written all over the walls of our minds, *know* that we are dead to sin (vv. 3, 6, 9).
 4. Fourth, *reckon* (v. 11). The devil may challenge it, the flesh may deny it, but we should reckon on it. Like a navigator, he reckons on the stars and sets his course accordingly. Like a fisherman, he gets his gear together the night before, reckoning that the sun will rise in the morning. When my mother died, we removed her clothes, reckoning that she would not need them again. So, sin is needed no more. It does not fit you. You are dead to sin. You are heavenly, a spiritual person (Col. 3:1-3). You are really in another realm. Set your mind above where Christ is, at the right hand of God.

DEAD BUT ALIVE WITH CHRIST

6:3-13

Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God
in Christ Jesus.

In the realm of crime we have a 74 percent recidivism (relapse into crime) rate. The criminal himself or someone else pays his debt, he is released and then does the same thing over again. Is it that way in the spiritual realm? Has Jesus paid off our debt to divine justice and then we continue to do the same old things? No, Romans 6 says it can't happen, in that we the criminal come out of jail dead—our old sinful self, the old man, who we were in Adam has been slain, crucified. We have *died to sin*.

How did it all happen? Verse 3 tells us that when we were baptized into Christ we got all that happened to him spiritually—his death, burial, resurrection. When a person is hooked up to an IV, he gets all that is in the bottle. Just like we were made partakers of all that happened to Adam—his condemnation and depravity, so also with Christ, now that we are in him.

It is not exactly like, but in the likeness. The transactions for us right now is only spiritual, our inner man. For him it was physical too.

What about the phrase *baptized into Christ*? Does it mean...

1. *Baptismal regeneration*? No, we know from other scripture (eg: Acts 15:7-9) that that is false. Baptism is a burial and burial is for the dead, not the living.
2. *The ordinance of baptism*? Many good men think this and it is quite an emphasis in scripture. I would conclude so if it read, “baptized into the name of Christ,” as in Matthew 28:19; 1 Corinthians 1:17, etc.
3. *Immersion spiritually into Christ*? I tend to think so. After all, it is an effectual statement, “all of us.” Many water baptisms are false. Also, spiritual immersion is a scriptural concept (1 Cor. 12:13). Becoming a Christian is no mere decision, it is a miracle, a being put into Christ by the Spirit (John 3:8).

So, if we have Christ, we have his death. Just as he died for sin, so we died to sin.

Then also we have his burial. Burial is the seal on death. *That is why the graveside is so hard, harder than the funeral home. Because there, it is all over, that is the end, the final good-bye.* Our Lord did not just faint, he died and they buried him. So with us, our old man is that far gone.

Then too we are raised with Christ. That was the ultimate proof of his victory. In folk history when the railroad spike driver was invented, one of the men bet he could outdo it. By the end of the day he had gone four feet farther but he laid his hammer down and died. He won but he lost. Not so with our Lord. The weight of the guilt of our sin and the grave did not keep him down. He rose by the glory, the power (Eph. 1:19-21) of the Father. He rose up into another realm. So for us, we are *alive to God* and walking in *newness of life*. It has to be. So it is in the agricultural realm. The seed is planted and dies. But still it lives (v. 5).

The explanation of verse 2 is verses 3-5. Verses 6 and 7 enlarge on the death aspect. Verses 8-10, on the life aspect.

Verse 6 is a classic explanation of the great truths of victory over sin. *First the old man, the sinful self, who I was in Adam, has fainted, has become sick? No. It is crucified.* Upon my union with Christ, the axe was laid to the root. *Second, the body of sin has been rendered powerless* (cp. Heb. 2:14). What is the body of sin? Some mass of sin? No, why not take it the way it is used in verses 12 and 13? The body of course is not killed. *But the body as controlled and conditioned by sin, the body as a vehicle for sin is put out of business.* Third, the result is that we are not servants to sin.

When it comes to victory over sin, death is the answer. How does the law take care of repeat offenders? They execute them. The reason murderers often immediately commit suicide is to be free from their sin (v. 7). The law can't come on him. A dead man cannot pay for sin nor can he produce it.

Conclusions and Applications

First, we ought to reckon (v. 11) ourselves to be dead to sin and alive to God. It is a total change over. Our factory no longer produces poison gas but now, by new ownership produces good things (David Needham). It is a total relocation. Christ was transferred from earth to heaven and so for us. Sin does not fit us any longer. It is unnatural. It is not us. How do you look at your hardest area? Do you take the attitude of the ten spies and fear and draw back? Or do you say with Joshua and Caleb, "we are well able"? Sure there is a fight—*not letting sin reign*, (v.

12). God has given us the land. Now we must take it. But we fight from a position of victory.

Remember, you are united to a dying Christ. It does not say baby Jesus, teaching Jesus, or working Jesus. You should think in terms of daily dying to sin.

Remember, you are alive to God in newness of life. Alive to God! So don't be afraid of the Spirit of God. Draw near. You are alive to God, so why not narrow your pursuits down as much as you can. Right here is your life.

Remember, sin and Satan are big bluffers, liars. You don't need them anymore. They are not the truth about you.

What security the believer ought to feel. If we are in Christ, how can we ever go back to being in Adam? Christ died once for all (v. 9).

Consider too that there is no such thing as a carnal Christian. It says, "no longer slaves to sin." Sure, some do more reckoning on it than others—30, 60, 90 fold. Yet, even the 30 is substantial.

Consider too that there is no such thing as a dual nature for the Christian. The old nature is dead.

Consider that there is no such thing as perfection. The Wesleyans claim too little (all Christians are dead to sin), but they also claim too much, that one can be sinlessly perfect in this life. The Christian will be reckoning on the facts and fighting the fight, and taking more ground for the rest of his life until all of Christ's victory is applied.

THEREFORE DO NOT

6:12-14

Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body that you should obey its lusts... for you are not under law, but under grace.

Chapter 6 is such a key chapter. The issue: if we find favor with God apart from performance, then neither will we lose favor with God by lack of performance; thus we might as well sin, after all, it only magnifies forgiving grace. Paul's answer: no, it cannot be, for we are made different in our nature by union with Christ. Not only has Christ done something for us (justification, Chapter 5) but he has also done something in us. And, all that happened to Christ happened to us through union with him. He died and rose and the same is true of us. We have died to sin. We are alive to God. *Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body.*

Therefore

Since you are dead to sin, *therefore* reckon on the fact and do not let it have a place. You have died to sin *therefore* sin is unnatural, *therefore* it does not fit, *therefore* it is inconsistent. Since you are a swan, *therefore* do not live like a swine. Since you are a man, *therefore* do not live like a child. That is the reasoning. David was a king, *therefore* he should not have acted as a madman (1 Samuel 21:13).

Do Not Let Sin Reign

Sin is spoken of as a personality. It is dethroned but like an insurgent power who will try to come back. It crouches at the door of your heart. It calls to get you to *obey*. It wants to reign, to have you sway again.

Where? In your mortal body, which I take to mean your embodied state, knowing that sin goes deeper than flesh (Ps. 51:10; 2 Cor. 7:1; Gal. 5:19f). Even the mind—evil thoughts—is an expression of the heart (Mark 7:21). It is in this embodied state that we have our weakness, our liability to sin. And if our body is *mortal*, if it is dying and wearing out, then, like a cordless tool with a battery, we had better use it efficiently.

The language of New Testament sanctification is “*do not let.*” As D. M. Lloyd-Jones says, the New Testament sounds more like a

military post than a hospital. The New Testament way of sanctification is language like: avoid, put off, lay aside, give no place, make no provision, abstain, etc. How do you quit sinning? Do not let it happen! It is astonishing the potential, the power we have to do what we know we ought to do.

Instruments of Righteousness

The members of your body are like instruments for good or evil. Much evil or much good can be effected by a body just like equipment in a factory, depending on the management. Well, our tools, the members of our body are under new management. Use them accordingly. Look at William Carey translating the Bible to many languages. His body—his fingers, his mind—was an instrument. Is there any option for the Christian? No, *for* we are...

Under Grace

This verse 14 is an explanation, an encouragement. Sin can not have dominion. Why?

First, we are not under the principle of law, that is, a covenant of works salvation. If it were up to us to attain to holiness, it would be hopeless, like trying to climb out of quick sand. Law only makes sin worse (Rom. 5:20; 7:5f). It only defines and deploys sin.

Rather, we are under grace. The grace of Jesus not only takes care of the penalty of sin (Chapter 5) but also the power of sin in providing a new power, a new heart, a new birth, a new nature (Jer. 32:38-40; Titus 2:12f; Heb. 8:10-12) whereby we don't have to or want to sin anymore. *It is impossible for the butterfly to act like the worm anymore.*

Sure, there is always going to be differences in consecration between one Christian and another (30, 60, 100 fold) but still we must hold that there will always be a difference between the true Christian and the world, between the true Christian and what he himself was before grace invaded his soul. That is the gospel. Away with carnal Christianity. Holiness is no option; it is the standard equipment for those who get hooked up to Christ. Notice, God's method of sanctification is not:

- a. let go and let God (although there is truth there),
- b. concentrating on surrender, or
- c. being willing to be made willing.

But rather, it is to be who you are. We war from a position of victory.

THE LAW AND THE SAINT

6:14

For you are not under law but under grace.

A great issue in Christendom is the relationship between the law and the saint. This text says the Christian is not under law. Then are we entirely free from all law? Do the ten commandments have nothing to say to the Christian?

What is meant by law? The word law occurs about 75 times in the book of Romans. There are various meanings:

1. Sometimes it means **principle**: *a different law in the members of my body*, (Romans 7:23). It speaks of the way things work, such as, the “law of gravity.”
2. Sometimes it refers to a **rule of conduct**: *a law to themselves*, (Rom. 2:14). A man may have no Bible, yet his conscience is his rule of conduct. The law officer enforces the law, the rules of conduct.
3. Sometimes it refers to the whole **Old Testament Scriptures**: *You who boast in the Law*, (Rom. 2:23). The Jews had the written revelation of God’s rule of conduct.
4. Sometimes it refers to the **Pentateuch**, the first five Books of the Old Testament: “the law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms” (Luke 24:44).
5. Sometimes it refers to the **Ten Commandments**: *has fulfilled the law. For this, you shall not*, (Rom. 13:8-9).
6. Sometimes it refers to the **Old Covenant**, that is, Judaism, or the Historic dispensation of Law: *to the Jews, to those who are under the Law*, (Rom. 5:20; 1 Cor. 9:21; 2 Cor. 3:7-15; Gal. 4:4).
7. Sometimes law means the **system of works**: *for as many as are of the works of the Law*, (Gal. 3:10). This is the main meaning of Romans 6:14 usage. Observe that one could be under the Law dispensationally but not under the Law soteriologically, like David, Abraham, Noah, and all who knew the Lord in the Old Testament. Or conversely, one could be under the Law soteriologically even though he is not under the Law dispensationally, like any lost man living right now in the

New Testament age. So there was grace in the Old Testament and there is Law in the New Testament. Or to put it another way, the New Covenant was the Old Covenant before the Old Covenant was the New Covenant.

8. Sometimes #6 and #7 are used interchangeably, like Galatians 4:3-4. It uses the historic to prove the soteric.

The Ten Commandments are very remarkable:

1. They were given in such a powerful way at Mt. Sinai.
2. They were written by the finger of God.
3. They were written on stone tablets.
4. They were to be kept in the ark.
5. They are repeatedly given honorable mention in the New Testament.
6. They are such a beautiful summary of all the Old Testament and of God's requirement for man.

The main issue is whether the Ten Commandments have any application to the Christian. There are three positions, but I will suggest a fourth:

1. We must keep the Ten Commandments for salvation.
2. The Christian must keep the Ten Commandments for sanctification.
3. The Ten Commandments have no bearing on the saint at all.

The *first is legalism*. It is works-salvation. It is attempting to keep the law to be good enough to be accepted with or justified before God. It is entirely a false view.

The *second* is held by many good Christians such as the Puritans, the Presbyterians (covenant theology), some Reformed Baptists, A. W. Pink, etc. The Larger Catechism of the Westminster Confession, for example, says that the Ten Commandments are "the rule of obedience." It is said that while the Law is not a governor, it is the guide, while not a king, it is a teacher. We are not under the dominion of the Law but we are under the direction of the Law. There is some truth in this position.

The *third is called antinomianism*. Those who hold this view in its fulness are those who *turn the grace of God into lawlessness*, (Jude 4). They are anti-law. To the question, "Is it alright for the Christian to

go to a harlot's house?" they would say, "all things are lawful, but not all edifies." They would say that as long as you have received Christ as your Savior, you will go to heaven regardless of your life. They would say you ought to be holy but you don't have to be to claim to be a Christian. This is "carnal Christianity."

I suggest a *fourth* position in the matter. The Christian is not under the Ten Commandments even as a director (#2 position), but the Ten Commandments and all the Old Testament scriptures do have application in their spiritual and moral aspects. What are the reasons for thinking that the Christian is *not under the Ten Commandments even as a director or a guide*?

1. The New Testament says we are *under the law of Christ*, not the Ten Commandments (Matt. 17:5; 1 Cor. 9:21; Galatians 5:1).
2. Jesus repeatedly says he is giving a new commandment (John 13:34). The New Testament emphasis on this new commandment of love is replete (Matt. 22:37; 1 Cor. 13; Gal. 5:14, 22; Col. 3:14; 1 Tim. 1:5; James 2:8; 1 Peter 4:8; 2 Peter 1:7; 1 John 2:8).
- 3.1 Timothy 1:9 says that law is not even made for the righteous man and even defines lawless deeds as anything contrary to the gospel (v. 11).
4. The Ten Commandments were given to the Jews specifically. When Judaism went, so did they in a sense. God was speaking loudly in 70 A.D.
5. Not even the early Christians kept the fourth commandment. They worked even on the Lord's day—of course, out of necessity because of the culture they were in.

What are the reasons for thinking that the moral and spiritual aspects of the Ten Commandments and all the Old Testament Scriptures still apply to the believer?

1. The New Testament says they are for our instruction (Rom. 15:4; 1 Cor. 10:11). The Old Testament scriptures are always being called forth by New Testament authors. Look at Ephesians 6:1, it is a straight forward quote of the fifth commandment.
2. The *great and foremost commandment and the second*, (Matthew 22:38) are really quotes from Deuteronomy 6 and Leviticus 19 and it is the same with what James calls the royal law.

3. This brings up a major point: the New Testament did not abolish the Old, but *fulfilled it*; it swallowed it up. The New Testament is in the Old contained and the Old Testament is in the New explained. Our Lord says, *do not think I am destroying the Law, but rather fulfilling it* (Matt. 5:17, Gal. 5:14). How did our Lord fulfill the Law?

- a. He fulfilled the condemnations by dying to pay that penalty for sin for the believer.
- b. He fulfilled the conditions of the Law by living a perfect life and earning a title to heaven for the believer.
- c. He fulfilled the very character of the Law in the believer by giving him a new heart whereby the *righteousness of the Law might be fulfilled in us as we are those who walk in the Spirit* (Rom. 8:4). Jesus explains in the Sermon on the Mount what he means by *fulfilled*— not abstaining from the outward act but having victory over the inward attitude. But observe the *shift of attitude* in the New Testament regarding the Ten Commandments:

No other gods	Love God with all your heart
No idols	Worship in Spirit and truth
Not in vain	Sincerity in the profession
Keep sabbath	Opportunity to worship and do good
Honor parents	Obey and care for them
Not murder	Love your enemies
Not adultery	Self-control and victory over lust
Not steal	Give to and protect neighbor
Not false witness	Tell truth and tame tongue
Not covet	Lay up treasure in heaven

4. One great aspect of the New Covenant is that God writes His laws on the heart (Heb. 8:10).

5. The New Testament itself is full of commands, such as *wives obey your husbands*.

My Personal Conclusion

The #2 position is not entirely adequate, for there is a very real distinction between the two covenants; and the #3 position is not right either; for the Old Testament laws certainly apply on some level and the New Testament is full of commands, too.

What are some ramifications in seeing the #2 position as inaccurate, that is, that the Ten Commandments are *not directly binding* on the Christian as primary rule of obedience?

1. You should see yourself not as one trying to conform to some moral code or set of rules, but rather thinking in terms of love. You are under the *law of Christ*. We should be thinking of loving our neighbor, esteeming others better than self, victory over the thought life, bearing other's burdens and thus *fulfilling the law of Christ*. Love is the very heart of the matter. The Old Testament mentality would have the Christian in China not merely retaliate against the neighbor who steals his water from his rice field; but, the New Testament mentality would have him fill his enemy's rice field too. The Old Testament mentality would have you stone or shun the homosexual, but the New Testament would have you try to bring him to Christ. We should be focusing not on precepts but on a person, the Lord Jesus Christ, and trying to please, love, and obey him. Our emphasis should be practical holiness, self-denial, and conformity to Christ.
2. This might affect the way you give. The Old Testament would have you merely tithe. But the New Testament speaks of regular, abundant, sacrificial giving.
3. This distinction from the Old Covenant might change your view of the holy war. Covenant theology yields a theocratic concept; thus, as the nation of Israel was commissioned to use physical force in the Old Testament, so it can carry over in the mind of the saint. Example: The Covenanters and the southern army in the Civil War who saw no conflict with their Christianity.

4. It would likely affect your view of government. Should we work toward a theocracy? It was this theocratic concept amongst the Puritans that caused them to drive Roger Williams out.
5. What is your view of the church? If one does not make a distinction between the Old Testament and the New Testament you will view the church as the counterpart of Old Testament Israel. Rather, the parallel to Israel is professing Christendom. The church is the remnant, the elect, those who know the Lord (Hebrews 8).
6. This would likely affect your view of the Sabbath. Instead of looking at the Lord's day as a special opportunity for doing good and for remembering the Lord and drawing near to Him and worshiping together, one will tend to view himself as under a mentality of ceremonial restriction. I would suggest that the creation ordinance of resting one day in seven is the precept that should bind our conscience to not work, if anything.
7. The freedom from the Ten Commandments would affect your view of baptism. Under the continuing covenant view, you would think that if they circumcised infants in the Old Testament then we should baptize infants in the New Covenant. But rather, the New Covenant people are those who are regenerate and who know the Lord (Heb. 8).

Conclusion

If you are a Christian, you should see yourself as entirely out from under the dominion of the law personally and historically. The Ten Commandments have only an indirect application to the Christian, for he is under the law of Christ. But this New Covenant demands more and then yields more. It produces true heart holiness. It produces substantial victory over sin (Matthew 5:20f). *Sin shall not have dominion, for we are ... under grace*— the mighty, sin conquering, grace of God.

THE TWO SLAVERIES

6:15-18

You are slaves...either of sin or of obedience.

Again, the issue of Chapter 6 is continuing in sin (v. 1) and the same thing is repeated in verse 15. Other scriptures make statements on victory over sin, but Chapter 6 is like a manifesto.

Can Christians continue in sin? Paul says, “sometimes”? No! Paul says, *never*. It is utterly impossible. Why?

Paul explains it with the principle of slavery, a concept with which they would be familiar. The first half of the chapter the picture was death and life. The idea is that if you ever presented yourself to someone for employment, you did what he said; you were his slave. We even see that in the employee/employer relationship. The fire fighter does what the chief says. Applications?

1. In the spiritual realm, there are ultimately only two masters: sin or obedience to God. In life there are many categories—rich and poor, high and low, etc. But in the spiritual realm there are only two. You are in one or the other. You can't serve both God and the devil.
2. Whichever category you are in, you are a slave in it. You are either a slave to sin or to obedience to God. Nobody is free, nobody independent, nobody neutral.
3. Each slavery exercises power and dominion. You are pushed around by sin or else you are compelled by obedience to God. Sin is a master. Take the fellow on drugs who goes without sleep for days. Not only that, he then takes a massive overdose ending up paralyzed. Still he can't quit and goes on selling drugs till imprisonment. I know such a one. He was a slave to sin until Jesus freed him. Obedience is also a master. The true Christian is bound by a desire to obey. He is not satisfied with disobedience. He may have miserably fallen, yet within there is a compelling desire to rise and walk (1 John 3:9).

4. You proclaim whose slave you are by your life. Your nature is reflected in your action. You can tell a tree by its fruit.
5. Each slavemaster pays off. Sin results in death and obedience in righteousness. Some paymasters pay off in money, others in food, etc., but sin pays off in death. Obedience yields righteousness which is always wed to life in contrast to death.
6. This knowledge, if indeed you have truly *presented yourself to God* or come to God, should put you on your feet. Think of yourself as indeed a slave to obedience. Don't try to be something you are not. You ought to see yourself as a slave to God. Your hands, feet, lips, hair and everything is God's.
7. You are not only a slave to God but also to the truth (v. 17)— God committed you to the form of teaching. God poured us into the mold of truth. The true Christian loves the truth. He obeys it from the heart. The Spirit of truth is in his heart.
8. The everlasting response from the Christian is *God be thanked* (v. 17). He did deliver us and we thank him for it. He sent his Son to pay the redemption price and then broke us free from sin's awful power and dominion.

JUST AS – SO NOW

6:19-20

I am speaking in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness, resulting in further lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification. For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness.

Paul was saying in verses 15-18 that just as we were slaves to sin, now, similarly, we are slaves to righteousness. Now in verses 19 and 20 he is saying be as good a slave to righteousness as you were to sin.

Paul says he is speaking in *human terms*. That is, the slavery picture is an illustration of spiritual reality taken from human relationships. Why? The *weakness of the flesh*. Is our little finger weak? Surely, it is a reference to the weakness, the dullness, of our mind in this embodied state.

The exhortation then is this: take a backward look. See how well you served sin. Now, in like manner serve righteousness. You used the *members* of your body (v. 13) to serve *impurity* and *lawlessness*. Like foreign substance in a glass of water, sin is an impurity to the soul of man. His heart was not meant for that. God considers sinners to be impure. The sinner is lawless, an outlaw before God. Maybe we were not as bad as some, but still we were on the same side. And we were picking up speed for hell; our lawlessness *resulted in further* lawlessness. We think we can control our sin. It controls us and progressively devours us.

Christian, look how well you served sin. *So now* present yourself with equal zeal and resolve in serving righteousness. Will we serve God less than we served the devil? Look how we used our money. We lavished our money on the service of sin—food, clothing, cars, entertainments. Now be equally liberal for righteousness. Look how you used your time for impurity. Friday nights, Saturday nights, sometimes Sunday nights, and often mid-week nights were spent specially for sin. We did not hesitate to go late into the night for the sake of sin. We did not hesitate to take our dissipation to other towns. Now will you be equally zealous for righteousness and holiness? You

sacrificed sleep for sin; will you grumble, faint and balk at a two hour prayer meeting? The sinner does not spare his body in the cause of sin. I could wish the young athletes of our country were throwing their iron constitutions into the cause of the gospel. Look how the sinner sacrifices even his reputation for the cause of the devil, even unto jail. Who will be a fool for Christ? Many are martyrs for the devil; few are the martyrs for Christ.

The call of Romans 6:19 is to pull out all stops for God, to break the alabaster vials of our heart for the King, to give our best for the best of masters. Shall we drive the chariot of our lives furiously for sin and self and now be casual for the things of God? We will sin with delight and then do righteousness with heaviness? Will we serve impurity 100 fold and then holiness 30 fold? Think of those who have left us an example—the John Newtons, the Samuel Hadleys, the Sauls of Tarsus. They were ringleaders in sin but also then shining lights for Jesus.

1. Here we have a wonderful description or definition of a Christian—a slave to righteousness. Be ever mindful of the change we have undergone. When we were non-Christians, righteousness had no hold on us (v. 20). Conversely, now sin has no hold on us. The power of it is broken.
2. This ought to shape our world view and our view of Christendom. There are only two categories of men. Slaves of sin and slaves of righteousness. There is no such thing as a Christian habitually practicing sin.
3. What a wonderful Savior and salvation—Jesus gave himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed and purify a people for his own possession (Titus 2:14)—*righteousness resulting in sanctification* more and more.

THE OUTCOME OF THE TWO SLAVERIES

6:21-23

Therefore what benefit were you then deriving from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the outcome of those things is death. But now freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The second half of Chapter 6 is using the picture of slavery to demonstrate freedom from sin. In verses 16-18 Paul gives the general idea of two and only two slaveries. In verses 19 and 20, we have an exhortation to look back and see how well we served sin and, in view of that, serve righteousness as well as we served sin. Now after a backward look, in verses 21-23, we have a call to a forward look. Consider the outcome, the benefits, the wages of the two slaveries.

Businesses look at the end result, the profits, all the time. If a farmer isn't making money with hogs, he should go to cattle or ostriches or something else. When you apply for a job, you look at the benefits. The same should be done in the spiritual realm. The latter end, "death or life," (Prov. 5:5) should chase us out of sin and inspire us to righteousness.

The outcome of sin is death in all its forms, even *shame*. Remember the shame that went with sin. It made us hide like Adam. It did not make us the man or a woman we wanted to be. It made us small and cheap. Why would we want to continue in those things, those things of which we are *now* ashamed. *Worse yet, we were not even ashamed of many of the things we did then. We only now see them and how disgusting they were.*

Think of the latter end of sin—death in all its forms. It was sin that shamed and killed the perfect man, Adam. It was sin that withered down the oldest man, Methusaleh. It was sin that pained the most faithful man, Abraham. It was sin that hindered the most humble man, Moses. It was sin that closed the sea on Pharaoh. It was sin that opened the ground under Korah. It was sin that put out the eyes of the strongest man, Samson. It was sin that blotted the testimony of the most loyal man, David. It was sin that marred the career of the wisest man, Solomon. It was sin that killed the God/man, Jesus. Sin

is no friend to the human race. Sin is man's supreme problem. With all his technology, it is still his one signal failure. Man spends all his life trying to survive and still dies like an animal. It is sin that fills the court rooms and the jails. It is sin that fills the psych clinics and the hospitals. It is sin that fills the nursing homes and the wheel chairs and the cemeteries. It is sin that fills hell, the second death. *The wages of sin is death.*

God was true to his word to Adam, *In the day you eat of it you shall die.* Adam did not die physically immediately. But he did die spiritually. He was cut off from the presence of God. And that is the essence of death—separation. Man is born separated from God and dead in sin. When man dies, his spirit is separated from his body. When man is put in hell, he is separated from God and all that is good.

Sin is a vicious taskmaster.

Some masters pay off in food, some in clothing, some in money, but the *wages* of sin is death. There is nothing worse that can come upon a man than death. It is ugly. It is final.

Conversely, the outcome of serving God is *life, even eternal life.* (Note the parallel to 5:21). But it is called a *gift*, not wages. Why? We earned our misery but we cannot earn God's blessing. How could we earn it, we were dead. The masses of humanity are *dead while they live*, pressing on toward hell and yet God graciously infuses life to some.

Life is so precious in all its forms.

What happens when a tree dies? No one knows. Life is a mystery. But here we are not talking about physical life but spiritual. And that is the only true form of life. All other life dies. This life is eternal. It cannot be worn out with time, destroyed by trial, or quenched by death. The Christian has eternal life and that life is eternal.

Look at the outcome of serving God. Think of Job's latter end. Think of Elijah being swept up to heaven. Think of Moses, glorified with Christ. Think of Abraham being blessed by and a blessing to all generations. Think of Paul, a crown laid up for him. Think of all the righteous, shining like the sun in the kingdom of heaven (Dan. 12:2).

Which category are you in, death or life?

If you are still thinking that there is some reason in yourself that God should take you to heaven, you are for sure headed for hell. You are

looking for wages and you will get them. The only way to heaven is by a gift. The gift is *in Christ Jesus*. If you want the treasure of eternal life, you must buy the field, for it is in him. In him corruption is reversed. In him grave clothes are removed. In him tombs are opened. In him is life (John 1:4). Will you receive him? Will you bow to Christ Jesus our LORD?

If you are a Christian, you should be ever mindful of the outcome of sin. Solomon said the wealth, the wine, the women, and the worldly fame was vanity; it is death. Peter says, *the time past is sufficient for you to have carried out the desire of the Gentiles*. Right? Conversely, let the eternal glories nerve your faint endeavor on toward heaven. Choose things that will prepare you for your latter end. Consider the outcome. Amen.

CHAPTER 7

DEAD TO THE LAW

7:1-6

Therefore, my brethren, you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ, that you might be joined to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, that we might bear fruit for God.

Chapter 7 of Romans is famous; it is unique; it is debated. We approach it with caution.

Chapter 6 says we are dead to sin. Chapter 7 says we are dead to the law and therefore dead to sin and able to bear fruit for God.

What brings on Chapter 7? Paul said in 6:14 that we are not even under law—a difficult statement for some, the Jewish Christians, no doubt. He said in 5:20 that the Law came in and caused sin to be all the worse—another hard saying.

Paul has put forward that the Law cannot justify. Now he shows that the Law cannot sanctify. He is *showing the function and also the limits of the Law*—what it does and what it does not do.

In these first six verses we have three things:

1. the principle (1)
2. the parable (2, 3)
3. the point (4-6)

The Principle.

Do you not know, brethren. That's Paul's method. That is God's method—using principles from everyday life everyone knows to illustrate spiritual truth.

He speaks particularly to those *who know the Law*, the scriptures (Romans 5:20), a point about law in general; that is, that while one is alive he is subject to law. You can't sue a dead man. If you make a contract with someone to cut wood and give him the money and he dies, he is gone and beyond the reach of law. Why does the criminal commit suicide? To escape the law. But, here Paul does not use suicide, but marriage to illustrate his point.

The Parable.

When the husband dies, a woman is released from the law, the

contract, the agreement, the union with her husband. Divorce is so unnatural that it is quite a legal hassle regarding the equity to get free. And adultery is a lawless act. But all agree that death terminates the agreement, the law that binds the woman to the man. She is free to remarry.

The Point.

In the spiritual realm, behold, a death has occurred. Christ died. He offered his body as a sacrifice for our sins (Col. 1:22). The law won't chase us anymore. Our crimes against divine justice have been paid for. Jesus paid it all. We are *released* (v. 2); We are *free* (v. 3).

What are the ramifications, the effects, the outworkings?

1. If a death has occurred, we are free to *marry another*, that is Christ, *him who was raised from the dead*. Think of the great privileges of marriage to Christ! Just as a wife shares in her husband's inheritance, so we Christ's. Just as a wife shares in her husband's honor, as one seated at the head table at a banquet, so also we are honored and seated with Christ. Just as a wife shares in her husband's name, so we carry Christ's.
2. But the chief thing here is that we *might bear fruit for God*, the natural outcome of a marriage. Why couldn't we bear fruit before? We were in *the flesh* (v. 5). That is, we were in a body controlled by sin. We were in a realm of fallen humanity (8:9). And the flesh, with all of its sinful passions and drives was *at work* in our bodies. And worse yet, the law *aroused* them all the more. Like a stick to a bull, like gas to the fire, like parental restraint, the law made sin worse.

The flesh did bear fruit, not for God, but for *death*. All sin leads to death. Some sin leads to early physical death, such as, immorality with its diseases. And the soul is always in a worsening condition as we get further and further from God. The letter kills. George Whitefield almost died trying to do enough good to be acceptable to God. *Trying to keep the law to get to heaven, which is impossible, leads to hell, the second death.*

Why can we now bear fruit for God? We are indwelt with the *Spirit*. We are no longer trying to conform to some external standard, but we

have the standard written on our hearts (Heb. 8:10). It is no longer biking with pedal power, but a motor. It is the difference between having to pump for water and using a spring that gushes forth water on its own. We have within us a power to break sin—not mechanical, or electrical, or nuclear, but divine.

God is a landlord and wants fruit.

A. He wants fruit in our lives.

B. He wants us to bear fruit in other Christian's lives (Gal. 5:22-23).

C. He wants us to bear fruit in non-Christian's lives (John 4:36).

Fruit glorifies God (John 15:8). I remember a farmer that had a reputation for growing good alfalfa. It was his glory. We should, we will, bear fruit *for* God (John 15:16).

Do you have this *newness* of the Spirit? The new birth? Are you a new creature with progressive victory over sin? They are those whose lives have been changed and find it no burden to live for God (1 John 5:3). We have *him who was raised from the dead* living within us. We have a new power. Resurrection power. We are in a new position with him—now married!

WHAT THE LAW DOES

7:7-14

What shall we say then? Is the Law sin?
Therefore did that which is good become a cause of death for
me?

Again, what is the purpose of Chapter 7? It is to clear up difficulties that were no doubt raised in the minds of some, particularly Jews, about what Paul said of the Law—not even applicable (6:14)? Even a negative influence (5:20)?

The Jews were very touchy about their Law, and in some ways rightly so. They knew Deuteronomy 4:8, *What nation has statutes and judgments as righteous as this whole Law which I set before you today?* They had Psalm 19, *The Law of the Lord is perfect*. Solomon ends his sermon concluding, *keep His commandments*. Jesus our Lord was careful to say that He did not come to destroy but to fulfill the Law. He assured men that it was *easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one stroke or letter of the Law to fail* (Luke 16:17).

Paul, in verses 1-6 showed that because a death has occurred, we are in a new relationship and dead to the Law, freed from the Law. But he made a pretty strong statement, “*the Law aroused sin*” (v. 5). So we have the question: Is the Law sin? (v. 7). In this second section of Chapter 7, Paul is vindicating the Law and thus showing what the Law really does do.

The first purpose of the Law—is to define sin.

“*I would not have known sin except through the Law*. I would not have known coveting if the Law had not said, ‘*You shall not covet*.’” Incidentally, we know by this that Paul is talking about the written Law, as summed up in the Ten Commandments. Someone might be walking through the woods and comes then to a little fence. He should know that to go further is trespassing but then he sees a sign, “*No Trespassing*.” Now he knows for sure.

So also, the man without the Bible has the Law written in some sense on his heart. He should know that it is wrong to be envious of his neighbors wife, but now, God gave the human race the tenth commandment for further clarity. This commandment is the toughest

of all. It addresses the thought life, the attitudes, the inner man.

But what about the Jews? Didn't Paul know the Law already before his conversion? Why did Jesus have to say, "I say to you," as though they lacked some understanding? It was because, even though they had sin defined, it had never been applied to their hearts. That brings us to:

The second purpose of the Law—to deploy sin.

It "*produced coveting of every kind.*" It is like a factory that was built to make good things; but now under bad management it produces evil devices. So also, because of "*the commandment*" more sin is aroused. Observe the sequence...

First, Paul says he was "*apart from the Law.*" The Law had never come home. It was a dead letter. Scripture was just theory, non-personal concepts.

At that time "*sin was dead.*" Sin was dormant. He was unconscious of it. Then the "*commandment came*" (v. 9). That is, it came with illuminating, convicting power (1 Thess. 1:5a). It is one thing to have lightning above you in the sky. It is another to have it hit you.

Then "*sin became alive.*" The Law stirred it up; it activated it like a man stepping on a snake.

How did it happen? "*Through the commandment.*" Just as parental restraint evokes desire from the child to do that very thing, so the Law activates sin. See Saul of Tarsus "*breathing out threatenings and slaughter.*" He was "*kicking against the goads.*" The commandment had come. That brings us to:

The third purpose of the Law—to destroy the sinner's self-confidence.

"*I died*" (vv. 9-11). He says he "*was alive*" once. He was living it up. He had no problems. But then the Law came with power and sin became alive like a volcano. The Law stirred up his sins like the man with the broom stirred up the dust in the Interpreter's House causing a choking for Pilgrim. Suddenly Paul saw his sins and "*died.*" He realized he was messed up, ruined, undone. His self-assertiveness, his self-confidence was gone. The song says it well, "*by God's word at last my sin I learned; then I trembled at the Law I'd spurned.*" It leaves a man crying, "*what must I do.*" But that is not all.

The fourth purpose of the Law—is to demonstrate the utter sinfulness of sin.

How do we see that? Sin took something good, the Law, and used it for evil purposes. *“For sin, taking opportunity through the commandment, deceived me and killed me”* (v. 11). It *“effected death through that which is good”* (v. 13).

Sin had the audacity to take the holy Law of God and deceive with it. It made people think that by Law-keeping they would make it to heaven. Sin, through the Law, made me think I was not all that bad—*“all these things have I kept from my youth up”* (Mark 10:20). Sin, hiding the internalness of sin as addressed by Scripture, made me think that sin was only external—washing hands, etc.

And sin had the audacity to take a thing *“for life”* and kill with it. Like a gun, made to protect from wild beasts, man uses it rather to kill his fellow men.

Is the Law sin?

No, Paul assures, *“It is holy”* in origin and in effect. It is *“righteous”* and entirely equitable and agreeable to all that man knows of what is right. It is *“good”* and has man’s best interest.

Is the Law death?

No, the Law was ordained to *“result in life.”* It was to guide, to direct, to regulate man. And if he would keep it he would get to heaven. But sin was the culprit. The Law is even *“spiritual”* (v. 14). It was written by the Holy Spirit, contains spiritual principles, and addresses the spirit of man. Praise God for this holy Law, a manifesto of his very character.

This is the function of the Law. Are you a stranger to these things? If you are, you are not a Christian. For, God lets sin over-step itself and uses the Law to bring us to Christ. If you have never been brought to despair, if you have never come to the end of yourself by the convicting Law of God, then you are not a Christian. You must be lost before you can be saved. One of the strongest signs of life is death.

Preacher, what does this tell us about our message? Maybe you are preaching the good news before the sinner has heard the bad news. See Jesus’ example in Luke 10:26. He gave no gospel to the man. He was not ready for it. He first had to be shut up and shut down. The plow must precede the planter. Because of failure here, we have our churches full of weeds instead of wheat, goats instead of sheep. Think about it.

A WRETCH NEEDS A SAVIOR

7:14-25

Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free?

With little doubt, one of the greatest controversies among Christians is the identity of the wretched man of Chapter 7 of Romans. There have been three basic positions: 1) the non-Christian, 2) the Christian, even at his best, and 3) the Christian who is needing to get into Chapter 8. Consider each.

The Non-Christian.

But can this be? The non-Christian does not feel the tension described in verse 14. For him, sin is dead, (v. 8). Moreover, he is very self-assured; he is alive, (v. 9). He is not at his wit's end crying, *who will set me free*. It simply does not fit the non-Christian.

The Christian, even at his best.

But can this be? The Christian is not "*of the flesh*," (v. 14). He is in the realm of the Spirit (8:9). He is not "*sold into bondage to sin*," (v. 14). He is a slave to righteousness (6:17, 18). He is not "*a prisoner*," (v. 23). He is free (8:2). He is not defeated and at his wit's end crying "*who...*" (v. 24).

Listen to Paul in 1 Thessalonians 2:10, *how devoutly, uprightly, and blamelessly we behaved*. Was Paul a wretched man? Was Peter a wretched man as he *rejoiced with joy unspeakable and full of glory* (1 Peter 1:8)? Was Barnabas, *a good man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit* (Acts 11:24), a wretched man? How can we reconcile Paul's teaching in Romans 5:10, *much more shall we be saved through His life*, with the teaching of us being a wretched man? How can we reconcile 5:17, *much more abundance of grace* with a wretched man? Does this describe a wretched man in 14:17—*righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit*? Indeed, the Christian has a battle to fight and Romans 7 does in a measure describe some of those realities, but Galatians 5:16 is the passage that really pertains to the Christian.

The Christian needing to get into Chapter 8.

How can this be? Both Chapter 6 and Chapter 8 talk about only two categories: slaves to sin or slaves to righteousness, flesh or Spirit. Even

7:1-6 acknowledges only two. Those in the realm of the Spirit are in a position of victory and freedom and substantial fruitfulness (7:6; 8:2).

Who is the wretched man?

He is an awakened soul. The commandment has come to his heart in power (v. 9). It caused sin to be all stirred up in his soul and he is under conviction (v. 8). He lost his self-confidence (v. 9). It has left him in frustration (v. 15f). He cannot deal with this sin problem which he has found to be bigger than his will. He sees himself in bondage and is despairing (v. 24). He does not yet see the gospel of Christ and cries, "*who will deliver me?*" The man is in a wretched condition needing a Savior.

Conclusions on Chapter 7.

Paul is dealing with his difficult statements about the Law in Chapters 5 and 6. He explains that the Christian is in a whole new relationship to the Law (vv. 1-6). He describes the function of the Law (vv. 7-13). Now he describes the limits of the Law (v. 14). Paul, speaking in the dramatic present says in so many words, "*If I have only the Law, here is the plight I'm in.*" It cannot free me from sin. A rope, like the Law, may take you to heaven, but who has the strength to climb it? The flesh is weak (8:3). Just as an airplane must have power to overcome the force of gravity, so also the soul must have indwelling power to overcome the power of indwelling sin. Chapter 6 told us what Christ can do with the power of sin and now Chapter 7 tells us what the Law cannot do. The Law can show us our sin but not subdue it. It can burden us with sin but not unload it. It can show us the defilement of sin but not wash it away. Man is wretched and needs a Savior. Thanks be to God he has provided a wonderful Savior in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Have you seen yourself to be a wretched man? Have you then surrendered at efforts at being holy? Have you come to Christ? He will save his people from their sins.

CHAPTER 8

NO CONDEMNATION

8:1

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

The NASB leaves off the KJV phrase, *who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit*. This phrase does occur in verse four of the NASB but whatever the case, I do not think we are to take it as a conditional statement based on whether the Christian is in a good way that day or not. The context (8:9) makes us think that it is to be considered a positional truth about the Christian who is by definition in the realm of the Spirit. Furthermore, that is in keeping with the very idea of condemnation—a positional, legal matter.

Therefore.

Why is the “therefore” there for? Get the feeling—“therefore now.” It is like Paul is making a summary statement, a conclusion, a deduction. I think he is calling us back to Chapter 5 and the theme of the security of the believer, the assurance of salvation, the final perseverance of the saints. Afterall, “*no condemnation*” is just another way of talking about justification (5:18).

This also backs up the idea that Chapter 6 and 7 are parenthetical. Paul steps aside to deal with antinomianism (Chapter 6) and legalism (Chapter 7), or what Christ can do with our sin and what the Law cannot do with our sin.

No Condemnation.

Propitiation takes us to the sanctuary. Redemption takes us to the slave market. But condemnation takes us to the court room. It is a legal term. It is the pronouncement of guilt by a judge.

Here, we have in 8:1 a glorious gospel statement. Through the ages the saints have reveled in it and found it to be an anchor to the soul through the storms of life. It has lifted the downcast; it has cheered the mourner; it has restored the fallen; it has welcomed back the erring one; it has been an open door to the lost—that the just God justifies the unjust.

It is gospel. Why? Mankind is under condemnation. He is in deep

trouble with God. He is a three way sinner. He is a sinner legally by Adam's imputed guilt (Rom. 5:18). He is a sinner inherently (Eph. 2:3). Not only does he have a bad record but he has a bad heart. He loves darkness rather than light—*this is the condemnation*. He is a sinner experientially in word and deed. We have all stumbled in many ways (James 3:2).

The 5 year old running around playing “hide and seek” is condemned awaiting execution. The 10 year old learning his math is condemned awaiting execution. The 16 year old gets his driver's license but is still condemned awaiting execution. The 21 year old finally graduates from college and is hired by some prestigious company, but he is still under God's condemnation. He is married at 28 to a fine woman and it is a happy day but still he is under condemnation. The years roll and he is 65 and retires having stored up much money for many years. But alas, he has stored up wrath for the day of wrath and at 70 his soul is required to stand before God. Being condemned, he is then executed with eternal fire and outer darkness.

In Christ Jesus.

The good news is that those in Christ are not condemned. They are in union with Christ like a branch in the tree, like a member of the body to the head.

It won't help to be in a Christian family, nor in a church house, nor in the act of some good deed or some act of penitence when we are called to stand before the Judge of all the earth. We must be in Christ.

Man has a legal problem. I might apologize utterly to my neighbor for breaking out his window. Nevertheless, he wants it paid for. So, how are we to pay this debt, this infinite debt, to divine justice?

It is Christ whom they *condemned to death*, (Mark 14:64). Now we, like Barabbas, go free. Because he was condemned our debt is paid, past, present and future. But what if man condemns me? Christ died and there is no condemnation. What if the devil condemns? Christ died and there is no condemnation. What if I miss the mark, even really bad like David? Still we may boldly say like he did in Psalm 32:1, “*How blessed is the man whose sins are covered.*” I will never stand as a condemned criminal before an angry judge, but always as a beloved son before a loving heavenly Father.

Am I that well received? Yes, we are seated now in the heavenlies with Christ and are glorified. We have been loved with an everlasting

love and there can be no separation. We are justified by the highest court in the universe and there is no accusation. We are under the shed blood of Christ and there is no condemnation.

How do you get *in* Christ? From God's side it is a miraculous invasion of the living word, "*He who hears My word,*" (John 5:24). From our side it is true saving faith in the living God and the Savior he has provided, "*and believes on him who sent me... shall not come into condemnation.*" Don't miss out on this great promise.

SET INTO A NEW DISPENSATION

8:2

For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ has set you free from the Law of sin and death.

Beautiful words, wonderful words! But what does this verse really mean? The commentators are divided.

The Law of Sin and Death.

This last phrase is a real perplexity. Should *law* be taken to mean *ruling principle*? That is the way it is used in 7:21, 23, 25. And isn't that the way we might immediately take it—the power of the Spirit has set me free from the power of sin?

I am persuaded that it is to be capitalized—the Law, the Mosaic Law, the Law of God, which is productive of sin and death. Reasons...

1. *That is the way it is also used in Chapter 7.* It is productive of sin (vv. 5, 7). What the red flag is to the bull, that is what the Law is to the old man. What gas is to the fire, that is what the Law is to the old man. What a gun is to a murderer, that is what the Law is to the old man. Put up a stop sign and see the rebellion exhibited, so also with the Law. It is a productive of death (v. 13). In 2 Corinthians 3 it is called the *ministration of death*. It says, *the letter kills*. How? Two ways.

- a. In the legal sense. That is, the Law demands the death penalty for any infraction or shortcoming (Gal. 3:12).
- b. In the experiential sense. That is, the Law exasperates and causes despair. It is like a rope reaching to heaven. It will take you to heaven, but everyone who tries (and we all do), is exasperated. *I am not practicing the very thing I would like to do* (7:15). *The logical meaning in view of the context* (v. 3). It is obviously talking about the Law (v. 1). It is talking about condemnation, a legal thing. So it goes this way: "I am not under condemnation because (for) I am no longer under the Law. Otherwise, it would read, "I am not under condemnation because I have freedom from the power of sin." We cannot base our freedom from condemnation on our sanctification. So what we have is the same as 7:6, that is, we are in a new covenant, a new

dispensation, *not the oldness of the letter but the newness of the Spirit.*

The Law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus.

What about the word *law*? How does that fit the Spirit? Surely here it means the ruling principle or power and Paul is making a kind of a play on words with the Law of sin and death. But we shouldn't be bothered at this. Look at 3:27, *the law of faith*. Look at Galatians 6:2, *the law of Christ*. Think of James 1:25, *the law of liberty*. All Paul means is *the reign of grace*, the same as 6:14.

The *Spirit* is surely the Holy Spirit (8:6, 10, 11) who is the very moving force in applying the New Covenant. The Father appointed, the Son accomplished, and the Spirit applies redemption.

The Spirit is the very essence *of life*. Everything is dead without the Spirit of life. Look at creation. The Spirit moved (Gen. 1). Into Adam was breathed the breath of life (Gen. 2). Look at the new creation. We are by nature dead in sin, doing dead works, hoping in dead ceremonies, headed for a dead end, until quickened by the Spirit and born anew (Rom. 8:10; 1 Cor. 15:45; Gal. 6:8; 2 Cor. 3:6)—*the Spirit gives life*. It was the Holy Spirit that showed us the Savior in order that our sins be forgiven and the cell door opened. It was the Spirit that made the dying criminal live and walk out. It was said that during the revival in the Hebrides in 1949 that there was everywhere a sense of *livingness*. The very air seemed to be tingling with divine vitality. Everything, grass, stones, sea, sky seemed to cry out, *God is here*.

The Spirit and Christ Jesus are closely related in considering redemption. (2 Cor. 3:18; 1 Cor. 15:45.) Jesus is the basis of life which he secured by his death. *He abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.*

We are *set free* from the Law of sin and death. Is entire sanctification taught here? No, that is clearly not true as seen by the subsequent exhortations to mortify sin (v. 13). Is this some second work? No, what we have here is true for all in Christ Jesus. Rather it is the same as 6:14 and 7:1-6. We are free from the Law. We are in a new covenant, a new dispensation. We are in the realm of the Spirit.

Are you in Christ Jesus? Are you under the law of the Spirit? The Law has the shell but Christ has the substance. The world promises life but produces death. Life only is in Christ (John 1:4; 10:10; 14:6). Come to him without reserve. Get plugged into him.

THE LAW'S FAILURE AND FULFILLMENT

8:3-4

For what the law could not do...God did...in order that the righteous requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us.

Here is another glorious gospel statement. Verse 3 is justification and verse 4 is sanctification.

The Law's Failure.

We have tax laws and we have traffic laws, but when God formed for himself a holy nation, he gave them his laws, moral laws. We might complain of man-made laws because of imperfection, but God's laws are perfect. That moral code consisting in do's and don'ts with according rewards or punishments for obedience or disobedience was perfectly holy, just and good. It was a perfect expression of God's character and His ways. It is immutable, infallible, and all-sufficient.

But the text says that it had a weakness. It could not do some things. It could not produce righteousness and life in man (Gal. 2:21; 3:21; Heb. 7:11, 18; 8:7f.)

Why was it weak? It was *weak through the flesh*. It was ordained for life (7:10), but natural man (flesh) could not keep it. Like a rope reaching to heaven, one could get there by climbing it, but alas, who can? The flesh is weak. You might give a child a shovel and tell him to dig the trench—there is nothing wrong with the shovel, but it is weak through the flesh. The Law says make brick but provides no straw. It diagnoses the illness but like the Levite and the Priest (Luke 10:30-37), it has no cure. It shows the path but provides no strength to climb. The sheriff's department says, "don't drink and drive." Those are good words but it is law and can't free anyone.

What is the solution? If God requires perfection, is the human race left helplessly lost? Will all perish? The good news follows...

The Law's Fulfillment.

God sent. In squabbles, the hardest part is who is going to be first to ask for forgiveness, who will be first to try to conciliate. God did not wait for us. He took the initiative. Salvation is of the Lord—his plan, purpose, and power.

God sent his own Son. He did not send a friend, not an angel, not another's son, but his own Son. Think of the astonishment amongst the angels when it was announced that the Son of God would leave heaven. What! Deity becoming humanity, Infinite becoming infant! Have you felt it?

God sent his own Son *in the likeness of sinful flesh.* It was flesh, not an angel, but a man (John 1:14; 1 Tim. 3:16; Heb. 2:14). The light of the world entered the darkness of the virgin's womb. What a distance between the throne of heaven and the feed bunk. Our Lord became so much a man that we could not tell the difference (Isa. 53:2, 3). But it was the *likeness of sinful flesh.* It was not sinful flesh. That would be heresy. Our Lord knew no sin nor did any sin (2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Peter 2:22). He, not Mary, was immaculately conceived. But he was indeed in the likeness of sinful flesh and thus, as such, felt temptation to sin (Matt. 4:1f; 26:39; Heb. 4:15). He felt even infirmity, weariness, etc. That is how close he was to us in our fallen condition.

Why all this? It was *for sin.* You have been sent to get groceries, sent to get parts or people, or sent to clean toilets, but our Lord was sent to deal with sin. Whoever had a mission like this? The Creator not only became a carpenter, but the Holy One became sin. Sin—that vile force that fills hospitals, clinics, jails, cemeteries and hell itself (Heb. 4:15). Our Lord came to deal with sin.

The Son of God was made sin for us and then condemned. Thus God *condemned sin in the flesh.* The broken Law was not mad at rocks or trees, nor turtledoves or lambs or donkeys. It was pursuing man and thus, in the Eternal Son of God, it got its man. The Lord's condemnation fulfilled the Law's condemnation for us.

See how God condemned sin in the curse on Adam and Eve, the flood on the old world, the confusion at Babel, the destruction of Sodom, and the burying of Korah's company. Go to a cemetery and see it there. But you will never see such a display of condemnation upon sin as when the Son of God was cursed for us.

But we have a double fulfillment. Not only did Jesus' death fulfill the legal aspect of the Law but also secured the actual aspect, not only imputed righteousness but also secured an imparted righteousness fulfilled in us (v. 4), not for us (Luke 1:6; Romans 2:26). If the condemned criminal on death row can get the legal aspect taken care of, that is if he can be forgiven, then he is able to live. So also in the spiritual realm, because atonement is made, then in the fulness of time

for each of the elect, redemption is applied by the Holy Spirit being sent to the heart causing him to live and walk in righteousness (Rom. 5:10, 18; 7:4, 6; Titus 2:14; 1Peter 2:24).

How do I know that I am one of the elect? What assurance do I have that God sent his Son for my sin? One great proof is if I am one who *walks according to the Spirit*. Are you living a life that is of him, through him, and to him?

God is out to get a holy people for himself. The Christian, indwelt and empowered by the Spirit of God, is actually, progressively, substantially fulfilling the Law's standard.

THE TEMPTATION OF CHRIST TO SIN OR COULD CHRIST HAVE SINNED?

8:3

...in the likeness of sinful flesh.

In this little phrase there is a latent doctrine that could use some further examination. I am speaking of the impeccability of Christ. The Spanish has the word *pecador* which means sinner—no doubt both are from the same root. So impeccability means that it was not possible for Christ to have sinned. Some good men say that Christ could not have sinned; others say he could have. I will put forward that he could not have but that he could have.

Before you go for the deer you must examine the woods. So here, there are background considerations, first that:

Christ was Deity.

(Isa. 9:6; John 1:1; Phil. 2:6; Heb. 1:8) The Pharisees did better than the Jehovah's Witnesses—the former got the message that Christ was claiming to be deity. They charged him with blasphemy and crucified him. Of course the latter point out that he was only the *Son* of God. But the Bible itself defines what it means by the Son of God in John 5:18, *calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God* (same essence, nature). The trinity concept is a great mystery and incomprehensible. Now we must also realize that:

Christ was a Man.

(John 1:14; 1 Tim. 3:16; Heb. 2:14.) He was made flesh, that is, human nature. Christ calls himself a man (John 8:40). The apostle Paul does the same (1 Cor. 15:21).

As a man he had a real body, so much like ours that you could tell no difference (Isa. 53:2). His body had blood, flesh and bones (Luke 24:39; Heb. 2:14). His body was so *like sinful flesh* that he felt our infirmities. Our Lord was no robot, no iron man. He was wearied from the journey (John 4:6), he was sleepy (Matt. 8:24), he was hungry (Matt. 4:2), and he was thirsty (John 19:28). No doubt he had to exercise self-control and discipline his body like we do.

As a man, he had a real and rational soul like we do (Matt. 26:38;

Luke 24:39; John 12:27). He was self-conscious, conscious of his identity (Luke 24:39). He wept (Heb. 5:7), he felt compassion (Matt. 9:36), he felt anger (Mark 3:5), he felt love (Mark 10:21), he felt troubled (John 12:27), and he felt distress and anguish (Luke 22:44). Apart from sin, he was a partaker of all the effects of the fall—the *likeness of sinful flesh*.

As a man, Jesus was subject to the ordinary laws of human development. He no doubt had to have diapers. He went through sexual maturity. He grew in grace, in wisdom, stature, and favor with God and man (Luke 2:40, 52). He never disobeyed but yet had to learn obedience. He had to study his Bible. He had to discipline his life like we do. He had to learn how to use those carpentry tools. He was so normal that his brothers did not recognize him for who he was. Now observe:

The Unipersonality of Christ.

What we have is two natures (the sum total of all the essential qualities) in one person. Our Lord was not half man and half God, but he was 100% both. This is a great mystery and admittedly incomprehensible, but nevertheless true.

There is no trace of dual personality. Jesus never refers to himself in the plural like God does (Gen. 1:26; 11:7). Some passages refer to both natures but still it is evident that only one person is intended (Phil. 2:6f). Some passages talk about his human attributes and actions while referring to his divine title (Acts 20:28). Some passages talk about his divine attributes and actions while using his human titles (John 3:13). Thus, as one person with two natures, he could be weak, ignorant, tempted, suffer and die not in his divine nature but in virtue of his human nature. One commentator compared Jesus' dual nature to our possessing both body and soul—two natures. Sometimes the spiritual dominates the flesh (Jacob gathered his strength and rose up on his bed) and sometimes the flesh dominates the soul (an injury will make us depressed).

Could Christ have Sinned?

In that Christ had a dual nature, we conclude with a dual answer: he could not have sinned and he could have sinned. From the standpoint of his deity, he could not have sinned (James 1:13). He was predestined to succeed. From the standpoint of his humanity, he could have. Hebrews 4:15 says that he was tempted. Tempted to what? To cut his fingernails

too short? Obviously we are dealing with sin, yet he was *without sin*. Jesus felt the pressure to sin, the drawing, the call, but did not give in. Think of the wilderness experience of Matthew 4. The “tempter” came. What does the devil tempt us to do? Sin! “Nevertheless not *my will*” (Matthew 26:39). Jesus was saying, “I want out.” He wanted out of the will of God (that is how close he came to sin), but yet he kept his will resigned and submitted to the Father’s.

Objectively, our Lord felt temptation to sin more, far more, than we. He had to bear the curse, the sin of the world. He was forsaken utterly of God. Subjectively, He was tempted more than we, for he never did give in to sin. Think of two hydraulic arms both having to lift 1,000 pounds. One blows at 100 pounds. The other does the job. It had to experience much more pressure than the first.

Application.

First, see the availability of Christ to sinners. See how accessible, how available he is. He came in the likeness of sinful flesh. He was a friend of sinners. His whole coming was to deal with sin. He can well identify with the sinner. It says in Hebrews 5:2, this great high priest can *have compassion on the ignorant and on those who are out of the way*. Why? *He is compassed about with infirmity*. Infirmity! It reminds us of infirmary, the hospital, the place for the sick and weak.

Second, we should see our Lord Jesus Christ’s sympathy for the struggling saints. It says in Hebrews 4:15 that we have a great high priest who can be touched with the feeling of *our* infirmities, not some heroes, not some martyrs, but ours. He is very able to take up our cause. He bears our names on his heart and shoulder, speaking of his love and power toward us. The tender Shepherd carries the young and gently leads the nursing ewes (Isa. 40:11).

We might be thinking, how can this perfect man identify with us? He never sinned. It is like the two men swimming the English Channel. One made it and the other swam only a fraction of the way and then had to be rescued. You see how the first could say, “I know what you went through.” Really, he had to undergo more tribulation than the one who gave in.

Yes, we have a sympathizing Savior (Heb. 4:15). He had no place to lay his head, no certain dwelling, and thus our Lord can sympathize with those tempted to feel disappointed that even though they are in the will of God yet they have slender means. Our Lord had to wait 30

years before the anointing came and thus can sympathize with those tempted with impatience for the unfolding of the plan of God in their lives. The devil came repeatedly with *if you are the Son of God* and thus our Lord can sympathize with those tempted with presumption to run ahead of the will of God. Our Lord never had a wife and can sympathize with those tempted with lust. Our Lord had constant contact with sinners and can sympathize with those tempted to join in with the wicked. Our Lord was grieved and tormented by the sensual conduct of the ungodly and can sympathize with those tempted to be vexed and scold them. Our Lord was disappointed by friends (*how long shall I be with you*) and thus can sympathize with those tempted to be bitter and retaliate. Our Lord ended up looking like a failure and lost all in trying to do the will of God and so can sympathize with those tempted to curl up and die or destroy themselves. Jesus cried *why have You forsaken me* and thus can sympathize with those who lose the sensible presence of God.

Last, see the dignity of our Lord Jesus Christ. He faced treachery, desertion, ingratitude, and unkindness. But he passed through it all without a wrong word or attitude. Compare Christ's excellency with other religious leaders—none were perfect and some were very wicked. He overcame as a man. The victory was real. It was no piece of theater, no rehearsal, not just going through the motions. He earned eternal life for us and is so deserving of our praise.

HOW THE RIGHTEOUS REQUIREMENT OF THE LAW IS FULFILLED IN US

8:5-8

For those who are according to...

What is the purpose of these next four verses? We have primarily an explanation of what was said in verse 4, that is, how the righteous requirement of the Law is fulfilled in us. Secondly, we have contained in this a contrast between the Christian and the non-Christian wherein we would do well to examine ourselves. The results of a school exam might greatly affect our future as to our career, but it is nothing compared to this test as to whether we are in the faith (2 Cor. 13:5), for that will determine our eternal destiny.

The **first reason** that the righteousness of the Law is fulfilled in us is that we *walk according to the Spirit* (v. 4). What does it mean, *according to?* (the KJV says, *after*). It does not mean later than, but rather according to, just as one might model his house after another's, that is, according to. Interestingly, the Greek word is *kata*. It means down or under like the catacombs were under the earth. So the Christian is under the rule and dominion of the Spirit. The Spirit of God has made him a new creature; he has been rewired. The Spirit of God is the whole sphere of his reality. He serves in *newness of the Spirit* (7:6); he naturally bears the fruit of the Spirit. Do you see how the Christian actually, substantially, and progressively fulfills the righteousness of the Law? The Law is written on his heart. This is the surpassing righteousness Jesus spoke of in Matthew 5:20.

But in contrast, the non-Christian is *according to the flesh*. Does that mean body? No, verse 9 makes that clear when it says *you are not in the flesh*. It is talking rather about the realm of natural man, man devoid of the Spirit. When the Holy Spirit was removed from man in the garden, he was nothing but a chunk of meat—flesh.

The **second reason** is that the Christian naturally *sets his mind on the things of the Spirit*. This is his mind set, his mentality, his attitude. He naturally thinks on the things of the Spirit. What are the *things of the Spirit*?

The truths of God (1 Cor. 2:10-14). He is intimate with his Bible; he listens to conversation; he is reading good books.

The glory and work of Christ (John 16:14). Everything is Christ, Christ.

Exposing and dealing with sin (John 16:9). Do you see someone confessing sin; concerned with not grieving the Spirit; worried about matters of right and wrong? That is the mind set on the Spirit.

Prayer (Rom. 8:26). He is seeing answers to prayer and enjoying communion with God.

The fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22). Holiness, conformity to Christ, and fruitfulness become an intense concern.

The gifts of the Spirit (1 Cor. 12). The Christian is concerned how to use these gifts to serve and edify others.

But the non-Christian has a mind set on the flesh—not necessarily overtly evil things, but rather he is a stranger to self-denial (Matt.16:23), prayer is a nuisance, Bible reading and the things of God are not his delight.

The **third reason** the Christian fulfills the righteousness of the Law is that he is in the realm of **life** (v. 6). His spiritual origin is due to an infusion of the Spirit of life, he ministers life to others and his life ends in a resurrection of life. Christ came that we might have life and life abundant. In the Christian the Law is fulfilled because he is now alive and able to walk according to the Law whose signposts all pointed to life (7:10). But the non-Christian is in the realm of **death**. He is dead in sin, that is, his spirit receives no communication from God. His words and ways minister death in all its various forms—broken relationships, foolish decisions, losses, sorrows, frets, fears, etc., until finally he ends up in hell—eternal death.

The **fourth reason** is that the Christian is at peace with God (v. 6) whereas the non-Christian is at war. He is hostile and would kill Christ again if he could. His mind is not subject to the Law—he is not about to go by the rule book. He is not even able—his nature will not permit it. He cannot please God—even his apparent good deeds are an abomination for they were done with the wrong motives. But the Christian is at peace with God through the blood of the cross which paid the Law's demands. He enjoys the peace of God knowing that the guilt is gone, his prayers are heard, and his life is full of purpose. The

Law is not burdensome but his delight (1 John 5:3).

Conclusion.

There are only two categories of mankind. Which one are you in? If you are in the flesh, you had better pursue any spark of repentance. If there is any, it came from God and if you obey it, you will end up in heaven. If you are a Christian, continue setting your mind on things above (Col. 3:1), especially on love—loving God supremely and your neighbor equally—the fulfilling of the Law.

THE INDWELLING SPIRIT

8:9-11

If indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you.

Four times in these three verses a reference is made to the idea of indwell. From this we could gather these four thoughts.

The indwelling Spirit is what puts you in another realm, the realm of the Spirit.

However you are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you (8:9).

Paul has been talking about two categories—those who are according to the flesh and those who are according to the Spirit. Now, lest you think that it is some kind of an external thing, lest you have too little appreciation for this, Paul is telling you that it is a matter of the Spirit indwelling the Christian. The kingdom of God is in you. The Holy Spirit takes up residence in you. He makes your heart his home. That is what the Greek word means.

See how meekly, how gently the Spirit abides within? All this power in a clay vessel! It is a wonder we are not blown apart like an overpowered tractor strips its own gears.

If not indwelt by this Spirit, you have a fatal deficiency.

If any man does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him (8:9).

It is one thing for a landlord to tell a hunter, “you do not belong here.” It would be quite a thing for a father to disown his son, or a husband his wife, or a country its citizen, but that cannot compare to the Lord of lords disowning us at the judgment seat. To not belong to Christ is to lose everything, our life’s labors and our eternal welfare.

You might belong to various clubs, lodges, associations, parties and orders but yet not belong to Christ. You might belong to a church and still not belong to Christ; you have never had an invasion of the Holy Spirit. Your confession is a product of your own imagination, of your own mental assent, your own decision, or your own fears. There is nothing supernatural about you, no fruit, no changed life, no changing life. We ought to search our hearts.

If indwelt by the Spirit, we have within a principle of life.

And if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness (8:10).

Some versions take it to be a small “s” (spirit), and others, capital “S” (Spirit). While verse 16 does make reference to our spirit, and while there are references contrasting the outer man and the inner man (2 Cor. 4:16), yet I think it is talking about the Holy Spirit. First, almost every verse up til now and then on to verse 16 has a reference to the Holy Spirit. Secondly, the word is *life* not alive (NASB). It would not work to say our spirit is life. It is rather, *the Spirit of life* (8.2) Third, there are almost exact parallels such as 5:21.

But we have a contrast here (backed up by the actual Greek which has the phrase *on the one hand*) between the body and the Spirit, between death and life. The body is dead, is as good as dead (Gen. 2:17; 20:3), has the seeds of death in it. It is a mortal body (v. 11). We have a terminal illness. We are sure to die. It is because of sin. The wages of sin is death.

Nevertheless, the Spirit is life. We have within a principle of life. We have been passed from death to life and we cannot go back.

How? It was because of righteousness, because of an imputed righteousness, that is, because of the atonement (Rom. 5:17).

If indwelt by the Spirit, the body will live too.

He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you,” (v. 11).

Is it talking about healing of the body? Is it talking about some moral strengthening of the body to be now an instrument of righteousness? No, surely not. The comparison makes it obvious. Just as Jesus was physically raised, so shall we be.

The Spirit had much to do with Christ, thus, *Spirit of Christ* (v. 9). The Spirit conceived him, baptized him, led him, empowered him, and finally resurrected him. God through the Spirit will raise us too.

What is the point? Yes, our bodies are dead. The body and the spirit shall be reunited. All shall be well. We have within a principle of life and that life will overtake our bodies too. We shall not continue as disembodied spirits after death. Full salvation is coming.

Conclusion.

1. See the doctrine of the trinity. We have *Spirit of Christ*, then *Christ*, and then *He* (God the Father). We have three persons, but yet one God.
2. We ought to examine ourselves—do I belong to Christ? Will he who has been appointed to judge say to me, “You do not belong.” “You are none of mine.” Or to take it back further, are there evidences of the indwelling Christ? Is prayer my delight? Am I being saved from sin? Is there constantly increasing fruitfulness? If I do not belong to Christ then I am the devil’s. I am in a perilous position suspended by a thread of mercy over a bottomless pit and the angel with the sword of justice is ready to cut me off. If I do not have Christ within, I have a fatal deficiency. All the noble characters, if they did not have the indwelling Christ, had this fatal deficiency.
3. We ought to be encouraged. In a sense, I am as delivered as I ever shall be. I have life, eternal life. In the battle, we must remember “greater is He who is *in* you, than he who is in the world” (1 John 4:4).
4. We should be exhorted that we are not our own, we belong to another. *Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you whom you have from God and you are not your own* (1 Cor. 6:19)? The one who lives in the house owns the house.
5. We might well be reminded that the tabernacle of God is with men (Rev. 21:3). The Most High does not dwell in houses made with hands (Acts 7:48). God made the heavens and the earth; do we think we could build something for him (Isa. 66:1)? God is looking to dwell in hearts, poor, contrite, humble, those who tremble at his word. We ought to seek to be more and more a container for the living Christ (Eph. 3:16f).
6. We also can be comforted. Just as we owe to the King of kings full allegiance, so also we receive from him full protection, too, in all the storms of life (Acts 27:34). We are his property and care.

OUR OBLIGATION TO THE SPIRIT

8:12-13

So then, brethren, we are under obligation...

The last section, verses 9-11, could be summarized this way: to be walking according to the Spirit is to be indwelt by the Spirit; and if indwelt, we have within us as a dominating life principle that will cause our bodies to overcome death; they shall be *made alive*, also.

Now it is obvious we are coming to an application—"so then." Briefly, we have an exhortation regarding sanctification. Like a banker, Paul is explaining our debt to us.

Our obligation (debt) is not to the flesh.

What is meant by flesh? There are various ways of saying it:

- a. natural man,
- b. fallen human nature,
- c. man void of the Holy Spirit,
- d. the body (including the mind) as conditioned by and controlled by sin.

The Bible itself gives a definition right here in verse 13, where it puts the flesh in juxtaposition with the sinful deeds of the body. This is not to say, of course, that the body is inherently evil (that would be heresy), but that the body, like a gun, is in the wrong hands.

What does it mean *to the flesh*? The next phrase clarifies it, *to live according to the flesh*, that is, to let that be the driving principle in our life. The Christian might do things that are fleshly, but that is not the characteristic, the tenor, the mainspring of the Christian's life.

Now the question comes, why are we not under obligation to the flesh? What motive and reason is given for not living according to the flesh? It leads to death. Already much has been said about death (Rom. 5:12, 17, 21; 6:21, 23; 7:5, 24; 8:6, 10, 11). This means death in all its forms. Take for example the man with a fleshly outlook and world view, that is, the non-Christian. He is walking around in his sins and with the accompanying guilt. That guilt leads to depression; that leads to bad attitudes; that leads to wounding words; that leads to broken relationships; that leads to more depression; that leads to destructive

decisions; that leads to loss; that leads to complicating life situations; that leads to further sin; then, if that's not enough, the man ends up in hell which is eternal death.

Yes, we are under obligation to clothe, feed, and care for our bodies, as a servant to the soul in the service of God, but no further. After all, the flesh never did us any kindness that should serve it, the flesh never gave us any security. So to please, to serve, and to gratify the flesh as though it were preeminent, that is the way to destruction. And what a deadly, tragic, foolish lifestyle (deathstyle) it is. It is like a bad investment that yields no final profit. Why buy more stock in a sinking business? It is like a bad renter, it makes some returns but never pays off. It is money down a rat-hole. It is the same language as Galatians 6:8, *sowing to the flesh, reaps corruption*, like sowing the field with thistle seeds. Those thistle blossoms are pretty purple at first, but in the end, hurtful and then the needed life-sustaining crop is choked right out as well.

If you live according to the flesh you *must die*. If victory over sin is not one of your major concerns, you are living according to the flesh and you must die. If the primary business of your life is the day to day routine of going to work, eating, sleeping, you are living according to the flesh and you must die. If you find your mind preoccupied with personal peace and affluence, you are living according to the flesh and you must die. If you find your mind preoccupied with being prominent and pretty, you are living according to the flesh and you must die. If you are able to get along habitually without daily time in the Bible, you are living according to the flesh and you must die. If you are able to get along habitually without daily time in prayer, you are living according to the flesh and you must die. That is, you are not a Christian, you are still in the flesh, you are living for self, and you must die.

If you think you are a Christian, you ought to be reminded to not be so foolish as to dance around the pit. Sin is crouching at your door. Let Samson tell you about the consequences of loose living. Let King Saul tell you about sparing Amalek. Remember Jesus' words about eye-plucking; nothing should be spared, no matter how dear, when it comes to dealing with sin.

Our obligation, debt, and loyalty must be to the Spirit.

First, see the *fact* of our obligation by implication of the words, *we are*. We are debtors to Christ and the Spirit by a thousand bonds and

obligations (Matthew Henry). There we owe our all, all we have and can do.

Second, what is the *cause* of that debt? It is all the benefits bestowed so freely and summed up in that one little word, *life*. Christ died that we might live; being delivered from so great a death by so great a ransom, we are surely deeply indebted to our great deliverer.

*To Him we owe our life and breath and all the joys we have;
He makes me triumph over death and saves me from the grave.*

(Samuel Stennett)

The Spirit applies the benefits of Calvary and thus he is to us a *Spirit of life*, (v. 2). So, to the Spirit we must devote our lives and invest our energies, cultivating His increasing influence in our souls. It is so easy to forget our debt to such kindness.

What is the *motive* in fulfilling that debt?

It is not legal. We already *belong* to the Lord (v. 9). We are accepted. There is no sin-debt to pay off. That was paid and we can never repay that. To try would be justification by works. After all, if someone risked his life to save my life, what could I ever do to actually repay him? Only but love and gratitude can be shown in return.

What is the *way* of fulfilling that debt?

It is by *putting sin to death*. We are called to cooperate with the Spirit in slaying sin. Surely that is the main meaning of being, *led by the Spirit of God* in verse 14 rather than decisional guidance (Acts 8:29). This is the Spirit's occupation—putting to death flesh or the sinful deeds of the body, that is, exposing sin, worldliness, and pride. The Spirit is a mortician, he mortifies (KJV) the flesh. He is a surgeon to cut out death in order for life to be sustained. He is an insurrectionist and out to dethrone evil that the King of righteousness might be installed. He is a prosecution lawyer to kill the evildoer that society might be preserved. The Spirit is a cultivator which destroys the weeds so the crop can live. He is a demolition supervisor to bring down the old that the new building can be erected. He is a fire, consuming all that old worldly brush that the land (which is the soul of man) might bring forth fruit to God. This is life, life by death; to live is to die; the way up is down. God's ways are not our ways.

Conclusions.

First, you by yourself cannot obtain victory over sin; it says, *by the spirit.*

Three reasons:

1. Flesh cannot kill flesh anymore than Satan will come against demons.
2. Sin is too deep. Perhaps one may keep himself from murder but who can deal with hate, envy, and strife? One may keep from adultery, but who from lust and fantasizing. One may keep from accumulating things, but who from imaginations and wishings. Only the finger of God can probe that deep.
3. The way to victory over sin is generally indirect. To obtain deliverance from materialism and covetousness, one does not necessarily sell all, but rather he stays filled with the Spirit and full of faith whereby he holds things loose and knows the joy of giving. Fornication and lust? It does not mean putting on a gunny sack but rather staying filled with the Holy Spirit whereby depression is avoided, the very thing that leads up to the problem. Murder and anger? Does it mean getting away from people? God's way is to cultivate our relationship with God whereby we are conscious that we are in good with Him and then who can offend?

*I fear no foe w' thee at hand to bless;
Ills have no weight and tears no bitterness.
I need thy presence every passing hour;
What but Thy grace can foil the tempters power.*
(Henry Francis Lyte)

God does not always move the rocks but wants us to maintain high tide and then we can float right over them. We need not pull our wagon by hand over rough ground but we must raise the sail and work with the wind.

Second, in this mortifying work, we are real and instrumental.

It says, *you* mortify. Don't lay back and expect the Spirit to overpower you. That is exactly what puts the myriads of church-goers in hell. The Spirit of God whispers, nudges, and pricks and you have the option

of doing something or not, of coming to the light or not, of agreeing to repent on the matter or not, of agreeing to take action or not. The reason you don't have victory over that besetting sin is because you don't want victory all that bad yet. If defeat and procrastination is the dominant characteristic of your life then you are still in the realm of death; you are not a Christian. Listen to the New Testament emphasis as to our responsibility: *do not let sin reign, present your body, make no provision, flee, cleanse ourselves, be perfect, walk worthy, put off, put on, lay aside, avoid, engage, draw near, put aside, with all diligence add.*

This is indeed a work and a battle. Contrast this with the doctrine of perfectionism, that is, the idea that sin is eradicated by a baptism of Holy Spirit. No, the Romans had that (5:5) and yet were exhorted with such things as 6:6 and 13:14. Sure, there is truth in it—maturity comes from a filling of the Spirit, but overall the Christian life is not hinged on some momentary experience, but rather a life-long fight and work and growth (Phil. 3:13). Amalek, a type of the flesh, would never be eradicated, but it was to be perpetually subdued again and again.

And what we have in this text is also in contrast with the resignation idea, the Keswick teaching, just let go and let God. There is truth in that, for we are trusting God ultimately for the impossible. But this is a call for action. What we have is not a hospital for sick, not a couch for presumptuous and the casual and the cool; we have a battlefield for soldiers familiar with death, hardship, and self-denial out of a sense of holy obligation and purpose.

Third, the New Testament doctrine of sanctification is: be who you are.

You are dead; now reckon on it (Col. 3:3, 5). Fight from this position of victory. Treat your body as a relic, a remnant from the old life. You are now a new man, live accordingly.

Set before us is death and life, the curse and blessing. Matthew Henry says it well, “in a word, we are put in this dilemma: either to displease the body or destroy the soul.” Choose life. For all the benefits and blessings you have received and shall receive from the Spirit of the living God, you are under obligation to do so.

THE LEADING OF THE SPIRIT, A GREAT PROOF OF SONSHIP

8:14

For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are sons of
God.

The last two verses could be summed up this way: In view of all that the Holy Spirit is to us and has done for us and shall do for us, it is only fitting and obligatory to live for him, which chiefly involves slaying sin in cooperation with him.

Now we have a favorite verse, a powerful verse, a bold verse, an adventurous and challenging verse (soldiers have written biographies about their leaders, but here we are talking about being led by the Holy Spirit), and a definitive and distinguishing verse.

It could be taken by itself, yet it is introduced by the word “*for*.” Thus we know it is connected to the preceeding context. See the two parallels between the verses: *by the Spirit you are putting to death with led by the Spirit* and also *live with sons of God*. It is like Paul is saying “you will live, yes, you are sons of God.” The purpose of his bringing in the idea of sonship and then the proof of sonship must be emphasized.

The purpose is to further put forward the doctrine of assurance—the assurance that comes from sonship.

When tracking deer it helps to place arrows as you go. By observing where you have come from, it helps to determine where to go. Remember where we have come from. Paul’s message to the Romans was the gospel—that a man can be right with God. Then he tells them why men need to be right with God. Then he tells them how they can be right with God. Then, having been justified by faith, he tells them about the benefits of it, specifically, their security (5:1f). Chapters 6 and 7 are an aside—what Christ does with our sins and what the Law cannot do with our sins. Then Chapter 8 is back to the same theme as Chapter 5—the security of the believer or assurance of salvation.

Why does Paul bring up sonship? Sons of God is an ultimate term in persuading us of our good position before God. It does not say we are creatures of God, an angel of God, or slaves (v. 15), but sons. How could anyone’s son cease being a son, even regardless of his conduct.

And, now as a son all the benefits of the Heavenly Father are ours (v. 17).

When we think of sonship we ought to think of ...

1. *A special love* (Ps. 103:13; 1 John 3:1). Who is the first that might bail a young fellow out of jail? The father. The busy father always has time for the little boy, even though he might be too busy for business appointments. God loves all but he has a special love for his sons, even going way back before the world began (Eph. 1:5).
2. *A special likeness*. It is expected that sons will eventually resemble the father. We have the mind of Christ (1 Cor. 2:16). As sons, we are disciplined that we might be *sharers of His holiness* (Heb. 12:10). We are to walk in love that we might be (obviously) sons of our Father in heaven (Matt. 5:45).
3. *A special leading*. Who has more input into the decisions and destiny of sons than the parents? Their eye is upon them and so God also counsels us with his eye upon us (Ps. 32:8). Fathers exhort and admonish and implore that their children might walk worthy (1 Thess. 2:11), and so does our heavenly Father. The Spirit of God is bringing (same Greek word) many sons to glory (Heb. 2:10). Second, consider that...

The leading of the Spirit is a great proof of sonship.

This should be for examination and consolation if we pass the test. The leading of the Spirit is a distinguishing mark, a trait of sonship—*as many as*.

What does it mean to be led? Sometimes the Greek word is translated brought or carried, a very strong word almost as though we are quite passive. In Matthew 10:18 it says, *brought before governors*. Luke 4:1 says, *led by the Spirit into the wilderness*. Luke 10:34, *led* is rendered as, *brought him to an inn*.

So the Spirit of God works in us to will and do of God's good pleasure, leading and impelling us.

How does the Spirit of God lead us?

1. He speaks intuitively to our spirit (v. 16). A farmer and preacher, S. O. Susag, in the early 1900's arrived in the town where he was to hold meetings. He needed a suit. The Spirit

- whispered "Samuelson." Susag walked a block, looked up and there saw "Samuelson Clothing Store." There he found the perfect suit for about \$1.50. The Spirit can lead so intricately.
2. He gives spiritual understanding of the Scriptures (Eph. 1:17). Sometimes this comes instrumentally through men (2 Sam. 23:2), by books or sermons. We are lead by raw truth. We are saved from wrong decisions by *it is written*.
 3. He leads us by direct providence. Charles Spurgeon almost entered Bible college, except the maid forgot to tell the interviewing president that young Spurgeon was waiting outside for the appointment. Jacob was lead to Egypt by providence and necessity.

Where does the Spirit lead us?

1. He leads us to turn from sin in repentance and faith (John 10:16; 16:8f). If you are a son of God, it was the Spirit who caused you to turn from sin to Christ (1 Cor. 12:1-3).
2. Now as a son, the Spirit continues to lead us out of sin to Christ. That is the primary meaning here—the leading in dealing with sin (v. 13) rather than decisional guidance. The Spirit is constantly working in our lives putting pressure on the flesh (Gal. 5:16), exposing to us our compromises, bringing us to humble ourselves and ask forgiveness, impelling us to make restitution, exposing wicked motives and wasteful ways, etc.
3. He leads us to *holiness*—he is the *Holy Spirit*! This is all the fruit of the Spirit cropping up in our life, especially love, love for the Lord, for fellow Christians (Eph. 1:13-15; Jude 20, 21), and for all men, seeing the souls of men in all their diversity and often ugliness as extremely precious.
4. He leads us to our work (Acts 8:29; 13:3; 16:6). He stirs up those gifts that we might labor for Christ.
5. He leads us to conform to Christ from one degree of Christlikeness to the next (2 Cor. 3:18), the Spirit constantly points out Christ (Rev. 1:10). A storage bin needs to be strengthened in order to hold more weight, and so the Spirit

does for us to contain more of Christ (Eph. 3:17).

6. He leads us into truth. After all he is called the Spirit of Truth (Prov. 1:23; John 16:13). I can remember when I first saw the effectualness of the saving call and the doctrine of election. It changed my whole concept of God.

So, the Spirit is urging, pushing, working in, carrying, and drawing us. He is teaching us that this life is a pilgrimage. He is leading us from Egypt to Canaan.

Are you being led by Spirit? Some are led by...

- a. idols (1 Cor. 12:2),
- b. various impulses (2 Tim. 3:6),
- c. money and (1 Tim. 6:10),
- d. men, (Eph. 4:14).

Is your life centered on the Spirit and submitted or are you stubborn and neglectful. Is self on the throne?

Notice it does not talk about baptism, communion, membership, orthodoxy, education, or age. It is a matter of being led by the Spirit.

The text does not say that more or less people are sons of God but *as many as* are such. A farmer may be sorting cattle. Some sneak into the “sell” pen and he says, “That is not *as many as* I wanted, but we will let it go.” Not so on the great day of God. It will be “as many as.” Sure some are following the Spirit more carefully —30, 60 or 100-fold—but all genuine sons do obey substantially.

If we conclude that we are led, then we ought to be all the more sensitive. Why should we be afraid of the Spirit? He is like a dove, not a vulture. He is gentle. The “good” Spirit (Ps. 143:10), leads us to life and peace and joy (Rom. 8:6; 14:17). He is the Spirit of grace (Heb. 10:29).

We ought to be so thankful that whereas we were formerly children of the evil one, led by the devil, now we are sons of God. Let us walk so that He can be proud of us, unashamed to call us sons.

If you are not a son of God, see another *as many as* in John 1:12 which says, *But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name.*

THE WITNESS OF THE SPIRIT, THE HIGHEST PROOF OF SONSHIP

8:16

The Spirit Himself bears witness.

The key theme in Chapter 8 is assurance. The main word is the Spirit—the ministry of life from the Spirit and all the benefits which puts us under obligation to live for him. To further put forward assurance, Paul introduces the assurance that comes to the believer from sonship. What is the proof of sonship? Guidance. Like sheep by the shepherd, like soldiers by the captain, like scholars by the teacher, like sojourners by the guide, like sons by the father, we are led out of sin into holiness (v. 13). Now, Paul gives us yet another, a greater, a higher form of assurance—the witness of the Spirit.

Some call this perfect love, some sanctification, some faith rest, some making Jesus Lord, some the baptism with the Spirit, and some infallible assurance. This witness is confirmation, not the taking of some Bible classes and passing a test.

What is this Spirit that witnesses?

We have four s's in these two verses. The 16th verse is clearly referring to the person of the Spirit. The problem is in the 15th verse. The NASB has both spirits in the small "s." The KJV has the first small and the second capital. Some expositors take both capital.

Surely the second is capital—the Holy Spirit considering Galatians 4:6—it is obviously not referring to an attitude or a mentality but to the person of the Holy Spirit.

What about the first "s"? Admittedly the Holy Spirit produces bondage (Rom. 7:6, 14; John 16:8f) by applying the Law and making us terrified before God. However, Hebrews 2:15 tells us that all non-Christians know this. Furthermore, the Spirit is not known as a *spirit of slavery*. Rather, that is applied to the Law. The point is at least this: the Spirit you have received, is not and never will be a spirit of slavery. It is rather serving to promote what is in harmony with adoption.

A spirit of adoption! In Galatians 4:6, it is *the Spirit of His Son*.

- a. The Spirit attended the Son.
- b. His work is especially to communicate a consciousness of sonship.
- c. The Son sends the Spirit. He is the baptizer.

This sonship is not by way of birth. It is by way of adoption. Now adoption might seem inferior but remember, it does have a superior aspect—they are chosen (Eph. 1:4)! We are chosen by the Father, the legal work was taken care of by the Son, and the application of it by the Spirit. Amen.

Where does this spirit of witness come?

He comes to *bear witness with our spirit, our hearts* (Gal. 4:6; Rom. 5:5). He does not come to temples or buildings, not to our big toe or forehead, but to our inner man (Eph. 3:16). He gets real close, right down to the inner chambers. And we were made for the Spirit of God. The unregenerate is a car without a motor.

When does this spirit of adoption come to our hearts?

A. It is after conviction, after the spirit of bondage. The plow is before the planter. The needle of Law's conviction before the thread of gospel consolation. Mt. Sinai is the way to Mt. Zion. We must be lost before we are found. Failure here is the reason for the mess our country is in. Easy, cheap, false conversion. So often the good news is dispensed before the bad news. Many are not ready for it. We give the answers before they ask the questions. The gospel is for the needy (Luke 4:18).

B. At or after conversion. Galatians 4:6 says, *because you ARE sons.* After conversion? (Luke 3:16; John 7:38; Acts 2:4; 8:17; 9:17; 15:8, 16; Ephesians 1:13). At conversion (Acts 19:2, as though Paul expected it; 1 Thessalonians 1:5). This is not regeneration, but something on top of it, even if it occurs simultaneously with it. If not, then we are making the witness to the thing (salvation), the thing itself.

C. There are two extreme positions. On one side there are the Baptists, the Brethren, etc., who say we have all at regeneration and should expect nothing more. The other end of it is the Pentecostal position—that is, that we must tarry for some second blessing which we might or might not get. If we don't get it then there is something wrong with us.

There is truth on the Baptist side, for salvation is all one package.

In reality, the baptism of the Spirit is a fuller revelation of Christ. The error is that it leaves one not expecting more from God, not living enough in the experiential. Surely it is a grief to the Spirit. I think a lot of it is a reaction against Pentecostalism.

There is truth on the Pentecostal side. There is a second blessing and a third, fourth, etc. Peter was filled with the Spirit at Pentecost and again in Acts 4. Paul was filled with the Spirit in Acts 9 and again in Acts 13. The Pentecostal error is that of over emphasis on the experiential and on the second blessing rather than the first. It leaves one looking at the gift rather than the Giver and expecting something like another had.

Of what does the Spirit Witness?

The Spirit witnesses of adoption that we are children of God. He, in and of himself (v. 16) produces a consciousness of sonship, which is assurance of salvation. There are various kinds or means or ways of assurance.

1. There is assurance from the Word. When we obey the Bible, like John 3:16, there is a basis for assurance. We are taking God at his Word and he does not lie.
2. There is assurance from our walk. How does Peter want us to make our calling sure? The previous context has to do with character development in spiritual virtues (Rom. 8:14; 1 John 2:3; 3:14, 19).
3. There is assurance from the witness of the Spirit. This is not something that we deduce or reason out but something we experience. This is not something you do but something God does to us. This is not me giving myself to God but God to me. This is not me drawing near to God but the Spirit coming upon me. We are sons and the same experience happened to the Son. It says in John 6:27 that the Father sealed Jesus. When? It was when the Spirit came upon him at the Jordan. What was the essence? It was assurance of sonship, both to himself (Luke 3:22 *you are*) and to others (Matt. 3:17 *this is*).

There are other references and other aspects of the Spirit's message to us. We have Romans 5:5; God tells us He loves us. It says, *shed abroad, poured out* (NASB). Some have described such a visitation this way, "we were knee deep in love."

God came upon D. L. Moody so powerfully that he asked God to “stay His hand.” *You see, it is one thing for a little boy to walk with his father, but it is another to be taken up in his arms, kissed and comforted.*

We see the Holy Spirit called a *seal* in Ephesians 1:13. What is a seal?

1. It is a mark of witness to authorize or authenticate (1 Kings 21:8; Est. 8:8; 1 Cor. 9:2). When you go to a notary public, you get a seal to make it official. When you go to the fair, you get a mark on your hand to show that your presence is valid. God by the Spirit is saying we are real sons. He is saying that we are accepted—*God, who knows the heart, bore witness to them, giving them the Holy Spirit* (Acts 15:8). This witness was not regeneration but a coming *upon*. *As yet He had fallen upon none of them* (Acts 8:16).
2. It is a mark witnessing to ownership (John 6:27; Rev. 7:3). A farmer brands his cattle. Why? Ownership. God is telling us by the Spirit that we are his.
3. A seal also indicates security (Matt. 27:66). The electric company seals the meter to make sure no one will tamper with it, and so also does God by the Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is also called a *pledge* or *earnest* or *down payment* in Ephesians 1:14. When you buy a car you might make a down payment. It is a little of the rest that is coming and it assures that the rest is coming. So also the Holy Spirit is a foretaste of glory and assures that God will complete the redemption of our souls.

In Matthew 3:16, 17 and Acts 1:5 it is called the *baptism with the Holy Spirit*. We are first immersed into Christ and His body (1 Cor. 12:13) and then immersed under the Spirit.

In Acts 2:4; 4:31; 9:17 and 13:9 it speaks of *being filled with the Spirit*. This also occurs in Eph. 5:18, *be filled with the Spirit*. Surely this is different. It is a command in contrast to the other fillings where the Spirit was simply *received*, (Acts 8:15; 19:2) and has to do with our walking with God—under the influence of the Spirit’s control and not the control of *wine*. It would appear that a baptism in the Spirit can be called a filling (Acts 2:4), but it would not seem like repeated fillings are called baptisms.

Notice it says *with our spirit*. The Spirit is a co-witness (see the Greek.). All who are regenerate have some assurance already. Now in

the mouth of two witnesses it is established.

What are the manifestations or results of the Spirit's witness?

There is liberty (2 Cor. 3:17). The less of the Spirit a person has or a church has, the more ritual, liturgy and formalism they have. Sometimes a Christian is praying; the going is tough and suddenly the Spirit of God comes and he has liberty—the words and thoughts flow.

There is also power and boldness in witnessing and in the work of the ministry (Luke 3:16; Acts 1:8; 4:33; 13:9). Erlo Stegen in South Africa testifies of their hard labor in the gospel that had little results. Then the Spirit came in power. Multiplied hundreds immediately began to be saved. Look at Gideon, Samson, and David. They were anointed for the work by the Spirit (Micah 3:8).

Also there is joy (Acts 2:13; 13:52; 1 Peter 1:8). At Pentecost they were indeed drinking new wine.

There is a revelation of glory (Acts 7:55; 1 Peter 1:8). Duncan Campbell was right, in the final analysis, the baptism of the Spirit is a fuller revelation of Christ.

But the thing mentioned here is again assurance of sonship as evidenced by the cry, *Abba Father*. *Abba* is an Aramaic word which means father. It is really saying, papa. Father is from the Greek, *pater*. The first for the Jews and the second for the Greeks. Both are expressions of love, intimacy and confidence. Where did Paul get this? From the Son himself (Mark 14:36). You see someone who always calls on God but never calls on the Father, you might as well question his standing.

It is a *cry*, indicating a deep, emotional, contact with reality. This is a meeting with God.

What must we do to have the witness of the Spirit?

It says, *receive* (John 20:22; Acts 1:8; 8:15; 19:2). This is something God does for you and to you. It is a birthright for all God's sons.

But you may also ask (Luke 11:13). It is promised (Acts 1:5; 2:33; Eph. 1:13, 14). Elisha asked for a double portion.

You avail yourself of the Spirit by walking in his ways, staying humble, and turning at reproof (Prov. 1:23; John 14:21). We shouldn't worry about the wages, but the work, says the Puritan. Keep yourself yielded to God; the fire falls on the sacrifice. By giving into sin, we can in varying measures lose assurance. Grieve not the Spirit (Eph. 4:30).

The Spirit departed from Samson. When? When he lost his hair, that which made him empowered.

Remember, the Spirit is sovereign. Look at John the Baptist who was filled with the Spirit before birth. The Spirit sovereignly fell on Cornelius' household. Look at the historic revivals.

Questions.

1. If you don't know you are a son of God and don't care, you need to be born again. But if you are really concerned, you likely need to be filled and sealed with the Spirit.
2. If you are struggling with sin—hate, envy, strife, lust—and don't care, you need to be born again. But if you really want to walk with God in some victory, you need to be filled and sealed with the Spirit. Remember, this is not the final answer, this is not the reaching of perfection. The Romans were flooded with God's love, but still had to be careful to "make no provision for the flesh."
3. You don't have what another has? We must be careful not to standardize this experience. There are varying degrees of intensity and clarity. Just like the post office seal on the envelope, just like the brand on the cattle, so there is, no doubt, variety in the Spirit's impressions. Elisha had a double portion.

Has the Holy Spirit witnessed of sonship to you? If you've claimed to be a Christian for years and don't have assurance, you have strong reason to question your profession. Maybe you need to follow 2 Corinthians 6:17, 18—forsake sin and God says *you will be my sons and daughters and I will be a Father to you.*

But has there been a time where God met with you and melted your heart? This was a witness from the Spirit that you were no criminal, nor a slave, but a son. You can be sure that the Spirit is not a spirit of fear and will never take you back to the realm of slavery and fear *again.*

HEIRS ALSO

8:17

And if children, heirs also, heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him in order that we may also be glorified with Him.

Consider these five headings...

1. Ground of our inheritance
2. Source of our inheritance
3. Extent of our inheritance
4. Condition of or proof of our inheritance
5. Essence of our inheritance.

The ground of, or the reason for mentioning inheritance.

It is given in the words: *if children, heirs also*. Children! It does not say as result of creation. We lost it all through the fall and became children of wrath instead. It does not say good works. Even in human terms it is not that way. The family piano is not something worked for but handed down as a gift. Heirship is based on sonship.

This is obviously a continuation from verse 16. It is an inference drawn from sonship. Paul says we are sons, and now, “I want to tell you just how good this thing is—heirs!”

This again is given for our comfort and assurance. The hired men have many benefits but the son never worries about them getting the farm. Abraham gave gifts to the sons of concubines, but he gave all to Isaac. Even of Ishmael, it was said, “The son of the bond woman shall not be an heir with the son of the free,” (Gal. 4:30). Isaac, the child by supernatural birth was the heir. And so for us, the children of the spiritual birth are heirs of the heavenly realities. Sonship means heirship.

The source of our inheritance.

It is given by the words *of God*. We are heirs not of an earthly father but heavenly. It is another realm. The riches we have come into far surpass comprehension or imagination. You might be an heir of J. P. Getty with his 1.3 billion dollars, or of J. D. Rockefeller, Howard Hughes, or H.

Ross Perot—all of them millionaires. You might be an heir to the great King Ranch, but how does that compare with Matthew 5:5, *Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth*. In Matthew 25:34, Jesus says we will inherit a kingdom, not a piano or silverware. And it is *prepared before the foundation of the world*—there will be no changes in this will. Truly we are the *blessed of the Father*. Heirs of God.

We should always remember this on the job when we feel tempted to slack off due to injustices (Col. 3:24). This is so powerful that we should feel loose to the world's riches and turn all we can into treasures above by using them for the kingdom. Moses saw it (Heb. 11:24). C. T. Studd saw it. Billy Sunday saw it when he left the professional baseball salary for the meager income of a gospel worker. And that is the theme of verse 18.

Not only is God the source of our inheritance, but God himself is the portion—all he has and does (Ps. 73:25; Lam. 3:24). What son wouldn't rather have the father himself infinitely more than the thing he inherits when the father dies? Glory would be no glory without God himself.

The extent of our inheritance.

It is given by the words—*joint-heirs with Christ*.” The Lord Jesus Christ is the heir, he is the Son (Matt. 21:38; Heb. 1:2). Every blade of grass is going toward him and his glory.

It says *with Christ*, like the wife, because of her union with her husband, gets a share of the inheritance, so also for us because of our union with Christ.

It says *joint-heirs with Christ*. Do we see him crowned with many crowns? So also we shall receive crowns of righteousness, of life, and of glory (2 Tim. 4:8; James 1:12; 1 Peter 5:4). Do we see Christ exalted to the right hand of God? So also we shall be seated there (Rev. 3:21). Do we see Christ revealed in glory? So also shall we be revealed in glory (Col. 3:4).

Roman law was different than Jewish law which had the first born getting a double portion (Deut. 21:17). In joint-heirship all get all. God's inheritance shall not be divided up with the accompanying strife (Luke 12:13). All get eternal life (Mark 10:17). Sure, there will be degrees of reward as one star differs from another in glory, but all will say they've received infinitely more than they deserved.

The conditions of our inheritance or the proof.

It is given by the words *suffer with Him*. Now, our sufferings are not the cause of our obtaining an inheritance. The cause is the predestinating grace of God (Eph. 1:11). And, as there is no inheritance without a death, the Son of God died to leave a legacy (Heb. 9:16). So we are not made recipients because of sufferings, yet we are not recipients without it either. This is part of the program. If we will share in the glory of Christ, so also we will share in the suffering. This is the way it was for Him (Luke 24:26; Phil. 3:10; 1 Peter 1:11). First, the cross, and then the crown.

God has designed that you only get one heaven. Either take it here or hereafter. If you take it hereafter, then we must let go of the world and all it offers—the lust of the flesh with its pleasures, the lust of the eye with its desire for possessions, and the boastful pride of life with its desire for popularity, preeminence, along with all the subtle sin in which we wrongly presume it is OK and go ahead anyways.

To follow Christ, it will mean sufferings. The bitter herbs had to be eaten along with the lamb chops, the locusts with the honey. It is a constant life of self-denials and perhaps hardest of all, dying to laziness. The New Testament is full of teaching on sufferings (Matt. 5:10; 10:23; Acts 14:22; 2 Cor. 1:1-7; 4:17; Phil. 1:29; 1 Thess. 3:3; 2 Tim. 3:12; Heb. 10:32-36; James 1:12; 2:3-7; 1 Peter 4:12; Rev. 1:9).

We must remember...

1. Suffering is part of the program. In 1 Thessalonians 3:3 Paul says that *we are destined for these afflictions*.
2. Suffering is a gift (Philippians 1:29) for...
 - a. it conforms us like practice does the athlete;
 - b. it is part of our glory like the metal is known by the tests it passes;
 - c. it is for God's glory, like Job showed that it was worth it to serve the Lord regardless the cost.
 - d. it is only fitting (2 Thess. 1:1-12). The worldling got his worldly stuff and the Christian who gave it up, gets heaven.

The essence of our inheritance.

There are various ways of describing the nature of our inheritance: heirs of salvation (Heb. 1:14), heirs of eternal life (Matt. 19:29), and heirs of God himself, as I have pointed out above (John 17:24). But the

next phrase gives us more of an idea—to be *glorified with Christ* (John 17:22).

When man exchanged his glory (God), he lost his own glory (Rom. 1:23; 3:23). The moon only has glory as it reflects the sun. Many mothers have lost their glory having left home to find other work. By exalting ourselves we ruined ourselves. But God has designed to restore some of that glory and banish the shame. He intends to bring many sons to glory (Heb. 2:10). The glory will be more than the original, just as perfection is greater than innocence (Phil. 1:6).

This ought to quicken our step. Billy Bray told that as he walked down the street, he picked up one foot and it said, “glory.” He picked up the other and it said, “amen.” He had some glory upon him. All creation is waiting for the unveiling of the work of the Master Workman (v. 19). Our glory is his glory.

Conclusion.

1. Are you an heir? If you are living in sin, you know for sure you are not (1 Cor. 6:9).
2. You might well ask, like the rich young ruler, *What must I do to inherit eternal life?* You must be a son. You must be born again (John 3:7, 1 Peter 1:3). That is God’s work. As for you, you must repent and believe (Acts 26:28).
3. If you are a son of God, this truth...
 - a. *ought to promote humility.* What is man that we should be treated so richly (Psalm 8)? Grace leaves no room for boasting. Two farmers got to comparing their farms. The one said, “Why should you talk, you inherited yours and I had to work for every acre.”
 - b. *ought to promote much thanksgiving* (Col. 1:12). We see that God does not hoard wealth and spend as little as possible. Hetty Green was one of the wealthiest women, while she was looking for free medical assistance her son’s ailing leg finally had to be amputated. God is no liar. We are heirs of promise (Heb. 6:17). God is faithful. Many an heir thought they were going to come into quite some wealth, but alas, through various misfortunes it was all dissipated. Arthur Decio of the Skyline Corporation lost \$24 million in one day. Not so with God. God has promised and it is

all safe and reserved (1 Peter 1:4).

- c. *ought to promote much attention to the Word.* We are in a marathon and need constantly to be strengthened (Acts 20:32).
- d. *ought to encourage you to keep pressing on and not be conformed to the world but looking forward to the heavenly inheritance.* Even Abraham saw that (Heb. 11:8, 11). A new heavens and a new earth! Indeed our heritage is beautiful (Ps. 16:6). Paul indicated that to even try and talk about it in too much detail would be unlawful (2 Cor. 12:4).

THE GLORY TO BE REVEALED

8:18

For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

What a pastoral statement we have here. It is food of such a nature that we need not ever faint. There is a coming glory that will swallow up present sufferings.

It is a glory so great that it is beyond comparison, it is infinitely greater than our sufferings.

It is beyond *comparison* (v. 18). What is sand compared to diamonds, chaff compared to wheat, a picture compared to the person, and what are sufferings compared to the coming glory? The promise is not exact pay, not pay with bonus, but reward beyond comparison to the labors.

Paul contrasts *momentary* with *eternal* (2 Cor. 4:17). A person may walk with God 50 years but what is that compared to the coming eternal glory? Paul contrasts *light* with *weight*. Our sufferings then should be viewed to be as light as a feather compared to the glory as heavy as lead. Paul contrasts *affliction* with *glory*. The promise is not money but glory. It is glory that comes from God. We Christians want God to get the glory, but he intends to give us glory (John 5:44; Rom. 2:7, 29; 1 Cor. 4:5). And every trial and hardship that the Christian goes through *works for him* (2 Cor. 4:17) more glory. It does matter what we go through and how well we pass the tests. The Bible teaches degrees of reward.

It says, there is glory to be revealed *to us* (Rom. 5:2; John 17:24). Man loves the spectacular. He will line up to see parades and performers. But here is the promise of seeing the living God face to face (1 Cor. 13:12). We will see him as he is (1 John 3:1, 2).

The KJV says, glory to be revealed *in us*. That seems to fit the following context better—the unveiling of a piece of workmanship (Matt. 13:43; Col. 3:4). We will be the showpieces.

It is a glory so great that all creation waits for it.

What is *creation* referring too? (v. 19). It could not be Satan nor his

angels. It could not be the non-Christians. They are not anxiously longing for this revelation either. It could not be Christians; they are that for which creation waits. It must be the non-rational creation, the rocks and trees, the skies the seas, the animals, etc.

There were a few hundred gathered at the opening ceremony at Mt. Rushmore. There were 200,000 gathered to see the lights turned on for Christmas in Kansas City. Here we are talking about all creation waiting for this unveiling.

Creation waits to see who these sons of God are. Pope Pious, you are not there, even though you seemed so pious? Pastor Mega, you are not there, even though you gave church growth seminars all over the country? Mr. Pharisee, you are not there, even though you were not like other men? Preacher Simon, you are not there, even though you esteemed the Power of God? But alas, there at God's right hand is Rahab, a harlot. And there is Abraham, a wanderer in sheepskins. And there is Lot, an inhabitant of Sodom. And there is Mephibosheth; he was nothing but a lame man on government welfare. And there is Naboth; I thought you cursed God and the king. And there is Elisha, why, he called bears in on little kids. And there is Jeremiah; I thought you were a traitor. And there is Lazarus, nothing but dog bait. And there is Joanna, the wife of a politician. And there is Paul, a tentmaker and a troublemaker, the scum of the earth. What surprises!

Creation waits to see what God did for them—how they were brought to Christ, how they were delivered from their sins and made holy by the mighty power of God.

Creation waits to see what God did through them—their life and labors. What Abraham went through waiting for that son? What Paul did in Arabia? All of church history will be retold (Eph. 2:7).

It will be a glory so great that it will bring about the restoration of all creation.

Paradise must have been beautiful. (If the wreck is so pretty, then what was the original.) But when man was cursed, so was creation. God subjected it to *futility*, emptiness, and frustration (vv. 20-23). The winds come and go, the rivers make their cycle, springtime attempts annually to bring in life, and the generations come and go. Everything fails for the creation is subjected also to corruption. Everything rots, rusts, and breaks down. The scientists acknowledge this phenomenon, calling it the second law of thermodynamics. Government programs won't

bring any lasting improvement. The ship is headed for destruction. The earth would be some huge penal colony, an island where prisoners are exiled with no hope of escape (C. H. Spurgeon) if not for the hope of restoration.

With the restoration of man comes the restoration of creation, a new heavens and a new earth. Man brought it down; with man it comes back up. But until that time it *groans* with its volcanoes, earthquakes, storms and floods. And *we also groan* with a sense that things are not right, things are out of order and perverted. Tragedy prevails. And we groan not only from the negative, but also in view of the positive, longing for the better day when the curse is lifted—no more boots and parkas, for the killing snows and biting frosts are gone; no more CCA treatment for the rot is gone; no more herbicides or pesticides, for the mice and flies and weeds are gone; no more grave, for the body and the soul are reunited at full *adoption* with the redemption of the *body*.

And we long for it all the more, for we have had a taste with the *first fruits*. The Spirit of God is given *as a pledge*, a down payment, an installment (Eph. 1:13, 14) of the powers of the age to come.

So, all of creation stands on tiptoe with its neck outstretched looking for the revealing of the sons of God, for then will come the *restoration of all things* (Acts 3:21 the *regeneration*; Matt. 19:28).

Conclusion: it is a glory that is future and we must wait for it in hope.

Our salvation is characterized by hope—in *hope we have been saved*. We are saved by the instrumentality of faith, not hope. The children are hoping for Dad to arrive but when he arrives they hope no more. But until he is seen, they continue in the sphere of hope.

And it is this business of hope that demands and energizes *perseverance* (v. 25). The worker toils on in hope of getting paid. The mother travails in hope of a child, the archer waits all day in the tree stand in hope of getting a deer. This hope protects our mind from every fiery dart (1Thess. 5:8, 1 Peter 1:13). This hope keeps our soul in the storms of life (Heb. 6:19). This hope stimulates preparation (1 John 3:3). Moses persevered for he had an eye to the recompense of the reward. Our Lord persevered in view of the joy set before Him. With God, the best is last (John 2). An eternal jubilee!

These things ought to shape our world view.

1. Evolution—things are getting better—how false!
2. Millennium—nothing of it is said. Rather Paul points us to the end of the world.
3. Materialism—no, heaven is our home. We are strangers here.
4. Purpose—all history is herded toward *the summing up of all in Christ*.
5. Evangelism—endure all things that others might obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus and with it eternal glory.
6. Examination—do you groan?

THE SPIRIT'S HELP IN PRAYER

8:26-27

And in the same way the Spirit also help our weakness...
because He intercedes for the saints.

What does Paul mean, *in the same way*. Just as hope helps us persevere through sufferings, *in the same way* Spirit-energized prayer helps our weakness.

Why we need Spirit-directed prayer.

First, we are, in general, weak. Do you see yourself that way? The worldling wants to think of himself as sufficient. But the Christian admits that without God, he is liable to do any rotten thing.

We are particularly weak when it comes to *knowing how to pray*. Have you ever been in a difficult situation where you had to talk with someone and use just the right words? Then, how much more it is true of talking with God—bringing the right words and the right subjects and the right frequency (Judg. 20).

Abraham missed it when he asked for Ishmael (Gen. 17:18). Moses missed it when he asked to go over Jordan (Deut. 3:25). Joshua was told to quit praying (Josh. 7:10). Samuel missed it praying for Saul (1 Sam. 16:1). The mother of James and John did not know what she was asking for (Matt. 20:22). The Gadarene missed it (Mark 5:18, 19). Paul was not on target (2 Cor. 12:8-10).

We say like the disciples, *Lord, teach us to pray*, (Luke 11:1). We are like little children learning to use the intercom. Our clumsiness surely hinders good communication.

The business of prayer is important, it is dangerously effectual for better or worse. God answered Israel's prayer but sent leanness to their soul (Ps. 106:15). God answered Abraham's prayer and made Ishmael a great nation, adversary that they were (Gen. 17:18). God's anger is felt over Moses' prayer (Deut. 3:23-26).

Our prayers have a lot of junk in them. There is much black smoke going up in the incense. Even our thanksgivings must be filtered through Christ (Col. 3:17). We don't know how to pray *as we ought*.

Moreover it is possible to get so heavy in spirit, so entangled in thought, so perplexed with difficulties that we have a hard time even

getting words out of our mouth. The psalmist says, *I am so troubled that I cannot speak*. That is what you might see in an infirmary, soldiers so wounded that they cannot speak, only *groan*.

How does the Spirit help us in prayer?

First, notice that the Spirit is a *helper*. Jesus calls him that (John 14:16). He is not “our little helper,” but it is more like the king helping the servant to do the king’s will. The Greek word is *paraclete*. It means one called alongside to help. It is like we are carrying a heavy log and a friend comes along and picks up one end, the heavy end at that.

Second, how does the Spirit help? *He intercedes*. That means go-between. We actually have two intercessors. Christ is the other (v. 34). He intercedes for us at the throne in a legal way and the Spirit intercedes through us in an experiential way.

Thirdly, the Spirit intercedes *by stepping in to speak for us, by speaking through us*. He directs prayer *according to the will of God*. He puts words in our mouth like Joab did the woman of Tekoa to intercede with David on Absalom’s behalf.

But sometimes it is not words, it is only groans, sighs, cryings, and burdens. We see our iniquities come to the surface all at once and they are such a dark cloud over our head that we cannot look up; we groan. We look around and see the wrong so strong, injustice so prevalent and we groan. We see souls perishing, laughing their way to hell and we groan (Rom. 9:2). We hear the name we love taken in vain and we groan (Ps. 139:21). We see the low-life amongst the people of God and we could pull our hair and fall to the ground and groan (Ezra 9:3). Maybe we are facing some new step of obedience and we see the cost of discipleship and we groan (Matt. 26:38). We don’t know how to put it into words. All we can do is groan, but even at such a time as this, we may be confident that that is the Spirit at work and it is of God.

Summary. How does it all work? Verse 27 tells us it is God seeing, God knowing, and God causing.

God sees. He searches the hearts. The Coast Guard searches boats for drugs. The homeowner searches the house for the lost coin. But God searches the hearts regarding our thoughts (Jer. 17:10).

God sees wrong motives (Ps. 139:23; Luke 16:15). He sees hypocrisies (Acts 5:3). He searches for stagnancy (Zeph. 2:2). And on the positive side, God is searching for true faith (Acts 15:7). He is searching out

and rewarding spirituality, (1 Sam. 16:7; Acts 1:24).

God has a reputation for being a heart-searcher. And as He searches the hearts of the saints, He finds unuttered words and unutterable groanings and though inarticulated, there is meaning and intent that can't escape His omniscient eye.

God knows what the mind of the Spirit is. Those groanings are wholly intelligible to him. Who can interpret that baby talk like the mother? So also God knows the workings of the heart, for the Spirit put it there and he knows the mind of the Spirit (1 Cor. 2:10f).

God actually is the cause, the instigator of it all. He told the Spirit what message to give. He sent the prompter to help the reciter. It is all according to his will.

Conclusions and Applications.

We are commanded to pray and our prayers are important. God has foreordained everything and even everything for us. He has foreordained the end but also the means. So we must pray. It can hurt us if we don't (James 4:3).

There is a right way to pray. It says *as we should*. God is concerned with content and intent. The Spirit is graciously helping, even in groanings of the heart.

These groanings, even these, are the promptings of the Spirit and meet with God's approval. They are from him. You know Christ's intercessions are entirely accepted with God. We ought to feel the same about ours, being Spirit-directed. God hears the softest prayer. Remember Nehemiah (Neh. 2:4)? Remember Hannah (1 Sam. 1:13)? God does more than we ask (Eph. 3:20).

We should not think that groanings are the normal. We should bring words (Hos. 14:2; Matt. 6:9). We should order our prayer (Ps. 5:3). We might start with God (Acts 4:24). We might then bring thanksgivings (Phil. 4:6). We might then hold up the promises and use the word—the Spirit's sword against the invisible foes. Sometimes a word is quickened and you can pray the *prayer of faith*.

The Holy Spirit is a person. He has a *mind*.

The Christians are the *saints*—in contrast to the Roman Catholic idea.

Prayer is a great indicator of who the true saints are.

We see in this area again, the humanness of our Lord Jesus and his fittedness to be our priest. On one occasion Jesus prayed, *what shall I*

say? (John 12:27). He never prayed wrongly, but yet felt the difficulty of knowing *how to pray as he should*. He was a man.

See the great power and provision attending us. Adam fell away when he had never known sin. Adam fell away in Paradise. We, in all our weakness, stand.

ALL FOR GOOD

8:28

And we know that God causes all things to work together for good for those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.

I suppose that Romans 8:28 has been on almost as many walls and hearts as John 3:16. It is special, like some of mother's dishes, and perhaps it should be used more often in the pulpits.

Here is some of heaven's best wine—a divine cordial (Thomas Watson). Here is some of the finest wheat from our Father's granary that we might eat and be strengthened to meet every adversity and adversary. Here is an anchor that will hold in the storms of life—all for good. Here is a balm to heal every wound in the battle of the ages—all for good. Here are glasses to see good in every evil—all for good. Here is a warm note of sympathy from the great heart of God to console any loss—all for good. Here is a spade to uproot every poisonous plant of bitterness—all for good. Here is an exceedingly great and precious promise, a key to unlock the doors of every "doubting castle" to escape from every "giant despair." Consider...

The purpose of this promise.

The purpose is depicted by the little word "*and*." It takes us back to Paul's topic of sufferings. In our afflictions we are helped by hope; we are helped by the Spirit in prayer; and we are helped by the knowledge of God's good providence. It is another stake in the grounds of assurance. Can we be overthrown by sufferings and adversity? No, they too work for our progress toward heaven. Consider...

The certainty of this exceedingly great and precious promise.

This is depicted by the little word *know*. There are some things we do not know. We don't know how to pray as we ought (8:26). We don't know the times (Acts 1:7). We often don't know what manner of spirit we are of (Luke 9:55). We don't know as we ought to know (1 Cor. 13:12).

But there are some things we know and here is a rock to walk on

with all your weight. Nothing can ultimately hinder your spiritual progress.

We don't know what the future holds but we know who holds the future. We don't know particulars but we know the overall plan. We don't know how we will do in our Ai's (land Israel sought to conquer) but we know God has promised us the land.

I might be traveling to a destination in the south of the country. The route takes me through some mountains with some switchback roads. I see by the compass that I'm going north instead of south. I think I must be on the wrong road but then I look up and see a highway sign and I know that indeed I'm on the right road and that this direction will only take me closer toward my destination.

God promised. This is not a word from parents, not a president, not a pope, not a pastor, but from the highest official in the universe. He is engineering the cosmos for our good.

The pervasiveness of this promise—the extent.

This is depicted by *all things*. Sure, the good things work for good (eg. the conversion of some sinner) but what about the bad things? Yes *all things* work for good because there is a God over all, over heaven and earth, who works all things after the counsel of his will to the praise of his glory (Rom. 11:36). Even our hairs are numbered.

The privilege of this promise, that is the blessing.

It is summed up in the word *good*. Are all things that happen to the Christian good? What about Job's losses, Stephen's stoning, and David's sin? What about that speeding ticket?

The bad things indeed are bad; but, rather, it is what God does with that bad thing. Job's loss was a miserable thing, but God brought good out of it (James 5:11). Through Stephen's stoning preachers were scattered everywhere (Acts 8:1). Through Paul's shipwreck came the conversion of the Maltese people. Through David's wanderings came many of the Psalms.

But you say, these are all outward evils. What about sin? Joseph's brothers sinned against him—they *meant it for evil but God meant it for good* (Gen. 50:20). The fall of man brought out the glories of grace. The devil only furthered the purpose and glory of God. The crucifixion of Christ only spilled the blood by which we are redeemed. God makes the wrath of the enemy to praise him (Ps. 76:10).

But what about my sins? Here the promise gets incredibly bold. Remember it was through Jonah's sin that the sailors were converted. David's sin yielded comforting scripture and an example to all who fall as to how to get up again. Peter's fall enabled him to strengthen the brethren. We must be so bold as to conclude that my sin brings good and furthers the purpose of God (Acts 4:28).

Shall we then conclude, *Let us do evil that good may come?* (Rom. 3:8). Never! First, sin is always devilish. Second, we must never presume on God. Third, it is always better to not have sinned at all. Think of the terror that David experienced because of his sin.

We must realize furthermore that this *good* is not money, nor long life, nor happiness. It is holiness. See the following verse, *conformed to the image of His Son* (2 Cor. 3:18). We are *partakers of His holiness* (Hebrews 12:10) by our sins and the subsequent chastisement. Paul's thorn brought humility. Israel's enemies left in the land taught them warfare. That injury teaches us that we are frail as a flower. Thomas Watson says, "Often more is learned from the sickbed than a sermon" (Ps. 119:71). These things drive us to our knees in dependency on God and that is growth in grace right there.

The people to whom this promise is made.

This is given us by *those who love him and those who are called*. It does not apply to the non-Christian. His good ends up a curse (1 Cor. 16:22). The things he accumulates only further his sin (Mark 4:19). The things he inherits only further his prodigality. The things, the honors, the comforts he acquires only furthers his pride and self-sufficiency. He is under the wrath of God and the bigger the building the worse the man is buried when it falls.

This promise applies to those who *love* God. Why love? It is likely in contrast to what he said in 8:7, the *hostility* of the natural man. Man by nature is not in a neutral position. Well, while many would admit that they aren't where they could be with God, yet they would maintain that they really don't hate God. The problem with that is that God defines loving him as an all out endeavor (Mark 12:29, 30), no strings attached. To neglect God is to hate him. So, this is a distinguishing mark of a true Christian.

Then it says, *called*. It is just like a father calling his son in to the house, only when God does it, his call is effectual (v. 30). *Lazarus, come forth*. There is a general, ineffectual call (Ps. 19:1; Matt. 22:14; Acts

17:30). But this one here gets the job done and this call of God going back to his love for us in eternity (v. 29) is why we love him (1 John 4:19).

Why does it go on to say, *called according to his purpose*? God is a God of purpose. He is not like children who make a putty pot and then destroy it. He is not like a father who calls his son and then forgets why. His call is with a reason (Rom. 9:11; Eph. 1:11; 2 Tim. 1:9). What is that purpose? It is that we might be conformed to Christ (now progressively and then perfectly) and share in his glory (Rom. 8:29, 30; 2 Thess. 2:14). It is like a man calling for a certain car out of a salvage yard. His purpose? To restore it, even better than the original condition.

Conclusion and Application.

1. *This is for our examination.* Are you in love with God? Is he the supreme reality in your life? Do you talk about him? Everyone talks about the one or the thing they love. Some love hunting and you know it by the way they talk. Is the reading of the Word a delight (Ps. 1:1, 2), or is it a mere duty and a drudgery? What do you do in your spare time? Are you called of God? Are you amazed at what God has done for you? Is there evidence? This is the meaning of 2 Peter 1:10, *making your calling sure*—sure by the fruitfulness mentioned in the foregoing passage. If two tests are not a reality, then God does not love you and does not have a wonderful plan for your life like some false preachers say.
2. *This is for our consolation.* Your final salvation is sure and God is in charge of your life to bring everything toward that end. If I know that I'm predestined to arrive at New York, then I know that each step must somehow be working that way. Nothing can hinder my progress. All curses shall be turned to blessings. In all these things we are more than conquerors (v. 37).
3. *This is for our humiliation.* What put such a great difference between me and my neighbor? It was God's eternal purpose (2 Tim. 1:9).
4. *This is for our liberation.* This ought to set us free from grumbling, anxiety, purposelessness, depression, and despair. We should never say, "Who will show us any good?" We

should not say like old Jacob. *All these things are against me*, (Gen. 42:36). We should not feel like Naomi, *The Lord brought me back empty* (Ruth 1:20, 21). They felt that way because they did not see the bigger picture. Children throw a fit if their toys are taken away by another. They only need to see the bigger picture that soon they will have them back. The worldling's optimism is a false hope. He has fixed up his ship very nicely, but he does not realize that there is a great hole down in the lower parts. Our house is not built on sand. Our feet are not set in slippery places. Our latter end is glory.

5. *It is for our admiration.* Praise God who is able to work all things this way. Like the watch with gears turning in opposite directions, yet the outcome is right. Like two chemicals which are harmful in themselves, when mixed right they are good medicine. This is our God. This is the harmony of providence. "With mercy and with judgment, my web of time He wove."
6. *This is for our proclamation.* Say among the nations, our God reigns.
7. *This is for our exhortation.* Do you know it? Do you really believe it is all for good?

FOREKNOWLEDGE AND THE ETERNAL PLAN OF GOD

8:29

For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren.

If you had a tour of a hospital delivery and operating room they could be likened to regeneration and sanctification. With new life coming about in the delivery room, and progressive growth being worked out in the operating room. If they showed you the meeting room where the board met and showed you a movie about the plans that went into building the hospital and the purpose for building it, that would be foreknowledge and predestination. In verse 28 Paul, to convey our security, brings us into the meeting room to show that our lives are rooted in the eternal purposes of God. Now in verses 29 and 30 we have more of this explained as Paul takes us from eternity past to eternity future.

Let's go back. I go back to justification and before that, God's calling me to himself. But then we go out of time into eternity with God's predestination, election and foreknowledge (Note the order as from 1 Peter 1:2). These are three great words that God has given us to describe the awesome eternal counsels of God.

Foreknowledge is the farthest back we can go. It is the fountainhead of the streams of grace. It is the origin of the scarlet thread of redemption. It is one of the most misunderstood Bible terms. Some things are hard to understand but this, notice, was written by Paul to these Roman Christians with the expectation that it could be understood and enjoyed. While it is not central to the gospel, yet it is foundational.

Look at the meaning of the word foreknowledge.

The Greek words are *proginosko* and *prognosis*, the latter being a medical term in the English, meaning what the doctor knows beforehand of the case. *Pro* means beforehand and *gnosis* means knowledge. The Gnostic error exalted (human) knowledge.

There are basically two views in Christendom. The Arminian

view says that God knew ahead of time (foresaw) who would believe and then predestined them to salvation on that basis. The Calvinistic view says that it is not knowledge but rather intimacy ahead of time; that is, God loved certain souls in eternity and these he elected and predestined to glory.

There are four reasons why the latter view is right.

1. *The singleness of the word whom.* It does not say “whom God foreknew would believe.” It stops at whom. It does not say *what* God foreknew, but whom. It does not say that God knew something about them, but rather that he knew them. The president might come to town. I would know things about him but I would not know him. This says that God foreknew some.
2. *The way the word foreknow is often used* (Gen. 4:1; 18:19; Ex. 2:25; Ps. 1:6; Jer. 1:5; Matt. 1:25; 7:23; 25:12; John 10:14; Acts 2:23; 1 John 3:1). These demonstrate that it is not used to mean knowledge but intimacy and acquaintance.
3. *It would make mockery of the following word—predestinate.* It would be ridiculous for the Queen of England to rise from her bed at 5:00 and, seeing the day dawn, make a decree, “I hereby predestinate that the sun shall rise today.” That would be post-destination.
4. *The thrust of the context is on God’s sovereign determinate action.* Paul’s conclusion to this is, *What shall we say? If God is for us (in this way) then who can be against us? My life, my salvation is rooted in the eternal plan of God to get me to heaven.*
5. *The doctrine of grace.* This other view of foreseen faith has my salvation based on my meriting the merit of Christ. Truth ought to leave me with my mouth open in utter amazement, “Why did God save me?”

What is the use of this doctrine?

There are two basic thrusts given us here in the context.

1. Foreknowledge magnifies God’s sovereignty. God has a plan and he gets it done. All that he foreknew he glorified. If someone did not make it to heaven, it must be that he was not foreknown or predestined. Salvation is of the Lord. This is a

jewel on the top of God's crown. The pride of man is humbled and the grace of God is magnified.

2. This ought to tell us something about our security. It is so sure that Paul puts it in the past tense as though we were already there. I am in God's eternal plan and it springs from the love of God. "He loved me 'ere I knew Him." Nothing will last to eternity but that which is rooted in eternity. And think of the security we ought to have just knowing the overall plan of God to get me to heaven. The particulars (such as losses, disappointments, hardships, etc.) don't seem so ominous if we know the big picture. If one knows how computers operate, he has a much better chance of understanding the needed commands. And God's plan for us is not health, wealth and happiness. It is to conform us to his Son, to eradicate all the effects of the fall from our lives.

Are you foreknown? The only way you can tell is if you right now know the Lord —personally, intimately, truly. Is he the supreme reality in your life? Are you lost in wonder, love and praise, saying, "Why me?"

GLORIOUS PREDESTINATION

8:29

For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren.

To many, predestination is a red flag. The non-Christian does not want God to be that much of a God. And strangely, many professing Christians think of this as some aberration; they change it to mean post-destination by basing their predestination on foreseen faith—an aberration indeed of the word foreknowledge. One minister told me outright that he did not believe in predestination. Old Adam must stand up for the sovereign rights of the creature rather than the Creator. But it is in the Bible. And it is not an ignorant and unlearned question. Paul expected the Romans to understand it and rejoice in it. It is a glorious truth.

The meaning of the word.

Foreknowledge says God loved me beforehand. Election says that God marked me out beforehand for something. Predestination speaks of what God marked out for me. God pre-determined my destiny. The Greek word is *proorizo*. *Pro* means before and *orizo* is the word from which we get horizon. The horizon marks off the sky and the earth. Thus, God marked off something for me before all time.

The object of predestination?

God predestined the physical world, every molecule of it (Isa. 40:12). God predestined history, the boundaries of the nations and their times (Isa. 46:10, 11; Acts 17:26). The year 1776 was no accident for the USA. The Rio Grande river was no accident for Mexico. God predestines great events and small events, even the roll of the dice (Prov. 16:33). God predestines my physical make-up, down to the very details, for even my hairs are numbered (Ps. 139; Matthew 10:30). God predestines my spiritual make-up—my work and calling (Eph. 2:10), the afflictions that come into my life (1 Thess. 3:3), and my ultimate destiny as indicated by this text, *predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son*.

God made man in his image, a moral and spiritual image—man operates in terms of right and wrong, man can commune with God. But when man fell, the image was marred. The mirror was broken and we no longer reflect the glory of God. But, in the grace of God, he sent his Son, taking upon himself our image that we might be made back into his image (Heb. 2:14). He accomplished redemption at Calvary that, the sin-debt being paid, the Holy Spirit might be sent into the redeemed and the renewing work begun. We have borne the image of the earthly, now the image of the heavenly (1 Cor. 15:48).

A potter might take clay and make it into a pot. A wood worker might take a stick and whittle it into a dog or a man. But God takes sinners and conforms us to his own Son.

Is there something you admire about Jesus? Take his faith as an example. He never broke faith through all the trials (Heb. 2:13). God is conforming you to be like him in this way. Take his hope. For the joy set before him, he endured the cross and despised the shame (Heb. 12:2). God is making you like him in that way. Take his love. He laid down his life for his enemies. God is conforming you that way. Take his holiness. He never gave in to sin. God is conforming you to be like him in that way.

You, Christian, have been predestined to be conformed not to some great ball player, orator, general or artist, but to the perfect man, the Son of God. And God has begun that work in you. The books you read are primarily for that purpose. The losses you incur, the battles you face, the chastisement you experience are primarily to make you *a partaker of His holiness*.

This is the #1 thing God has in mind for you. When you wake up, you ought to think, “holiness to the Lord.” When you go to work, you ought to think, “holiness to the Lord.” What about your marriage and the children from that union? God is still more concerned about your sanctification than your family. God has not promised wealth, health, and happiness, but holiness to the Lord. God will strip, burn, blast and peel to conform us.

Paul had it right. He says he counted it all rubbish for the surpassing value of knowing the Lord. He prayed, *that he might know Him, the power of His resurrection, the fellowship of His suffering, being conformed to His death* (Phil. 3:10). And death to the self life is the major element in our sanctification.

God is constantly renewing the inner man. He is changing us from

glory to glory until at last we reach glory. But there is yet a higher object than all of this.

The ultimate end of predestination.

God intends to conform many sons to his only begotten Son in order that he might have the preeminence—that he might be the *first-born* (Gen. 49:3, Ps. 89:27). Every blade of grass, every gust of wind, every sunrise, every ball game, every deceiver, every move of Satan, not to mention every Bible that is printed and every soul that is saved and brought to heaven, works toward that ultimate goal of magnifying the Son.

Of course, by necessity, for one to be the first-born, he must have brothers and sisters. Preeminence is a relative thing. The more competitors in an athletic event, the more glory goes to the winner.

Many brethren! It does not say angels. They have no body, but rather it is the brethren whose bodies shall be made like unto his glorious body. The angels are not sons, but servants—again, it is the brethren. Will there be worlds to rule? It will be the brethren. Will there be battles to fight and decisions to make and matters to judge? It will be by the brethren.

See how the Son of God desires fellowship. He does not want to be alone. He wants many brethren. Our joy is his joy.

See how the Father is so pleased with the Son that he wants many portraits of the Son all over the halls of glory.

Yes, we like the Son fought with invisible foes. We like the Son suffer cruel reproaches and miserable disappointments. He suffered and so did we. He was crowned and so are we. He is not ashamed to *call us brethren*.

How to use the doctrine?

1. Are you wondering if you are one of these predestined? It can be answered simply—are you being now conformed? If you are the same old person you always were, you have no reason to believe that you are headed for heaven. Ask the Lord, to begin that *good work* in you.
2. Are you struggling with sin, longing to be perfectly whole? Predestination will not let you retain anything not according to the image of the Son.

3. Are you real in this pursuit of holiness? Yes! You are commanded to, *not be conformed to the world, but to be transformed by the renewing of your mind*. And, you are right now not as holy as you want to be. God gave the Israelites the land, and they were sure to take it, but they had to take it.
4. Does predestination bother you? Listen, if it weren't for God's gracious predestination, there would be no one in heaven. But God did destine some for glory, to the praise of the glory of his grace (Eph. 1:6), and that is glorious predestination.

GOD FOR US

8:31

What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us?

Paul's statement of the purpose of redemption (v. 29) and then the progression of redemption (v. 30), the whole thing being so strong and sure like an unbroken and unbreakable chain, evokes this response, *What then shall we say to these things?*

Now we come to a very enjoyable statement. It sets so well on the mind. It rolls off the tongue equally well. We like to quote it continually. Shall we take it as a banner, as a shield, and as a sword? Saints down through the ages have taken refuge here. It is an incredible statement. It is so all-encompassing. It is so bold, challenging all opposition. It seems to laugh at all our foes.

See how God is for us.

Down through the ages God has been for his people. There are the children of Israel in Egypt making bricks for cruel taskmasters. But God arises for his people and what desolations are left in the land of Ham as God's people march right out carrying riches. But then they were trapped like rabbits at the Red Sea. Again God made a highway through the bottom of the Sea and the Egyptian army was left belly up. God was for his people. Did their shoes wear out? Did they lack water? They had water from the rock like the ocean depths and bread from heaven. Not Amalek nor Sihon and Og could stand in their way. God was for his people. They drove out of Canaan mighty nations stronger than they for God was for them like a dread champion, like the horns of a wild ox. You say what about Ai's defeat? Yet there was Jericho, for God was for them. What about Babylon? Yet there was the return. What about 70 AD when the whole Old Covenant system was destroyed? Yet there was the New Covenant, for God was for His people. He did not cast away his people which he foreknew. And the promised Messiah came who set up the church consisting of Jews and Gentiles which was the eternal plan anyhow. Down through the centuries now, Jesus has built his church and the powers of hell can not stand in his way. He is for us.

This is what the saints down through the ages have wanted to know, have needed to know. Abraham (Gen. 15:1), when no doubt in danger after having routed the kings, was comforted, *Do not fear ... I am your shield*. God was saying he was for him. Isaac, when losing his wells to the men of Gerar, received the same message from God (26:22-25). Jacob (28:15), when facing the unknown, heard the same thing, *I am with you and will keep you*. Joseph was exalted in Egypt. Why? *God was with him* (39:2). God was for him. Moses, in his timidity, heard the same message from God (Ex. 3:12). Caleb, encouraged Israel to take the land with the same message (Num. 14:9). Joshua, when beginning his ministry, was encouraged with the same thing, *Just as I was with Moses, so I will be with you*. God was saying he'd be for him (Josh. 1:5). David came against Goliath with that very confidence (1 Sam. 17:45, 46). Elisha could be so confident in the face of the surrounding Syrian army. Why? He knew that God was for them. *Do not fear, he told his servant, those who are with us are more than those who are with them* (2 Kings 6:16). Jeremiah faced false prophets and false religion with the confidence that God was for him—*They will fight against you but they will not overcome you for I am with you to deliver you* (Jer. 1:19). Paul, when facing the opposition of the Jews, was encouraged to press on by those same words (Acts 18:10).

If you have ever wanted to hear anything, it was that God is for you. At the beginning of the day, planning a trip, buying a car, or preaching a sermon. This is the bottom line of all good news. This is the essence of all consolation. This is the answer to all questions before they arise. This fills in all the holes, bridges all the gaps, and is our ticket to heaven and our vindication on the great day.

Ball clubs have paid millions to get a certain player to play for them. In World War II it was no small consolation to Britain to know that the USA would be for them as an Ally. But here, who is for us? It is God, the omnipotent God. If you could knock the stars out of the sky with a fly swatter, then you could frustrate God. If you could extinguish the sun with a garden hose, then you could frustrate God. If you could fight off lightning with the arm of flesh, you could frustrate God. If you could damage the Statue of Liberty with pebbles, you could frustrate God. If a flea could stand in the way of an elephant, then God can be frustrated. But the creature cannot frustrate the Creator. One man with God on his side has a majority, and God is for us. Why could Athanasius take such a lonely and bold stand, so much that it was said

“Athanasius against the world and the world against Athanasius”? He knew God was with him. Why could John Wesley stay so cool before his persecutors, glory in poverty, and persevere with a contentious wife? He knew God was with him. What did he put on his tombstone? “Best of all, God is with us.”

God is for us in foreknowledge for he has loved us with an everlasting love. God is for us in predestination, for he has predetermined a glorious destiny. God is for us in calling, for all the Father gave Jesus shall come. God is for us in justification, for he has given us his righteousness through his Son. God is for us in working all in our lives for good. God is for us in glorification, for he wants us with him.

What are those *things that are against us* but ultimately *not against us* if indeed God is for us?

In verses 33 and 34, sin is implied. The main culprit from the beginning was sin, so deadly that one drop will kill. And the problem is the guilt from that sin. The solution?—the death of Christ (vv. 32-34). The reason that God could be for us is because he was against his Son. That is why his name was Immanuel (Matt. 1:23). We might miss God’s will and thus his support on particulars, and be chastened in such a way that we think God is against us, (think of Job and Jonah as examples of perplexity and adversity) yet really even in that he is for us as it brings about holiness. And moreover we know that in the whole of our life, God has set things up so that even all particulars are for our good. And not only has God dealt with the legal aspect of sin, but the actual power of sin, for the old man is slain and the flesh mortally wounded.

In verse 35, the world is an adversary. With its lusts, pride, enchantments, and vanity fairs populated by haters of good, it is no friend to grace to help us on to God. “On earth’s fairest, they have stamped their foulest brand” (Samuel Rutherford). But God is for us, for the blood of the martyrs indeed has been the seed of the church. The fire that consumed the Riddleys, the Latimers, the Tyndales, and the Covenanters spread through all England and the world. God is for us in all our battle with infallible truth, comforts of the Spirit, and an eternal weight of glory.

In verse 38, we have the Devil with all his principalities and powers, with all the wiles, schemes, and devices, more subtle than any can

imagine. But the devil comes with pills called depression. Still we say, *Do not rejoice over me, my enemy. I will arise* (Mic. 7:8). We have winds called affliction, yet we know the outcome of the Lord as with Job. We have smiles called false religion, yet the Lord has his 7,000. We have tongues of accusation, yet there remains this promise from God, “No weapon that is formed against you shall prosper and every tongue that rises against you in judgment, you shall condemn” (Isa. 54:17). Yes, *greater is He that is in us, than he that is in the world* (1 John 4:4). No condemnation, no accusation, and no separation!

Is God for you?

This is the big “if,” and it is answered this way, are you *for* God? Have you given your heart to the Lord. Do you profess Christ and sacrifice for him? Is he the supreme reality in your life? If not, then God is against you. He is your enemy and intends to put you in hell.

But if you have God on your side, then you have angels for body guards, you have all for time and eternity (Matt. 28:20). This is the gospel—God for us through Christ! This is where Paul started in 1:16. And this should prepare us for whatever may come our way.

JUST HOW MUCH GOD IS INDEED FOR US

8:32

He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?

Surely one of the biggest wine cellars in the New Testament is Romans, Chapter 8; it yields joy unspeakable. Surely one of the best observatories in the New Testament is Romans, Chapter 8 where we see so clearly the unseen things above. Surely one of the best armories in the New Testament is Romans, Chapter 8 that we might be more than conquerors. It is a bank box describing so thoroughly our inheritance.

Paul is trying to comfort and assure the Christians that all is well. He made the glorious statement in verse 31 that God is for us. Now in verse 32 he is telling us more of just how much God is for us.

See what God has done for us in accomplishing redemption.

It is depicted by the words in the first half of the verse, *God did not spare His own Son*. It must be put in the back drop of the fact that God could have turned his back on the whole human race for all of our failures.

First, we rebelled in Paradise, a perfect setting. Then we got so corrupt that God had to wipe out the world with a flood and start again with one man, Noah. Then we find God destroying cities due to immorality. But then God made a nation for himself from Abraham. But they got so bad bearing poisonous fruit, that like a degenerate vine, he had to cut them off. And down to this very day we see the plight and the depravity of man. With all our improvements in science and medicine, we find no satisfaction. Men know how to build great buildings but can't build character. They have powerful bombs but have no power over sin. They stop back mighty waters but can't hold back anger. We with all of our achievements, yet sin and death reigns.

How could God do anything other than banish the human race to hell? Love found a way, the way of atonement. But what could pay off our debt to the broken holy law. Could God cut down the cedars of Lebanon and burn them as an appeasement for his impeccable holiness? Could he melt the gold of Ophir to propitiate his supreme majesty? Could he offer the fruit of the vineyards of Engedi as a

sacrifice for sin? Could he slay his cattle on his thousand hills to satisfy divine justice?

No, it took God to atone for man. Could a prophet like Moses do it? Could a priest like Samuel or Jehoiada do it? Could a king like Hezekiah or a holy man like Job do it? No, they had sins of their own. The deliverer had to come from heaven. And not angels, but the Messiah had to be the blessed eternal Son of God himself.

But would God send him? Would he deliver up his Son to a Mt. Moriah slaying? Would he send away his Son who rejoiced always before him to a Valley of Baca where his eyes would be filled with tears and his voice with strong cryings? Would he send away his Son from the realms of light to the dark shadows of Gethsemane, from the heights of glory to the lion's den to fight with the powers of darkness? Would he send his Son, the brightness of his glory and the express image of his person, to be slapped, spit upon and scourged, marred more than any man? Or would God spare him?

God spared not his own Son. In the counsels of eternity a decision was made. Jesus was delivered up by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God (Acts 2:23). Then, in time, delivered into the hands of ungodly men (Luke 9:44).

What does it mean, spared not? It means to relieve of the necessity of doing something. If a business gets a state sales tax license, they are spared from paying tax. It means to refrain from use, to keep from harm. Sodom would have been spared if there had been ten righteous people. The homes sprinkled with the blood were spared (Ex. 12:27). Saul wrongly spared king Agag. My brother-in-law spared his son by donating a kidney (Mal. 3:17).

But God spared not his Son, sending him away from the blissful shores of Paradise, from the realm of unclouded day, from the purest and most filial relationship ever known, from eternity into time, to be dumped into the sewer of sin.

Was it easy for the Father? Our God is not impersonal steel. He is not some insensitive stone idol. God is the source of personhood. He can be grieved. He can feel sorrow and pain.

It was not Judas who delivered up the Lord for money; it was not Pilate who delivered up the Lord for fear; it was not the Jews who delivered up the Lord for envy. It was God the Father. It *pleased the Lord to bruise Him*. It was the Father who said, *Awake, O sword, against the Shepherd*.

For whom did he deliver up the Son? It says, *for us*. That is, in our place. It speaks of a substitutionary atonement. Who are these? It is those who love the Lord (v. 28). It is those foreknown and predestined (v. 29). It is those called and justified and glorified (v. 30). It is those for whom God is for (v. 31). It is the elect (v. 33). It is those for whom Jesus intercedes (v. 34). It is those who are inseparably united to Christ (v. 35). It is those who are killed for the Lord, yet more than conquerors (v. 36). When we think of the atonement, it should not be some nebulous concept, some non-personal concept. Paul said, “He loved *me* and gave himself *for me*.” Jesus loved *the church* and gave himself *for her*.” Jesus the good shepherd “laid down His life *for the sheep*.” For your comfort listen to the New Testament language of these verses (Matt. 20:28; Rom. 5:8; 1 Cor. 15:3; 2 Cor. 5:21; Gal. 1:4; 3:13; Titus 2:14).

And think of the purchasing, redeeming, sanctifying power of the blood (Acts 20:28; 1 Cor. 6:20; Col. 1:20; 2 Tim. 1:9; Heb. 2:14; 10:10, 14; 13:12; 1 Peter 1:18, 19; Rev. 5:9). Do you feel the comfort of the fact that Jesus personally died for you? He paid it all, past, and present, future. He freely forgave us forever.

What is the application, the ramification, the inference, the point? If God has accomplished redemption then certainly it will be applied.

It is an argument from the greater to the lesser: if God has given for us the greatest possible, surely he will do whatever else might be necessary for our welfare. If a man redeemed you at the very expense of the life of his son, could you ever doubt his love and care for you? If some big corporation built a multi-million dollar factory, would they, having completed and paid for all, just turn away and leave it when all that was left was to turn on the power? You know how you feel it to be so ridiculous when someone buys something at an auction and then does not pick it up to take it home. Will you think God would do that? No, if God has given his most precious possession, won't he do the rest for you? If he has given you the bread from heaven, won't he care to give you the earthly? If he has clothed you with divine righteousness, why be anxious thinking he might not give us the needed physical. And we must remember redemption was all God's idea, it was not angels who suggested the idea. So if God accomplished redemption, won't he apply it? If he began the good work, will he fail to complete it? Character development, protection, and sustenance are all little flows compared to the ocean of benevolence that was opened up at Calvary. Do you

need victory over retaliation? Do you need closer fellowship? Do you think God would do less for us now that we are friends, than what he did for us as enemies (Rom. 5:10)? Inconceivable! If you see someone who did not make it to heaven, be sure Christ did not die for him. For all for whom he died, make it.

Yes, *all things* are included in the atonement. All things necessary for life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3). All things are designed to promote the interests of the church. The universe revolves around the elect. The consummation of the work of redemption is the great end to which all things are directed and to which they are made subservient.

Conclusions.

What grounds for faith. We should reckon on the blessings purchased for us at Calvary. If you were a very poor man and a rich neighbor came to you, "I see you are poor and have had little. I would like to buy you an ocean cruise." There on the cruise a man comes over, "I see you are always over here by yourself eating crackers while we are over there feasting. What is wrong?" You meekly respond, "While this man bought me this cruise, yet I have no means beyond that." He says, "But don't you realize that everything was included in the price." We ought to reckon on the wealth of power and grace and love and goodwill behind us in God. We ought to enjoy our infallible security. There is no sin or situation that can stand in our way. We may defy our many, mighty, malicious foes. All God is, has, and does is for me.

This ought to keep us from bitterness and suspicions against God. If some wealthy man gave me a great inheritance, would I question him whether he is being fair to me? Remember, too, the Israelites how they grumbled saying God had brought them out of Egypt only to let them die (Ex. 16:3). It was wicked unbelief.

We ought to let the dignity of our position be a motive to holiness. We don't want to disappoint the one who has loved us so.

And remember the word *freely*. God is not reluctant. *He will withhold no good thing from those who walk uprightly*, Psalm 84:11. He freely gives.

The question is: are you a believer? Peter says, *This precious value is for you who believe. He who believes in Him will never be disappointed* (1 Peter 2:6, 7).

NO CHARGES

8:33-34

Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the One who justifies; who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us.

The theme of Romans, Chapter 8 is the security of the believer. Boats have anchors for security, poles have guy wires, passengers have seat belts, and loans have insurance. And we need security for our soul as well.

The non-Christian secures his soul with man-made ideas, concepts, and philosophies. The Christian knows which way to go, but still, after he once sets out, might he be waylaid? He knows the right bridge to cross but will it hold or will the weight of sorrows that he might encounter bring it down? He has this certificate of acquittal but maybe other accusations might supercede it. Are we secure? Are we really free of charge? Paul takes up yet another challenge to our security. It is a golden staircase of assurances, one on top of another—*yes, rather...*

Think of our liability to charges and condemnation (vv. 33, 34).

The words, charges and condemnation, take us to the courtroom—they are legal terms. It has to do with the pronouncement of guilt or acquittal by the judge. That is why the Bible warns the judges not to condemn the righteous or justify the wicked (Prov. 17:15), as happened to Naboth and as happened to Jesus (Matt. 20:18). So there you are, standing in a court room before the judge and witnesses come in testifying against you bringing up charges. Finally, the judge pronounces guilt and condemns you.

Think of our liability to condemnation. First, we are condemned because of imputed guilt (Rom. 5:18). God sovereignly set Adam as our representative and when he fell, the whole human race fell. Second, we are condemned because of personal guilt. Whenever we turn from light and suppress the truth, we are condemned (John 3:19). Whenever we violate our own conscience, we are condemned (Rom. 2:1). Whenever we operate by doubt and not in faith, we are condemned (Rom. 14:23). Peter stood condemned for his hypocrisy and evading

a straightforward position on truth (Gal. 2:11). There is opportunity to be condemned. And the devil, the accuser of the brethren, stands before God day and night accusing us (Rev. 12:10).

Think of our assurance of vindication—five reasons.

First, God Himself has justified us. If the highest court in the land says we are OK, it does not matter what the lower courts say. A brother might accuse the sister of many things, but when father says, “no more,” it is all over. Now, the lower court of conscience might tear us up, the wicked prosecutor called the devil might have a thousand charges, but if God says we are OK, then that settles it. And God has not only forgiven, but justified, he has pronounced us righteous, as though we’d never broken the Law, but always kept it. When one believes on Jesus, there is a transfer. My guilt is transferred to Christ’s books and his positive, divine, everlasting righteousness is put on my books. You see, we don’t need to worry about picking up some traffic fine near the end of the journey down the highway of holiness when we are almost to the celestial city (Isa. 54:17). Can you imagine how frustrating this would be to a prosecutor if a judge never received charges?

Second, Christ died, he was condemned for us. The wages of sin is death and he died for our sins, (1 Cor. 15:3). If he died then how can I? If Christ died in Barabbas’ place, how can he be executed too? Would they execute your substitute and you too? If someone paid your grocery bill, would they try to get it out of you too? Yes, God may discipline, rebuke, peel, burn, and blast, but never condemn. Why, we are not even *under Law*. We are in another jurisdiction called grace.

But maybe they did not accept our substitute? No worry! Our substitute is called Christ, which means Anointed One. God himself appointed him.

But maybe the substitute is not enough? Five dollars won’t pay for the neighbor’s broken window. No worry. The Christ is of infinite worth to pay our infinite debt. It is finished!

Third, Christ was raised. Did the death of Christ get the job done? Yes, the resurrection was the proof that his death was accepted (Rom. 4:25). The blood of the sacrificial lamb had to be not only shed but then sprinkled on the mercy seat. If the high priest came out alive, it was proof that all was well. Spurgeon puts it this way, if an indebted

woman marries a wealthy man, she knows her problems are over. Yet, she feels a further assurance when he returns from the creditors with the receipts in hand. The victory he wrought did not do him in. Our Lord was not like the spike driver who beat the machine but in the end collapsed and died. Paul says if Christ was not raised, our faith is in vain. That is why the New Testament emphasizes the resurrection (Acts 3:15; 4:2; 17:18).

Fourth, Christ is at the right hand of God. This is the place of honor (Heb. 1:13). If the husband is at the head table to speak at the banquet, where is the wife? At his right hand. It is the place of power (Luke 22:69). Who will argue with the King of kings? In the book of Acts, only two times is Jesus called Savior, but about 150 times he is called Lord. It is the place of rest, for when Jesus finished the work, he sat down (Heb. 1:3; 10:11, 12). When you finish mowing the lawn, you sit down.

Fifth, Christ intercedes for us. You know how you'd feel if you could get some man of God to pray for you. But here is the Son of God praying. There he appears for us continually pleading his merits for our needs (Luke 22:32). His prayers are personal, for like the Old Testament high priest, he has our names on his heart (Ex. 28:15f). He is personally preoccupied with you. Your financial advisor may die and fail you. Your barber may die and disadvantage you, but not your Advocate (Heb. 7:25).

Conclusion.

Have you trusted Christ? If not you face certain condemnation. What can be worse than for the Judge of all to pronounce those words over you, "*You are weighed and found lacking? He who disbelieves is condemned,*" (Mark 16:16). We will never find assurance by trying to belittle our sins or magnify our goodness. What can that do before the holy God who charges angels with folly and before whose presence the heavens are not pure? It is Christ!

If you have trusted Christ, then when accused by demons, conscience, or men, take what good you can from the reproof and remember again, it is Christ. Cast down discouragement and despair. Do not permit a single suspicion to come in regarding your acceptance with God. This passage challenges heaven, earth and hell.

We need security to rest. You can't rest if the door is not locked at night. You need security to work. The plowman must plow in hope. You need security to war. How can you swing your sword on slippery slopes of doubt. You need security to rejoice or you will be like the birds in the woods and quit singing when danger approaches. Do you see yourself as one of God's elect?

*“Bold shall I stand on that great day,
And who ought to my charge shall lay?”*

(John Wesley)

THE FINAL PERSEVERENCE OF THE SAINTS

8:35

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?

We are at the end of Chapter 8, perhaps the greatest chapter on the security of the believer and his assurance of salvation. Verse 2 says we were taken out of the realm of Law and thus we have the assurance that there is no condemnation. Verse 4 says we walk according to the Spirit and thus we have the assurance that the righteousness of the Law is being fulfilled in us. Verse 6 says that this indwelling Spirit is a spirit of life and thus we have the assurance that we shall live, even our bodies. Verse 14 says we are led by the Spirit and thus we have the assurance that we are sons of God. Verse 16 says we have the witness of the Spirit and thus we have another assurance that we are sons of God. Verse 17 says if we are sons of God then we have the assurance that we are heirs of God. Verse 18 says that although we are suffering, we have the assurance that none of it is worthy to be compared with the glory to come. Verse 26 says that the Spirit helps us to pray and thus we have the assurance that we are praying according to the will of God. Verse 28 says God has a plan for our lives and thus we have the assurance that circumstances can do nothing for us but good. Verse 29 says that this plan is a predestined plan and thus we have the assurance that it will come about. Verse 31 says that God is for us and thus we have the assurance that none can be against us. Verse 32 says that God sent his Son to die for us and thus we have the assurance that all things are ours to get us to heaven. Verse 33 says that God has vindicated us, Christ has died for us, it was confirmed by the resurrection, and his exaltation to the right hand of God, and that Christ is speaking for us.

Now Paul takes up yet another danger, another challenge to our security. It is the fourth *who*. It is the grand climax regarding the final perseverance of the saints.

The point.

The point, the issue is whether there can ever be a separation, whether we can ever be cut off from the Lord, whether we will ever persevere. Many have (it seems) started across the right bridge but alas it did not hold under the weight and burden of it all. Many got on the right boat

but it got swamped before they reached the desired haven. Have you seen beautiful father and son relationships turn sour? Have you seen a beautiful marriage end in separation? How do we know that won't happen to us and the Lord? Many indeed have professed union with Christ and ended up castaway. Look at the Demases (2 Tim. 4:10). Look at the Alexanders (2 Tim. 4:14). Look at the big crusades—only 5-10 percent of those who “make decisions” stay true. It is the parable of the sower and the soils. Three of four made professions. Only one was real. Will I lose my salvation? After all, look at ...

The awful powers against us.

Tribulation: The Romans crushed grain under tribulum—thus, tribulation. Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom (Acts 14:22).

Distress: The saints fight depression, oppression and all sorts of stresses. We face difficulties of discerning good and evil, how to respond in various situations, etc.—things that will make a long term difference in our lives and others. John Paton, on the lonely Pacific island, after losing his baby and wife, said he'd lost his mind if not for the comforts in Christ.

Persecutions: We know personally some who were ostracised from their family upon baptism, some who were imprisoned for the faith. Think of the Bunyans, the Latimers, the Covenanters—thousands of Scot's worthies slain like sheep. It is estimated that in the Dark Ages of Europe the Catholics killed 50 million Christians.

Famine: They fed John Huss so poorly that his teeth fell out.

Nakedness: Tyndale humbly asks for clothing in his prison cell (Heb. 11:37).

Peril: Paul was *often without food, in cold and exposure* (2 Cor. 11:27).

Sword: They were thrown to the gladiators.

Then as an example (Ps. 44:11). They were slain like sheep at that time in Israel's history. And here we are like lambs before wolves in a world that is no friend to grace, a world whose king is Apollyon, the devil, who knows every trick. He can make fleshly pride look like humility, fleshly pride look like zeal, and heresy look like truth. A major part of Satan's work is not in the beer house but the church house, not the abortion clinics but the cathedrals, not the Pentagon but the pulpits.

Religious demons are much worse than secular.

Will I persevere? Maybe nothing heavy will hit me but the years roll on into sickening lukewarmness. Then consider...

The promises and prospects offered for our comfort.

No separation (vv. 35, 39)! Now we know that God is greater than all (John 10:28, 29), and no one can take us out of his hand. But can't I take myself out? Answer: verse 38 *nor life*. Nothing in our lives can do it! Furthermore, the whole context speaks against it, for it says His love for us can never be cut off, as clearly seen through *Him who loved us* (verse 37 and 39).

But maybe my love for the Lord will grow cold from all these things against me? Well, the comfort comes from the essence of the love of God. It should be viewed as the driving force behind my salvation, so strong and effectual that it takes me right through all of it and takes me to heaven.

It is a special love. God has loved me with a special love. You say, God loves everyone. True and false. True from the standpoint of common things (Matt. 5:44, 45). But regarding salvation, he hates the sinner (Ps. 11:5). It must be that God has a special love for the elect or this passage has no comfort whatsoever. If God loves all equally then how can I get any comfort in God's love more than the non-Christian?

What is contained in the love of God?

1. The Father's appointment of salvation.
 - a. Foreknowledge = loved beforehand.
 - b. Election = Romans 9:11.
 - c. Predestination = Ephesians 1:5.
2. The Son's accomplishment of salvation.
 - a. It was love that he was sent, and that he died for us (Rom. 5:8; Eph. 5:25).
 - b. This love in his death secured all for us (v. 32).
3. The Spirit's application of salvation.
 - a. regeneration (Eph. 2:5).
 - b. the sealing (Rom. 5:5).
 - c. the preserving (1 Peter 1:5; 2 Tim. 1:12; Jude 24).

The love of God is an eternal, infallible, invincible bond. It is a weld that is indestructable, a graft inseparable. In all adversity it guarantees

we will stay true to Him. If any falls away, it only shows his profession of faith was not real.

Next, what does it mean, *more than conquerors*? In what way are we more than conquerors?

First, the fact of making it through to heaven and obtaining the eternal weight of glory, that is more than conquerors. Think of the Covenanter, Hugh Kennedy, when he knew he was to be executed, “I have breakfasted with you this morning and I will sup with Jesus tonight.”

Second, the benefits and blessings that come to us under sufferings, make us more than conquerors (Ps. 119:71; Rom. 5:3; 8:28; 2 Cor. 12:10; 2 Tim. 4:18). Archibald Campbell had a great sense of the presence of God, nearing his execution. Rutherford’s prison was a palace. Bunyan’s prison time did much damage to the devil’s camp. Ridley and Latimer did light such a candle in all England as was not put out. Remember Job. They asked Elizabeth Elliot how she handled the bitterness of losing two husbands. She said, “How could I be bitter against the One who has loved me so?” These were overcomers. Yes, even in the worst situations as is implied by Psalm 44, we are still overcomers. It is not just getting by, but more than conquerors.

Then Paul takes a sweep through the universe. What can separate? *Death?* No, Jesus made it a grim porter to usher us into the heavenly palace. *Life?* No, whether it is the terrors of death or the comforts of life, we are still invincible. *Angels,* (perhaps good angels and spoken of hypothetically as in Gal. 1:8), *principalities or powers?* No, Jesus is over them all. *Things present or to come?* No, Jesus holds the present and the future. There are no dimensions of time or space—*height or depth*—for the love of God goes beyond the highest star and reaches to the lowest hell. Is there *any other created thing?* No! And that leaves only the Creator and he’s on my side.

The bravest man yet unregenerate will compromise or quit. The weakest saint will win the day though death and hell obstruct the way.

Conclusion.

Are you in Christ? You must be to find this love, for it is “*in Christ Jesus,*” (v. 39). And if you are in you are in for good. One good evidence of this is what is talked about right here—undergoing sufferings *for Thy sake*. The husband may not be a martyr for Christ but he can die

to his self life and show consideration for his wife. The wife may not die physically for Christ but she can mortify self and submit to her husband.

Are you convinced (v. 39)? Do you enjoy this assurance?

What an incredible ending to this theme of assurance of salvation! We have been loved with an everlasting love and that love will take us to heaven (Jer. 31:3; John 13:1; 17:23). Paul does not set forth the omniscience, nor the omnipotence, nor the omnipresence of God to prove this truth, but rather the love of God. Our God is love, and nothing can break it off. No separation!

When dear George Matheson, the beloved pastor in Edinburgh in the 1800's was deserted by his fiancé due to his decline into blindness, he turned aside and wrote this song:

*O love that will not let me go,
I rest my weary soul on Thee,
I give Thee back the life I owe,
That in its ocean depths its flow
May richer fuller be.*

What a theme to tell the world. What God is like our God!

*O love of God
So rich and pure,
So measureless and strong;
It shall forever more endure,
The saint's and angel's song.
(Frederick Lehman)*

CHAPTER 9

THE PROBLEM OF JEWISH UNBELIEF

9:1-13

It is not as though the word of God has failed. For they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel.

Romans, Chapters 9-11 is a new section. Chapter 9 is one of the most striking chapters in the Bible and surely the strongest statement of God's sovereignty—a chapter that is hated and explained away by some, but loved by many.

What is the problem? Why is Paul burdened with great sorrow and unceasing grief? It is the Jewish unbelief. They stumbled (9:33); they needed to be saved (10:1); they were rejected (11:1); they were hardened (11:7); they were broken off (11:17); they were in unbelief (11:23). They went so far as to kill their Messiah and God gave the kingdom to another, the Gentiles (Matt. 21:43).

How does this fit what Paul had just said, *no separation*? It looks like the people of God were separated. How does it fit what Paul had just said about the purpose of God not being frustrated? It looks like the Word of God, the promises and plan of God, had failed.

And all of this is put in the backdrop of the Jews' privileges. It is irony; it is tragedy.

1. They are called *Israelites*. It takes us back to Genesis 32:28 where Jacob's name was changed from that which meant *deceiver* to *prince of God*. It became a distinguishing title (John 1:47; Phil. 3:5).
2. They had the *adoption as sons*. This is not full adoption in the New Testament sense (Rom 8:15; Gal 4:1), but yet God in some general sense called Israel his son (Ex. 4:22; Hos. 11:1; Matt. 8:11, 12).
3. Their's was *the glory*. The glory came on Mt. Sinai (Ex. 24:16); on the tabernacle (40:34); on the mercy seat (Lev. 16:2); and on the temple, (1 Kings 8:10). It signified their consecration by God (Ex. 29:43). It was as if the spotlight was on them.
4. They had *the covenants*. There was the covenant with Abraham (Acts 3:25), particularly regarding land and lineage (Gen. 12:1, 2; 13:14) signified by circumcision (17:10) and including especially the spiritual aspects (Gen. 22:16; Luke 1:72; Acts

- 3:26; Heb. 11:10). There was the Mosaic covenant (Ex. 19:5; Deut. 4:13; 5:2), having to do with their keeping the Ten Commandments. It was conditional (Gal. 3:12) and thus could not nullify those promises made to Abraham (Gal. 3:8, 15). There was the Davidic covenant (2 Sam. 7:13), where God promised to put his seed on the throne for an everlasting kingdom. A covenant is an agreement. The Gentiles had no agreements with God (Eph. 2:12).
5. They had the *giving of the Law*. The mountain was set on fire. It shook and so fearful was the sight that they thought they would die. What an advantage one has in having the book with the assembly instructions for a tool. Israel had the book, the written revelation from God (Deut. 4:13).
 6. They had *the service*. It is the same word in Hebrews 9:1, meaning the service of God. When a church holds services, it is primarily Godward. The Gentiles worshipped God ignorantly (Acts 17:23). They were in the dark as to how to approach God.
 7. They had *the promises*. The promises were the details of the covenants, like Isaiah 35:6, *the lame man shall leap like a deer*. The promises centered on Abraham and Christ (Gal. 3:16). A boy rests when he has a promise from dad to go fishing. Israel had promises.
 8. All of this belonged to the *fathers*, a reference to...
 - a. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Acts 3:13)
 - b. David (Mark 11:10) and
 - c. all the heads of the families (1 Cor. 10:1; Heb. 1:1).
 9. Even the *Messiah*, deity in flesh came through them, not the Chinese nor the Edomites nor the Arabs.

What distinguishing privileges! Stories in my Bible are painted on the walls of the government buildings in Jerusalem. Yet for all of that, they sinned those *ten times* in the wilderness, they continually went into idolatry in Canaan, and they crucified Christ. God cut them off and sent the Holy Spirit and the gospel out to the Gentiles. It looked like the promises had indeed failed (9:6). It looked like the purposes of God had indeed been frustrated.

What is the answer? "*They are not all Israel who are descended from Israel.*" And not all of Abraham's children are children of God (9:7-8).

It was through Isaac that Abraham's children would be *named* (NASB) or *called* (KJV) or designated (4:17).

What should we think of when we think of Isaac? We ought to think of the fact that he was created according to *promise* (9:8-9). If flesh can produce the fact, then we don't need a promise. If flesh can't, we need a promise from someone else that they will do it. Thus, Isaac's birth was according to God's promise and according to God's supernatural power.

A second example is used in verse 13—Jacob. How was it that he was designated by God instead of Esau? His own merit? No, he was not even born. It was simply God's purpose, God's choice, and God's call (v. 11). It is also confirmed with the quote from Malachi (v. 13).

What applications and conclusions can be made?

1. We see the difference between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant. The first was physical and the second was spiritual. You could be a good Jew and still go to hell. Those in the New Covenant are of a spiritual birth, like Isaac (John 1:13; Romans 2:29; Gal. 4:29). They are born again. All the external privileges will avail nothing as seen here by the Jews. This was the burden John the Baptist dealt with in Luke 3:8, "*Do not begin to say, 'We have Abraham for our father.'*" And it was the same for Jesus in John 8:39 for example, "*If you were Abraham's children...*" There is no such thing as a Christian nation, no such thing as Christian parents automatically producing *godly seed*. And, in a way, the offence of the cross is that we are sinners and have nothing going for us; we are cast on mercy from God.
2. Salvation is of the Lord. He has his elect and he saves them by grace and his purpose does indeed stand.
3. See how God changes a soul. Paul formerly as a Jew was a violent aggressor against Jesus. Now he is for Jesus and carries a burden for the Jews.
4. See Paul's example in having a burden for souls. He was telling the truth, not lying. His conscience, as a Christian, was quickened by the Holy Spirit. And this burden was so great that he could wish (if it were possible) to go to hell for his Jewish brethren. Paul had been whipped 195 times, beaten

three times, etc. But did he say, "Just let them go to hell?" Did he write them off? Did he have any secret delight in seeing them perish? Were they an annoyance? No, he would do anything he could to remove stumbling blocks and see them saved. Paul had a missionary zeal. Do you?

5. See how Paul backed up his position with scripture (vv. 7, 9, 12, 13). We ought to know the Old Testament and be able to apply the scriptures like that.

ELECTION! IS THAT FAIR?

9:14-16

What shall we say then? There is no injustice with God, is there?

Again, Romans, Chapters 9-11 is a new section. Paul addresses one big problem—the apostasy and the rejection of the Jews, in that, it looks like God’s purposes and promises can be frustrated in 9:6, contrary to what he has said in 8:28. The answer he has given in 9:6, is that many of the children of Abraham were not even in God’s sovereign electing purposes. Thus, God’s purpose according to election stands in 9:11.

Paul gives examples of how God chose Isaac, not Ishmael. He chose Jacob, not Esau. “But,” says the objector, “that does not seem fair, it seems like injustice.” How does Paul answer it?

First, he flat out denies it—“*May it never be.*” Impossible, isn’t it? It would be like saying, “Is the Pope Catholic?” God is the very author of righteousness and justice (Gen. 18:25; Deut. 32:4; 2 Chron. 19:7; Job 8:3, Pss. 92:15; 145:17; Rev. 15:3).

Second, Paul gives us a quote from the Old Testament (Ex. 33:19). Moses was pleading for God to spare Israel and God responds, *I will be merciful to whom I will.* This mercy, this relieving of suffering, what is it? It is synonymous with salvation (Mark 5:19; Eph. 2:4; 1 Peter 1:3; 2:10; Titus 3:5).

With that statement, we have a conclusion in verse 16, *so then.* Salvation, (10:1) does not depend on the one who wills (intention) nor on the one who runs (exertion and activity) but on divine mercy. It is not that one can be saved without these qualities, but nevertheless salvation is not based on it.

Conclusions.

God fulfills his purposes on the basis of and by way of sovereign unconditional election. Is that your explanation for why you were saved and your neighbor was not? Or is it, “I received Christ,” “I submitted to Jesus,” “I saw my need,” “I, I, I...?”

Is there anything (on the surface), that would make your theology appear unfair? If you have a merit-based salvation, God electing you on the basis of his foreseeing that you would believe, that would never

evoke the objection, “*There is injustice with God.*”

But you still say, “It does not seem fair that God saved one man and not another.” Well, we must remember, God does not owe anybody anything but hell and he can pay off anytime. After all, if we want to talk about what is fair and just, we would be in hell right now. God’s problem is not how he can be right in not saving everybody, but rather, how he can be right in saving anybody.

Remember the parable of the laborers in the vineyard in Matthew 20:1-16? Those who worked longer thought that they should be paid more and were envious of those who were paid proportionally more. The master’s answer? They were getting what was right and he had the prerogative in giving grace (an advantage) to some.

We ought to be continually amazed that God shows mercy. If we have *tasted that the Lord is gracious*, it ought to bring us to our knees continually in thanksgiving. Think! God had me in mind before the foundation of the world.

Is this sovereign mercy personal? Yes, *even us whom he called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles* (v. 24).

GOD'S SOVEREIGN CHOICES AND DIVINE REPROBATION

9:17-24

He hardens whom He desires.

Remember, what is the problem here? It is Jewish unbelief; it appeared they had been reprobated. And all of that is highlighted by all their squandered privileges. It looked like God's purposes were frustrated, like God's promises had failed. "Paul, you said the people of God could not be separated, but it looks like one can be cut off in contrast to what you said in Chapter 8."

What is the answer? Many were not even Israel (v. 6), were not even Abraham's children. Who are? Children produced by the promise and power of God. We have two examples: Isaac (v. 7) and then Jacob—they were God's choice. God is not at all frustrated.

But this business of taking one and passing by another makes God appear unjust (v. 14). The answer? God can have mercy on whom He wills (Ex. 33). That is the positive side and now Paul asserts the opposite: reprobation. We must deal with the other side, *Esau have I hated*.

Now we come to verse 17, approaching holy ground, like Mt. Sinai with its shaking and all fiery with its awful decrees. We can only put our hand over our mouth. It is like some secret chamber, some inner sanctuary, some control room. And here we have some of the most awesome statements of God's sovereignty—he is the Potter. And then we have statements most humbling for man—we are merely clay.

The overall subject of Chapters 9-11 is God's sovereign choices. Last time it was divine election and now divine reprobation.

Why is Pharaoh brought in, in verses 17 and 18? He was raised up in history for a particular purpose as in Habbakuk 1:6, *to demonstrate God's power and to proclaim His name*. Pharaoh's obstinacy (he would not let the people go) led to a struggle and that led to a showdown.

Notice strength is demonstrated by resistance. The weightlifter's strength is exhibited by the resistance he can handle. If the local high school football team beat the neighboring town, it would not amount to much; but if they beat an NFL team, the news would travel nationally.

And the Egyptian army was one of the finest in the world; they were the superpower. So when Egypt was destroyed by the mighty power of God with all the plagues and then the Red Sea massacre, this was international news (Ex. 15:14; Josh. 2:9; 9:9).

Immediately we see that:

1. God is king of kings. He raises up Pharaohs, Hitlers, Napoleons, Stalins, and Neros (Rom. 13:1).
2. God has a purpose in raising these rulers up. Example: Jeroboam, Saul, Herod (Rev. 17:17). History is truly his story.
3. God is concerned about his reputation—his power and name. Ultimately all is for the glory of God.

Again, why was Pharaoh brought up in this context? Verse 18 makes it clear. He was the classic case of reprobation. He was a man *God hardened*. How did God get that desired resistance? He hardened Pharaoh.

But you say, “Did not Pharaoh harden his own heart?” Nine times it says that God hardened his heart and only three times Pharaoh hardened his own. And God did it the first time in Exodus 4:21. Furthermore, that is the way Paul talks about it right here. Now it is true that God did not harden a good man’s heart. Men are already in a fallen condition. But God, though not the immediate cause and though indirect, is the ultimate cause. How does it happen? God withdraws his presence. When rain is withheld, the ground hardens (Rom. 1:21; 11:7, 25). God sends evil spirits (2 Chron. 18:20; 2 Thess. 2:11).

So why Pharaoh? He demonstrates the negative side of God’s sovereign choices. *Esau, I have hated*.

Behold God’s sovereignty. We look out over the history of the world and we see God raising up presidents, caesars, kings, and popes, yes, even Satan. And all of these will find in the end that they have only been a servant of God (Gen. 45:5-8; 2 Sam. 16:11; 1 Kings 11:14; 12:15; 1 Chron. 5:26). God uses wicked men and then judges them (Isa. 10:5; Acts 4:28).

“Wait a minute,” you say, “that brings up a problem—*how can God judge?*” That is what we have in verse 19. If God is that sovereign, if he hardens men to sin, then how can he *find fault*? If his sovereign will is most certainly done, then how can he judge? Are you going to blame a puppet? Are you going to blame a clay pot? How can it be right for

God to pass by someone not giving him saving grace, and then put him in hell?

At this point, there is only one thing you can do—back off and put your hand over your mouth and bow down. That is the answer to this matter of divine reprobation. He is God and we are mere men, so no back talk (v. 20). What could we say if God were evil? But he is not and that is why we praise him—for *He is good*.

And there is a further illustration (v. 20b)—the molder and the plastic (Greek: *plasma*). We dare not quarrel with our maker (Isa. 45:9).

And then we have another illustration—the potter and the clay. Here Paul brings up the potter's rights. (Jer. 18:1-12; Isa. 64:8-12). A man might go out to the shop and out of the same lumber pile make a table for the kitchen and another table for the backyard on which to clean fish. The glass blower might make of the same material, a vessel to hold flowers and another for cigar ashes. A farmer might buy two scoops—one for grain and another for manure. Will they ask, "Why?"

Now here is the spiritual application on this business regarding the potter's rights (v. 22). There are two vessels: one, the elect and the other, the non-elect. There are two destinies: one is destruction (2 Thess. 1:9) and the other glory (John 17:22; Col. 3:4). There are two purposes: the first is wrath by the vessels of wrath. That is, they are designed to exhibit wrath as did Pharaoh when God destroyed him and as does the child of wrath who has paraded himself in neglect of God, when he is destroyed. This is praiseworthy (Rev. 16:5; 19:3). The second is mercy by the vessels of mercy. They are designed to exhibit mercy and glory (Eph. 1:6; 2:7) just as a car is taken from the salvage yard and restored. It brings glory to the craftsman.

So, what if God does this? What can we say? What are you going to do about it?

Considerations.

1. Does God *hate* the non-elect? Some say it means loved less (Gen. 29:30, 31; Luke 14:12-24). But that does not adequately handle this passage or others (Ps. 5:5; 11:5). God is angry and abhors the sinner. He puts sinners in hell. We tend to think of it in human terms. God is not hateful in that sense. God hates in the sense that he reprobates, that is, he passes them by and

- rejects.
2. Does God *predestinate* people to hell? Is double predestination true, that “horrible decree”? Esau was rejected before he was born. The vessel of wrath is designed that way. Other scriptures indicate so (1 Peter 2:8; Prov. 16:4; Jude 4). Election by necessity means non-election. You go to the grocery store and select one tomato and reprobate another. However, the great emphasis in scripture is on the side of human responsibility for their sin. Even here in the passage, the vessels of wrath are spoken of as *prepared* whereas the others are *prepared beforehand*. We know God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked. Even here, God *endured with much patience* as though it were not his pleasure. Jesus wept.
 3. Does God push men into sin? He does not push good men or even neutral men into sin. He does turn evil men over to more sin (Ps. 105:25; 1 Sam. 2:25; John 12:40; 2 Thess. 2:11). We must conclude that Paul is saying this in view of the objection raised, *why does He yet find fault?*
 4. Is God the author of sin? God is absolutely holy, pure, good. He is light and in him is no darkness at all. Nevertheless he does decree it (Acts 4:28). But his decree in no way produces the event but rather renders its occurrence certain.
 5. How should election / reprobation affect our lives?
 - a. *We ought to fear God.* He hardens souls and makes them stubborn. Don't give him reason to do it. Hebrews 3 and 4 warn us repeatedly, *Do not harden your heart*. Apply the oil of heaven to keep your heart from being like leather—tough, inflexible, insensitive. Do not neglect truth (2 Thess. 2:10). There can come a time when one crosses the line and God gives a man over and hardens him. God punishes stubbornness with more of it. He punishes sin with more sin. No one knows the end of any sin. Now, nobody will be at the judgment seat saying that he would have repented but God passed him by. No! They could have believed if they would have but would not so could not. If anyone ends up in hell there is none to blame but self.

- b. This might help keep us from wrongly striving with men.* In 2 Samuel 16:10 Shimei was cursing David and his response was, *What have I to do with you....if he is cursing because the Lord has said to him, "Curse David."* He refused to quarrel with Shimei because he saw God being the one who brought it about. Likewise, Joseph knowing of God's sovereign control, said to his brothers, *Do not be distressed or angry with ourselves because you sold me here, for God sent me before you* (Gen. 45:5).
- c. If we are Christians, this doctrine ought to bring us to bow down in utter gratitude.* We are vessels of mercy headed for glory with no cause but sovereign mercy. We ought to give God the glory and that is the conclusion Paul makes and others (Ex. 33:18; John 12:41; Rom. 11:33). We have a king in charge with sovereign omnipotence and his purposes stand.
- d. Is God harsh?* No, it does not say, "Behold the goodness and the badness of God." God is, rather, very patient and loving. Remember Calvary. He sent his Son to die for sinners. Won't you come to God through Christ and find this mercy?

GOD'S SOVEREIGN CHOICES — GENTILES ACCEPTED AND JEWS REJECTED

9:24-33

What shall we say then? That the Gentiles...but Israel, verses
30, 31.

Paul has been asserting that

1. (Rom. 1-13) the ultimate issue, when it comes to religion, is God's sovereign choice, his sovereign call,
2. (Rom. 14-23) God is free in that choice, and
3. (Rom. 24-33) in that freedom of choice he has chosen the Gentiles and rejected the bulk of the nation of Israel.

The Gentiles have been received into a position of favor (vv. 24-26).

See how Paul supports this by Old Testament scripture. It was prophesied, for example, in Hosea. Gomer's unfaithfulness and Hosea's loyal love pictured Israel and God. But it all had a double application. The rejection and restoration of Israel had its parallel in the exclusion of the Gentiles from God's covenant favor and then their reception. (Note: Some scriptures have double application. The Pharisees were literalists and missed it.)

So, see the great grace of God. Formerly they were *not God's people*. Have you ever walked up to a picnic shelter for the family reunion and realized that you were at the wrong spot? They were not your people. But now God calls the Gentiles *my people*. Gentiles! They were considered *dogs* but now *sons of the living God*, not slaves, relatives, not friends only, but sons, with all the comforts and security of sons. What a change in the relationship. For centuries the Gentiles were born and lived and died not knowing where they had come from or why they were there or where they were going. We should be so thankful that the gospel has traveled to our doorstep, even the doorstep of our hearts if we are Christians.

Not only have the Gentiles been received but the majority of the Jews have been rejected (vv. 27-29).

Again Paul conveys this truth with Old Testament Bible—a quote from Isaiah who said just a remnant would be saved. Again, we have

a double application—the near and the remote. Isaiah prophesied that Israel would be destroyed except for a remnant. So also in the spiritual sense. Just a few Jews will make it to heaven, just the elect.

A little piece of carpet left over is a remnant. A few items after a house fire is a remnant. And also, as we look out over Christendom, just a remnant of those who profess will make it to heaven. *Few are those who find* the narrow gate (Matt. 7:14).

Verse 28 says, God will cut things short. His word of judgment will be executed without delay.

Verse 29 says that except for a *seed* (the elect, compare with v. 7) Israel about ended up like Sodom, utterly consumed by the fires of God's wrath. It is like a farmer who has a crop fire and all that is left is a bag of seed in the shed.

Now we have the conclusion (vv. 30, 31).

“What shall we say then?” The Gentiles who did not pursue righteousness (God permitted them to go their own way) have found righteousness, a divine righteousness through faith in Jesus. But the Jews who made righteousness their business (they had the book of God and tried to keep it), missed it all. For an example see the Pharisee and the tax-gatherer in Luke 18:9-14.

We must conclude that there will be surprises in the kingdom of God. Faith arises from the least expected places—a Melchizedek from obscurity, a Jethro from Midian, a Job from Uz, a Queen from Sheba, Magi from Persia, Rahab from Jericho, and a little boy named Whitefield from the tavern of Gloucester.

Finally, we have the explanation (v. 33).

The Jews sought righteousness by works, by performance, by merit. They thought they could be good enough to find favor with God. Their privileges tripped them up. It is like the child who has a ladder and wants an apple in the tree. He climbs and falls to his hurt. The other boy has no ladder and merely asks the father.

We should be warned that our strength is often our weakness. Is it eloquence, looks, money, musical abilities, denomination? That can turn to self-sufficiency. God calls us to look away from ourselves unto Christ.

But the Jews *stumbled at the stumbling stone*—they stumbled over Christ's birth, they thought it would be in Nazareth; his education for

he had nothing formal; his social status for he was a poor man; his co-workers for they were but fishermen; his appearance for he was unattractive; his doctrine for he gave them hard sayings; his life and even his death for the cross meant weakness, self-denial, guilt, and substitutionary atonement in contrast to personal merit.

The Jews were ashamed, but in contrast, quoting Isaiah again, *he who believes in Him will not be ashamed.*” Have you come to Christ and said, “Lord Jesus, I understand that you died for sinners. I am a sinner. I trust that you died for me.”

God’s purposes are not frustrated (v. 6). The church, not Israel, was his eternal predetermined plan.

CHAPTER 10

FALSE ZEAL

10:1-4

They have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge.

In Chapter 9, Paul has been asserting that

1. (1-5), that it appears God's purposes were frustrated,
2. (6-23) the ultimate issue, when it comes to religion, is God's sovereign choice, his sovereign call, and God is free in that choice,
3. (24-33) in that freedom of choice he has chosen the Gentiles and rejected the bulk of the nation of Israel—the last four verses being an explanation of how it happened. Now, in Chapter 10, we have a continuation of the explanation.

See, first, Paul's burden for the salvation of his lost brethren.

Why this statement, *My heart's desire and my prayer to God for Israel is for their salvation*? Paul had made some very heavy statements about the Jews—*a remnant, like Sodom, they stumbled*, and then referring to the Gentiles on the same level or even favored. Paul wanted to soften it as much as he could. He wanted to express compassion.

And think of this! See Paul's heart. He was to the Jews a traitor of traitors, a pestilent fellow, and they plotted against him, they pelted him with stones and whipped him almost 200 times. Yet, he holds no grudge; he prays for them. Is this our attitude toward those who have made it hard for us, toward those who belittle us, toward those who treat us shamefully? Or, do we take the attitude, "I'm not going to pursue you until you come and apologize, until you come and bow at my feet?" This is not love which *does not take into account wrongs suffered*. This is not Christ who said, *Forgive them*.

Also, think of Paul's prayer in view of God's revealed will. God had reprobated the Jews, yet Paul prays. It was the same with Moses in Exodus 32:10-11. God's sovereignty does not negate our responsibility.

Paul kindly testifies of their zeal for God—they have a zeal for God (v. 2).

Paul should know, for he was exceedingly zealous before he was saved

(Acts 22:3; Gal. 1:14; Phil. 3:6). These Pharisees were so zealous that it affected their dress (Matt. 23:5), they prayed long prayers (23:14), they evangelized everywhere (23:15), they made vows (23:16), they tithed even down to their garden products (23:23), and they were interested in church history (23:30).

God himself is zealous—Isaiah 59:17 says the Lord, *wrapped himself in zeal as a mantle*. The raising up of a Messiah, the establishment of his kingdom and its increase was accomplished by the zeal of the Lord of hosts (Isa. 9:7).

Jesus was zealous (John 2:17). To be Christlike we must be zealous, an ardent, hot desire. A zealot is a fanatic.

The New Testament emphasizes this (1 Cor. 14:12; 1 Peter 3:13). The very reason Christ redeemed us was that we might be *zealous for good works* (Titus 2:14). The Old Testament says the same (Num. 25:7, 8; 1 Kings 19:10; 2 Kings 10:16; Ezra 7:23; Eccl. 9:10). Zeal is very desirable but very rare. We are zealous for so many other things—sports, politics, work, etc. Few are those consumed by sacred enthusiasm. Many are like the five virgins, though wise, yet sleepy.

However, they were zealous but wrong—a zeal for God but not in accordance with knowledge (v. 2).

They were like a gun pointed in the wrong direction. They were excellent workers but, alas, misinterpreted the blueprint and were building with wrong materials.

Cain's offering was false zeal. Moses' murder was false zeal. Saul's slaying of the Gibeonites was false zeal. Nadab and Abihu's fire was false zeal. Uzzah's help for the ark was false zeal. The two blind men's testimony everywhere was false zeal. Peter's rebuke to Jesus was false zeal. His cutting off the ear was false zeal. It ought to be an awful warning.

The Jews' zeal was *not in accordance with knowledge*. They did not know God; they did not know his will; they did not know, most specifically, about God's righteousness (v. 3).

They did not know about God's righteous requirement. They did not know how holy God was, nor how deep sin went—that ill-will towards a person was them committing murder in the heart.

More exactly, they did not know of God's righteous provision, how he would provide a righteousness all his own to everyone who believes. They were blind to the way of salvation and the gospel (1:17).

Thus, they *sought to establish their own righteousness*. This is what every non-Christian is doing in one way or another—perhaps through work, deeds of kindness, good intentions, self-abasement, severe treatment of the body, or religious ritual and activity. The Jews even killed thinking they were rendering service to God (John 16:2).

Why did they do this? It was pride. They were not willing to *subject themselves to God's righteousness* (v. 3). "I'm not going to put myself in a position of having to subject myself to another, even God. I don't want to admit I'm bankrupt—a poor, needy, losing, sinner deserving of hell."

Where can this divine righteousness be found?

Verse 4 gives the answer—*Christ, and for everyone who believes, He is the end of the law for righteousness*. What does that mean?

Some say the end means that Christ is the goal or purpose of the law (as used in 1 Tim. 1:5). When we get to the end of a driveway, we are at the house. There is truth in that—the law is to bring us to Christ (Gal. 3:24).

However, I put forward that it means termination. The definitive phrase is *for everyone who believes* and also the next verse contrasts law-righteousness and faith-righteousness. The point: when one genuinely trusts in the merit of the finished work of Christ on the cross, he has by definition ceased to trust in his own merit and in his own works at attempting to be right with God by keeping the law. He is submitting to the righteousness provided by God and earned by Christ in his perfect life.

Remember the Pharisee and the Publican of Luke 18. The one had an attitude of self-righteousness and the other plead none of his own, asking only for mercy from God. He went down to his house justified with a divine righteousness on his account.

The Christians join in heaven saying, "*Salvation to our God and to the Lamb.*" The credit is theirs'.

JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH, A SIMPLE GOSPEL

10:5-13

Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend...or who will descend...the word is near you.'

Again, this section goes back to 9:30-33 with the explanation (from the human side) as to why the Jews were cut off. Paul says in 10:1-4 that it was a problem of false zeal; they went after righteousness the wrong way. Now Paul is giving a further verification and explanation of the way of salvation by contrasting the two bases for obtaining righteousness. We have...

We have an appeal to the Old Testament Jewish scripture regarding salvation based on works (v. 5).

Leviticus 18:5 is quoted. If you practice (not like practicing a piano but engaged in the business like a medical doctor) law-keeping you can live eternally. If you row the boat hard enough you won't go over the waterfall to destruction but you will live. *Do and live* is the summary of it.

If a person obeyed all God required, then he could go to heaven and not hell. The only problem is that God made the law so holy and iron clad that nobody could keep it. Mt. Sinai is too steep and fiery for anyone to make it. And it won't help to make it part way up. God demands perfection (James 2:10) and pronounces a curse on anything less (Gal. 3:10). If one link in the chain breaks, all is lost. If the vase is cracked, all is useless. And indeed the holiest men are flawed: Noah, Moses, Elijah, David. If God would mark iniquities who could stand (Job 25:4; Pss. 14:1-3; 130:3; 1 Kings 8:46; Prov. 20:9; Eccl. 7:20)? One man might jump a little further across the Mississippi River than another, but they both fall short. If one will get to heaven by merit, he must start without sin, continue without sin and end without sin. There is only one who has, our Lord Jesus Christ, holy, harmless and undefiled.

Now the Jews had so perverted the truth and added to it that they thought they were keeping the law. *All these things have I kept from my youth up* (Mark 10:20). They viewed God's requirement as external only. That is why Jesus said, *Unless your righteousness exceed that of*

the scribes and the Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom. Now we have...

Now we have an appeal to the Old Testament Jewish scripture regarding salvation based on faith (v. 6).

There are really only two religions in the world: those who believe you can obtain heaven (in whatever form it might be thought of) by merit and those who believe by faith, one by works and the other by a gift, one by working your way up and the other by God coming down. Babel's tower was to reach heaven. Buddhism's Noble Eight-fold Path, Islam's five requirements, Romanism's self-abasement and rituals, all of this is the same effort at works-obtained righteousness. Christianity says, "Surrender and look away from yourself entirely to another, to Christ who by his perfect life and substitutionary death earned a title to heaven which I can receive as a gift." All other religions base salvation on something I must do, whereas Christianity teaches that salvation is based on what God has done.

The *Scripture speaks* (personified), "Don't think you must do some far out thing like ascend to heaven." There is no need to go up there and get help or find answers. Contact with heaven has already been made. Christ has already come down. It would deny the incarnation. Don't say who shall descend even into the abyss, into hell itself to find the truth. Someone has already come from there and brought us saving truth.

The word *is near you*. The message of truth is not hard to find nor difficult to perform. If a father were accidentally locked in a room, he might call out to his little son to go some distance and get a hammer and chisel and then to knock the hinges off the door. As the child leaves, the father calls out that he has found a key right there beside him. This is the *word*, the message of *faith*. It says don't try to merit, only believe.

Here is a very clear explanation of the simple gospel (vv. 9, 10).

There are various ways of stating and summarizing the elements of the faith but this is one of the favorite. It is obviously adopted from the preceding text. To be saved, to find righteousness, one must *confess* with his *mouth* (the organ of confession) the *Lordship of Christ* and *believe* in his *heart* (the organ of faith) his *resurrection*.

Both are necessary. Some believe but never confess (John 12:42). This by definition is false faith (Matt. 10:32). This is one purpose of

baptism; it forces an open confession. One can not just slide into the kingdom. If faith is real, one can't stop speaking (Acts 4:20). Then, some confess but never really believe. They are hypocrites (Matt. 7:21; Titus 1:16).

The confession has to do with the *Lordship* Jesus exercises in virtue of his exaltation (Acts 2:36; Rom. 1:4; 14:9; Phil. 2:11), when he was invested with universal dominion (Matt. 28:18; John 17:2). The crux of Christianity is his Lordship—one must bow to Lordship to be saved. The final issue between God and man is the bowing to Jesus' Lordship (Phil. 2:11). Lordship is not optional.

The faith has to do with the resurrection which is the supreme validation of Jesus' person and ministry (Rom. 1:4). It was God's *amen* to Jesus' *It is finished*, as someone said. It was the supreme demonstration that Jesus had conquered sin and death and hell. It is the supreme hope of ultimate victory for the believer (1 Cor. 15:14). Every other religious leader is dead. Jesus lives; his bones are not to be found.

Yet there is another way of putting it—*whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved*. This is no casual prayer, but the call of a drowning swimmer. It has to do with desperation and urgency and need (Gen. 4:26; 12:8; 13:4; 21:33; 26:25; 1 Kings 18:24; 2 Kings 5:11; Acts 7:59; 9:14, 20; 22:15; 1 Cor. 1:2; 2 Tim. 2:22). The *name* speaks of authority (Luke 10:18). It speaks of one's character (Matt. 1:21).

Look at the promises contained in these gospel statements:

1. *Righteousness*. This is a righteousness from God himself, a right standing with God.
2. *Salvation*. Righteousness is the positive side and salvation the negative side. One is what we obtain and the latter is what we escape—sin's penalty and power.
3. *Not be disappointed* (*lit.: shame*). Shame is one aspect of hell (Dan. 12:2).
4. *Riches* (v. 12). Jesus is rich, the heir of all (Heb. 1:2). Yet, he gives of the riches of grace, glory, and goodness. Think of the riches of safety. Some might know what it is to be in deep trouble—maybe stranded at sea. You would give anything to be safe. Here we are, safe.

5. *It is open to all, to whoever, to all without distinction.* Does God have something special for the Jews? (Rom. 1:16; 2:11; 3:9, 22-24, 29; 4:9; 5:18; 9:24; 11:32; 1 Cor. 7:19; Gal. 3:9; 5:6; 6:15; Eph. 2:14; Col. 3:11.) Jews and Greeks are on the same level. The Jews should have known this for Ruth of the Moabites was the great, great grandmother of David and Rahab, the Canaanite harlot, was saved. One of the greatest moves of the Spirit was amongst the Ninevites.

Conclusion.

We don't need to take some impossible journey to lay hold on saving truth but simply put trust in the accessible Christ who has finished the work of redemption. It is so simple that men won't do it because of their pride. Remember Naaman? 2 Kings 5:12, *Are not Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them and be clean?*

Jesus has done it all. *“Lord, I see you in the womb, in the stable, in the shop, at the well, on the sea, on the mountain, in the wilderness, in the garden and in the judgment hall. You ran the ‘gauntlet’ for me. I see you on the cross, on the throne as Lord. You descended and ascended. You did the job and I put my hope in that. You filled all things (Eph. 4:10).”*

STILL THEY DID NOT BELIEVE

10:14

However they did not all heed....

Paul had just described the simplicity of the gospel; we don't need to climb or dive but simply believe. Help is so near, so accessible, the faculties for salvation are even in you. We should never cease to be amazed that salvation is not by doing anything at all. Rather, it is a matter of simply hearing a message and believing it (Gal. 3:2; Heb. 4:2). It is so simple, yet the Jews did not believe.

The necessity of preaching the gospel (vv. 14, 15).

The gospel is so very simple yet salvation does not occur in a vacuum. There is divinely ordained machinery needed.

A. It is necessary to believe in calling on the Lord (v. 14). Verse 13 had just held out the promise *whoever calls shall be saved*, but it presupposes faith. You might not call a certain doctor because you don't believe he can help you. Do you believe God is and that he is a rewarder of those who seek him?

B. It is necessary to hear in believing. If I've never heard of Dr. X, I'll never call him. Think what obligation is laid upon us to preach the word and spread the gospel. Many have never heard.

C. It is necessary to preach in order to hear. God does not send the message out in mid-air. He generally uses men (sometimes angels, although apparently in a limited way, Luke 2:10; Revelation 14:6). Think of the Christians you know. They were saved under the ministry of the Word. This should give us great confidence, Acts 26:18, and also a great sense of responsibility, for the masses are blinded. Paul says, *Woe is me if I don't preach*. We must pray that God would raise up workers, Matthew 9:38.

D. It is necessary for a divine commission to preach. A fraudulent ambassador will have no authority if he is found to have no credentials. Myriads will be found on the judgment day to have gone through Bible school and seminary, were commissioned by the denomination, pastored a large church and yet God never sent them. John the Baptist was sent from God in contrast to the priests and Levites, sent from men (John 1:6, 19). Remember the old Puritan's dream—he saw

someone preaching on the street corner to a crowd. He drew near and it was the devil. He asked why he would be preaching the gospel. The devil replied, “This is one of my most effective tools—unanointed preaching.”

But we should think of the glory of a God-sent preacher—(v. 15) *how beautiful are the feet*. The quote is in the context of the messengers coming to the Jews in captivity with a message of restoration and deliverance. Paul applies it to the gospel preacher. The feet that carry such a message are beautiful. They held Jesus’ feet (Matt. 28:9). It is good news of good things—everlasting life, forgiveness of sins, peace with God, a new heart and power over sin, answers to ultimate questions. God has made every provision. All the machinery is there.

Still they did not believe (v. 16).

The gospel was sent to the Jews first (Rom. 1:16; Acts 3:26; 17:1f). Yet, few of them received the message. The gospel was foretold and Paul quotes Isaiah 53:1 to demonstrate this. Then Paul seems to summarize in verse 17—really a reiteration of verses 14, 15. Faith comes by hearing a message and that message is concerning Christ, not Buddha, nor Hitler.

But maybe they really did not hear (v. 18). Yes, they heard. Paul borrows words from Psalm 19. Just as the general revelation of creation is universal, so also the gospel went out everywhere (Col. 1:6, 23). They were inexcusable.

But maybe they really did not know (v. 19). Yes, they were forewarned. Moses told that the blessing of God would go to the Gentiles. He told that they would be moved to jealousy by a people who were not even a nation and who (without the truth of God) were fools. Yet, they did not let that work for their good (11:14). They had a real problem with jealousy (Jonah 4:1; Matt. 27:18; Acts 7:9; 13:45; 17:5; 22:22). It was the elder brother.

Isaiah’s statement is bold (v. 20) because it implies Israel’s rejection, Gentiles’ reception, and pure grace in doing so. That is the way anyone is saved. Again, it is not by works. None seek after God anyway (3:11) without having an invasion of the Spirit into their hearts.

Think of the Jews’ inexcusable unbelief still more. They not only neglected the gospel, but even were angry, disobedient and obstinate (v. 21). God was very patient—*all day long*. He stretched out his hand like a father to a child and yet they did not “give him a hand” (2 Chron.

30:12). Thus, wrath came upon them to the utmost, their house was left desolate, they missed the things that belonged to their peace, and the blessing of God was given to another nation (Luke 13:34, 35; 14:24; 19:41-44).

We ought to search our own hearts. Have we obeyed the gospel? What more could God do for us than send his own dear Son to die for sinners (Isa. 53)? Who dare disobey the gospel?

CHAPTER 11

THE JEWISH REJECTION NOT ABSOLUTE

11:1

I say then, God has not rejected His people has He? May it never be!

Chapter 9 dealt with the Jews' election (or non-election), Chapter 10 with their rejection, and Chapter 11 with their restoration. The overall concern here is eternal security, going back to that powerful statement at the end of Chapter 8 that there is no separation. Many are the Old Testament references that could be cited saying the same thing, such as, *the Lord will not abandon His people* (Ps. 94:14).

But it looks like Israel lost out. Think of Jesus' words in Luke 13:35, *Jerusalem, your house is left desolate*, and also Luke 19:44, *If you had known the things that make for peace but now they are hidden from your eyes; you did not recognize the time of your visitation*, and also Matthew 21:43, *The kingdom of God is taken away from you and given to another*. Think of Paul's words, *Wrath has come upon them to the utmost*. What is the solution, the answer to these things?

Paul began the answer in Chapter 9 by explaining that not all of Abraham's children were children of God. When the Jews asserted sonship to Abraham, Jesus told them they were children of the devil. Who are the children of God? Those who were eternally chosen by God and who are made children by supernatural power (9:16). Paul went on to explain that the Gentiles were now called his people and after all, the Jews did not seek God on his terms, even when he made the way so simple (Chapter 10).

So what about his special treasure, his holy nation who was fashioned by God in Egypt, brought out with mighty power, given the lively oracles, and through whom the Messiah came? Has God cut them off?

Paul certainly rules that out, pointing out that after all he, being a total Jew, has found favor with God. Obviously, God still has an interest in the Jews. His conclusion? God has not cast away his people whom he forknew (v. 2).

Here, who are his people? There are two reasonings. First, it might mean all ethnic Jews, because (1) that is obviously what Paul was talking about in verse one, (2) that is the whole burden of Chapter

11—what will happen to the Jews, and (3) foreknowledge is used that way (Amos 3:2). Secondly, it might mean elect Jews only, because, (1) that is normally the way foreknowledge is used (soteric and not generic) and the words that follow (*election, remnant, grace*) have to do with specific salvation, (2) it fits the following Old Testament passage that is cited—a remnant saved and the rest rejected in their apostasy, and (3) this is the same pattern of thought in 9:6, that is, the promises of salvation did not even contemplate the natural seed as such. I lean toward the second, that is, that God has not cut them off totally, in that He is still saving the elect ethnic Jews.

Observe eight beautiful truths regarding salvation here.

1. We see the **certainty** of salvation depicted by the words in verse 4, *I have kept for Myself*. These were days of apostasy headed up by wicked Ahab his yet more wicked wife, Jezebel. But in it all God kept some. The New Testament says God keeps his elect (John 17:12; 1 Peter 1:5). We feel our disgust at incompetence—“You lost it when I specifically trusted you with it?” God does not do that. He keeps even the weakest and if it were not for that even the strongest would be swept away with the rest.

2. We see the **glory** of salvation depicted by the words in verse 4, God keeps for himself his elect. God preserves us, not for our sake primarily, but for his. God does not care so much about the cattle on the 1,000 hills nor for ecology, but his great care is for his people, his glory, the *riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints*. Redemption is God’s great work—bringing many sons to glory. How the devil would *steal, kill and destroy* if not for the lions being put on chains, if it weren’t for the hedge put around us. Just look at Job.

3. See the **scarcity** of salvation depicted by the words in verse 5, God keeps a remnant. Note that just as it was in the days of Elijah, so it was in the days of Noah and of Lot. Isaiah had a child named *a remnant shall return*. The quotes in Romans 9:27 and 29 come from Isaiah. The masses of Israelites perished. The masses of the Gentiles both before and after Calvary perished. Just a remnant God saved (Matt. 7:13; 22:14). Like a remnant of carpet, God keeps a remnant of souls. If we are included, we ought to be so thankful.

4. See the **immensity** of salvation depicted by the words in verse 4, *I have kept 7,000*. There is often more than even good men think. Through any “dark age” we can be sure that God keeps some for himself

and more than it would appear that there are. And when the elect of all the age are summed up, it will be a multitude *which no man can number*. Remember, at that present time (v. 5), there were thousands of Jews converted (Acts 2:41; 4:4; 6:7; 21:20).

5. See the **purity** of salvation depicted by the words in verse 4, they have not *bowed the knee to Baal* which was idolatry and apostasy. God *keeps* the believer in the sense that he keeps us from sin (Matt. 1:21; Titus 2:14).

6. See the **humility** needed in salvation depicted by the words in verse 3, *I am left alone*. We must beware of the “Elijah complex.” We are not as unique as we might think.

7. See the **divine charity** in salvation depicted by the words in verse 5, it is the *election of grace*. God did not have to chose anybody; it was a gracious thing. If he had not elected some, there would be no one in heaven.

8. See the **exclusiveness** of salvation depicted by the words in verse 6, *no longer on the basis of works*. This is an exegetical comment on the preceding clause reminding them of God’s way of salvation in contrast to the Jewish religion which was merit and human performance. The point: grace and works are mutually exclusive. If I agreed with a neighbor to mow his lawn for \$10 and, when, having finished the job, I come to the man for the \$10, he says, “I just want to give you this \$10 as a gift,” I would cry out, “What do you mean gift? I earned this and you owe it to me.” Conversely, suppose you were a wealthy businessman and you noticed a beggar continually outside your door. Finally, you decide you will give him \$10. He says, “I waited long for this pay but I knew you’d come through eventually.” You’d say, “What do you mean pay? This is a gift.” Do you see how grace and works are mutually exclusive?

What is your view? Works slips in so easy even in evangelical circles. Compare these pairs of statements....

I could not have gained my salvation without Calvary.

Christ gained my salvation for me at Calvary.

I decided for Christ; I made Him Lord.

Christ found me and saved me.

I owe my election to my faith.

I owe my faith to my election.

*God builds the machinery of salvation and man operates it.
God alone engineers everything.*

*Salvation has to do with the benefits to man (Job 1:9).
Salvation has to do mainly with the glory of God (Rom.11:36).*

Grace! It is a charming sound and with John Newton we can say, *“I’m not what I ought to be, I’m not what I wish to be, and I’m not what I hope to be, but by the grace of God I’m not what I used to be.”*

THE REST WERE HARDENED

11:7

And the rest were hardened.

Chapter 11 is an important chapter in that it further explains the Jews. Chapters 9 and 10 tell us about the past but Chapter 11, about the future of the Jews.

It is a difficult chapter. Paul acknowledges that he is dealing with *mystery* (v. 25).

Again, the problem he faces is explaining the Jewish rejection in view of what he has said about the security of the people of God. Paul has spoken of a remnant; now he speaks of the rest, the bulk, the mass of Israel.

Paul makes a conclusion in verse 7—*what then*. With unusual zeal, Israel *sought* for righteousness, for God's blessing (9:30; 10:3). But they missed it all. Only the *elect* obtained it, for it was all of grace. And, the rest were *hardened*. To demonstrate this hardening Paul quotes from Moses, Isaiah (a compilation) and then David. What is this hardening?

Hardening has to do with the heart (Heb. 3:12, 13). The heart, like leather, can become hard and inflexible. The heart, like arteries, can become hard and lose its life. The heart, like clay, can become hard and unimpressionable. The heart, like a plant, can become woody and cease to grow.

Why does hardening happen? It is a judicial thing. God does it as a judgment on sin. God does not harden good men in their desire for goodness (only true of a Christian) but rather (as in Chapter 1) God gives men over to go deeper in their sin. Ultimately, God is sovereign in who he softens and who he hardens (9:18; 1 Peter 2:8; Jude 4).

How does hardening happen? God withdraws his presence and influence and sends evil spirits to the hearts of men. *He gave them a spirit*. God is in charge of evil spirits (Judg. 9:23; 1 Sam. 16:14; 1 Kings 22:22; 2 Thess. 2:11). In this case it was a spirit of slumber or stupor. Like when sleeping, one is unaware of reality around. A thief could be the house and one would not know it.

What is the effect of this hardening? This demon blinds a person to spiritual reality—*eyes to see not*. And one reality we are blinded to is our blessings—*let their table become a snare, a trap, and a stumbling*

block. The table is not the table itself but that which is on our table which speaks of our provision, our bounty, our blessings. And these very blessings become (through spiritual deception) a curse, a disadvantage, even a retribution, a pay back, a judgment from God upon our sin. Israel's table was that they had the written revelation (3:1) and all the other benefits of having access to God. But they did not handle these blessings rightly and humbly and the blessings became a source of pride to them that kept them from seeing themselves as sinners in need of saving grace. They fell into a mentality of religious merit, dead works. They fell into a terrible spiritual condition, like an old blind man whose strength is broken—*let their eyes be darkened to see not and bend their back forever.*

Application One.

We should be warned against hardness of heart. We might think of a hard hearted man as a cruel individual, however think of these marks of hardness for a believer.

1. The Lord had just provided in a miraculous way and yet they were anxious and fearful. That is hardness of heart (Mark 6:52).
2. The Lord had just shown them his sufficiency in spite of their incompetency and yet they felt perplexed. That the Lord calls hardness of heart (Mark 8:17).
3. They had not believed the report of the others about spiritual reality. The Lord reproaches them for their unbelief and hardness of heart (Mark 16:14).
4. Do you find the preaching and Bible reading fairly unexciting? That is hardness of mind and heart (2 Corinthians 3:14).

Being insensitive to the feelings of others, being unwilling to make restitution, being complacent to the dangers of worldliness, being unconcerned about the lost around us—this is hardness of heart. For the believer, the Lord is continually pouring the Holy Spirit on our heads like oil to soften us. He is continually sending rain to soften the soil of our heart.

Application Two. We must beware lest our strong point be our weak point. Good looks can become destructive pride, a snare, trap and stumbling block. Mechanical ability, musical ability can be used in

servicing others, yet be a distraction from devotion to the Lord, like Martha (Luke 10:40). The USA is a land flowing with milk and honey like Canaan, yet the abundance is taking many to an early grave. Money, inheritance, etc. can be a snare keeping us from trusting the Lord. Many are ruined by the lottery winnings. Eloquence for a preacher can keep him from feeling his keen need for prayer. In the spiritual realm, it is an advantage to be brought up in a Christian home, yet like Israel, there is the danger of trusting in that. It should be a blessing to be kept from the grosser forms of sin, yet it is possible to not abhor sin like the convert from the rough background—those who have been forgiven much love much. It is possible to see hypocrisies in the parents and thus hold the things of God in contempt. One pastor told me that, upon visiting his alma mater, a professor at this Bible school told him he observed that the students from the non-church upbringing feared God and loved the Word more than the students from Christian homes. Terrible!

What about the imprecatory psalms?

Some psalms (Pss. 58:6; 104:35; 109:6), like Psalm 69 from which Romans 11:9-10 is taken, are pronouncing curses. Four difficulties are urged against them...

1. *These psalms were not inspired.* However, we know they were. Actually, this psalm is quoted by Peter on the day of Pentecost (Acts 1:20) and he says it was the Holy Spirit speaking through David (v. 16).

2. *They do not communicate a right view of God, for God is a God of love.* True, God is love, but he is also righteous and just and holy and judges sinners. Wrath is one of his crowning attributes. Everyone wants justice for themselves when they are offended, but when it comes to justice for God they back off.

3. *This is not a Christian attitude.* We are to turn the other cheek. We must realize that this was not some personal desire for revenge. Think of David. He grieved when Saul was slain, when Absalom was slain, and when Amasa was slain. No, it was David entering in to God's cause (Ps. 69:7, 9). Many of these should be viewed as prophecies of what will come upon the ungodly, *let the sinners be consumed* (Ps. 104:35).

4. *This was alright in the Old Testament but not valid for the New Testament dispensation.* We are to pray *forgive them and lay not this sin to their charge* (Acts 7:60). That is generally true, but there are

some pretty rough things in the New Testament, too. At Peter's words Sapphira dropped dead. At Paul's words Elymas was blinded. Paul did not forgive Alexander the coppersmith but called in God's judgment (2 Tim. 4:14).

The *rest* of the Jews were *hardened*. But it was only *partial* (v. 25). We don't want to make too much of the Jews (dispensationalism), but we don't want to make too little of the Jews either. It appears there is something for them yet.

THE FAILURE AND THE FULNESS OF THE JEWS

11:12

How much more will their fulness be.

Isn't it clear that we have two categories of people here—the Jews and the Gentiles? Then we have two categories of Jews—the remnant and *the rest* (v. 7). What about the rest? They were *hardened*. But Paul goes on to explain that it was only a partial hardening (v. 25). There is something in the future for this category called *the rest*—it is called *their fulness*. To prove it, let us ask the following questions.

What Israel are we talking about in Chapter 11? Is it physical or spiritual Israel? Clearly it was spiritual Israel in 2:29 and 9:6 and Philippians 3:3. However, here it is certainly physical, ethnic Israel (vv. 1, 12, 15, 23, 24, 25, 26, 31). Here we are dealing with the shell which includes the nutmeat whereas in other references it is just the nutmeat. So also, we would do well to choose carefully the appropriate term—Christendom or the church.

What was the failure of the Jews? Notice the words in verses 11-32—*stumble, fall, transgression, rejection, enemies*. Their failure consisted in their transgression (vv. 11, 12). It means a misstep, a false step. They transgressed the law of God, they broke the covenant (Heb. 8), they committed idolatry, they killed the prophets, they did always resist the Holy Spirit, and they killed the Messiah. Consequently God broke off the covenant with them (Heb. 8), wrath came upon them to the utmost (1 Thess. 2:16), God sent the Roman army and destroyed the whole system, God even sent demons amongst them (v. 8), and God took away the kingdom from them and gave it to another (Matt. 21:43).

What are the ramifications of their failure? Salvation came to the Gentiles (v. 11). Salvation was of the Jews (John 4:22). They had the keys to the kingdom. They had the Oracles of God. They had the Messiah. Before Calvary, the masses of the Gentiles perished; God permitted them to go their own way (Acts 14:16). But now we have riches for the world (v. 12), *reconciliation* (through faith in the blood of the Lamb) *for the world*, the Gentiles (Luke 14:23; Acts 8:4; 13:46).

How should this affect the Gentiles? It should humble us and teach us to not be *arrogant or conceited* (vv. 18, 20). We should not think that

we were brought into the blessings of God for any personal merit. God did not have to send the gospel out to the world. He did not have to raise up an apostle to the Gentiles. He did not have to break down the middle wall of partition. It should make us *fear* (v. 20). Fearing God is not some Old Testament concept (Acts 9:31; 1 Cor. 10:12; Hebrews 4:1; 12:28; 1 Peter 1:17). Paul seems to forget the doctrine of eternal security and places everything on the responsibility of man and exhorts them to continue in the goodness of God (Acts 13:43) lest they forfeit their blessings. Paul urges them to remember the goodness and the severity of God. Look out over the history of the Jews—the first generation was laid low in the wilderness, Moses was rejected from the promised land, Korah and company were swallowed, Jerusalem was destroyed and the famine was such that they ate their babies, the Holocaust eliminated six million Jews—behold the *severity of God*. Look at the fall of the human race, the Genesis Flood, the destruction of Sodom, the petrifying of Lot's wife, the way Ananias and Sapphira were dropped, Samson's blinding, and the end of the world. Look at Calvary, the way the Son of God was riddled for sin, and see the severity of God. We ought to tremble.

How should this affect the Jews? It should move them to jealousy (10:19, 11:11, 14). If a top athlete errs and he sees another receiving the crown, it should move him to jealousy to try all the harder next year. If we see another brother flourishing in his spiritual pursuit, this should inspire us to follow his example. Jealousy is not necessarily a bad thing, it is how we turn it.

What is the future of the Jews? Right now there is a hardening, not total and not final (v. 25). Right now a remnant is being saved. Right now their clock is waiting for the *fulness of the Gentiles*, the multitudes (Gen. 48:19) of the Gentile elect to be converted. Jerusalem is trodden underfoot by the Gentiles (see the Muslim mosques and Roman cathedrals) until their time is fulfilled. Then comes the *Jews' fulness*, their *grafting in again*, *life from the dead* (6:13; John 5:24), their acceptance (v. 15), their *ungodliness being removed* (v. 26), *their being shown mercy again* (v. 31). The Jews as a people will become Christians, not totally just as their rejection was not total (every individual), but nevertheless substantially and reputedly.

What is the lump and the olive tree analogy? You have a lump of dough and take a piece and bake it into a loaf of bread. It is very good. You know that if that first piece is so good, then the rest will be too. You

have a tree. If the roots go bad, the whole tree will die. But if the roots are healthy, the branches will be too. All the life of the tree comes from the roots. Thus, if the first part (the *fathers*, v. 28) *was holy*, set apart to God, then the rest is too. God blessed Abraham (Gal. 3:14) and though the branches were broken off, yet the Jews will like branches be grafted back into the tree, the people of God. That would be more *natural* (v. 24) than was the grafting in of the Gentiles.

Who is all Israel that will be saved (v. 26)? Is it...

1. All Jews in all generations saved, the Ahab's and Jezebel's included?
2. All Jews alive at that time of the fulness of Gentiles?
3. All who are living only in the borders of Israel at that time?
4. All spiritual Israel, both Jew and Gentile elect, that is, the blinding and hardening was such that it was only partial and would not hinder the elect Jews from being converted as long as the Gentiles were being converted. Thus, all true Israel including Jews and Gentiles will ultimately be saved.
5. Jews, in general, at this future time, wherever they are, will become Christian. I believe that this is the correct view and that this is a great prophecy of the Bible, predicting a great general awakening amongst ethnic Jews when the bulk of the Gentiles are converted.

Reasons?

1. Numerous verses in this chapter clearly refer to Israel as a people. There are two categories of Jews here in Chapter 11—the *remnant* who are being constantly saved and then the rest who were hardened. This latter group was rejected and it is they who shall be restored. They were rejected but it was not absolute or total and so they shall be restored. We don't get the idea from Chapter 11 that there is merely a few Jews trickling in and silently being converted.
2. The word Israel is used in the ethnic way in the previous verse (v. 25).
3. There is *mystery* (something known only by divine revelation). It does not seem like the idea that a few Jews are going to continue to be converted is much of a mystery.

4. The response to it all (v. 33) is an overflow of glory and admiration for the sovereign unchanging purposes of God and that seems to be more fitting for such an outburst of praise.

Conclusions and Applications.

1. See how our view of prophecy and particularly Israel in prophecy can affect our lifestyle and our ways. It was his view of these things that sent Robert Murray M'Cheyne to Israel. It is our view of Israel in prophecy here in the USA that makes us protective of the Jews. It is the view of Israel in prophecy that has people counting the buzzard population in Israel.
2. I believe this is a great prophecy of the Bible and should affect our view of:
 - a. *Israel*. This prophecy indicates some restoration—not political, for we have that now, not geographic, for we have that now, not religious or ecclesiastical, for that Old Covenant was clearly broken, but spiritually, evangelically through Christ, through the gospel, the Jews will come into the kingdom the same as the Gentiles. We should not make too much of the Jews (dispensationalism) yet we should not make too little of the Jews, for they are yet special.
 - b. *God*. God chose Jews to be his people and his purpose can never be altered (v. 29) though they so badly transgressed. Election in verse 28 and foreknowledge in verse 2 are national.
 - c. *Ourselves, the Gentiles*. This should make us rejoice and marvel at the goodness and the grace of God that we were brought in.
3. Observe Paul's burden for souls (11:14, 9:2; 10:1). In spite of the fact that the Jews were in a state of rejection, yet he was looking for just some way to bring some of them in.

THE GREATNESS OF OUR GOD

11:33-36

Oh, the depth of the riches!

There are two points in Chapter 11: the rejection of the Jews was not total (vv. 1-10) and it was not final (v. 11f). It will be helpful also to remember that we have two categories of people: Jews and Gentiles. And of the Jews, we have two categories in verse 7: *the remnant* (elect) and *the rest* (non-elect). Those called the rest were hardened. How hardened? It was a *partial hardening* (v. 25) which will abide *until the fulness of the Gentiles has come in*. Then they will be *accepted, there will be life from the dead, they will be grafted in again, their sins will be taken away, and they will be saved*.

Now we have what many commentators and preachers feel is the most sublime passage of scripture in the Bible. And it is so grand, *oh, the depth of the riches*; it is so humbling, *who has known*; it is so comprehensive, so powerful, so strong, *all things* (v. 36).

Cause—What brought this on or what elicited this outburst of theology?

A. It was the *mysteries* (v. 25), the surprises, the twists in these international affairs. The Jews were selected by God but failed and through them salvation came to the Gentiles and through the Gentiles salvation came again to the Jews, both having been reduced to an obvious position of sinnership that mercy might be magnified.

B. It was the great proof of *God's faithfulness, his immutability* (v. 29). After the Jews had so splendidly sinned, after they had fallen into idolatry worse than even the Gentiles, after they had crucified Messiah, after they had become the chief persecutors of the gospel to the world, after wrath had come on them to utmost, after they were broken off, yet God's purposes and promises still stand. Talk about eternal security! God selected Abraham for special purposes and "if the root be holy, so are the branches." (Lev. 26:42; Deut. 4:37; 2 Sam. 9:7; Gal. 3:14).

C. It was this great demonstration of *God's sovereignty*. God sovereignly elected a physical family for his special purposes and out of that family sovereignly elected some in a spiritual way to heaven and then broke off that family, yet grafting them in again in a spiritual way.

So all this sovereign working is so mysterious. It is like a kalidescope yielding different beauties when viewed from different angles, like tapestry whose individual threads yield a beautiful piece of work, or like mixing colors which yield something different in the end. Can you imagine a team of explorers finding the opening to some cavern of jewels and one being let down some distance into it sees sparkling jewels. More than that, running off from the main cavern, he sees many veins going deeper yet which seem to be unexplorable and upon rising, he comes out and exclaims to his fellows, *Oh the depth of the riches! Riches!* It is an abundance of that which is precious and valuable.

Content—What is the content of this great doxology? It is the greatness of God.

A. Deep riches of wisdom. God not only knows but has the know how. A graduating physician might have the knowledge but lack the experience and the wisdom. A machinist might have the tools but not know how to use them. A man might know all about the computer but not know how to apply it in some good use. A seminary or Bible student might have much knowledge but lack the wisdom to use it. Some preachers like D. L. Moody and Charles Spurgeon had much wisdom. God is the author of wisdom, he is wisdom personified, he defines what wisdom is. He gives wisdom to all in all areas. God gives wisdom to the farmer to know how to plant and harvest a crop (Isa. 28:23-29). Without God we would not have the wisdom to make a pocket comb.

See the wisdom of God in creation. God made the body with wisdom. The thumb was wisely designed. God made the trees with wisdom. They are pleasant to the eyes, and they have useful properties—soft enough to float, hammer nails through it, shape into furniture, yet so hard that it competes with steel. Think of the order in the universe—the timing of the heavenly bodies, the properties of matter, the atomic chart, the mathematical qualities of music, etc. This is our God.

Especially see the wisdom of God in redemption (which is the context). God in wisdom found a way to justify the unjust and still be just, even declaring and displaying his justice. He does things right. He found a way to forgive man's sin and yet not compromise justice. He found a way to let man into heaven and yet not defile his reputation. See the wisdom of God in calling man, ruined sinful man, to do his will and even further his kingdom, even ruling the new heavens and

earth. See the wisdom of God in making a redeemer who would be deity of infinite worth and yet humanity, able to identify with us as near kinsman. See his wisdom in his ways in redemption—his skill in humbling those who walk in pride, making the way up down; making it so that if a man will give away his life he will find it; making defeat to be success; foolishness to display his wisdom; weakness the way of strength; setting things up so that he can answer prayer and yet be sovereign; making our faithlessness to magnify his faithfulness; our lie to magnify his glory; and using the Jews' failure to save Gentiles and the Gentiles to save the Jews.

B. The deep riches of God's knowledge. God is omniscient. God knows the location of every atom in the universe. He knows where David's stone is at, the one that stuck in Goliath's head; where Nebuchnezzar's fingernails are at; the ones he clipped when he came in from the pasture, where Samson's hair is at, that which was cut losing his power; where Korah's bones and Moses bones are at; where Abel's blood is at; what happened to the basket that Paul rode in; and where the ark of the covenant and Noah's ark is at. God knows what has happened—he is a perfect historian. He knows what is happening—not only the actions but thoughts of every man and even motives (Heb. 4:13). His judgment will be perfect. He knows what shall happen, which way the dice will land and where and when the leaf will fall. God has no plan B, he is taken by no surprises.

C. His unsearchable judgments. They are a *great deep* (Ps. 36:6). It is not that man can't begin to discover these judgments (he does upon becoming a Christian), but it is that he can't possibly exhaust them. God's judgments are his calls, his decisions, like an umpire calling a ball or strike. Why did he make man? Why did he let sin enter? Why did he let king Saul on the throne? Why was John Bunyan's daughter blind? Why did he let someone die so young? Why is the USA so wealthy and Haiti so poor? How come God let that sinner get a deer and not the saint? Why didn't he save more souls? God could have. Unsearchable!

D. God's unfathomable ways. These are his methods, the way things are done. David prays, *teach me your ways*. They are unfathomable and too deep, like the ocean. Like the path of a ship, it leaves no tracks (Ps. 77:19). "God moves in a mysterious way His wonders to perform" (William Cowper). Yes, we know some things from the Bible (1Cor. 1:31; 2:16), but yet we wonder why the wicked triumph and the righteous suffer (Hab. 1), why God delays to answer prayer, why he let

the Arminian / Calvinism controversy exist.

How different God's ways are than man's. If man were to *send the Son of God* into the world we would choose a palace not a stable, wealth not poverty, the finest schools not a carpenter's shop, and a throne not a cross. If man were to devise a way to *continue to advance the kingdom of God* after Pentecost we would bring in golden tongued rabbis not common fishermen. If man were to set up the *rules for entering the kingdom*, we would choose merit, performance, ability, or at least faithfulness.

E. God's unknowable mind. If the heart of kings is unsearchable (Prov. 25:3), how much more the King of kings. It can only be known by revelation (Ps. 25:14; 1 Cor. 2:16), and then only the fringes (Job 26:14).

F. God's uncounseled plans. Even the president has counselors. God no more needs counselors than the sun needs a flashlight.

G. God is totally free and without obligation. God owes man nothing but hell and can pay him off anytime. God does not need man. Man is a debtor, even a thief. Everything is from God.

H. All things are from him. From him, for he is the *maker, through him,* for he is the *means,* and *to him,* for he is the *motive.* What is the motive of all things? It is the glory of God. And that is the conclusion to this great doxology.

Conclusion—To Him be the glory.

The whole plan of creation has this in view (Ps. 19:1; Rev. 4:11): Why do you exist? For the glory of God. All you do is to have that one motive in view (1 Cor. 10:31). The condemnation, the crime of all men's crimes is that they have failed right here (Dan. 5:23; Acts 12:22; Rom. 1:21). God will get the glory even out of Pharaoh, Jezebel, and Satan. God is big enough to use rebellion for his glory. He is able to take a crooked stick and draw a straight line (3:4). He reaps where he didn't sow. *The whole purpose of redemption is for the glory of God* (Jer. 13:11; 1 Cor. 1:30; Eph. 1:1-23; 1 Peter 2:9; Rev. 5:12). God finds man in his utterly miserable sinful condition that salvation might be of grace and mercy alone to the praise of his glory—a *debtor to mercy alone*. You say, "but repentance and faith was mine." No, as Charles Spurgeon says, "these are too fine a flower to grow in nature's garden." As the text says, *through him and to him are all things* and here all means all.

Can you say *amen*? It is a test of your spiritual condition. If you

don't marvel at the supreme wisdom of God who works *all things* after the counsel of his will (Eph. 1:11), the sovereign power of God who upholds *all things* (Heb. 1:3), the sheer grace of God who through our Lord Jesus Christ gave us *all things* pertaining to life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3), the singular glory of God who through Christ will sum up *all things* in him (Eph. 1:10), if you don't tremble at the great day of the Lord when *all things* will be subjected to him (1 Cor. 15:28), then your Christianity is to be called false. Paul cries out like a challenge, with three *whos*—who has contributed anything? None stand up to answer. All must bow and bless his name—to him be glory forever. Amen.

CHAPTER 12

THE CALL FOR A LIVING SACRIFICE

12:1-2

That you present your bodies a living sacrifice ... your reasonable service.

Think of these four points from the first two verses of Romans 12:

1. Background of this call to serve,
2. Basis of this call to serve,
3. Essence, nature, and content of this call to serve and
4. Blessing on this call to serve.

The background of this call to worship.

It is called to our attention by the words —*I urge you therefore*. We have a major division here in the book of Romans. There is a change, a transition. It is like coming out of one woods and into another or like coming out of the classroom and into the workplace. The first eleven chapters was doctrinal (except some of Chapter 6), but now practical. In view of these things, *I urge you therefore*. This is no classroom matter. When you read the Bible do you look for a *therefore*? When you read the Bible do you look for an application? Or is it so much entertainment? Do you have merely a curious interest, a legal interest, or are you just putting in the time? C. T. Studd was found up one night and being asked if he were sick, he replied, “No, I’m looking for a new command to obey.” When civil authorities put up 55 mph speed limit signs they expect an application. The *therefore* is the difference between heaven and hell (Matt. 7:21). The Pharisees were the conservative religionists of Jesus’ day—they said the right things but did not do them. Jesus called it leaven. (James 1:22; Titus 1:16).

The basis of this call to worship.

It is indicated by the words *therefore by the mercies*. *Therefore* on the basis of the foregoing doctrine that we are justified by grace —we can go ahead and fight from a position of victory; *therefore* since we are crucified with Christ we don’t have to try to be something we’re not but be what we are; since we are dead to sin, now reckon on it. Don’t be a hypocrite. Don’t act like a swine when you have been made a swan, like a slave when you are free from sin. On the basis of foregoing doxology

speaking of the greatness of God, we can only want to serve such a God.

What else brought up this term? *By the mercies!* (2:4; 9:23; 11:31, 32). God is in the business of showing mercy. He is grafting people in to partake of the fatness of the olive tree. The door is open, table set, and the call is out. We ought to think it a tremendous privilege to come to God, to be a worshipper of God, the true, the living, the great God. Think of Noah *who found grace* (Gen. 6:8), of Lot, *the compassion of the Lord was upon him* (19:16), of Esther, Rahab, and Paul (1 Tim. 1:13). Paul looked at himself and all those called by the grace of God as *vessels of mercy*. Such a God deserves our worship. Love (mercy) so amazing, so divine demands my all (2 Cor. 5:14). We should not serve only from threat of discipline, but out of unceasing gratitude.

The essence, the nature of this call to worship.

We are to present the body as a sacrifice to God. Why body? Is it restricted to body only? No, 6:13 and even 12:2 (mind) indicates otherwise. But it is not likely it should be taken as a synonym for the whole person either. Paul often thinks specifically of the body (6:6, 12; 1 Cor. 6:19; 9:27). It was an integral element of man from the beginning (Gen. 2:7). The dissolution of body is part of the wages of sin. The consummation of redemption is the resurrection of the body. In Greek philosophy the body was depreciated—matter was considered evil. But much of our sanctification is learning to manage the body. And, in a word, we are set in this dilemma—whether we will pamper the flesh or please God.

The body is to be presented as *a sacrifice*. A sacrifice is something you give up. In baseball a sacrifice fly costs. It is a loss. There is no worship of God without sacrifice. The heathen know this—if there is a God he deserves to be sacrificed for. Even Satan worshippers do that. God taught this idea of sacrifice in the Old Testament—Adam, Abel, Abraham with his altars, Gideon, and Elijah, and the whole Levitical system. In the days of Solomon they offered 22,000 oxen and 120,000 sheep. Why sacrifice? It is done as a statement of devotion, and esteem, acknowledging worth and worship. When Abraham was willing to offer up his son, God said, *now I know you love me*. It is total devotion for it entails death. God does not ask for a loan, but death. A sacrifice is not only for acknowledgement but also for atonement (Lev. 1:4; Isa. 53:6). God drove man out of the garden and stationed flaming sword-bearing cherubim at the entrance indicating the only way back into the

presence of God was to die. Yes, Jesus died for us but even yet we can't worship God without death. (1) Self-sufficiency must die (Rom. 7:9). (2) The Old Man must be slain, old sinful self (6:6). (3) The Christian enters with self-will being slain and then dying daily (Luke 9:23). John the Baptist said the Messiah would have fire and an axe. This is why man will not come to Christ. This is why there are so many false Christians—they are *workers of iniquity*, self will. Little does he realize that he will die, an eternal death. Everything must die. However the death the Christian experiences is swallowed up by life. The seed dies but yields life.

Now, we are called, not to a dead sacrifice, like the Old Testament system, but a *living* sacrifice. We should view our whole *life* as a sacrifice. When you became a Christian it was good-bye to family, friends, finance, plans, ambition, wishes, status, comfort, and all the world has to offer— anything that would stand in the way of obedience to him. It is death to self and all to Christ—no strings attached, but absolute, unconditional surrender to the King. This is especially seen in the life of missionaries who poured out their lives for Christ. This devotion to Christ is especially manifested in sacrifice for others (Phil. 2:17).

It is to be a *holy* sacrifice. Like special dishes, we are to be cleansed and set apart. Under the Old Testament, the sacrific had to be without blemish. (Rom. 6:22; Eph. 1:4; 2 Tim. 1:9; 1 Peter 2:9).

Now we have specific instruction of what this consecration involves—*not conformed to the world*. *Conformed!* If you were to take an animal to the fair, part of the criterion would be its conformation, its shape. God does not want us to shape our lives after the world, not their mold—thinking like the non-Christian, their attitudes, philosophies, decisions, actions, purchases, etc. It is likely that if the world is for it, we can be against it or at least check it out. We are not to be obnoxious, unkind, discourteous, or contrary (12:18). Amoral things (telephone, car, etc.) don't apply. But in general, the Christian is a non-conformist.

The world? The word is wrongly translated from the Greek *aion* which means age or ages. (Rom. 11:36; Eph. 1:21; Heb. 1:2; 6:5; 13:8). We have here a contrast between this age and that which is to come. We have two different systems, spheres, and kingdoms. The devil is the god of this age. It is called this *present evil age* (Gal. 1:4). The Christian has put his lot in another world (2 Cor. 4:18; Heb. 13:14). Look at the example of Moses who left all for the reward to come (Heb. 11:25,

26), in contrast to Demas (2 Tim. 4:10). The gospel music industry is unashamedly worldly. But the Christian is a stranger and sojourner, never comfortable, always vexed like Lot while passing through. We are not to be conformed to this age but to live for the next, for eternity, not be a time-server but focus our life on the judgment seat and the age to come. This whole system, this whole set-up is to come crashing down. The lusts of the flesh (sensual pleasures), the lusts of the eyes (possessions), and the boastful pride of life (preeminence)—all that is in the world—is to come to an end.

Positively, we are to be *transformed by renewing the mind*. The Greek word is metamorphosed, sometimes translated changed or transfigured as when the Lord put on some of his glory. Thus we are in a constant process whereby the understanding is enlightened, the conscience is softened and sharpened, the thoughts rectified, attitudes adjusted, will bent, and affections purified. As we begin to see the desirability of the Lord Jesus, we want to follow in his steps. As we see the glory of the Lord, we see our own unworthiness and the world's wretchedness (Isa. 6).

The outcome? It is *proving* the will of God. We prove by doing, just like a truck dealer would bring a businessman a truck, a demonstrator, whereby upon using it he proves that it is the one. Thus the will of God, the revealed will, is ascertained often by trial and error, and there is nothing bad about it, it is *good*, nothing unacceptable, it is *acceptable*, and there is nothing better, it is *perfect*. The Father seeks such to be his worshippers .

The blessing placed upon this call to worship.

It is our *spiritual service of worship*. Here the NASB is poor. There is only one Greek word for *serve* and the word translated spiritual is from *logikos* (also 1 Peter 2:2), that is, in view of how great God is and how merciful He is, it is only logical to give Him all. Unbelief and disobedience are terribly unreasonable. This alone is *acceptable* to God.

Conclusion.

This is *worship*, not just coming to a meeting, but a life of consecrated willing cheerful devotion to the Lord. One put it so well, “Most people attend church service from 10:00-11:00 on Sunday morning and then go out and worship.” They put up with the saints and then go to the crowd they feel comfortable with.

This is an urging to worship, *I urge, beseech*. It comes from the Greek word *parakaleo* which means one who comes alongside and calls. Listen to the call of Livingstone:

People talk of the sacrifice I have made in spending so much of my life in Africa. Can that be called sacrifice which is simply paid back as a small part of the great debt owing to our God, which we can never repay? Is that a sacrifice which brings its own reward of healthful activity, the consciousness of doing good, peace of mind, and bright hope of a glorious destiny hereafter? Away with such a word, such a view, and such a thought. It is emphatically no sacrifice. Say, rather, it is a privilege. Anxiety, sickness, suffering, or danger now and then; with a foregoing of the common conveniences and charities of this life, may make us pause and cause the spirit to waver and sink; but let this only be for a moment. All these are nothing when compared with the glory which shall hereafter be revealed in and for us. I never made a sacrifice. Of this we ought not talk when we remember the great sacrifice which he made who left his Father's throne on high to give himself for us.

This is a call to service. It sets the stage for what is to come—serving with our various gifts.

AN ACCURATE SELF-IMAGE AS IT PERTAINS TO SPIRITUAL GIFTS

12:3-6

Not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think.

The concept that carries over from verses one and two into these next four verses is mind—the *renewing of your mind* and then in verse three, *think* and *sound judgment* or *sound mind*.

Consider that the mind is crucial in the service of God.

It is the very workshop for either the devil or God. It is the soul or the greater part of the soul. It is the command center for all our attitudes and actions. It is a continual target for the devil—*But he turned and said to Peter, “Get behind me Satan, you are not setting your mind”* (Matt. 16:23) and *so your minds should be led astray from the simplicity that is in Christ* (2 Cor. 11:3). Listen to these scriptures, regarding the unregenerate man whose heart is a nest of snakes:

- a. Romans 1:28, a reprobate *mind*
- b. Romans 8:7, the carnal *mind* is enmity against God
- c. Ephesians 2:3, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the *mind*
- d. Ephesians 4:17, as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their *mind*
- e. Philippians 3:19, they *mind* earthly things
- f. Colossians 1:21, formerly alienated and hostile in *mind*
- g. Titus 1:15, but even their *mind* and conscience are defiled
- h. 2 Corinthians 10:4, casting down *imaginations*.

The Christian, upon conversion has: the law written on the *mind* (Heb. 8:10), he has the *mind* of Christ (1 Cor. 2:16), and he must gird up the loins of his *mind* for action (1 Peter 1:13). Paul says he served the Lord with all humility of *mind* (Acts 20:19). *Same mind* occurs four times, *one mind* occurs six times, and *like minded* occurs three times. God wants our mind (Mark 12:30). And he wants it pure (2 Peter 3:1). We ought to take heed as to what we feed our mind on. The pictures we hang on walls can be brought down but often leave scars. Satan knows how important the mind is and blinds the *minds* of those who believe not (2 Cor. 4:4), filling them with lies. But upon salvation, God begins

renewing and remodeling the mind.

God is after a sound mind, sound judgment.

Sound mind is sometimes translated *sober*, for the drunk does not have sound judgment. He is not thinking soundly, not straight, not accurately. Once the Gadarene was saved he was at the Lord's feet in his right mind.

Specifically, we need accurate or sound thoughts about ourselves.

We are *not to think of ourselves more highly than we ought*. With all the self esteem going around, what is right in this matter of self-image? Dr. Dobson says the reason the Germans attempted genocide on the Jews was low self-esteem. Robert Schuller defines sin as low self-esteem. What is right? There are three aspects when it comes to self-image.

1. *Creation*. Here we should think highly of ourselves, for we are worth more than many sparrows and worth more than the world's wealth. We are made in the image of God (Gen. 1:26; Matt. 10:31).

2. *The Fall*. Here we can't think low enough of ourselves. We have missed the mark and are *worthless, and wretched* to put it in Bible terms. We are *abominable and disobedient and unto every good work, reprobate* (Titus 1:16). The problem is not low self-image but high self-image or pride. This is the bait Satan used in the fall of man. The original lie was, *You shall be as gods*. The reason men don't come to Christ or glorify Him is pride. The problem on the first day and great problem of the last days is pride, *lovers of self* (2 Tim. 3:2). If the *bitter* man had low self-esteem, he would be glad he looked so homely or had such a poor lot in life. What about the *rapist*? Low self-esteem? It is the most self-assertive act imaginable. What about *suicide*? Surely this is low self-esteem. No, rather, he is saying, "I have not got what I had coming and I will show them." Fallen man is incredibly proud and selfish. Self sits as king and dictator and will tolerate no rivals. There is only one thing that will topple him, not hell-fire, but the finger of God in regenerating power.

3. *Salvation*. This is what we are dealing with in the text. How should the redeemed look at self? First, even the holiest say with holy Job, *I abhor myself*. Yet, he knows he is a child of God, loved with everlasting love, bought with an infinite price, one of those over whom God sings, and one with whom the Lord is pleased (Col. 1:10). These things are universal amongst all Christians, but yet there are differences between

Christians in terms of *intimacy* (Daniel, John) and *spiritual gifts* (v. 6) and that is our text.

Consider various factors pertaining to our self-image when it comes to spiritual gifts.

But to think so as to have sound judgment as... We have a word for all —*to every man among you*. The first principle is...

Humility—*not to think more highly than we ought*. When it comes to gifts we are tempted with pride, with high thoughts of self. See it in the physical realm, such as the gift of a strong body—it is a temptation to pride. Or, the child is given a toy—he is likely to be selfish and proud over it. So in the service of God and in spiritual gifts, pride is the perpetual danger. It is the last to leave before conversion and the first to try to re-enter. But we must in all humility acknowledge that a gift is a gift and is given to us to help others. The Greek word for gifts is *charisma* and for grace, *charis*. Thus we have the modern word charismatic and the old word charity meaning handouts. Is there reason for pride? Paul conveys an attitude of humility when he says: *through the grace given to me*. There is an *inverted form of pride* that this also speaks against. Note it does not say “don’t think highly” but *more highly*. What is that gift? We don’t need to act like we don’t have it but rather to use it in serving. If you inherited a tool and you learned that one of the brothers needed a job done that you could do with it very easily and you said to yourself, “I’ll not mention that I have this tool, for that would be prideful,” it would be a false humility.

Sovereignty—*God has allotted* (v. 3)—is a great factor. God is sovereign in the distribution of gifts and this will shape your self-image. This answers all the why, how come, but he, and I wish.

It protects us from envy—Why wasn’t I born a man so I could have been a pastor? Why did George Whitefield have such eloquence and me so little?

It protects us from pride—I am really something and I can do it so much better.

God is sovereign in the giving of gifts and they are not earned, learned, collected or natural (though they seem to be in conjunction with or superimposed on natural gifts as in Matthew 25:15, “each according to his ability”). Yes, we can be zealous and covet earnestly certain spiritual gifts yet acknowledging that God is sovereign.

Entirety—*God has allotted to each a gift or gifts* (vv. 3, 6).

Every Christian has a gift or gifts. *As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God* (1 Peter 4:10). We must not *feel left out* and we must not *feel like we have the whole ball of wax*. If each has a gift, then what is my gift? Should I know? Very likely you are going to know what it is as evidenced by the fact that we are instructed to exercise them. But maybe it is impossible to fully identify and analyze and make precise distinctions. We should just go ahead and serve where we can and thus our gift will be confirmed by the brethren.

Diversity—to each a measure, gifts that differ (vv. 3, 6). God sovereignly distributes different gifts and combinations thereof. We have some listings: in Romans 12:7, in 1 Corinthians 12 and in Ephesians 4. There are apparently so many factors that go into the expression of our giftings—background, training, experience, personality, and effort. Two pastors might both be gifted teachers, yet the effect and outworking can be so different. The same stain on two different pieces of wood gives a different appearance. But ultimately it is a different *portion of grace* which determines our gifts (v. 6). Two people might both dip into the granola can and one has more raisins but the other more nuts. There are *different unctions* (v. 4). Hudson Taylor and George Müller likely had the gift of faith; Alexander Peden prophecy; Pastor Hsi works of power; Erlo Stegen healing; D. M. Lloyd-Jones, Matthew Henry, and John Murray teaching; and Noah Webster helps and the word of knowledge. There are *different measures* too. Spurgeon had a wonderful flow of grace. And accompanying that grace is a *measure of faith*—what faith? (1) justifying faith? No, all have equal; (2) the gift of faith? No, not all have it; (3) rather, the faith in exercising that gift (v. 6). For example, both have the gift of hospitality but some are exercised more than others.

So we must recognize differences. Just as in the temporal realm, a little *thin boy* would not be using sound judgment to go out for football and would be thinking more highly than he ought to think, so also in the spiritual realm, a *frail fellow* might not be using sound judgment to attempt to be a foreign missionary. The brother who has trouble talking across the fence to a neighbor about the Lord would not be using sound judgment to think of going to preach on campus.

Uniformity is a mark of false religion, a monstrosity, and does not work. In music we need all parts, the ball team can't be all quarterbacks, and the body can't be all eyes.

Necessity—the various gifts perform a different *function*, one that is greatly needed. We should never overesteem any gift (tongues, preaching) and never underesteem any. The starter on a car is small and not visible but plays an important part. One brother might not say much but all of a sudden in the right situation he has a word. His make-up is for that occasion. Since all are needed and since all are different, how can we compete? Are apples better than oranges, the starter better than the battery, or the brain better than the heart? Both are necessary. As each one has received *a special gift, employ it* in serving one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God (1 Peter 4:10). Limitation also means specialization. The eagle and the duck both have limitations, but also specialization. The mole can't do things the squirrel can do but yet can do other things the squirrel can't do. So regarding self-image, remember you have a unique part. The only thing that should make you feel bad is sin and if you deal with that you will feel to be more than a conqueror.

Unity—*we are members one of another* (v. 5). We must remember that it is all a team effort, and we have a mutual interest in one another. The foot has an interest in the eye. I should not be grieved that another brother is more gifted than I am, for if it is truly of God, it won't be to my disadvantage; but, for my help, for the gifts are for the common good.

Validity—Are gifts valid? The cessationist says no, they are terminated with the completion of the canon, they are ended with the prophets and the apostles. Ironically many are indeed themselves very gifted. The scripture says in verse 6, *we have gifts*, and we are to exercise them as they are vital to the health of the church.

All these things should work toward keeping us from pride, envy, competition, strife, cut throat, criticism, and idolatry and help us to make an accurate estimate of ourselves. Often the assertiveness, talkativeness and pride is a cover for insecurity anyhow.

THE GIFT OF PROPHECY

12:6

Let each exercise them accordingly: if prophecy,
according to the proportion of his faith.

The call beginning in Chapter 12 is to the service of God, and more particularly, serving God in the exercise of spiritual gifts. Some guiding principles were given in verses 3-6 in order that we might have an accurate self-image, the most important thing when it comes to spiritual gifts. Pride in any of its subtle forms will distort our service. Now, various gifts are listed. The first is prophecy.

The validity of the gift of prophecy.

Some say gifts are not valid for the church age. This is called Cessationism—they say the gifts have ceased. This idea comes from 1 Corinthians 13:8, “Love never fails; but if there are gifts of prophecy, they will be done away; if there are tongues, they will cease; if there is knowledge, it will be done away.” Baptists, Presbyterians, and in general non-Pentecostals hold this view or some shade of it.

What are the reasons?

1. *It is an over-reaction against the Pentecostal and Charismatic over-emphasis on subjectivism (de-emphasizing the objective word), the gifts, and the experiential.* One time I was at a Reformed ministers’ conference and learned that they did not even appreciate a shout of joy during the singing.

2. *Since the canon is finished, they say, we can’t have more prophecy.* Yes, it is true there will be no more canon, for the foundation was laid, *having been built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets* (Eph 2:20), the building is being built, and there’ll be no more foundation. However, it is not true that we can’t have any more words from God. After all, a word from God need not compete with canon, and any so-called word from God must be judged just like new canon was then. The criterion for any prophecy is the existing revelation. Even Paul the apostle was judged by that (Acts 17:11). So, the same thing applies in the church age just as the apostolic age, *And let two or three prophets speak, and let the others pass judgment* (1 Corinthians 14:29). *Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits*”(1 John 4:1).

3. *Others say that some of the gifts ceased and some remain.* They point out three categories of gifts: sign, speaking, and serving and that the sign gifts (miracles, healing, tongues) have ceased. The reasons for this are that *the signs were to authenticate apostolic ministry which is no longer valid.* That is true.

The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with all perseverance, by signs and wonders and miracles. (2 Cor. 12:12)

God also bearing witness with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit... (Heb. 2:4)

And they went out and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them, and confirmed the word by the signs that followed. (Mark 16:20)

However are there no more apostles? Admittedly, the first two qualifications or aspects are not engaged, but the last two are:

- 1) a witness of resurrection (Acts 1:21, 22).
- 2) the laying down of canon (Eph. 2:20).
- 3) attesting signs and power (2 Cor. 12:12).
- 4) church planting (1 Cor. 3:6, 10).

If men like Bakht Singh of India, Prem Prahdan of Nepal, and Erlo Stegen of South Africa, men who have been used to plant hundreds of churches, men whose ministries have been attested with the miraculous, are not apostles, then I am terribly deceived.

Furthermore, there were other apostles aside from the original twelve (Rom. 16:7), and many prophets (Acts 13:1) that didn't lay down canon. Some say: *1 Corinthians was written in 54 A.D. and Romans about four years later and the sign gifts ceased in the meantime—none are mentioned in Romans 12.* But this reasoning is rather thin—four years? Also, would we then say that because the communion ordinance is not in Romans then it is not valid?

Aside from this, how shall we refute the idea that all gifts have ceased? Look at 1 Corinthians 13:8f, notice the pairs—partial / perfect; childhood / manhood; and dimly / face to face. The “*face to face*” is *in juxtaposition with the cessations.* Who would honestly say that the church age is that of seeing the Lord face to face and knowing as we are known? No, it is clearly the future order. Secondly, *knowledge is in juxtaposition with tongues.* So, has knowledge ceased? Other reasons?

It is true Acts was transitional, but what about *repeated occurrences in the epistles*, such as, 1 John 4:1 and 1 Thessalonians 5:20? Also, *the very purpose for gifts is to edify the church* and for the work of the ministry. And Ephesians 4:11 and on says they are given *until the end*. Also, they are gifts *of the Spirit*. What a grievance to the Spirit of God, to deny His gifts! Also, who are we to *eliminate some gifts and not others*? Consider...

The nature of the gift of prophecy.

It is an amazing gift, an apparently very important gift, a very desirable gift:

And God has appointed in the church, first apostles, *second* prophets, third teachers, then miracles... (1 Cor. 12:28)

Pursue love, yet desire earnestly spiritual gifts, but *especially* that you may prophesy. (1 Cor. 14:1)

Now I wish that you all spoke in tongues, but even *more* that you would prophesy; and *greater* is one who prophesies than one who speaks in tongues, unless he interprets, so that the church may receive edifying. (1 Cor. 14:5)

Therefore, my brethren, *desire earnestly* to prophesy... (1 Cor. 14:39)

Incidentally, why aren't apostles mentioned here? Answer: By the same token, why aren't evangelists mentioned either here or the gift of mercy in other places?

What is the meaning? *Some (John Calvin) say it is expounding the Old Testament prophecies and Scriptures*. No, that is teaching and preaching. *Some would point out foretelling the future* and that is true.

It was also about these men that Enoch, in the seventh generation from Adam, prophesied, saying, "Behold, the Lord came with many thousands of His holy ones." (Jude 1:14)

Much of the Old Testament is prophecies in that sense:

And in their case the prophecy of Isaiah is being fulfilled, which says, "you will keep on hearing but not understand." (Matt. 13:14)

And one of them named Agabus stood up and began to indicate by the Spirit that there would certainly be a great famine all over the world. And this took place in the reign of

Claudius. (Acts 11:28)

But that is still not broad enough, for sometimes, the gift is a supernatural ability to tell not only the unknown future but present (in contrast to Charismatic *word of knowledge*):

The woman said to Him, "Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet."
(John 4:19)

If I have the gift of *prophecy*, and *know* all mysteries and all knowledge.... (1 Cor. 13:2).

But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or an ungifted man enters, he is convicted by all, he is called to account by all; *the secrets of his heart* are disclosed; and so he will fall on his face and worship God.... (1 Cor. 14:24, 25)

But he went in and stood before his master. And Elisha said to him, "Where have you been, Gehazi?" (2 Kings 5:25)

And one of his servants said, "No, my lord, O king; but Elisha, the prophet who is in Israel, tells the king of Israel the words that you speak in your bedroom."...Then Elisha prayed and said, "O LORD, I pray, open his eyes that he may see." (2 Kings 6:12, 17)

Many examples of non-apostolic, church age prophets could be given: Alexander Peden of the Covenanters continually escaped his pursuers' hands through his gift of prophecy. In the revival amongst the Zulus, beginning in 1968, the gift was manifested. One coworker tells another, "God has shown me we must immediately go to such and such a place." They arrive finding that the team there had announced this preacher would be there. Many were saved and healed.

But the most broad and basic definition is this: *A Spirit-inspired word from God*. It means to *speak forth*. It is *thus saith the Lord*. The prophet is *God's spokesman*.

But Moses said before the LORD, "Behold, I am unskilled in speech; how then will Pharaoh listen to me?" Then the LORD said to Moses, "See, I make you as God to Pharaoh, and your brother Aaron shall be your *prophet*." (Ex. 7:1)

It is a gift specifically involving revelation.

And let two or three prophets speak, and let the others pass

judgment. But if a *revelation* is made to another who is seated, let the first keep silent. For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all may be exhorted. (1 Cor. 14:29)

It is a timely Spirit-inspired message from God.

But two men had remained in the camp; the name of one was Eldad and the name of the other Medad. And the *Spirit rested upon them* (now they were among those who had been registered, but had not gone out to the tent), and they *prophesied* in the camp. (Num. 11:26)

When they came to the hill there, behold, a group of prophets met him; and the *Spirit of God came* upon him mightily, so that he prophesied among them. (1 Sam. 10:10)

Now this he did not say this on his *own initiative*; but being high priest that year, he prophesied... (John 11:51)

And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they began speaking with tongues, and prophesying. (Acts 19:6)

Where does it occur? Often it is in the meeting or with brethren, after all it is for them.

But one who prophesies speaks to men for edification and exhortation and consolation. (1 Cor. 14:3)

What is the content?

Exhortation. *And Judas and Silas, also being prophets themselves, encouraged and strengthened the brethren with a lengthy message* (Acts 15:32).

Warning and judging. *Then Eliezer the son of Dodavahu of Mareshah prophesied against Jehoshaphat saying, "Because you have allied yourself with Ahaziah, the LORD has destroyed your works..."* (2 Chron. 20:37).

Manifesting secrets. *But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or an ungifted man enters, he is convicted by all, he is called to account by all; the secrets of his heart are disclosed; and so he will fall on his face and worship God* (1 Cor. 14:25).

Instruction. *For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn.* (1 Cor. 14:31).

To exalt Jesus and redemption. *For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy* (Rev. 19:10). *And his father Zacharias was filled with*

the Holy Spirit, and prophesied, saying: “Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for He has visited us and accomplished redemption for His people, and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of David His servant” (Luke 1:67-69). We see this in meetings when the songs are empowered. Of Jeduthun, the sons of Jeduthun: Gedaliah,... under the direction of their father Jeduthun with the harp, who prophesied in giving thanks and praising the LORD (1 Chron. 25:3).

With this definition you can see why women also can have this gift—an ability to share a timely thought or to sing a melting, exhilarating solo, breaks the stiff atmosphere in a meeting. Scriptures?

But every *woman* who has her head uncovered while praying or prophesying, disgraces her head; for she is one and the same as the woman whose head is shaved. (1 Cor. 11:5)

And it shall be in the last days, God says, that I will pour forth of my spirit upon all mankind and your sons and *your daughters* shall prophesy.... (Acts 2:17)

Now this man had *four virgin daughters* who were prophetesses. (Acts 21:9)

And there was a prophetess, *Anna*...At that very moment she came up and began giving thanks to God, and continued to speak of Him to all those who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem. (Luke 2:36)

And *Miriam* the prophetess, Aaron's sister, took the timbrel in her hand, and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dancing. (Ex. 15:20)

Now *Deborah*, a prophetess, the wife of Lappidoth, was judging Israel at that time. (Judg. 4:4)

So Hilkiah the priest, Ahikam, Achbor, Shaphan, and Asaiah went to *Huldah* the prophetess,...and they spoke to her. (2 Kings 22:14)

So I approached the prophetess, and she conceived and gave birth to a son.... (Isa. 8:3)

Remember, O my God...*Noadiah* the prophetess and the rest of the prophets who were trying to frighten me. (Neh. 6:14)

But I have this against you, that you tolerate the woman *Jezebel*,

who calls herself a prophetess.... (Rev. 2:20)

But the woman is not to have any part in the meeting with regard to instruction, direction, or correction:

A woman must quietly receive instruction with entire submissiveness. But I do not allow a woman to *teach or exercise authority* over a man, but to remain quiet. (1 Tim. 2:11, 12)

Let the women keep silent in the churches; for they are not permitted to speak, but let them subject themselves, just as the Law also says. And if they desire to learn anything, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is improper for a woman to speak in church. (1 Cor. 14:34; note the context is that of judging).

And let two or three prophets speak, and let the others pass judgment. (1 Cor. 14:29).

So one can prophesy without being...

- a. a man
- b. a pastor
- c. a preacher (likely most preachers have the gift and may on occasion find it in operation while preaching)
- d. an apostle (likely all apostles have the gift of prophecy)
- e. in a good way with God (Saul, for example)
- f. a Christian: *Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name? (Matt. 7:22). Caiaphas and Balaam are examples. But he received a rebuke for his own transgression; for a mute donkey, speaking with a voice of a man, restrained the madness of the prophet (2 Peter 2:16).*

Now consider the exercise of the gift of prophecy:

What is the meaning of this phrase “*according to the proportion of faith*”? Some take it in the objective sense—according to the Bible.

I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for *the faith* which was once for all handed down to the saints. (Jude 1:3)

Others take it in the subjective sense—how much persuasion or confidence you have to exercise the gift. If you can't say it if not in

good faith (similar to v. 3) then don't say it. Or, conversely, if you have a word from God, don't shrink or shirk, but say it. Both come to the same end—prophecy to the extent of what God has said.

It is possible to let the gift lie dormant.

And for this reason I remind you to kindle afresh the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands. (2 Tim. 1:6)

And say to Archippus, 'Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfill it.' (Col. 4:17)

Don't hide your gift under the bed of laziness or the bushel of business. How can a person who has the gift do more? Stay word-filled and Spirit-filled as much as you can. Keep your soul in a good way.

They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit... (Acts 6:5)

Keep the radio plugged in and tuned in if you expect to receive a message. Be where the Spirit is. Remember Saul. There are great manifestations of spiritual gifts in revivals and outpourings of the Holy Spirit.

How can a person get the gift of prophecy? Is it valid to say such a thing? Is not the Spirit sovereign in the distribution of gifts? Are not the gifts unmerited and unlearned? Yes, but still it is scriptural *to seek*:

Pursue love, yet desire earnestly [be zealous for] spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy. (1 Corinthians 14:1)

One can *aspire* even to be a pastor.

It is a trustworthy statement: if any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desires to do. (1 Tim. 3:1)

One can *ask*.

If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him! (Matt. 7:11)

But we *must ask with right motives*.

One who speaks in a tongue edifies himself; but one who prophesies *edifies the church not himself* (1 Cor. 14:4).

In the South African revival of 1968 a man asked for tongues with prideful motives. He began speaking in another language and could not stop, even at work. He was delivered when he confessed his error.

If you have some desire for ministry that way, *go ahead, seeking to be a blessing to your local church*. The local church should be the place where ministries are developed, not some Bible school. Sadly, many local churches are a spectator—performer mentality, a one-man show, where little participation is permitted. The meeting should be ordered, yet with room enough for spontaneity and such things as 1 Corinthians 14:30 to occur—*But if a revelation is made to another who is seated, the first one must keep silent*.

When are gifts received? *It might seem like they are imparted at birth*. Charles Spurgeon, for example, was so gifted from birth. However, it was likely that the spiritual gifts were superimposed on the natural gifts.

To one he gave five talents, to another, two, and to another, one, each *according to his own ability*.... (Matt. 25:15)

These verses would indicate that *gifts are imparted with the Holy Spirit's coming upon the believer* (which might be at regeneration, even).

And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesying. (Acts 19:6)

Do not neglect the spiritual gift within you, which was bestowed on you through prophetic utterance with the laying on of hands by the presbytery. (1 Tim. 4:14)

I remind you to kindle afresh the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands (2 Tim. 1:6)

How can prophecy be judged? There were many false prophets in the Old Testament days, even 400 to one. Maybe that is the ratio today. We must learn to discriminate. “*And let two or three prophets speak, and let the others pass judgment*” (1 Cor. 14:29).

Does the prophecy line up with the written revelation?

If a prophet or a dreamer of dreams arises among you and gives you a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder comes true, concerning which he spoke to you, saying, “Let us go after other gods (whom you have not known) and let us serve them,” you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams; for the LORD your God is testing you.... (Deut. 13:1-3)

1 John 4:1 says we should test the spirit behind the prophet. How?

Verse two gives us a doctrinal statement—*By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God.* Prophecy must line up with the written revelation.

Does the prophet's life conform to scripture or is he lawless and selfish? Our Lord said you *can tell them by their fruit.* The following parable of the two builders defines what He means.

And everyone who hears these words of Mine, and does not act upon them.... (Matt. 7:26)

If the prophecy had to do with a prediction, did it come to pass?

And you may say in your heart, “How shall we know the word which the LORD has not spoken?” When a prophet speaks in the name of the LORD, if the thing does not come about or come true, that is the thing which the LORD has not spoken. The prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him. (Deut. 18:21, 22)

Some prophets, looking at the whole of their lives and ministry, are obviously true, but on occasion they spoke presumptuously.

Are they under control? And the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets. (1 Cor. 14:32)

One time I told a preacher that I felt he had a word but he spoke so fast that I could only get half of what he said. He said, “Well, my heart was in my throat.” He was saying he was out of control.

Does it exalt the prophet or does it serve the church? “But one who prophesies edifies the church” (1 Cor. 14:4).

Finally, *Let us not despise prophetic utterances,* (1 Thess. 5:20), *not quench the Spirit,* (1 Thess. 5:19), *desire earnestly spiritual gifts,* (1 Cor. 14:1), *examine everything carefully and hold fast to that which is good* (1 Thess. 5:21).

There is one prophet we must be sure to obey—our Lord Jesus.

I will raise up a prophet from among their countrymen like you, and I will put My words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him. And it shall come about that whoever will not listen to My words which he shall speak in My name, I Myself will require it of him. (Deut. 18:18)

He sent the prophets. *Therefore, behold, I am sending you prophets* (Matt. 23:34). He is the prophet of all prophets.

THE GIFT OF SERVING

12:7

If service, in his serving.

The Greek word here is *diakonia* (with its sister *diakonos*) which means an attendant, a waiter (at table or in other menial duties); a servant (NASB) or a minister (NKJV). From this we get the English word *diaconate* or deacon. It apparently comes from an interesting root *dioko* which means to flee or *to run* after and is normally translated persecute: *Bless those who persecute you* (Rom. 12:14). If someone is running after you they are persecuting. The same word is in 12:13, *practicing hospitality* (pursue, run after). Sometimes it is translated press on as in Philippians 3:14, *I press on toward the goal*. If the mother says, "I've been running after you all day," she is saying, "I've been serving you all day." A deacon is the classic errand boy, a servant with a capital S. Sometimes *diakonia/diakonos* is translated to mean *servant in a general way*.

It is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant. (Matt. 20:26)

England has it right. They call their top man "prime minister." *It is a minister of God to you for good* (Rom. 13:4). We don't think of police as being deacons.

In the proportion that any of the disciples had means, each of them determined to send a contribution for the relief of the brethren living in Judaea. (Acts 11:29)

Deaconing is relieving. A servant relieves.

Now at this time while the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint arose on the part of the Hellenistic Jews against the native Hebrews, because their widows were being overlooked in the daily *servicing* of food. (Acts 6:1)

Here was the roots of the office of deacon.

Are they not all ministering spirits, sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation? (Heb. 1:14)

We don't think of angels as deacons. *I know your deeds, and your love and faith and service...* (Rev. 2:19). God notices the things a church does as a church.

Sometimes these Greek words are with reference to a *minister of spiritual needs* (thus a preacher is called a minister).

But we will devote ourselves to prayer, and to the ministry of the Word. (Acts 6:4)

Therefore it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as *servants of righteousness*; whose end shall be according to their deeds. (2 Cor. 11:15)

For he was counted among us, and received his portion in this ministry. (Acts 1:17)

But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry. (2 Tim. 4:5)

I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who strengthened me, because he considered me faithful, putting me into service. (1 Tim. 1:12)

Sometimes these Greek words are with reference to a *minister of physical needs* (the office of deacon).

Paul and Timothy, bond-servants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, including the overseers and deacons. (Phil. 1:1)

Deacons were a known group of individuals. They specialize in ministering to the body and elders to the soul, the deacons in the material and the elders in the spiritual.

Deacons likewise must be men of dignity, not double-tongued, or addicted to much wine or fond of sordid gain. (1 Tim. 3:8)

Women must likewise be dignified, not malicious gossips, but temperate. (1 Tim. 3:11).

We would think that this is talking about women deacons, in that it goes back again in the next verse to talk about men deacons.

I commend to you our sister Phoebe, who is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea. (Rom. 16:1).

Phoebe could have been a deaconess to that church. Now consider...

The meaning of *service* here.

One might think it is talking about the ministry of the word, for it is sandwiched in between other speaking gifts. However, that would

seem redundant and would lack specificity. One might think it is the office of service, the diaconate, for we should not be surprised that it is mentioned in a list of giftings, and it is mentioned right after a specific speaking gift:

As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. Whoever *speaks*, let him speak, as it were, the utterances of God; whoever *serves*, let him do so as by the strength which God supplies. (1 Peter 4:10)

Paul and Timothy, bond-servants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, including the *overseers and deacons*. (Phil. 1:1)

However, order is obviously not important here—leadership is mentioned later between two serving gifts, and furthermore there is a feeling of breadth here, that is, the general aspect of service. So, I would put forward that it is talking about whatever special way that you can serve and are responsible to (appointed to) serve, that is, a non-official physical service, naturally including the diaconate. Now consider...

The gift of serving others.

Some are called to serve others—they have this sense, this desire, this fulfillment right here in this. Martha is an example: It is called the gift of helps:

And God has appointed in the church, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, various kinds of tongues. (1 Cor. 12:28)

In everything I showed you that by working hard in this manner you must help the weak.... (Acts 20:35)

They do not want to lead, to rule, or to make decisions. They do not want to be an ice-breaker, a lightning rod, a head, or mouth, or eye. They do not delight so much to work directly with souls and words but with things and physical matters. They know God has made them a hand and are a real hand at doing their work, even better than the leader. The work that is the pastor's grief is the deacon's glory, and thereby they bring great relief to the pastor. It does not seem beneath their dignity, for they are delighted to make the load easier for you, they are delighted at making things go smoothly, delighted at making you

successful, delighted at meeting needs wherever they can find them.

Ye know the house of Stephanas, that they have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints. (1 Cor. 16:15)

Every true Christian ought to feel this desire to serve in some measure. Even and especially the preacher must have this as a motive—not a show but to serve. It might be that every pastor was first (doing the work of) a deacon. But if any profess Christ and doesn't delight in serving others, he should question his Christianity. It is natural in the heart of the child of God. Rabi Maharaj in his book, *Death of a Guru*, tells how after his conversion to Christ, for the first time he could serve. The Christian sees the truths of the body of Christ that every member serves the other members and he sees the way up is down, beholding the supreme example of our Lord (Philippians 2:5).

Now...there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord (1 Cor. 12:4). Two other aspects of service are mentioned here in Chapter 12—the gift of *giving*, that is a special ability to make money and a heart to give it, and the gift of showing *mercy*, that is, a special ability to see needs and a heart to meet them. This is a very real part of the diaconate:

If there is a poor man with you, one of your brothers, in any of your towns in your land which the LORD your God is giving you, you shall not harden your heart, nor close your hand from your poor brother; but you shall freely open your hand to him, and shall generously lend him sufficient for his need in whatever he lacks. (Deut. 15:7, 8)

Also in 1 Corinthians 12 we have the gift of *helps*. Those that design Bible computer programs likely have this gift. Those who put together the concordances likely have this gift. The things are “a real help.” Keeping the finance books, moving the chairs, recording the messages, cleaning the building, directing the nursery, overseeing the meals, keeping the tracts and tapes, these are all various areas of service. All of this is only fitting.

And the twelve summoned the congregation of the disciples and said, it is not desirable for us to neglect the Word of God in order to serve tables. (Acts 6:2)

And notice the blessing that came from it:

And these they brought before the apostles; and after praying, they laid their hands on them. And the Word of God kept

on spreading; and the number of the disciples continued to increase greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were becoming obedient to the faith. (Acts 6:7)

Notice, it is not that ministers of the Word never have anything to do with the material:

And that my service for Jerusalem may prove acceptable to the saints. (Romans 15:31)

This they did, sending it in charge of Barnabas and Saul to the elders. (Acts 11:30)

And lay them at the apostles' feet; and they would be distributed to each, as any had need. (Acts 4:35)

Often it is necessary for the elder to do the work of a deacon, but never the other.

Dangers in the gift of serving.

1. *Not taking the ministry seriously enough.* Archippus is encouraged to, *Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfill it* (Col. 4:17). The thought is, "After all, I'm not preaching, I'm not in a prominent position." But remember Ecclesiastes 9:10, *Whatever your hand finds to do, verily, do it with all your might. As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God* (1 Peter 4:10.) Hudson Taylor said, "A little thing is a little thing but faithfulness in that little thing is a great thing." Either do it well or get out.

2. *By the same token there is the danger of not going far enough.* That is implied in verse 8: "*He who gives, with liberality.*" One time a Christian sister sent us off with lunch so we could eat on the road. But there was not enough to satisfy all. Her kindness left a bit of a bad taste in our mouth. It might be translated "singleness" and mean "sincerity," that is, not self-seeking, but purity in the ministry.

3. *Arrogance is another danger—doing more than assigned.* This was Satan's fall. *But you said in your heart, "I will ascend to heaven, I will raise my throne above"* (Isa. 14:13). The servant must always remember that he is under the leadership, an extension of the leader, not a replacement. *Whom we may appoint over* (Acts 6:3). *Shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight* (1 Peter 5:2). In most churches the deacons are the pastors. But the diaconate is described as

those who *serve well* and the eldership as those who *rule well*. It must be acknowledged, however, that deacons may have speaking gifts too. *And on the next day we departed and came to Caesarea; and entering the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, we stayed with him* (Acts 21:8). Philip was both a deacon and an evangelist. *And Stephen, full of grace and power, was performing great wonders and signs among the people* (Acts 6:8). Stephen had the gift of miracles. Serving requires more spirituality than we might think. *But select from among you, brethren, seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may put in charge of this task* (Acts 6:3).

4. *Distraction is another danger.* Service for the King can take me away from the King himself. *But Martha was distracted with all her preparations* (Luke 10:40).

5. *Resentment can come in.* The service can get to be more than we bargained for and we have these thoughts, “they don’t notice, they don’t care, they aren’t grateful.” *Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to do all the serving alone?* (Luke 10:40). But we must do our work as unto the Lord and remember our Lord’s example when others expect more of me than I have of time or strength: *this is my body, broken for you.* See verse 8: *He who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.* Anything else will be resented by the very ones you are seeking to serve.

6. *Greed can be a real snare in the ministry*—wanting to get paid for your ministry. I wonder how it will be at the judgment seat, if something of our Lord’s words apply for those who perform a ministry for money (such as gospel singers and authors)—*Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full* (Matthew 6:2). Remember Gehazi in 2 Kings 5:20, *As the LORD lives, I will run after him and take something from him.*

Incentives in regard to the gift of giving.

1. *There is great reward promised.* Whether in the kitchen or in the pulpit, it matters not. *For as his share is who goes down to the battle, so shall his share be who stays by the baggage; they shall share alike* (1 Sam. 30:24). It does not matter what your ministry is but rather how faithful you are in it. Your reward is according to your faithfulness. *His master said to him, “Well done, good and faithful slave; you were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things, enter into the joy of your master”* (Matt. 25:21).

2. *There is great honor promised.* Phoebe was commended, *who is*

a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea; that you receive her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the saints, and that you help her in whatever matter she may have need of you; for she herself has also been a helper of many, and of myself as well (Rom. 16:1). Pick up Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for service (2 Tim. 4:11). That you also be in subjection to such men and to everyone who helps in the work and labors (1 Corinthians 16:16). Before Elisha was exalted, he was a servant. But Jehoshaphat said, "Is there not here a prophet of the LORD, that we may inquire of the LORD by him?" And one of the king of Israel's servants answered and said, "Here is Elisha the son of Shaphat, which poured water on the hands of Elijah" (2 Kings 3:11). It was the same with David. But David went back and forth from Saul to tend his father's flock at Bethlehem (1 Sam. 17:15). It was the same with Joshua. Then Joshua the son of Nun, the attendant of Moses from his youth (Numbers 11:28). It was this way with Jesus. But emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore also God highly exalted Him (Phil. 2:7). For those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a high standing and great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus (1 Tim. 3:13). And our Lord was the servant of all:

Behold, *My Servant*, whom I uphold; My chosen one in whom My soul delights. I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth *justice* to the nations. He will not cry out or raise His voice, nor make His voice heard in the street. A bruised reed He will not break, and a dimly burning wick He will not extinguish; He will faithfully bring forth *justice*. He will not be disheartened or crushed, until He has established justice in the earth; and the coastlands will wait expectantly for His law. (Isa. 42:1)

How did He serve? He served man and God by dealing with the supreme problem in the universe—sin. Jesus satisfied divine justice so man could be forgiven and justified.

As a result of the anguish of His soul, He will see it and be satisfied; By His knowledge the Righteous One, *My Servant*, will justify the many, As He will bear their iniquities. (Isaiah 53:11)

THE GIFTS OF TEACHING, EXHORTATION AND LEADERSHIP

12:7

If service, in his serving; or he who teaches, in his teaching;
or he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who gives, with
liberality; he who leads, with diligence.

Paul lists seven spiritual gifts here. Now we come to the gift of teaching. It is a very important gift. *And God has appointed in the church, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers* (1 Cor. 12:28). It is a very dangerous calling.

Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. (Matt. 5:19)

Thus the scripture puts up a fence about this gift. *Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we shall incur a stricter judgment* (James 3:1). There are snares of pride all around this gift. *But do not be called Rabbi; for One is your Teacher, and you are all brothers* (Matt. 23:8). The devil realizes the power in this gift and has skillfully counterfeited it and infiltrated the office.

But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies.... (2 Peter 2:1)

What we are talking about is the gift of imparting truth. The Greek word is *didaktikos* and from that we have the English word didactic which means that a matter is of teaching purposes. This gift is an unusual ability to help others arrive at truth, to understand truth, to impart facts, information, and doctrine such as the doctrine of God, man, salvation, sanctification, the whole Christian life, and the whole counsel of God for the purpose of building up and establishing the saints. We know what this gift is like in the school classroom—a good teacher from a poor one. Some teachers are very knowledgeable but are simply unable to communicate clearly. But good Bible teachers are able to communicate information clearly. They are able to make learning enjoyable. They make it tasty. They stimulate thought. They are able to illustrate. They are able to help you to see underlying principles.

They help you make applications. They are able to put the bricks in the right order so things make sense. They are able to assimilate the verses, to manipulate the words. I'll never forget, when I was a new convert, hearing a good teacher at a Bible convocation teach on the baptisms. It was light, light, wonderful light.

What a teacher our Lord must have been—*this One who spoke as never a man spoke* (John 7:46); *this One who taught as one having authority* (Matt. 7:29). About 43 times Jesus was called Teacher. Seekers called Him Teacher, *And a certain scribe came and said to Him, "Teacher, I will follow You wherever You go"* (Matt. 8:19). Enemies called Him Teacher:

Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered Him, saying, "Teacher, we want to see a sign from You." (Matt. 12:38)

Friends called Him Teacher:

And when she had said this, she went away, and called Mary her sister, saying secretly, "The Teacher is here, and is calling for you." (John 11:28)

If you are a teacher, then, concentrate on that. Let others focus on other areas.

Second, we have *the gift of exhortation*. This is the ability to press known truth upon men's hearts and minds. The teacher has put the truth out there and then an exhorter comes along and drives it home. He encourages, rouses, stirs, and rebukes. He makes the application. He pours gas on the fire that the teacher has built.

A teacher ought to be able to do some of that but the exhorter has a special ability to move the saints to action, to provoke, to stimulate, to elicit a response, and to get them to move off dead center. Spurgeon said, "My people come to see me burn." He, like John the Baptist, was a burning and shining light. The scholarly John Owen said of Bunyan, "I would exchange all my learning for the tinker's ability to move men's hearts." Of George Whitefield's preaching they said, "Never have the sons of men heard such an instrument." He was envied by orators and actors. They said he preached a felt Christ. One, Joseph Williams, heard Charles Wesley and comments,

He then (after praying) preached for an hour in such a manner as I have scarce ever heard any man preach—such vehement desire and he labored so earnestly to convince his hearers

that they were all by nature in a sinful, lost, undone, and in a damnable state, notwithstanding there was a possibility of their salvation through Christ. And then by a variety of the most forcible motives, arguments and expostulations he did invite and allure every heart to believe on Christ.

What was Apollos like! Thomas Chalmers' exhortations were like a perfect orchestra and William Jay's, the waves of an ocean breaking gently on the shore on a summer day. Robert Hall and Vance Havner were skilled in the use of smiling allusions. John Jasper, the slave preacher was to preach a double funeral with a white man. The white preacher went for two hours not wanting to permit the black preacher a chance. The crowd demanded Jasper preach, which he did for but 20 minutes and the effect was electrical. Think of Duncan Campbell's story-telling ability, bringing in a sense of the presence of God.

Exhorters are able to call men in to the Good Shepherd (likely every evangelist has the gift of exhortation). They are able to crack the whip of duty, to send out the warnings like sons of thunder, to comfort and console pointing out the green pastures and the quiet waters, ministering faith. I know of one preacher who speaks in such a way that only half can be understood. He is no teacher but nevertheless with his gift of exhortation he can minister faith. The exhorter is able to hold forth those exceeding great and precious promises like the stars of heaven. Spurgeon said of Thomas Brooks, "He could fling stars with both hands."

Now, the exhorter has his place, but yet, day in and day out, we must have a teacher. You may keep pouring gas on the fire, but eventually you need a teacher to bring in more fire wood.

It is true that all mature Christians should be able to teach. *For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you* (Heb. 5:12).

Women are not to be teachers, at least, not of men. *But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet* (1 Tim. 2:12). *But I have this against you, that you tolerate the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, and she teaches and leads My bond-servants astray* (Rev. 2:20).

Of course, all pastors should have some ability to teach. *An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach* (1 Tim. 3:2). Some think Ephesians 4:11 is teaching that the pastor and teacher are one and

the same. However, I would assert that some teachers are not pastors, they are teachers only. A. W. Pink, and John Murray are teachers, not exhorters nor pastors.

Some are exhorters only like Howell Harris. The early Methodists called their preachers exhorters. Leonard Ravenhill had an excellent gift that way.

Some have both the gift of teaching and exhortation or preaching and that is a beautiful and helpful combination (both light and heat). Think of Charles Spurgeon, Bakht Singh, Bill McLeod, Conrad Murrell, Al Martin, Don Currin, or Charles Leiter. The **apostles** had both. *Being greatly disturbed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead* (Acts 4:2). *And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they kept right on teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ* (Acts 5:42). **Paul** had both. *But Paul and Barnabas stayed in Antioch, teaching and preaching, with many others also, the Word of the Lord* (Acts 15:35). *Preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all openness, unhindered* (Acts 28:31). *And we proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, that we may present every man complete in Christ* (Col. 1:28). *And for this I was appointed a preacher and an apostle (I am telling the truth, I am not lying) as a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth* (1 Tim. 2:7). **Apollos** might have been both. *This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he was speaking and teaching accurately the things concerning Jesus* (Acts 18:25). How about **Timothy**? *Teach and preach* these principles (1 Tim. 6:2). Look at **Jesus** our Lord:

And Jesus was going about in all Galilee, *teaching* in their synagogues, and *proclaiming* the gospel of the kingdom. And it came about that when Jesus had finished giving instructions to His twelve disciples, He departed from there to teach. *and preach* in their cities. (Matt. 11:1)

Do you see how teaching differs from exhortation and prophecy? Teaching requires preparation, meditation, reading, pondering, seeking to handle accurately the Word of truth. Exhortation means to call others on—the Greek word *parakaleo*. As for prophecy, all prophets have the gift of exhortation (1 Cor. 14:3). But I don't think all exhorters are prophets. Prophecy has the revelatory aspect, often incisive. *But if a revelation is made to another (prophet) who is seated,*

let the first keep silent (1 Cor. 14:30).

Think of *the gift of ruling*. Some are gifted in supervisory capacities, ruling, overseeing, and holding things in order.

For if a man does not know how to manage his own house, how will he take care of the church of God? (1 Tim. 3:5)

But we request of you, brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you, and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction. (1 Thess. 5:12)

The Greek word is *proistemi*—to stand before. It has to do with management and the exercise of authority. It is the gift of administration. Some have an outstanding grace here like Charles Spurgeon or John MacArthur who can oversee various ministries. It was said of Wesley and Whitefield that they had such administrative gifts that they could have ruled nations.

This gift is to be exercised *diligently*, carefully and clearly. The Greek word is *spoude*, from which we get “speed.” A ruler must not procrastinate. Many decisions are relatively immaterial, but the one thing that does matter is to not let it hang, not leave others in doubt. Here we have a call to decisiveness. It applies to husbands who are to rule their house, but especially to pastors and Christian leaders. This leadership is not to be done timidly, not apologetically, not uncertainly, not hesitatingly. The leader is not to be domineering but eager and firm.

Feed the flock of God which is among you, *taking the oversight* thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind. (1 Peter 5:2)

In *conclusion*, I have commented on all these gifts. This is not an exhaustive list nor an exhaustive commentary.

You might wonder what your gift is? As you obey God in trying to further the kingdom of God, and serve others it will be manifest. If you can see or identify your gift, it can help you to not be dissipated or distracted trying to cover the outfield when you are to cover home plate. An exhorter would likely die at a bible school. If you are a teacher, you need not feel condemned by the exhorter who needs no notes. Whatever your gift is, do that and do it well.

THE PRIMACY OF LOVE

12:9

Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor.

Having lined out various gifts of the Spirit, Paul now exhorts us as to various graces and virtues, without which all gifts are worthless—*it profits me nothing* (in the economy of God).

We should not be surprised that love is mentioned first. Take a tour of the New Testament and see the primacy of love.

Jesus said unto him, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments depend *the whole law and the prophets.*” (Matt. 22:37-40)

Jesus is here saying that the whole Bible message could be summed up in love. God is big on love. Here it is at the head of the list:

But now abide faith, hope, love, these three; *but the greatest of these is love.* (1 Cor. 13:13)

But the fruit of the Spirit is love.... (Gal. 5:22)

I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to *walk in a manner worthy* of the calling with which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in *love*, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. (Eph. 4:1-3)

If you were assigned some high position in the government, you might be very interested in the foremost responsibility so that you would walk worthy. In this high calling, it is love, lowliness!

And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more.... (Phil. 1:9)

Paul’s prayer for them was simply that they might love yet more.

For I want you to know how great a struggle (agony) I have on your behalf, and for those who are at Laodicea, and for all those who have not personally seen my face, that their hearts

may be encouraged, having been knit together in love.... (Col. 2:1-2)

This was the mighty apostle Paul, the one who was specially apprehended by God with a saving revelation of Jesus Christ that was brighter than the midday sun. Yet he had this agony. Paul was given more grace than any other New Testament leader or laborer. Yet he had this agony. Paul was not inferior to the most eminent apostles. Yet he had this agony. Paul made such bold statements as, "*If God be for us, who can be against us?*" Yet he had this struggle. Paul knew much about contentment, *I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.* Yet, he had this struggle. Paul extolled a *peace that passes understanding*, yet he had this struggle. He exhorted others to *rejoice always*. Paul made such solid statements of a sovereign God as, *Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth* (Rom. 9:15). Yet he had this struggle. What was the struggle? Not for himself but others—that the saints there at Colossae might be encouraged by being knit together in love.

And beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity. (Col. 3:14)

Love is beyond all—supreme in importance and all-inclusive. It is the perfect bond, the perfect glue, the only glue that will keep the church together. And notice this is *as those chosen of God*. This is how princes must act.

And may the Lord cause you to increase and abound in love for one another, and for all men, just as we also do for you. (1 Thess. 3:12) For all men!

But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. (1 Tim. 1:5)

Every sermon should in one way or another be effecting love.

And let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another. (Heb. 10:24)

One main purpose of gathering is to stimulate love.

Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart. (1 Peter 1:22)

Our love is to be red hot, fervent.

Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins. (1 Peter 4:8)

Why do we need such a degree of love? Because there is so much sin still remaining in the church. Some sin is of such a nature that it can't be dealt with immediately. It merely must be covered.

Greet one another with a kiss of love. (1 Peter 5:14)

Our greeting is to communicate love. If we can't give out the message that we are so very glad to see one another, we ought to deal with ourselves or talk with that brother. One great mark of regeneration is that we love the saints.

We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death. (1 John 3:14)

By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another. (John 13:35)

Now Paul in Romans 12 gives some warnings and instructions about love. *Let love be without hypocrisy.* The same is found here:

In purity, in knowledge, in patience, in kindness, in the Holy Spirit, in *genuine* love. (2 Cor. 6:6)

Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a *sincere* love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart. (1 Peter 1:22)

Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth. (1 John 3:18)

Don't fake anything, not even love. *Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good* (12:9). I'm thinking that this is sandwiched in here to remind us that love is never at the cost of righteousness.

Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. We should think it would say *be devoted to God*. But, our brother has that much claim on us. It is brotherly love—whatever our highest thoughts of that might be. After all, we have the same father.

Give preference to one another in honor. Another brother was asked to preach at a funeral. It was a good check for me—whether I actually preferred that he have the honor.

One might wonder why God left so many differences in the church, why God even permitted different views on some almost basic doctrines. Surely it was to call forth love, longsuffering, forbearance, etc. If we were all alike, where would the need be? God puts a great premium on love.

Love is still in the Bible. The liberals have no comer on it. May God help us to *excel still more*.

DILIGENT, FERVENT, SERVING THE LORD

12:11

Not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.

It is amazing how much detail is given us in the New Testament that we might be pleasing to God in our very person and conduct, how many truths are given us that we might get along in the workplace, how many precepts are given us that we might avoid broken relationships, how much God has told us of his ways that we might avoid and overcome depression, how many laws God has given us that we might stay out of jail—many are incarcerated due to retaliation, trying to overcome evil with evil, for example. What we have here in Chapter 12 is New Testament teaching on sanctification—do this and don't do that.

Not lagging behind in diligence.

The Greek word for *lagging* means tardy, indolent, and lazy. It is a good word in that it is in contrast to *diligent* (NASB) which is from the Greek word *spoude* meaning speed. Speed is a great virtue. Everyone appreciates that and looks for it—we look for the best checker at the grocery store. But it is so easy to be slow and put things off. Procrastination is an awful curse. Lack of aggressiveness and courage are an awful curse. *But his master answered and said to him, "You wicked, lazy slave"* (Matt. 25:26). How many mental problems are rooted right here. We keep putting things off till buried by them. How many financial problems are caused by lack of diligence, as it is written in Proverbs 10:4, *Poor is he who works with a negligent hand, but the hand of the diligent makes rich*. The lazy man, by his own laziness, makes his own thorny obstacles and difficulties, as it is written in Proverbs 15:19, *The way of the slothful man is as an hedge of thorns, but the way of the righteous is made plain*. Indecision, delay, and sluggishness, have a paralyzing effect. It is easier to ride a bicycle fast than slow. The long trip goes relatively faster if you can avoid losing momentum. It is easier to water ski behind a fast boat than a slow one.

This diligence applies to the way we get up in the morning—*As the door turneth upon its hinges, so doth the slothful upon his bed* (Prov. 26:14). It applies to the way we make the bed, manage the kitchen, keep

the shop, office, desk, and record books, collect the rent and pay the rent, and the way we maintain the car. The way we do some of these things is just a shame. I think this laid back mentality—no sweat, fuss, muss, play it cool, take it as it comes—is a lie from the enemy. It is true the Spirit moves where he wills and when he wills and without him we can do nothing, but we must remember that, though we may not be able to see it, he does all *in the fullness of time* and is right on schedule. And, we are obliged to use our head and to use our hands. The Bible is a very practical book and God expects us to be practical too—*Make every effort to come before winter* (2 Tim. 4:21). *I have decided to spend the winter there* (Titus 3:12). Paul did not even say, *If the Lord wills*, though I'm sure he had that in the background.

We tend to think the spiritual thing is to be laid back—“I'm just trusting the Lord,” but there is no glory in doing your business out of a shoe box. There is no glory in letting the salt rust your vehicle. There is no glory in not washing your hands and body and clothes. There is no glory in not making out a will. There is no glory in not getting that house painted. There is no glory in buying the wrong tool, when with a little investigation you could have had the one you needed and cheaper. There is no glory in not getting your Bible read when for years you have been a Christian. There is no glory in coming to a meeting late. There is no glory in poor grades. There is no glory in slop.

To do it right and good, it does take work, thought, caution, and alertness, but it pays. This is something that God and men honor—*The hand of the diligent will rule, but the slack hand will be put to forced labor* (Prov. 12:24). Why does one major store lose preeminence to another?

Now, admittedly there is the danger of perfectionism and bondage, one becoming touchy and difficult to please. There is the danger of trying to be like someone else, losing peace and becoming anxious, and doing things in the flesh, but there is truth in that old saying “God helps them that help themselves.” Much weight is laid on personal responsibility—*the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and violent men take it by force* (Matt. 11:12).

God is a god of order—*But let all things be done properly and in an orderly manner* (1 Cor. 14:40). This is the benefit of the Christian heritage in the USA; we believe in an orderly God who created an orderly world which can be scientifically investigated.

Think of it this way, diligence is *required by God in seeking Him*—

But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that *diligently* seek him. (Heb. 11:6)

See David's attitude in Psalm 119:60, "I hastened and did not delay to keep Thy commandments."

It is required in *keeping the heart*—

Watch over your heart with all *diligence*, for from it flow the springs of life. (Prov. 4:23)

Looking *diligently* lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled. (Heb. 12:15)

It is required in *self-examination*—

As in Psalm 77:6, "I call to remembrance my song in the night: I commune with mine own heart: and my spirit made *diligent* search."

It is employed in *cultivating Christian graces*—

Now for this very reason also, applying all *diligence*, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge..." (2 Peter 1:5)

It is required in *church unity*—

Being *diligent* to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. (Ephesians 4:3)

It is an ingredient in *all good deeds*—

And may the God who has caused His name to dwell there overthrow any king or people who attempts to change it, so as to destroy this house of God in Jerusalem. I, Darius, have issued this decree, let it be carried out with all *diligence!* (Ezra 6:12)

He knew Ecclesiastes 9:10, "Whatever your hand finds to do, verily, do it with all your might."

It is a great element in *fulfilling our calling*—

He who leads, with *diligence*. (Rom. 12:8)

Be *diligent* to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the

word of truth. (2 Tim. 2:15)

It is required in *making our calling and election sure*—

Therefore, brethren, be all the more *diligent* to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble. (2 Peter 1:10)

And we desire that every one of you do show the same *diligence* to the full assurance of hope unto the end. (Heb. 6:11)

This is needed in *preparation for the 2nd coming*—

Therefore, beloved, since you look for these things, be *diligent* to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless. (2 Peter 3:14)

Let us therefore be *diligent* to enter that rest, lest anyone fall through following the same example of disobedience. (Hebrews 4:11)

Fervent in spirit!

I would think it correct to have the small “s” referring to attitude rather than a capital. Paul speaks that way in Romans 1:9, *For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son.* The word *fervent* is from *zeo* from which we get zeal, meaning hot, boil, or glow. We are also to be fervent in prayer, *The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much* (James 5:16) and also fervent in love, *Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another* (1 Peter 4:8.)

Apollos was an example of fervency in spirit in Acts 18:25, *This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he was speaking and teaching accurately the things concerning Jesus.* It means to look alive, not stagnant like some old frog pond but having something fresh like a bubbling brook, able to minister some cheer, robust in the faith, the overall mentality and spirit not sluggish, heavy, cool, murmuring, grumbling, negative, or sarcastic, but winsome, hopeful, zealous, onward, upward, and “you can count me in.” It is reflected on our face, *They looked to Him and were radiant* (Psalm 34:5). Now, a person can be heavy and groan. There ought to be some of that:

And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body. (Romans 8:23)

And again in Ezekiel 9:4, *And the LORD said to him, "Go through the midst of the city, even through the midst of Jerusalem, and put a mark on the foreheads of the men who sigh and groan over all the abominations which are being committed in its midst."* Yet that should not be the overall tenor or spirit of our lives.

Think of Paul in Colossians 1:29, *And for this purpose also I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me.* Think of our Lord in John 9:4, *We must work the works of Him who sent Me, as long as it is day; night is coming, when no man can work,* and again in Luke 2:49 (and he at age twelve!) said to them, *Why is it that you were looking for Me? Did you not know that I had to be in My Father's house (affairs)?*

The candle which George Whitefield held in his hand had almost burned out. It was symbolic, for it was his last sermon. He went upstairs and died. He had burned out for God.

Serving the Lord!

This is the great issue of the universe. Proud man says, *Who is the Almighty, that we should serve Him, And what would we gain if we entreat Him?* (Job 21:15). Pharaoh in his hardness said, *Who is the LORD that I should obey His voice* (Ex. 5:2). Pharaoh's servants plead with him, *How long will this man be a snare to us? Let the men go, that they may serve the LORD their God. Do you not realize that Egypt is destroyed?* (Exodus 10:7). Joshua made his famous stand saying, *But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD* (Joshua 24:15).

It is a power struggle between Satan and the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord had to counter him with Luke 4:8, *Get thee behind me, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.* It is a power struggle between self and the Lord Jesus Christ. The crux of conversion is summed up in Jesus' words in the garden—*Not my will but Thine be done.* And having put our seal to that, we do all as unto the Lord. When we go to work, it is with this in mind, *Do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men; knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve* (Col. 3:23). When discouragement tries to impede our step, we remember it is the Lord Christ whom we serve. What a privilege to be a servant of the God of heaven, a position higher than the most exalted position on earth. Paul was right up front and introduced his letters as, *Paul a bond-servant of the Lord Jesus Christ.*

To the Ephesian elders Paul describes his ministry this way, *From the first day that I set foot in Asia, how I was with you the whole time, serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials which came upon me* (Acts 20:18). His testimony to the lost was this, *For this very night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve stood before me* (Acts 27:23). We are his servants, we belong to him. *You are Christ's* (1 Cor. 3:23). We are his by donation for the Father gave us to the Son, his by purchase for the Son bought us at the price of his own blood, his by dedication for we have devoted our lives to him, his by relation for we, like the bride, are named by his name, and we are his by habitation for he resides in our heart. When tempted to sin we respond, "I serve the Lord." When exposed to difficulties, remember this—"I serve the Lord." When called to do labor, labor to which others won't lift a hand, remember this—"I serve the Lord." When tempted to loiter, labor on knowing you serve the Lord and that "your toil is not in vain in the Lord."

And heaviness won't do in the service of the Lord, *Because you did not serve the LORD your God with joy and a glad heart, for the abundance of all things; therefore you shall serve your enemies*, (Deut. 28:47) and again, *Serve the LORD with gladness; come before Him with joyful singing*. (Psalm 100:2). I know of a brother who signs off his letters with, "Yours in the service of the best of masters."

REJOICING, PERSEVERING, PRAYING

12:12

Rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer.

These three, like the former three, go together. Beautiful words! Wonderful words!

Rejoicing in hope.

The Greek word used here for rejoicing is *chairō* which means “cheer” and is sometimes used as a salutation on meeting or parting. Examples:

And immediately he came to Jesus, and said, *Hail*, master; and kissed him. (Matt. 26:49)

And after weaving a crown of thorns, they put it on his head, and a reed in his right hand; and they kneeled down before him and mocked him, saying, *Hail*, King of the Jews! (Matt. 27:29)

And as they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All *hail*. And they came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him. (Matt. 28:9)

James, a bond-servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes who are dispersed abroad, *greetings*. (James 1:1) If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God *speed*. (2 John 1:10)

Rejoice with those who *rejoice*, and weep with those who weep. (Rom. 12:15)

It is not the same as Romans 5:2, *we rejoice in hope of the glory of God*. There it means to boast or to glory. Nevertheless it is similar.

The word *hope* means anticipation or expectation with confidence and pleasure. Hope always has to do with the future.

For in hope we have been saved, but hope that is seen is not hope; for who hopes for what he already sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance we wait eagerly for

it. (Rom. 8:24)

It is a great factor in the Christian life.

For in hope we have been saved.... (Rom. 8:24)

If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied. (1 Cor. 15:19)

So, we are to be cheerful because of that for which we are looking. It is like getting ready for a trip or like payday or like meal time, there is a sense of cheer.

What is the Christian's hope, for what is he looking? One of the best answers is in Titus 2:13, *Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ*. It says glorious appearing, the same language of Romans 5:2, *and rejoice in hope of the glory of God*. It is the anticipation of seeing the glory, the splendor at the coming of the Lord. Great crowds gather to see the spectacular—the launching of the space shuttle or a demolition derby—but this will be infinitely surpassing any show on earth. And the worldling in some sense will miss it, *And these will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power* (2 Thessalonians 1:9).

Notice it says blessed hope. Many expectations are not blessed. The wicked plots out evil, making his plans for the night. But this is blessed, pure consummate eternal bliss. No more death, sorrow, crying, pain, or tears. No more valleys for we are living on the mountain forever. No more shadows or frowns, for sin is finished. No more hungering, for we are filled with righteousness. No more battles, for the war is over. An eternal cloudless morning! We shall have the society of the saints and of the angels, but most of all, the Lord himself. We shall be with him where he is. We shall see him as he is. We shall see him face to face. We shall behold his glory. We shall ever be with the Lord.

This is our consummate consolation. As Thomas Boston put it:

Are we oppressed? There is a day coming in which we shall have dominion. Is our honor in the dust? There shall be a crown on our head. Are we reduced to poverty? Heaven is a lasting treasure. Are we forced out of our house? The Father's house is ready. Are we stripped of inheritance? We have an inheritance incorruptible reserved. Are we driven into the wilderness? We have a city prepared. Do we have a life of bitter

experiences? We have a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. Do we battle the powers of hell? We have a glorious triumph waiting. Are we filled with toil? We are promised an everlasting rest.

Do you have a share of the inheritance of the saints in light? Test yourself. Do you love his appearing?

Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that *love his appearing*. (2 Tim. 4:8 KJV)

Do you practice purging your soul from sin?

Every man that hath this *hope* in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure. (1 John 3:3 KJV)

If you are expecting someone to come, you will get ready. If you are not ready for heaven, do not despise the pleasant land or judge yourself unworthy of eternal life. Now is the time when children of wrath may be heirs of glory. Now is the time when Jesus of Nazareth is passing by. Close with Christ, come to Christ, confess the Christ, be clothed with Christ. If you do not have Christ in your heart you are *without hope*.

To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is *Christ in you, the hope* of glory. (Col. 1:27 KJV)

Persevering in tribulation.

The Greek word is *thlipsis* which means to pressure or to crowd. The Latin brings it out also, for the *tribulum* was a threshing sledge. Paul was careful to tell the saints that there would be tribulations.

Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we *must* through *much tribulation* enter into the kingdom of God. (Acts 14:22 KJV)

Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus *shall suffer persecution*. (2 Tim. 3:12 KJV)

Beloved, *think it not strange* concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you. (1 Peter 4:12 KJV)

So that no one would be disturbed by these afflictions; for you

yourselves know that we have been *destined* for this. (1 Thess. 3:3)

Think about this the next time you encounter awful boredom in the path of duty, or are faced with shame in the pursuit of righteousness; suffer wrong for the sake of right; or suffer loss for the sake of truth. Do you think it strange?

Think how having an advance notice should strengthen you. If you were told ahead of time about the rough road ahead, and that you had to go through that to get to the city, you would not be as likely to faint.

For indeed when we were with you, we kept telling you in advance that we were going to suffer affliction ; and so it came to pass, as you know. (1 Thess. 3:4)

The mind is the target of the enemy's fiery darts.

But since we are of the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the *hope* of salvation. For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Thess. 5:8, 9)

And our mind should despair of comforts here below.

Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your *hope* completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. (1 Peter 1:13)

If the wife were stranded in some far off unknown location, and the husband had to leave for help, the only hope is for him to return.

When tempted to sin, we must remember the glory that is to be revealed. When exposed to difficulties, we must remember the glory that is to be revealed. When called to do labor, labor to which others won't lift a hand, remember the glory. When tempted to loiter, we must labor on, knowing our labor is not in vain, there is glory to be revealed.

It is the hope that will take you through:

Fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the *set before Him endured* the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. (Heb. 12:2)

This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast and one which enters within the veil. (Heb. 6:19)

Some tribulations must simply be endured. But the Christian is also able to glory in it, too.

And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; and hope does not disappoint. (Rom. 5:3, 4)

Surely we miss much blessing by hopping out of the fire and resorting to some fleshly consolation, compromise, or change.

We must remember that God is faithful, merciful and wise. Like a wise gardener, he knows how to prune. We've not had an apple from our tree since I pruned it. I almost killed it. God is not like that. One brother tells that they had such a hard-driving basketball coach, they lost their drive. God is not like that.

Devoted to prayer.

The exacting demands of the previous two commands show us the need of this injunction. The Greek word *proskartereo* means to be strong toward, earnest, intent upon, and assiduous. Like the hunting dog after the prey, there is not a glance to the side. Like the wrestler, he is intense with total concentration.

Prayer as a mere form is a mockery. Our God hates lukewarmness and that includes prayer. God expects more and Paul expects the same.

Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye *strive* [agonize] together with me in your prayers to God for me. (Rom. 15:30 KJV)

Jesus says to knock in prayer, to be importunate like the widow. We must pray as though God were unwilling to give us what we need or did not know what we need. We must pray as though it all depended on our supplication, though we know the whole matter is rooted in eternal causes.

Devoted, earnest! Shall we bring an offering without fire? Will listlessness prevail with God? God is looking for desperate devotion. Look at Jacob, *I will not let you go unless you bless me*. We will see again that the Lord listens to the voice of a man. See it in human terms. The mother will let the baby whine some but when the little one roars and screams, he gets attention. The Son of God prayed with strong crying

and tears. Who do we think we are?

Is there a need or isn't there? Is it the will of God or isn't it? Do we think we can meet the need ourselves or not? Be devoted to prayer.

This is the New Testament mentality:

These all with one mind were *continually devoting* themselves to prayer, along with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers. (Acts 1:14)

They were *continually devoting* themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. (Acts 2:42)

And lest we think it only applies to ministers, we have, *Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving* (Colossians 4:2 KJV). Incense filled the Old Testament temple and so also prayer fills the New Testament gospel house.

This is where we make most direct contact with God. This is where we charge our batteries to press on and on even through that tribulation. This is where the blessing flows and joy leaps up. This is where the strength is supplied.

On the day I called you answered me, You made me bold with strength in my soul. (Ps. 138:3)

How many martyrs found courage to welcome the gallows through prayer. The measure of our rejoicing in hope and our perseverance in tribulation, is directly proportional to our diligence in prayer.

Prayer catches heaven's attention. As though it were noteworthy, the Lord says of the newly converted Saul, *Behold, he is praying* (Acts 9:11). Prayer was vital to our Lord Jesus in the days of his flesh. He prayed on Jordan's stormy banks, on the lonely mountain, on the Mount of Transfiguration, in the shadows of Gethsemane, and in Calvary's darkest hour.

How did you receive the cancellation of your debts? Like the Publican, it was in prayer. Where did you receive some of the sweetest earnestness of heaven? Like the disciples on the Mount, it was in prayer. Where did you receive some of the most life changing revelations? It was, like Peter, on the roof in prayer. Where were the powers of darkness embarrassed? As with the prophet on Carmel, in prayer. How did you climb out of the depths of depression? Like Jonah, it was in

prayer. How have the saints used their latest breath? Like Stephen, in prayer.

The NKJV says *continuing* in prayer. Elsewhere scripture says *pray without ceasing, praying always at all times, and men ought always to pray*. Elijah's servant went back seven times. Our Lord went back three times. Mr. Spurgeon asks, "Where on the map to heaven does it say we don't need to pray?" Though our prayers are not immediately answered, quoting him again, "When prayers, like great ships, have been long on the voyage you may hope that they have gone far and have gathered rich cargoes and will come home freighted with all the goodlier merchandise."

Prayer is a very accurate gauge of our spiritual condition. Fred Mitchell said, "What a man is on his knees before God in secret, that he will be before men, that much and no more." Frances Power Cobbe put it this way, "Prayer used or neglected must in the nature of things determine whether we are to dwell in the Holy Place or in the outer courts of religion." You can tell where a soul is at with God by his attitude toward prayer and the prayer meeting. Every one is given the same number of hours in the day to work with and it is the interest of angels and of God what we do with them, how we manage them, what choices we make— and choices indeed must be made. The choices speak too loudly. If a man always chooses vanilla over chocolate you have to conclude he likes it best. And when you choose one thing you are denying the other. What do you chose? Do you chose the *good part*.

But only one thing is necessary, for Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her. (Luke 10:42)

If constant prayer, day by day, is optional to you, you have never been born again. If prayer is not your habit, there is no way you are regenerate. The Christian would die if he could not pray; it is his "vital breath," it is his "native air."

CONTRIBUTING, HOSTING

12:13

Contributing to the needs of the saints, practicing hospitality.

The previous phrase, *devoted to prayer*, was an upward look. Now the call is to an outward look—*contributing to the needs*. Contribution (Greek: *koinoneo*) means to share. It speaks against self-centeredness. The old man was self-centered and it is still easy to see our own needs than to see the needs of others.

The Christian church is rich in example. The early church shared, *And all those who had believed were together, and had all things in common* (Acts 2:44). Think of Paul's example,

You yourselves know that *these hands ministered to my own needs* and to the men who were with me. In everything I showed you that by working hard in this manner you must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He Himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.' (Acts 20:34, 35)

These hands that made the tents, that carried the parchments, that picked up sticks, that clung to the planks a night and a day in the deep, that carried the contributions, yes these were the hands that ministered to the saints. *But now, I am going to Jerusalem serving the saints*" (Romans 15:25). Paul pointed out others, giving honor where honor was due:

For the ministry of this service is not only fully supplying the *needs* of the saints, but is also overflowing through many thanksgivings to God. (2 Cor. 9:12)

For even in Thessalonica you sent a gift more than once for my *needs*. (Phil. 4:16)

You know the household of Stephanas, that they were the first fruits of Achaia, and that they have devoted themselves for ministry to the saints. (1 Cor. 16 :15)

Paul urged this upon others.

Our people must also learn to engage in good deeds to meet pressing *needs*, that they may not be unfruitful. (Titus 3:14)

It must be learned, for we don't easily see needs, and don't see the

blessedness of meeting them.

This is a trustworthy statement; and concerning these things I want you to speak confidently, so that those who have believed God may be careful to engage in good deeds. These things are good and profitable for men. (Titus 3:8)

The next phrase is “*practicing hospitality*.” This is one example of meeting needs. The Greek word for hospitality is *philonexia*—loving to have guests. The Greek word for practicing is *dioko*—to pursue, to persecute. It is the same word in Romans 12:14, *Bless those who persecute you; bless and curse not*.

Do we think of showing hospitality that way? Or is it a matter of must, “If no one else will take them in, if we must, then we will have the visitors in”?

This virtue was so important that a widow could not be put on the church welfare list without it,

Having a reputation for good works; and if she has brought up children, if she has shown *hospitality* to strangers, if she has washed the saints’ feet, if she has assisted those in distress, and if she has devoted herself to every good work. (1 Tim. 5:10)

It is so important that it is a qualification for eldership:

An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, *hospitable*, able to teach. (Titus 1:8)

But a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate. (1 Tim. 3:2)

The Bible gives us such very strong persuasions as this:

Do not neglect to show *hospitality* to strangers, for by this some have entertained angels without knowing it. (Heb. 13:2)

Remember, to have a Christian in our house is regarded by Jesus as hosting him, *I was a stranger, and you invited Me in* (Matt. 25:35). No wonder Peter says, *Be hospitable to one another without complaint* (1 Peter 4:9).

Our Lord Himself was the good Samaritan. When we were in the wilderness of sin, he took us in. When we were stripped of our righteousness, he took us in. When we were bruised by the fall, he took us in.

It is a tremendous mark of Christ and of true Christianity. And

the lack of this virtue is a mark of low spirituality. It is an indication of selfishness.

It is true there was more of a need in the ancient times due to poverty and persecution, but I have been in situations where there was no place to stay and it was a hardship on the saints to have to find a motel.

So we are to be fond of showing hospitality, especially when they can't pay back:

And you will be blessed, since they do not have the means to repay you; for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous. (Luke 14:14)

The Lord grant mercy to the house of Onesiphorus for he often refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chains; but when he was in Rome, he eagerly searched for me, and found me—the Lord grant to him to find mercy from the Lord on that day—and you know very well what services he rendered at Ephesus. (2 Tim. 1:16-18)

EXHORTATIONS REGARDING CHRISTIAN BEHAVIOR — NO RETALIATION

12:14-21

Bless those who persecute you; bless and curse not. Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men. If possible, as far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men. Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, vengeance is mine; I will repay, says the Lord. But if your enemy is hungry, feed him; and if he thirsty, give him drink: for in so doing you will heap burning coals upon his head. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

No retaliation! This is a very powerful virtue. What code of morals can compare with this? Where can we find such laws of love?

What awful pain can be avoided if we can learn this! I wonder how many are in jail for retaliation?

This call is one of the most demanding of almost any in the Bible. It is most searching. It is very revealing of our spiritual condition. It pierces the self life as nothing else can do. It cuts way down deep where we live. The flesh wants to strike back in some way— “you hurt me and you will suffer for that.” But the call of Christ is to deny self.

And He was saying to them all, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.” (Luke 9:23)

The meaning of retaliation.

Other words we have here are “pay back” and “revenge” (vv. 17, 19). Even a child knows this language—“I’ll get you back for that.” We want to get even; we want to square the account—insult for insult, push for push, funny face for funny face, and tooth for tooth.

Expressions of retaliation.

It well may not be murder as in the case of Joab when he struck Abner in the belly so that he died on account of the blood of Asahel his brother. It may be slow murder, hatred, inflicting pain somehow in return. It may be things such as neglect, extra work, defrauding, cold shoulder, silence, avoiding, the flash of the eye, afflicting self, or even

quoting scripture in a cruel way. There are so many ways to retaliate—even pronouncing a curse on our adversary, but we are to bless and not curse them (v. 14). Behind all this is ill-will. It is not love, but a concern for personal honor, not God’s honor (a vital point of distinction).

Causes for being tempted to retaliation.

Persecution (v. 14) provides a temptation to retaliate.

You have condemned and put to death the righteous man; he does not resist you. (James 5:6)

The Covenanters, for example, were led as sheep to the slaughter. Oppression by means of unfair wages or unfair work load tempts us to be disrespectful. But it says,

Servants, be submissive to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and gentle, but also to those who are unreasonable. For this finds favor, if for the sake of conscience toward God a man bears up under sorrows when suffering unjustly. (1 Peter 2:18, 19)

There are various ways in which we are disadvantaged by another, even a brother in Christ, and we are tempted to go to law —

Actually, then, it is already a defeat for you, that you have lawsuits with one another. Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be defrauded? (1 Corinthians 6:7)

Humiliation, embarrassment, etc. tempt us *to return evil for evil or insult for insult*. Maybe others don’t appreciate our ministry and we are tempted to retaliate.

And they did not receive Him, because He was journeying with His face toward Jerusalem. And when His disciples James and John saw this, they said, “Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?” But He turned and rebuked them, and said, “You do not know what kind of spirit you are of.” (Luke 9:53-55).

Reasons to not retaliate.

First, God says not to retaliate. Isn’t that enough?

Second, we must “leave room for the wrath” (Greek: *orge* = passion).

1. Does it mean the wrath of the enemy? No, he will take all of

that he wants.

2. Does it mean yours? No, the very context is commanding the opposite.
3. Does it mean civil authorities (13:4)? No, the obvious meaning (from the quote) is God's wrath. So we must remember it belongs to God. Retaliation is God's job. And God is perfectly just; why not let the judge handle it? God will sooner or later vindicate—I will repay. *Do not move the ancient boundary, or go into the fields of the fatherless; for their Redeemer is strong; He will plead their case against you* (Prov. 23:10, 11).

If you want God, the living God, the Almighty God to fight for you, you must get out of the ring.

Third, God will bless us.

If your enemy is hungry, give him food to eat; And if he is thirsty, give him water to drink; For you will heap burning coals on his head, And the LORD *will reward you*. (Proverbs 25:21, 22)

For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But if when you do what is right and suffer for it you patiently endure it, this *finds favor with God*. (1 Peter 2:20)

Not returning evil for evil, or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead; for you were called for the very purpose that you might *inherit a blessing*. (1 Peter 3:9)

Blessed are you when men cast insults at you, and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely, on account of Me. “Rejoice, and be glad, for your *reward* in heaven is great, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you” (Matthew 5:11, 12).

Perhaps the LORD will look on my affliction and *return good* to me instead of his cursing this day. (2 Samuel 16:12).

Charles Spurgeon was ridiculed in the downgrade controversy, but the following year Spurgeon pointed out that his preachers, one-fourth the number, saw about three times as many converts as the Union.

Fourth, we are sinful with enough liability to bring wrath upon ourselves.

And now you are proposing to subjugate for yourselves the people of Judah and Jerusalem for male and female slaves. Surely, do you not have *transgressions of your own* against the LORD your God? (2 Chronicles 28:10)

Fifth, we are biased. God is a righteous judge, who can perfectly handle it.

Sixth, God may use other means, such as the government bearing the sword about them and avenging the wrongdoer (Rom. 13:4).

Seventh, it is a means to overcome evil.

Not retaliating may overcome evil in the adversary.

Now it came about when David had finished speaking these words to Saul, that Saul said, “Is this your voice, my son David?” Then Saul lifted up his voice and wept. And he said to David, “You are more righteous than I; for you have dealt well with me, while I have dealt wickedly with you. (1 Sam 24:16, 17)

The story is told of a Chinese Christian rice farmer who, after his neighbor repeatedly had stolen the water from his rice field, began to fill the neighbor’s first. It led to his conversion. Dan Smith’s sister-in-law was brought to be a friend after he yielded his share of the disputed inheritance. In doing this he did exactly what we have in the text:

- a. he took thought to what was right in her eyes,
- b. he did all he could to be at peace, and
- c. he overcame evil by doing good.

Lloyd-Jones tells of a Christian woman in London who led a Communist woman to Christ by her example of letting others shower first when the water was scarce.

You will *heap burning coals on his head*. This speaks of pain, that is, pangs of conscience.

And keep a good conscience so that in the thing in which you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ

may be put to shame. (1 Peter 3:16)

Peter Cartwright tells of an adversary whom he treated kindly, inviting him to a camp meeting and even to stay in the preachers' tent. The man was converted and later said that he had never received any whipping like the pain he felt in his conscience from Cartwright's kindness.

Not retaliating overcomes evil in you by growth in grace. The virtue of non-retaliation is such a powerful thing.

He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, And he who rules his spirit, than he who captures a city. (Proverbs 16:32)

Peter the Great was the father of modernization in Russia, yet he killed his son. Ivan the Terrible, the first Czar of Russia, expanded the borders of the country greatly, yet was so cruel he killed his son with his own hands.

What a great privilege is ours. Police can only restrain evil. We can overcome it.

Examples of non-retaliation and the results.

The Lord was an example for us to follow in his steps. He was:

1. unrecognized by even his own brothers, but he did not retaliate,
2. deliberately misinterpreted, but he held his peace and did not retaliate,
3. passed over, *away with this man*, but he did not retaliate,
4. made to appear a failure, but he did not retaliate,
5. taken advantage of, they mistreated his property, but he did not retaliate,
6. treated in an unforgivable way, yet he did not retaliate,
7. betrayed by friends, Judas' kiss was perhaps more cutting than the whips, yet he did not retaliate. He turned the other cheek.

The result? Our Lord was highly exalted and his enemies became a footstool.

David left us an example.

When David heard that Nabal was dead, he said, "Blessed be the LORD, who has pleaded the cause of my reproach from

the hand of Nabal, and has kept back His servant from evil. The LORD has also returned the evildoing of Nabal on his own head.” Then David sent a proposal to Abigail, to take her as his wife. (1 Samuel 25:39)

Naboth’s family did not retaliate and look at the end of Ahab and Jezebel:

And they went to bury her, but they found no more of her than the skull and the feet and the palms of her hands. Therefore they returned and told him. And he said, “This is the word of the LORD, which He spoke by His servant Elijah the Tishbite, saying, ‘In the property of Jezreel the dogs shall eat the flesh of Jezebel; and the corpse of Jezebel shall be as dung on the face of the field in the property of Jezreel, so they cannot say, ‘This is Jezebel.’” (2 Kings 9:35-37)

Dan Smith, a missionary to China, was robbed on a journey. He warned them of God’s displeasure. Not long afterward, the thieves were in a fray and left wallowing in their blood (yet, in the goodness of God, three were converted and one of them became a powerful preacher in those rough parts). Also, there was a missionary woman and some men began to think that it was her Jesus that caused the drought. They burned her lips but God rewarded and honored her by making it one of the most fruitful outposts.

William Huntington tells of a man named Gatten who mocked the prayer meeting. A few months later he was hauling a load of explosives for a company, and you know the rest of the story.

Peter Cartwright tells about a good Methodist preacher, Simon Carlyle, who was framed by a youth who put the pistols in Carlyle’s saddle bags to cover a murder. The preacher had to step down, being unable to prove his innocence. A few months later the boy came down sick and was about to die. It was in his last moments that he confessed.

Possible exceptions for non-retaliation.

First, there is a difference when it has to do with God’s cause and or unusual opposition. Jesus overturned the tables. Paul did curse Barjesus.

And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you will be blind and not see the sun for a time." And immediately

a mist and a darkness fell upon him, and he went about seeking those who would lead him by the hand. (Acts 13:11)

Alexander Peden of the Covenanters did the same to the adversaries repeatedly. One time a governor's daughter mocked the prisoners. Peden prophesied against her and she fell off a cliff to her death according to his word. David did the same in his imprecatory Psalms.

Let his days be few; let another take his office. (Psalm 109:8)

Yet, notice his attitude. He never personally delighted in seeing harm come to his enemies.

Then David said to him, "How is it you were not afraid to stretch out your hand to destroy the LORD's anointed?" (2 Samuel 1:14)

Second, when it is a matter of law and government. Gideon, God's judge, pronounced a curse on the princes of Succoth.

And Gideon said, "All right, when the LORD has given Zebah and Zalmunna into my hand, then I will thrash your bodies with the thorns of the wilderness and with briers." (Judges 8:7)

The reason for Joab's judgment was because he killed when it was not a time of war.

Now you also know what Joab the son of Zeruah did to me, what he did to the two commanders of the armies of Israel, to Abner the son of Ner, and to Amasa the son of Jether, whom he killed; he also *shed the blood of war in peace*. And he put the blood of war on his belt about his waist, and on his sandals on his feet. (1 Kings 2:5)

Remember how King Saul got in trouble for *not* killing Agag but instead sparing him.

We see how Paul appealed to the law more than once.

Then Paul said to him, "God is going to strike you, you whitewashed wall! And do you sit to try me according to the Law, and *in violation of the Law* order me to be struck? (Acts 23:3)

Third, if it is a case of self-defense where the attack is not even because of a stand for righteousness, then we must flee or if need be protect our loved one or neighbor.

Something yet more than non-retaliation.

It is not just that we never desire their harm, not just the negative, but we even seek to do them good. Our text says we should bless (v. 14) them, that we should do all we can (apart from compromise) to be at peace with them, and that we should try to help them (v. 20).

And he answered, "You shall not kill them. Would you kill those you have taken captive with your sword and with your bow? Set bread and water before them, that they may eat and drink and go to their master. (2 Kings 6:22)

The story is told of the Anabaptist who turned back to rescue his pursuer from the river, even though he knew it would cost him his life. The Lord says the same.

But I say to you who hear, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. (Luke 6:27, 28)

He left us an example, laying down his life for his enemies.

For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. (Romans 5:10)

The basis for not retaliating, how to not retaliate.

First, purpose that you are not going to sin. The worst thing that can happen to you is sin. It says, *be not overcome of evil.* Your bad response that you bring on yourself will torture you more than the wrong they brought on you.

Second, we must believe God. Jesus threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously. Is God God or isn't he? Is there a judgment day coming or not?

Commit your way to the LORD, trust also in Him, and He will do it. And He will bring forth your righteousness as the light, and your judgment as the noonday. (Psalm 37:5, 6)

True, sometimes we must wait a long time.

And they cried out with a loud voice, saying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, wilt Thou refrain from judging and *avenging* our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" (Revelation 6:10)

Remember, God has so much more to give you than any loss you may incur from non-retaliation.

And Amaziah said to the man of God, "But what shall we do for the hundred talents which I have given to the troops of Israel?" And the man of God answered, "The LORD has much *more to give you than this.*" (2 Chronicles 25:9)

Third, remember, you are called (and surely deliberately here) "beloved of God" (v. 19). He cares for you, and if someone touches you, it is as if they touched the apple of God's eye. He will jealously defend you.

For thus says the LORD of hosts, "After glory He has sent me against the nations which plunder you, for he who touches you, *touches the apple of His eye.*" (Zechariah 2:8)

EXHORTATIONS REGARDING CHRISTIAN BEHAVIOR — IDENTIFICATION

12:15

Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. Be of the same mind toward one another; do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly. Do not be wise in your own estimation.

Participation was the thrust of verse 13, retaliation was the theme of verses 14 and 17f, and identification is the theme of verses 15 and 16.

Two specific exhortations regarding identification.

Rejoice with those who rejoice. The Greek word is *chairō* which means cheerful, the same as verse 12, rejoice. Have you ever had someone come to you rejoicing in some victory, some provision, some blessing, or some insight from the Scripture and you have been unable to enter in? Rather, you felt envy or resentment. It is subtle pride. We don't want to see others having more blessing than we have. We feel their joy to be a rebuke to our low spirituality, and don't even crack a smile. We don't let them tell it in full and even cut them off. Maybe someone is speaking publicly or giving a testimony of the Lord's goodness or preaching with a full joy in his soul and we sit there unable to give him the benefit of a smile or nod of the head. It is pure pride, wickedness, and a mark of our own insecurity and dissatisfaction. Rather we are to deny ourselves and rejoice with those who rejoice.

Biblical examples.

We have *the friends and family of Elizabeth*. When they heard she was with child in her old age, they could have thought—what does she think she's trying to prove, but rather they rejoiced with her.

Her neighbors and her cousins heard that the Lord had displayed His great mercy toward her; *and they were rejoicing with her.* (Luke 1:58)

Barnabas could have been envious in Antioch at the results of the preaching of certain men from Cyprus, but rather he rejoiced.

Then when he arrived, and witnessed the grace of God, he rejoiced, and began to encourage them all with resolute heart

to remain true to the Lord. (Acts 11:23)

The angels rejoice with others' happiness.

In the same way, I tell you, there is *joy* in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents. (Luke 15:10)

Think how *our Lord* rejoices in our joy.

The LORD be magnified, who *delights* in the prosperity of His servant. (Psalm 35:27)

And conversely our Lord, like the good shepherd of Luke 15, wants us to rejoice with Him in the salvation of sinners.

And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, "*Rejoice with me*, for I have found my sheep which was lost!" (Luke 15:6)

Now we have the converse, *Weep with those who weep*. Likely this is easier than the former. In this fallen world, there are so many causes for weeping in the Christian life.

A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance. (Ecclesiastes 3:4)

We are called to rejoice in the Lord always and to believe in a God who works all for good, yet ironically there are tears that *go with missed opportunities*.

And Esau said to his father, "Do you have only one blessing, my father? Bless me, even me also, O my father." So Esau lifted his voice and *wept*. (Genesis 27:38)

"Remember now, O LORD, I beseech Thee, how I have walked before Thee in truth and with a whole heart, and have done what is good in Thy sight." And Hezekiah *wept* bitterly. (2 Kings 20:3)

There are *failures before the Lord*.

And Peter remembered the word which Jesus had said, "Before a cock crows, you will deny Me three times." And he went out and *wept* bitterly. (Matthew 26:75)

And David went up the ascent of the Mount of Olives, and *wept* as he went, and his head was covered and he walked barefoot. Then all the people who were with him each covered

his head and went up *weeping* as they went. (2 Samuel 15:30)

“And now, please forgive the transgression of the servants of the God of your father.” And Joseph *wept* when they spoke to him. (Genesis 50:17)

There are *the afflictions that come upon the saints* and they are real. Can we weep with them in their misery?

And when they lifted up their eyes at a distance, and did not recognize him, they raised their voices and *wept*. And each of them tore his robe, and they threw dust over their heads toward the sky. (Job 2:12)

Jesus *wept*. (John 11:35)

Not only the saints but *we must weep with all men in their misery and hardship*.

Have I not *wept* for the one whose life is hard? Was not my soul grieved for the needy? (Job 30:25)

And when the Lord saw her, He felt compassion for her, and said to her, “Do not weep.” (Luke 7:13)

Some carry a special burden for the needs in the kingdom of God. Can we weep with them?

Now it came about when I heard these words, I sat down and *wept* and mourned for days; and I was fasting and praying before the God of heaven. (Nehemiah 1:4)

By the rivers of Babylon, There we sat down and *wept*, When we remembered Zion. (Psalm 137:1)

Let the priests, the LORD’S ministers, *Weep* between the porch and the altar, And let them say, “Spare Thy people, O LORD, And do not make Thine inheritance a reproach, A byword among the nations. Why should they among the peoples say, ‘Where is their God?’” (Joel 2:17)

Some might have a *loved one in danger*. Can we enter into their burden?

Then she went and sat down opposite him, about a bowshot away, for she said, “Do not let me see the boy die.” And she sat opposite him, and lifted up her voice and *wept*. (Genesis 21:16)

Then all his sons and all his daughters arose to comfort him,

but he refused to be comforted. And he said, “Surely I will go down to Sheol in mourning for my son.” So his father *wept* for him. (Genesis 37:35)

Compassion is such an exalted Godly virtue.

Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. (Matthew 25:36)

And he took them that very hour of the night, and *washed* their wounds; and immediately he was baptized, he and all his, household. (Acts 16:33)

And he gave orders to the centurion for him to be kept in custody, and yet have some freedom, and not to prevent any of his friends from ministering to him. (Acts 24:23)

And Julius treated Paul with consideration, and allowed him to go to his friends and receive care. (Acts 27:3)

Nevertheless, you have done well to share with me in my affliction. (Philippians 4:14)

The Lord grant mercy to the house of Onesiphorus; for he often refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain. (2 Timothy 1:16)

For you showed sympathy to the prisoners. (Hebrews 10:34)

Our Lord condemned unresponsive attitudes.

They are like children who sit in the market place and call to one another; and they say, ‘We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not weep. (Luke 7:32)

He who rejoices at calamity will not go unpunished. (Proverbs 17:5)

And He pronounced a blessing on those who weep.

Blessed are you who *weep* now, for you shall laugh. (Luke 6:21)

Tears are precious in the sight of God.

Put my *tears* in Your bottle; are they not in Your book? (Psalm 56:8)

Compassion is also natural because of our real spiritual unity.

Remember the prisoners, as though in prison with them, and

those who are ill-treated, since you yourselves also are in the body. (Hebrews 13:3)

And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. (1 Corinthians 12:26)

A hurt toe affects the rest of the body.

Compassion is just common courtesy—even the worldling knows this and is sensitive to insensitivity. One time my father's cattle were dying of some disease. The neighbors came to invite my parents to a party. They then realized the affliction that was upon him and apologized.

It is unnatural to not weep with those who weep.

Like one who takes off a garment on a cold day, or like vinegar on soda, is he who sings songs to a troubled heart. (Proverbs 25:20)

Then the king went off to his palace and spent the night fasting, and *no entertainment* was brought before him; and his sleep fled from him. (Daniel 6:18)

Constrained rejoicing was like salt in the wound in Babylon.

For there our captors demanded of us songs, And our tormentors mirth, saying, "Sing us one of the songs of Zion." (Psalm 137:3)

Inconsiderate levity or even excessive cheerfulness can be a sword in the bones. Those who are naturally bouyant on one hand and those frigid on the other must heed this instruction. Much can be done to correct this constitutional deficiency.

Think of our Lord's example.

For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are. (Hebrews 4:15)

Himself took our infirmities, and carried away our diseases. (Matthew 8:17)

The underlying principle or virtue—like-mindedness.

It says be of the same mind. That is, don't try unnecessarily to be

different, contrary, or unique. We will naturally be different enough. We should try to go with the flow as much as possible. There are plenty of opportunities to be different. Think of these scriptures:

And the congregation of those who believed were of *one heart and soul*. (Acts 4:32)

Now I exhort you, brethern, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ that you all agree, and that there be no divisions [schisma] among you, but that you be made complete in the *same* mind and in the *same* judgment. (1 Corinthians 1:10)

Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I will hear of you that you are standing firm in *one spirit with one mind*, striving together for the faith of the gospel. (Philippians 1:27)

Make my joy complete by being of the *same mind*. (Philippians 2:2)

However, let us keep living, by that same standard to which we have attained. (Philippians 3:16)

I urge Euodias, and I urge Syntyche, to live in harmony in the Lord. (Philippians 4:2 KJV)

To sum up, all of you be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit. (1 Peter 3:8)

If you disagree with someone do your best to understand him, identify with him, see where he is coming from and what he is thinking. Meet his mind. Make every effort to come to a place where you can say, "Now I see what you are thinking." Likely this is tied in with verse 18, be at peace.

The Underlying Vice—Haughtiness, Pride, and Highmindedness.

Do not be haughty in mind or highminded. The literal is *not minding high things, but yielding (associate, carried away with) to the lowly. Do not become wise within yourselves*. We had this also in Romans 12:3 and 11:20. It is a great temptation to be highminded in the spiritual realm.

And do you seek great things for yourself? (Jeremiah 45:5)

One preacher said, “I know election is true, but you can’t build a big church with the doctrine of election.” He is highminded.

The Christian often finds it relatively easy to throw off the overtly fleshly ambitions but that same carnal ambition can be translated into the spiritual realm.

And there arose also a dispute among them as to which one of them was regarded to be greatest. (Luke 22:24)

Parents can even have that for their children—carnal religious ambition.

And He said to her, “What do you wish?” She said to Him, “Command that in your kingdom these two sons of mine may sit on Your right, and one on Your left.” (Matthew 20:21)

Self is constantly looking for sovereignty and preeminence. It is a tremendous danger for the pastor.

I [John] wrote something to the church, but, Diotrephes, who loves to be first among them, does not accept what we say. (3 John 1:9)

It is a real temptation for the wealthy.

Instruct those who are rich in this present world, not to be conceited, or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy. (1 Timothy 6:17)

Even the worldlings see this virtue. One time I asked the cook on a trail ride out west how long he had worked on the ranch. He gave me a number of years. Later I learned that he was the owner.

Highmindedness is a mark of the last days.

Traitors, heady, *highminded*, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God. (2 Timothy 3:4 KJV)

Pride is the very heart and downfall of the devil.

For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north. I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High. Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell. (Isaiah 14:13-15 KJV)

Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil. (1 Timothy 3:6 KJV)

We want to speak like this.

LORD, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty: neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me. (Psalm 131:1 KJV)

We are called to *associate with the lowly* (places, things, thoughts, persons). The world is just the opposite. They want to be around the eminent. I have seen even at Bible conferences, there is a fleshly desire to be around the eminent. Like water we should seek the low position. There is to be no aristocracy in the church, no cliques of the wealthy and fancy over against the poor, no pedestals of unapproachable dignity (John Murray). How contrary to the Head of the church.

Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. (Matthew 11:29)

This is the heart of God.

For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones. (Isaiah 57:15 KJV)

The next phase is *do not be wise with yourself*—do not tell yourself you are pretty smart. Don't think you are pretty clever, cute, infallible, or impervious. Scripture is replete with this warning.

For I do not want you to be uninformed of this mystery—so that you will not be wise in your own estimation.... (Romans 11:25)

Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord and depart from evil. (Proverbs 3:7 NKJV)

Do you see a man wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him. (Proverbs 26:12 NKJV)

Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes, and clever in their own sight! (Isaiah 5:21)

Let no man deceive himself, if any man among you thinks that

he is wise in this age, he must become foolish, so that he may become wise. (1 Corinthians 3:18)

But if anyone supposes that he knows anything, he has not yet known as he ought to know. (1 Corinthians 8:2)

Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him show by his good behavior his deeds in the gentleness of wisdom. (James 3:13)

Curt Bork was such an example in all these things. His daughter writes, "My dad was in the business of making others happy."

Conclusion.

We end the chapter where we started. These are the virtues called for in verses 1-3. It is because we are so secure, we can be vulnerable.

So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. (Colossians 3:12)

We are to love ... our friends and it is to be pure, devoted, respectful, liberal, sympathizing, united, and condescending, and our enemies, not only to do them no harm, but do them good.

CHAPTER 13

SUBJECTION TO THE GOVERNMENT (PART 1)

13:1

Let every person be in subjection to the governing authorities.
For there is no authority except from God, and those which
exist are established by God.

We come to a very distinguished chapter and a very important chapter.
There are many other occurrences of and references to this issue:

Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human
institution, whether to a king as the one in authority. (1 Peter
2:13)

My son, fear the LORD and the king. (Proverbs 24:21)

Then render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's; and to God
the things that are God's. (Matthew 22:21)

Remind them to be subject to rulers, to authorities, to be
obedient, to be ready for every good deed. (Titus 3:1)

(They) despise authority (and are) self-willed. (2 Peter 2:10)

But this is the most thorough treatment of the subject of the relationship
between the Christian and the state.

Romans 13 is a very difficult chapter; it raises many questions and
yet hopefully it lays down many answers. It is a difficult principle here
with which we are dealing. I wonder how many are in jail because they
are missing this principle right here; at least, it is the surface cause of
their trouble. It is difficult, for it is much easier to submit to God than
to the IRS or the man in the uniform.

What brings up this topic? Notice the overall context and flow
of Romans. After Paul in the first eleven chapters has laid down the
foundations, then with Chapter 12 he begins to make applications.
It is a call to serve the Lord. And that involves serving one another.
One another comes up repeatedly in Chapter 12. It has to do with
relationships. Now we come to *the relationship of the Christian and the
state*.

Now, why this chapter on government?

First, it logically flows out of Chapter 12. Paul had been talking

about giving place to wrath and one way God shows wrath is through the government. Paul had been talking about living in peace and now we are instructed to live at peace under the government. Paul had been talking about love and now he brings up love again (v. 8).

Second, the Jews had a problem with submission to Gentile government. They were forbidden to have an outsider for a king.

You shall surely set a king over you whom the LORD your God chooses, one from among your countrymen you shall set as king over yourselves; you may not put a foreigner over yourselves who is not your countryman. (Deuteronomy 17:15)

And they were thinking in terms of the theocracy, a government under God, a holy nation. And that is one reason they rejected their Messiah; they expected a political leader. They were very hard to get along with, and it became so bad that in 70 AD the Romans invaded with the destruction of 1.1 million Jews.

Third, the Christians, the people of God, Jew or Gentile, see themselves as spiritual people.

For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ (Philippians 3:20)

We are in another realm and thus we tend to see government as a nuisance. We have come to be free of the fear of man and thus we reckon that it is God with whom we have to do; we don't have to answer to man. We are looking for another kingdom, another era (v. 11) and thus we reckon we should have little to do with this one here and now.

The chapter is easily divided:

1. verses 1-7: our relation to state,
2. verses 8-10: our overall attitude—love,
3. verses 11-14: our anticipation—yes we are strangers and we must conduct ourselves in view of the future.

This first section then consists of a command, *Let every person be subject to the governing authorities...* (v. 1) and the following considerations or reasons for it.

The command, the thrust, the proposition, or the rule is that the Christian be in *subjection* to the government (v. 1, 2, 5).

It means to get under, under obedience to, the government. Though obedience is not absolute, yet this attitude is absolute. Think, this was

written in the days of Nero, a cruel man who used Christians' bodies as torches. This was just after leaders like Herod who killed little children (Matt. 2:16).

What are the considerations or the reasons?

A. *First*, governments are set up by God and thus it is a matter of submission to God (v. 1). *There is no authority except from God; they are established by God.* Does this bear out with other scripture?

For not from the east, nor from the west, nor from the desert comes exaltation. (Psalm 75:6)

And it is He who changes the times and the epochs; *He removes kings and establishes kings*; He gives wisdom to wise men, and knowledge to men of understanding. (Daniel 2:21)

And you will be driven away from mankind, and your dwelling place will be with the beasts of the field. You will be given grass to eat like cattle, and seven periods of time will pass over you, until you recognize that *the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind, and bestows it on whomever He wishes.* (Daniel 4:32)

He was also driven away from mankind, and his heart was made like that of beasts, and his dwelling place was with the wild donkeys. He was given grass to eat like cattle, and his body was drenched with the dew of heaven, until he *recognized that the Most High God is ruler over the realm of mankind*, and that He sets over it whomever He wishes. "Yet you, his son, Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart, even though you knew all this. (Daniel 5:21, 22)

Jesus answered, "You would have no *authority over Me, unless it had been given you from above....*" (John 19:11)

And from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the first-born of the dead, and the *ruler of the kings of the earth.* To Him who loves us, and released us from our sins by His blood. (Revelation 1:5)

These will wage war against the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, *because He is Lord of lords and King of kings....* (Revelation 17:14)

Could it be that Nero, Stalin, and Hitler were installed by God? What about Satan, the ruler of this world, and demons who are over countries?

God is still sovereign and uses even them to fulfill his predetermined plan.

Is the axe to boast itself over the one who chops with it? (Isaiah 10:15)

They all, from the top down are ordained of God.

Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority. (1 Peter 2:13)

Thus we can *submit as unto the Lord*. They are *ministers of God, servants of God*. And to resist is to *oppose the ordinance of God*, that is, the God ordained authority. David took it as an offense to himself when the sons of Ammon dishonored his delegates.

B. A second reason, to resist will bring punishment, *condemnation, wrath, vengeance* (v. 2, fines, jail, execution which is represented by the *sword*. The Emperor Trajan, when appointing an officer, said, "For me; or if I deserve it, then in me."

C. A third reason, to be free of *fear* (v. 3). If we are in a right attitude, there is no need to be afraid. They are not against us. There is no need to watch in the rearview mirror. There is no need to have your heart beat faster when an officer appears. There is actually the possibility we may have praise. One, Prem Prahdan of Nepal, spent years in prison for preaching and baptising. Yet years later, due to his good works, received honors from the government. It is a matter of keeping a good testimony.

Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may on account of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation. (1 Peter 2:12)

And seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf; for in its welfare you will have welfare. (Jeremiah 29:7)

D. Fourth, they are for good, (v. 4) *they are ministers of God* (as seen in their activity). Someone has to build the highways and someone has to make sanitation rules. I'm glad we have some national forests and parks. God established governments to control man and restrain him

from evil, to protect and to serve.

E. Fifth, to maintain a clear conscience (v. 5). The purpose of the Bible is to secure a good conscience and to keep it.

But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good *conscience* and a sincere faith. (1 Timothy 1:5)

Keeping faith and a good *conscience*, which some have rejected and suffered shipwreck in regard to their faith. (1 Timothy 1:19)

When we cheat on our taxes, it defiles our conscience. That is no little thing.

Conclusion and Application.

Render to all what is due them. Taxes and customs are likely the most hated of all government obligations. Remember the publican, the tax-gatherer. And probably tax evasion is the greatest crime in the USA. Our Lord taught us to *render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's; and to God the things that are God's.* Jesus did this.

And upon his saying, “From strangers,” Jesus said to him, “Then the sons are exempt. However, so that we do not offend them, go to the sea, and throw in a hook, and take the first fish that comes up; and when you open its mouth, you will find a stater. Take that and give it to them for you and Me.” (Matthew 17:26, 27)

Here we see:

1. Our exaltation (v. 25). We are sons of God and indeed in another realm.
2. Our liberty (v. 26). We are free of obligation, in a sense.
3. Our duty (v. 27). We are yet commanded to pay tax.
4. Our confidence: (v. 28). The Lord helps us pay those taxes.

Fear! Does it mean fear God?

Honor all men; love the brotherhood, *fear God, honor the king.* (1 Peter 2:17)

My son, *fear the LORD and the king.* (Proverbs 24:21)

And disrespect is forbidden. We may say some rough things—*Herod, that fox* — yet we can still honor the leader and be free of cheap talk.

John the Baptist reproved Herod. He was right in it. Yet, George Fox, the founder of the Quakers, would not remove his hat before the judges. He spent much time in jail from it. He went too far—*honor to whom honor is due*.

SUBJECTION TO THE GOVERNMENT (PART 2)

13:1

Let every person be in subjection to the governing authorities.
For there is no authority except from God, and those which
exist are established by God.

We come now to some problems and applications that might arise from this teaching, *let every person be in subjection to the governing authorities.*

Does the Christian have to submit to evil rulers; or is civil disobedience ever right?

The inmates always bring up that the legal system is fouled with evil men, and they have a truth, for white shirt crime and t-shirt crime are equally rampant. It must be admitted that many rulers are not a terror to evil (v. 3) but the good. Some governments throw their good citizens to the lions; some use tax money to fund the murder of babies.

But submission to any authority is never absolute, except to God himself. Think of the wife to the husband—is it absolute? What about religious authorities? *Peter and the apostles answered and said, “We must obey God rather than men.”* The same way when it comes to civil authorities. So, Romans 13:1 is conditional, not absolute or non-optional. But when it comes to the universal, non-optional absolutes of God, then we must not sin against God or defile our conscience.

Do we have Biblical examples of civil disobedience? We have the government commanding murder in Exodus 1:17, *But the midwives feared God, and did not do as the king of Egypt had commanded them, but let the boys live.* God blessed them for it. Also Moses’ parents *were not afraid of the king’s edict.* If a church were prohibited from firing a homosexual choir director, they must fear God not man. But one thing the Christian can do is look for creative alternatives.

Daniel made up his mind that he would not defile himself with the king’s choice food or with the wine which he drank; so he sought permission from the commander of the officials that he might not defile himself. (Dan. 1:8)

Heathen nations not only ate *unclean* beasts, which were forbidden by Jewish law, but even the clean animals that were eaten were first

offered as victims to their gods, and part of the wine was poured out as a libation on their altars. Daniel was therefore resolved not to defile; yet he did not rudely refuse what was intended as a kindness, but humbly requested the proper officers for an option. Sometimes there is no alternative and one must pay the consequences. The Hebrew men said :

“But even if He does not, let it be known to you, O king, that we are not going to serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up” (Daniel 3:18). In that case they were divinely protected.

In it all, our attitude must still be respectful and submissive. Daniel said, *O king live forever*. In our religious zeal, we don't want to be a crank. And we should do everything we can to obey the law. Use lawful means to change the law— elections, appeals, etc. It is valid to appeal to Caesar as in Acts 25:11. It is valid to use protection of the state. I imagine Paul appreciated the Ephesian town clerk. Whitefield used the Countess' power. The last resort is to flee or disobey. In whatever form of civil disobedience, we must beware of using the arm of flesh, such as, sit-ins, marches, and protests.

Should a Christian have a part in overthrowing a government?

I question it; after all, this was written under Nero's evil reign. And, too, a government will eventually be overthrown by non-Christians themselves. Nero was overthrown by his own due to neglect of the army. God eventually, one way or another, steps in and drowns a Pharaoh, and puts a Nebachadnezzar out to pasture. Sennacherib's own sons killed him.

Should it be overthrown? Here are some helpful points of distinction.

A. *No government is perfect*, and only in varying degrees does any fulfill its commission. But when it becomes cruel and demonic, some think, then it should be overthrown. Mao was responsible for 26 million killings from 1949 to 1965.

B. *Interestingly, in the matter of overthrow, the form of government matters little*. It is the men that are the problem, not the machine. One would be better off with a benevolent king than an immoral democracy. Even in wicked totalitarian non-Christian regimes, such as Saudi Arabia, India, or former Communist Russia, there is not as much crime as in the USA. It is helpful to remember that the form

of government makes little difference in advancing the kingdom of God—a cruel dictatorship won't hinder and a benevolent democracy won't help. Even war does not seem to matter. The Revolutionary hindered the advance of the gospel but during the Civil War, the business of heaven progressed. Yet we can be very thankful we don't have bullets flying over our heads, and to that end we are to pray, *for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way* (1 Tim. 2:2).

C. *Politics, for the Christian, is somewhat of a dead horse.* The state is only a temporary relationship and we look for another, an eternal kingdom. Also, our burden and business, that is, our priority, is spiritual. We want to save souls. Our Lord Jesus nor Paul gave no sign of political involvement. Our Lord taught one soul is worth more than the world's wealth (Matt. 16:26). Especially, for the minister of the gospel to leave his ministry and get into politics it would be like a heart surgeon leaving his work for cosmetics (John MacArthur). The Christian is called to be a priest not a social activist. Ultimately, what difference does it make whether a man goes to hell as a prince or a pauper, a college president or a village prostitute, a doctor or a dope user? Also, remember the corrupt religious leaders are far worse than the political, *For this reason he who delivered Me up to you has the greater sin* (John 19:11).

Can a Christian submit to the government in the way of military service? Some, called pacifists, say no. They are opposed to war or violent means of settling disputes. They refuse to bear arms. They believe in non-resistance. For sure this is right when it involves the individual level—*turn the other cheek*. Our Lord, nor John the Baptist, nor Paul told the centurions to get out. Duncan Campbell was baptized in the Spirit in a military charge. One could have a better spirit on the battlefield than a pacifist in his house of worship. I can see how a Christian could have faith to be in the military. But one consideration might be this: is it a just cause?

Should the Christians use force of arms?

One thing clearly wrong is religious war. The Crusades were a grievous stumbling block to true Christianity. Zwingli died with a sword in hand in a religious war. The Covenanters fought more from self-defense and were very godly men, yet how does it fit with these Scriptures?

But I say to you, do not resist an evil person; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. (Matthew 5:39)

For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God for the pulling down of strong holds. (2 Corinthians 10:4 KJV)

Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, then My servants would be fighting.... (John 18:36)

But Jesus answered and said, "Stop! No more of this." And He touched his ear and healed him. (Luke 22:51)

Then Jesus said to him, "Put your sword back into its place; for all those who take up the sword shall perish by the sword." (Matthew 26:52)

Is capital punishment valid?

Private revenge is wrong. Murder is wrong. But the execution of justice is right and an obligation of the state. They have been given *the sword*. It is the symbol of all instruments for taking life. There are two reasons:

A. *Justice*. Abel's blood cried for justice.

And He said, "What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood is crying to Me from the ground." (Gen. 4:10 KJV)

Right from the beginning God commanded justice to be executed by man.

Whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed, for in the image of God He made man. (Genesis 9:6 NKJV)

Man was made in the image of God and so murder is a unique crime. When justice is not executed, the land becomes guilty of blood.

So you shall not pollute the land in which you are; for blood pollutes the land and no expiation can be made for the land for the blood that is shed on it, except by the blood of him who shed it. (Num. 35:33)

Think of the bloodguiltiness of this land with 1.5 million abortions per year (1996). There were no prisons in Israel. God's law taught punishment and restitution. And, what good does it do? The USA

prison system did not start till the late 1700's and was introduced by Quakers. But now, we have the highest per capita rate of incarceration and crime. Prisons are government-sponsored crime schools. The humanist says that capital punishment is inhumane, but that is really the thing that verifies the value of life. Paul concurs with capital punishment,

If then I am a wrongdoer, and have committed anything worthy of death, I do not refuse to die. (Acts 25:11)

B. Capital punishment is for a deterrent.

And they shall say to the elders of his city, "This son of ours is stubborn and rebellious, he will not obey us, he is a glutton and a drunkard" Then all the men of his city shall stone him to death; so you shall remove the evil from your midst, and all Israel shall *hear of it and fear.* (Deuteronomy 21:20, 21)

Then all the people will *hear and be afraid*, and will not act presumptuously again. (Deuteronomy 17:13)

Because the sentence against an evil deed is not executed quickly, therefore the hearts of the sons of men among them are given fully to do evil. (Ecclesiastes 8:11)

What about the church and the state and the wall of separation?

This phrase originated from a letter by Thomas Jefferson. He advocated freedom of religion but today it is construed to mean freedom from religion.

There are two views as to the relationship between the church and the state. The first is that *the church and the state are one*. Constantine, in 325 AD, declared Christianity to be the state religion of the Roman Empire. From that came the Roman Catholic Church with the church dominating the state. The Reformers somewhat continued the false concept. Calvin's Geneva was like a little state-church. Zwingli and Calvin both had a theocratic concept. If one wanted to be a citizen of Geneva he had to make a profession. Calvin thought the state was somewhat responsible to maintain proper worship, to punish sins against the first table of law, and to help the church Christianize the world with force where necessary. This was no different from the Roman Catholic Church in principle. John Wycliffe and others had fought for freedom from the Pope. King Henry VIII broke from the

papacy but set himself up as a pope and from that came the opposite side of the error, the tradition that the state is over the church—the Church of England.

The American colonists stopped short of separating the two and Roger Williams reproved them for not breaking with the Church of England. He was perhaps more responsible for religious freedom in the USA than any other man. The early American Puritans ironically had established the very thing from which they fled, trying to enforce religion and righteousness.

The second view is that *the church and state are essentially different*, which is the right view. Why? Both the church and the state are ordained of God. Yet, there is a distinction between Caesar on one hand and God (although God is still over all).

A. They are different in their origin. The state is from the Creator and in the realm of creation but the church is from the Redeemer in the realm of the new creation.

B. They are different in their purpose. The state is to restrain evil (a terror to evil), to judge evil (the sword), to keep order (a quiet and peaceable life, 1 Tim. 2:2f), and to maintain freedom of worship (in all godliness and honesty). The church is to rescue souls, to edify the saints, and to be a dwelling place for God.

C. They are different in the power which has been committed to them by God. The state coerces outwardly by gallows, but the church inwardly by grace; the state by the metal sword, but the church by the Spirit's sword, truth.

D. They are different in the qualification of the officers appointed to carry out their purposes. The ministers of the church must be regenerate and taught by the Spirit.

How did the faulty views of church and state come about? It was wrong theology, or more specifically, faulty hermeneutics which led to a wrong idea of the New Covenant. The Westminster Confession in defining the role of civil magistrates, Chapter 23, supports it with all Old Testament references. It says that the state is to suppress blasphemies and heresies and abuses in worship. They had a theocratic concept and with that come infant baptism, vestments, etc.

Now, in the Old Testament, the church and the state consisted of the same people. God's nation was equal to God's church. But in the New Covenant, the church consists of those called out of all nations.

Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you, and be given to a people producing the fruit of it. (Matt. 21:43)

In the Old Testament you could be one of God's people and still not know him but in the New Testament, *all shall know Me from the least to the greatest*. The Old Testament was by natural birth, but the New Testament is by spiritual birth. Jesus answered, *My kingdom is not of this world* (John 18:36). It is of a spiritual character. Paul reproved the Corinthians for going to the world for help (1 Cor. 6). *Our citizenship indeed is in heaven* (Phil. 3:20). *We have been saved out of this present evil world* (Gal. 1:4).

What are the results of a wrong concept here between the church and the state? (1) Tyranny. Look at the Roman church. (2) Hypocrisy. The people get "Christianized." Culture is "won" for Christ. It does harm to the gospel. (3) Disgust by the world.

Is it right to vote?

Surely, if it is right to pay taxes, it is right to vote. It is a part of doing good and of being a good citizen.

Can a Christian hold a political office?

Daniel held a high office in Babylon and Joseph in Egypt. We have no indication that Zaccheus or Sergius Paulus left their positions. It is a matter of priority.

Can a Christian be in unions or be involved in a strike?

Yes, if they are lawful in our society and not a reproach or a mark of rebellion, it would seem to be all right.

Could there be or should there be a Christian political party?

It would not be the business nor the emphasis of the church. Furthermore, there are too many differences on non-essential points.

What about the little laws?

1 Peter 2:14 says we must submit *to governors as sent by him*. That goes right down to the little local officials—building codes, etc.

Conclusion.

Peter is concerned about behavior. What behavior did he have in mind? Surely our relationship to the state was one of them.

Keep your *behavior* excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may because of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation. *Submit* yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority. (1 Peter 2:12, 13)

LOVE: THE FULFILLING OF THE LAW

13:8

Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law.

What is it that brings up this subject?

Paul makes a play on a word to introduce this next subject. He said in verse 7, *render to all what is due them*. It is a sister to the word *owe* in verse 8. He was talking about paying our debt in taxes and now, our debt of love. Second, it is not only a carry-over from verse 7, but also from 12:9, 10, for there, Paul, beginning his exhortations on Christian behavior, puts love to be the priority in it all. It is the beginning and the end, the *summing up* of it all.

It says owe nothing to anyone; does this teach that absolutely every debt is wrong; is it always wrong to borrow?

Some hold and teach that view. For sure, one ought to be very cautious in borrowing anything. The old saying, “Neither a borrower nor a lender be,” has some wisdom in it. Borrowing puts you under obligation; it puts a string on you. And it is very easy to forget that borrowed book, tape, or tool in the shuffle of life.

And a borrowed item is easily damaged thus putting one under obligation also. In a sense, it is better to rent, for then one is not obliged for breakage,

And if a man borrows anything from his neighbor, and it is injured or dies while its owner is not with it, he shall make full restitution. If its owner is with it, he shall not make restitution; if it is hired, it came for its hire. (Ex. 22:14, 15)

Then, too, there is the danger of bitterness. “The loan often loses both itself and the friend.” Maybe the best is to treat that loan as a gift:

But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, *expecting nothing* in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for He Himself is kind to ungrateful and evil men. (Luke 6:35)

It is a very desirable thing to be totally free of debt. One preacher said, “When I got out of debt, it was like I was born again, again.” Proverbs 22:7 says, “The borrower becomes the lender’s slave.” It is also

likely to enslave you to mammon—working overtime and sacrificing the spiritual and personal relationships for the material. Why do it? It is a terrible snare in our society. Surely it is a great cause for marriage pressures—bitterness, suspicion, and injury leading to divorce. The country is sunk deep in debt, spending billions more than it has.

Covetousness is generally the underlying vice in it. “I don’t have it, I want it, I can’t get it, God is not providing it, I don’t want to wait, so I will take things into my own hands and make it possible to get it anyhow.”

The general rule is to avoid debt wherever possible. In general, debt is wrong—*Owe nothing to anyone*. Make every attempt to avoid it. Just humble yourself, deny yourself, do without and wait till you can buy it. The discipline of patience and self-imposed (rather than debt-imposed) frugality will do you good. Grace will be given there; God blesses self-denial. Jesus came back from the wilderness sufferings in the power of the Spirit. The sense of expectation ministers hope in the soul. There is joy in looking ahead to the fulfillment of your desire. There is a heaviness and a pressure in being under that debt. Interest expense is incredibly deceptive, too.

But, it does not appear we can make an absolute. It must be acknowledged that debt in some ways is unavoidable. The employer is in debt till the pay check is transmitted. There is Bible for it:

If you lend money to My people, to the poor among you, you are not to act as a creditor to him; you shall not charge him interest. (Ex. 22:25)

Then you ought to have put my money in the bank, and on my arrival I would have received my money back with interest. (Matt. 25:27)

Here are some considerations in borrowing. Is it really necessary? Is it safe? Of course, we can get “poly” to secure it, but the policy premiums put us further in trouble. Will it pay its way? There is a difference between going in debt for a car as compared with a tool for business. Is it going to depreciate? A house might appreciate, but not a car. Is it forever beyond reach? Are you making your monthly payments and meeting the terms? There is a sense, then, in which you are not in debt.

Paying our debts is one way, at the very least, we want to distinguish ourselves from the world, *The wicked borrows and does not pay back*,

but the righteous is gracious and gives (Psalm 37:21).

What is the one debt that we all have and to which we should give ourselves?

It says, *except to love one another*, especially in terms of the gospel.

I am under obligation both to the Greeks, and to barbarians; both to the wise, and to the foolish. So, for my part, I am eager to preach the gospel.... (Romans 1:14, 15)

There ought to be this captivating sense of obligation, God has entrusted us with the gospel, heavenly dynamite, tools of heaven, the very bread, the only bread that can satisfy the heart of man. The four lepers felt obliged to share (2 Kings 7:9). We should feel others have a claim on ourselves, just as if our neighbor's house were burning. There is the danger of ending up working our lives away to pay off the wrong debt—some financial debt instead of this spiritual one.

Why is love so important?

It is the *summary* and *fulfillment* of the law, verses 8, 9, and 10.

It is the *summary* of all our obligation before God and to our fellow man (v. 9). We have a God who loves and He has chosen a people to represent him in this very way. When you get to heaven, if you were to sum up the way God has treated you, what would you say—*He loved us! He loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins* (1 John 4:10).

Think of the overwhelming New Testament emphasis: 1 Corinthians 13; Galatians 5:22; Colossians 2:2; 3:14; 1 Thessalonians 3:12; 1 Timothy 1:5; James 2:8; 1 Peter 4:8; 2 Peter 1:5-7; and 1 John—36 times. Jesus says in John 13:34, *Just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another*. It is the distinguishing mark of true Christians. It is not the distinguishing mark of the ball club or the fraternity or the firefighters.

What is this law to which verses 8 and 10 refer to?

Sometimes the law means the Pentateuch:

These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled. (Luke 24:44)

Sometimes it means the whole Old Testament in the historic sense:

But they have done this in order that the word may be fulfilled that is written in their Law, *They hated Me without a cause.* (John 15:25)

Sometimes it means the principle of works in the soteriological sense:

For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law, but under grace. (Rom. 6:14)

Sometimes it means simply a principle:

For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. (Romans 8:2)

Here it seems to refer specifically to the Ten Commandments. But the point, as seen by the phrase *any other commandment*, is that all God requires of man is fulfilled in love.

What is the meaning of fulfilled the law in verses 8, 10?

It means to fully fill, like a cup with water. It means to fill out, like a grown up boy or girl, realizing their potential. It means completion, like filling out the answer sheet on a test (Luke 22:37). It means to satisfy all the demands, like filling an order. Love satisfies all the demands.

How are we to look at the law and the Old Testament? Is it negated or abrogated? Do the Ten Commandments mean nothing now that we are under grace and are only obliged to love? How are we to look at the Ten Commandments? This passage right here teaches us that we should spiritualize the Old Testament, that we should look for the heart of the matter. Get the New Testament sense of the Ten Commandments:

no other gods	love God with all your heart
no idols	worship in the Spirit
not in vain	in sincerity of heart
keeping sabbath	rest, worship, honor the Lord, do good
honor parents	obey and care for them
not murder	not even hate but love enemies, doing him good
not adultery	self-control and victory over lust
not steal	give, protect neighbor

false witness	truth, taming the tongue
covet	lay up treasure in heaven, esteem others

Jesus says the same, *Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill* (Matt. 5:17). And he makes it clear what he means by the following context—adultery as compared to victory over lust.

Also we see it in matter of supporting some elders, *For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn; and, the labourer is worthy of his reward* (1 Tim. 5:18). The New Testament does not destroy, but fulfills, it swallows it up.

Is the Westminster Confession right when it says that the Commandments are the rule of obedience for the regenerate? Yes, it is obvious from this very passage that they apply and also others (Eph. 6:1). The Old Testament gives teeth to the New Testament. The fornicator says, “I love her, why do you say I must leave her?” We answer, “Because it is contrary to the law.” The New Testament has law in it and the Old Testament has love in it—but *you shall love your neighbor as yourself* this was a quote from Old Testament, from Leviticus 19:18. But there is a *no* to the question also—it is not the *primary* rule, but rather love is. Jesus calls this a *new commandment*. Paul says he was not under the law.

And to the Jews I became as a Jew, so that I might win Jews; to those who are under the Law, as under the Law, *though not being myself under the Law*, so that I might win those who are under the Law; to those who are without law, as without law, though not being without the law of God but *under the law of Christ*, that I might win those who are without law. (1 Cor. 9:20, 21; See also Gal. 6:2)

We should not think of our obligation before God and our Lord Jesus as keeping precepts from fear, but pleasing a person from love, that is, what would honor, glory, and satisfy him, uplift him, and advance his cause? On the Mount it was said, *This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased; listen to Him*, (Matt. 3:17) in contrast to the Law and the Prophets or Moses and Elijah. So when Romans 6:14 says, *For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law, but under grace*, it is not only that we are free from it in terms of justification, but also free from it (in a sense) regarding our sanctification. The Ten Commandments were the covenant God made with the Jews and that

is now abrogated:

So He declared to you His covenant which He commanded you to perform, that is, the Ten Commandments; and He wrote them on two tablets of stone. (Deut. 4:13)

So we must go for the spirit of the matter. Under the Old Testament, we would stone the homosexual; under the New Testament we would try to bring him to Christ. The Pharisees were literalists and missed it all and crucified the Lord.

What is the second basis or criterion of love in this passage?

It is you shall *love... as yourself*. So we are to love not only according to the terms of the Old Testament (the law), but also according to our own terms—an incredibly high standard. Paul even says, under inspiration, love the neighbor *as more important* (Phil. 2:3).

This concept is paraphrased in Matthew 7:12 (KJV), *Therefore, however you want people to treat you, so treat them, for this is the Law and the Prophets*. It is often called the golden rule; it is a rule because actions can be ruled and measured by this rule. Is that the way I would want them to talk to me or treat me? How would you like that if they did that to you? Pastor, if you were a congregant, is that the way you would like to be treated? Congregant, if you were a pastor, is that the way you would like to be treated? Employee, if you were the boss, is that the way you would like to be treated? Husband? Wife? Son? Daughter? Parent? We can see why the New Testament says to pursue love, to study it—“now is that the way I’d want to be treated?” Here we can see the just condemnation of the man without the Bible; he may not have any Bible but he is furious when someone steals from him.

Back to loving *as yourself*. This belies the self-esteem philosophy. This is stated as though it were a given that people have no trouble loving themselves. All do. Ever since the fall of man, man is selfish. Even his good works are not for the glory of God. Self denial is the very crisis of conversion. And the same in our sanctification—it is continual self-denials. There is a sense in which it is righteous to love self, *For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church* (Ephesians 5:29). God wants us to take care of our body, soul, property; it is righteous. Thus we are to love others as we love and care for ourselves.

Who is your *neighbor*?

Remember the case of the lawyer in Luke 10:25f. The Lord told him in so many words that it was the whole world, especially those in the providence of God, that are put right before us.

Why does it speak only of *loving neighbor*, not God?

Isn't that only the second great commandment? Paul is here dealing with inter-personal relationships.

Can the law be fulfilled in me?

Unless you have had a meeting with God, it is impossible. Man is fallen and selfish. Only the Christian is actually able to do this and he does substantially, *in order that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit* (Rom. 8:4). We cannot see our neighbor accurately without first having self dethroned and Christ enthroned. Only the Christian can see the value of the neighbor's soul. Only the Christian can see his need and has the means to meet it.

There is such a glorious transition historically with the coming of Christ, and personally with the coming of Christ into the heart, that we have a *new commandment*. It is called *the law of Christ*, for it was emphasized by him, only possible in him, and exemplified by him—*We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us* (1 John 3:16).

AN ALARM TO SLEEPY SAINTS

13:11

And this do, knowing the time, that it is already the hour for you to awaken from sleep; for now salvation is nearer to us than when we believed.

Paul starts out this section saying, *this do*. That is, we have a further reason to love; in addition to it fulfilling the law, it must be done in view of the urgency of the hour. We have here a very striking text with a strong and glorious admonition. It was the light that lit Augustine's soul.

What is this sleep from which we are to awaken?

Surely this is figurative language, that is, it is not physical but rather spiritual slumber. Reasons? (1) See the company of terms; we are talking about moral and spiritual issues. (2) It is already used that way. Romans 11:8 says, *God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear, unto this day.* (3) This is a commonly used figure of speech—"wake up." "Are you asleep?" So we are speaking of the mental and spiritual state of laziness and insensitivity.

Is it possible for the saints to be sleepy?

Consider various scriptures that indeed pertain to the people of God:

[Trumpet] Awake, awake, Clothe yourself in your strength, O Zion; Clothe yourself in your beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city. For the uncircumcised and the unclean Will no more come into you. Shake yourself from the dust, rise up, O captive Jerusalem; Loose yourself from the chains around your neck, O captive daughter of Zion. (Isaiah 52:1, 2)

But while his men were *sleeping*, his enemy came and sowed tares also among the wheat, and went away. (Matthew 13:25)

What I say to you I say to all, "Be on the *alert!*" (Mark 13:37)

So then let us not *sleep* as others do, but let us be alert and sober. (1 Thessalonians 5:6)

Wake up, and strengthen the things that remain, which were

about to die; for I have not found your deeds completed in the sight of My God. (Revelation 3:2)

Most certainly this passage in Romans 13:12 pertains to the saints, for it says, *let us*. So it is not a rod for the sinner, but a prod for the saints; it is not warning of damnation, but an encouragement of salvation; it is not breathing out threatenings and slaughter, but rather a very understandably urgent admonition to saints!

It is possible for saints to be sleepy. You might be a Jonah: out of the will of God and even under the divine chastisement of a great storm, yet sleeping:

Then the sailors became afraid, and every man cried to his god, and they threw the cargo which was in the ship into the sea to lighten it for them. But Jonah had gone below into the hold of the ship, lain down, and fallen sound *asleep*. (Jonah 1:5)

So the captain approached him and said, "How is it that you are *sleeping*?" (Jonah 1:6).

You might be like Peter, James and John on the Mount of Transfiguration, surrounded with glory, yet missing it all due to sleep:

Now Peter and his companions had been overcome with *sleep*; but when they were fully *awake*, they saw His glory. (Luke 9:32)

Or again like the disciples in Gethsemane's garden, you might be sleeping when you should be praying:

And when He rose from prayer, He came to the disciples and found them *sleeping* from sorrow. (Luke 22:45)

Things were crucial, the enemy was out to destroy, and they were on the edge of a temptation which was to lead to a grievous fall, yet they were sleeping. Can you hear the Lord's disappointment?

Then He came to the disciples, and said to them, "Are you still *sleeping* and taking your rest? (Matthew 26:45)

You might be a Eutychus:

And there was a young man named Eutychus sitting on the window sill, sinking into a deep sleep; and as Paul kept on talking, he was overcome by *sleep* and fell down from the third floor, and was picked up dead. (Acts 20:9)

The young man was sleeping when he had rich truth pounding his ears from a mighty apostle. You might be a virgin for Christ and yet be spiritually drowsy:

Now while the bridegroom was delaying, they *all got drowsy* and began to sleep. (Matthew 25:5)

Yes, these illustrations are of the physical sleep, but surely the application carries over.

What are some indicators or characteristics of sleepiness?

We know this from physical sleepiness.

A. It is a state of dullness, heaviness, and weakness. It is a state of inactivity. The mind is disengaged. When we get sleepy reading, the mind gets nothing. So it is in our spiritual life. There is little progress, little accomplished, little Bible read, little memorized and we don't seem to be getting anything. Just as when someone is talking to you and you are missing it, so it is with God and thus we have nothing to share with others. Duties seem dull, lifeless, and routine. Instead of a spirit of praise, a spirit of heaviness. Instead of praying "in the Spirit," we are saying prayers. Instead of prayer meetings being invigorating, they are enervating (causing one to feel drained of energy). Instead of seeing the meeting as a great privilege with expectation, we feel they are a hardship. We become too concerned with physical matters (food, clothing, money, things of the body); they seem more important than the spiritual. Lusts are not mortified and self is not denied.

B. Sleepiness means losing contact with reality. As with physical sleepiness, we become insensitive to reality—both the dangers and the opportunities. A thief might be in the house and we are not concerned at all, for we are asleep. So it is in spiritual realm, we become insensitive. Sin is not so sinful, nor righteousness so desirable. The truths of God become cloudy and we forget that we are a new man and it is not natural for me to sin. We forget that we can live our lives on higher ground. We forget that self is such an enemy and must be denied. We forget that we are in a race and become complacent. We forget that the world is not a resting place, but all things are passing away. We forget that there are so many opportunities for serving the saints. We forget the worth of a soul and the great privilege in being used of God to win them.

What is the remedy against sleepiness?

We must *know the time*. It says know; it makes a difference if we know the facts of a matter. If you knew a thief was coming to your house this very night, you wouldn't sleep. And we do know some things for sure or else we are denying the inspiration of the scriptures. We know the urgency of the hour.

Knowing the time! Our action is always being altered by the time. That is the reason you wear a watch. When you wake up early, you want to know the time so as to determine if you really want to wake up. We should be like the children of Issachar, which were men *that had understanding of the times*, to know what Israel ought to do (1 Chron. 12:32).

What do we know about the time? We know that "*salvation is so near*." Nearness makes a difference with regard to action. If you were waiting for the plane at the airport you would not sleep if the plane were near. Parents call their children to wake up and put their shoes on at the end of the trip. The swimming coach shouts, "Go on; you are almost there." Even the horse picks up his step as he nears the barn.

What is near? Salvation? Aren't we already saved? Sometimes it is used in the past tense sense (2 Tim. 1:9); in the present tense (Rom. 5:10); and obviously this is the future aspect, as in other places:

But since we are of the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope of *salvation*. (1 Thessalonians 5:8)

For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining *salvation* through our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Thessalonians 5:9)

Are they not all ministering spirits, sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit *salvation*? (Hebrews 1:14)

So Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time for *salvation* without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him. (Hebrews 9:28).

Who are protected by the power of God through faith for a *salvation* ready to be revealed in the last time. (1 Peter 1:5)

Obtaining as the outcome of your faith the *salvation* of your souls. (1 Peter 1:9)

So we are saved but not in full. We are not yet saved from all our sins, not yet saved from all the results of the fall, we don't yet have our

glorified body.

We know that our “*salvation is nearer than when we believed.*” Think of the progress you have made; it should encourage you to go on and not turn back. Don’t be like the fellow who swam two-thirds of the way across the river and decided he couldn’t make it and must turn back. Some left the John Wesley Powell Expedition when, lo, there was only one more rapid to endure. I am 25 years closer to heaven than when I believed. Look at all the Baca valleys through which you have passed. Think of all the Ebenezer’s that have been raised. We have seen Goliath’s fall. Much ground has already been covered and the Celestial City is so much closer. Shall I sleep when so near the pearly gates? Shall I not rouse myself and make it a well spent journey?

Also, regarding the time, look at the fact that “*the night is almost gone.*” What does it mean by *night*? It is this age that is ruled by the prince of darkness (John 13:30). It is this present evil world (Gal. 1:4). Darkness means ignorance, *Being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart* (Eph. 4:18). Ever since the fall of man, the world has been a dark place. Listen to the scripture language in Isaiah 60:2, *For behold, darkness will cover the earth, And deep darkness the peoples.* And then when Jesus came the gospel went out to the nations, *The people which sat in darkness saw great light* (Matt. 4:16). But still, even in the Pentecostal age, it remains a dark place:

And so we have the prophetic word made more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a *dark* place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts. (2 Peter 1:19)

So knowing this about the time, that *the night is almost gone*, it should affect our lives. If you wake up at 5:00, you might well figure that there is no need to go back to sleep; you might as well get up and get dressed, for the night is almost gone. How can we continue in any sinful slumber when this dispensation of evil is almost over, when the history of the universe is ready to be summed up, when our lives, labors, and struggles here are so brief? God has not called us to endure nor fight for a millennium.

We also know that “*the day is at hand.*” When you have got something really important that must be done, you have no trouble waking.

What *day*? Surely it has an eschatological designation—the day of the Lord. Listen to these scriptures:

Many will say to Me on that *day*, Lord, Lord. (Matthew 7:22)

But of that *day* and hour no one knows. (Matthew 24:36)

And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last *day*. (John 6:39)

He who rejects Me, and does not receive My sayings, has one who judges him; the word I spoke is what will judge him at the last *day*. (John 12:48)

Because He has fixed a *day* in which He will judge the world in righteousness. (Acts 17:31)

On the *day* when, according to my gospel, God will judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus. (Romans 2:16)

And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the *day of redemption*. (Ephesians 4:30)

For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the *day* of Christ Jesus. (Philippians 1:6)

When He comes to be glorified in His saints on that *day*. (2 Thessalonians 1:10)

For I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that *day*. (2 Timothy 1:12)

The Lord grant to him to find mercy from the Lord on that *day*. (2 Timothy 1:18)

In the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that *day*. (2 Timothy 4:8)

By this, love is perfected with us, that we may have confidence in the *day of judgment*; because as He is, so also are we in this world. (1 John 4:17)

And angels who did not keep their own domain, but

abandoned their proper abode, He has kept in eternal bonds under darkness for the judgment of the great *day*. (Jude 1:6)

So we ought to be getting dressed with the robes of righteousness. We ought to be working, laying up treasure in heaven. Can we sleep when there is gold to mine? Can we sleep when there is glory to gain? Can we sleep when we have sheaves to gather? Can we sleep when there is so much work to do on the temple (Rev. 3:2)? We need the wisdom of the ant:

Go to the ant, O sluggard, observe her ways and be wise, which, having no chief, officer or ruler, prepares her food in the summer, and gathers her provision in the harvest. How long will you lie down, O sluggard? When will you arise from your sleep? (Proverbs 6:6-9)

The ant has no guide but we have the guide of conscience and the guide of the Bible. We need the wisdom of the Gentiles (Luke 16:8). They are on the road with the beer truck before we are on our knees. How is it that before we knew the Lord we served sin so zealously and righteousness so slightly? The day of the Lord is at hand, that is, the eternal day when the bridegroom comes, when there will be no more time to live by faith, when all in the dark shall come to light, when motives shall be exposed and secrets judged. When the lights are turned on then we will want no contraband in hand. When the heavenly bridegroom comes, we don't want to be caught in bed with the world,

Blessed are those slaves whom the master shall find on the alert when he comes; truly I say to you, that he will gird himself to serve, and have them recline at the table, and will come up and wait on them. (Luke 12:37)

Conclusion and Application. Therefore (v. 12), in view of the truth, what should we do about it? *Lay aside the deeds of darkness*. It does not say, "let go and let God" or "whatever will be will be" or "well God knows," or "I'll have victory someday." It means to renounce, forsake, and repent of sin. If your dog dies you lay it aside. There is nothing complicated.

Some of these deeds are listed (three pairs):

1. *Drunkennes*—what tragedy is promoted by drink. Think of Noah and Lot. Drink is a thief for it will steal your reputation.

It is a liar for it promises joy but produces sorrow. It is a murderer—90% of auto accidents in Russia are due to drink. It is the devil's drink and as Billy Sunday said, "It is no good for the world except the underworld." God wants us under control and sober (Eph. 5:18).

2. *Sexual promiscuity* is from the Greek word *koite* which means to mate and is from a word meaning couch or bed. How many sell their virginity, their purity so cheaply. Tamar said, "What will you give me, that you may come in to me?" He said, therefore, "I will send you a kid from the flock" (Genesis 38:16).

3. *Sensuality*—lustful thoughts, clothing, looks, and books must be laid aside.

4. *Strife*—arguing, sharp answers and discord are deeds of darkness (James 3:16).

5. *Jealousy* is from the Greek word *zelos* which means hot, and in this usage it means to be stirred up because someone is trying to outdo you. Pilate knew Jesus was delivered up because of jealousy.

Now it says *put on*. It is a familiar picture, that of clothing. When day comes you get dressed.

First we are to put on *the armor of light*. Light is the strongest weapon—to walk in the light, to walk with a clear conscience, a holy walk, and a devoted will. McCheyne said, "A holy man in the hand of God is an awful weapon." If you are walking with known sin you are no scare to the devil, in any doubtful practice you are no scare to the devil, with a defiled conscience you have no armor and are wide open to the devil's darts. Some preachers have body guards; the reason is they have no armor. Do you see your life as that of a soldier? Do you see it as a fight? Let us not be like Samson, sleeping in some bed of lust when the Philistines are upon us, (Judg. 16:14).

Second, it says put on the Lord Jesus Christ. If you are a Christian, you already have Christ on, but this is a call for more, just like the call for more sacrifice in Romans 12:2 and in Ephesians 4:24 with the call to put on the new self. Let the Lord rule, be like him, imitate him, let him be seen on you. If you were going to some great event you would want to dress accordingly. A father might tell his son, "Here, put this on."

Third, we are to make no provision for the flesh. Flesh? That is the

remaining tendency to sin which finds expression in our embodied state. Formerly we were to lay aside, now we must make no provision for it to return. If you build concrete forms, you are making provision for concrete. If you go to grocery store, you are figuring on living another week. So also with sin. We must avoid the place of temptation. Don't even go near; don't associate with an angry man; don't even pick up certain magazines. One brother told me he never got victory over cigarettes till he quit buying them.

Finally, what is the New Testament method of sanctification? It says *walk as in the day*—be who you are. Act in accordance with the facts, *behave properly, walk properly, or honestly*—don't live a lie. Note there is an apparent contradiction—it says the day is at hand, and yet it also says we are in the day. We have been called out of the domain of darkness and have become children of light. We have been placed in the sphere of light, and are partakers already of the coming glory. We are seated in heaven already. It is like a parent saying to the teen-age son, “Don't act like a child.” We who have been awakened by a great light from heaven, should we be acting as though in the dark?

All this is held in light of eternity, the coming of Christ. We ought to see the uniqueness of Christianity again in this aspect of eschatology. We are saying that the world is coming to an end. We are saying the world is on a head-on collision course with Almighty God. We are talking about the mightiest event the cosmos has ever known apart from creation itself. We are saying there will be a regeneration. We are saying that everything points to this end. The philosophers have no explanation for history. Politics? It is a hopeless cause. Because of this unique event, we have a unique motive, an incentive for conduct, unique from all other world religions and that is constantly used as a catalyst regarding Christian conduct:

And Jesus said to them, “Truly I say to you, that you who have followed Me, in the *regeneration* when the Son of Man will sit on His glorious throne, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.” (Matthew 19:28)

Be on guard, that your hearts may not be weighted down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of life, and that day come on you suddenly like a trap; for it will come upon all those who dwell on the face of all the earth. But keep on the alert at all times, praying in order that you may have strength to escape all these things that are about to take place, and to

stand before the Son of Man. (Luke 21:34-36)

Many of the parables, the Dragnet, Wheat and Tares, Talents, Sheep and Goats are couched in this theme (Rom. 14:10; Heb. 10:25; 1 Peter 2:12; 2 Peter 3:11; 1 John 2:15, 17; and Rev. 16:15). We are in the last days:

In these *last days* has spoken to us in his Son. (Hebrews 1:2)

For He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these *last times* for the sake of you. (1 Peter 1:20)

And it shall be in the *last days*, God says, I will pour forth of my Spirit on all mankind. (Acts 2:17)

Children, it is the *last hour*...(1 John 2:18)

Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the *ends of the ages* have come. (1 Corinthians 10:11)

You too be patient; strengthen your hearts, for *the coming of the Lord is at hand*. (James 5:8)

The *end of all things* is at hand; therefore, be of sound judgment and sober spirit for the purpose of prayer. (1 Peter 4:7)

Surely there is not much sand left in the top of the Lord's hour-glass of human history. We ought to feel the urgency here and redeem the time. There is a danger of drifting, thinking "all is well." The New Testament leaves no place for: apathy, lethargy, complacency. One brother was likely right, "Wasting time is the number one sin of teens."

There is nothing more to happen and this is the explanation of the apostolic urgency. Why did Paul and other apostles say *at hand* way back then? It was spoken in a prophetic perspective. The coming of Christ ushered in the final stage of God's plan for the universe. There is nothing more to happen before the Lord comes. What an obligation we should feel toward our generation:

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession; so that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who has called you out of *darkness into his marvelous light*. (1 Peter 2:9)

To open their eyes, and to turn them from *darkness to light*.
(Acts 26:18)

May we go and do this with great zeal for our Lord!

PUT ON THE LORD JESUS CHRIST

13:14

But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts.

Here we have a powerful exhortation, a glorious call for the Christian soldier in fighting the good fight. Look at it phrase by phrase.

But.

This tells us what must be done in preparation for putting on the Lord Jesus Christ. It is saying “not that but this.” It is telling us that something must first be done—the putting off before the putting on just as with literal clothing; the dirty clothes are taken off before the clean are put on. It speaks of repentance and this must come logically before faith. Some do not do enough putting off. Contrarily, some dwell too much on the negative. What must first be put off? The deeds of darkness, and some are listed. It is striking that strife is as much a deed of darkness as is sexual immorality! See how much the Bible says against it:

Then Abram said to Lot, “Please let there be no *strife* between you and me, nor between my herdsmen and your herdsmen, for we are brothers. (Genesis 13:8)

A false witness who utters lies, and one who spreads *strife* among brothers. (Proverbs 6:19)

Through insolence comes nothing but *strife*, but wisdom is with those who receive counsel. (Proverbs 13:10)

Better is a dry morsel and quietness with it than a house full of feasting with *strife*. (Proverbs 17:1)

The beginning of *strife* is like letting out water, so abandon the quarrel before it breaks out. (Proverbs 17:14)

Keeping away from *strife* is an honor for a man, but any fool will quarrel. (Proverbs 20:3)

An arrogant man stirs up *strife*, but he who trusts in the LORD will prosper. (Proverbs 28:25)

For you are still fleshly. For since there is jealousy and *strife*

among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men? (1 Corinthians 3:3)

For I am afraid that perhaps when I come I may find you to be not what I wish and may be found by you to be not what you wish; that perhaps there may be *strife*, jealousy, angry tempers, disputes, slanders, gossip, arrogance, disturbances. (2 Corinthians 12:20)

And the servant of the Lord must not *strive*; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient. (2 Timothy 2:24 KJV)

Idolatry, sorcery, enmities, *strife*, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions. (Galatians 5:20)

Put on the Lord Jesus Christ.

Don't concentrate too much on the negative. The Christian should be characterized by the positive, by the Lord Jesus Christ.

Surely these believers had already put on Christ. He must be in us before he can be on us. Now, if you have, now do more. Put him on in your conduct as though he were the glory, the distinguishing mark of your life. Just as clothing is so visible to your body, so should Christ be for the soul.

It does not say carry Christ as though he were taken along in a supportive way, but put him on like clothing such that the Lord covers your personality. It does not say try him on like something that can be taken off again. He is put on permanently like old Peden of the Covenanters who being chased, never took his clothing off for years.

Have you ever put on Christ? Man is naked in his sinful state. And the only thing that will cover this spiritual poverty is Christ's robe of righteousness, not the fig leaves of good works or good intentions. Jesus is put on by believing, and thus his robe of perfect righteousness covers our guilt. If you have put on the Lord Jesus Christ in justification, then you can go on to do this in sanctification.

Have you put on the Lord Jesus as though he were your own, *fully identifying* with him just like clothing? Just as we might be reluctant to put on a dirty piece of clothing, so also we might be reluctant to put on a royal piece of clothing. A plain-clothes officer might go unnoticed. But a uniformed officer identifies with that authority. The distinguishing mark of a Christian is that he loves the Lord; he is excited about Christ. To him Christ is all. A dying man told me he had a little talk with Jesus.

That won't do.

It means to fully be like him. We are called to follow in his steps—what would Jesus do? What is the spirit of Christ? How did he answer? How would he act around children, around disciples—John laid on his chest. How did the Lord witness, win souls, preach, pray, and deal with devilish temptation?

We are called to put him on as *Lord*, as Master, as Boss, as King, and delight in his sovereign claim over our life, for better or for worse.

We are to put him on as *Jesus* which means Savior. We then trust him to save, to satisfy, to sanctify, in every way. If he is going to fail, we might as well find out now.

We are to put him on as *Christ* which means “anointed one.” He was anointed as Prophet, Priest, and King. As Prophet, we are instructed and guided by his word. As Priest we trust him to be our representative in the presence of the Holy God. As King I give him place on the throne of my heart.

What will be a garment to fit me to appear in glory? The Lord Jesus Christ! What will be an invincible shield against the darts? The Lord Jesus Christ!

What precautions must we take to not spoil our clothing?

It says to *make no provision* for the flesh, that remaining tendency to sin in our embodied state. If you don't want to get your clothes dirty, don't go down that path. If you don't want that dog around, don't feed it. Pampering won't do.

What incentives are given us in regard to our being properly clothed?

The night is almost gone and the day is at hand—the great day of the Lord, the wedding day. We don't want to be like that man in Matthew 22:12, 13:

And he said to him, “Friend, how did you come in here without wedding clothes?” And the man was speechless. Then the king said to the servants, “Bind him hand and foot, and throw him into the outer darkness; in that place there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

Put on the Lord Jesus Christ. This royal robe will put us in good standing before the King.

CHAPTER 14

ACCEPTING ONE ANOTHER AND DIFFERENCES IN THE FAITHFULNESS

14:1

Now accept the one who is weak in faith, but not for the purpose of passing judgment on his opinions. One man has faith...

Here we have an entirely new subsection of the main division in Romans which was introduced with that famous verse in 12:1, *present yourselves a living sacrifice*—a call for self-denial; and this carries right on through to 15:2—*not please self but others*.

You might ask, “How is it that we are to please others?” What about Galatians 1:10, *If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ*. How can we balance that out? The answer is in part that we now as Christians have died to it and we are trying to please others not for our good but their good.

So this is now a new subsection and a very difficult section—difficult to handle and to live. It is an important section. There is more on this than on baptism, the Lord’s supper or the Trinity. And some, failing to understand these truths have majored on minors and thereby, straining at gnats and swallowing camels, have hindered their testimony and their ministry, being *disapproved by men* (v. 18).

We have a sister passage in 1 Corinthians 8:10-13. That is concerning idolatry but this with ceremony; that deals with Gentile background and this deals with Jewish; that deals with pagan practice and this deals with things even God commanded.

This chapter could be entitled with the words from the first verse, “*Now Accept the One*.” This is repeated in verses 3, 18, and 15:7. It is kind of like Dad saying, “Come on boys, let’s try to get along with one another.” This chapter has to do with matters of indifference, things which are not universal, non-optional absolutes from God. It has to do with principles of conscience.

Verse one is the primary sentence of the chapter. It should read, *not judging (discerning) his reasonings*. The whole chapter has much to do with judging and not judging, for sister words in Greek come up in verses 3, 4, 5, 10 (twice), 13 (twice), and 22.

Various reasons are given in this chapter for accepting one another

and the first one is an acknowledgment of the fact that there are differences amongst the saints, particularly differences in the faith(v. 2). Consider...

The fact of differences in the faith.

See this in verses 1, 2, 5, 14, 22, 23, 15:1, and 15:13. What is this weakness in the faith? What does it mean to be strong (15:1)? It must be acknowledged that there is a difference in the *quantity* of faith:

In everything I showed you that by working hard in this manner you must help the *weak* and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He Himself said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." (Acts 20:35)

And without becoming *weak* in faith he contemplated his own body, now as good as dead since he was about a hundred years old, and the deadness of Sarah's womb. (Romans 4:19)

To the weak I became *weak*, that I might win the weak; I have become all things to all men, that I may by all means save some. (1 Corinthians 9:22)

Who is weak without my being *weak*? Who is led into sin without my intense concern? (2 Corinthians 11:29)

And we urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the *weak*, be patient with all men. (1 Thessalonians 5:14)

Therefore, strengthen the hands that are *weak* and the knees that are feeble. (Hebrews 12:12)

It is like electricity, there is current but it is low voltage. Just as with physical strength, some have more than others. Some attempt great things for God and expect great things from God. Think of George Mueller. Some are strong in faith. Some even have the gift of faith:

And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man *full of faith* and of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 6:5)

And Stephen, *full of faith* and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people. (Acts 6:8)

For he was a good man, and *full of the Holy Spirit and of faith*. And considerable numbers were brought to the Lord. (Acts 11:24)

One the other hand I am filled with power—with the Spirit of the Lord—and with justice and *courage* to make known to Jacob his rebellious act, even to Israel his sin. (Micah 3:8)

But here the meaning is a difference in the *quality* of faith. Verse one should read “*the faith*.” The faith is the truths that are believed. So being weak or strong has to do with a believer’s level of understanding, his knowledge of the truths regarding his liberty in Christ. See 1 Corinthians 8 (5 times weak is used); also, repeatedly, knowledge occurs.

Now concerning things sacrificed to idols, we *know* that we all have knowledge. *Knowledge* makes arrogant, but love edifies. (1 Corinthians 8:1)

However not all men have this *knowledge*; but some, being accustomed to the idol until now, eat food as if it were sacrificed to an idol; and their conscience being *weak* is defiled. (1 Corinthians 8:7)

So weakness means an inadequate understanding; his conscience has not been strengthened by the truth:

As we night and day keep praying most earnestly that we may see your face, and may complete what is lacking in your faith? (1 Thessalonians 3:10)

Yes, the weak brother understands justification by faith but unconsciously and inconsistently he drops back to a form of works in his sanctification, in his application, in the outworking of his salvation. He retains ceremony in his application of salvation and fails to enter into the liberty in Christ. Now in the case of the Galatian and Hebrew Christians, they were dropping back even farther to deny the gospel and deny the faith entirely. And that is why Paul does not give them the message (as here) of toleration but condemnation.

So, all Christians are not equal. It would seem to be so nice. But God in his sovereignty, able to handle us as he is, left us different. Now think of..

Reasons for differences in the faith or why we are not equal.

Yes, it is true all Christians are equal as far as regeneration—a holy seed has been planted by a sovereign work of grace. And all are equal as far as justification, no one has more righteousness than another, all

are equal to Christ. But after conversion many differences arise in the working out of salvation. The same seed is sown on different soils.

How is this? What are the factors? (1) *Natural ability*. This is intimated in Matthew 25:15, *And to one he gave five talents, to another, two, and to another, one, each according to his own ability*. Spurgeon went so far as to say God never calls one to preach who has a weak voice and a small chest. (2) *Similarly temperament*. A worrier will be more cautious also after he is converted. The analytical will be like that after he is converted. The same with the intellectual. Paul was zealous before and then after. (3) *Background*. Think of the difference if you were a convert from Judaism. We are dealing here with the sovereignty of God—parents, country, culture, where born, when born, etc. Likely that is why Spurgeon had liberty, for a while, to smoke cigars. (4) *Teachers we have been under*. How this affects our thinking. (5) *Length of time we have been a Christian*.

Two equally diligent Christians are yet different, the elder having more experience, a broader view compared to the novice. Ironically, *those weak in the faith often have more scruples*, more restraints than stronger. They are more “religious.” See verses 2 and 5. One Sunday evening, after having talked about the things of God with a visiting sister all evening, it being late, we went right to bed. The sister later expressed her disappointment that we had not had our family devotions. One woman, a professing believer, spit the food back out, having forgot to pray first. One sister could not have her quiet time in the morning without first making the bed. As a young believer I was very conservative regarding the Lord’s Day. I reproved my mother for washing my clothes Sunday afternoon. Timothy was circumcised for the sake of the weak-faith Hebrew Christians. Then again, sometimes it is the opposite. I can look back on things I used to have no conviction about and am now ashamed—language, immodest or inappropriate apparel, places I went, etc. Then, aside from the givens, there is the matter of personal diligence:

For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil. (Hebrews 5:12-14)

They had not exercised. Failure in Bible reading? Malnutrition leads to weakness.

So we must see that not everybody is where we ourselves are at in the Christian life. How many differences of opinion and viewpoints there are on things that have nothing to do with absolutes, the non-optional, universal absolutes of God, but are our own personal conviction. Yet, we are called to accept one another and bear with one another if they are indeed in the faith (15:1). Now consider...

Examples of differences in the faith.

We are dealing in Chapter 14 with things that are (1) *absolutely neutral*. There is nothing actually wrong or right one way or the other. The Bible is silent on them. There is the category also of (2) *things unclear*. The Lord's Day observance issue has points on both sides and good men on both sides. Also there are points on which the (3) *Bible is not strong*, such as mode of baptism, frequency of observing the Lord's Supper, etc. They are not cardinal or major, but tangent. Also there is the category of *sound wisdom, or negatively, things unhealthy*. We can't say it is right or wrong; we can't say it is sin but yet it is not wise. For example when people talk about dating, purchasing a car or a house, which Bible translation, music, and eating habits. In this we can't come on strong. We can give our advice but then must give room for growth in grace. The brother has his reasons—let each be fully persuaded in all sincerity and honesty before God. Also there is the category of the *dangerous*. We can't really even say it is unwise but yet it is dangerous. Things like TV, public schooling instead of home schooling, college education, etc. Denominations have been started over differences like this. Yet in it all, we must acknowledge they may have their reasons. We must acknowledge that's where they are at and then keep hands off. Sure you can talk about it, but then leave it alone. Jethro said it well:

If you do this thing *and God so commands you*, then you will be able to endure. (Exodus 18:23)

Sometimes it is a case of a personal cross—others may, you cannot; don't judge (v. 22).

And thinking of this matter of tolerance, *some things may indeed be sin* and yet we forbear. The sin of talkativeness or of obesity and gluttony may indeed be hurting a brother's testimony and growth, being a grievance to the Spirit, yet all we can do is reprove and give

time for growth in grace. We must receive him; apparently God has. Are we holier than Him? There are in fact degrees of sin.

He who delivered Me to you has the greater sin. (John 19:11)

Some sins cannot be tolerated. The Lord confronted the rich young ruler about his covetousness, making it a condition of his entering the kingdom.

So we are dealing here with minor issues, matters of personal difference (v. 2), *one man has faith*. We are not talking about the absolutes of God. We must never compromise the gospel, what it takes to be right with God.

So *one man has faith* to have a beard and another does not. One man has faith to take in a certain entertainment and recreational activity and other does not. One has faith to put on boxing gloves and another does not. One man has faith to preach on the streets and another does not. So much in this area is a personal judgment call.

The examples given are foods (vv. 2, 3, 6) and drink (vv. 17, 21) and days (vv. 5, 6). There were three kinds of problems with these: (1) idolatry (1 Cor. 8); (2) heresy (Col. 2:16; 1 Timothy 4:3)—false religion often deals much in food as in Romanism, Islam with their Ramadan, 7th day Adventist; and (3) ceremony, with which Chapter 14 deals.

Foods were big in Judaism. Peter needed three revelations in order to be convinced that these things were now clean. To mollify the Jews they conceded for the Gentiles.

That you abstain from things sacrificed to idols and from blood and from things strangled and from fornication. (Acts 15:29)

The Jews had their clean / unclean laws (Lev. 3:17, 11:4, etc). It is obvious from verse 14 we are not dealing with the matter of nutritional differences. Some did not understand the applications as to the liberty in the new covenant (Mark 7:1-3; 1 Tim. 4:4). Days were big in Judaism. Think of that Old Testament ceremonial law:

And ye shall observe the *feast of unleavened bread*; for in this selfsame day have I brought your hosts out of the land of Egypt: therefore shall ye observe this day in your generations as a permanent ordinance. (Exodus 12:17)

Also you shall observe the *Feast of the Harvest* of the first fruits of your labors from what you sow in the field; also the *Feast of the Ingathering* at the end of the year when you gather in the

fruit of your labors from the field. (Exodus 23:16)

Plus they had their Old Testament man-made religious traditions:

Thus says the Lord of hosts, 'The fast of the fourth, the fast of the fifth, the fast of the seventh, and the fast of the tenth months will become joy, gladness, and cheerful feasts for the house of Judah; so love truth and peace.' (Zechariah 8:19)

Here in Rome, as other places, these Jews did not understand yet fully what happened in redemption. Now to the Galatians and the Colossians it was a different picture.

You observe days and months and seasons and years. (Galatians 4:10)

Therefore let no one act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day. (Colossians 2:16)

Paul's attitude was one of condemnation, not toleration. Matthew Henry says that in Rome they were following ceremony to the grave, but at Galatia they were raking them out of the ashes. Does the Sabbath and the Lord's Day observance come in here? I would think it does—one says there is this one day above others. It predates even the Ten Commandments; it is a creation ordinance and the Ten Commandments only fixed it on the Jews. It was made for man (Mark 2:27). When the Lord finished creation he set aside a day and when he finished the new creation he did the same—the Lord's Day (Rev. 1:10). Another says each day is alike—I am a Christian and each day is spent as unto the Lord. The new covenant abrogated the old and even the Ten Commandments which are the plank of the old covenant. There is nothing in the New Testament which commands sabbath observance and nothing in the New Testament which condemns sabbath breaking. The early church allowed work on each day and all Rome did was make Sunday official. I know of two brothers in the Lord and in the flesh which have such a difference here that they can scarcely talk about the things of God together.

One has faith to observe birthdays and another does not. The same with Christmas day. Some go all out as *unto the Lord* with it. Others say take advantage of the day for God; use these days; don't make a religious festival out of them but use them for God. Some want nothing to do with it; it is pagan, worldly, and idolatrous.

How does it happen? It has to do with the mind, with mental association. It is a matter of what he thinks (v. 14). Just as a Christian might be able to free his mind from the idolatry associated with the meat, so also one might be able to sing a Christmas hymn. Of course, often there are other factors involved—letting the world influence our worship, for example.

What is the danger in all these differences?

A. *Despising*, judging, contempt (v. 3, 10). If we are not careful, we'll judge one another as to how they answer the phone.

B. *Divisions* (15:5). This was always a great burden for Paul:

Now I exhort you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree, and there be no divisions among you, but that you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment. (1 Corinthians 1:10)

Denominations have started over these minor issues.

C. *Disputes* (v. 1), loss of peace (v. 19). It is a problem in the New Testament church as in the old,

Now when Moses' father-in-law saw all that he was doing for the people, he said, "What is this thing that you are doing for the people? Why do you alone sit as judge and all the people stand about you from morning until evening?" (Exodus 18:14)

D. *Damage* (vv. 15, 20). These are not things that can be relegated to the sovereignty of God.

What should be done in view of all these differences in the faith?

A. *Accept one another, all brethren, the weak as well as the strong* (15:7). If God does, (v. 3) can't we? Are we holier than he? Our communion should be as inclusive as God's. If they are in Christ they are in with us. It should be as exclusive: all that are outside of Christ are out with us. There can be no pure unity if you are including anyone who is not in Christ. (*Churches often will not excommunicate blasphemers.*) There can be no pure unity if you are excluding anyone who is in Christ. That again is the beginning of a denomination. Separation and identification are equally important.

B. *Acknowledge God* (verse 4). Keep hands off the servant of another; don't judge or hold him in contempt. Let them learn like you did that there's no water in those worldly cisterns, that it is a mirage.

“But,” you say, “*he might become drawn even more into the world.*” God is able to make him stand. If you are so strong in faith, then believe God for that one. Don’t hold him in contempt, despise, shake your head, withdraw, and cut him off. If you’re so spiritual then love him (verse 15) then pursue (verse 19).

C. *Acquiesce; agree* (15:1). Generally the stronger brother must bow to the one with the scruples (15:1). I know of a woman advised by a Christian doctor to take some wine for her ailments. She did not, lest it be an offense. Regardless of who is stronger or weaker, the point is not to offend. This self-denial goes even beyond neutral things and applies also to the good (v. 16).

D. *Analyze; judge this* (v. 13). If you know that this offends, that is sin (v. 20). Listen to Paul:

And so, by sinning against the brethren and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ. Therefore, if food causes my brother to stumble, I will never eat meat again, that I will not cause my brother to stumble. (1 Corinthians 8:12)

The attitude, “I have perfect peace to do that and I’m going to show them.” You parade it before their eyes and shove it down their mouth—that is sin, subtle religious flesh. Remember:

But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him to have a heavy millstone be hung around his neck, and to be drowned in the depth of the sea. (Matthew 18:6)

The Christian does not have luxury of saying I don’t care. You may have liberty to have a Christmas tree or wear this or that, but you dare not bring it into a fellowship situation if it is offensive, whether in the meeting or if you are at another’s home or they are in yours. We must never even do anything doubtful. Only walk in good faith (v. 23).

All this involves major self-denial. But there is glory here, (15:6). It takes a big heart like the heart of God to accept the erring (15:7). We are in a selfish generation, an ‘I don’t care’ generation, a ‘so what’ generation. But every action you do affects others, verse 7. If you have faith (14:22) you don’t have to do it. Ironically, on the liberal side, we can get into bondage trying to exercise our liberty. On the conservative side, we can get into idolatry trying to stand against idolatry. We must do all we can to maintain unity. It must be a very important matter,

for it gets right down to where we live—my opinions. We don't care so much whether others think we are wealthy or pretty, strong, but we sure want to be found to be wise. We want our judgment to be respected. May we then endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

REASONS FOR RECEIVING ONE ANOTHER FOR WE ARE THE LORD'S

14:8

For if we live, we live for the Lord, or if we die, we die for the Lord; therefore whether we live or die, we are the Lord's.

Romans, Chapter 14 deals with differences in the faith, neutral matters, matters indifferent, optional points or non-essential. Is that valid? In Acts 15:28, they laid on the Gentiles *no greater burden than these essentials*.

Paul, in verse 1, calls for us to receive one another. Now in verses 3-12 we are given four reasons to accept or receive one another. The first is ...

The first reason to accept one another is God has accepted him (v.3).

This brother has been accepted by God. This is quite an emphasis in scripture:

Whoever *receives* this child in My name receives Me. (Luke 9:48)

Whatever city you enter, and they *receive* you, eat what is set before you. (Luke 10:8)

I am come in my Father's name, and you do not receive Me: if another comes in his own name, you will *receive* him. (John 5:43)

And when he wanted to go across into Achaia, the brethren encouraged him and wrote to the disciples to welcome him.... (Acts 18:27)

And I saw him saying to me, "Make haste, and get out of Jerusalem quickly: because they will not *accept* your testimony concerning Me." (Acts 22:18)

That I may be rescued from those who are disobedient in Judaea; and that my service for Jerusalem may prove acceptable to the saints. (Romans 15:31)

That you *receive* her in the Lord, in a manner worthy of the

saints. (Romans 16:2)

Receive us; we have wronged no man. (2 Corinthians 7:2 KJV)

Receive him then in the Lord with all joy; and hold men like him in high regard. (Philippians 2:29)

Aristarchus my fellow prisoner, sends you his greetings, and also Barnabas's, cousin Mark about whom you received instructions; if he comes to you, welcome him. (Colossians 4:10)

Whom I have sent again: thou therefore *receive* him, that is, mine own bowels. (Philemon 1:12 KJV)

If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, *receive* him not into your house, neither bid him God speed. (2 John 1:10 KJV)

We therefore ought to *receive* such, that we might be fellow helpers to the truth. (3 John 1:8 KJV)

And not content therewith, neither doth he himself *receive* the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church. (3 John 1:10 KJV)

But more importantly, has God received me?

And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and *receive* you, ... (John 14:3 KJV)

And they went on stoning Stephen, as he called on the Lord, and said, Lord Jesus, *receive* my spirit. (Acts 7:59)

But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is *accepted* with him. (Acts 10:35 KJV)

Wherefore we labor, that, whether present or absent, we may be *accepted* of him. (2 Corinthians 5:9 KJV)

Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will *receive* you (2 Corinthians 6:17 KJV)

To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us *accepted* in the beloved. (Ephesians 1:6 KJV)

If God has received this other fellow, shouldn't we? If God has accepted

him, befriended him, taken him into fellowship, is close to him, and considers him on his side, then shouldn't we? They did not receive Paul, but Barnabas told them he was received by the Lord.

But Barnabas took hold of him and brought him to the apostles and described to them how he had seen the Lord on the road, and that He had talked to him, and how at Damascus he had spoken out boldly in the name of Jesus. (Acts 9:27)

Are we holier than the Lord? Do we have more scruples than the Lord, more qualifications, or higher standards than the Lord? Have you ever been in an embarrassing situation where you have been holding the line and the boss comes in and says, "It's OK"?

"But," you say, "they have this glaring inconsistency, this disgusting hypocrisy, embarrassing childishness, strain of worldliness, and it is like they are on kind of a different wave-length than me." Receive them! "But I don't want to confirm them in their error." Receive them! Yes, there is a time to stand aloof, a time to excommunicate, a time to discern true and false brothers. But likely many of the surprises on the judgment day will be souls who, though they were not received here by men, they will be found to have been received by God. Remember Lazarus (Luke 16:25).

The second reason to accept one another is in verse 4:

This brother is *the servant of another*—this brother is owned by God. The picture is that of a farmer criticizing the neighbor's hired man for plowing a crooked furrow. It is like a guest criticizing the host's maid for folding the napkins a certain way. We must beware of being a meddler.

Also, this brother, being a servant of the Lord, is centering his life around God and his glory and will (v. 6) *for the Lord, gives thanks to God*. With these kind of motives, he can't be too far wrong.

Now verses 7 and 8 are connected—*for*. It is a general statement of the particular example in verse 6. *Not one (of us Christians) lives for himself*. Is it a statement about solidarity of the human race—no man is an island? Is it a statement about the co-dependency of the body? It is true, every move we make sends ripples. Yet it does not appear that this is the meaning, but rather it is about the centrality of Christ in the believer's life as evidenced by verse 8. And the point is this, the Christian is always governed by his relationship to the Lord;

the brother is trying, give him a break.

What a “given” statement of the Christian—*we live for the Lord*. The Christian has denied himself, and that is the first thing true of a true Christian. Self has been dethroned and Christ exalted. His mind, emotions, and will, are all pointed at the Lord. All his energies and motives are transformed into one main effort—to glorify the Lord and to do his will. He has *presented his body a living sacrifice* and his *members instruments of righteousness*. He is *enslaved to God*. Being a priest, he has *holy to the Lord* written on his mind. Sure there are differences in consecration, yet there is a substantial intention—*this one thing I do*. Away with the teaching that Lordship is optional.

I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. (Galatians 2:20)

And He died for all, that they who live should no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf. (2 Corinthians 5:15)

And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus. (Colossians 3:17)

Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord... (Colossians 3:23)

Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself a people for His own possession. (Titus 2:14)

Dying? *We die for the Lord*? We don't decide when, where, how we will die. Suicide is out of the question. It is none of our business whether we will die a martyr's death or a normal death, a sudden death or slow death. Listen to Paul:

According to my earnest expectation and hope, that I shall not be put to shame in anything, but that with all boldness, Christ shall even now, as always, be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. (Philippians 1:20)

Often we think of fruitful life, but how about a fruitful death? This sounds like a fruitful, God glorifying death:

Now this He said, signifying by what kind of death he would glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He said to him, “Follow Me!” (John 21:19)

Now the poor man died and was carried away by the angels to Abraham's bosom; and the rich man also died and was buried. (Luke 16:22)

And he said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened up and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God." (Acts 7:56)

And I heard a voice from heaven, saying, "Write, 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on!'" "Yes," says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow with them." (Revelation 14:13)

With all this evidence, we can make only one conclusion. *We are the Lord's* (v. 8). All you do *is for the Lord*. The application? We should keep our hands off. It is a matter of ownership.

And now even the basis for this consecration is given in verse 9, *to this end Christ died and rose or lived again*. Because our Lord Jesus died and rose, he conquered death. He is Lord. The position that our Lord now occupies is the result of his death and resurrection. His mediatorial rule and dominion had to be secured (Matt. 28:18; Phil. 2:11; and Rev. 1:18). His exaltation was after humiliation. As a man he could not have been so exalted there if not for his death and resurrection. Death was an enemy and it had to be conquered. If not for that, all would have been held by the grave. Jesus was the *first to rise from the dead, the firstborn of the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep*. Death is now our servant, our possession. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 3:22, "Whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or things present or things to come; all things belong to you." Death is but the grim porter to usher us into the palace of God. Moody came near to death and called it his coronation day. What is the focus of all this? It tells us how much this brother is the Lord's.

The third reason to accept one another is in verse 4:

Stand he will, for God is able to make Him stand—this brother is supported by God. God will indeed make him stand—he has been loved with an everlasting love. Have you noticed all the "God is able" verses?

Able to keep. (2 Timothy 1:12)

Able to do exceeding abundantly. (Ephesians 3:20)

Able to make all grace abound. (2 Corinthians 9:8)

Able to come to aid the tempted. (Hebrews 2:18)

Able to subdue all. (Philippians 3:21)

Able to save to uttermost. (Hebrews 7:25.)

Able to keep you from falling. (Jude 24)

God is big enough to handle this brother. Herein is rest—I don't need to feel that this brother's welfare is contingent on my input. And what we have here is a statement of the eternal security of the believer. God is able and God is willing:

All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out. (John 6:37)

And I give eternal life to them, and they shall never perish; and no one shall snatch them out of My hand. (John 10:28)

If it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. (Matthew 24:24)

And whom He predestined, these He also called; and whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified. (Romans 8:30)

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? (Romans 8:35)

For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. (Romans 11:29)

Who are protected by the power of God, through faith to a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. (1 Peter 1:5)

When he falls, he will not be hurled headlong; because the Lord is the One who holds his hand. (Psalm 37:24)

Another reason to not judge, but to accept one another is in verses 10-12.

Each of us shall give an account—this brother is to be judged by the Lord. We shall all stand...a most awesome statement.

I would think verse 10 should read of *Christ* instead of God as some have it. First, Paul was just talking about the Lord. Second, verse 11 is taken by Paul in Philippians 2:11 as Christ. Also, from the standpoint

that the New Testament emphasis is that the Lord Jesus will judge. In the Old Testament, the emphasis is that God is the judge:

Far be it from Thee to do such a thing, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous and the wicked are treated alike. Far be it from Thee! shall not the Judge of all the earth deal justly? (Genesis 18:25)

Boast no more so very proudly, Do not let arrogance come out of your mouth; For the LORD is a God of knowledge, And with Him actions are weighed. (1 Samuel 2:3)

Rejoice, young man,...And follow the impulses of your heart and the desires of your eyes. Yet know that God will bring you to judgment for all these things. (Ecclesiastes 11:9)

For God will bring every act to judgment, everything which is hidden, whether it is good or evil. (Ecclesiastes 12:14)

But in the New Testament, the thrust is that judgment is committed to the Son:

For not even the Father judges anyone, but He has given all judgment to the Son. (John 5:22)

On the day when, according to my gospel, God will judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus. (Romans 2:16)

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ.... (2 Corinthians 5:10)

But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne. (Matthew 25:31)

Because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead. (Acts 17:31)

Think of the characteristics of the judgment given us in this passage:

It is a universal judgment—*we shall all, every knee, every tongue*. All the great preachers and all the great sinners and all the great kings shall stand before the Lord. Each husband alone, wife alone, and baby alone. That baby may not have put his knee to the floor yet, but his knee will bow.

It will be a humbling judgment—*every knee will bow*. That speaks of submission to authority, to supremacy. The Napoleons, Alexanders, and popes maybe had thousands bow before them and never did they bow before another. Yet, they will bow before King Jesus.

It will be a compulsory judgment—*shall*. It is not a matter of will you bow, but when you will. All will. We can either bow now by faith or then, on the great day of the Lord, by force. *Knowing the terror of the Lord, we ought to persuade men*.

It will be a God-glorifying judgment—*confess*. Which seems more likely than *give praise* as it fits most usages of the Greek word in the New Testament and also as it compares with Paul's use in Philippians 2:11. Men shall specifically confess Jesus' Lordship—you gave me life and breath and all things; you gave me that job; you raised up nations; you had all claims on me.

It will be a thorough judgment—*account*. We shall give an account of our stewardship:

a) Our deeds

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. (2 Corinthians 5:10)

b) Our words

And I say to you, that every careless word that men shall speak, they shall render account for it in the day of judgment. (Matthew 12:36)

c) Our thoughts, the secrets

On the day when, according to my gospel, God will judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus. (Romans 2:16)

d) Our motives

Therefore do not go on passing judgment before the time, but wait until the Lord comes who will both bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives of men's hearts; and then each man's praise will come to him from God. (1 Corinthians 4:5)

And this passage applies specifically to the judgment of believers—we,

us. It is not regarding our salvation, for we have already been judged in Christ (John 5:24; Rom. 8:1). But it is our works, rewards. For example, it appears that authority can be gained:

And he said to him, "Well done, good slave, because you have been faithful in a very little thing, be in authority over ten cities." (Luke 19:17)

It matters how we used time, how we improved opportunities for our king and his kingdom. It appears that joy can be gained.

For who is our hope or joy or crown of exultation? Is it not even you, in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming? (1 Thessalonians 2:19)

It appears that loss can occur.

If any man's work is burned up, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, yet so as through fire. (1 Corinthians 3:15)

The point in all this is that this brother is the Lord's and he will take care of him. The Lord will balance the scales, will judge him for his deeds and expose the motives. We won't have to answer for his sins and shortcomings.

Conclusion.

Paul states it:

Therefore let us not judge one another anymore. (Romans 14:13)

No one is in a position to judge; we must not play God, not in matters that are indifferent. On major issues, that is another matter. See:

For I, on my part, though absent in body but present in spirit, have already judged him who has so committed this, as though I were present. (1 Corinthians 5:3)

But he that is spiritual judgeth all things... (1 Corinthians 2:15)

Able to admonish... (Romans 15:14)

But in these things we should not be spiritual detectives, or at least not in a heavy handed sense. May God help us to judge how to judge.

And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment. (Philippians 1:9)

ACCEPTABLE SERVICE IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD

14:17

"For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

What is the kingdom of God?

Jesus spoke often of the kingdom of God or the kingdom of heaven. Are they the same? Yes. See how they are used in consecutive verses:

And Jesus said to His disciples, "Truly I say to you, it is hard for a rich man to enter the **kingdom** of heaven." (Matthew 19:23)

And again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the **kingdom** of God. (Matthew 19:24)

Also see how they are used interchangeably from Matthew to Luke:

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 5:3)

And turning His gaze toward His disciples, He began to say, "Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God." (Luke 6:20)

But see how much the Lord Jesus spoke of the kingdom of heaven:

Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 5:10)

Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and so teaches others, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 5:19)

Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, On earth as it is in heaven. (Matthew 6:10 KJV)

And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Yours is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen. (Matthew 6:13)

But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you. (Matthew 6:33)

Not everyone who says to Me, “Lord, Lord,” will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven. (Matthew 7:21)

And Jesus was going about all the cities and the villages, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom.... (Matthew 9:35)

And He answered and said to them, “To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been granted.” (Matthew 13:11)

He presented another parable to them, saying, “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field.” (Matthew 13:24)

It is here called a *kingdom*. What are we to get from this? A kingdom is where a king rules. It is God’s kingdom; it is where he rules. God rules as king over all creation.

The LORD has established His throne in the heavens; And His sovereignty rules over all. (Psalm 103:19)

For His dominion is an everlasting dominion, And His kingdom endures from generation to generation. And all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, but He does according to His will in the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of earth; And no one can ward off His hand or say to Him, “What hast Thou done?” (Daniel 4:34, 35)

Also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will. (Ephesians 1:11)

There’s not a bird that chirps, not a dog that barks, nor worm that crawls apart from the King. He makes the nations prove his love and wisdom.

For the kingdom is the LORD’S, And He rules over the nations. (Psalm 22:28)

But is this talking about that? Surely not. Maybe it is talking about the theocracy, the reign that God had over his Old Testament people, that religious nation called Israel. Surely that is not it. That is why John and Jesus preached the way they did — anticipating the kingdom.

The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent

and believe in the gospel. (Mark 1:15)

But surely this is talking about God's spiritual rule over the hearts of men, the Christians; it is his rule of the new creation, the New Testament people. This is talking about God's spiritual kingdom entered by the operation of the finger of God. It is when the Spirit of God enters the heart of man, for unless a man be born again he cannot enter the kingdom. It is entered by submission to the absolute total rule of King Jesus.

Truly I say to you, unless you are converted and become like children, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 18:3)

Notice it is not called a club, association or partnership but a kingdom. This religion called Christianity rules in the hearts of men. That's where King Jesus has set up his throne. When he says go, you go. We are those who tremble at his Word. Are you in the kingdom? Have you ever run up the white flag of unconditional surrender? Have you ever put God's interests first in your life?

But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you. (Matthew 6:33)

What things are not essentials in the kingdom of God?

Meat and drink! This is a reference to the theocratic kingdom of the old covenant, with all its visible, external, physical, and earthly elements. In the Old Testament they had their *regulations and ceremonies* pertaining to food and drink and washings.

Speak to the sons of Israel, saying, "These are the creatures which you may eat from all the animals that are on the earth." (Leviticus 11:2)

He shall abstain from wine and strong drink; he shall drink no vinegar, whether made from wine or strong drink, neither shall he drink any grape juice, nor eat fresh or dried grapes. (Numbers 6:3)

And whoever picks up any of their carcasses shall wash his clothes and be unclean until evening. (Leviticus 11:25)

And when they come from the market place, they do not eat unless they cleanse themselves; and there are many other

things which they have received in order to observe, such as the washing of cups and pitchers and copper pots. (Mark 7:4)

They had their tabernacle and sanctuary, terms foolishly employed by many in the New Testament with reference to their meeting place. All these things (these meats, drinks, days) were at best shadows, and at worst superstition and worldliness—the elemental principles of the world. Jesus had to deal with this.

There is nothing outside the man which can defile him if it goes into him; but the things which proceed out of the man are what defile the man. (Mark 7:15)

Peter had to deal with this.

Your adornment must not be merely external—braiding the hair, and wearing gold jewelry, or putting on dresses; but let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God. (1 Peter 3:3, 4)

Paul was always emphasizing this.

Therefore, no one is to act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day. (Colossians 2:16)

But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God. (Romans 2:29)

David even knew this reality under the Old Testament economy.

The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise. (Psalm 51:17)

And God, lest they did not get the message, wiped out the Old Testament economy in 70 AD. That is the background of this chapter and thus Paul says it is not meat and drink, not externals, but internals, spiritual matters, the Spirit of Christ reigning in the heart.

What are essentials in the kingdom of God?

Three characteristics are given: righteousness which is Godward, peace which is toward the neighbor (v. 19), and joy which is inward. These are not comprehensive but very representative.

Righteousness

Is this imputed righteousness spoken of in Romans 4:3?

For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. (Romans 4:3)

Or is it the imparted righteousness spoken of in Romans 6:18 and 8:4?

And having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness. (Romans 6:18)

So that the requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. (Romans 8:4)

Commentators are divided, but surely this is the imparted, actual, personal righteousness.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. (Matthew 5:6)

It is synonymous with holiness.

In holiness and righteousness before Him all our days. (Luke 1:75)

It is conformity to the standard of God's law.

And they were both righteous in the sight of God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and requirements of the Lord. (Luke 1:6)

How do we know it is imparted and not imputed righteousness? The other two characteristics give it the sense. *Peace* is, from verse 19, not legal but personal. And *joy* is obviously subjective. Also, we have in verse 18 *serves*. That is not a legal thing. Then the phrase *in the Holy Spirit* is another indicator that it is experiential.

Also righteousness is used this way in Matthew 5:20:

For I say to you, that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.

And the following context in Matthew 5 proves the Lord is speaking of an inward righteousness, surpassing the external righteousness.

Noah, Job, and John the Baptist were righteous men (Gen. 6:9; Job 1:1;

Mark 6:20). This is one distinguishing mark of the true Christian.

By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother. (1 John 3:10)

It is one of the outstanding features of the Christian in heaven.

And it was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. (Revelation 19:8)

Peace

This is not peace with God, as in Romans 5:1, but peace of God; not peace in heaven but peace in the heart (15:13), especially interpersonal (Rom. 12:18; 14:19; Eph. 4:3; 2 Tim. 2:22; Heb. 12:14; Ps. 133:1-3). Eight times in the New Testament, God is called the God of peace. It is more than others (Rom. 15:33; 16:20; 1 Cor. 14:33; 2 Cor. 13:11; Phil. 4:9; 1 Thess. 5:23; 2 Thess. 3:16; Heb. 13:20). It is a rare jewel in a world at war—war somewhere they say every year except for 300 years out of the history of the human race. It is no easy thing to establish peace in the borders of your heart and overcome the strain, stress, sweat, and strife. It is no easy thing to have peace in your house or in your church. When Jesus' birth was announced it was revolutionary:

To shine upon those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace. (Luke 1:79)

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men. (Luke 2:14)

Joy

This is obviously experiential (Rom. 15:13). This is a great distinguishing mark between true and false Christians. The non-Christian can rejoice when all is well but the Christian rejoices even in tribulation.

Yet I will exult in the LORD, I will rejoice in the God of my salvation. (Habakkuk 3:18)

What is the source and sphere of all kingdom virtues?

The *Holy Spirit*. Formerly we were devoid of him (Jude 19), like an unplugged lamp, like clouds without rain. But now we have been regenerated by the Spirit and we live in the realm of the Spirit.

For we are the true circumcision, who worship in the Spirit

of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh. (Philippians 3:3)

But now we have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we were bound, so that we serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter. (Romans 7:6)

So, are we talking about *righteousness* and victory over sin and inward corruption? Do we expect to break away from our old master the prince of darkness? Do we expect to do good, we who are accustomed to do evil?

Can the Ethiopian change his skin Or the leopard his spots?
Then you also can do good who are accustomed to doing evil.
(Jeremiah 13:23)

Do we actually expect to be in this life literally conformed to Christ? Apart from the Holy Spirit we might as well chop the tree down without an ax head on the handle. We need a power outside of ourselves—the Spirit of God.

But if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live. (Romans 8:13)

God won't quit; he started and will not quit till we are perfectly righteous. My father was helping me align the table saw—which can be a task. I said that we had it good enough. He replied, "It's not good enough till it's right."

Do you long for *peace* like a river, peace that passes understanding? Is it possible to pass through tense situations without fizzing? Is it possible to control your spirit and not bite someone's head off? Is it possible to smile at all your foes and the future too? Is it possible to get along with one another as a church in intimacy?

Without the Spirit we are a city without walls and vulnerable to every fiery dart. But the Spirit teaches us to trust. The colt will run at every fright, but the old mare has learned to stay right there and keep on feeding. A lot of our peace is through staying prayed up.

Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:6-7)

We can't chase away the flies of envy, jealousy, and strife. We need oil

on our head and then it is easy.

Do you expect to have *joy*, joy unspeakable in this dark world of sin, in this vile and perishing body? The new wine will do it. The flies of discouragement can not sit on the oil of gladness. The boat that is hung up on rocks of despair will sail on in high tide. Praise God for the omnipotent equipment—a power beyond ourselves. It is a wonder we don't explode being wired to divine electricity.

And what is the surpassing greatness of his power toward us who believe? These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might. (Ephesians 1:19)

Conclusion

Am I in the kingdom? Am I in the Spirit? Have I been born again? I know of one man who a few years ago was a church officer, and who rejoiced greatly in the things of God but is now in adultery headed for hell. It is possible to be strongly influenced by the Spirit like Balaam and yet have it be merely an external thing.

If I am in the kingdom, this text puts it clear. Some things just do not matter to God and others are paramount and we ought to concentrate on them, not pictures and patterns but purity of motives and power over depression:

1. not personal opinions and preference but purity and power,
2. not symbols and shadows but sanctification,
3. not ceremonies but the souls of men
4. not customs but the cross—the personal cross in my life,
5. not tradition but the truths of God,
6. not externals but heart righteousness—taming the tongue, training it to edify, and not being a hypocrite. One time at a yard sale the police asked all to move their cars. All did except the religiously dressed women.

The kingdom of God is not vitamins, speaking in tongues, the doctrine of election, or philanthropy, or church. We don't want to be known for anything (personal appearance, home schooling, home births, birth control, etc.) but Christ. What impression do we give off? Do we give others the impression that Christianity is many don'ts? Our great need is reality.

But I will come to you soon, if the Lord wills, and I shall find

out, not the words of those who are arrogant, but their power.
(1 Corinthians 4:19)

We must admit there is such a thing as *weightier* matters. Some are camels and others only gnats. These things do and don't leave the other undone. We are in danger of dealing with pennies when we should be dealing with dollars. It is possible to be dusting when we ought to be remodeling, to be combing our hair when we ought to be rescuing the perishing. There are some things we won't be asked at the judgment seat. The message here is that we should not be concerned to exercise our liberties (meat and drink), but rather to edify others in holiness. You want to serve Christ? This is acceptable service (v. 18).

Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear. (Matthew 13:43 KJV)

THE NECESSITY OF OPERATING BY FAITH

14:23

Whatever is not from faith is sin.

This chapter is a chapter on minors. Yet it is not a minor chapter but a very practical chapter. So many problems that are faced in the Christian life must be worked through this grid of truth.

The thrust of verses 13-15 is that we should always be thinking of others; every move is to be done in loving concern for others. Paul backs it up with a reason: Christ died for him (v. 15). It is like a father saying to his son, "Yes, you can use that tool, but take care that you not damage it, for I paid a lot of money for that tool." Jesus gave up his life for them; shall we not give up our food? A second reason and a similar one is this: to injure a brother is to tamper with the work of God (v. 20). You know how a child feels when another knocks down his block structure. So also, we are God's workmanship.

What about eternal security? It said in verse 4 that God is able to make the brother stand. How does that line up with "hurt, tear down, and destroy?" Some say that it means we are putting him on the road to destruction. Surely it means at least that, after all, destroy is the same word as perish in John 3:16. But furthermore, is it not talking about our awful responsibility? Just as we are quite responsible for our own soul's welfare, so also for that of another.

Hindering us from speaking to the Gentiles that they might be saved; with the result that they always fill up the measure of their sins. But wrath has come upon them to the utmost (1 Thess. 2:16).

Sure, God is sovereign; but yet we are quite responsible and accountable in either helping or hindering another from making it into the kingdom.

Woe to you lawyers! For you have taken away the key of knowledge; you yourselves did not enter, and you hindered those who were entering. (Luke 11:52)

Just as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit, but the profit of the many, that they may be saved. (1 Corinthians 10:33)

Not only should we be thinking of others regarding injury *to* them but also a bad testimony *from* them, as in verse 16. Missionaries must be especially conscious of not offending another culture in dress, food, etc. Now consider these last verses of this Chapter 14:

The faith which you have, have as your own conviction before God. Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves. But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because his eating is not from faith; and whatever is not from faith is sin. (Romans 14:22)

Faith is a personal matter.

The faith which you have, have as your own conviction before God. This is a very vulnerable statement. Are we saying, “It is whatever you believe; you have your faith and I have mine”? Of course, that is not valid when it comes to justifying faith. But here we are still talking about faith in matters indifferent, as before mentioned in verse 2.

So, Paul is saying, “keep it to yourself.” We are not to try to push it on others, to flaunt, to brandish, or parade our liberties. We are not to try to get others to do what we are doing. If you find yourself doing this you might ask: Is it because I am not really doing this as unto the Lord and I need the approval of others by way of their involvement in it too? Am I doing this *before God*? Admittedly, support is communicated this way. It is encouraging when others want to hand out tracts with us. But we dare not rely on this. Am I bitter against God and want others to bear the yoke? Am I trusting God with them or am I subtly trying to be their Savior? After all, will they go to hell if they don’t do what I’m doing? Am I lording it over them? There is fleshly satisfaction in manipulating others.

Faith is a must, an absolute necessity.

Whatever is not of faith is sin. God in a sense graciously grades on the curve. He does not judge us exactly by actions. There is mercy shown for ignorance.

And if the whole congregation of Israel sin through ignorance, and the thing be hid from the eyes of the assembly, and they have done somewhat against any of the commandments of the LORD concerning things which should not be done, and are guilty. (Leviticus 4:13 KJV)

There is mercy shown because of faith; God honors faith (not presumption). You might be wrong but if you think you are right, some mercy is shown, some acceptance is considered. I have made decisions that I believed were right at the time, but I'd never do them again.

God condemns unbelief. There are various definitions of sin (1 John 3:4; 5:17). But here unbelief or doubt is sin. Any doubt is poison. You say, "I don't know if I should say this, but I'm going to say it anyway." That is sin. If you claim a reimbursement from your employer, thinking likely that it was a company call and not a personal call, yet you are not totally sure, that is sin. One brother admitted he was trying to insert doubt in my mind about the rightness of not singing exclusively psalms. If he could, my practice would have to change. Suppose you turn onto a road and you don't know what the speed limit is—it might be 65 mph—but you don't know. Thus, you cannot "in good faith" go 65 mph. Suppose a certain action might offend a brother. You think it likely would not but yet it might. You are constrained because of a doubt to take the safe action.

We are obliged before God to be *fully persuaded* (v. 5), in every action and position. We should search the matter out, investigate, and examine it and eliminate the doubt.

Faith and a good conscience go together.

The idea of conscience is suggested in verse 14. It is directly brought up in the parallel passage in 1 Corinthians 8.

Howbeit there is not in every man that knowledge: for some with conscience of the idol unto this hour eat it as a thing offered unto an idol; and their conscience being weak is defiled. (1 Corinthians 8:7 KJV)

For if any man see thee which hast knowledge sit at meat in the idol's temple, shall not the conscience of him which is weak be emboldened to eat those things which are offered to idols? (1 Corinthians 8:10 KJV)

But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ. (1 Corinthians 8:12 KJV)

What happened? There were some who followed the example of others when as yet their conscience was not strengthened through the knowledge of the truth of the liberty in Christ. We must be careful to not imitate others unless we are sure it is good and right. Conversely,

we must be careful to not tempt others into something. Sometimes “what we don’t know won’t hurt us” (1 Cor. 10:25). Faith and good conscience go hand in hand:

Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck. (1 Timothy 1:19 KJV)

The conscience is like the rudder on the ship—you throw it away and you shipwreck. How did the apostate become so? He did not keep his conscience clean.

Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron. (1 Timothy 4:2 KJV)

I know of a big name evangelist. He said, “I know the doctrine of election is true, but you can’t build a big church on election.” Paul exhorts Timothy this way:

Holding to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. (1 Timothy 3:9)

In one way, the whole thrust of the gospel ministry is to teach souls to keep a good conscience.

But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. (1 Timothy 1:5)

And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offense toward God, and toward men. (Acts 24:16 KJV)

The worldling is constantly defiling his conscience, suffering pain and shame from it. At work he looks this way and that and steals from the company. If you have to hide it, you know you are defiling your conscience. If you are not sure about something, you are defiling your conscience. This is what puts the man without the Bible in hell:

In that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness, and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them. (Romans 2:15)

This is what must be cleansed at conversion.

How much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? (Hebrews 9:14)

What is the conscience?

Is it some little part within our body? Is it some additional mechanism to our soul? It is, rather, an aspect or function of our soul that registers right and wrong. The word means “knowledge in agreement with.” It is knowledge in agreement with the law of God. The man without the Bible has the law whether he knows it or not. The crab and the oyster work together. The crab pricks the oyster when danger appears, the oyster closes its shell and they are both protected. So also, the conscience pricks up when sin approaches. But it can be seared.

Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron. (1 Timothy 4:2 KJV)

Just as the branded or cauterized area is deadened, so also sin calluses the soul. The conscience becomes desensitized. We become used to the dark.

And they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality, for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness. (Ephesians 4:19)

Conversely, it can be trained and sharpened.

I am telling the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience testifies with me in the Holy Spirit. (Romans 9:1)

This is extremely important.

Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake. (Romans 13:5 KJV)

And we must remember that we are obliged not only to our own conscience, but also our neighbor's.

But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the Word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. (2 Corinthians 4:2 KJV)

A good deal of our joy comes through maintaining faith and good conscience.

For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward. (2 Corinthians 1:12 KJV)

A defiled conscience makes us feel bad. We are not happy about ourselves before God. What kind of a conscience do you have today? Do you have a good, pure conscience, void of offense? Maybe you have what the Bible calls an evil, defiled, or seared conscience. Then go to the Savior.

How much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?
(Hebrews 9:14)

You ought to listen to it. It is a real safeguard against hypocrisy, laziness, and all sin. Romans, Chapter 14 could be summarized in this old saying: in essentials unity, in non-essentials liberty, and in all things charity.

CHAPTER 15

SELF-DENIAL IN SERVING OTHERS OR MAN- PLEASING

15:1-3

Now we who are strong ought to bear the weaknesses of those without strength and not just please ourselves. Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to his edification. For even Christ did not please Himself; but as it is written, THE REPROACHES OF THOSE WHO REPROACHED THEE FELL UPON ME.

We are done with Chapter 14 but we are not done with the subject, for it still calls for us to *accept one another*, verse 7. Romans 15:1-8 is really a summary of the subject and a very precious, though obscure passage. These issues must be a major concern to Paul and to the Spirit of God, for we are given line upon line and precept upon precept as Paul fills his mouth with arguments, reasons, and examples. Matthew Henry says, “With such differences in apprehension amongst Christians, there are easily distances in affection amongst Christians.”

There is a repeated word in the first three verses: *please*. The first three verses could be titled “Man-pleasing” or, more safely, “Self-denial in Serving Others.” First consider...

The Precept

It is a call to the *strong* (v. 1, 2), though as seen in Romans 14:3-23, it applies both ways to the strong and the weak. There is such a thing as a strong believer:

And the child continued to grow, and to become **strong** in spirit, and he lived in the deserts until the day of his public appearance to Israel. (Luke 1:80)

And the Child continued to grow and become **strong**, increasing in wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him. (Luke 2:40)

Yet, with respect to the promise of God, he did not waver in unbelief, but grew **strong** in faith, giving glory to God. (Romans 4:20)

Finally, be **strong** in the Lord, and in the strength of His might. (Ephesians 6:10)

You therefore, my son, be **strong** in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. (2 Timothy 2:1)

Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be **strong**. (1 Corinthians 16:13)

Quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, from weakness were made **strong**, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. (Hebrews 11:34)

I have written to you, young men, because you are **strong**, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one. (1 John 2:14)

On the other hand I am filled with **power**—with the Spirit of the LORD—and with justice and courage to make known to Jacob his rebellious act, even to Israel his sin. (Micah 3:8)

They are on top with God, prayed up, read up, built up, filled up with fresh thoughts from the Word, free of self, able to give, to pursue, reach out, and take in. They are substantially free of the fear of man, they boast in the Lord, trust in the Lord, take risks for the Lord, and do exploits for the Lord, as it is written,

But the people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits. (Daniel 11:32 KJV)

First, they *ought to bear* the weaknesses of those who have no strength. They ought to bear with, to tolerate, to put up with them. Especially, it means to carry. One who bears witness carries a witness. We ought to go out of the way, to give preference to their preferences, to meet their needs just like parents do with children. The children spill water at the table and the parents clean it up. Jacob adjusted his itinerary for the children. Paul even took a Jewish vow for the sake of the weak. The Jerusalem council advised the Gentile Christians to make concessions for the Jews who were weak in their theological understanding of the liberties in the grace of Christ.

We all have weaknesses, even parents spill the water glass. But some have more than others. There is such a thing as a bruised reed and a smoking flax. The point is that the strong should not judge, not be sharp, and not alienate. He should make concessions. Think of how the Lord did with the disciples and even with Peter after Pentecost — three times to get the point across (Acts 10).

Second, we are called to *not please self*—to not please self all the time, to not please self at other's expense, to not make it our practice to put self first in satisfying all our little preferences and pleasures. It is a call to cross ourselves—the very first lesson we have to learn in even becoming a Christian. If we cross ourselves it is much easier to take when others do. David never crossed Adonijah and it led to his rebellion and ruin.

Third, it is a call to please *our neighbor* (brother, v. 21). Think of Paul's attitude:

For though I be free from all men, yet I have made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more. (1 Corinthians 9:19 KJV)

To the weak became I as weak, that I might *gain* the weak. I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. (1 Corinthians 9:22 KJV)

Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth. (1 Corinthians 10:24 KJV)

Even as I *please* all men in all things, not seeking my own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved. (1 Corinthians 10:33 KJV)

Love...does not act unbecomingly, it does not seek its own.... (1 Corinthians 13:5)

Of course, this is not talking about compromising the truths or the ways of God, but yielding personal preferences and liberties. We should study to do this—to not cross, thwart, frustrate, or stumble, but help.

Again, it is not unlimited. We are not to edify the brother in sin, lusts, or selfishnesses. We are not to tempt or flatter. We are to strengthen him in that which would be for his *good*. It is possible to please our neighbor for our good as Absalom did when he stood at the gate sympathizing with the people for his own preferment. This was the essence of Paul's concern:

For am I now seeking the favor men or of God? Or am I striving to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ. (Galatians 1:10)

It explains what good means—for his *edification*, and this is a major emphasis:

So then we pursue the things which make for peace, and the things **building up** of one another. (Romans 14:19)

Then had the churches rest throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria, and were **edified**; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied. (Acts 9:31 KJV)

Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and **edify** one another, even as also ye do. (1 Thessalonians 5:11 KJV)

Now concerning things sacrificed to idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge makes arrogant, but love **edifies**. (1 Corinthians 8:1)

But one who prophesies speaks to men for **edification** and exhortation and consolation. (1 Corinthians 14:3)

For you are giving thanks well enough, but the other man is not **edified**. (1 Corinthians 14:17)

What is the outcome then, brethren? When you assemble, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for **edification**. (1 Corinthians 14:26)

All this time you have been thinking that we are defending ourselves to you. Actually, it is in the sight of God that we have been speaking in Christ; and all for your **upbuilding**, beloved. (2 Corinthians 12:19)

For the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the **building up** of the body of Christ. (Ephesians 4:12)

From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the **edifying** of itself in love. (Ephesians 4:16 KJV)

Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for **edification** according to the need of the moment, that it may give grace to those who hear. (Ephesians 4:29)

This is so different than the attitude of competitive sports. The motive there is to beat your neighbor and that does not edify.

Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves. Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 2:3, 5)

We can edify others in the littlest things: meeting attendance, taking time to talk, and phone calls. Meal times ought to be times of edification.

Are you trying to please? Do you think in these terms? What a high calling in an age of self-serving, personal peace and affluence, and doing your own thing. What a good and pleasant society is the church where this occurs. Now think of ...

The Pattern

Christ did not please himself. That is quite an understatement, for the whole of the incarnation was for the good of others. The whole of his life was for serving others. Matthew Henry says, “There was no proposal our Lord abhorred more than *save yourself* (Mark 15:30). He did not seek his own pleasure, plan or protection. He lived on alms; he would not be made a king; he washed the disciples’ feet; he endured the disappointment of friends, and he endured the contradiction of sinners. He served us by bringing in for us a divine righteousness and leaving behind for us an example.

Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many. (Matthew 20:28)

Even as the Father knows Me, I also know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. (John 10:15)

I am the living bread that came down out of heaven; if anyone eats of this bread, he shall live forever; and the bread also which I shall give for the life of the world is My flesh. (John 6:51)

For instance, think of the *reproaches* of Christ. Here Paul takes a quote from Psalm 69, a very Messianic psalm. Reproach! That is, blame, dishonor, condemnation, disapproval, abuse, and criticism. Yes, the *cruel reproaches* of fallen man against God were taken out on him because of his identification with the Father. He was the Holy One, yet was reproached and called a sinner. He was the only begotten Son, yet was reproached as being born of fornication. He was from heaven, yet was reproached and called a Samaritan. He had the fullness of the Spirit and yet was reproached and accused of having a demon. He was

reproached as being a gluttonous man when in fact his true bread was to do the will of the Father.

And not only did the *cruelties* of the reproaches fall on him, but also the **guilt** of the reproaches fell on him. The curse fell on Him; he was made a curse for us. See the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, he took all that guilt upon himself.

Even Christ! Even he who was infinitely happy became a man of sorrows. Even he who did not need us served us. Even he who was holy was made sin. If even he bore the wickedness of enemies, surely we can bear the weakness of friends. Have you ever set your feet to follow the Savior in this way of pleasing others, even when it means reproaches?

Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall **reproach** you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake. (Luke 6:22 KJV)

Partly, by being made a public spectacle through **reproaches** and tribulations, and partly by becoming sharers with those who were so treated. (Hebrews 10:33)

So, let us go out to Him outside the camp, bearing His **reproach**. (Hebrews 13:13)

For therefore we both labour and suffer **reproach**, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe. (1 Timothy 4:10 KJV)

Considering the **reproach** of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he was looking to the reward. (Hebrews 11:26)

Herbert Carson put it so well, "Respectability is the death knell for any church." Note, the call is not only self-abnegation in relation to the world, but also in relation to body-life in the church. Often that is the greater chore.

HELP FROM THE WORD

15:4

For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.

The key phrase in the first three verses of this chapter was *please*—to please my brother by bearing, and not pleasing myself, but him. Example? Christ pleased others and not Himself. Then proof is given from the Old Testament. Why now verse 4? Verse 4 vindicates what he just did in verse 3 and indicates what purpose scripture is intended by God to subserve.

Lesson #1: See the honor put on the Old Testament. You would agree that this is indeed talking about the Old Testament. Normally, as here, the word *scriptures* is talking about the Old Testament. Compare: 2 Timothy 3:16, Romans 16:26, and 2 Peter 3:16. Now we who have the completed canon should think of both in this text. But Paul, the inspired apostle that he was, having given us thirteen of the twenty-seven New Testament books, could have himself spoken an utterance in this regard; yet he quotes the Old Testament—in the book of Romans some forty quotes. See how Paul knew and used the Old Testament. Like a parts man, he selects the pieces he needs. Paul, like Apollos, was mighty in the scriptures. Do you know the Old Testament? Are you reading the Old Testament? Is it a dark useless unexplored mass of writings to you? We would do well to fix in our mind something of the main content of each Old Testament chapter. The blessing is pronounced on the man who meditates in the law of the Lord day and night. The one who professes Christ and does not read his Bible daily is self-deceived.

Lesson #2: The Old Testament scriptures were written for our instruction. When you think of the *histories* of the Old Testament, remember, they were written for our instruction. You read the story of Abraham and Hagar, and we should learn to beware of trying to help God out, producing something in the flesh. You read of Noah and his drunkenness, and we should learn that a fall can occur right

after heroic conduct. You read of Job, and you learn that one of the foremost trials that will come to a saint is this: is it worth it to serve God regardless of lack of benefit? You read of Esau's children in Genesis 36:24, and of one, Anah, *He is the Anah who found the hot springs in the wilderness when he was pasturing the donkeys of his father Zibeon*, and you learn that with God there are no little people, places, or deeds. You read in Judges 20:30 of the battle against the Benjamites, *And the sons of Israel went up against the sons of Benjamin on the third day and arrayed themselves against Gibeah, as at other times,*" and you learn that it is possible to be defeated miserably and still be in the will of God, not obtaining victory without repeated efforts. In Galatians 4, Paul says the account of Sarah and Hagar was an allegory.

Look at the **laws** of the Old Testament which were for our instruction:

You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the sons of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself; I am the LORD. (Lev. 19:18)

It is just as useful as anything in the New Testament. There were the ceremonial laws—the pigeons, turtledoves and the veil. These pictures are helpful:

By a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh. (Heb. 10:20)

Even the civil laws, we should always be looking for the greater purpose:

For it is written in the Law of Moses, YOU SHALL NOT MUZZLE THE OX WHILE HE IS THRESHING. God is not concerned about oxen, is He? (1 Cor. 9:9)

Take the **poetry** of the Old Testament:

My beloved is dazzling and ruddy, outstanding among ten thousand. (Song 5:10)

Much is learned of Christ and of his salvation in these passages:

Our soul has escaped as a bird out of the snare of the trapper; the snare is broken and we have escaped. (Ps. 124:7)

This is the way Jesus expounded them:

Now He said to them, "These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." (Luke 24:44).

The **prophecies** of the Old Testament were instructive. They were not some legalized crystal ball, but were given to strengthen our faith:

And now I have told you before it comes to pass, that when it comes to pass, you may believe. (John 14:29)

And then what needs to be said of the epistles of the New Testament. We get to read others' mail. They were letters explaining mysteries hidden. Immortality, for example, is brought to light:

But now has been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. (2 Tim. 1:10)

Instruction! We must be ignorant, and we need a handbook for the battle of the ages, a rulebook for the race of life, a manifest of the invisible realities, a roadmap to glory land.

Lesson #3: The scriptures help us persevere.

The KJV reads *patience*. The contemporary meaning is more like patient endurance, for the idea is not just passive but active too,

Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance, and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us. (Heb, 12:1)

How does it work? We read of Job:

Behold, we count those blessed who endured. You have heard of the endurance of Job and have seen the outcome of the Lord's dealings, that the Lord is full of compassion and is merciful. (James 5:11)

We read of Abraham:

And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise. (Heb. 6:15)

We read of the children of Israel in the wilderness in:

Now these things happened as examples for us, that we should not crave evil things, as they also craved. (1 Cor. 10:6)

The events at Shittim, at Sinai, at Kadesh, etc., all had impatience involved. We should learn from this.

Lesson #4: The scriptures encourage us.

Sometimes it is translated *comfort or consolation or exhortation*. It means to call near, near to God. You are suffering affliction because of being a Christian? Think of Moses:

He chose to suffer affliction with the people of God, rather than enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. (Heb. 11:25)

You are facing incredible odds? Think of David and Goliath. You have seen nothing happen? Think of Joshua and Jericho which did not fall until some seemingly useless effort. You have suffered much loss? Remember David at Ziklag — he *encouraged himself in the Lord*. You are passed by? Remember Joseph and the way God exalted him at the right time. You feel like God is holding out on you? Remember:

For the LORD God is a sun and shield; The LORD gives grace and glory; No good thing does He withhold from those who walk uprightly. (Psalm 84:11)

You are seeing no results? Remember:

For in this case the saying is true, “One sows, and another reaps.” (John 4:37).

I remember how my outlook changed when I saw the sovereignty of God. How many times I’ve been helped by:

Turn away my eyes from looking at vanity, And revive me in Thy ways. (Psalm 119:37)

Some are leaving the meeting?

They went out from us, but they were not really of us. (1 John 2:19)

And remember, this is all in the context of pleasing others, getting along with others. Abraham pleased Lot by giving first choice. He rescued Lot though he had done him dirty. Sarah pleased Abraham by submission even though he made it tough for her. Joseph pleased his brothers by being so forgiving. David pleased Saul by not putting his hand against the Lord’s anointed.

Lesson #5: the scriptures build our hope.

That is confident expectation, that is assurance of heaven. Just as you are given a map to reach a destination and your experience agrees with the map and its markings, so also if our experience agrees with the

Word of God, we find our hope abounding that indeed we are on the right path. And the more you let the scriptures search you, the more hope you will have. If you hear a noise at night and think a thief has broken in, you can't sleep. So you check out one room and find no one. But still you can't go back to sleep, for he might be in the other room, etc. So you can't find rest till you have searched everything out. If you are willing to leave some dark closet, in that degree you will be robbed of rest.

The reason many don't have the assurance they could have, the joy and the reality is because they are starving their soul. *Like newborn babes, long for the pure milk of the word, that by it you may grow in respect to salvation* (1 Peter 2:2).

*Tho cares like a wild deluge come
and storms of sorrow fall;
When I have fed with Christ at home
My soul defies them all.
(Charles Spurgeon)*

Strength is directly connected to the indwelling richness of the scriptures:

I have written to you, fathers, because you know Him who has been from the beginning. I have written to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one. (1 John 2:14)

Many lack peace for the same reason:

Those who love Thy law have great peace, And nothing causes them to stumble. (Psalm 119:165)

Often the heart is so cold because we don't spend enough time in the Word to let it talk to us. What made the difference for the two on the road to Emmaus? They had a sad heart but ended with a burning heart. Why? They had a word from the Lord:

And they said to one another, "Were not our hearts burning within us while He was speaking to us on the road, while He was explaining the Scriptures to us?" (Luke 24:32)

What other book will help us get free of self, sin and strife? Will *Little House on the Prairie* show the way to overcome lust? Will the *Bill of Rights* secure an inheritance in glory? Will *Calculus 2* renew

our mind enough to not retaliate? Will the comics bring us out of depression? The great preacher Charles Spurgeon was incapacitated after seven people were trampled to death at one of his meetings when someone falsely cried, “fire.” He had to be under the care of a friend. He wondered if he would ever preach again. But then Philippians 2:10 came to him with power—*that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE SHOULD BOW, of those who are in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth.* He was assured that Jesus was in charge and would triumph.

Some years later, at about 33 years of age, he began to lose his health and was very disturbed over the thought that he would become a burden instead of a help. Then Hebrews 13:5 came with power—*for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.* Will the daily paper give you the direction you need to assure you that you have the smile of God? Again, Spurgeon, as a teenager, saw success in his ministry, but some urged him to get formal training. The Jeremiah 45:5 came with power—*And seekest thou great things for thyself? Seek them not.* That decided it.

We have many examples from the Bible, but preeminently think about the Lord Jesus. Patient endurance? For 30 years He waited to be used of God. Encouragement? Isaiah 42:4 says, *He will not be disheartened or crushed, until He has established justice in the earth.* Hope? For the joy that was set before him He endured and is now highly exalted. So also will it be for us.

The scriptures were written for our perseverance, telling us we will be tempted to give up, for our encouragement telling us we will face discouragement, and for our hope telling us that our assurance will be attacked. And what we need is practical observations. As Matthew Henry says, “Practical observations are more important than critical expositions” (and that is why he is liked so well). Hear Jonathan Edwards: “Resolved, to study the scriptures so steadily, constantly, and frequently, as that I may find, and plainly perceive, myself to grow in the knowledge of the same.” Hear John Wesley: “Give me the book, give me the book of God.”

Do you have hope? If not, why not? Maybe you are still outside Christ who is our hope (Col. 1:27). *Christ in you, the hope of glory.* But if Christ is in you, attention to the scriptures will help you build hope.

REASONS FOR UNITY

15:5

Now may the God who gives perseverance and encouragement grant you to be of the same mind with one another according to Christ Jesus.

Paul preached to them in verse 4, now he prays for them in verse 5. In verse 4 he addresses our responsibility to lay hold of perseverance, encouragement and hope through the Word of God, but now in verse 5 he tells us of God's provision and intention that way. It is the nature of God to keep us and encourage us, he is *the God of* these things. In other places he is called the God of hope, of peace, of love, of comfort and of glory.

And he said, Men, brethren, and fathers, hearken; The God of **glory** appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran. (Acts 7:2 KJV)

Now the God of **hope** fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost. (Romans 15:13 KJV)

Now the God of **peace** be with you all. Amen. (Romans 15:33 KJV)

Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all **comfort**. (2 Corinthians 1:3 KJV)

Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of **love** and peace shall be with you. (2 Corinthians 13:11 KJV)

When we come to prayer we should come expecting to find God strengthening us—that is what He deals in. He does not want to see us discouraged. That tells us that God is in the business of granting such blessings. God's Word is given to secure our perseverance and encouragement.

What is the key word in verses 5-13? **Unity**—*one mind, accord, voice*. Here we have reasons, four reasons for unity.

1. Unity is in accordance with the nature and will of God and of

Christ

2. Unity is in accordance with God's glory
3. Unity is in accordance with Christ's example
4. Unity is in accordance with God's plan

Unity is in accordance with the will and nature of God and of Christ.

Do you see what a premium God puts on unity? Paul is praying that God grant this very thing.

A. It was promised and anticipated in the Old Testament.

And they shall be My people, and I will be their God; and I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear Me always, for their own good, and for the good of their children after them. And I will make an everlasting covenant with them that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; and I will put the fear of Me in their hearts so that they will not turn away from Me. (Jeremiah 32:38-40)

For then I will give to the peoples purified lips, that all of them may call on the name of the LORD, to serve Him shoulder to shoulder. (Zephaniah 3:9)

B. It is a prayer of Christ. This is in accordance with the Godhead.

And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are. (John 17:11 KJV)

The scoffer often rightly brings up the problem of divisions in the visible church as an excuse for unbelief.

That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. (John 17:21 KJV)

There are many events around which people gather. Christians gather because they have seen God's glory.

And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one. (John 17:22 KJV)

I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me. (John 17:23 KJV)

C. Caiaphas prophesied of the unity.

And not for the nation only, but that He might also gather together into one the children of God who are scattered abroad. (John 11:52 KJV)

D. It is a characteristic of the early church, right after Pentecost in its pristine condition.

These all with one mind were continually devoting themselves to prayer, along with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers. (Acts 1:14)

And day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart. (Acts 2:46)

E. It is a great thrust of the New Testament epistles. We should work at thinking alike and being willing to consider the other's position, reasons, motives, and needs (Ephesians 4:1; Philippians 2:2; Colossians 2:1; 1 Peter 3:8).

Be of the same mind toward one another. (Romans 12:16)

Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. (1 Corinthians 1:10 KJV)

Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you. (2 Corinthians 13:11 KJV)

F. It is the purpose of redemption—*one new man*. Yes, each shall receive his own reward. There will be individuality. However, we should be thinking of ourselves as a unit, *the bride*. There is no room for a maverick, for loners, for independents. We are all a team. Does not even nature teach us? What military general would expect victory if his soldiers fought themselves? One of the chief tactics of the enemy is division within, which is far more dangerous than adversity from without. What father is pleased when his sons are at one another's throats?

This likemindedness and unity is a crucial factor in our perseverance and encouragement. There is hardly anything more discouraging than disagreements. Philippians 4:2, *I beseech Euodias,*

and beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord.

It says *according to Christ Jesus* — according to His precept, His pattern, and His person. There are many other things around which to unite — a common enemy like Herod and Pilate; a common error; a common cause like at Babel; or a certain truth like revival; yet it can be one step away from the center, Christ Jesus.

Unity is in accordance with God’s glory.

That with one accord you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 15:6). This is the chief end and purpose of man. After all, this business of pleasing others is still for God’s glory. The glory of a band or an army is its unity. The glory and strength of an engine is its tuning. The locusts are even held up for their unity.

Unity is in accordance with Christ’s example in accepting us.

Wherefore, accept one another, just as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God. (Romans 15:7).

There is acceptance required in the matter of unity. In an organ transplant, the body must accept it if it will become one with the rest of the organs. Note: 14:1 is the same theme. So think how Jesus accepts us. Our Lord accepts us joyously:

And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, *“Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!”* (Luke 15:6)

Our Lord accepts us mercifully.

But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:8)

He was sinless but accepted us when we were sinful. He, the perfect one accepted us when we were imperfect. He, the wise one, accepted us though we were so foolish. The Lord is not anxious to point out our errors. He is very patient and does not wash his hands of us. Like Peter, we often speak for Satan; like the disciples, we are slow to believe and even argue as to who is the greatest; we are sometimes overzealous and call for fire; we forget miraculous provision; mercifully we are accepted in the Beloved. Our Lord accepts us impartially.

Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that

feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.
(Acts 10:34, 35)

Our Lord accepts us intimately. He takes us into his fold, his friendship, and his family. The Lord Jesus does not keep us at arm's length. Our Lord accepts us gloriously,

Wherefore, accept one another, just as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God. (Rom 15:7)

In the state of Iowa, there is a massive structure built out of all kinds of rocks. Many come to see this glory. So also, the Lord is building his building out of all kind of people. There is glory there—to *the praise of the glory of His grace*. Some families take in a foreigner. The newspaper interviews them. There is glory there. So also, the Lord has taken in foreigners, even enemies. There is glory.

Unity is in accordance with God's plan.

For I say that Christ has become a servant to the circumcision on behalf of the truth of God to confirm the promises given to the fathers, and for the Gentiles to glorify God for His mercy; as it is written, "THEREFORE I WILL GIVE PRAISE TO THEE AMONG THE GENTILES, AND I WILL SING TO THY NAME." (Romans 15:8, 9)

Jesus Christ became a servant to the Jews and, in one way, his primary work for them was fulfilling the promises, particularly the gospel promise made to the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in Genesis 13:15-17:

The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, 'ALL THE NATIONS SHALL BE BLESSED IN YOU.'" (Galatians 3:8)

The blessing is salvation from sin.

The ministry for the Gentiles, strangers to the promises, was one of mercy. They were *strangers to the covenants of promise*. This was always God's plan—to include the nations in His blessing and make both Jews and Gentiles one new man. The Jews should have known. Their Bible was full of promises that way. Jonah knew that God would likely bless the Ninevites. All of this was no plan B. God's eternal plan was to have one people with Himself.

A PRAYER FOR ABOUNDING HOPE

15:13

Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Here we have another prayer as in verse 5. It is a glorious verse, loaded with sweets—faith, peace, joy, hope. In this we have a round of delights. Paul wanted them to be in a delightful way, to *drink of the river of God's delights*, (Ps. 36:8) not just to draw from the bottom of the barrel but *filled*, not just a meager portion but *all* peace and joy, not just even to the top but *abounding*.

What is the main thought? We have in the immediate context three usages of the word *hope* (v. 12 could read hope) and thus it could be entitled “A Prayer for Abounding Hope.” In this verse, hope is both mother and daughter.

See who it is to whom this prayer is directed—the God of hope.

We can't really appreciate this shining star unless we see it in a dark background—our need for hope being in a fallen hopeless world. The world is under a tyrant, the devil and he has two chief deputies, sin and death. They reign (Romans 5:21). The curse of God is on the cosmos. Every time we see a ragweed, a hospital, and a cemetery we could think of this.

The Jim Bridgers and the pioneers who found new lands and “built them a home in the meadow,” yet they still died and without Christ perished in hell. All the effort and the bravery of their lives was hopeless. When my father turned eighty someone wrote in an encouraging note, “You have overcome almost everything,” yet he will die and without Christ will perish in hell—the strength of his years along with the sum of his life was hopelessness. The criminal is released early having served only a fraction of the time he feared, yet he still dies and without Christ perishes in hell—the mercies and the liberties he obtained with that good lawyer were hopeless. Michael Johnson in the summer of 1996 at the Olympics won the 200 meter race in a time of about 20 seconds, which figures that he ran 32 feet per second or 22 mph; yet those fine bodies will die and without Christ they will perish

in hell—their strength and skill is hopeless. It is futile and vain. Their trophies will melt, their records will bum and the applause accorded them will be found to be the laughingstock of demons.

In 1923 a group of the world's most successful financiers met at the Edgewater Beach Hotel in Chicago. Collectively these tycoons controlled more wealth than there was in the US Treasury and for years newspapers and magazines printed their success stories and urged young people to follow their examples; yet one died penniless, two went to prison and three committed suicide — they had lived hopeless lives and apart from Christ died and perished in hell.

Howard Hughes, one of the world's wealthiest ended up in a hotel with his hair grown long and his fingernails long like bird's claws. He ate nothing but ice cream and collected his urine in bottles. His was a hopeless life apart from Christ.

The human race is like a tree cut off at the roots; it is like a sick man with a terminal disease. There are no answers. There is no way out, no satisfaction. The logical end is suicide, and some of the philosophers like Hemingway go ahead and blow their brains out on the living room wall, yet even that is an inconsistent statement by the man without God, for he is making an absolute statement which thing he cannot make apart from an outside infinite reference point.

Yet in a fallen world, God intervenes with hope. God has provided hope for the human race. The earth's best candles soon burn out but God's oil burns eternal. He is called the *God of hope*. It should bring us kindly thoughts of God. He has not left us to ourselves. He has not scoffed at our miserable self-imposed plight. He so loved the world that he sent his own son to die for his enemies. The Lord Jesus Christ is our hope (1 Timothy 1:1). He has thrown out the life line—eternal life for the sons of death. He has set bread at the door for the beggars.

Application? Let the names, titles, and attributes of God encourage us. Is his name **El Shaddai**, the Almighty God? Then when we pray it is with this attitude:

*“Thou art coming to a King, large petitions with thee bring;
for His grace and power are such, one can never ask too much.”*

(John Newton)

Is His name **Jehovah-tsidkenu**, The Lord our righteousness? We have a righteousness from God equal to His. Is His name **Jehovah-jireh**? He will provide. Is he the God of **Hope**? Then we should expect he would want me abounding in hope. Pray with confidence. We are looking to

the *God of hope*. It does not say the God of wrath. He is the basis of our hope, the author, and object. It is a gospel title.

What are the subjects of Paul's prayer?

It is joy and peace and hope. The joy and peace were already mentioned in 14:17. They are sisters. As someone said, "Peace is joy resting, joy is peace dancing." **Peace**. It is a rare Christian jewel. Peace with God, for we are no longer running from the law, being fully, freely, forgiven forever. The peace of God, an attribute communicated to our soul. **Joy**. The joy of knowing your life is right with God, of knowing you are doing the very thing for which you were made, of knowing that all is well, of knowing that my God is King and he has me covered. May God give us joy. It is such an attractive quality. Spurgeon points out that the cold snows of winter won't ripen the wheat. The harvest is brought in with the warmth of summer. Give us more of that *rejoicing in tribulation*. **Hope**. A third element is hope and it is related to the joy and peace. Hope equals assurance, confident expectation. Of what? The Christian hope is heaven (Col. 1:5). It is glory (Col. 1:27). It is the *resurrection* (Acts 24:15). It is the second *coming* (Titus 2:13). It is *eternal life* (Titus 1:2). So hope abounds, knowing that I'm destined for glory. Paul always thought along these lines (Rom. 8:18; 2 Cor. 4:16). I want to have more of what Billy Bray had: one foot says "glory" and the other, "hallelujah."

How are these precious commodities obtained?

In believing. Believing in the goodness of God and the love of God. Believing in the promises of God and the Word of God. "Remember the word to Thy servant, In which Thou hast made me hope" (Ps. 119:49). Believing in God's faithfulness, in the certainties of the New Covenant, and in the glories of heaven.

You want peace? Trust God in all circumstances. George Whitefield, in a storm at sea, lost peace. Again, with believing prayer, resigning all to God, his peace returned. Joy? We must plow through adversity with faith. Hope? It is faith grown up. Faith is the key that opens the door of hope to visions of glory. These things are not obtained by education, wealth, health, religion or sincerity, but only through faith in the God of hope. Faith in this God who is bigger than my past, present, or future.

In conclusion, here we have a call to faith. It is faith that goes in

and brings back the grapes of Eschol. Why not believe God for all this promise contains. Surely it is attainable or we would not have this verse. Will you believe or not? *And so we see that they were not able to enter because of unbelief* (Heb. 3:19).

We should be careful of grievances to the Holy Spirit, for this is communicated by *the power of the Holy Spirit*. He is the holy Spirit and is only comfortable in a setting of holiness. Little decisions make big differences. How much we need him. He alone is our illuminator. He alone is our comfort from the world. The Holy Spirit and assurance are directly connected. He turns up the rheostat to illumine the spiritual glories. Justifying faith will take our soul to heaven but sanctifying faith will bring heaven to our soul. Think of the power of the Spirit in creation (Gen. 1:2; Luke 1:35). Think of the power of the Spirit in the resurrection (Rom. 8:11). What power could have brought our Lord from the dead—muscle power, mechanical, electrical, or nuclear? We have much cause to let hope abound in the heart.

It is a call to prayer, large believing prayer. God does not want us to live off the bottom of the barrel but *filled*. He does not want us to live with a meager portion but *with all*, all sorts. God wants *abounding* measures. It is the same word for surplus or left over.

And they all ate, and were satisfied And they picked up what was *left over* of the broken pieces, twelve full baskets. (Matt. 14:20)

Rutherford surely had abounding hope when he spoke of the glories of Immanuel's land. Fanny Crosby surely had this when she spoke of visions of rapture bursting on her sight. George Muller was carried to the pulpit and got out three words, "I know God," when the Spirit fell. Whitefield spoke of the sallies of his soul. Paul spoke of visions and revelations. These men had hope abounding.

PAUL DEFENDS HIS BOLDNESS (PART 1) FIRST, A COMMENDATION

15:14

And concerning you, my brethren, I myself also am convinced that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, and able also to admonish one another.

Paul now begins the end of his famous letter to the Romans with an encouragement to them, an explanation and defense of ministry, plans for future ministry, personal greetings, and then a blessing.

Paul is defending his boldness. *But I have written very boldly to you on some points* (Rom. 15:15). But first we have in verse 14 a commendation.

What was the reason for this right here? There are at least three reasons:

1. Paul had given them a letter that was long, heavy, and what could have seemed to be presumptuously intrusive (the Romans had not asked for all this).
2. It was a church he had not founded.
3. They were believers he had not yet seen personally. *For I long to see you in order that I may impart some spiritual gift to you, that you may be established* (Rom. 1:11).

So Paul was wanting to sign off in a personal way. He calls them *my brethren*. He had opened his letter this way.

First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, because your faith is being proclaimed throughout the whole world. (Romans 1:8)

And now Paul is wanting to sign off in a positive way and he praises them. He gives them this commendation. It was not flattery but sincere encouragement. Some Christians are very exercised in this. Maybe one reason we sometimes feel restrained is the fear of fostering pride or complacency, but really, for the humble, meek, lowly, the regenerate, it does not work that way; it only makes them want to be more zealous and do more of whatever goodness they have. There is such a need for encouragement. I know of one preacher who tries to write something to encourage in each letter. We should try to believe the best we can about another and say the best we can. If we err, then let it be on that

side. Matthew Henry says, “We should not be so simple as to believe everything, yet not so skeptical as to believe nothing.”

Paul was *convinced* those saints at Rome were *full of goodness*. It was a statement of his confidence in them. He had just been bringing up an area that was so potentially hurtful, *For if because of food your brother is hurt...* (Rom. 14:15), yet he is confident their attitude was goodness. They were a healthy church.

In view of the Bible teaching about the depravity of man, *there is none good*, this is a very powerful statement. This gospel of God can so affect people that they are described as being *filled with goodness*, when formerly, by nature, they were bad—a bad record and a bad heart, haters of God, haters of good and lovers of darkness, of self, of pleasure, and of money (2 Tim. 3.2f).

And Paul says *full*. He does not say half and half or 60/40 but full. If the doctor were to open up a cancer patient, he might say, “He is just full of it.” So also you would say the same, if you were to open up a believer who is walking in a good way with God. Now, as with all virtues, this virtue is present in varying measures. But just as one vessel may be pint-size and another a gallon, yet both vessels can be full.

The essential nature of a believer is goodness. He is indwelt by the Spirit of God, and one aspect of the fruit of the Spirit is goodness (Gal. 5:22). The Christians are good folks, not evil; they are opposed to evil. One woman, not long after conversion, remarked, “It is just so good to do good.” Think of this adjective:

The steps of a **good** man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way. (Psalm 37:23 KJV)

A **good** man obtaineth favour of the LORD. (Proverbs 12:2 KJV)

A **good** man leaveth an inheritance to his children’s children. (Proverbs 13:22 KJV)

The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways, and a **good** man shall be satisfied from himself. (Proverbs 14:14)

The **good** man out of his good treasure brings forth what is good; and the evil man brings out of his evil treasure what is evil. (Matthew 12:35)

And, behold, there was a man named Joseph, a counsellor; and

he was a **good** man, and a just man. (Luke 23:50 KJV)

For he was a **good** man, and full of the Holy Spirit and of faith.
(Acts 11:24)

Teach me good discernment and knowledge, for I believe in
Your commandments. They have a good **understanding** in
spiritual matters (Psalm 119:66).

They have good **will** toward one another and the watching world. One
Christian organization, though tax exempt, pays taxes to have a clear
testimony in the community.

They are zealous in good **works**. Dr. James Kennedy's book, *What If
Christ Had Never Been Born*, shows what goodness has come through
Christians.

They, like Mary, chose the good **part**. Think of Paul. He, under the
power of God, blinded a man. He reproved the Apostle Peter publicly.
He called the Galatians *fools*. Yet the image you have of Paul is that he
was a person full of goodness. He was so conscientiousness as to say in
1 Corinthians 9:12, *we endure all things, that we may cause no hindrance
to the gospel of Christ*. He was so outgoing as to say in 1 Corinthians
9:22, *I have become all things to all men, that I may by all means save
some*. He was so concerned for others as to say in 1 Corinthians 6:7,
Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be defrauded?

And think of our Lord Jesus. It says in Acts 10:38, *He went about
doing good*. And all of this is coming from a God who is characterized
by goodness.

Second, they were *filled with all knowledge*. That is they were
filled spiritual truth, not secular knowledge. The non-Christian is
characterized by ignorance:

And now, brethren, I know that you acted in *ignorance*, just as
your rulers did also. (Acts 3:17)

Therefore having overlooked the times of *ignorance*, God is
now declaring to men that all everywhere should repent. (Acts
17:30)

Being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God, because of the *ignorance* that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart. (Ephesians 4:18)

As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your *ignorance*. (1 Peter 1:14)

For such is the will of God that by doing right you may silence the *ignorance* of foolish men. (1 Peter 2:15)

This is one reason to publish the truth and to spread the word. Ignorance destroys —“I did not know the bridge was out,” “I did not know it is dangerous to fill a gas can sitting in a plastic pick-up bed liner.” God puts no premiums on ignorance, ignorance of any kind, especially Bible knowledge. Knowledge does not save, yet a person is not saved without it. Knowledge sanctifies, as it says:

And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in real *knowledge* and all discernment. (Philippians 1:9)

Paul commends his ministry with this:

But even if I am unskilled in speech, yet I am not so in *knowledge*. (2 Cor. 11:6)

In purity, in *knowledge*.... (2 Corinthians 6:6)

Third, Paul commends them as being *able to admonish one another*. Literally the word means to warn. The Greek word is *noutheteo*, and is more broadly taken to mean confrontational counseling—seeking to change another’s attitude or behavior. Normally we tend to think of this in regard to a prophetic ministry, as in:

When I say to the wicked, “You shall surely die”; and you do not warn him or speak out to warn the wicked from his wicked way that he may live, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood I will require at your hand. (Ezekiel 3:18)

However, this applies to every Christian and is a mark of maturity. We ought to warn the lost as in:

For I have five brothers—in order that he may *warn* them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment. (Luke 16:28)

Whom we preach, *warning* every man, and teaching every

man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. (Colossians 1:28 KJV)

We ought to warn our children. Eli and David did not adequately confront their children:

And his father had never crossed him at any time by asking, “Why have you done so?” (1 Kings 1:6)

For I have told him that I am about to judge his house forever for the iniquity which he knew, because his sons brought a curse on themselves and he did not rebuke them. (1 Samuel 3:13)

We ought to warn our fellow believers—it says *one another*—as in:

Remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears. (Acts 20:31)

I do not write not these things to shame you, but to admonish you as my beloved children. (1 Corinthians 4:14)

The warnings are heeded only by the elect. They are effectual for the elect only.

Even our singing should include this element, as in:

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. (Colossians 3:16)

Pastors should be exercised in this business of confrontational counseling:

“And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you. (1 Thessalonians 5:12)

We ought to consider it an oil for our head, as David put it, when someone warns us. We ought to have humility enough to consider our ways. Sometimes they are not totally right, but often there is something right in it which will indeed help us. Be sure of this, if a godly man comes to you, it was no fun for him.

I can remember as a young Christian, older saints warning me—“I would caution you on this,” “beware of the pitfall of extremes,” “beware of anyone who puts a price tag on his ministry,” “you are going to hurt your testimony,” “I wouldn’t hang around that fellow,” and “never

exalt experience over truth.” In natural life we welcome warnings—the grooves before the stop sign, etc. How many times such signs have saved our lives. So also we should welcome spiritual warnings. Counseling is a very spiritual work—it says *able*. We see this in:

Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted. (Galatians 6:1)

Sure some are more able than others. It requires much patience, gentleness, wisdom, courage and especially self-denial, remembering you are doing it for their sake and not to meet your standards. But all are competent to counsel. And this one little phrase rules out psychology. All Christians should be able, competent to counsel. The scripture is sufficient. Happy is the pastor that has a congregation of saints able to admonish, able to counsel *one another*—not short of spirit, not picking on one another, but lovingly able to have an input into one another’s life so as to keep our testimony blameless before the Lord and arrive safely at the desired haven.

PAUL DEFENDS HIS BOLDNESS (PART 2) JUST A REMINDER

15:15

But I have written very boldly to you on some points, so as to *remind you* again, because of the grace that was given me from God.

Paul, beginning the end of his famous letter to the Romans, gives them an encouragement and then defends his boldness as to the weighty letter he wrote them. The first thing he does is to call his letter but a *reminder*, giving them the credit that they already knew these things, they were already *filled with knowledge*, verse 14.

Much of the work of the ministry to fellow-believers consists of reminders, as is seen also in the case of Peter.

Therefore, I shall always be ready to remind you of these things, even though you already know them, and have been established in the truth which is present with you. (2 Peter 1:12)

We should be reminded of the example of godly men.

For this reason I have sent to you Timothy, who is my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, and he will *remind* you of my ways which are in Christ, just as I teach everywhere in every church. (1 Cor. 4:17)

Paul had just spoken of his ways, his lowly estate—scum of the world, the dregs of all things—to admonish the Corinthians for their pride and clever fleshly mentality. Again, we have:

For you *recall*, brethren, our labor and hardship, how working night and day so as not to be a burden to any of you, we proclaimed to you the gospel of God. (1 Thessalonians 2:9)

It is easy to forget the way others have worked hard for us. Again, think of:

Remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you; and considering the result of their conduct, imitate their faith. (Hebrews 13:7)

It is easy to forget those who, in the very providence of God, lead us to Christ. John Bunyan is largely forgotten in Bedford, England. William Williams, who brought glad singing to the land, is largely

unappreciated in Wales. I know of a brother who talked to one of Williams' descendants. He had no knowledge of the glory that was on his great great grandfather.

We should remember the plight of other believers.

Remember my imprisonment. (Col. 4:18)

Self-centeredness is incredible. While others in the body of Christ are being tortured, we lie in luxury. The psalmist put it so powerfully:

If I *forget* you, O Jerusalem, may my right hand *forget* her skill.
(Ps. 137:5)

We should remember the plight of the poor.

They only asked us to *remember* the poor—the very thing I also was eager to do. (Gal. 2:10)

One might think the apostles would have laid on Paul some great theological burden. No, rather they spoke for the poor.

We must remember the gifts and calling of God.

And for this reason I *remind* you to kindle afresh the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands. (2 Tim. 1:6)

Just as I remind the children to not let the woodstove go out, so also we must continually be exercised in our calling.

We should remember the provisions of God.

Do you not yet understand or *remember* the five loaves of the five thousand, and how many baskets you took up? (Matt. 16:9)

It takes about three days to forget some miracle.

We must remember the judgments of God.

Now I desire to *remind* you, though you know all things once for all, that the Lord, after saving a people out of the land of Egypt, subsequently destroyed those who did not believe. (Jude 1:5)

Remember Lot's wife. (Luke 17:32)

Remember therefore from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first; or else I am coming to you, and will remove your lampstand out of its place—unless you repent. (Revelation 2:5)

If you were sick, the doctor might ask where it all began. So it is in the spiritual realm, we should remember where we fell, where we started to spiritually decay.

We should remember the Word of God

He is not here, but He has risen. *Remember* how He spoke to you while He was still in Galilee. (Luke 24:6)

Remember the word that I said to you, “A slave is not greater than his master. If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also.” (John 15:20)

In everything I showed you that by working hard in this manner you must help the weak and *remember* the words of the Lord Jesus, that He Himself said, “It is more blessed to give than to receive.” (Acts 20:35)

And ye have *forgotten* the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him. (Hebrews 12:5)

I will delight myself in thy statutes: I will not *forget* thy Word. (Psalm 119:16)

For I am become like a bottle in the smoke; yet do I not *forget* thy statutes. (Psalm 119:83)

I will never *forget* thy precepts: for with them thou hast quickened me. (Psalm 119:93)

My soul is continually in my hand: yet do I not *forget* thy law. (Psalm 119:109)

I am small and despised : yet do not I *forget* thy precepts. (Psalm 119:141)

Consider mine affliction, and deliver me: for I do not *forget* thy law. (Psalm 119:153)

I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek thy servant; for I do not *forget* thy commandments. (Psalm 119:176)

It is easy to forget “the key of promise” to take us out of some doubting castle. It is a temptation to forget this love letter from heaven. It is a temptation to override the rulebook for building character.

We should remember to be subject to the government.

Remind them to be subject to rulers, to authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good deed. (Titus 3:1)

It is easy for the Christian, being disgusted with the wicked system around us, being aware that we are citizens of heaven, to become rebellious and obtain a bad testimony.

We should remember the salvation of God.

Once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was. (James 1:24)

Whenever we rail on some unbeliever for being so stubborn, we ought to remember this and realize, but for the grace of God, we would do the same or worse.

Therefore *remember*, that formerly you, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called “Uncircumcision” by the so called “Circumcision” (Eph. 2:11)

For he who lacks these qualities is blind or short sighted, having *forgotten* his purification from his former sins. (2 Peter 1:9)

We should remember the Savior Himself.

Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, descendant of David, according to my gospel. (2 Tim. 2:8)

One would not think Paul would have to tell this to such a one as Timothy, but there it is. The communion ordinance is to be done *in remembrance* of Him. It is easy to forget His “thorn-crowned brow,” the spit, the slaps, the scourge, the spikes, the spear, the shame and the sin He bore for us. Ecclesiastes pictures this:

There was a small city with few men in it and a great king came

to it, surrounded it, and constructed large siegeworks against it. But there was found in it a poor wise man and he delivered the city by his wisdom. Yet no one remembered that poor man. (Ecclesiastes 9:15)

Jesus is our great deliverer—from the *wrath to come*—yet we can lose the glory and the wonder of it. We need reminders.

PAUL DEFENDS HIS BOLDNESS (PART 3) THE GRACE THAT WAS GIVEN ME

15:15

But I have written very boldly to you on some points, so as to remind you again, because of the grace that was given me from God.

Beginning with Chapter 15, Paul continues his discourse regarding forbearance on matters of conscience—line upon line. Paul then begins the end of his famous letter to the Romans. And he does this with an *encouragement* to them consisting of three commendations in verse 14. Then Paul gives a *defense of his boldness* having written such a weighty letter to them. First, Paul says, “I did it only as a reminder”—giving them the credit of already knowing these things and taking a very humble attitude. Now a second reason in defense of his boldness is this: *I did it because of the grace given me.*

First, in verse 15 we have an *explanation*.

Paul says his bold letter to these Romans was due to the grace given him. Paul is quick to credit the grace of God for everything he is and does (1 Cor. 15:10) *By the grace of God I am what I am.* When God saves us by a dispensation of grace, that grace resulting in our salvation also contains gifts pertaining to our vocation.

For through the grace given to me, I say to everyone among you, not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think. But to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith. (Romans 12:3)

Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith. (Romans 12:6 KJV)

For Paul the grace of God was that of an apostle particularly to the Gentiles.

But I am speaking to you who are Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an *apostle* of Gentiles, I magnify my ministry. (Romans 11:13)

By whom we have received *grace* and *apostleship* for obedience to the faith among all nations, for His name. (Romans 1:5 KJV)

According to the grace of God which was given to me, like a wise master builder I laid a *foundation*, and another is building on it. But each man must be careful how he builds on it. (1 Corinthians 3:10)

But by the *grace* of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain, but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the *grace* of God with me. (1 Corinthians 15:10)

Of which I was made a minister according to the gift of God's grace which was given to me, according to the working of His power. To me the very least of all saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ. (Ephesians 3:7, 8)

As a steward of that grace, Paul wants to be faithful. He does not want to bury his talents. If your neighbor is building a house and you have these special forms for laying a foundation that would really help him, it is not humility to keep silent, but rather it is kindness to offer your help.

Paul was a very unique instrument raised up by God. He had a unique *ministry* as an apostle to the Gentiles—consider the churches he started. He was equipped with surpassing *revelations* of the Lord—consider the scriptures he was used to pen. He had a unique *power* on him:

The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with all perseverance, by signs and wonders and miracles. (2 Cor. 12:12)

Secondly, in verse 16, we have a *description* of the ministry that flowed from that grace.

He calls himself a *minister*. The Greek word *leitourgos* is used in the general sense of being a public servant as in Romans 13. But here it is used in the more restricted sense of being a functionary in the temple. Grace will instill in you a progressive desire and ability to minister to others. We would do well to ask the Lord each morning how we can serve others that day.

Paul acknowledges the authority behind his ministry—*Of Christ*

Jesus. It is not man but the Lord Himself. That will put us to doing a thousand tasks, though they be unnoticed. That will relieve us of miserable bitterness, envyings, strife and fear.

Paul identifies to whom it was he ministered—to *the Gentiles*. Paul was appointed to this at his conversion.

And I said, “Lord, they themselves understand that in one synagogue after another I used to imprison and beat those who believed in Thee. And when the blood of Thy witness Stephen was being shed, I also was standing by approving, and watching out for the cloaks of those who were slaying him.” And he said to me, “Go! For I will send you far away to the Gentiles.” (Acts 22:19-21)

That was the thing that brought him much persecution.

And they listened to him up to this statement, and then they raised their voices and said, “Away with such a fellow from the earth, for he should not be allowed to live!” (Acts 22:22)

Recognizing the grace that had been given to me, James and Cephas and John, who were reputed to be pillars, gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we might go to the Gentiles, and they to the circumcised. (Gal. 2:9)

The point? You Romans are Gentiles and I am an apostle to the Gentiles, so bear with me.

How did Paul minister? *As a priest.* Priest is in the NASB, but not in the Greek. The normal word for priest is *hiereus*. Here it is *hierourgeo* which does mean temple worker. The point? He is speaking of the dignity of his office. What does a priest do? He is one who stands between God and men, who brings others into the presence of God, who represents man to God, *For every high priest taken from among men is appointed on behalf of men* (Heb. 5:1). Paul was a priest in a larger way, but do you think of yourself that way? We are priests; we don't need to go through any human mediator (1 Peter 2:9). We are appointed by God to bring others into his presence. Who else will take care of the souls of men? Who else will bring them into the presence of God? Will the local bartender?

What did Paul minister? *The gospel of God.* It was not the philosophies of men, but the gospel of God. It was not doctrines of demons, but the gospel of God. It was not the law of God, but the gospel of God. It is our job to make people see their sin and God's solution.

The purpose of his ministry as a priest was to *offer up the Gentiles to God*. A priest presents offerings to God:

For every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices. (Heb. 8:3)

In the New Testament economy we offer souls not sheep.

And they shall bring all your brethren for an offering unto the LORD out of all nations. (Isa. 66:20)

Each convert to Christ is a living sacrifice to God.

I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. (Rom. 12:1)

Each soul you would bring to Christ is an offering. We ought to put a high value on soul-winning. The acceptableness of his ministry—it was *sanctified by the Holy Spirit*. It could read “made holy by the Holy Spirit.” Unholy things are never acceptable to God. The Old Testament priest could wash the bull and make it acceptable, but only the Holy Spirit can make a soul acceptable to God. This is not talking mainly about progressive sanctification in the life of the believer, but the whole of salvation, begun when the Spirit of God calls out a soul like a leaf taken off a tree by a gust of wind, that leaf then being picked up and preserved in someone’s special book.

But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through *sanctification* by the Spirit and faith in the truth. (2 Thessalonians 2:13)

According to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the *sanctifying* work of the Spirit, that you may obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood.... (1 Peter 1:2)

Thirdly, in verse 17 we have *exultation*.

Paul is rejoicing in being used in the ministry. The word is often translated *rejoice* or *glory* (Phil. 3:3; Romans 5:2). Is this kind of boasting all right? Yes, for it is *in Christ Jesus* and it is about what *Christ accomplished through me*. Paul centers all his boasting on the Lord. He always deflects the praise to Christ:

I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me” (1 Cor. 15:10)

“And when they had arrived and gathered the church together, they began to report all things that God had done with them and how He had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles. (Acts 14:27)

Will the ax get the glory for the tree it cut down? The psalmist felt the same way:

Not to us, O LORD, not to us, but to Thy name give glory because of Thy lovingkindness, because of Thy truth. (Ps. 115:1)

We are taught to boast in the Lord:

That, according as it is written, he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord. (1 Cor. 1:31 KJV)

It is a mark of spiritual decay when one is not talking about what the Lord is doing in his life. Paul’s boasting was again safe in that it was *in things pertaining to God*. It is much safer to talk about how you brought a man to Christ than to talk about how many pounds you can bench press, or how the Lions devoured the Rams.

It was also safe in that he was not taking the praise for another man’s work—Paul said, *through me*. In contrast, we have Saul’s example:

And Jonathan smote the garrison of the Philistines that was in Geba, and the Philistines heard of it. Then Saul blew the trumpet throughout the land, saying, “Let the Hebrews hear.” And all Israel heard the news that Saul had smitten the garrison of the Philistines” (1 Sam. 13:3).

Fourthly, in verse 18 we have a *manifestation*, that is, the proofs of that ministry. Think of the success and the diligence in Paul’s ministry. His ministry produced *obedience*. Many make that optional, as though it were just for spiritual Christians. Our Lord put it plainly, *But He answered and said to them, “My brothers are these who hear the Word of God and do it”* (Luke 8:21). Paul saw hearts open and responding to the truth like Lydia, men flee from divine wrath like the jailer, men cleave to him out of sneering masses like Dionysius the Areopagite, whole households turn to Christ in the face of much opposition like Crispus the leader of the synagogue, whole cities gather to hear the Word as at Pisidian Antioch, and far off peoples receive him as an angel of God as at Galatia. He took many of the devil’s children

and made them his own in the faith.

Paul's ministry flowed out of a consistent life—in word and deed. Paul's ministry was as it was with our Lord, *The first account I composed, Theophilus, about all that Jesus began to do and teach* (Acts 1:1). It would seem that this especially has reference to the miraculous power that attended his ministry, as confirmed by the following verse. His ministry was characterized by supernatural power (1 Cor. 2:4; Gal. 3:5; 1 Thess. 1:5; and Acts 19:11):

And God was performing *extraordinary miracles* by the hands of Paul, so that handkerchiefs or aprons were even carried from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out. And all the multitude kept silent, and they were listening to Barnabas and Paul as they were relating what *signs and wonders* God had done through them among the Gentiles. (Acts 15:12)

Paul pronounced curses on false prophets; he blinded men. He healed lame men. He chased enough demons out that he gained a reputation amongst the forces of hell—*Paul I know*.

Paul's ministry was characterized by much zeal—he *preached from Jerusalem to Illyricum*. Why Jerusalem? Why not Syrian Antioch (Acts 13:2)? After all, the first three great missionary journeys started from Syrian Antioch. Why Jerusalem? Was it because it was there he first had the call to the Gentiles while praying in the temple, or because there he first began to preach, or because it was there the Jerusalem leaders endorsed Paul and Barnabas, Jerusalem being the headquarters for the early church? The answer is likely in connection with Illyricum, that is, these two were the extreme points of Paul's ministry, about 1,400 miles apart. Paul was indeed very zealous, having *fully preached* in all that area. He did not do things by halves. He had fulfilled his ministry *in labours more abundant*. Someone might leave the job without finishing his work or not filling the contract. But Paul was called to get the gospel out to the Gentiles and he did. In general, his job was actually done in that area (v. 23). It was not that everybody had heard or every town had a church, but the stage was set with many churches planted and co-workers raised up, *Just as you learned it from Epaphras* (Col. 1:7).

Not only did he preach in many places but in new places—not where Christ was already named. He was an apostle, a pioneer, an ice-breaker. He named the name of Jesus where it had never been named, where the name of Jesus was to them a strange god or a foreign demon:

And also some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers were conversing with him. And some were saying, “What would this idle babbler wish to say?” Others, “He seems to be a proclaimer of strange deities,”— because he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection (Acts 17:18).

Where idolatry had for long millennia bound men in fear and foolishness, Paul invaded with his gospel and tore down the Dagon and the Dianas. He exposed their false altars and took the profit from their silversmiths. He built fires out of unclean magazines and then melted down the devilish devices. He made cities rejoice where no joy had been. He reproved their atheistic humanism, foolish fool-osophies— sacrifices for the dead, worshipping angels, and severe treatment of the body. He turned the world upside down. Can we see how the Isaiah 52 passage was fulfilled in a great measure through Paul—*those who had no news of Him shall see?* Can we see why Paul, such a one as he was, wrote so boldly to the Romans?

CHAPTER 16

PAUL'S FRIENDS

16:1

I commend to you our sister Phoebe, who is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea...

Romans, Chapter 16 is an often neglected chapter; but it is laden with love and intimacy that is scarcely found elsewhere in scripture. It gives us a feel for the nature of the first century church. What a sense of community!

First, notice the repeated phrases.

First, we have *in Christ* or *in the Lord*. It appears ten times. See verses 2, 3, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13. That was Paul's basic concept of what it meant to be a Christian. Think of these few selections:

There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are **in** Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. (Romans 8:1 KJV)

For the law of the Spirit of life **in** Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. (Romans 8:2 KJV)

Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is **in** Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:39 KJV)

I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness **in** the Holy Ghost (Romans 9:1 KJV)

But of him are ye **in** Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption. (1 Corinthians 1:30 KJV)

For **in** Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel. (1 Corinthians 4:15 KJV)

For as in Adam all die, even so **in** Christ shall all be made alive. (1 Corinthians 15:22 KJV)

Which veil is done away **in** Christ. (2 Corinthians 3:14 KJV)

Therefore if any man be **in** Christ, he is a new creature: old

things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. (2 Corinthians 5:17 KJV)

For **in** Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature. (Galatians 6:15 KJV)

That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things **in** Christ (Ephesians 1:10 KJV)

For we are his workmanship, created **in** Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them. (Ephesians 2:10 KJV)

For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice **in** Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh. (Philippians 3:3 KJV)

Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect **in** Christ Jesus. (Colossians 1:28 KJV)

For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead **in** Christ shall rise first. (1 Thessalonians 4:16 KJV)

Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us **in** Christ Jesus before the world began. (2 Timothy 1:9 KJV)

Yea, and all that will live godly **in** Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. (2 Timothy 3:12 KJV)

That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory **in** the Lord. (1 Corinthians 1:31 KJV)

Children, obey your parents **in** the Lord: for this is right. (Ephesians 6:1 KJV)

Finally, my brethren, be strong **in** the Lord, and in the power of his might. (Ephesians 6:10 (KJV)

Is that your world view? All are either in one kingdom or the other. This is the essence of what it means to become a Christian. It has nothing to do with water, with denomination, maturity, or learning. A man must

be in union with Christ. He must be born again.

Is that a definition of your circle of friends? Are your best friends your high school classmates or those in Christ?

Is that the way you see the brethren? In spite of faults, still they are in Christ. That is the one thing special about them.

Second, notice names are repeated.

Paul names names, as though these people were very special. It was like he was poring over his jewels. They were Paul's *beloved*, a word repeated four times in this text (vv. 5, 8, 9, 12). Christian, look at your address book and how it has grown over the years. I never dreamed that I would have so many friends, even more friends than I can keep up with, *A man that hath friends must show himself friendly* (Prov. 18:24).

Third, the word *greet* is repeated.

Indeed Paul was friendly. There was a warmth there. In the NASB it appears nineteen times. The root meaning is to embrace. It is the least we can do, *And if you greet your brothers only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same?* (Matt. 5:47). Indeed, more than the Gentiles, we are commanded to *greet one another with a holy kiss* (v. 16). This is no rare matter in the New Testament:

All the brethren greet you. Greet ye one another with a holy kiss. (1 Corinthians 16:20)

Greet one another with a holy kiss. (2 Corinthians 13:12)

Greet all the brethren with a holy kiss. (1 Thessalonians 5:26)

Greet one another with a kiss of love. (1 Peter 5:14)

This is a holy kiss, not like Judas' false kiss. This is a kiss of love, not like Simon who gave no kiss.

Fourth, the word *work* is repeated.

It is the most emphasized comment in this text (vv. 3, 6, 9, 12, 21). See it especially in verse 2. Notice, this is not talking about secular work—that which we do for a paycheck. But rather it is direct kingdom work. It is that which we do for others in the cause of Christ as brought out in these phrases:

verse 1, *servant of the church*

verse 2, *helper of many*

verse 5, *church in their house*

verse 6, *for you.*

Paul puts an honor on our works, and understandably so, for the Lord Jesus did also, *For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works* (Matt.16:27). This emphasis is found in the Old Testament too—the building of the tabernacle and the repairs of Jerusalem were all recorded as though God were telling us they were remembered, *Then Eliashib the high priest arose with his brothers the priests and built the Sheep Gate* (Nehemiah 3:1). In the New Testament, the work is not on physical structure, but it is on souls; it has to do with the building up of the church.

From whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by that which every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love. (Eph. 4:16)

Listen to various verses:

While they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the *work* to which I have called them.” (Acts 13:2)

From there they sailed to Antioch, from which they had been commended to the grace of God for the *work* that they had accomplished. (Acts 14:26)

But Paul kept insisting that they should not take him along who had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not gone with them to the *work*. (Acts 15:38)

But each one must examine his own *work*, and then he will have reason for boasting in regard to himself alone, and not in regard to another. (Galatians 6:4)

Each man's *work* will become evident; for the day will show it, because it is to be revealed with fire; and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work. (1 Corinthians 3:13)

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the *work* of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord. (1 Corinthians 15:58)

So that you may walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good *work* and increasing in the knowledge of God. (Colossians 1:10)

Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are you not my *work* in the Lord? (1 Corinthians 9:1)

But just as you abound in everything, in faith and utterance and knowledge and in all earnestness and in the love we inspired in you, see that you abound in this gracious *work* also. (2 Corinthians 8:7)

Because he came close to death for the *work* of Christ, risking his life to complete what was deficient in your service to me. (Philippians 2:30)

It is a trustworthy statement: if any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine *work* he desires to do. (1 Timothy 3:1)

The elders who rule well are to be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who *work* hard at preaching and teaching. (1 Timothy 5:17)

And that you esteem them very highly in love because of their *work*. Live in peace with one another. (1 Thessalonians 5:13)

But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the *work* of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry. (2 Timothy 4:5)

Having a reputation for good works; and if she has brought up children, if she has shown hospitality to strangers, if she has washed the saints' feet, if she has assisted those in distress, and if she has devoted herself to every good *work*. (1 Timothy 5:10)

Two are even singled out (vv. 6, 12); he *worked hard*. Work is work and flies in the face of laziness. Work is service to others and will not grow in a context of independence.

Fifth, various names are repeated.

What was special about *Phoebe* (v. 1)? She is called a *servant*. Sometimes it is used in the general sense for any service. Sometimes it is used to mean a preacher (Eph. 3:8). And sometimes it is used for deacon (Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:10).

Was Phoebe a deaconess. Is a woman deacon scriptural? It does

not appear to be a church office, for it is not mentioned in the listings of church offices (Phil. 1:1) and in the other (1 Tim. 3:1-13), it reverts back to talking about deacons as though it were talking about deacons' wives, a crucial position.

But there is work to do and it is a valid work. Phoebe was outstanding in it. She surely had the gift of helps (1 Cor. 12:28). One way she was serving was right here. It appears that she was the one who brought the letter and little did that honored sister realize what she had in her hand. Little did she realize that she carried in her hand the very document which would be instrumental in the redemption of countless souls. No doubt as she covered hill and sea, the devil would have loved to pick her off. Paul would want to send this by none less than such a one.

Think too of the honor put on the women. Seventeen men and seven women are mentioned. The first three of four are women. They are called *sisters*.

Think of the honor put on this gift and this work—she was to be received *worthy of saints* as though they were some very elite group. “And you will do well to send them on their way in a manner **worthy** of God” (3 John 1:6). These are the holy ones, the excellent ones, those for whom Jesus died.

Prisca and Aquila (v. 3), were outstanding servants. Much information is given of them in Acts 18.

After these things he left Athens and went to Corinth. And he found a certain Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, having recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome. He came to them, and because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them and they were working; for by trade they were tent-makers. (Acts 18:1-3)

And Paul, having remained many days longer, took leave of the brethren and put out to sea for Syria, and with him were Priscilla and Aquila.... he left them there [in Ephesus]. (Acts 18:18)

And he began to speak out boldly in the synagogue. But when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately [more insight]. (Acts 18:26)

The churches of Asia greet you. Aquila and Prisca greet you heartily in the Lord, with the church that is in their house. (1 Corinthians 16:19)

What are the lessons? They were dearest friends. Peter lapsed, but not Priscilla and Aquila. Barnabas was disagreeable, but not Priscilla and Aquila. Mark had to be disciplined, but not Priscilla and Aquila. Demas deserted, but not Priscilla and Aquila. Euodia had to be reprov'd, but not Priscilla and Aquila. They stood true. They were outstanding workers. They hosted Paul. They helped Paul make some money. They risked their lives for Paul. They helped start and host two churches—Ephesus and Rome.

As an aside, is it valid to say “thank you” to a Christian? Isn’t thanks to be given to God alone? Paul here directs his thanks to Priscilla and Aquila. It is possible to become hyper-spiritual.

Another application: Some maintain that there is only one true New Testament church per town? Are they right? No, Paul identifies amongst all the Christians in Rome, a church that meets in Priscilla and Aquila’s house and maybe the same in verses 14 and 15.

Think of *Epaenetus* (v. 5). He was the *first fruits* of Asia. There is something special about the first with God, *As it is written in the law of the Lord, Every male that openeth the womb shall be called holy to the Lord* (Luke 2:23). John Paton had his Abraham. J. O. Fraser labored seven years with very little fruit and then made one last trip when his first family came to Christ and then immediately 129 families. Hudson Taylor speaks with such satisfaction upon seeing his first convert—“If one soul is worth worlds, I am abundantly repaid.” Adoniram Judson labored almost six years and then Moug Nau came to Christ.

Andronicus and Junias (v. 7) were Paul’s *kinsmen*. Did Paul lead his cousins to Christ? Likely they were not cousins but Jews, (cp: 9:3 and 16:11, 21). They were *in Christ* before him. Are there more *apostles* than the eleven and Paul? This also points that way (Acts 14:14; 1 Thess. 2:6; Eph. 4:12).

In verse 13, *Rufus’* mother may have been a mother to Paul figuratively, having given such help to him. Unless somehow he was half-brother or step brother. Anyway he was an exceptional Christian character—*choice*. He could have been the one mentioned in Mark 15:21. Mark having written his account from Rome would have known him and that could have been the reason Mark even mentioned who

Simon's sons were.

Paul can't quit. He appeared to be in 15:5, 13, 33; 16:16, 20, 24, 25, but again his affection overflows. May God grant this intimacy amongst the brethren everywhere.

Here are some searching questions: If someone who was part of your local church and then left for work elsewhere, would he be able to write back using such language—"He worked hard for me," etc. Another question: Do you see yourself as laboring alone? Paul didn't. Though beat around and rejected, he had quite a company. I know some who profess Christ who don't fit in anywhere. Will they fit into heaven? Also, when you see a brother come to your door, do you consider it a welcome thing? Paul longed to see the saints. It is a good test.

SEPARATION

16:17-18

Now I urge you, brethren, keep your eye on those who cause dissensions and hindrances contrary to the teaching which you learned, and turn away from them. For such men are slaves, not of our Lord Christ but of their own appetites; and by their smooth and flattering speech they deceive the hearts of the unsuspecting. For the report of your obedience has reached to all; therefore I am rejoicing over you, but I want you to be wise in what is good, and innocent in what is evil. And the God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you.

Paul, having come across advocating and demonstrating loving unity in the first sixteen verses, quite conversely gives a call for watchful separation. Having shown so much intimacy, now he talks of exclusiveness. Having so esteemed the dear brethren, now he is warning against false brethren and, more broadly, false leaders.

The call—I urge.

The Greek word *parakaleo* means to call to the side, like a cow calls her calf, like a parent his child when hiking. This doctrine of separation needs to be urged in our day, in a day of accommodation, moderation, and toleration—all of it is a subtle attempt of the enemy to make the narrow gate broad. Many preach fine sermons, yet their example in the company they keep, like an antidote, nullifies their exhortation.

Is it important to God? Remember Baal-peor.

They joined themselves also to Baal-peor, And ate sacrifices offered to the dead. Thus they provoked Him to anger with their deeds; And the plague broke out among them. (Psalm 106:28, 29)

Remember Jehoshaphat after he joined wicked Ahab for war.

And Jehu the son of Hanani the seer went out to meet him and said to King Jehoshaphat, "Should you help the wicked and love those who hate the LORD and so bring wrath on yourself from the LORD? (2 Chronicles 19:2)

He did not learn the lesson.

Then Eliezer the son of Dodavahu of Mareshah prophesied against Jehoshaphat saying, “Because you have allied yourself with Ahaziah, the LORD has destroyed your works.” So the ships were broken and could not go to Tarshish. (2 Chronicles 20:37)

And he still did not learn his lesson, for he went to war with wicked Jehoram.

Then he went and sent word to Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, saying, “The king of Moab has rebelled against me. Will you go with me to fight against Moab?” And he said, “I will go up; I am as you are, my people as your people, my horses as your horses.” (2 Kings 3:7)

Elisha would not even acknowledge Jehoram, except for Jehoshaphat.

And Elisha said, “As the LORD of hosts lives, before whom I stand, were it not that I regard the presence of Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, I would not look at you nor see you. (2 Kings 3:14)

Do you see why Paul is urging believers to separate from those who cause divisions and hindrances that are against sound doctrine?

The command—keep your eye ... turn away.

Keep your eye comes from the Greek word *skopeo* as we now find in microscope and telescope. We also see that good men are to be watched.

Brethren, join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us. (Philippians 3:17)

Bad men are to be marked, like a father sending his son to the neighbor’s house, “They have a dog; keep your eye on him” or like the doctor to the patient, “I think it will be all right, but keep your eye on it.” We are not to be *unsuspecting*.

Turn away? But we want to win people and see the church increase. Well, God is very concerned first and foremost about purity, about quality over quantity. The bread is not improved by the presence of chaff. Even the world knows you must quarantine when a deadly plague is spreading through the land. Separation is a great Bible doctrine and very neglected bringing much weakness into Christendom. Think of the many scriptures:

If he refuses to listen to them, tell *it* to the church. And if he

refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. (Matthew 18:17)

But actually, I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother if he is an immoral *person*, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler—not even to eat with such a one. (1 Corinthians 5:11)

Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you. (2 Corinthians 6:17 KJV)

Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us. (2 Thessalonians 3:6 KJV)

And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. (2 Thessalonians 3:14 KJV)

Supposing that gain is godliness. From such withdraw thyself. (1 Timothy 6:5 KJV)

Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof; from such turn away. (2 Timothy 3:5 KJV)

Reject a factious man after a first and second warning. (Titus 3:10)

If anyone comes to you and does not bear this doctrine, do not receive him into the house, and do not speak a greeting to him. For the *one* speaking a greeting shares in his evil works. (2 John 1:10 KJV)

And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, “Come out of her, my people, that you may not participate in her sins and that you may not receive of her plagues. (Revelation 18:4)

Is “second degree” separation right? Consider 2 John 10, 11. God takes it as if the one who associates with the evil-doer was committing the error himself. Thus, I must withdraw from him.

The characteristics.

A. *Dissensions.* False leaders cause troubles, disagreements, seditions,

and undercurrents. The Greek word is *dichostasia* which means to take two stands, that is, they are always taking another stand and causing a division. They are always standing over there, making a fuss, and a dissent. They've always got some problem, some burr, some bone to pick. They are always irked and miffed and cause an unrest, an uprising.

Now I exhort you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ *that* you all agree, and that there be no divisions among you, but you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment. (1 Corinthians 1:10)

It is a great dilemma. On the one hand, it is valid to reprove and to take a stand on a principle. Yet, we dare not commit this sin of dissension.

B. *Hindrances* are another attribute. It translates *skandalon* from which we have scandal. It is normally translated stumbling block. Hindrance is the meaning, and they are messing people up; they are hindering and confusing people.

Whose mouths must be stopped, who *subvert* whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake. (Titus 1:11 KJV)

Since we have heard that some of our number to whom we gave no instruction have disturbed you with their words, *unsettling* your souls. (Acts 15:24 KJV)

There is nothing wrong necessarily with stumbling blocks.

But we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block, and to Gentiles foolishness. (1 Corinthians 1:23)

But I, brethren, if I still preach circumcision, why am I still persecuted? Then the stumbling block of the cross has been abolished. (Galatians 5:11)

And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence. (1 Peter 2:8)

Actually Jesus said stumbling blocks must come and Paul said that they are necessary.

For there must also be factions among you.... (1 Corinthians 11:19)

But when it is *contrary to the teaching*, that is, doctrinally unfaithful, then it is wrong. We must always measure spiritual realities by two things: what people say and what they do, their words and ways, their

creed and conduct, their doctrine and deportment. Here is mentioned the former, the doctrine—especially doctrine when it has to do with salvation. On these essential matters, we must take a strong stand for the truth.

And when Paul and Barnabas had great dissension and debate with them.... (Acts 15:2)

Which is not another; only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. (Galatians 1:7)

See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, and rather than according to Christ. (Colossians 2:8)

These people are *slaves*. It is ironic, for they remonstrate, “You are being too narrow; you are bound up.” Yet, the Bible says that the compromiser is the one enslaved.

Promising them freedom while they themselves are slaves of corruption. (2 Peter 2:19)

There is some reason that he can't obey that truth, there is some string on his foot. Diotrophes, for example, wanted preeminence.

For this reason, if I come, I will call attention to his deeds which he does, unjustly accusing us with wicked words; and not satisfied with this, neither does he himself receive the brethren, and he forbids those who desire to do so, and puts them out of the church. (3 John 1:10)

Such a one has an agenda, some other interest, or some fear. There is some reason he is not free to obey the truth. Some kind of an appetite has him bound.

He is a slave *of his belly*. Shocking! Their god is their belly (Phil. 3:19). All they can think about is filling that belly, the next meal, and how much they can put away. They can't stop, moderate, sacrifice, deny that thing, or declare war. They are strangers to fasting and self-control. Remember the sons of Eli, *And the sons of Eli were sons of worthlessness; they did not know Jehovah* (1 Sam. 2:12). Micah saw this problem, *Thus says the LORD concerning the prophets who lead my people astray; when they have something to bite with their teeth, they cry, “Peace,” but against him who puts nothing in their mouths, they declare holy war* (Micah

3:5). Jesus warned of it, too, *But beware of the false prophets who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inside they are ravenous wolves* (Matt. 7:15) and, *[the unfaithful steward] begins to beat his fellow servants, and to eat and to drink with the ones drinking* (Matt. 24:49).

Trace the error back to its origin. It goes back to the belly. For the belly takes food. Food takes money. Money takes job stability. Job stability means pleasing the people and people pleasing brings about compromise. Thus preachers are enslaved.

False leaders are typically out for gain.

Who must be silenced because they are upsetting whole families, teaching things they should not teach for the sake of sordid gain. (Titus 1:11)

These are murmurers, complainers, having gone according to their *lusts*, and their mouth speaks proud things, admiring faces for the sake of *gain*. (Jude 1:16 KJV)

And in their greed they will *exploit* you with false words. (2 Peter 2:3)

Now the Pharisees, who were *lovers of money*. (Luke 16:14)

They are not out to serve Christ and His glory. Rather they are religious empire builders.

In contrast, Paul disowns such a practice, *For we are not as the many, peddling the Word of God; but as from sincerity, but as from God. We speak in Christ, in the sight of God* (2 Cor. 2:17).

C. Smooth speech is another attribute. They are eloquent. They are great preachers and very gifted. You like to listen to them. They are good storytellers; they eulogize and flatter (note the Greek *eulogia*). They can really spin out those biographies and personal illustrations. But somehow they are too eloquent, too positive, too smooth. One well known evangelist was interviewed by a national magazine. He states, "I fully adhere to the fundamental tenets of the Christian faith but as an American I respect other paths to God." Why did he say it like that? He had to smooth it over. Another preacher tells a lost man who had just lost his wife, "May this bring you closer to God." It is much smoother than may this bring you to God. Listen to what the Bible has on this by way of precept and example:

And the king of Israel gathered the prophets, four hundred

men. And *he* said to them, Shall we go to Ramoth-gilead to battle, or shall I forbear? And they said, *Go up*, and God will give *it* into the king's hand. (2 Chronicles 18:5)

[The people] say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophecy not unto us right things, speak unto us *smooth* things, prophesy deceits. (Isaiah 30:10 KJV)

For [the false prophets] have healed the hurt of the daughter of My people slightly, saying, *Peace, peace!* And *there is* no peace. (Jeremiah 8:11)

They keep saying to those who despise Me, the Lord has said, you will have *peace*; and as for everyone who walks in the stubbornness of his own heart, they say calamity will not come upon you. (Jeremiah 23:17)

Then the prophet Jeremiah said to Hananiah the prophet, Hear now, Hananiah, Jehovah has not sent you, but you have made this people trust in a lie. (Jeremiah 28:15)

And I say this that no one will delude you with *persuasive* argument. (Colossians 2:4)

And in their greed, they will exploit you with *false* words. (2 Peter 2:3)

For speaking *great swelling words of vanity*, by *the* lusts of the flesh, by unbridled lusts, they allure those indeed escaping the ones living in error. (2 Peter 2:18 KJV)

These are murmurers, complainers, walking after their own lusts; and their mouth speaketh *great swelling* words, having men's persons in admiration because of advantage. (Jude 1:16 KJV)

Even though they are eloquent, yet little is said. It is more like a pep rally.

But shun profane and vane babblings. (2 Timothy 2:16 KJV)

For there are many rebellious men, *empty talkers* and deceivers, especially those of *the* circumcision. (Titus 1:10)

4. The consequence? They *deceive the unsuspecting*. The first thing the enemy did was to deceive Eve in the garden and so he uses men to

carry on his work.

And many false prophets will rise, and will mislead many.
(Matthew 24:11)

For false christs and false prophets will rise up. And *they* will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect. (Matthew 24:24)

For such ones *are* false apostles, *deceitful* workers transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. Did not Satan marvelously transform himself into an angel of light? *It is* not a great thing, then, if also his ministers transform themselves as ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works. (2 Corinthians 11:13 KJV)

And their word will have growth like gangrene, of whom *are* Hymenaeus and Philetus, who missed the mark concerning the truth, saying the resurrection already has come, and *overturn* the faith of some. (2 Timothy 2:17)

In contrast, Paul testifies this way:

But we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in *craftiness*, nor adulterating the word of God, but *by* the revelation of the truth commending ourselves to every conscience of men before God. (2 Corinthians 4:2)

Paul was concerned that Christians be established:

As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by *craftiness* in deceitful scheming. (Ephesians 4:14).

What type of person gets deceived? The *unsuspecting*, the simple, those without guile, innocent, gullible. The only hope is to be *watchful*, to be honest, and self-denying. For, how is one deceived? Deception is not an intellectual problem, but rather it is a moral problem.

And with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the *love* of the truth so as to be saved. (2 Thessalonians 2:10)

Stay true to the truth—*the teaching you have learned*.

Chapter 1-3: the depravity of man

Chapter 4: justification by faith in the blood of Christ

Chapter 5-8: the security of the believer

Chapter 6-7: impotence of the law and the power of Spirit in victory over sin

Chapter 9-11: the sovereignty of God

Chapter 12f: Christian love.

Paul was confident in their maturity, *For the report of your obedience has reached to all; therefore I am rejoicing over you* (Rom. 16:19). But still he was cautious and wanted to secure their being established (v. 25) in *what is good* and that they be free of *evil* (Matt. 10:16). There is no need to get worked up in the flesh in fighting evil. We must hold our peace and then the *God of peace*, at the end of the world, coming so soon, whereas we are even now in the last days, will do the *crushing* under *our feet*, being in union with Christ and thus fulfilling the old gospel promise (Gen. 3:15).

TO ESTABLISH YOU

16:25-27

Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which has been kept secret for long ages past, but now is manifested, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, has been made known to all the nations, leading to obedience of faith; to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, be the glory forever. Amen.

And now Paul is at the end of his honored letter to the Romans. Paul's burden was that they might be *established*, the same as he stated in the very beginning. Like a lamb, like a lawn, or like a business, so also souls must be established. Many we know who started out looking fine, but somehow never got a sufficient root. Paul does not take this for granted. The Greek word *sterizo* is sometimes translated as follows:

When the days were approaching for His ascension, He was determined to go to Jerusalem. (Luke 9:51)

And besides all this, between us and you there is a great chasm *fixed*, in order that those who wish to come over from here to you may not be able, and that none may cross over from there to us. (Luke 16:26)

It is a major concern to see the saints established, first, in doctrine, not tossed, but knowing the certainty of the truth, *That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive* (Eph. 4:14 KJV). Also, we must be established in our hearts, that is, in our walk in a life of self-denial, learning to be courteous, kind, committed to seeking the welfare of others, setting our mind on things above, seeking the Lord and growing, and learning how to avoid and overcome depression.

Paul commits this to him who is *able*. Yet, in this there are various responsibilities. We are responsible to do this for ourselves, *You too be patient; strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand* (James 5:8). Second, we can help others, *And we sent Timothy, our brother and God's fellow worker in the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you as to your faith*, (1 Thess. 3:2) and *But I have prayed for*

you, that your faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers (Luke 22:32). But ultimately, it is God who does this work or we would all be blown away. He has the power to do it.

What are the means in establishing a soul? A major factor is through knowing the truth—the *gospel and the scriptures*, that is, the New Testament and the Old Testament.

Paul calls it *my gospel*. It was personally real to him. It was not “we believe.” It was the *gospel*, the good news that there is hope for a condemned guilty sinner to have full favor with God apart from any merit. The man on death row gets the report that the governor has pardoned him. That is gospel. But even more than that, the Christian does not even have to feel beholden; the law is satisfied and demands that he go free. How? Justice is satisfied. Jesus Christ died.

Thus we have another way of saying the same thing — *the preaching* (message) *of Jesus Christ*. There is a savior. Christianity is unique from all other world religions in that it *offers a savior* (Matt. 1:21). All other religious leaders (Mohammed, Confucius, Buddha) present themselves as mere examples and teachers, now dead and in the grave. Christ died to save the believer from his sin-debt. Christ rose again and lives in the believer’s heart to save him from sin’s power. He invades, delivers, and transforms the believer (2 Cor. 5:17). Christianity is not something that man says, but what God did. God came down in history. The gospel is the story of what God did in history on Calvary. He became a man. He died for sinners. He became a sin-bearer to take away the debt to divine justice. The *preaching*? This is a proclamation by a herald of the arrival of the king—to prepare for him, to honor him, and submit.

Now we have yet another way of saying the same thing—the *revelation of the mystery*. A mystery is something which cannot be known until revealed. You don’t know what is in the box until the cover is taken off. The gospel truths comparatively speaking remained a mystery all down through the Old Testament. The Jews and even the prophets did not understand fully the way of salvation—how sin would be put away and who, what, and when the Messiah would come, especially how the Gentiles would be brought in. And the Gentile nations were in darkness, sacrificing their babies to appease their god, etc. Then Jesus came and opened His mouth, speaking things hidden since the foundation of the world (Matt. 13:35). But even then, much was still in the dark. Think of the two on the road to Emmaus. Then

Paul was raised up and given special apostolic revelation.

For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles—if indeed you have heard of the stewardship of God’s grace which was given to me for you; that by revelation there was made known to me the mystery, as I wrote before in brief. And by referring to this, when you read you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit (Ephesians 3:1-5).

Here are some of the mysteries.

The mystery of God’s wisdom—his mind, his thoughts and plans from all eternity, *But we speak God’s wisdom in a mystery, the hidden wisdom, which God predestined before the ages to our glory* (1 Cor. 2:7)

The mystery of the faith—the body of truth we believe, *But holding to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience* (1 Tim. 3:9).

The mystery of godliness—more specifically, the truths of the accomplishment and application of redemption, *“And by common confession great is the mystery of godliness: He who was revealed in the flesh, was vindicated in the Spirit, beheld by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory”* (1 Tim. 3:16).

The mysteries of the kingdom—much of it has to do with true and false Christianity, *And He answered and said to them, “To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been granted”* (Matt. 13:11).

The mystery of the inclusion of the Gentiles—how they would be included, *To be specific, that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel* (Eph. 3:6).

The mystery of regeneration—just how the Gentiles would be included, *To whom God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory* (Col. 1:27).

The mystery of the recovery of the Jews—*For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery, lest you be wise in your own estimation, that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fulness of the Gentiles has come in”* (Rom. 11:25).

The mystery of the marriage union—the intimacy of the church

with Christ, *This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church* (Eph. 5:32).

The mystery of Babylon—the subtle perverted imitation of the church, *And upon her forehead a name was written, a mystery, Babylon the great, the mother of harlots and of the abominations of the earth* (Rev. 17:5).

The mystery of lawlessness—how lawlessness can cover itself with a religious cloak, *For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way* (2 Thess. 2:7). *Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God* (2 Thess. 2:3, 4).

The mystery of the rapture—*Behold, I tell you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed* (1 Cor. 15:51).

The mystery of the end of the world—the summing up of all things in and under Christ, *He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him*” (Eph. 1:9).

These gospel truths were kept *secret* under types and shadows. Then they were *manifested* (2 Tim. 1:10). Not only the New Testament, but the Old Testament also—the *Scriptures of the prophets*—was sent out to the *nations* (Matthew 4:16). God *commanded it*—the timing and the speed and everything was under His sovereign direction. It was not some plan B, but His *eternal* plan. And it leads to *the obedience of faith*—the two cannot be separated. How does the Bible establish this? We see it first in grace in contrast to the law.

Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines. For it is a good thing that the heart be *established* with grace; not with meats, which have not profited them that have been occupied therein. (Hebrews 13:9 KJV)

If it weren't for the gospel of grace we might be living as hermits, thinking this finds favor with God. We might be painting our bumper black or driving a horse and buggy. We might be trying to keep all sorts of holy days.

We see it in truth in contrast to lies. A tribe of natives in Papua New Guinea did not believe they could look on the blood from women. Thus,

their women had to build a hut in the wilderness to give birth all alone. Then the gospel came. They could not sleep well with all their fears. Then the gospel came and as they say, “Now I can sleep anywhere.”

Certainty in contrast to doubt will help establish the soul. If you are not sure you have taken the right road, you drive on hesitatingly. We know some things. We know from Chapters 1-3 that we are depraved. Put no confidence in self. We know from Chapters 3 and 4 that a man finds favor with God through faith in Christ alone and thereby he is freely, fully, forgiven, forever. Go ahead and leave the court room and do business with God. We know from Chapter 5 and 8 that there is no separation. We know from Chapter 6 that there is victory over sin and we can call the devil's bluff.

Purpose in contrast to vanity will help establish the soul. Purpose is like gas on the fire of direction. It yields much satisfaction. It helps eliminates frustration. And what is the ultimate purpose?

The ultimate goal and reason for all? The *glory of God*. This is the chief end of man and of the universe. This tells me why I exist. It tells me why something is there rather than nothing. It is so pervasive that whatever we do, we must do all to the glory of God. It answers a thousand daily decisions. Failure here is the crime of all men's crimes. This was the purpose of redemption—the praise of the glory of God's grace, “*that we ... to the praise of the glory of His grace*” (Eph. 1:6).

One thing for which we should glorify God most is His wisdom—the *only wise God*. Interestingly it is not love. This is one of the supreme attributes that is to be seen by the angelic realm (Eph. 3:10). It is the great wisdom of God in finding a way to justify the sinner and still be just. It was all *through Jesus Christ*. And only through Him can even our praise be accepted. What an *amen* does Paul put on this letter.

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