

PAUL'S DIVINE COMMISSION
Romans 1:1-7

Intro: Today I want to begin with you the study of the book of Romans. As we approached the end of our studies in Hebrews, I began to pray and to think about what my next Sunday morning series would be. It is not always easy to determine the will of God in the ministry except for the fact that I always must be teaching the Word of God. Here at Trinity we have tried to include the Old Testament as well as the New Testament. And we have tried to approach the Word from a doctrinal standpoint as well as to teach the books of the Bible. All of these thoughts went through my mind again. Should I teach an OT book, or a NT book? Or should I bring a doctrinal series. As I thought and prayed it seemed that the Lord kept bringing me back to the book of Romans.

I went back into my notes and found that I had taught Romans at Central Bible Church soon after I became the pastor. I began it on my birthday in June of 1970 and concluded that study on the first Sunday of December almost a year and a half later: December of 1971.

After we started Trinity Bible Church early in 1981, I again taught Romans. That series began on the first Sunday of February of 1982, and completed it on the first Sunday of August in 1983. And so that series occupied just a little over a year and a half.

We have studied Romans in our Sunday School classes, and from time to time I have preached on different passages in the book of Romans without linking them with a series on the book. I probably have more notes in my files on Romans than on any other book of the Bible. That is saying a great deal because I have extensive notes on many of the other books. Those of you who attend the Tuesday Bible Class which I have conducted for many years know that for about 13 years I was busy with the first six books of the OT. A lot of Scripture has been covered during the years I have had the privilege of being your pastor, but I never expect to be able to exhaust the teaching of the Word of God regardless of what books we may consider, or how often.

Why, then, am I coming back again to Paul's epistle to the Romans?

My first answer to that question would have to be that I believe this is what the Lord wants me to do. As I have said, it is not ever easy to know the will of God in such matters as this for sure and certain, but, although I have thought of other books, and have even wondered about what I

should do up to this past week, yet the Lord seems to bring me back to Romans in my thinking. The days ahead will prove whether or not I have clearly understood the will of God. I hope that I have.

A second reason for going to Romans is because of the present spiritual condition of the Church, the Body of Christ.

I noticed in my notes of over twenty years ago I mentioned that things were at a very low ebb spiritually in the church. Since then things have gotten worse. The church seems to conform more and more to the world. There is less real teaching going on in the church. And, at the same time, conditions have deteriorated at an alarming rate in the world. Abortions and homosexuality and divorces and crimes of all kinds have become a way of life, not only in America, but around the world. And the church, if it seeks to meet the needs of the world, does so in a worldly way, or in a political way, but not in God's way. We can thank God that the scene on earth is not totally black, but it is getting that way. And there is nothing that I know of which could be of greater benefit to the church and to people in the world than a revival of the truths of the book of Romans! From what I have read it seems that the book of Romans has had more to do with spiritual awakenings in the past than any other book of the Bible. They are all wonderful, but when we scale the heights of Romans we are on the Mount Everest of Scripture. No book of the Bible gives us a more thorough picture of the whole doctrine of salvation and its practical effects than does Romans.

The third reason that I want to go through Romans again is because I feel that I need it. Perhaps you can say the same, too. We need to see again the depths of our depravity. We need to see the marvelous love and grace of God in sending the Lord Jesus to die for us. We need to be reminded of the transforming power of the grace of God. And we need to see what our ultimate glory will be. We need to see how God is going to bring to fulfillment all of His purposes in grace. And we need to be reminded of what it means to live a holy life. All of this is in the book of Romans.

And so I ask you to join with me in going through this wonderful book of Holy Scripture again. Would you be offended if I ask you to read it over and over again? Read it as much as you can. Read it until the truths of the book really grip your heart. Read it asking the Holy Spirit to open your eyes and your heart to the precious truths that we will see there. Let us ask Him to take us deeper into this book than we have ever gone before. Perhaps the revival which we have been praying for, and hoping for, will begin in

the weeks ahead as we give ourselves to know the book of Romans. Some of you may have never been through Romans before. Others of you have been through it many times. But whatever your own situation may be, let us determine by the grace of God that we are going to seek the blessing of the Lord as we go through this book in the coming weeks.

Today I want to look at the first seven verses of chapter 1. Let me read them to you. (Read.)

The first seventeen verses of chapter 1 give us Paul's introduction to the book of Romans, and so these seven verses are a part of that introduction. However, I want to point something out to you from these seven verses that I don't remember seeing before.

To emphasize what I mean, let me reflect for just a moment upon the life of the Apostle Paul.

If Paul wrote Hebrews, then he wrote over half of the books of the NT. That was a special place of honor the Lord gave to the Apostle Paul. He probably had a greater understanding of the truth of God than anyone has ever had with the one exception of our Lord Jesus Christ.

But there are two other things that I want to point out about Paul.

The first is that you do not find any scandal connected with his life. He not only knew the truth, but he lived it. He practiced what he preached. And this gave usual power to his ministry.

But the other thing is this, and this is related to what I want you to see this morning. I do not know of anyone who surpassed the Apostle Paul in both the zeal and faithfulness of his ministry. I do not mean to belittle anyone else, but do you know anyone who suffered so much and as long as Paul did. He faced death almost every day that he ministered. He was beaten, imprisoned, went without food, humiliated again and again, and yet he never stopped until he died. Nothing deterred him from the work that spent his life doing.

Why?

I think that he has told us in the opening verses of this epistle. It was this: PAUL LABORED UNDER THE DEEP CONVICTION THAT HE HAD BEEN CALLED OF GOD AND SOVEREIGNLY COMMISSIONED TO DO THE WORK THAT HE DID. HIS SOUL BURNED WITH A FIRE WHICH COULD NOT BE EXTINGUISHED REGARDLESS OF THE OPPOSITION THAT HE FACED. HE WAS TIRELESS IN HIS DESIRE TO

PREACH THE GOSPEL, AND HE WAS EQUALLY TIRELESS IN HIS EFFORTS TO SEE THE PEOPLE OF GOD WALKING IN THE WAYS OF THE LORD. HE WAS A MAN COMMISSIONED BY GOD AND HE KNEW IT! IT COMES OUT IN THE WAY HE DESCRIBED HIMSELF, AND IN THE WAY HE DESCRIBED HIS MINISTRY. IF YOU WANT TO KNOW WHAT KIND OF A MAN PAUL WAS, THEN READ AND RE-READ THE FIRST SEVENTEEN VERSES OF ROMANS 1. We are only going to consider the first seven verses today, but here I want you to see:

- 1) His Position, or His Titles (v. 1a).
- 2) His Message (vv. 1b-4).
- 3) His Mission (vv. 5, 6).
- 4) His Greeting (v. 7).

First, then, let us look at what he had to say about himself:

I. HIS POSITION, or HIS TITLES (Rom. 1:1a).

A. "A servant of Jesus Christ."

Anyone can easily see that Paul was not his own man. He emphasized two things about himself. First, he belonged to Jesus Christ. He was a bondservant of Jesus Christ. He considered himself to be a man whose primary responsibility was to do whatever Jesus Christ wanted him to do. He knew that he was not his own; he had been bought with a price, an infinitely great price, as he told the Corinthian church about themselves. And that price was the blood of Jesus Christ.

It is significant that he mentioned this first. We cannot all claim the second title which Paul claimed here in verse 1, but this first title belongs to all of us, from the oldest to the youngest. It showed his humility. It showed his submission to the Lord. To link his name, "Paul," with that of his Lord, "Jesus Christ," did not bring fear to his heart (as it would if some other person's name might have been there). It brought joy. It brought peace. It brought conviction to his heart as to the way he was to live. It was Paul's great honor to be able to claim truthfully that he was "a servant," a bondservant, "of Jesus Christ."

You and I need to dwell on those words until they really mean a transformation of our own lives, of the way we live.

Secondly, he was:

B. "Called to be an apostle."

This was not something that he sought. He did not make an application to be an apostle. In fact, we know that he felt completely unworthy to be an apostle because of what he wrote

to the Corinthian church. These are his words in 1 Cor. 15:9:

For I am the least of the apostles,
that am not meet to be called an apostle,
because I persecuted the church of God.

There was no higher place for a man to occupy in the Church of Jesus Christ than for him to be an apostle. It was not a position for which Paul felt himself worthy. He knew that he was an apostle by the grace of God. He said so in 1 Cor. 15:10. He was an apostle because that was the sovereign calling of God in his life. It was not a position that he had earned, nor even sought. God saved him, made him His bondservant, and appointed him to the high and holy calling of an apostle.

What was an apostle?

Basically the word means a sent one. He was one sent from God, sent from Jesus Christ, to others. (We will see those to whom he was sent in a moment.) He was a man with a mission and a message. The call of God was upon him. As an apostle he was one of the leaders, one of the founding fathers, if you please, of the NT Church. He was one of those men through whom God would give His Word to the Church and to the world, especially to the Church. It is commonly thought that Paul, because of his great natural ability, would have risen to great heights in Judaism, but he never could have achieved anything like this which was an honor bestowed upon him by the grace of God. And let me say at the outset of our studies in this great epistle, that Paul never lost sight of the fact that he was a man under a divine commission! It motivated him in all that he did. It caused him to face all kinds of hardships throughout his life with joy and courage because he knew that he belonged to Jesus Christ, and was under divine orders which he had to fulfill.

This explains why he never wavered in his ministry. When you see a man enter the ministry and then because of hardships get out of the ministry, you can be sure that he does not have the call of God upon his heart. Or, if he does, you can be equally sure that the Lord will go after him, like he went after Jonah, until his servant comes back and again takes up the work he was called to do.

May the Lord give us many young men in our day who, although they cannot be apostles, will nevertheless be men called of God, men with a divine commission and mission, men who will stand for the truth regardless of how strong the opposition might be.

But not let us look at:

II. PAUL'S MESSAGE (Rom. 1:1b-4).

It is described in those last four words of verse 1:

A. "The gospel of God."

Paul had good news from God to deliver to men. And to this he was "separated." The word "separated" would suggest that God, in calling Paul, had drawn a circle around him and this message, and Paul knew that he was never, under any circumstances, to step outside of "the gospel of God" in his ministry to people.

The book of Romans is going to tell us what that Gospel is. It was not a message of social improvement, nor of prosperity. It was a message of salvation from sin. Look at what Paul wrote in verses 13 through 17 of this chapter. (Read.) Paul's life and ministry were to be devoted to the most wonderful message that man has ever heard, a message so simple in many ways, and yet so profound that it can never be exhausted.

It was a gospel which had been:

B. Promised by the writers of the OT.

We can see from this that the Gospel according to Abraham and the Gospel according to Moses and the Gospel according to David, and according to Isaiah, and according to Jonah, were no different from the Gospel according to Paul. Paul was able to give a more complete statement of that Gospel, but the Gospel of the OT and the Gospel of the NT are one and the same.

So, if we want to know what "the gospel of God" is, we need to examine the Scriptures, the Bible, which is the Word of God.

But notice! The Gospel is a message about:

C. A Person.

That Person is God's eternal Son, "Jesus Christ **our Lord**." To preach the Gospel is to preach Christ. If we do not preach Christ, we are not preaching the Gospel.

We preach Him as the pre-existent One Who came to earth as a Son of David, died (which is only implied here), but was raised from the dead in such a way as to reaffirm that neither His birth, nor His life on earth, nor His death, had in any way affected His Deity.

It is interesting to me that Paul did not mention here why the Lord Jesus Christ died. We will come to that later in the epistle. The one thing that he seems to have wanted to make sure was that his readers clearly understood Who Jesus Christ was, the Son of God Who became a real Man, Whose very resurrection was a proclamation to people of all time that He was the Person He claimed to be, the Person that prophets before Paul had predicted would come.

And let me say right here: ANYONE WHO PREACHES A CHRIST DIFFERENT FROM THE ONE PAUL DESCRIBED HERE IS NOT PREACHING "THE GOSPEL OF GOD." JESUS CHRIST IS THE CHRIST OF SCRIPTURE. HE IS ALL THAT PAUL DECLARED HIM TO BE IN THESE OPENING VERSES OF THE BOOK OF ROMANS.

Paul would have us know that the Gospel is not primarily a message about man, but a message about Christ.

But what was to be the scope of Paul's mission? Was it a Gospel only for Jews like Paul? Or, was it for others also? Our answer is found in verse 5.

III. PAUL'S MISSION (Rom. 1:5, 6).

Paul's mission was to "all nations." He was the apostle to the Gentiles. This does not mean that he ignored the Jews. We know that he preached to the Jews. But his appointment was to go to those whom he had previously despised. The Gospel is to be preached to all. It is good news about Jesus Christ for Gentiles as well as Jews, a message to which all are exhorted to be obedient. And, amazingly, in the heart of the Empire, in Rome itself, there was a group of people who were like Paul, "called," not to be apostles, but to belong to Jesus Christ!

And it is to those people, trophies of divine grace, that Paul addressed this epistle.

IV. HIS GREETING (Rom. 1:7).

He identified the Lord's people in two ways:

- 1) They were the "beloved of God."
- 2) They were "saints." This was their calling.

"The gospel of God" is a message concerning Jesus Christ by which sinful Jews and Gentiles, especially "beloved of God," are being changed through the death and resurrection of Christ, from guilty, hell-deserving sinners, under divine judgment, into "saints."

It is for them that he wrote this epistle. It was for them

that he prayed. It was for them that he sought "grace...and peace" from their inexhaustible source, "God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ." They are the only Ones Who can provide us with the daily grace and peace which we all need. To link our Lord with God the Father in this way was further evidence of the absolute Deity of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Concl: I hope the Holy Spirit will use these first seven verses of Romans to whet your appetite to read and to meditate on the whole epistle. Make sure that you are trusting in the only Savior for sinners. And let us pray also that the Lord will make us faithful and fervent like the Apostle Paul was in spreading this message of salvation to Jews and Gentiles alike in our day. There is no hope for salvation from sin for anyone except in our Lord Jesus Christ.

TRUE CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP
Romans 1:8-12

Intro: I would like to encourage you again today to read the book of Romans as often as you can. The more you read it, the more you will love it, and, under the Lord's blessing, the more you will understand the wonderful truths it contains. So set aside some time each week to read Romans. You will receive great blessing if you do.

Today I have a text which might not seem very important for us today when we first read it. It may sound to us like just a personal message from Paul to the members of the church in Rome. He obviously was delighted with what he was hearing about them, and for a long time he had hoped and prayed that he would be able to visit them. But up to the time of writing this epistle, he had not had that privilege. But it was still very much one of the main things which was upon his heart. He knew some of them, but only because he had met them in other places. He mentioned many of them in chapter 16, which as I have suggested before, may have been his prayer list for the believers in Rome.

We cannot fit all of the details together that we would like to, but we can learn some very important lessons from the five verses we will be considering this morning, verses which, as I have said, seem to be, when we first read them, only of historical importance. But they give us an insight into what was going on in the church of Rome, and what should be going on in our churches today. They also give us a greater understanding of the Apostle Paul, his relationship to the church, and why it was that he wanted so badly to visit them.

In the first seven verses which we considered last Sunday, we saw how the Apostle identified himself, his message, and his mission. And then he went on to emphasize their relationship with the Lord, after which he gave them his characteristic greeting which in itself is full of meaning.

Godet spoke in his commentary of the first seven verses as a kind of official introduction. It might be necessary for some in Rome to understand that he was an apostle by divine calling so that they would be more receptive to his message.

Having done all of that, he proceeded to tell them the first thing that was on his heart. And it had to do with:

I. HIS THANKSGIVING TO GOD FOR THEM (Rom. 1:8).

There are three ways in which Paul expressed his personal

love for the believers in Rome:

- 1) His thanksgiving for them.
- 2) His intercession on their behalf.
- 3) His great desire to see them coupled with the reasons for such a visit.

Here in verse 8 we have the first of those: his thanksgiving for them. This was "first" on his list of things that he wanted them to know.

It is a healthy thing spiritually for all of us to cultivate the habit of looking for things in the lives of other Christians for which to give thanks to God. It is always easy to find things to criticize in each other, but we need to think about the things that are in people's lives because they know the Lord and as proof that they know the Lord.

Although Paul seems to mention only one thing here, yet the one implies another. When he said that he was thankful for their faith, he obviously meant, in the first place, that he was thankful that they knew the Lord as their Savior.

But he took a step beyond that. He was thankful that their faith was "spoken of throughout the whole world." By "the whole world" he had to mean the Roman world, i.e., the Empire. And when he said that "is spoken of" he meant that people throughout the Empire were assured that the Lord had done a work in Rome, and that it was seen in the lives of the people in the church. It was not just a claim that the believers in Rome made for themselves, but it was a claim that others were making for them.

This brings to mind a very important truth of Scripture. As I have said many times before, the Bible knows nothing of a salvation that leaves people like they were before they supposedly trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul preached that "if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away" and "all things are become new" (2 Cor. 5:17).

Paul gave a simple statement of the Gospel to the Ephesian church in Eph. 2:8, 9. But he followed it immediately with what we find in verse 10:

For we are his workmanship,
created in Christ Jesus unto good works,
which God hath before ordained
that we should walk in them.

We must never separate verses 8 and 9 of Ephesians 2 from verse 10. No Christian is perfect, but if a person is truly saved, he will be changed, and the change will become more apparent the longer he knows the Lord.

James is often criticized as being different in his teaching from the Apostle Paul, but that charge is not true. He was simply emphasizing the very same thing that Paul taught. This is what he had in mind when he said, "I will shew thee my faith by my works." And James said that we are not just to be hearers of the Word, but doers, and that if any person is not a doer of the Word, and yet claims to be a Christian, he is self-deceived.

Paul made it clear as to what he meant here in Rom. 1:8 when in Rom. 16:19 he wrote, "For your obedience is come abroad unto all men." Even our Lord Jesus said, "Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them."

It is wonderful to see people in church. It is wonderful also to see a church full of people. But going to church does not necessarily mean that a person is a Christian. He may think that he is, but the only way we can be sure is the testimony of a life that is changed, NOT PERFECT, BUT CHANGED. Paul rejoiced that this was the message that was getting out into the Roman world about the people in the church at Rome.

Let us pray that this will be the same kind of a message that will get out into the world about us. So often today when you ask people how things are going in their church, you will often see any smiles leave their faces as they begin to tell you about problems that they are having. Have you noticed that? The Lord's work is never easy, but how refreshing it is to hear about a church where their faith is spoken of throughout the whole world. That is the way it ought to be in all of our churches. I am sure that the church in Rome had its problems, but that was not the main thing to be told about the church. The main thing was that the Lord's people were showing that they were the Lord's people by their love for the Lord and His Word, by their love for each other, and by their desire to live lives that were pleasing to the Lord. It is no wonder that Paul was thankful for them.

Before I leave this verse, please note that even with his thanksgiving which is always pleasing to God, even He as an apostle could only come to God with his thanksgiving "through Jesus Christ." This sound much like what we saw in Heb. 13:15, doesn't it? We can never come to God for any reason except through the Lord Jesus Christ. He is our Mediator, our Great High Priest. Paul's thanksgiving to the Father was a spiritual sacrifice.

In verse 9 we read about:

II. PAUL'S INTERCESSION FOR THEM (Rom. 1:9).

How easy it is to tell people that you are praying for them when you may not be praying for them at all, or only at widely scattered times! Paul felt that such a claim was so important that he took God as his Witness that he was telling the truth. Paul was just as genuine in his praying as he was in his preaching. He served God with his spirit, i.e., genuinely and enthusiastically, in the Gospel of His Son, i.e., preaching the Gospel. That which characterized his preaching, characterized his praying.

Those of you who do not teach a class or preach may not know this, but I will let you in on a little secret. It is this: It is much easier to preach than it is to pray. It is much easier to teach a class than it is to pray. I can also say that it is often more enjoyable to teach for thirty minutes or an hour than it is to pray for the same amount of time. Paul was telling us something very important about himself in this verse. He enjoyed preaching, but he enjoyed praying, too. He was faithful in preaching, but he was also faithful in praying. The two belonged together, and the one was not complete without the other. Public ministry is usually more attractive than private ministry. But Paul knew, and we should know, that it is that which goes on in our private lives in our relationship with the Lord which determines the effective of our public ministry with people.

To how many people can you say, "Without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers"? "Without ceasing... always..."

It is hard to keep on praying for people if you do not see evidence of answered prayer in their lives. And you can't see that if you are living at some distance from them. Perhaps this is what makes letter-writing so important. But even when there is no exchange of letters, we need to keep praying. And I would like for you to notice that Paul evidently kept praying even when he knew that the Lord was working in that church at Rome in a most remarkable way. We need to pray if we see no blessing, and we need to keep praying when we do see blessing. We may not all be teachers, but we all need to be "pray-ers."

But now let us notice:

III. PAUL'S PRAYER REQUESTS (Rom. 1:10-12).

You know, it is always interesting to hear what people pray for. Often we never get beyond the physical problems, and usually it is that people will get over their problems. Did you ever notice how little there is of that in the Word of God? Paul prayed about his thorn in the flesh, but the Lord

told him that it would not be taken away. Timothy had stomach problems, and he apparently was sick quite often, but Paul told him, in so many words, to be careful about taking his medicine regularly. People probably had more physical problems in Paul's day, and died earlier in life, than we do today. But that was not the main thing that they were concerned about. I am not saying that we should not pray for each other when we are sick. You all hear me pray for the sick every Sunday--and I do so through the week, too. But what I am saying is that we need to bring a new dimension into our praying. Sometimes it is the Lord's will to heal us; sometimes it is not. The main thing throughout our lives is, in health or in sickness, what is going on in our lives in our relationship with the Lord? This is what we need to be concerned about.

Paul actually mentioned three prayer requests here. Notice what they were:

A. His travel plans.

We often think of Paul simply going from place to place to preach, but that he just took each day as it came without much thought given to it. Some in the Corinthian church accused him of this. You will probably remember that they said that you tell us you are coming to see us, and then you don't come. To them he had what we would call today "a credibility gap."

But in reality that was not the case. We see here that Paul had been praying a long time about going to Rome. But he wanted to go there when the Lord wanted him to go. And he wanted it to be "a prosperous journey."

We can see that Paul wanted to be in the right place at the right time, the right place and time according to God's will, not his own. If he had been directing his life, he would have been in Rome much earlier in his ministry. But the Lord kept leading otherwise, as we will see next week. His ministry was not self-planned, but God-led.

Why did he want to go?

Was he just tired of what he was doing, perhaps struggling with the problems in the church at Corinth, and wanted to get into a work that was enjoying the blessing of God? No, that was not the reason.

Did he need a vacation? Was he hoping to get in a little fishing, and perhaps some sightseeing? After all, there was a lot to see in Rome. That, in effect, was the capital of

the world at that time. No, that was not the reason

His reason is given in verse 10.

B. To give them a spiritual gift.

What did he mean by this?

It seems clear that Paul wanted to be a blessing to them in order that they might be even more established in their faith and in their relationship with the Lord. As Arthur Pink said in his book, Gleanings From Paul, p. 20,

Paul sought not to take a pleasure trip, nor to obtain variety in his labors, but to be made a blessing to these saints.

Travel in those days was not easy, and Rome was some distance away. So there would have been other places where it would have been easier for him to go. No, he knew that regardless of how well things were going in the church at Rome, they could always be better, and so he wanted to contribute to their lives by being a spiritual blessing to them.

But he had another reason which was a part of his request to the Lord.

C. His own blessing as well as theirs (v. 12).

(Read the verse.)

When we think of a man like Paul, we think of someone who was always giving, giving, giving. We think of him ministering, and of others receiving his ministry. But while he did not want to miss the giving part, yet he felt the need in his own soul for receiving blessing. And let us never forget that regardless of how greatly used a servant of the Lord may be, he has spiritual needs just like any other child of God. And we can be sure that, if this were true of the Apostle Paul, it has been true of every other servant of the Lord from that day to this.

We have examples of this in Scripture, don't we? Abraham and Sarah got tired of waiting for the Lord, and so Sarah gave Hagar to her husband to have a child, and Ishmael was born. They both needed spiritual help at that time. We have the Lord's own testimony that Job was the most godly man on earth, and yet the book which bears his name shows that he had great needs. Over and over again in the Psalms you can see how often David was discouraged and downcast. He needed spiritual help. Think of Elijah who got so discouraged that he prayed that the Lord would take his life. He had

spiritual needs. We have been studying the life of Jonah. He was a prophet, but a man who greatly needed the blessing of the Lord in his life. And do you remember how grievously Peter denied the Lord? Afterwards the Lord ministered to his needs.

So we should not be surprised to see that Paul needed spiritual renewal in his own soul. He needed encouragement. That is what it means to be comforted. And he looked forward to being in Rome that he might not only be a spiritual blessing to the church there, but that the people of the church might be a blessing to him.

Concl: What I have been describing from our text in Romans 1 is TRUE SPIRITUAL FELLOWSHIP! We pray for each other. We rejoice to see evidence of salvation in each others lives. We anticipate being with each other not just so we can engage in small talk, but so we can be a blessing to others, and receive blessing from the Lord through them.

We learn from the Apostle Paul that spiritual blessings are intended to go both ways. The apostle needs the Lord's blessing just as much as any other child of God. And may the Lord keep any of us from ever thinking that we have gotten to the place where we always give blessing but never need to receive it. When we meet at church, or see each other during the week. When we are together with our families, or when we have guests in our homes. Let us pray for people because we want to see them established in the truth and in their walk with the Lord. Let us pray for each other to that end. And when we go to church, let those of us who minister the Word pray that our own hearts will be built up, and that the Lord will use others to be a channel of blessing to us.

I often think of the disciples serving what became of that little boy's lunch as probably over 10,000 people were fed. And when they were finished, each disciple had a basket full of food for himself. Solomon wrote in Prov. 11:25,

The liberal soul shall be made fat:

and he that watereth shall be watered also himself.

The Lord Jesus said it this way:

Blessed are the merciful:

for they shall obtain mercy.

So let us pray for each other, and pray also that we may be a blessing to others wherever we go. Let this always be uppermost in our minds. But let us also pray that others will be a blessing to us. This is TRUE CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP.

THE APOSTLE'S MESSAGE

Romans 1:13-17

Intro: As anyone reads Paul's epistle to the Romans, I don't see how he or she can possibly miss seeing that the Apostle Paul was a man of great understanding, of great conviction, and a man of great dedication to the task which the Lord had appointed him to do. He knew that he had been called of God. He knew the message he was to proclaim. He knew where the Lord wanted him to serve, and he was anxious to do what the Lord had called him to do. There was no uncertainty with him about any of these things. We can see from the first seventeen verses of Romans 1 that he firmly believed in the Gospel message, and that there was absolutely no other way for anyone to get right with God. He was not just a messenger of one way of salvation; he did not believe that there were even two ways. He believed that Christ was the only Savior.

It will do all of us good to read and re-read the first seventeen verses of Romans 1 until we see these things about the Apostle Paul, and then pray that we may share the same convictions which he had. Paul did not hold any of his convictions lightly. He demonstrated many times during his ministry that he would seek to fulfill the calling that he had from the Lord even if it cost him his life--which, according to tradition, it eventually did!

Verse 13, the first in our text for today, really continues the subject which he brought up beginning with verse 9. That was his great desire to see them. How long he had this, we do not know. But he had prayed about it. He had even made plans for going to Rome. However, at this point as he was writing this epistle, he still had not been to Rome.

In verses 11 and 12, as we saw last week, he expressed the reasons why he wanted to see them. It involved blessing for them as well as blessing for himself. (Read, and review the content of those two verses.) He did not just want to take a vacation, or a holiday, as they say in Canada. His purpose in going was the fulfillment of the commission that he had received from the Lord.

In our text for today he became even more specific, referring first to the times he had planned to go to them, why he had not yet made it, and then why he felt compelled to keep praying and to keep trying.

In verse 13 we see:

I. INTENTION AND PREVENTION (Rom. 1:13).

He used the word "purposed" here. This means that he was practically on the way. He was very determined time and again that he would go to Rome.

But what had happened? He was "let hitherto." This is an Old English expression which means that he had been hindered! Every time he had planned to go, something had prevented it! He does not say how he was prevented, but we would assume from what he said about "the will of God" in verse 4 that he was satisfied every time that it had not been the Lord's time for him to go. On some occasions it may have been other, urgent opportunities which came his way to preach the Gospel in other places. It also probably was, in some instances, the Devil's opposition which stood in the way. But he did not think it important to say why he had been hindered, only that he had tried many times to come, but had not for a variety of reasons been able to carry out his plans.

This ought to be very helpful to us.

Every time Paul's plans fell through, it must have been a great disappointment to him. Probably on many occasions it would have been a trial to his faith. We all have made plans, determining to do something, only to have something make it impossible for us to do what we really have felt that the Lord wanted us to do. It is interesting to see that the Apostle Paul had that experience, not once, but many times.

But where had it brought him?

It brought him to realize more strongly than ever that his life was being directed, not by himself, nor by others, and not even by Satan, but by God! And so that made him more prayerful in making his plans.

James was speaking about business people when he wrote in his epistle,

Go to now, ye that say,
Today or tomorrow we will go into such a city,
and continue there a year,
and buy and sell, and get gain:
Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow.
For what is your life?
It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time,
and then vanisheth away.
For that ye ought to say, **If the Lord will,**
we shall live, and do this, or that (Jas. 4:13-15).

There is nothing wrong about making plans. In fact, it is good to make plans. But our plans must be made as much as we can tell under the guiding hand of God, trusting Him to show

us if it is His will. The words, "If the Lord will," should be a part of every Christian's vocabulary.

Do you remember that we had this teaching in the book of Hebrews? The writer exhorted the Hebrew believers with these words,

Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection... And then he added a couple of verses later, "And this will we do, **if God permit**" (Heb. 6:1a, 3).

In 1 Cor. 16:7 Paul wrote the following words to the Corinthian church:

For I will not see you now by the way;
but I trust to tarry a while with you,
if the Lord permit.

In Acts 16:6, 7 we read the following about Paul and Timothy,
Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia
and the region of Galatia,
**and were forbidden of the Holy Spirit
to preach the word in Asia,**
After they were come to Mysia,
they assayed [tried] to go into Bithynia,
but the Spirit suffered them not.

Why was their way blocked in these two instances? The following verses tell us that it was because the Lord wanted them to go over to Macedonia.

And so the ministry is under the same limitations. Not even the Apostle Paul had infallible understanding of the will of God as to where he should go next. May we be learning that same lesson. Make your plans, but do so remembering that everything is subject to the will of God. The Lord opens doors, but He also closes doors. And when He closes doors, we must be content with His will and not try to force the doors open.

Paul wanted to be fruitful when he went, and a part of fruitfulness is doing things according to the Lord's timing.

What did Paul mean by "fruit"?

He meant that he wanted to contribute to their spiritual growth. That is fruit. But he also meant that he hoped that God would bless his mission to Rome so that he would see other Gentiles turning to Christ. In Paul's language, this is what he would call "a prosperous journey" (v. 10).

But let us move on to verse 14. In this verse, and in the following verses of our text, down through verse 17, Paul

tells us,

II. THE REASONS FOR HIS STRONG MOTIVATION TO GO TO ROME
(Rom. 1:14-17).

There are three of them.

A. He felt himself to be "a debtor" (v. 14).

Paul said that he was "a debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians," and then, to explain what he meant by these two terms, he added, "both to the wise, and to the unwise."

Now remember that he was the Apostle to the Gentiles. That was his appointment. It was not that he could not minister to Jews; we know that he did. But his special calling was to take the Gospel to the Gentiles. "Greeks" and "Barbarians" were Gentiles. The "Greeks" were the philosophers of the day; the "Barbarians" were not of the educated class. These two words spanned the widest spectrum of Gentiles society. Paul was saying that he was a debtor to all Gentiles, whether trained or untrained, whether educated or not educated.

Some commentators take "Barbarians" as meaning foreigners, but the contrast in the latter part of the verse shows to my satisfaction that Paul was contrasting "the wise, and...the unwise." The Greek philosophers considered Greeks who were not interested in philosophy as non-Greeks, and so we have Paul's use of the word, "Barbarians."

But this raises an interesting question: Was Paul indebted to the Greek population to take the Gospel to them? Did God owe them an opportunity to hear the Gospel? Think about this for a moment.

I once heard a missionary say that no person has the right to hear the Gospel twice until everyone else has heard it at least once. Do you agree with that statement? Do people have the right to hear the Gospel? These are days when people are insistent upon having their rights. Is this a common human right? Is God under obligation to every person to see that they hear the Gospel?

OF COURSE NOT! God does not owe any man anything! As I have said many times before, God would have been perfectly righteous if He had let all of us go to hell. Remember that the Gospel is "the Gospel of the grace of God"! See Acts 20:24. Paul would not have spoken of the Gospel in that way if God were indebted to us to provide for us a way of salvation, and to make sure that we hear it. No, Paul did not owe the Greeks and Barbarians anything. He had a much

higher and greater obligation.

Paul's obligation, Paul's debt, was to God! And for two reasons:

- 1) In gratitude for his own salvation.
- 2) In response to the calling he had received from the Lord. Paul was in debt to God, so to speak, to preach the Gospel to every creature. And just as we can see from Paul's writings that he was scrupulously careful to meet all of his financial obligations, he was even more scrupulous to make sure that he fulfilled his obligation to the Lord.

I am not saying that Paul was attempting to pay God back for saving him. He could never do that even if he had all eternity in which to try. Neither can we. We have a debt of love, a debt of gratitude, to our God and heavenly Father to carry out His will in telling every one we can about the Lord Jesus Christ. We all have a God-given responsibility to preach the Gospel to others.

Paul would have enjoyed the words of Isaac Watts' hymn which go like this:

But drops of grief can ne'er repay
The debt of love I owe;
Here, Lord, I give myself away,
'Tis all that I can do.

This is one reason, and a big reason, why Paul was so anxious to get to Rome.

But here is his second reason:

B. He was "ready" (v. 15).

This does not mean that he was prepared. He certainly was that. But this word means that he was eager to preach the Gospel. It means that he was willing, and more than willing. It meant that he was predisposed to preach the Gospel. It means that he was more inclined to do this than to do anything else. If you had asked the Apostle Paul what he enjoyed doing the most, he would tell you that he would rather preach the Gospel more than do anything else!

So his debt to God was not a burden to him; it was a delight! When you put "debtor" and "ready" together, you have a perfect combination. The Apostle Paul was a happy servant of the Lord.

Dr. Criswell, who was for many years the pastor of the First Baptist Church in Dallas, Texas once said at a conference where I heard him speaking that he would rather do what he

was doing free than to get paid for doing anything else. That is the way Paul felt. In fact, he worked at making tents so he could preach the Gospel to lost sinners.

Now you can understand why he was so anxious to get to Rome.

But he had a third reason.

I am not going to be able to deal today with verses 16 and 17 the way I want to, but I want to get started, and then next Sunday, **the Lord willing** (I must be careful to say that), we will look more thoroughly into verses 16 and 17.

Paul's third reason for wanting to go to Rome was:

- C. He was not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ (vv. 16, 17).

He had no reluctance in his heart about being identified with the Lord Jesus Christ, or with His Gospel. Why? Because as he said right here in verse 16 "the Gospel...is the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth."

Things were bad in Paul's day, very bad. In Romans 1 he mentioned some of the terrible sins of his day, and it sounds like it was written for our day. People were held as slaves in the grip of their sins in Paul's day, and it is the same today. Things are terribly wrong in our society, and they are constantly getting worse. People think that if they have all of the necessities of life plus a few more things, health insurance, education for their children, and all of the other things our politicians are promising them, that they will be happy. Those are all good things, but they don't help us with our sins. The only way our society can be changed is for people to be changed, and the only way for people to be changed is through Christ and the Gospel. Man tries to work from the outside in; God works in the heart, and then people are really changed!

Rome was a city which was the center of power. The Romans loved to talk about their power, and they loved to exercise their power. But all of the power of Rome never could change a human heart. Only Christ can do that. And that was the reason that Paul was not ashamed of Christ or of the Gospel. It, and it alone, is "the power of God unto salvation." And remember what I have said over and over about the word salvation. That is the big word describing God's saving work in the hearts of believing sinners. It means that Christ not only delivers us from sin's penalty, which is death and hell, but Christ delivers us from the bondage of sin--our immorality, our drinking, our lying, our adultery, our

murdering, and all the rest. But He does even more than that: He guarantees that some day we will be in heaven where sin will no longer be even a possibility.

Concl: Can you tell me why we should be ashamed of a Gospel like that? There is no reason at all, is there? Whether a person is a Greek or a Barbarian, black or white or any other color, rich or poor, healthy or sick, young or old, male or female, everyone needs Christ! Our sins are so terrible in God's sight that nothing but the death of Christ could make possible divine forgiveness.

But what did Paul say was the way of salvation? He said it is for everyone who believes! Believes what? To believe is to trust. You hear the message of the Son of God Who became a Man, Who suffered and died on the Cross bearing the sins of people in all nations and in all generations. We must come to God repenting of our sins, acknowledging that we are sinners and deserving of nothing but eternal judgment, and trusting God to forgive us and accept us because of Christ's death on the Cross. Salvation is not a work that we do for God so He will save us; salvation is a work which God does for us through Christ so that we can be fully pardoned and cleansed, and made new creatures, the children of the living God.

This is the message that those of us who know the Lord are responsible to proclaim. We are to do it with eagerness and joy knowing that if people are to be changed and set free from their sins, this is the only way.

If any who hear me today are not saved, if you are still what you always have been, a sinner by nature and a sinner by choice, let me plead with you to turn to Christ. Trust Him to save you by His blood which was shed for sinners. Come to Him. Believe in Him. There is no other way to be saved.

UNASHAMED OF THE GOSPEL

Romans 1:16, 17

Intro: These two verses mark the end of Paul's introduction to the book of Romans. In verse 18 he begins the main message of the book. We have seen that Paul had never been to Rome. He had no part in establishing the Church at Rome. He had planned many times to go, but each time something had happened to make him postpone his plans. At last it looked like the Lord was going to open that door to him, and he was looking forward to it with the greatest anticipation. He felt himself deeply indebted to the Lord because of his own salvation, and also because of his calling. He had been called of God to minister especially, but not exclusively, to the Gentiles. And so he looked upon Rome, the center of the Gentile world of that day, as a "must" as far as his ministry was concerned. He was "ready." He eagerly awaited that opportunity. He expected to see others saved as a result of his trip, but the writing of this epistle shows that he believed there was a great need for the believers in Rome to be established in the Gospel.

This is the fourth time that he had mentioned the Gospel in this epistle. Cf. vv. 1, 9, and 15. In verse 1 he called it "the gospel of God." In verse 9 he called it "the gospel of his Son." In verse 15 it was simply "the gospel." In verse 16 it is "the gospel of Christ," although some MSS simply have "the gospel." In Rom. 2:16 he called it "my gospel," not because he had his own version, but because he had made it his own. It was "the gospel of God" and of God's "Son" by which he had been saved. And this was the gospel which he preached. Therefore, he called it "my gospel." I sincerely hope that you can do the same. May God forbid that any other gospel should be preached here at Trinity. I would say as Paul said in writing to the Galatian churches that there actually is no other Gospel although many people would lead us to believe that there is.

How did Paul feel about the Gospel? Listen to what he wrote:

I. UNASHAMED OF THE GOSPEL (Rom. 1:16a).

When Paul said this, he was saying a lot. We get some idea of what he meant by this from what he wrote to Timothy in his last epistle. He said this:

Be not thou therefore ashamed
of the testimony of our Lord,
nor of me his prisoner:
but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel,
according to the power of God (2 Tim. 1:8).

After mentioning "the gospel" in verse 10 of the same

chapter, Paul continued,

Whereunto I am appointed a preacher,
and an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles.

For which cause I also suffer these things:

nevertheless I am not ashamed:

for I know whom I have believed,
and am persuaded that he is able to keep
that which I have committed unto him
against that day (2 Tim. 1:11, 12).

And then in 2 Tim. 1:16, 17 where Paul was writing about
Onesiphorus, he said,

The Lord give mercy unto
the house of Onesiphorus; for he oft refreshed me,
and was not ashamed of my chain:

But, when he was in Rome,
he sought me out very diligently, and found me.

To be unashamed of the Gospel in Paul's day meant suffering,
often severe suffering, and even death. And so to make a
statement like that showed how dedicated Paul was to the
calling he had received from the Lord. Whatever it might
mean to him (and it eventually did lead to his death), he
refused to be ashamed of the Gospel of Christ. If he had
been ashamed it would have meant that he was reluctant to
preach such a message, or to identify himself with Christ,
for fear of the shameful consequences which he knew would
follow.

He had stated the same thing in a positive way when he said
that he was "ready to preach the Gospel" to those who were in
Rome.

Now no one in his right mind is out looking for trouble.
Paul did not relish the idea of being persecuted because of
the message he preached. Satan told the Lord when they were
discussing Job, "Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will
he give for his life" (Job 2:4). And that is naturally true
of every person. It would have been naturally true of the
Apostle Paul. Before he was saved, in persecuting believers
he was acting on the belief that the fear of suffering was
one way to keep people from witnessing of Christ. But, after
Paul was saved, then he understood that preaching Christ was
more important than life itself. He expressed that to the
Ephesian elders after he told them about the warnings he had
received about going to Jerusalem. He said, "But none of
these things move me..." (Acts 20:24).

By comparison, we have an easy time, don't we? Or is it
because we are quiet about the Gospel that we stay out of
trouble. Paul wanted to keep his friends as much as we do,
but, if telling them about Christ would mean the loss of

their friendship, and even turning his friends into enemies, he was ready for that. Nothing was more important to Paul than preaching the Gospel.

But all of this raises a question: WHY DID HE FEEL THIS WAY? What was there about Christ and the Gospel which made him have such a sense of urgency in his heart? Let us see what he had to say in the remainder of our text.

II. THE REASONS PAUL WAS NOT ASHAMED OF THE GOSPEL (Rom. 1:16b, 17).

He gives two reasons, and they are indicated in our Bibles by the word, "for."

- A. Reason #1: "For it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek" (Rom. 1:16b).

It is very, very important that we are all straight on the subject of salvation. That is a word which is used in many different ways by church leaders today. But the only way we can have an accurate understanding of salvation is through the Bible. God has given us His Word so that we could find out what it means to be saved.

Paul's statement in verse 16 would lead us to understand that everyone needs to be saved. When he spoke of Jews and Greeks, he was speaking of the whole human race. We would say today, Jews and Gentiles; and that was what Paul meant then. He believed, I believe, you believe, that the one thing that everyone needs is salvation.

Secondly, we can see from his statement that there is not one way of salvation for a Jew, and another salvation for Gentiles. Paul did not preach two different Gospels, nor was there any adapting that he did with the one Gospel. He had one message about Christ for everyone he preached to. That is where Paul got into trouble, and that is where we can get into trouble. People are not as opposed to the Gospel if you will be willing to say that there are other ways for people to get right with God. But when we say that this is the only way, and that all must believe the same Gospel, that is where the trouble begins.

The third thing that we can see in this statement is that it is not possible for anyone, whether Jew or Gentile, to save himself, or herself. The Gospel is a message of salvation by God without any help for man. It is not a question of God doing part, and then we have our part to do. The Gospel is "the power of God unto salvation." We are going to learn

when we get to Romans 10, and verse 17, that we do not even contribute our faith. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Ephesians 2:8, 9 tell us that "faith," along with everything else that has to do with our salvation, is "the gift of God." Hebrews 12:2 tells us that Jesus is "the author and finisher of our faith."

The Gospel is "the power of God unto salvation." Salvation is not a reward for our works, but a gift from God by His grace!

Please note even the word salvation. It suggests that we have something to be saved from. We are going to begin learning about that as we get into verse 18 next week, the Lord willing. Salvation has to do with the wrath of God, and the wrath of God has to do with sin. Jews and Gentiles alike are under condemnation because of sin, but God in His grace has provided a way of salvation from His own wrath. And salvation in its fullness has to do with our deliverance from everything that has made us unacceptable to God. The man who preaches that God is just a God of love is not preaching the Gospel. We will see more about that in just a moment.

But let me point out another fact that is evident from what Paul said in this verse.

The Greek word for "power" which Paul used here is a word which speaks of inherent power, that is, power residing in God and in His Gospel which is totally able to save the worst of sinners. And when Paul spoke of being saved, he did not have in mind being saved, and then losing it for some reason. He was talking about a salvation that is permanent, eternal.

I can understand why some people think that we can be saved, and then lose it. It is because they do not understand that salvation is totally a work of God. They feel that it is partly dependent upon their good behavior or performance, and that if they falter, God is not obligated to keep up with His part.

But this is not what Paul taught. Salvation is a divine work, and it is forever. Solomon was describing salvation when he said in Ecc. 3:14,

I ~~know~~ that, whatsoever God doeth,
it shall be for ever:
nothing can be added to it, nor any thing taken from it:
and God doeth it, that men should fear before him.

Those of you who were here last week will remember that I said that this word "salvation" is the big word which describes God's work in our hearts. Let me repeat that again

today.

It is perfectly in agreement with Scripture to say, if I am trusting in Christ for my salvation, that I am saved. But it is also in agreement with the teaching of Scripture to say that I am being saved. Finally, from Scripture I can see that it is right for me to say, if I am trusting in Christ, that I shall be saved. You may respond, "How can that be?" Let me explain.

A believer in Christ can say that he is saved. He is no longer under divine judgment, and he never will be under divine judgment again. He is saved. This is what the Bible is speaking of when it speaks of justification.

However, when you and I are first saved, it is only the beginning of the work that the Lord will do in our hearts. And so we can say that as the work of salvation continues and increases in our hearts that we are being saved. We are growing as Christians. We are being delivered from the power of sin within us. The Lord is making changes in our lives. It is becoming more apparent that we belong to the Lord. We are being saved. This is what the Bible calls sanctification.

However, as long as we are in this life, we will not become all that the Lord intended for us to be when He saved us. Not until we are "with the Lord" will this work be finally finished. As we look forward to that wonderful day we can say that then we shall be saved. That is, this work of salvation will finally be finished. And the Bible calls this glorification.

And so we say:

- 1) We are saved, delivered from sin's penalty, justified.
- 2) We are being saved, delivered from sin's power, and made more like Christ. We are being sanctified.
- 3) We will be saved when we are finally delivered from sin itself, no longer capable of displeasing God in any way. Then we will be glorified.

Is it any wonder that Paul could say that he was not ashamed of the Gospel? Without Christ, without His work for sinners on the Cross followed by His triumphant resurrection--without all of that, man is forever under the judgment of God. There is no salvation except through Christ.

But Paul went on to enlarge upon what he was saying in verse 16, and we have a second reason that he was not ashamed of the Gospel which is given to us in verse 17:

- B. Reason #2: "For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith" (Rom. 1:17).

He was not only unashamed of the Gospel because it was "the power of God unto salvation," but because in the Gospel "the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith."

It is true that the love of God and the grace of God and the mercy of God and the goodness of God are revealed in the Gospel. Paul will get to all of that in this epistle. But he first told us that the Person of Christ is revealed in the Gospel. Now we see that he said that in the Gospel we see a revelation of the righteousness of God!

We do not understand the righteous character of God until we understand the Gospel. Neither do we understand how abominable sin is in any of its many forms until we understand the Gospel. We don't understand the Gospel unless we see in it "the righteousness of God"! No one but the absolutely perfect Son of God could offer a sacrifice that would satisfy a holy God concerning the sin of sinners. In the light of the Cross and the awful suffering of the Savior, no one can ever speak of the goodness of man. Man was utterly ruined by sin; only by the righteousness of God which is seen in the death of Christ can any sinner be saved from the judgment which he justly deserves. The Cross not only tells us how bad we are, but it tells us how infinitely and perfectly righteous God is. We are going to learn more about this in this epistle, too.

But what did Paul mean, "from faith to faith"?

It seems that the best way to take these words is by relating them to "the righteousness of God" rather than to the word "revealed" as it appears to in the English text. And so we probably should read it that the righteousness of God by faith unto faith has been revealed. This would mean that the Gospel teaches us that the righteousness of God is available by faith, and that it is revealed that it might be accepted in that way. God did not make known His Gospel, He did not send His Son just with the hope or possibility that some people might be inclined to receive Christ. He revealed His righteousness, which is by faith, with the specific purpose that it would be accepted by some.

It would seem that there is a slight suggestion here that God's purposes in salvation will be accomplished through divine election.

The quotation from Hab. 2:4 shows that salvation in the OT is

the same as salvation in the NT. Not only is Christ the Savior of those who believe now, but He is the only Savior that there ever has been. People in OT times looked ahead to the promised Redeemer; since the death of Christ we look back in faith to His finished work for our acceptance with God.

Concl: You know, most of us are trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ for our salvation, but I wonder if we are as aware of the uniqueness of the Gospel as we should be. And I wonder if we have been sufficiently impressed that the only hope for salvation for anybody is in Christ. We have the truth, and we know the truth, but are we telling others about the Savior. Do we really understand what it means that people are under divine judgment, and that they will spend eternity in hell unless they turn to Christ. How we need to pray that the Lord will stir us, as Paul's heart was stirred, with the judgment facing lost sinners, and with the joy and blessing that can be ours, along with the dangers, of making Christ known.

Is there anyone listening to me today who is not saved? You are not trusting in Christ as your Savior? Let me urge you to lose no time in repenting of your sins and seeking forgiveness through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. We have seen in the Word today that you need to be saved, and that you cannot save yourself. But we have also seen that Christ and the Gospel are "the power of God unto salvation." So come to Him today. Believe on Him. There is no other Savior. There is no other way to be saved from the judgment you are now under because of your sins.

I would be very happy to speak personally with any of you after the service who are concerned about your salvation and your relationship with God.

THE WRATH OF GOD
Romans 1:18-23

Intro: Martin Luther once wrote:

This epistle can never be read or considered too much or too well, and the more it is handled, the more delightful it becomes and the better it tastes (Back cover of Romans by Geoffrey B. Wilson's commentary on Romans).

I am sure that those words would get a hearty approval from all of us who have spent time reading Romans. And let me take this moment to encourage all of you to be reading and re-reading the book of Romans as much as you can. Set aside time each day for this extra reading. Don't let the reading of Romans replace your other Bible reading, but add this to it. It can only mean greater blessing for you.

We begin a very solemn section of Romans today. My text is chapter 1, verses 18 through 23, but the theme which Paul started with verse 18 continues on through the twentieth verse of chapter 3. One word can describe what we have in this part of Romans: the word CONDEMNATION. Geoffrey Wilson in his brief but very helpful commentary on Romans said this, speaking of Romans 1:18: **"This verse begins a terrifying indictment of human sin"** (p. 25). And that is exactly what it is. If man is "without excuse" in the beginning of his comments, he is infinitely more "without excuse" by the time we come to Romans 3:20. This is a section which causes many people to stop reading Romans before they get to chapter 3 and verse 3. It seems that every conceivable argument has been used by man to discredit what the Apostle Paul was saying here. However, it is in these verses that we see the absolute necessity for the Gospel. It is here that we see why Paul was not ashamed of the Gospel. It is here that we understand more of the utter depravity and hopelessness of the natural condition of every human being who has ever lived, with the lone exception of our Lord Jesus Christ. Paul does not attempt to sugar-coat the truth. He gives us here God's portrait of the human, sinful heart. None of us can escape the charge. With thanksgiving to God we can say that we have not committed all of the sins that are mentioned in this part of Romans, but we need to be warned that we have such capacity. There is not a person on earth who can escape the charge that Paul finally reached in Rom. 3:19, "...that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God."

And so this word "GUILTY" hangs over us all, and that is the reason we need to find God's answer to our most basic need: our need to get right with God.

Notice, if you will, what we considered last week in verse 18, that one of the main reasons that Paul was not ashamed of the Gospel was because in the Gospel God's righteousness has been revealed. And after he finished this section on sin, Paul wrote in Rom. 3:21, 22, (read).

So, on the one hand, we have the righteousness of God. On the other hand, we have the utter sinfulness of man. The book of Romans was written to show us what God has done to provide for forgiveness and cleansing and complete justification for guilty sinners, and how far-reaching and complete that work is. When we speak of the justification of sinners, we are not speaking of how God excuses man for his sin; we are talking about how God has provided for the salvation of sinners so that they will no longer be under divine judgment.

You can easily see that in this discussion of man's sin, Paul began with God. Sin is anything that displeases God. Sin is any departure from the will of God. As I have said before, we are all "guilty" sinners under the judgment of God, but we cannot understand how deep and hopeless our guilt is until we see and understand what Paul has written here in Romans.

Paul starts with one terrifying point:

I. THE WRATH OF GOD (Rom. 1:18a).

I want you to see today from the Word of God that there is such a thing as the wrath of God! There are those today, and some of them are in the pulpits of our country, who would have us believe that all we need to be concerned about is the love of God, that God is something like a tolerant grandfather who may not like all that we do, but he is too good to do anything about it.

Now let me say that there is no one here who is more thankful for the love of God than I am. I would not be a child of God myself if it were not for the love of God. John 3:16 tells us that, and so does Rom. 5:8, just to mention a couple of NT passages which speak of God's love. The Apostle John even tells us twice in his First Epistle that "God is love." He not only loves, but He is love. This is His very nature.

But there is another side to God. God is holy, God is righteous, totally holy and totally righteous, and He hates every form of sin. The writer of the book of Hebrews was speaking of our Lord Jesus Christ when he quoted from Psalm 45 in writing Heb. 1:9, and said, "Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity." God does not tolerate sin. He does not turn His back on it. He does not excuse it. He hates it.

The people who talk about the love of God all of the time need to read Psalm 7. There, beginning with verse 9, and I am reading from the NKJV,

Oh, let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end,
But establish the just;
For the righteousness of God tests
the hearts and minds.
My defense is of God,
Who saves the upright in heart.
God is a just judge,
And God is angry with the wicked every day.
If he [the wicked] does not turn back,
He [the Lord] will sharpen His sword;
He bends His bow and makes it ready.
He also prepares for Himself [i.e., the Lord]
instruments of death;
He makes His arrows into fiery shafts
(Psa. 7:9-13).

But people will say, "That was in OT times; God is different now." You won't say that when you get through this section in Romans on Condemnation. The God of the OT is the God of the NT, and one of His chief attributes is He is unchanging. The person who refuses to believe in "the wrath of God" is a person who is headed straight for eternal judgment. I pray as I speak that God will give all of us listening ears and believing hearts as we examined the Word of God.

But let us take a step further.

How do we know that there is such a thing as "the wrath of God"? Because it is "revealed from heaven..." (Read to the end of verse 18.)

II. THE REVELATION OF GOD'S WRATH (Rom. 1:18b).

This last part of verse 18 is God's summary of all of human history. From the very beginning of time, over and over again in countless ways and in a variety of ways, God has revealed the fact that He is angry with human sin. He did it when He put Adam and Eve out of the Garden of Eden. He did it when He destroyed man in Noah's day with the flood. He did it in the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. He did it with the plagues in Egypt. I could go on and on throughout the OT. He revealed it most of all at the Cross of Christ. He reveals it continually in sickness and death. He reveals it in wars and hurricanes and earthquakes and famines and crimes. The problem is, not that God has not made known His wrath against sin; the problem is that man is too blind to see what is going on.

What do you think that the Lord is doing in our nation today if He is not speaking loudly and clearly against our sins as a nation? We can talk as long as we want to about all of the social and economic problems that we have, but our main problem is S-I-N!

Look at how it is described here: "all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness." What did Paul mean by these words?

"Ungodliness" is a disregard for God's as a Person. People do it by failing to recognize God at all, or, if they recognize Him, they ignore Him and completely disregard what He wants us to be and what He wants us to do. This is the root of all sin.

David was talking about ungodliness when he wrote in Psalm 14 and Psalm 53 that "the fool hath said in his heart, There is no God." He was not denying the existence of God, but he was saying, "No God for me!" Or, as the NIV renders Psa. 10:4,
In his pride the wicked does not seek him
[i.e., the Lord];
in all his thoughts there is no room for God.

And so what is the result of man's failure to give God first place in his life? It is "unrighteousness."

What is "unrighteousness"? It is moral evil. It is a distaste for the truth, a refusal to render to God the obedience which is due to Him.

These two words together show that when man rejects God and His Word, moral corruption results. It is inevitable. And men become guilty of holding down the truth with their unrighteous deeds. It is not that they are ignorant of God, nor that they are devoid of any understanding that they are responsible to God, but they suppress the truth. They hinder the progress of the truth in their hearts and in the world by their unrighteous deeds.

We can begin to see now why man does what he does, and why we have all of the sin that we have in the world. We have no place for God, not because we are ignorant of what we ought to do, but because we deliberately choose to do without God.

But someone might say, "How do you know that man has that much knowledge of God, and of right and wrong?" All right, let us notice what Paul said about:

III. THE REVELATION OF GOD (Rom. 1:19, 20).

God has revealed Himself in several ways:

- 1) He has revealed Himself in His Word.
 - 2) He has revealed Himself preeminently in Christ, His Son.
- But here Paul indicates that God has revealed Himself in two other ways, even to people who do not know the Bible and who have never heard of Christ.

A. The revelation of God in man's heart (v. 19).

You don't read this in books on anthropology, or psychology, except where the writer may be a Christian. What Paul said here means that there are no real atheists! We know it in our own hearts, and we know that this is true of every person who has ever lived because God has told us here in His Word that this is so. Paul knew it by divine revelation.

There is in every human heart the God-given realization that there is a God. And this would include the fact that we are accountable to Him, that we are subject to His will, and that He is sovereign over us. Don't let anybody tell you that this is not so. Let God be true, but every person who contradicts the Word of God be known as a liar! I repeat: There are no true atheists. People may say that they are, but they are trying to convince themselves that what their hearts tell them is not really true.

But there is another revelation that God has made of Himself:

B. The revelation of God in nature (v. 20).

And this revelation of God goes back to creation, and it continues to this very day. Listen to the way this verse is translated in the NIV:

For since the creation of the world
God's invisible qualities--
his eternal power and divine nature--
have been clearly seen, being understood
from what has been made,
so that men are without excuse.

Now let me say that this is not what we are taught about ourselves by most politicians or social workers, or even by many ministers today. This is what God has told us about ourselves, and about every person who has ever lived. Paul was not saying that God is in creation, but he was saying that the evidence of God's power and Godhead are so evident in creation, even in the make-up of the human body, that all people are "without excuse" as to the existence of God and our obvious need to thank Him, to worship Him, and to obey Him.

No man will ever be able to stand before God and say, "I'm sorry, Lord, but no one ever told me about you." I am not saying that there is enough of a testimony of God in creation to be saved, but I am saying that there is enough theology in nature to render man excuseless as far as God's existence is concerned, and His power and Godhead.

Creation clearly tells us that it could not have just happened—by a "big bang," followed by a process of evolution. Creation tells us that it could never have been, nor could we have been, without a mighty creative act of a powerful God. Let me deny this, but let us take our stand on the Word of God. Did you ever wonder why it is that you don't have to prove to children that there is a God? It is because they know in their hearts that what you are telling them is true. It is only as they get older and more sophisticated that many of them try to convince themselves that there is no God.

God's power, the same word Paul used in verse 16 with reference to the Gospel, is power that is inherent in God, not only to start something, but to keep it going. If God were to take His hand off of this universe for a millionth of a second, or even less, this cosmos would become chaos. But that is not going to happen because of God's power.

What did Paul mean by God's "Godhead"?

He means that by creation we can understand something of the majesty of God, that He is greater than His creation, and in control of it.

Now we can see more clearly the reason for God's wrath. And it is displayed in:

IV. THE FOOLISHNESS OF MAN (Rom. 1:21-23).

Here we see the steps which man has taken in his own self-degradation—his shame and his deterioration. Note what the steps are:

- A. "When they knew God, they glorified him not as God" (v. 21a).

This does not mean that they had a personal acquaintance with God, but that man had all of this evidence of the existence of God, and yet he failed to render to God the glory that was due to Him as God and as the Creator. This is the first step down that man takes.

The second is this:

B. "Neither were thankful" (v. 21m).

Thankful for such knowledge. Thankful for His care. With all of the evidence of the existence of God around us, man has more to say about "Mother Nature" (whoever that is), than they do of God, and they gripe rather than being thankful for all of the blessings we enjoy every day at the hand of the Lord. "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handiwork," but how often do you see people looking at the beauties of our world, and offering glory to God or thanks for all the evidences of His goodness? Usually only from believers.

Step down #3:

- C. They "became vain in their imaginations [i.e., their reasonings], and their foolish heart was darkened" (v. 21b).

Paul told Timothy in his second letter to the young preacher that, when people turn from the truth, they turn to fables (2 Tim. 4:4). What is a fable? It is a myth, something which is not true, but is false. And so the words of our Lord are proven to be true when he said, "If therefore the light which is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness" (Matt. 6:23). "The wisdom of this world is foolishness with God" (1 Cor. 3:19a). "In the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God" (1 Cor. 1:21).

The final step:

- D. "Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, And changed the glory of the uncorruptible [immortal] God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things" (vv. 22, 23).

And this has led to all kinds of "unrighteousness," as we learned from verse 18, and will learn more fully as we go on in this chapter next week, the Lord willing.

Idolatry, with all that goes with it, is not only a testimony to the utter foolishness of man, but also of the wrath of God upon man. Supposedly intelligent men worshipping mere human beings, or creatures that are far less than they are. People today will worship a dead rock and roll singer, but ignore the living God. They have more concern for the spotted owl than they do for the God Who created that owl. Thousands will pay big money to go to a sports event, and do it over and over again, who never give one thought to the God "in

whom we live, and move, and have our being" (Acts 17:28).

Concl: Can you begin to see from what we have considered today in Romans 1 why people's lives are in such a mess, why we have so many broken homes, why crime is so high, why we have all of the problems nationally and internationally that we have? It is because we have left God out of our lives, that is the true God, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. And let us remember that we cannot honor God unless we also honor His Son, Jesus Christ. No nation has ever prospered which has followed the God-less and Christ-less course which we are following in our nation.

Where is the root of our problems today? It is in the human heart. And as long as we ignore God, and despise His will as all men recognize in their hearts to be in distinguishing right from wrong, things will only get worse regardless of what political party is running our nation. Our hope needs to be, not in men, BUT IN GOD! Our hope needs to be IN CHRIST!

However, in the face of such an overwhelming need as we are witnessing in our city, state, and country, what can we as the Lord's people do to make things different? Two things:

- 1) Let us make sure that we are living the way the Lord wants us to live, not just according to our consciences, but according to the Word of God. We can only do this as God puts the desire in our hearts and keeps us faithful to Him.
- 2) Let us ask the Lord to open our mouths boldly to speak of the saving grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Man's knowledge of his sin comes from the Word of God. That is the message we need to spread, telling people wherever we can that Jesus Christ is the One they need, not just to make them happier, or more prosperous, but to save their sinful souls from an eternity under the judgment of God.

May the Lord enable each one of us to say from the heart what Paul told the Roman church in verses 16 and 17 of this first chapter of Romans. (Repeat.)

SIGNS OF DIVINE JUDGMENT

Romans 1:24-32

Intro: There is nothing that will impress upon our minds the greatness of Paul's epistle to the Romans more than reading it--and re-reading it again and again. Those who have written commentaries on this portion of Scripture, have been very outspoken in their praise of this book. David Brown, who in the JFB commentary has written on Matthew through Romans, had this to say about Romans:

While all Scripture has stamped its impress indelibly on the Christian world, perhaps it is scarcely too much to say, that--apart from the Gospels--for all the precision and the strength which it possesses, and much of the spirituality and fire which characterise it, the faith of Christendom in its best periods has been more indebted to this Epistle than to any other portion of the living oracles (quoted by Griffith Thomas, Romans, p. 26).

And Dr. Griffith Thomas has this to say for himself on p. 26 of his commentary:

This may be said without the slightest qualification, and certainly without the faintest fear of contradiction; that a Christian life nourished on the Epistle to the Romans will never lack the three great requisites of clear perception, strong conviction, and definite usefulness.

All of us are sure to be blessed by considering Romans verse by verse Sunday after Sunday, but blessing for each of us will be multiplied many times more if during the week we are literally saturating our minds and hearts with the truths of this great book.

So let me ask you again to be reading it as much as you possibly can. Don't neglect any other Bible reading that you may be doing, but add it to it. You will find it most worthwhile in increasing your knowledge of the Lord, and in giving you the help that you need in your walk with the Lord.

In our studies we have gotten down to verse 24 of chapter 1. But let me review for you what we have learned so far.

Paul began with a strong emphasis upon the Gospel, showing us that the Gospel is a message of Christ. He demonstrated also how zealous he was to spread this message throughout the world of that day. The reason was because it was the message, and the only message, by which anyone can be saved. He stressed the fact that in the Gospel we see the righteousness of God revealed. This brings us down to verse 17.

However, the tone of the epistle changes abruptly in verse 18

when he began to speak about the wrath of God. And notice, if you will, that so far Paul has had nothing to say about the love of God. That will come later, but he did not deal with God's love at the beginning. Instead, he spoke of "the righteousness of God" and "the wrath of God." And he proceeded to show that "the wrath of God" is upon all men because of sin. That will become clearer in our text for today.

But to show the greatness of God's wrath upon man, Paul pointed out that God has revealed Himself very clearly and very powerful in two ways:

- 1) In the consciences of all men.
- 2) In the created universe.

And God's testimony (not just Paul's) is that this twofold revelation of God is so strong that man is "without excuse" — "without excuse" as to the existence of God, and, may I add, "without excuse" as to sinning.

But what has man done with this twofold revelation?

Two things:

- 1) He has rejected it.
- 2) He has perverted it.

Man has taken the position that he has a clearer understanding of the truth than God does. And so he rejects the revelation of God, and makes a god out of himself, or of some other person, or even of some creature which is lower than he is. See vv. 21-23. What an indictment of man we have in the first part of verse 21! (Read.)

All of this means that God has revealed Himself to man, and yet man has rejected the revelation of God, and then has gone on to invent his own ideas of God. And this is what has gotten us where we are today. When man rejects what he knows to be true, God does something, and has done something, which we are going to learn about today. God gives men over to the consequences of rejecting the truth, and this means present judgment, as well as future judgment.

Three times it is stated in our text that God has given man up to the consequences of turning away from the truth.

Later in this epistle we are going to learn more about the nature of man, but at this point Paul was showing his readers in every generation two things:

- 1) How very important it is that we respond properly to the truth, and he was speaking about the truth about God. The most tragic mistake any person can make is to reject the truth about God which God has written in his heart as well as in the world around him.

- 2) That when we reject the truth that God has given us, including now the truth that we have in Scripture, and the truth given us in Scripture concerning Christ, then God gives us over to the very sins of which we are capable because of what sin has done to each one of us.

See this statement in verses 24, 26, and 28. This does not mean that God has given up on man so that no one will be saved. No. It means that He has given them over as prisoners to act according to their natural desires.

And so I want to make a very important point from this latter part of Romans 1. We have in vv. 24 and 25 a general statement of what God has done. Then in vv. 26 and 27 we have a description of homosexual sins. This is followed by a long statement of specific sins in vv. 28 through 31, with a closing statement of man's satisfaction with a life of sin, a life that is displeasing to God. It sounds like a description of life in these United States, doesn't it? These are the kinds of behavior that we see, and that we read about, every day.

Now remember: These words did not originate with Paul. Paul was writing the words of God. Paul did not say that man is "without excuse" (although he believed it); God said it, and you and I had better believe it. And the comments about homosexuality and the specific sins which followed did not come originally from Paul; they came from God!

But this is the point I want to make. When we see evidence in our country of the sins which Paul mentioned in this chapter, we often say, or hear others say, "If we do not change our ways, our nation is going to fall under the judgment of God." That is not a correct statement. Instead, Romans 1 teaches us in an unmistakable way that when any society is characterized by these sins, IT IS ALREADY UNDER THE JUDGMENT OF GOD! What we can say is this: "IF WE DO NOT CHANGE OUR WAYS, OUR NATION IS GOING TO FALL UNDER EVEN GREATER JUDGMENT FROM GOD!"

THE FACT THAT WE HAVE SUCH A PREVALENCE OF THESE SINS IS EVIDENCE THAT RIGHT NOW OUR NATION IS UNDER THE JUDGMENT OF GOD! Remember: This is not Paul's idea. This does not come from me. This is the revealed testimony of Almighty God Himself! And we all had better listen.

Let me say something else. We are in the midst of a bitter election. Candidates are talking about the economy, about the need for health care for everyone, about the need to provide education for more of our people, for greater safety in our cities, and on and on. But whenever a moral issue is

raised, usually the reaction of a large segment of our population is that those things are unimportant. You cannot read the Word of God and say that. The Word of God tells us, and history bears testimony to this over and over again, that unless and until we get right with God, things will get worse and worse until our nation will be destroyed. And we cannot get right with God as long as we are living in sin. The problems we have with our national debt, with the economy, with crime, with broken homes, and so on, are all signs of divine judgment. Oh, that people could be awakened out of their sleep, that God would in mercy show us what our real need is, and that we would see that it is righteousness which exalts a nation. It is righteousness that makes nations great, "but sin is a reproach," a disgrace, "to any people."

The problems we face in America are not limited to us. The same thing is going on throughout the world--in England, in Scandinavia, in France, in Germany, in Spain and Portugal, in Africa, in Japan. It is everywhere! And things will get worse for all of us if we don't get right with the Lord.

But let me return to our text, and speak now about:

I. THE GENERAL STATEMENT OF DIVINE JUDGMENT (Rom. 1:24, 25).

What does "uncleanness" mean? Well, this is one of the words God uses in Scripture to describe sin. Here it speaks of a profligate way of life--a life that is indecent, immoral, a life in which man is unable to control himself where sin is concerned. When God says that he wants nothing to do with God, then God lets him go, and he finds that he is consumed by his sin.

And what happens as far as God is concerned? The person who makes a liar out of God finds that he replaces God with some creature and robs God of the glory which rightfully belongs only to Him. He is "blessed for ever," i.e., to be praised and worshiped forever. "Amen."

Under the second statement we see how people dishonor their bodies, as is mentioned in v. 24.

II. HOMOSEXUALITY (Rom. 1:26, 27).

What is this? It is sexual desire and sexual activity with persons of the same sex.

Paul spoke of women in verse 26, and then he spoke of men in verse 27.

And will you notice that he spoke of this as "vile

affections." They are the depraved affections of men and women whereby in the sight of God they disgrace themselves and bring reproach upon themselves.

In verse 27 Paul called homosexuality "unseemly." This means degrading, scandalous, indecent--the opposite of what is noble and upright. This is what God the Holy Spirit directed Paul to say about such behavior.

And what are the consequences? Paul said that they receive "in themselves that recompense," that reward, "of their error which was meet." "Meet" means that the consequences were unavoidable, inescapable, they had to be. "In themselves" indicates that something went wrong with their bodies as a result of their sin.

I realize that the Apostle Paul was using strong language, but he wanted to awaken people to the sins and cause them to turn to God in repentance before it was eternally too late, and that is my purpose, too.

Let me give you a little background on God's purpose for men and women.

In the beginning when God created human beings he made a man and a woman, Adam and Eve. He did not make two men, and tell them to be joined to each other. He did not make two women and ask them to be joined to each other. He did not tell two men to multiply; that is impossible. He did not tell two women to multiply; that also is impossible. He did not tell the man to leave his father and mother to cleave unto another man, but He told Adam to cleave unto Eve, his wife. And the pattern has been set for all future generations. For a man to be joined to a man is a perversion of the marriage relationship. And for a woman to be joined to a woman is a perversion of the marriage relationship. And for them to adopt children (because that is the only way they can have children) is a perversion of the family. So homosexuals are displeasing God in two of the most sacred relationships that human beings can have: marriage and the family.

The first instance of homosexual behavior in the Word of God was when Noah's son, Ham, looked on his father's nakedness. Obviously there had to be more than a look for his action to bring such severe judgment from God. And then we have the judgment of God upon Sodom and Gomorrah. In the NT Paul declared by the Spirit that no practicing homosexual can be saved. Cf. 1 Cor. 6:9, 10. And yet in verse 11 he indicated that some homosexuals had been changed, and their lives had become altogether different.

We have gotten completely off of the track by teaching our young people that God did not make us. And we have gotten farther away by silencing the testimony that God has given us in our hearts as well as in nature. And so God has delivered us up to do things that are in our depraved, sinful hearts, which can only lead to eternal judgment unless we listen to the Gospel message.

But before we get to that, let me call your attention to:

III. A DIVINE CATALOG OF SINS (Rom. 1:28-32).

We are thinking today about how God has judged man because man has refused to recognize and submit himself to God, giving Him the worship and praise which we all owe to God. A vote of many Americans would undoubtedly approve some of the things mentioned here, but man's vote doesn't make acceptable to God what He condemns. And these sins given here are also evidences that we are under divine judgment.

We are told before the sins are mentioned that these are the products of "a reprobate mind," i.e., a mind which is totally rejected by God, a mind which will not stand the test of God. And "a reprobate mind," man's way of thinking about life, leads him (or her) to do things which are totally inappropriate for human behavior in God's sight. And the list which follows tells us about the kind of sins which the Lord had in mind.

Let us look at them briefly.

Verse 29:

- A. "All unrighteousness" -- probably a title for the list, meaning all kinds of unrighteousness, i.e., all kinds of sins which are displeasing to God.
- B. "Fornication" -- which the NKJV translates, "sexual immorality." This is illicit, ungodly relationship between men and women who are not married. It has become so common today that it, like homosexuality, has been accepted as a way of life. But it not only will be judged by God; it is evidence that the judgment of God is upon us.
- C. "Wickedness" -- probably best described as the excessive practice of sin, not just sinning once in a while, but continuously and shamelessly.
- D. "Covetousness" -- which is greed. Advertisers play on this all of the time. It is the person who is never satisfied, who always wants more. It is the opposite of contentment.
- E. "Maliciousness" -- the vicious person, the person who is addicted to harming others, who robs and/or

kills or destroys just for the pleasure he or she gets out of it. Vandalism is an example.

- F. "Full of envy" -- a form of jealousy, an envious person will want to belittle someone good, taking their goodness from them, but not wanting that goodness for himself. The news media engages in this continually. A "full" person is consumed with envy.
- G. "Murder" -- which we hear about almost daily. It is not only the unlawful and premeditated killing of someone, but often mutilating the body of the dead.
- H. "Debate" -- quarreling, strife, contention. Such a person is never satisfied unless he is causing trouble.
- I. "Deceit" -- the person who tricks another by setting some kind of a trap. This is often done in business.
- J. "Malignity" -- in the NKJV, "evil-mindedness." It is the person who always puts the worst possible interpretation on the actions, and even the motives, of others. He accuses others of the evil which he feels in his own heart. He is malicious, rebellious against authority.
- K. "Whisperers" -- one who engages in false accusations and slander.

Verse 30:

- L. "Backbiters" -- one who speaks evil of another person.
- M. "Haters of God" -- a God-less person, profane and blasphemous, one who ridicules God and anyone who believes in Him.
- N. "Despiteful" -- NKJV, "violent." One who deliberately tries to hurt others in any way possible. He is really a man-hater, one who considers himself better than others and who enjoys insulting and mistreating people.
- O. "Proud" -- the person who makes himself conspicuous, and who likes to put himself above others.
- P. "Boasters" -- the person who pretends that he is better than he actually is.
- Q. "Inventors of evil things" -- one who is always trying to come up with some new form of evil.
- R. "Disobedient to parents" -- the child who is not only rebellious, but who refuses to change.

Verse 31:

- S. "Without understanding" -- NKJV, "undiscerning." He is one who is incapable of putting things together, the person who is described in Proverbs as a fool.

- T. "Covenantbreakers" -- the person who has no intention of standing by any agreement which he may make. He is a liar, and lives that way. He is completely untrustworthy.
- U. "Without natural affection" -- NKJV, "unloving," especially toward those who are his own kindred.
- V. "Implacable" -- NKJV, "unforgiving." He refuses to settle any difference. He is irreconcilable.
- W. "Unmerciful" -- one who refuses to overlook or to forgive the faults of others.

This is the way people behave when God removes his restraint and lets them follow the sinful inclinations that are in their hearts by nature. They can be seen in every generation because there are always those who turn away from God. A. T. Robertson referred to a missionary to China who said that a man in China who got hold of this chapter said that the Apostle Paul could not have written it, that it had to have been written by a modern missionary to China (IV, 333).

The chapter closes with a terrible indictment of those who turn their backs on God. They know that they are doing wrong, but they sin anyway, and heartily approve and encourage others who are sinning against the Lord.

Concl: I have said that this section of Romans, beginning with chapter 1, verse 18, and concluding with Rom. 3:20, deals with CONDEMNATION. We see here a picture of twentieth century America. We are defying God every day, and yet we rebel more and more. God removes the restraints which He often in grace imposes upon a nation, and then men reveal how deeply rooted sin is in their hearts. All of the sins Paul has mentioned are bad, very bad. But the place and space given to homosexuality shows that nothing is worse, and it will bring greater and greater judgment if people continue on in it. What is the answer?

The obvious purpose of this chapter is to show that God judges sin by letting man sin more and more. It is only when we acknowledge that it is sin, and turn to God in repentance, trusting Him to forgive us through the sacrifice that Christ made for sinners when He died on the Cross, that our sins will be forgiven, our hearts will be made new, and we will be able to live the way the Lord wants us to live. If you do not know the Savior, may this chapter be a warning to you, and may you turn to Christ today to be forgiven of your sins and to find a new life, a life that will please and glorify God.

THE JUDGMENT OF GOD

Romans 2:1-11

Intro: The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead holds many messages for the human race. It gave special emphasis to the truth that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. We learned that in Rom. 1:4. (Read.) As we learned in our study of the book of Hebrews, it was proof of the Father's complete satisfaction with the work of Christ. The Lord Jesus had fully accomplished all that was necessary for the salvation of sinners. Cf. Heb. 1:3. The Apostle Paul pointed out a third message contained in the resurrection. He did this when he was preaching on Mars' Hill in Athens. This is what he said after he mentioned that God "now commandeth all men every where to repent." Here are his words found in Acts 17:31,

Because he [God] hath appointed a day,
in the which he will judge the world in righteousness
by that man [Christ] whom he hath ordained;
whereof he hath given assurance unto all men,
in that he [God] hath raised him [Christ] from the dead.

Last week we learned that there is a present judgment upon sin when God judges sin with more sinning. And God judges sin when man refuses to recognize Him, and to give Him the thanks and the glory which rightfully belongs to Him. We know that there is a God because God has put that testimony in all of our hearts. Further, we see evidence of God's existence in creation. There could be no universe without God. God made it, and God operates it and controls it. You and I would not be here, the human race would never have started if it were not for God.

However, if we reject the knowledge of God, God turns us over to our sins, and people become slaves to the terrible sins which are mentioned in verses 26 through 31 of Romans 1.

But let me ask you to look again at the last verse of chapter 1 where we have a most condemning commentary on people who reject God. Let me read Rom. 1:32 to you in the NKJV. Paul said, speaking of those described from verse 26 on:

Who, knowing the righteous judgment of God,
that those who practice such things
are worthy of death, not only do the same
but also approve of those who practice them.

Now, as we move from chapter 1 to chapter 2 we are dealing with a second for a divine judgment, a future judgment. The judgment spoken of in the latter part of chapter 1 is a present judgment. But the present judgments are not only an evidence of God's displeasure upon people and society today,

but they are a forewarning of a future judgment which is even worse than the present judgments. The present judgments are temporary; the future judgments are permanent. There is always the possibility that the people described in chapter 1 can be convicted of their sin, repent, and turn to Christ. In such cases they will be forgiven. But there is no escape from the judgment we are going to be talking about now if people die in their sins without seeking the salvation that is in Christ. The Bible does not teach a second chance after death.

There is another change in chapter 2 that seems apparent.

In chapter 1 Paul seems to be addressing the Gentile world, people who do not have the Word of God, who know nothing about Christ, and yet reject the natural revelation which God has given to all of them. In chapter 2 it seems that Paul's words are directed toward the Jews, those members of the chosen nation of Israel who have the Scriptures. This seems clear in verse 17, and also from the way Paul spoke of "the Gentiles" in the third person in verse 14. In verses 9 and 10 Paul also seemed to want to make the point that what applies to the Gentile, applies also to the Jew. The heart of a Jew is no different from the heart of a Gentile. Both are sinners by nature and by choice. Both are inclined to reject the revelation of God. Both can become bondslaves of sin. Both need a Savior.

But let me say one more thing about chapter 2.

Although Paul seems to have directed his words to the Jews who were religious, yet his words can also apply to religious Gentiles—people who claim to be Christians, who go to church and may belong to a church, but people who feel secure because they do go to church, but have never really been changed in heart by the Gospel of Jesus Christ. They may know that the Gospel has to do with salvation, but they have never been saved.

Therefore, chapter 2 should serve as a warning to all people who are merely religious, but not true believers in Christ, whether Jews or Gentiles.

Paul's comments on judgment are not limited to the first eleven verses of chapter 2, but they continue on to the end of this section, Rom. 3:20, which deals with God's condemnation of man. This chapter tells us four things about God's judgment:

- 1) Judgment is inescapable (vv. 1-5).
- 2) The basis of judgment (vv. 6-10). It is your life.
- 3) The impartiality of judgment (v. 11). This means that it

doesn't make any difference who you are, Jew or Gentile, you are going to be judged righteously according to the truth.

I. JUDGMENT IS INESCAPABLE (Rom. 2:1-5).

One thing that is true of every one of us is the tendency to excuse ourselves. We may concentrate on certain sins, such as homosexuality, and think that because we are not guilty of that sin, therefore, we are not under the same judgment as others who are. And so we try to excuse ourselves, thinking that because we try to do the best we can, we will not have to experience the judgment of God.

Let me say this about the list of sins in chapter 1: It is not an exhaustive list. That is, Paul was not trying to list every sin that it is possible for people to commit. But it is representative of the kind of things that we as human beings do. And so if our particular sins are not listed there, we must not think that we will not face divine judgment.

We also need to realize that sins do differ in the kind of punishment they will receive. If the greatest commandment in the Law was to love the Lord, then the greatest sin is not to love Him. Others sins follow that sin, and, as far as Romans 1 is concerned, homosexuality is singled out as being at the bottom of the social scale. Genesis 19 shows that when homosexuality becomes dominant in a society, that society is in danger of being destroyed.

However, because we are all sinners by nature, and under the judgment of God, none of us has the right to point an accusing finger at anyone else as far as sin is concerned. We are all guilty. We are all under divine judgment. And so, as Paul said in verse 1, if we judge others, we are only condemning ourselves as well because we, too, are sinners. And, as Paul added in verse 2, God's judgment is not going to be by comparing one sinner with another, but it is going to be "according to truth." And his chief emphasis is upon those who practice sin, i.e., those who do these things as a way of life. I will explain that more in a moment.

So, since we are all sinners, none will escape the judgment of God.

I have said that Paul was speaking primarily to Jews in this passage. Verse 4 shows that the Jews had misinterpreted the favor that God had shown to them as a nation. God had shown His "goodness and forbearance and longsuffering," not just occasionally, but as "riches," i.e., abundance. Why had God been so good to them? Why had He been so tolerant ("forbear-

ance") with them when He had severely judged other nations quicker and more harshly than He did Israel? Why had He been so "longsuffering," so patient with them over such long periods even when they kept on sinning?

Paul's answer was that it was not because they were better, or that they were not sinning. His amazing blessings were upon them so that they would turn to Him, repent of their sins, and not have to face the judgments which eventually came upon them. The Apostle Peter wrote that we are to "account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation" (2 Pet. 3:15). God was seeking to lead them to repentance. This is what the goodness of God upon all people is intended to do. Instead, we interpret blessings and the good life as meaning that we can go on sinning against the Lord. But that is not true! Our persistence in sinning is only bring greater judgment now as well as hereafter. This is what Paul meant by his words in verse 5 of our text. (Read.)

A hard heart is a stubborn heart, a calloused heart, a heart that is completely unresponsive to the meaning of God's goodness. And this means that causes for the judgment of God are being stored up for the eventual outpouring of the wrath of God.

This is probably the major reason that Americans are not seeking God, and imploring Him to clean up their lives. We are experiencing judgment, but so far we can explain it away, or we can try to overcome it, as in the case of AIDS, but such a refusal to listen to God only makes our situation worse.

Don't let any of us be guilty of putting the wrong interpretation upon the blessings which we are presently experiencing as a nation.

Now let us go on to see what Paul said about:

II. THE BASIS OF DIVINE JUDGMENT (Rom. 2:6-10).

Paul said that it is "according to his deeds."

Verse 7 tells us what pleases the Lord. Verses 8 and 9 tell us what displeases the Lord. And then in verse 10 we see again what pleases Him.

Let us look at verse 7 first. "Patient continuance in well-doing." This suggests something that is hard, difficult. As Robert Haldane said in his commentary on Romans, The word is used to signify perseverance, patience, endurance,--a perseverance with resistance to all that

opposes, namely, to all temptations, all snares, all persecutions, and, in general, to all that could discourage or divert from it, in however small a degree (p. 82).

Paul was not suggesting for a moment that it is easy to live a life that is pleasing to God. In fact, he was saying just the opposite. But it is the goal that makes it all worthwhile: "glory and honour and immortality, eternal life." "Glory" is that state of perfection toward which the true child of God is headed. "Honour" speaks of the "well done" which we seek from our Lord. "Immortality, eternal life" is that eternal state which will never end and in which we will never again be able to displease God.

Let me ask, "Is this what you are seeking?" Or are you seeking earthly glory, and honor from people? Are you living like you are going to be here forever, or are you looking forward to the life above?

What about the other category of people?

Are you "contentious" where "the truth" is concerned? That is, do you argue with Scripture, and try to find every reason you can for not obeying the Word of God? Instead, do you "obey unrighteousness"? How much time do you spent searching the Scriptures to find out what it is that the Lord wants you to do?

The Jews had many blessings. God had dealt with their nation better than any other. They had the prophets, and to them the Word of God had been given. They had seen the hand of the Lord acting in their behalf many times. They knew much truth. But they did not obey it!

What awaits such people? "Indignation and wrath, Tribulation and anguish." This is a combination of words which describes the awful fury of the wrath of God. You see, in the case of the Jews, they felt that they were a privileged people just because they were Jews, the descendants of Abraham. Paul was telling them that it did not make any difference how much they had, nor how much they knew, if their lives were not being lived in obedience to the Word of God! And instead of escaping judgment, the Jew would be ahead of the Gentile in experiencing the wrath of God.

In verse 10 Paul went back to the first group as if to emphasize the point that he was making. If the Jew lived according to the truth, he would receive priority in the blessing of the Lord. Here instead of saying "glory and honor and immortality," he said, "glory, honour, and peace." There is no reason to change the meaning of the first two,

and it would seem that "immortality" and "peace" go together. "Peace" is supreme, uninterrupted joy. It is wonderful to experience it here; it will be even greater when we are with the Lord in heaven. There nothing will disturb it or remove it. It will be one of the priceless joys of heaven.

The last verse of our text speaks of:

III. THE IMPARTIALITY OF JUDGMENT (Rom. 2:11).

It doesn't make any difference to God as to whether a person is a Jew or a Gentile, rich or poor, black or white, young or old, male or female, master or servant, all must come to Him in the same way, and all must give the same evidence of their salvation.

Concl: Now let me draw some lessons from this important passage of Scripture.

First of all, one thing that must be in many of your minds is that Paul was here teaching that we are saved by works! That is what it sounds like, doesn't it?

However, that cannot be the case. That is not what Paul teaches in Romans, nor in any of his other epistles. In fact he tells us in more than one place that we are not saved by works. What, then, does this passage mean?

Paul was touching upon a very great, but much neglected, truth of Scripture. We are not saved by works, but the proof that we are truly saved is to be seen in our works, i.e., in the way that we live. A person may claim to be a Christian, he may be a very active member of a church, he may know a great deal about the Bible, but the proof of salvation is to be seen in a changed life! Cf. 2 Cor. 5:17.

In our Tuesday Bible Class we have been learning from 1 John that a true child of God won't continue to live in sin. A true child of God will want to live his life by the Bible. A true child of God will make his best friends from among the people of God. I have said it before, and I want to say it again, "The Bible knows nothing of a salvation that leaves people unchanged.

The Jews, as we can see from the OT and from the Gospels were very self-righteous. They felt themselves to be right with God because they were Jews, because they had the Temple, and the priesthood. They were the people to whom the OT Scriptures were originally given. But the thing that spoiled it all was that their knowledge and their privileges had not changed their lives.

The only way anyone can be delivered from "the wrath to come" is by seeking forgiveness from God through the atoning, substitutionary death of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is not looking for our good works, or our good intentions. We can only be right with Him when we are trusting the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior.

This is a passage of Scripture which needs to be taught in every church in our land. People depend upon their church membership, or upon their position in the church, or the work that they are doing in the church. They depend upon the fact that they are moral, upright people. They may give generously of their time and money. They may even read their Bibles faithfully. But the big question is: How do I live? Am I, in the words of Paul to the Colossians, seeking the things that are here on this earth, or am I actively pursuing "glory and honour and immortality, eternal life"? It is good to do all of the things that I have mentioned, but only Christ can save us. Apart from faith in Christ for the forgiveness of our sins, we are destined for the eternal judgment of God.

Let me close by giving you some words from the Lord Jesus Christ which beautifully sum up what we have seen today in Romans 2. The verse is John 5:24:

Verily, verily, I say unto you [said our Lord],
He that heareth my word,
and believeth on him that sent me,
hath everlasting life,
and shall not come into condemnation;
but is passed from death unto life.

We need more than human morality today. We need divine holiness of life, and that is impossible until Christ has become our Savior. If you don't know Him, put your trust in Him now for the forgiveness of your sins and the gift of eternal life, a new life. And for those of us who do know Him, let us live for Him by His grace that we may demonstrate to a God-less world that there still is hope in Christ for sinners who will come to Him.

IS GOD RIGHT TO JUDGE?

Romans 2:12-16

Intro: The question that I have taken as my subject for this morning's message is probably beyond where most people are in America today. There are millions of people who never give God a thought. There are many who have tried to convince themselves that there is no God, and so God does not figure into their thinking about their daily lives. And among those who say that they believe in God, there is a strong conviction that God does not care what we do. In one way or another people try to get rid of God. The attitude expressed in Romans 1, that men do not want to hold God in their knowledge, is very evident in this closing decade of the twentieth century. Man wants to be free to do what he wants to do, and he doesn't want anyone to hinder him with the idea that God determines what is right and wrong, and that, if we depart from His will, we are going to face divine judgment. Man does not like that kind of talk.

However, whether man likes it or not, God does determine what is right and wrong, and those who do what is wrong in His sight are some day going to pay a terrible price. That is why the Scriptures are so important. The Bible emphasizes many truths which we as human beings know in our hearts to be true.

So, what I am saying is that people today, instead of asking, IS GOD RIGHT TO JUDGE?, deny that there will be a day of judgment. They even refuse to believe that the troubles we face in our society today are evidences that God's judgment is already upon us. And so they blindly and blissfully go on in their sin, doing the very thing that Paul mentioned in verses 5 and 6 here in Romans 2, and which we considered last Sunday. (Read.)

You see, not even governments have the right to determine what is morally right and morally wrong. Governments were brought into existence by God to enforce what God says is morally right and morally wrong. And so it is possible for something to be legally right but morally wrong if a government puts its approval on things which God condemns. This is a fact which most people in the world do not understand, and perhaps we as Christians have done a very poor job of showing them why homosexuality is sin, and why all of the other things mentioned at the end of chapter 1 are sin, are morally wrong before God, and eventually bring divine judgment upon any nation now, and everlasting judgment upon people in the day of judgment.

In these early chapters of Romans Paul was writing like a

lawyer seeking to prove his case in court. He began by saying in Rom. 1:18 that "the wrath of God has been revealed ~~from heaven~~ against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold [down] the truth in righteousness." He has revealed it in our hearts. He has revealed it in the present-day judgments which come upon men and nations. And He has revealed it by declaring that a day of judgment is coming in which people are going to be judged for the things that they have done.

God's case against man is a closed case. Any person who thinks that he can plead his own case before God, is deceiving himself. There is only one answer to man's sin, and that is what the book of Romans was written to tell us. It is too late for any of us to claim that we have not sinned. What we need to be asking is what can be done so that we can be forgiven of our sins, and find acceptance with God? If you happen to be a person who has ignored God, and who has felt that there is no absolute standard of right and wrong, let me plead with you to read carefully, over and over again, the first two and a half chapters of this book of Romans. And as you read, ask God to open your eyes to the truth that is there, truth which you may never have realized before.

In you were here last Sunday I hope you will remember that I said that, whereas the Apostle seemed to be thinking primarily about Gentiles in chapter 1, his emphasis shifted to the Jews in chapter 2. And, so none of you will miss it, let me point out that when you speak of Jews and Gentiles, you have included the whole human race. All people on the earth today are either Jews or Gentiles. If you are not a Jew, you are a Gentile. If you are a Jew, then you are not a Gentile. It is that simple. And yet when Paul spoke of sin and man's condemnation by God, he put Jews and Gentiles into the same category. This is one thing that makes our text for today, Romans 2, verses 12 through 16, important for all of us. Coming up to verse 12 Paul declared in verses 8 and 9 that all who disregard the truth of God, are going to be judged, whether Jew or Gentile. And then he said in verse 10 the same thing about those who do well in God's sight. They will receive the same blessings whether they are Jews or Gentiles.

Sin is a universal problem. It includes every person in every nation in every generation ever since the sin of Adam. It includes every Jew and every Gentile. And when it comes to judgment, you are not going to be better off if you are a Jew instead of a Gentile, nor if you are a Gentile instead of a Jew, because, as Paul mentioned in verse 12 of our chapter, "There is no respect of persons with God." He will show no

favoritism. He will not be partial. He will judge righteously according to His own sovereign will!

And so as we come to verse 12, notice that here we have:

I. A GENERAL STATEMENT OF TRUTH (Rom. 2:12).

The first part of the verse deals with the Gentiles. They are the people who are "without law," that is, without the revealed Word of God. They are without the written law, the Scriptures.

By the way, this is a passage that helps us to answer the question, "Will people be lost who have never heard of Christ?" Let us notice what the Apostle's answer is to that question.

The second part of the verse deals with the Jews. They have the law, i.e., the written Word of God.

The Gentile was not given the written Word; it was given to the Jew. But our verse tells us that both sinned. Both missed the mark. Both failed to live up to the will of God, and so are sinners in God's sight.

What is the difference as far as the outcome for each group is concerned? Paul said that the Gentiles would "perish," and the Jews would "be judged."

There is no difference. Both would be condemned. Both would be rejected by God. Both would experience eternal judgment, unless, of course, God would see fit to intervene--and He is the only One Who could!

At this point the question of God's fairness in judging people could easily be introduced, and it might be stated this way:

- 1) With regard to the Jews, why would God condemn a people to whom He had given His Word? Surely that in itself showed His favor toward them.
- 2) With regard to the Gentiles, why would people be condemned if they did not have the Word of God? Surely their ignorance of His Word would be a factor in permitting them to escape the judgment of God.

How did Paul deal with these extremely important matters?

II. THE RIGHTNESS OF GOD IN JUDGING JEWS AND GENTILES (Rom. 2:13-15).

In our Authorized Version this verses are set off as a

parenthesis, indicating that they for an explanation for the solemn statement of verse 12 which both Gentiles and Jews might want to dispute.

Paul began with:

A. The Jews (Rom. 2:13).

Nowhere in Scripture do we see any evidence that because the Jews were given the Word of God, the Law, that this would mean that they would be saved. It is not those who hear the Law that will be saved, but those who do it! In Luke 11:28 we learn that on one occasion the Lord Jesus said this:

"Blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it."

James also wrote in Jas. 2:10,

For whosoever shall keep the whole law,
and yet offend in one point,
he is guilty of all.

God's law, not man's law, is the measuring standard by which the righteousness or sinfulness of men is to be established. But, even though the Jews were given the Law, no Jew was ever able to keep the Law, and so they all stood condemned before God. Therefore, God is right in pronouncing judgment against the Jews. If they were to escape divine judgment, it was not by possessing the Law, but by obeying it. And every Jew failed. Ecc. 7:20 tells us,

For there is not a just man upon earth,
that doeth good, and sinneth not.

The OT is full of illustrations that every Jew was a sinner, even Abraham, and Jacob, and Moses, and David. They all sinned, and so the fact they had the Word of God did not in and of itself provide salvation for any of them.

B. The Gentiles (Rom. 2:14, 15).

If the Jews could not escape the judgment of God even though they had the Word of God, yet it would only seem fair that the Gentiles could escape because they did not have the Word of God. The Law was not given to them. How did Paul answer this objection?

He said that while the Gentiles did not have the written Law, yet they were not entirely without the Law of God. We saw evidence of that in chapter 1. But notice how Paul proved it here.

1. Sometimes they "do by nature the things contained in the Law" (v. 14).

It is generally agreed among nations, even among the most primitive, that there are some circumstances in which it is wrong to kill, or to steal, or to lie, or to commit adultery, etc. And so you can see evidence among the Gentiles that there are things that are wrong, and there are other things that are right. And when you put those beside the Law which God gave to the Jews, you find an amazing similarity. Life on earth would really be impossible if this were not the case.

2. Such behavior shows that "the work of the law" has been "written in their hearts," of even Gentiles (v. 15).

"The work of the law" is not actually the Law, but it is that which the law requires, i.e., right and wrong before God. Where is it? In the hearts of Gentiles. Who put it there? God did. How do we know? Because the Gentiles often display the same sense of right and wrong which was clearly indicated by the Law which was given to the Jews. The consciences of the Gentiles cause them to recognize the same standards of right and wrong which the Jews recognize by the Law. This does not mean that the Jews do not have the testimony of their consciences, but it does show that the Gentiles, even without the Law, are without excuse as far as right and wrong are concerned.

When Paul went on to say "their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another," he was indicating that this was the basis of human government. The very fact that people in every nation talk about things being right or wrong is evidence that God has written His Law in the hearts of all human beings.

These are not things that you and I read in our newspapers. But they are things that we see confirmed in our newspapers every day. We speak of good things, and bad things. We speak of right things, and wrong things. However, the fact that we all have more of an inclination to do the wrong than the right, and will often do the wrong when we know it is wrong, is evidence of God's "rightness" in pronouncing judgment upon us. And so both Jews and Gentiles stand condemned before God. Taken from a purely practical standpoint, there is not a person on the face of the earth who has not at some time violated what he has known in his heart to have been the right thing to do.

Paul was arguing that God had every right to condemn and to pass judgment upon all men. He gave the written Law to the Jews, so they have no excuse. He wrote the same Law in the hearts of Gentiles, and so they are without excuse. And, as

we have seen before, both Jews and Gentiles not only know that there is such a thing as right and wrong, but they know also that God will bring them into judgment some day. What a wonderful day it is in any person's life when he recognizes for himself that these words of the Apostle Paul are true.

And so we see that the Jews are under the judgment of God, having failed to keep the Law. But we also see that even the Gentiles who have never heard of Christ, are under divine judgment, and justly so. Their lost condition has nothing to do with whether or not they have heard the Gospel message.

But now let us look at the last verse of our text. In verse 16 we have:

III. THE CERTAINTY OF GOD'S JUDGMENT (Rom. 2:16).

Having proved that it is right that God should judge both Jews and Gentiles, we are now told specifically that He will.

Link this verse with verse 12. Let me read them together.
(Read.)

It seems that the Apostle was running ahead of himself by what he wrote here. He was like the prophets of the OT. Perhaps you have noticed how frequently, after declaring the judgment of God upon men and nations, the prophets close their message of judgment by holding out a hope of experiencing the mercy of God and deliverance from judgment? He was not ready to speak further about the Gospel, but he evidently could not hold himself back. He had shown both Jew and Gentile that they were without excuse, and that God was perfectly righteous in judging them, not being partial in any way to either one. And he had to tell them, as he did here in verse 16, that there would be a time, a set time, in which judgment would be executed. And it would be a judgment so thorough that even secret sins, and sins of thought as well as of act, would be brought into judgment. God would judge, but He would do it by His Son, Jesus Christ. But this is the message of hope. He would do it, Paul said, "By my Gospel."

Now the Gospel is not bad news, but good news. He had given them much bad news. All men stand condemned before a holy God. All deserve to be cast forever from His presence, except for one thing, Paul said, "My Gospel." It was not his because he had worked it out; it was his because that was his hope, his only hope, for escaping the judgment of God. It was his because God had called him into the grace of Christ. It was his because he was trusting in the saving, cleansing power of Christ's sacrifice as the atonement for his sins, by which he, a guilty sinner, would be declared righteous in

God's sight.

And so, although Paul would go on to strengthen what he had been saying about man's condemnation before God, he had to inject a word of hope for those who might be in despair because of what he had been saying.

We have no hope in ourselves. Neither can we save each other from the judgment of God. But there is One Who can! His Name is Jesus Christ! He died to put away our sins. He died that we might be forgiven. And now the call goes out by the authority of the Judge of all the earth, declaring that all who put their trust in the Son of God and His work at Calvary, shall not be brought into judgment, but have passed from death unto life.

Cf. John 5:24.

Concl: All of us by nature are under the judgment of God. There is no question about that. Our behavior has betrayed what we are time and time again. Our judgment is sure. And yet there is hope. And it is not in trying to do better from now on. Nor is it by any special work by which we try to atone for our own sins. It is Christ, and by His death, His death for sinners, on the Cross.

Is He your Savior? Some of you have heard the Gospel for years, but just the knowledge of the Gospel is not sufficient. You must believe on Him. Come to Him today. Turn to Him in your heart. Confess that you are a sinner and that you need the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior. He will save you, and He will do it now. There is no other Savior and there is no other Gospel. Come to Christ today.

If you have come, how thankful you should be. Let us pray that by our lives we may show forth His grace and that by our lives we may render praise to Him for what He has done for us in saving our souls.

OUR CLAIMS AND OUR CONDUCT—DO THEY MATCH?

Romans 2:17-29

Intro: As we come to Rom. 2:17 for the message of the morning, let me remind you that we are in the first major division of the book of Romans in which Paul was showing that every person is a sinner, whether he be a Jew or a Gentile. And, since we are all sinners, we are all under the judgment of God. That is the conclusion that he reaches in chapter 3, verses 19, 20.

Here in the second chapter, however, Paul was dealing specifically with the Jews. There was a great deal of competition and hatred between the Jews and the Gentiles in Paul's day. Paul was personally hated because he took the Gospel to the Gentiles. Both groups felt that they were above the other, as though a person's standing before God was established by comparing himself with someone who was not as good as he is.

In chapter 1 Paul has given us a picture of the Gentile world. The Gentiles were not given the Word of God, but they did have the witness of God in their hearts as well as in the wonders of creation all around them. However, their sinful hearts rejected the evidence of God's existence. As a whole they chose to have nothing to do with God, and so the sins mentioned in chapter 1 are evidence of the way that God has let man have his way, plunging him into sins which are mentioned, starting with homosexuality.

In chapter 2 Paul turned his attention to the Jews. If there is any doubt about that, the doubt is gone when we get down to verse 17 where we are starting today. Here it is clear that he was speaking to the Jews. And so, lest there be any question in anyone's mind, let me answer the question,

I. WHO IS A JEW?

The first time this word, Jew, is used in the Bible is in 2 Kings 16:6, where it appears in the plural. The word comes from Judah, which you will remember was the name of the southern kingdom after the nation was divided under Rehoboam. During and after the captivity, this word became the title by which all of the descendants of Israel were known. While our Lord was on earth it was used by the Pharisees for themselves, and the people also used it for them. In the Acts and the Epistles it was again used of the whole nation. In this chapter, Romans 2, Paul was using it for those of Jewish descent who claimed to be the people of God. And so the context usually shows us how the term is used. But it comes from Judah, and set the Jewish nation apart from the Gentiles as the nation God had chosen to work through in

giving us the Bible, and in giving us our Savior. In our text for today Paul was building upon his words in verse 13 that it is "not the hearers of the law" that "are just before God, but the doers of the law..."

Now let us look at:

II. THE CLAIMS OF THE JEWS (Rom. 2:17-20).

There are eight claims which the Jews made for themselves, and which seem to have been implied in the fact that they were "called" Jews. The last four can be grouped together into one, and so we could say that there are five claims, with a special emphasis upon the fifth.

Let me point them out to you.

A. "Restest in the law" (v. 17m).

This means that they were settled that the Law which had been given to Moses was the only real authority concerning man's responsibility to God, and they were not interested in looking any farther. They were trusting in the Law; they leaned upon it exclusively for their guidance.

This was very commendable. They were orthodox in their attitude toward the OT Scriptures.

B. "Makest thy boast of God" (v. 17b).

The NIV translates this to say that the Jews bragged about their relationship with God. That may be true, but I doubt if this is what the Apostle Paul meant by this expression. He seems to have been commending them for the claims that they were making even though he was going to point out that they were empty claims.

I would rather think that he was saying here that they rejoiced in God, they praised God, that they had been so blessed as a nation as to be the ones to whom God had given His law through Moses. To be sure, it was a false glorying, perhaps like the Pharisees who was thankful that he was not like the publican (Luke 18:11), but they gloried in God.

C. "And knowest his will" (v. 18a).

They looked upon the law as the revelation of God's will. They knew what it was. They felt that they understood it. They were not left to natural revelation like the Gentiles were, but they had the very Word of God, and they were assured that it was just that.

This, too, was very commendable.

- D. "And approvest the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law" (v. 18b).

— This meant that they, through the Word of God, had learned through being faithfully catechized by their teachers, what God was pleased with, and what displeased Him, and they took their stand with God. They had no argument with the Word of God.

They knew that in God's sight it was wrong to lie, to steal, to kill, etc., and they heartily and fully agreed with God. They chose the way that pleased God rather than to sin against Him--at least this is what they claimed that they did.

The last claims, and the reason for them, are given in verses 19 and 20. There are four claims, but, as I mentioned earlier, they are four claims which essentially mean the same thing.

- E. "A guide of the blind, a light of them which are in darkness, An instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes" (vv. 19, 20).

— They considered themselves guides, light, instructors, and teachers. They considered the Gentiles, and perhaps other Jews who were not religious, as blind, in darkness, foolish, and babes.

We can hardly disagree with any of this. If you have the truth of God, and know what you have, it is criminal not to pass it on to others who do not have it, or who have it but are ignoring it. One of the first feelings a person has, or should have, when he or she comes to know the truth of God, is that he wants to tell others, to teach others. We are taught many places in Scripture that this is the thing that the Lord wants all of us to do.

"A guide" is one who leads the way for a person who cannot see, or who has not seen. "Blind" fittingly describes people who have never received the Word of God. And it is the Word of God which gives them sight.

— "Light" and "darkness" are certainly figures of speech we are familiar with in Scripture. "Light" dispels "darkness." The two cannot exist together. "Light" is knowledge; "darkness" is ignorance. It is when we become messengers of "light" that we see the "darkness" vanish away.

"An instructor," according to Robertson in his Word Pictures in the New Testament, IV, 338, is a corrector. He points out what is wrong to those whose behavior is "foolish," i.e., unreasonable, senseless, without thought. People will do the things that they do because they are ignorant of the truth.

"Teacher" is used here in a more positive sense, one who gives instruction to those who may have some knowledge, but are still immature and childish in their knowledge. These were those who had "the form of knowledge and of the truth in the law," i.e., they had a rough idea of what the truth was, but they needed more substance. Or, to state it another way, they had the skeleton, but they needed meat on the bones.

Now you and I surely can't find anything wrong with the way the Jews felt with regard to their law. If you believe that you have the truth of God, you ought also to feel that it is your responsibility and privilege to see that others understand what you know. It would be a wonderful thing if every Bible-taught Christian felt the same way today.

SO IT WAS NOT THE CLAIMS OF THE JEWS WHICH WERE WRONG. It was:

III. THE CONDUCT OF THE JEWS (Rom. 2:21-27).

The first principle of teaching the Scriptures is that the teacher must teach himself first. Or, in other words, he must practice what he preaches.

In Matthew 23 we have our Lord's denunciation of the scribes and Pharisees of His day. And this is how He began:

All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe,
that observe and do;
but do not ye after their works:
for they say, and do not.
for they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne,
and lay them on men's shoulders;
but they themselves will not move them
with one of their fingers (Matt. 23:3, 4).

Look at the questions Paul asked in verses 21 through 23.
Read them over, and think about them.

The second question in verse 22 probably means, You claim to abhor idolatry and all that is connected with it, but will you rob temples? This has been interpreted in different ways, such as withholding tithes from the Temple of the Lord. But I wonder if Paul was not rather saying that you oppose idolatry, but you will receive money from those who are idolatrous--a strong rebuke against receiving money from

those who are not the people of God in order to support the Lord's work.

These are very important, and very heart-searching questions.

Verse 24 tells us that when those who profess to be the people of God do the very things that they preach and teach against, it is God's Name which suffers. God and the things of God are then treated with contempt by the people of the world. This is always tragic whenever it happens.

And then in verses 25 through 27 Paul turned to the subject of circumcision. And what he wrote here teaches us that when those who profess to know the Lord become disobedient, or remain disobedient, rituals become the cloak with which they hide themselves.

Circumcision was very important under the Law. It was the sign of God's covenant with Abraham, and made stronger under the Law. But when Paul wrote these words, they were no longer under the Law, and so circumcision was not required of them. However, the Jew continued to teach circumcision, and many were say that a man could not be saved unless he was circumcised "after the manner of Moses" (Acts 15:1).

However, Paul did not deal with that aspect of truth here. But he did raise the question in so many words, Which is more important, circumcision or obedience to the Law?

Paul was not saying here that Jews had been able to keep the Law perfectly. Nor did he mean that Gentiles might be able to keep the Law perfectly. The only one who was ever perfectly obedient to the Law of God was our Lord Jesus Christ. What Paul was saying was that it is obedience to the Law, as imperfect as it might be, which was the thing that God was after. If a Jew were not obedient to the Law, it cancelled out his circumcision. On the other hand, if a Gentile were obedient to the Law, the fact that he had not been circumcised was compensated for by his obedience.

And so, if a Gentile keeps the Law and a Jew does not keep the Law, then instead of the Jew judging the Gentile, the Gentile judges the Jew. It is not having the Law that is important; it is obedience to the Law.

Let me repeat what I have said on previous Sundays, Paul was not teaching salvation by the Law. The Law never saved, and the Law cannot sanctify. What he was saying is that the Jew was no better off than the Gentile if he did not obey the Law. In fact, he was worse off than the Gentile if the Gentile obeyed the Law of God.

So this brings us down to:

IV. THE CONCLUSION OF THE MATTER (Rom. 2:28, 29).

Paul used the words "a Jew" here to describe what God has always intended that His people should be, right inwardly as well as outwardly. God is primarily concerned about our hearts. Our behavior cannot be pleasing to God until our hearts are right with God.

Therefore, the Jews failure to keep the Law, as well as the Gentiles failure to respond to the truth he had in chapter 1, proves that both the Jew and the Gentile both alike, and to the same extent, need a Savior.

This is what we are going to learn in greater detail as we go through this epistle of Paul to the Romans. Cf. Rom. 10:9, 10, "That is thou shalt confess..."

And so this passage teaches us very clearly that it is not in having the Word of God that we are saved, nor in learning a lot about the Word of God that we are saved. It is possible for a person even to be able to teach the Word of God without being saved. What is important is that we know God in our hearts. When we know Him in our hearts, know Him through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, then our lives are going to be different.

Concl: The Claims and the Conduct of the Jews did not match. What about ours? If they don't match, it probably is because we are claiming to be Christians outwardly, but we have never been transformed inwardly.

Just this last week in my reading I came across a statement made by a man of God who knows the truth. He said this, that the most impossible task a person can undertake is to try to live like a Christian without being a Christian.

The Law shows us that we cannot measure up to God's standard of righteousness, but it does not help us to be obedient. It cannot save us. When we see our true condition before God, then we see that we do not need a Law which says, "Do," but we need a Savior Who says that He has "done" all that is needed for our salvation. Then, after we know Him, after we have trusted Him to save us, it is possible by His grace for us to live lives where our praise will come from God.

Do you know Christ as your Savior? If not, come to Him this very day, trust Him in your heart, and you will be saved.

MAN'S INSOLENCE TOWARD GOD

Romans 3:1-8

Intro: From Romans 1:18 down to 3:20 the Apostle Paul was proving that all people, whether Jews or Gentiles, are under the judgment of God. First he focused his attention upon the Gentiles in Rom. 1:18 to the end of the first chapter. Beginning with chapter 2, and continuing on to the eighteenth verse of chapter 3 Paul was directing his comments to the Jews. And so our text for today is in the section dealing with the Jews.

But let us not lose sight of what Paul wrote at the end of this section. His condemnation of the Jews did not mean that the Gentiles were better. Rather he made the case against the Jews conclusive because, in doing so, he was also showing that the Gentiles were under the same condemnation. (Read Rom. 3:19, 20.) And so both Jews and Gentiles are guilty of sin, under divine judgment, and in need of a Savior.

Our text for today is a little different from the rest of this section because in it Paul was taking up some questions which he probably heard many times from the Jews. They may have even been questions which he raised against his own condemnation before he became a child of God. I could have given my message the title, THE JEW ANSWERS BACK. No person takes lightly the charge that he is a sinner and under divine judgment. The Gentiles might not ask the same question that the Jews did, but the same feeling is in the hearts of all men unless, of course, he is under the conviction of sin. However, by nature we are all inclined to defend ourselves, even before God. We claim that we might have done a bad thing here and there, but certainly we are not worthy of the judgment of God. We want to put God on the defensive. We would like to show that we are right, and that He is wrong. Let us see what the questions were which the Jews asked, and how Paul answered them. We have here eight verses which clearly show MAN'S INSOLENCE TOWARD GOD.

First, I want to make sure that everyone understands my title. What is insolence?

An insolent person is a rude person. He is disrespectful. He may sometimes go so far as to show contempt for the person he is dealing with. An insolent person can become abusive. Insolence can be shown in our behavior, or in what we say. Insolence proceeds from a proud heart.

I felt that during the recent presidential campaign many of the people in the media were insolent in their conduct with President and Mrs. Bush. The media is often rude and

disrespectful. They somehow feel that they are the authorities, and everyone else is supposed to bow before them, including the President and his wife.

Going to the Scriptures we have an example of insolence in the way the Lord was treated during His lifetime here on earth, and especially during His trials and even after He was on the Cross. Insolence can be manifested in varying degrees. We probably have a mild form of it here in Romans 3. It is hard to tell on the printed page. An insolent attitude on the part of people has resulted often in the martyrdom of the Lord's people down through the history of the world. If you have been reading Jeremiah, you know that Jeremiah suffered greatly from the insolence of his own people.

People today treat the Word of God with insolence. They will say it is out-of-date, or that for some reason it does not apply to our situation today. They do not want to hear it. That is especially true when you deal with sin and the need for salvation.

I hope all of you understand what the situation is in our text for today. The Jews, by their questions, were out to prove that God was wrong. What they particularly disliked was being put in the same category with the Gentiles.

Their objections were expressed in four questions. You will see these questions in verses 1, 3, 5, and 8. The first, question deals with the advantage of being a Jew--in verses 1 and 2. The second, with the faithfulness of God--in verses 3 and 4. The third, with the righteousness of God--in verses 5 through 7. The fourth and last, with the practical consequences--in verse 8.

Let us look at the first question:

I. THE ADVANTAGE OF BEING A JEW (Rom. 3:1, 2).

Is there any? This is clearly a Jew versus Gentile question.

The Jewish questioner was probably not using "Jew" as Paul used it at the end of chapter 2. He was using it in the national sense. What advantage was there to being a Jew instead of a Gentile? This would seem to be confirmed by the second part of the question: "Or what profit is there of circumcision?"

Paul said that there were many advantages to being a Jew. It did not mean that a Jew was not a sinner. It did not mean that a Jew was easier to save than a Gentile, or that it took

less to save him. But history showed that there were many advantages which the Jews had because of God's dealings with them that the Gentiles did not have. They had experienced God's protection in a way that was different from the Gentiles. They had received God's guidance more than the Gentiles had. The Gentiles had never had a pillar of cloud and fire to guide them. God had given them greater victories than He had given to the Gentiles, and in most unusual ways. Think of how the walls of Jericho fell down, or how Jehoshaphat and the people of Judah were delivered when three nations came against them, and the three nations destroyed each other without the people of Judah ever shooting an arrow or throwing a spear! C.F. DEUT. 4:7,8; 2 SAM. 7:23; 1 CH. 17:21; PSA. 147:19,20.

However, Paul singled out one advantage that the Jews had which outweighed anything that any Gentile or Gentile nation ever had. As Paul stated it, "Chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God" (v. 2b).

"Committed" is the translation of the Greek verb for believing. It is used here with the idea not only of receiving the oracles of God, but of being entrusted with them. They became the guardians of the Word, the stewards of the Word, responsible to spread that Word, to disseminate, to spread it like seed throughout the Gentile world. Of all people they should have been the ones who believed it, who defended it, and who were submissive to it. Humanly speaking, God trusted them with His Word.

Why is it called here, "the oracles of God"?

This means that they were the utterances of God. Paul, of course, was speaking of the OT. They had ever reason to believe that the OT was not made up of the words of Moses, and David, and Solomon, and Isaiah, and on and on. They knew that it was God speaking through Moses and David and Isaiah and the rest of the OT writers. The OT is the Word of God, the utterances of God! And we know now that the same can be declared for the NT. Paul wrote Romans, but he did not do it by himself, or on his own. He wrote as he was directed by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit used Paul, but the words came from the Holy Spirit.

How wonderful it would have been if Paul could have rejoiced over the Jews as he did over the Thessalonians when he wrote,

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

You will find that in 1 Thess. 2:13.

How different the lives of the Jews should have been because God entrusted them with His Word! And yet they added their own laws to the Word until they didn't know the difference between when God had given and what they had added. They killed the prophets whom the Lord had sent to them. This was a great advantage which the Jews had, and even why they had circumcision. It was the way God gave them of expressing their faith in His covenant with them. But it really did not profit them at all.

Let us look at the second question.

II. THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD (Rom. 3:3, 4).

The Jews could not argue about the way they had treated the words of God which had been given to them throughout their history. They knew that they had not believed it, that they had failed in the priceless trust which God had given to them as a nation. And so now they argue, if we failed on our part, why do we need to be concerned about God's part. He is released. His Word is no longer in effect, no longer valid.

"Not so," said Paul, "let it not be." This is the opposite of an amen. The truth of God's Word, and the validity of God's Word, its effectiveness, is not changed at all by the way that either Jews or Gentiles treat it. People have always been inclined to feel that if they ignore it, it has nothing to do with them. Just because a man does not believe in God, that does nothing to God's existence. He lives and He continues to be the Lord of heaven and earth even though nobody believes it.

So the Jews' faithlessness does not change the faithfulness of God in any way. Let every person lie about the Word of God, God will still be faithful, and Paul proved it by quoting what God spoke through David in Psa. 51:4. (See Rom. 3:4b.) This was one of David's Psalms of Confession. He knew that he stood condemned before the Word of God, and that God was absolutely just in judging him for what he had done.

So let none of us think that all we have to do to cancel out the Word of God is simply to go our own way. God's Word stands regardless of the treatment that it receives from the hands of men.

Let us look at the third question.

III. THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD (Rom. 3:5-7).

This is a particularly insolent question. Paul was framing the question as we can see from the parenthesis at the end of verse 5, but he doubtless had heard this question many, many times as he had preached the Gospel to the Jews.

The question is actually stated twice here in these three verses, once in verse 5, and then stated again in verse 7.

The question means this: If my sin proves that God is true, and shows that His Word is true, why does He judge me when I am putting Him in a good light? If He is glorified by my sin, how can He be righteous in condemning me? If my actions show that His Word is true, how can He judge me for what I have done?

There is probably no question that brings out the total depravity of man's nature and his thinking than a question like this. We try to make something good out of something that is abominable in the sight of God. We try by any means possible that God is not righteous in condemning any of us for any reason. In fact, we will try even to implicate God in our sin. Adam tried to tell God that God was not right in judging him because, as Adam said in so many words, "Eve made me do it, and You gave Eve to me, so it really is Your fault that I ate of the forbidden fruit!"

If the fact that God can be glorified even through the sins of men prohibits Him from judging man, then there would be no possibility that God would eventually judge the world. That would be especially disastrous to all morality because one thing that God has written upon man's heart is that he is accountable to God for what he does, and that some day he will stand before God in judgment.

The last question is related to this third question. It has to do with:

IV. THE PRACTICAL CONSEQUENCES OF UNBELIEF (Rom. 3:8).

This was the attack that was made upon Paul's teaching. His enemies said that he was teaching that sin can be justified because out of it good may come, i.e., God is glorified. Paul's response to such an interpretation of his teaching was that their "damnation is just."

Paul took this as slander. He considered it blasphemy to excuse sin on the basis that good can come out of it. God often brings good out of evil, but the evil must never be committed with that purpose in mind. Sin is always sin, and it can never be anything else. To do something wrong to achieve a good end, is still sin.

Paul got back to this subject at the end of chapter 5 and the beginning of chapter 6. He taught that where sin abounded, grace did much more abound. And this raised the question,

What shall we say then?

Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?

(Rom. 6:1).

His answer was, "God forbid," or let it not be. It was abhorrent to him that such a thought would ever come to mind.

Concl: These questions give greater proof not only of his depravity and guilt, but also that he is deserving of "damnation" (as it is translated in the KJV). In using this particular word ("damnation") Paul was speaking of the verdict which God has pronounced against all sinners.

God gave His Word to the Jews. They did not believe it, and they did not obey it. And, instead of repenting and forsaking their sin, upon learning that God sovereignly overrules man's sin for His own glory, decides that he ought to "do evil, that good may come."

And so the Jew, in trying to prove that he is better than the Gentile, demonstrates that he deserves the judgment of God because, having been given the light of the Word of God, he has turned his back upon the truth to pursue a life of sin.

But let us forget about the Jew for the moment. Let us think about ourselves, and about our country. ARE WE TREATING GOD WITH INSOLENCE?

We do not occupy a position in the plan of God like that of Israel, but there are some principles here that surely apply to us personally, and to us as a nation. We have been blessed with the light of Scripture. The Word of God has been preached in our nation since its beginning. God has given the English-speaking world some wonderful Bible teachers. Missionaries have gone from our shores all over the world, telling people in other lands about the saving grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Today the picture is quite different. Not only has our nation turned from the Word of God, but in many of our churches the same thing has happened. People who have been raised on the Scriptures, have turned away from God's Word, and we find sin prevailing not only in our world, but in our churches, and in the lives of people who know better than to do what they are doing.

What is the answer?

The first thing that we need to do is to make sure that we are living by the Word of God. Are we really saved? If so, is obedience to the Lord the greatest priority that you have for your own life? Are our homes built on the teaching of

Scripture, husbands leading, wives helping and following, children being taught obedience? Is the ministry of our church being carried on in agreement with Scripture? We as Christians have a lot of homework to do.

The second thing that we need to do is to pray. We need to pray personally, and do it faithfully. We need to pray as families. We need to pray as a church. We must not be weary in doing the will of God, and a major part of doing the will of God is that we pray. Prayer is the expression of our dependence upon God. If He doesn't bless us, we will fail. If He doesn't bless us, we have no blessing, nothing will prosper that we do in His Name.

The third thing that we need to do is to talk to people about the Word of God. Not everybody is going to listen to us, and we can be sure that not everybody is going to agree with us, but nevertheless we can be sure that God will use His Word. He has promised to do that. If people are going to see the light, it will only be through understanding the Word of God.

I have been very concerned about the increasingly rapid breakdown of morality in our country. Things are going faster and faster every day in the wrong direction. Our greatest problem today is sin. We need to tell people that we don't hate them, but we may know something about their sins that they don't know, and that is that they are displeasing God and are going to experience the judgment of God if they do not seek His forgiveness through Christ. I would like to live in a nation that considers homosexual behavior as unlawful. I would like to live in a nation that considers abortion as unlawful. I would like to live in a nation that considers many things unlawful that are being accepted today. But let me tell you this: Making laws, while it may benefit things to some degree, IS NEVER GOING TO CHANGE THE HUMAN HEARTS. Only the grace of God can do that, As Paul said earlier in this book of Romans, he was not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ. It is only when people know the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior that they are going to want to do what is right before God, and only then will they have the desire and the ability to do it.

We have the Word of God. What are we doing with it? May God move upon us to hear it, to believe it, to turn to Christ, and to live our lives to please God, not to please ourselves, and not to please someone else. It is only when we please God that we will have peace in our hearts and be assured that we will escape that final judgment from which there will be no escape.

THE CHARGE IN HEAVEN'S COURT
Romans 3:9-20

Intro: As we come to our text for today, we realize that the

Apostle Paul was concluding his case against man, all men, whether Jew or Gentile. He had started with the Gentiles in chapter 1 who did not have the Word of God, but who did have a God-given testimony of God's existence in their hearts, as well as a powerful witness to the existence of God in creation. And this twofold testimony carried with it the conviction that they were responsible to God. However, the other important thing to notice about the Gentiles in chapter 1 is that they rejected this testimony which God had given them. Therefore, God gave them over to tyranny of sin which was in their hearts. That is what led to homosexuality as well as all of the other sins which are mentioned at the end of chapter 1.

In chapter 2 Paul turned his attention to the Jews, and he was writing to them down to verse 8 in chapter 3. Although they tried to escape the charge of sin by condemning the Gentiles, Paul showed that they were guilty, too. Their behavior throughout their history showed that they also had rejected the truth of God, and, because of the hardness of their hearts, they were facing the same judgment that the Gentiles were facing. They had the Word of God, and they preached the Word of God, but they did not live according to the truth that God had revealed to them. Paul concluded chapter 2 by showing them that they were not the people of God because they were Jews by birth. No, they were not the people of God until they were changed inwardly, and until they were more concerned about pleasing God than they were pleasing man.

In chapter 3 the Jews talked back. But Paul answered their questions one by one. We considered their questions and Paul's answers last Sunday.

In the beginning of our text for today, Romans 3:9, the first thing that we have is:

I. THE JEWS' REACTION (Rom. 3:9).

The Jews came back at Paul with another question in the first part of this verse; the latter part of the verse gives his answer.

With all the space and time that Paul devoted to the Jews it seemed to the Jews that Paul might be saying that the Gentiles were better off than the Jews, or, to state it another way, that the Jews were worse than the Gentiles. And

so the Jews wanted to know, "Is that true?" The question means, Can they consider themselves to be better than we are?

Paul's answer was a strong negative! The expression which we used today would be a good translation of Paul's words: NO WAY! Or, as we might also say, Not at all! And then he explained what he had been doing from Rom. 1:18 on to this point in his letter. He had charged, or laid the accusation against both Jews and Gentiles, that they were both "under sin."

"Under sin" is a very important expression, and it is equally important that we understand what it meant about it.

Paul used this same expression in Gal. 3:22 where we read,
 But the scripture hath concluded all **under sin**,
 that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ
 might be given to them that believe.

In Romans 7:14 Paul wrote,
 For we know that the law is spiritual,
 but I am carnal, sold **under sin**.
 What does it mean?

Robertson in his Word Pictures in the New Testament (IV, 297) describes this as meaning that Paul meant that we are like a person closed up in a massive chest which we could not open. Or he also said that it is like prisoners in a dungeon. The idea is that we are not only sinners, but we are imprisoned in our sin and unable to escape, unable to do anything about it.

"Under sin" is a term that was defined by our Lord when He said, according to John 8:34,
 Verily, verily, I say unto you,
 Whosoever committeth sin is the bondservant of sin.

This is the opposite of being a free man. And so man is not only a sinner, but he is help captive by his sin. He cannot escape. He cannot do anything to change his condition. He is held in the grip of the tyrant named, Sin, helpless and hopeless.

This is one way that Paul had of saying that man does not have a free will. He cannot decide to set himself free. His destiny is not in his own hands. He is like Jeremiah in the pit; if someone else had not gotten him out, he would have died there. And so there are two truths that Paul was pressing here upon the minds of Jews and Gentiles alike. We are all sinners, and we are all help in bondage by our sin. We are slaves to sin with no hope that we will ever be anything else.

I hope that all of us here today realize the truth of what Paul was saying. We are sinners, sinners before God, and sinners against God. But we are slaves to our sin. We are in bondage, unable to escape either from sin's penalty or from sin's power. When the Devil tempted Eve, he told her that if she would eat of the forbidden fruit that she would be like God, knowing good and evil. But what he did not tell her was that, if she disobeyed God, she would be powerless to choose the good, or to resist the evil.

And so let us not look at some other person and say that this applies to them. It certainly does. But it applies equally to us, and it would still describe our condition if the Lord Jesus Christ by His death had not set us free!

So this is Paul's charge: All people, whether Jews or Gentiles, regardless of what our sins may have been--all of us are "under sin," held captive in a dungeon, and we cannot get ourselves out.

This leads us to the next point:

II. THE PROOF OF PAUL'S CHARGE (Rom. 3:10-18).

Now in many ways this is a very instructive section of Scripture. How did Paul prove his point? How did he confirm his charge?

We need to remember that Paul was speaking under the direction of the Holy Spirit. We are reading the words which Paul wrote to the church at Rome, but these words are the words of God. The Holy Spirit was directing him in the choice of every word which he used. That is what we mean when we speak of the verbal inspiration of Scripture. And because we believe that the Holy Spirit's work through Paul included every word, we call it plenary inspiration. That is, it applies to all of the Word of God. There is no part of Scripture which the Holy Spirit did not cause to be written.

Why am I saying this?

I am saying this because, beginning with verse 10 and going down through verse 18 Paul was quoting from the OT. He was citing the OT as proof that the charge that he was making against Jews and Gentiles was absolutely true. He proved his teaching by Scripture.

You will remember that our Lord did a very similar thing when he was tempted by the Devil. The Lord could have said anything that He wanted to say, and it would have been true,

and it would have been powerful. But what did He do? He quoted three times, with each temptation, from the OT! He was teaching His people in all generations that there is power in the written Word of God.

What Paul wrote in verse 9 is definitely the Word of God. And in that respect his words in verse 9 are of the same character as the words which he quoted in verses 10 through 18. But he chose to quote from the OT, the Bible which the Jews knew, to show that he was not coming up with some new idea, but that his teaching was identical with that contained in the books of the OT. It is the Bible which shows us what we are to believe about ourselves (as well as about many other things), and, if any teaching can be documented by the Word of God, IT HAS TO BE TRUE! WHAT POWER THERE IS IN THAT EXPRESSION AT THE BEGINNING OF VERSE 10, "As it is written." This is like saying, "Thus saith the Lord." This is the Word of God, and all arguments suddenly come to an end when God speaks.

May God give us the grace to accept the Word as it is! When man's word is different from God's Word, always accept God's Word. The reason that our country is going down a moral slide, with the pace increasing every day, is because people do not know the Word of God. Or, if they know what it says, they do not believe it to be true. I, along with many of you, will take my stand upon the Word of God.

The margin of your Bible will probably tell you where Paul got these verses, but let me point the sources out for you just in case you do not have marginal references.

Verses 10-12 are found two places in the Psalms: Psalm 14 and Psalm 53. And many feel that Paul also had Ecc. 7:20 in mind, which says,

For there is not a just man upon the earth,
that doeth good, and sinneth not.

Verse 13 is taken from two verses: Psalms 5:9 and Psalm 140:3.

Verse 14 is a quotation from Psalm 10:7, the LXX.

Verses 15-17 were originally written in Isaiah 59:7, 8.

The last quotation, in verse 18, is found in Psalm 36:1.

Paul's quotations may differ slightly from what we have in the OT passages, but the Holy Spirit was guiding him as to what passages he should use, and how they would be arranged. But the point that is important for us is that our doctrines, our teachings, must be found in Scripture. And the Jews

could see immediately that Paul was not teaching some strange, new doctrine, because he was giving them what was contained in their own Scriptures which they professed to believe.

Note three things about Paul's charge against the Jews and Gentiles:

- 1) It is all-inclusive, not only to Jews and Gentiles as a group, but to every Jew, and every Gentile! (Read verses 10 through 12.)
- 2) Its truth is verified in man's behavior. (Read verses 13 through 17.)
- 3) Verse 18 declares that man, because he is a sinner, is in rebellion against God. (Read verse 18.) If, as Solomon declared by the Spirit, "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom," then the person, Jew or Gentile, who does not fear God, is the greatest of fools.

If you study Anthropology in our secular universities, you won't be taught this about man, and I am afraid that even in many of our so-called Christian schools they don't teach this any longer. Thank God there are those who still believe what Paul wrote, but it seems like our numbers are diminishing. But it makes no difference as far as its truth is concerned if no one believe what we have here; it is still true because it is the Word of God.

Verse 10 tells us that no one is acceptable to God. Verse 11 tells us that man by nature will not understand these truths. And it also tells us that man is not seeking the true God. If God and man are going to get together, it will be because God has sought man, not man seeking God.

What a commentary on our present generation is verse 12! Paul was talking about God's way. And so man has become "unprofitable." This means he wastes his time. He wastes his energies, and his life, concentrating on things that have to do with this life, not knowing that he is ignorant of the real truth, and not making any preparation for eternity and meeting with God.

Paul had a lot to say, didn't he, about the way sin has affected our speech. This is in verses 13 and 14. Man's mouth, by the things that he says, represents, as Robertson said, "a newly opened grave." Man uses his tongue to deceive, and we poison each other by what we say. We are like deadly snakes. We curse, and we complain.

Verse 15 does not mean that all people are murderers, but it does mean that murder always has been, and always will be, one common way which people take to settle their differences.

The first son of the first couple was a murderer.

"Destruction and misery" are ruin and wretchedness. Sin never produces lasting happiness. It may provide momentary pleasure, but it never lasts. Man can never expect to be happy as long as he is not right with God, and as long as he lives in a manner that is displeasing to God. With all that we have here in America, our possessions do not bring us joy or peace. And that is what verse 17 says. It is not that man has known peace, and lost it; the Word says that he has never known peace. And "there is no fear of God before their eyes." In fact, God doesn't figure at all into the thinking of people. If He did, they would be afraid to be doing the things that Paul has identified as sin in these first three chapters of Romans.

We have had the charge; now for:

III. THE FINAL VERDICT (Rom. 3:19, 20).

What is the verdict? You will see it in one word near the end of verse 19. It is **"guilty"**! This is the only time this word appears in Scripture. It means that you and I have lost our case, and there is no appeal that can be made. It means that we stand condemned before God and must suffer the punishment that God has decreed for all sinners.

There has only been One Man Who has been not guilty before God, and that One is our Lord Jesus Christ. All of the rest of us are "guilty," with no appeal, facing not only certain judgment, but eternal judgment.

Notice how Paul reached this conclusion. It goes back to the Word of God, too.

In view of the fact that Paul had just quoted from the Psalms, Isaiah, and possibly Ecclesiastes, I would take it that he is using the term "law" here to apply to all of the OT, the books of Moses, and all of the other OT books.

To whom was it given? To the Jews--not to the Gentiles.

What does the law of God, the Word of God, do? It stops the mouths of men. It silences them. It puts an end to what we had at the beginning of chapter 3: back-talk. No appeals can be made. The verdict has been issued by God, and it is final. And it is final not only for the Jew, but for the Gentile because Paul went on to say, "That **every mouth**" [Jew and Gentile] "may be stopped, and all the world" [in every generation] "become guilty before God."

Bishop Handley Moule, who is now with the Lord, but who taught at Cambridge University in England, had this to say in his commentary on Romans (p. 89) about our mouths being stopped:

Oh solemn silence, when at last it comes! The harsh or muffled voices of self-defence, of self-assertion, are hushed at length. the man, like one of old, when he saw his righteous self in the light of God, "lays his hand on his mouth" (Job xl. 4). He leaves speech to God, and learns at last to listen. What shall he hear? An eternal repudiation? An oburgation [reproof], and then a final and exterminating anathema? No, something far other, and better, and more wonderful. But there must first be silence on man's part, if it is to be heard. "Hear--and your souls shall live."

So the great argument pauses, gathered up into an utterance which at once concentrates what has gone before, and prepares us for a glorious sequel. Shut thy mouth, O man, and listen now.

What follows? We read in verse 20 that man's condition before God is hopeless. We have to hear the worst before we will be willing to listen to the good news.

When people learn that they are sinners, the first thing that they attempt is to try to do something that will make God happy with them. And so they work at obeying the Law. But the Law does not cleanse away our sins; it makes our sins more apparent. The Law was given, not to take away our sins, but to show all of us that we are sinners, under divine judgment, and unable to do anything about it.

Concl: But I can't leave you here. Thank God, there is an answer for our sin. And that is really why Paul wrote this epistle to the Romans. And he gets into it in the passage we will have next week, the Lord willing. However, we can't wait another week for the answer. And so let me read in closing verses 21 through 24. (Read.)

As sinners, we are in bondage. Therefore, we can't help ourselves. We are not interested in seeking God. Without the Lord's help we can't understand our situation, nor can we understand the remedy which God has provided for us. But the good news is that God has done all that is necessary to cleanse us from our sins and to give us perfect acceptance with Him. He sent His Son to die for sinners. And, while we do not seek Him, He seeks us, and He gives us understanding, and He enables us to put our trust in the Lord Jesus Christ so that we can escape that awful judgment, and be assured of

a place in heaven.

If you know the Lord, you know what I am talking about, and your heart should overflow with praise to God that He has not left you to die in your sins. If you don't know the Lord, then come to Him today, right now! Repent of your sin, and put your trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul told the Philippian jailor that if he would believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, he would be saved. I tell you the same thing this morning, and I do it on the authority of the Word of God.

Believe what Peter proclaimed when almost 2,000 years ago he was preaching in Jerusalem to the rulers of the Jews. This is what he said: "Neither is there salvation in any other [speaking of Christ], for... (Acts 4:12).

Come to Christ now. He will save you, and you can leave here today at perfect peace with God.

THE GOOD NEWS
Romans 3:21-26

Intro: I am sure that it would not be a waste of time if I were to begin my message today with the reading of Romans 1:18, and continue on down through verse 20 of chapter 3. This has to be one of the darkest, most depressing passages of Scripture in all of the Word of God. Paul has charged every Gentile and every Jew with being a sinner. He did that by reminding the Gentiles of their way of life in things that are clearly displeasing to God. With the Jews, we have seen here in chapter 3 that he took them to various OT passages of Scripture to show their guilt and condemnation before God. Although there may be many differences between Jews, on the one hand, and Gentile, on the other, yet there is one thing that can be said about all people, whether Jews or Gentiles--all are sinners before God! All are guilty in God's sight. And all are under divine condemnation.

This is not the kind of teaching that people like to hear. Most people will readily admit that they do not do as well as they could, but being described as sinners is not acceptable, especially if you go on to say, as Paul has said, that we are under divine judgment. God has sought in many ways to make Himself known to men, but man has rejected what God has done. And so, in order to make man's condition even more apparent, God has withdrawn His restraining hand and has let man take himself deeper and deeper into sin.

We see this in modern America, but the average person does not realize what is going on. The more man has rejected God, the more humanistic society has become. And, as strange as it may seem, when people are free to do what they want to do because they have rejected God, the more in-human is their behavior. It has gotten so that our children are paying a great price for our determination to leave God out of our lives. The crimes of adults against each other is terrible enough, but the crimes of adults against children is so bad that it is hard to find words to describe it. Things get continually worse, and so few seem to realize what is going on, and why.

During the recent political campaign I heard a woman, a member of the media, interviewing Mrs. George Bush, the wife of our President, and she asked Mrs. Bush if she felt that morality was an issue in the campaign. Right away Mrs. Bush said, "I surely do." And then she added, addressing her questioner, "Don't you?" This young woman refused to answer, telling Mrs. Bush that she was the one who would ask the questions, and Mrs. Bush could do the answering.

Mrs. Bush was 100% right! In fact, it ought to be said that morality is the issue in any campaign. It is because of our immorality that we have all of the other problems we face, which no one has been able to solve. Immorality has destroyed many nations, and it is in the process of destroying our nation. We could learn that from our Bibles, if we would, but man is determined that not even God is going to tell him what to do.

Well, it's all laid out for us in Romans 1, 2, and 3. There we see man as he is--both Jew and Gentile. And Paul has pronounced the verdict of "guilty" upon the whole human race. And in conclusion, as we saw last week in Romans 3:19, 20, that not even the Law can save us. In fact, the Law only made man's sin more evident.

So this is why I say that when you look at the human scene through the windows of Scripture, the picture is black, very black, and only getting worse. Surely anyone reading this epistle thoughtfully as far as we have gone, would be inclined to ask in tones showing the greatest alarm, "What is the answer? What is the answer? Is there any hope at all?"

I would remind you today that if we cannot be saved by obeying the Law which God gave through Moses, which is the highest and best law that has ever existed anywhere, then no other lesser law can help us either. Deliverance from our condemnation does not come through obeying any church laws, or any self-imposed laws for our improvement. Because we are what we are, we can't make ourselves acceptable to God, nor can other people help us because they are in the same trouble with God that we are.

What about those questions--"Is there an answer? Is there any hope for us? Or, are we to face the wrath of God for all eternity because there is no way to escape?"

I am thankful to be able to tell you today that Paul has given us the bad news, but as we come to chapter 3, verse 21, he began to give the good news! Yes, there is an answer to man's sin! And there is only one answer! Yes, there is hope! But there is only one hope! And beginning with Romans 3:21 Paul introduced the good news with:

I. TWO LITTLE WORDS (Rom. 3:21a).

Those two little words are, "But now." These are words which introduce the good news. Paul was saying in so many words, "I have told you the truth about yourselves, and every word of what I have said is true because I have gotten those words from the Holy Spirit Himself. It has all been bad news."

'But now' I am ready to give you the good news!"

Actually this is not the first time that Paul has mentioned good news in this epistle. In fact, just before he started this rather lengthy section on man and his sin, he said these words which you will find in Rom. 1:16, 17. (Quote.)

The word "gospel" is the word I want you to notice. Do you know what it means? It means good tidings, or good news!

We will soon be in the Christmas season, and we will be singing Christmas carols and reading the story of the birth of Christ from the Gospel of Luke. One favorite passage of many people seems to be when the angels appeared to the shepherds, and announced to them the birth of our Lord. I am sure that most of you will remember what the angel of the Lord said to the shepherds. He said,

Fear not: for, behold, **I bring you good tidings**
of great joy, which shall be to all the people.

And then the angel said,

For unto you is born this day in the city of David
a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord (Luke 2:10, 11).

Those words, "**I bring you good tidings,**" are the translation of one verb, and it is the verb from which get the word Gospel. The angel was preaching the Gospel to those shepherds. There is so much bad news in the world today; we ought to relish the opportunity to give people good news. And there is no better news than to tell people that Jesus Christ has come, and why He came! The angel said that the Babe Who was born in Bethlehem had come as "a Saviour." He was "Christ the Lord."

That is what Paul said in Rom. 1:16. "The gospel of Christ ...is the power of God unto salvation." And he was not ashamed of it. Actually he wanted to say more about it in chapter 1, but he knew that people would not be interested in a Savior until they saw the need for a Savior. From verse 18 of chapter 1 all the way to verse 20 of chapter 3, Paul has shown the need, has shown the Jews and the Gentiles that they all have the same need. They need someone to save them from the wrath of God. And so, after showing the need, we have those tremendous words which introduce our hope, "But now..."

Let me remind you again, as I have done many times before, there did not have to be a "But now." There did not have to be an answer to man's sin. There did not have to be a hope for sinners. By that I mean that God was not obligated by anything in us to do anything to help us so that He could forgive us. When you read those two words, let them speak to you about the grace of God. Let them speak to you of the love of God. When you ask yourself, "Why did God provide a

Savior for us?", don't look at yourself. The answer is not there. The answer is in God. In John 3:16 we have our Lord's own words telling us why there is an answer to the problem of our sin. (Quote.) Romans 5:8 says the same thing. "But God commendeth his love..."

And so we can thank God for all eternity for those two words, "But now."

The word "But" is a conjunction which introduces a contrast. At this point Paul was moving his readers out of darkness into the light, out of despair into hope. And he said that it is "now"--a present prospect, an immediate hope. It is not something that was to be available at some time in the future, but it was "now." It is "now" for us. There is no need to wait. It is "now."

But what is "now"? This lead us to one of the major words of the epistle. In fact, it is one of the major words of the entire Bible. It is:

II. "THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD" (Rom. 3:21b-26).

I don't expect to get through this whole passage today because it is too important to hurry through it. And an understanding of this term is essential for our understanding of the book of Romans and the whole doctrine of salvation.

Let us think first about this as:

A. An attribute of God.

One reason why people do not understand sin, and how bad it is, is because they do not understand God. In studying the Bible we need to begin with God. This is where the Bible starts in Gen. 1:1. (Quote.) When we see what God is like, we will not need anyone to tell us that we are not fit to be in the presence of such a great God. And there is probably no better place to start in learning about "the righteousness of God."

God is a righteous God. This means that morally He is just the opposite of what we are. He is righteous, has never been anything but righteous, and always will be righteous. This means that He is a just God. He is right, never wrong. He never is unjust with anyone. He is never wrong in His ways, in His dealings with either people or angels. He never has sinned, and He never will sin. He is incapable of sinning.

There is a close connection between the righteousness and the holiness of God. God is absolute perfection. Sin is sin

because it is a deviation from the righteousness of God. Anything that is contrary to what God is, is sin. In fact, this is one way that the Apostle John defined sin when he wrote, "All unrighteousness is sin" (1 John 5:17a). And if, somehow, we are to be saved from the wrath of God, we must measure up to His righteousness. We must be righteous, not unrighteous, in His sight. And the message of the Gospel is to tell us how we can become righteous in God's sight. To be justified is to be declared righteous. The problem is, how can we be righteous when we are sinners, guilty, and under the judgment of God? This is what Paul was preparing to tell the Romans as he got to this point in his epistle.

But we all need to get this idea firmly fixed in our minds: we are dealing with an absolutely righteous God. And somehow, although we are sinners, we must find a way to be acceptable to God, that is, to be declared righteous in His sight.

Look at verse 20 again. It speaks of this "righteousness of God" being "manifested." That is, God has made known how the righteousness of God can become available to us. And Paul said four things about this righteousness of God in verses 21 and 22. Let me point out what these are, and this is as far as we will go today.

1. It is "without the law" (v. 21a).

That is, it can never be ours by obedience to the Law of God. It is, lit., apart from the law. That is, the Law has nothing to do with our becoming righteous. In fact, Paul had just said in verses 19 and 20 that the Law pronounced us guilty. The Law cannot justify us. The Law shows us that we are worse than we thought we were because "by the law is the knowledge of sin."

Why can't the Law save us? For one big reason: because the Law places the responsibility upon us. The Law calls for works from us. But we are sinners, and cannot keep the Law. In addition, if we were to try to be obedient to the Law from this day forward (which is impossible, but let us say for the sake of argument that we will try), yet that would do nothing about the sins which we have already committed.

So, if you are looking for something you can do to save yourself, quit looking. Nobody has ever been saved by works, and no one ever will be. God has made known how we can be saved, but it is not by the Law.

But there is a second thing that Paul mentioned about "the righteousness of God" and its availability for sinners.

2. It is spoken about in the OT (v. 21b).

Earlier in this chapter (as we saw last week) Paul had quoted from the OT to prove that all men are sinners. Now he states that the salvation we need was spoken about in "the law and the prophets." This is one way the Jews spoke of what we call the OT Scriptures. They were made up of "the law and the prophets."

This means that people in the OT not only knew how to be saved, but that many of them were saved, and that their way of salvation was the same as ours. When I speak of salvation I am speaking of becoming righteous in God's sight with our sins forgiven and cleansed away.

If I took the time to deal with justification in the OT we would never get through Romans, but I do want you to see this truth, and I trust that the Lord will impress it upon your heart. Contrary to what many well-meaning Christians say, people in the OT were not saved by keeping the Law. Paul has already made that clear. Nor do I agree with one well-known Bible teacher of the past generation who said that people were saved in the OT by offering animal sacrifices. They were a part of the Law, and that could not save them. The keynote of justification for all of Scripture was declared in Genesis 15:6, and quoted in Romans 4:3 where we read that "Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness." This means that Abraham was justified by faith, not by any work that he did to try to make himself acceptable to God. The people in the OT offered sacrifices to show that they were saved, but not in order to obtain salvation.

So read "the law and the prophets," passages like Isaiah 53, and you will see how God has planned to make guilty sinners righteous in His sight.

But let me mention the third thing that our text tells us about salvation--and this is what we have been looking for:

3. Justification comes through faith in Jesus Christ (vv. 22a).

The fact that justification is not by the Law shuts one door, and so we will quit looking there. The fact that it is spoken of in the OT gives us added information about this most important of all subjects. But it is here in verse 22 that we really have the good news.

It is by faith in Jesus Christ. It is by believing that He was, and is, the Person He claimed to be. It is by believing

that what He did on the Cross was sufficient to take away my sins and make me completely acceptable with God--FOREVER! He took our sins to Calvary. He paid our penalty in full. And now those of us who have trusted in Christ are fully accepted with God, declared righteous, because of what He did for us.

So you see our righteousness before God is not the result of anything that we do for God; it comes as the result of what Jesus Christ has done for us.

Now for my last point about "the righteousness of God":

4. Salvation for the Jew is the same as salvation for the Gentile, and just as necessary (vv. 22b, 23).

Both Jews and Gentiles must come to God through Jesus Christ, and all need to come because "all have sinned..."

No Jew is going to be in heaven who has not trusted Jesus Christ as his Savior. And neither will any Gentile, regardless of what nation he belongs to or what language he speaks. There are not many ways of salvation--only one--through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Concl: There you have it, the whole story of how sinners can be declared righteous before God. If you never hear another word, you have enough truth in these three verses to show you how you can be sure that you will be in heaven some day. This is good news, the best good news you will ever hear. And we all need to remember that it is not just in knowing what the good news is, that we will be saved. But it is in believing the good news about Christ that we are declared to be fully acceptable to God.

We will see more about this great salvation next week, the Lord willing, but make sure that the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, is your Savior "now." Come to Him today. Trust in Him, and you will most certainly be saved.

THE GLORY OF THE GOSPEL
Romans 3:21-26 -- II

Intro: In our consideration of the book of Romans, last week we passed beyond the dark picture which the Apostle Paul by the Holy Spirit had painted regarding human sin. That was the bad news. But then with chapter 3 and verse 21 we came to the good news--that the very righteousness of God has been provided for all those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. It is not a righteousness which we can earn by keeping the Law of God, because no one is able to keep it. It is a righteousness which covers all who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. It is needed by all people, whether they are Jewish or Gentile, because "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." I did not deal specifically with that verse last week, and so I would like to start there today.

In verse 23 Paul was dealing with sin from a different perspective, and showed the effect of that sin. It is generally described as:

I. ORIGINAL SIN (Rom. 3:23).

We have seen in the latter part of chapter 1, all of chapter 2, and in the first twenty verses of chapter 3, that all people are sinners. There are no exceptions except for our Lord. Every person from the Adam's day down to the present hour, has been a sinner. Paul has shown that we are all sinners, but he has not explained why we are all sinners. In fact, he is not going to do that until we get to chapter 5, verse 12. (Quote.) Here he gives us a hint of the reason.

I think that most of you are familiar with the story of Adam and Eve. We know how God created them, and then placed them in the Garden of Eden where there needs would be met, and which they were to care for. However, they were put under one restriction: They were not to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. But the Devil appeared to Eve in the form of a serpent, lied to her about what God meant, and got her to eat of the forbidden fruit. After that she gave the fruit to her husband, and he ate of it also. When they did what God told them not to do, they sinned. But even more than that, they became sinners. Their very nature was changed and they became sinners by nature. They fell under the judgment of God which was death--not only were they doomed to die physically, but they died spiritually, and they would eventually face eternal death.

If you know the story regarding their children, Cain and Abel, you know that they were not put under a similar test.

When they were born, their parents passed on to them a sinful nature. And parents from that day down to the present day have done the same with their children. Children do not become sinners the first time they commit a sin; they are born as sinners. We all were born in sin. Sinning is our nature, and that is why we commit acts of sin.

Romans 3:23 gives us this truth in germ form. If I were to translate it literally, it would read something like this: For all sinned, and continually fall short of the glory of God. "For all...sinned" is expressed as something that took place in the past, for all of us. It indicates that we all originally sinned at the same time. The explanation is that when Adam sinned, he brought judgment upon the whole human race. If we want to trace back to the reason why we are sinners by nature, we have to go back to Adam. That is original sin.

I was talking to a lady on the telephone the other day who was facing surgery, and she wanted to get rid of original sin before she went into surgery. I told her that I would like to get rid of it, too, but that I knew that I wouldn't until I was with the Lord. I really don't know what her understanding of original sin was, but I told her that what she needed was a Savior. We can't get rid of the effects of original sin. David recognized this after his terrible sin of adultery with Bathsheba. In his confession one of the things he said was,

Behold, I was shapen in iniquity;

and in sin did my mother conceive me (Rom. 51:5).

He did not mean that he was an illegitimate child. He meant that he had been born with a sin nature. That, basically, was why he did what he did.

Many people have ridiculed that explanation, but that is the teaching of the Word of God, and so there is no question but that it is true.

Now, because we are sinners by nature, we are continually falling short, failing to attain to, the glory of God. God has created us to live for His glory, but He also created to bear His glory, to be like He is. But we continually fail to do either one of those things. This is what sin is--missing the mark for which we were created. And the reason we miss it is because we are continually sinning, and we sin continually because we are sinners by nature. This is the reason that the world is in the terrible state it is in: because all sinned in Adam, and we by nature do what we want to do rather than to live the way God wants us to live. And so, whether we like it or not, SIN IS OUR PROBLEM! Our hearts are wrong, and they need to be made right. Education

is not our answer. A new philosophy or way of life is not our answer. The basic answer is that people need to be changed in their hearts, and the only one who can make that change is God. So when we turn away from God and leave Him out of our lives, things can only get worse. When politicians list our problems, they never speak of sin. And yet that is our basic problem: S-I-N! If you and I once get this in our minds, then that which is bad news can actually become good news because it will make us realize what we really need. A doctor cannot help us until he determines what is wrong with us. This is what Paul was doing here in these early chapters of Romans: he was diagnosing man's problem, and then showing the remedy.

The remedy is that something needs to be done about our sin, and Paul has already indicated that the remedy is through faith in Jesus Christ, but as we come to verse 24 we see that Paul gave more details about Christ and the Gospel which make us see how really glorious the Gospel is.

II. THE REMEDY: THE GLORIOUS GOSPEL (Rom. 3:24-26).

It has always seemed to me that the translation of verse 24 is a little awkward, when you are reading from verses 22 and 23. (Read.)

I wonder (although I have not found this suggestion anywhere) if it would be right to make a parenthesis beginning with "for there is no difference," at the end of verse 22, and then end the parenthesis at the end of verse 23? Paul was not ready to deal with original sin, and so I think he was mentioning it parenthetically. And so when we read verse 22 and get down to the word "believe," we can skip to the beginning of verse 24 to pick up the thought. (Read.) The NIV begins the translation of verse 24 with the words, "and are justified..." I would prefer to leave the "being" in there because it emphasizes the present aspect of justification. A. T. Robertson says that the present passive, "being justified," emphasizes the fact that this work of justification is being repeated in the case of each person who believes in the Lord, each person is being made right with God.

Let us look more closely at this subject of justification.

Be sure to notice that if we are "being justified," this means that we are not justifying ourselves, it is not a work we do for ourselves, but it is a work of God in our behalf.

Then notice something else.

Paul used two expressions to show us that we do not deserve this justification, but that God has acted freely of His own will. One of the expressions is "freely"; the other is "by his grace," that is, by God's grace.

"Freely" means that God has justified us without seeing a single cause in us as to why He should do it. He could see many reasons as to why we needed to be justified, but not one as to why we deserve it. He could see many reasons as to why He should condemn us, but absolutely none as to why He should deliver us from His judgment.

"By his grace" means, as I have said many times, that He does not give us what we deserve, but He gives us what we do not deserve.

So without any reason as to why God should justify us, and totally by His grace, He has done this. It is free as far as we are concerned, a gift from God, but the price of our justification is far greater than we will ever be able to understand in this life. It is "through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus."

Did you notice that Paul spoke of "Jesus Christ" in verse 22; here he reversed the Lord's Names, and said "Christ Jesus." I don't know that I understand fully the reason, but it seems that in verse 22 where he speaks of our faith, it is "Jesus Christ." We approach God through the One Who became Man and yet was God. In verse 24 Paul was speaking of what God has done for us, and so it was God Who became Man in order to die for our redemption.

A. "Redemption" (v. 24).

What does "redemption" mean?

The word "redemption" speaks of a deliverance from something. In the Greek language it was used to describe money that was paid to free slaves. That is the picture here, not of money being paid, but of a price nevertheless. The price was nothing less than the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is by His death that we have been set free from the terrible penalty of our sin. It is by His death that we have been set free from the power of our sin, so that, while we can still sin, we are not slaves of sin anymore. And the death of the Lord Jesus Christ guaranteed that some day we will be free forever from even the possibility of sinning.

We would have none of these if our Lord had not died on the Cross. There our redemption was forever secured! Cf. Tit. 2:11-14, "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation..."

And also see 1 Pet. 1:18, 19, "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things..."

But let us not stop with verse 24, as wonderful as it is, because we need to see from verses 25 and 26 why such a great price had to be paid. In verse 25 we come to another great word which is a vital part of this glorious Gospel.

B. "Propitiation" (v. 25, 26).

Bound up in this word is the idea of an atoning sacrifice. And the purpose of this sacrifice is to satisfy God, and to turn away His wrath, from that which has displeased Him.

In Martin Lloyd-Jones' series on the book of Romans he referred to the four things which the Puritan theologian, John Owen, said that are essential elements in any propitiation (Atonement and Justification, p. 70):

- 1) Somebody has been offended.
- 2) He has been offended by someone.
- 3) The offender has committed some act of offense.
- 4) The offense must be removed in some way.

God is the Offended One. We are the offenders. We have offended God by our sin. The offense must be removed in some way that will be perfectly satisfactory to the One Who has been offended. Therefore, we do not decide how we can remove the offense; we must find out what the Offended One requires. Our case is in His hands, not ours.

From Gen. 3 on through Scripture we learn what is stated in Rom. 6:23: "For the wages of sin is death." God told Adam that "in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Gen. 2:17b). And the Lord declared through the ministry of Ezekiel that "the soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Ezek. 18:4b). And, as I have already explained, the death which is the penalty for sin is threefold:

- 1) Physical.
- 2) Spiritual.
- 3) Eternal, meaning everlasting punishment in hell.

God's righteousness prohibits Him from saying that we will forget all about it. Sin must be punished. And so either we have to pay the penalty for our own sin, or someone else must pay it for us.

This is what the Lord Jesus did. He was not a sinner, and so He could take our place. And by His death on the Cross He became the propitiation for our sins, and God is fully satisfied with what the Lord Jesus did. Therefore when you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, you are saying:

- 1) I know that He died for sinners.
- 2) I believe that God is completely satisfied with what His Son has done.
- 3) I am placing my trust in Him as my Savior, believing that by His death God can be absolutely just in justifying me, in cleansing me from all my sins.

The Cross is the focal point of all human history. There God was publicly declaring through the sacrifice of His Son, that even the sins of His people in the past which had not been judged due to the amazing "forbearance of God," were now taken care of, so that God could be just in forgiving guilty sinners, and the needs of sinners could be met completely and forever! "Forbearance" means that God temporarily suspended judgment until the time appointed for His Son to come and die. Then, by that death, He not only saved all of His people in the past, but He provided for all of His people in the future. We can perhaps begin to see the great value of the death of Christ when we see that by His death our Lord satisfied the just demands of our holy God concerning every sin that all of His people ever had committed, or ever would commit. When we all get to heaven, everyone of us will be able to sing, and sing as we never have here on earth,

Jesus paid it all,
All to Him I owe;
Sin had left a crimson stain,
He washed it white as snow.

So, let me say it again although I have said it before. Your Savior is Enoch's Savior. Your Savior is Abraham's Savior. Your Savior is Moses' Savior. Your Savior is David's Savior. And on and on I could go. They all looked forward to a coming Savior; we look back to the Savior that they were looking for, knowing that He has come. There has always been only one Savior, and there never will be another. We do not need another. His sacrifice is sufficient and efficient for every sinner who will ever be saved.

Concl: Let me conclude by pointing out the foolishness of what some people say when they talk about God and heaven. They will ignore what the Bible says, and respond to you by saying, "This is what I think."

When people come up with their ideas about how to get right with God, just ask them, "And what does God think about your idea?" And then remind them that there is only one way which God has openly shown will satisfy Him, and that is through Christ. Any person who tries to get to heaven his own way, and ignores God's way through faith in His crucified and risen Son, will some day find himself, or herself, in hell. Let me remind you again of what Solomon said, and it is very

appropriate for this passage:

There is a way which seemeth right unto a man,
but the end thereof are the ways of death
(Prov. 14:12; 16:25).

Come, ev'ry soul by sin oppressed,
There's mercy with the Lord,
And He will surely give you rest,
By trusting in His Word.

Yes, Jesus is the truth, the Way,
That leads you into rest;
Believe in Him without delay,
And you are fully blest.

Come then, and join this holy band,
And on to glory go,
To dwell in that celestial land,
Where joys immortal flow.

Only trust Him, only trust Him,
Only trust Him now;
He will save you, He will save you,
He will save you now.

May the Lord be pleased to bring to Himself any who are here today without Christ. And may those of us who know the Lord go away with a greater realization of the perfect salvation that we have in Christ, completely undeserved, free, but purchased for us by our Lord Jesus Christ at the infinite cost of His own precious blood.

THREE SIGNIFICANT CONCLUSIONS ¹

Romans 3:27-31

Intro: Anyone who reads Paul's epistle to the Romans cannot help but notice that he used a lot of questions in his writing. There are some times when a couple of questions may be so closely related that they could be counted as one. But if I have counted them correctly, there are over 80 questions in the epistle. (I have counted 83.) This third chapter of Romans contains more questions than any other chapter in the epistle: 15.

Questions are obviously intended to make us think. They are designed to make us look for answers. They help us to see how the Apostle Paul moved from one thought to another in a very reasonable manner. Sometimes Paul's questions must have indicated how people had responded to his teachings in the past. So questions serve many purposes. And we can be sure that each question in Romans had a very distinct purpose.

You will notice that there are six question marks in our text. There are three in verse 27; two in verse 29; one in verse 31. And the questions really help us to see what the divisions are in these last five verses of that chapter.

The first questions in verse 27 have to do with boasting. The second questions have to do with whether or not God is the God of the Gentiles as well as the Jews. The last question in verse 31 deals with the question of the Law, and whether or not justification by faith ignores the Law, or possibly does away with the Law completely.

All of these questions arise out of what Paul had just taught in the preceding verses about justification being by faith. Paul had emphasized faith in 1:8, 12, 16, and 17. And then here in chapter 3, as he began to deal with justification, we see "faith" mentioned in verses 22, 25, and 26.

We saw in chapter 2 that the Law was very important to the Jews. Many of them were mistakenly of the opinion that obedience to the Law was the way that God intended for them to be acceptable to Him, that is, to be saved. To speak about justification by faith was not only strange-sounding, but it seemed to many Jews as if it were heresy. They were inclined to hang on to the Law very tenaciously.

¹ This message was to have been preached last Sunday, but due to ice and snow it was necessary to cancel both services for the day, December 6.

It seems very likely that Paul was really addressing the Jews in this part of Romans. However, since I am speaking to a predominantly Gentile audience, maybe completely Gentile, I want to adapt what he wrote to those of us who are here today without in any way changing what Paul had to say in these verses. Remember that we are in the part of Romans which deals with justification, and so it is important for all of us to see what the answers were to the questions that Paul used in these last five verses of chapter 3.

I will take the first questions as my first point, and ask:

I. WHAT ABOUT BOASTING?

We see this question and the answer in verses 27 and 28 of chapter 3. This is the first matter that Paul took up as one of the conclusions we all need to be acquainted which arise out of the doctrine of justification by faith.

The thought behind this idea of boasting was really raised in verse 1 of this chapter. (Read.) Paul had probably been asked this question hundreds of times by Jews who struggled to understand his message. Was there no importance to be attached to the fact that a person was a Jew?

What does it mean to boast?

This is a word which probably does not need a lot of explaining. We all are guilty of boasting, and so we know what it is. Actually the word can be used in a good sense. It is sometimes translated in Scripture as meaning to glory in something. Paul used it in Gal. 6:14. (Quote.) It means to exult, or to rejoice in something. This word is used in various ways many times in the NT, but Paul was using it here in a bad sense. That was the way he used it in Rom. 2:17, and again in verse 23. We have it again in Rom. 4:2, translated "glory." See it also in 1 Cor. 1:29, 31. That passage reflects the teaching of Jer. 9:23, 24.

When the word is used in a bad sense it is the equivalent of bragging. And bragging always is an indication of pride. And pride is sin.

Now let us think about the Jews for a moment before we apply this to ourselves because bragging is just as much of a Gentile sin as it is a Jewish sin. However, bragging is dressed up in acceptable garments when we brag about certain things.

The Jews bragged about being Jews. They bragged because they were descendants of Abraham. They bragged because they had

the Law. They bragged about being the people of God. They bragged about their history. It was easy for them to feel that they were better than the Gentiles because of the way God had seen fit to deal with them throughout their history. And so they did not feel that they were doing anything wrong when they boasted about themselves. They could even feel that they were glorifying God by such boasting.

However, they could see from the preaching of the Apostle Paul that he did not leave them any room for boasting. He seemed to be putting them on the same basis as the despised Gentiles, and this was really one of the biggest reasons that the Jews hated Paul and hated the Gospel which he proclaimed. Paul took away all of the reasons that they had for feeling that they were better than the Gentiles. Paul had declared that they were sinners like the Gentiles, and that, if they were to be saved, they had to be saved like the Gentiles. And so he had heard them say many, many times, "Where is boasting then?"

Paul's answer was this: "It is excluded." He meant that it was shut out! The door was closed on it. There was no room for it in their Jewish hearts. Paul meant that under no circumstances was boasting to be allowed in the hearts or on the tongues of any person, whether he be Jew or Gentile.

Then Paul portrayed the position of the Jews by using the word "law" in a special way. When they said, "By what law?", they meant, "On what basis, or principle, are you saying that?" It couldn't have been on the basis of works or they would have had some reason to glory in their acceptance with God. Is there a principle in God's dealings with men that has a higher priority than the Mosaic Law, or a higher priority than "works"? Paul said that there was. It was "the law of faith," or the principle of faith. As long as any person, whether Jew or Gentile, contributes a single work for his salvation, or justification, he has something to boast about because he would not be saved if he had not done what he had done. But Paul has shown that salvation is not by the Law. Salvation is not dependent in any way upon our works. The Law shows man's need of salvation, but it does not save. The Law is like a mirror which shows us that our faces are dirty, but we do not wash our faces with the mirror!

Salvation is by faith and by faith alone. And even our faith is a gift from God. It is God Who enables us to trust in Christ. So that we cannot even boast in the fact that we have trusted in the Lord. If our faith originated with us, then we could boast in our faith. But our salvation is of the Lord from start to finish! And so the door is shut

forever on our boasting in ourselves.

We Gentiles are inclined to boast, too, aren't we? We often have a false idea of where our faith comes from, and so we congratulate ourselves for believing in the Lord. Or we may have the idea that the Lord saw something of merit in us, and for that reason He saved us. Our sinful hearts are always going to find something for us to brag about, but let us make sure that the door is shut! All the boasting that we do takes away from the glory that rightfully and completely belongs to the Lord.

Do you remember the first stanza of James M. Gray's great hymn, Only A Sinner? It goes like this:

Naught have I gotten but what I received;
Grace hath bestowed it since I have believed;
Boasting excluded, pride I abase;
I'm only a sinner saved by grace.

So the Gospel leaves us no ground for glorying except in our Lord and His death for us on the Cross.

In verse 28 Paul stated what we can count on as being the pure truth of the Gospel. The Law has not even had a minor role in our salvation. Our salvation is all of God, all of grace, completely undeserved and completely unearned. This is the first conclusion that Paul mentioned as issuing from the true doctrine of justification by faith.

The second is this:

II. IS GOD THE GOD OF THE JEWS AND OF THE GENTILES?

Now we are dealing with verses 29 and 30.

One reason that the Jews felt that they had more of a claim upon God and salvation was because the Law had been given to them. But, if the Law does not save, but faith does, then doesn't that mean that God is the God of the Gentiles as much as He is the God of the Jews? If it takes faith to save, and God gives faith to Gentiles as well as to Jews, then He must be the God of both.

Paul's answer: "Yes, of the Gentiles also." And he gave the reason in verse 30. (Read.)

One truth that is not usually recognized by Gentiles, and often not recognized by Jews either, is that the Law was never given to the Gentiles. The Law was given by God to Moses for the nation Israel. And so, if salvation were by the Law, then the fact that God gave the Law to the Jews

would mean that He only intended to save the Jews. But since salvation is not by the Law, but by faith, we see that it was God's intention to save Gentiles as well as Jews. And not even circumcision makes any difference as far as salvation is concerned. Jews are saved by faith in Christ; Gentiles are saved by faith in Christ. There is only one God and He has provided only one way of salvation for all people, whether Jew or Gentile, and regardless of the generation in which they live. Salvation is always by grace through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ!

So we do not preach one Gospel to Jews, and another Gospel to Gentiles. Or one Gospel to American Gentiles, and another Gospel to Russian Gentiles, and another to German Gentiles, and another to Japanese Gentiles. The Gospel has not changed since the days of Paul, nor even since creation, or even before creation. There has never been but one Gospel, and it is for all sinners whoever they may be, wherever they might be, or whenever they may have lived. And the same will be true forever!

These are well-known truths for the reader of Scripture, but how important it is that we understand them. This is the second conclusion we find in the doctrine of justification by faith. First, boasting is locked out. Second, God is the God of Jews and Gentiles alike.

The third is mentioned in verse 31.

III. DO WE MAKE VOID THE LAW?

Let us make sure we understand what Paul was saying here. Again, it probably was a point that had been raised with him many, many times by Jews who sought to understand the message of Christ.

For "make void" the NASB and the NIV use the word "nullify." Williams, in his translation, render it, "make null and void the law." The Greek verb means to cause it to cease, to put an end to the law, to abolish it. Paul was answering those who wondered if Paul was saying that the Law was no longer important, that we do not have to pay any attention to it, that there is no longer any need for it.

His answer was, "God forbid," lit., let it not be--which, as I have pointed out to you before is the opposite of saying, "Amen!" It is a very strong statement, and the translators of the KJV evidently felt that it could best be expressed by the equally strong, "God forbid."

Paul was not saying that the Law has no longer any purpose.

However, we need to be clear about its purpose. We are not "under the Law" as a rule of life. The Law does not justify; it condemns. The Law does not sanctify; it shows the need for sanctification. As far as the Law is concerned we can say, as Paul said at the end of verse 20, "For by the law is the knowledge of sin."

The whole legal system came to an end when our Lord Jesus Christ died on the Cross. This was the meaning of the rending of the veil in the temple. The Aaronic priesthood and the sacrifices were no longer to be offered. The sacrifices and the sabbaths came to an end. But the righteous standards established by the Law will remain forever. It will always be wrong to worship any other God but the one living and true God, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Idolatry will always be wrong. It is a sin to take the Lord's Name in vain. We are taught very clearly in Ephesians and Colossians that we are to honor our parents. It is wrong to murder. It is wrong to commit adultery. It is wrong to steal. It is wrong to lie. It is wrong to covet.

Now the Word of God declares that "there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not" (Ecc. 7:20). We also know from Rom. 6:23 that "the wages of sin is death." We hear every day about people who are violating the Law of God by their sins. And they stand condemned by that Law. The whole world is guilty before God, and therefore are under the sentence of death.

How is the Law established? And what does this mean, to establish the Law?

The Law is established when it is supported, when its penalty is carried out. If the Law is to be supported, then this means that every violator of the Law must die! And this would apply to Gentiles as much as to Jews. God's Law has been violated, and the offender must pay the penalty, which is death--eternal death.

Now if God's Law is ignored (like it is ignored today by most people), and they get away without paying the penalty, then it would be that it has been declared null and void. But God has made no such declaration. The penalty for sin is still death, and every person born into this world is born under that sentence.

But we still need an answer to our question, and to Paul's claim that "we establish the law." How does the Gospel establish the Law? Listen very carefully as I read the answer to you from Gal. 3. I will read verses 10 through 14:

For as many as are of the works of the law
 are under the curse: for it is written,
 Cursed is every one that continueth not
 in all things which are written
 in the book of the law to do them.
 But that no man is justified by the law
 in the sight of God, it is evident:
 for, The just shall live by faith.
 And the law is not of faith: but,
 The man that doeth them shall live in them.
**Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law,
 being made a curse for us: for it is written,
 Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree:
 That the blessing of Abraham might come
 on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ;
 that we might receive the promise of the Spirit
 through faith (Gal. 3:10-14).**

Has the Law been supported? Have its just demands been
 carried out? Therefore, has it been established?
 Absolutely! How? By the death of Christ. Paul declared it
 when he wrote those words which we find in 2 Cor. 5:21,

For he hath made him to be sin for us,
 who knew no sin;
 that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

Our Lord Jesus Christ has perfectly fulfilled the demands of
 the Law for every person who ever has, or ever will, trust in
 Him for salvation. And so all who believe are free from the
 condemnation of the Law, justified, not so they are free to
 sin, but free from sin. This means that they are able to
 live so as to glorify God even while we are in these bodies
 and while still living in this wicked world.

Concl: So what are at least three of the significant
 consequences of our justification in Christ?

- 1) We have no reason to boast in ourselves, but only to
 praise God for His grace and love.
- 2) There is only one way for anyone to be saved, whether Jew
 or Gentile. It is not through the Law, but through faith
 in Christ.
- 3) We do not throw the Law out as meaningless, but in Christ
 the righteous demands of the Law have been met for us
 when He died as our Substitute on the Cross.

And so, if you are saved, you know that the only One you can
 boast in, can glory in, is the Lord Jesus Who died to free
 you from the Law's demands, which He satisfied by His death
 on the Cross. He died in our place so that we would not have
 to die. By His death we are declared righteous, or
 justified, by God. The Law has not been ignored in your case

and mine, but has been fully satisfied, so fully satisfied in fact that our cases will never come up for review. Cf. John 5:24.

How we all, who know the Lord, should spend our days praising Him for the salvation that we now have, and will always have. It is ours by grace, ours as a gift from God, ours because Christ died to pay our penalty. Cf. Isa. 53:6.

But if the Lord is not your Savior, let me tell you as graciously and clearly as I know how, there is no other hope for your salvation. It is either Christ, or eternal doom. It is either Christ, or you will spend eternity in hell as the just punishment of God for your sins. But why will you die when the call is given today for you to come to Christ, believe in Him, with the promise that he will save you?

We are entering the Christmas season in which the story of the birth of Christ will be read from the Scriptures throughout our land. And we will likewise hear the message of the carols which are sung every year--but which so few seem to understand, or even to be interested in. May the Lord give you who do not know Him hearing ears, and receptive hearts, that possibly even today you may know the saving grace of Christ. Come to Him now. Believe in Him before you leave this place today. Christ died to save sinners, and it may be that He is calling you now to come to Him. Delay no longer. He will save you now.