

The Epistle of Paul to the Church at Rome

October 27, 2003

II. CONDEMNATION (Rom. 1:18-3:20).

This section has three main divisions:

- A. The Case against the Gentiles (1:18-32).
- B. The Case against the Jews (2:1-3:8).
- C. The Charges confirmed by Scripture (3:9-20).

We can only assume that Paul began with the Gentiles because he was writing to what was predominantly a Gentile church. And he had emphasized that he was an apostle to the Gentiles in verses 5 and 6, and then in verses 13 and 14. Graham Scroggie, born in England of Scottish parents in 1877, and ministering all over the world (esp. in England, Scotland, Australia, New Zealand, Tasmania, Canada, and the United States), wrote this about this section on Condemnation:

For a religion to be universally applicable and effectual it must answer to universal need, and it is here shown that the need to which the Christian religion answers is universal. No other religion answers to world-need, and, therefore, no other religion is universal in its scope (*The Unfolding Drama of Redemption*, Vol. III, pp. 137, 138).

We are going to learn some very important truth about mankind in the verses we have come to, truth which God has revealed in His Word, but truth which is constantly denied by mankind. Who are we going to believe, what man says about himself, or what God says about him? Paul's answer to this question should be our answer: "Let God be true, but every man a liar" (Rom. 3:4). The person who rejects the Word of God to prefer the words of men, is a fool. Let us notice what Paul said under the direction of the Spirit of God.

A. The Case against the Gentiles (Rom. 1:18-31).

1. God's revelation to all men (Rom. 1:18-20).

1:18 Here we come to the word "revealed" again; in fact, it is the first word in the Greek text in verse 18.

And it is exactly the same verb and the same tense, voice, and mood – present tense, active voice, and indicative mood. And John MacArthur is perfectly right in saying that it should be translated, "is constantly revealed" (*The MacArthur Study Bible*, p. 1693). It is the verb ἀποκαλύπτω from which the book of Revelation gets its name: ἀποκάλυψις. We could even translate it, *is constantly being revealed*.

Let me explain. When God gave His Word to Moses, to David, to Solomon, and all of the OT writers, and when He did the same with Matthew and John and Paul and all of the other NT writers, He revealed to them what they were to write – word for word! He revealed His Word to them. With each one it was a great disclosure. An alternate meaning of this great verb "revealed" used in both 17 and 18 is that *God took off the cover of His truth, and let these men see it*. He let them see the light of his truth. He revealed to them that which otherwise was unknown and unknowable.

Now the Apostle Paul indicated in verse 17 that that which was made known to the writers of the Old and New Testaments is constantly being revealed to those who are being saved, nothing in addition to what we have in the Old and New Testaments, but what is written in the Old and New Testaments. God revealed it to the writers of Scripture so they could write it, and God reveals what they have written to us in order that we might be saved, and then continue to grow in our understanding of the Word of God.

Now here in verse 18 we have a different kind of revelation. It is a revelation that we see in the providence of

God, in the way He orders the events of human history. This is not a written revelation, but a message from God made known in life. In the past some of these events have been included in Scripture, like the destruction of the world at the time of the flood. Or another couple of examples is seen the events referred to in Luke 13:1-5. But people are just as blind to these events as they are to the Word of God.

Since the terrible fires started in southern California I have heard at least a couple of announcers talking about Mother Nature's hand in all of this, but nothing about God. Who controls the weather? Who makes those Santa Ana winds blow? Who could have prevented these fires by giving southern California some heavy rains? Are events like this just freakish weather, or is the Lord trying to tell us something. Is the Lord telling all of us in our country, not that the people of southern California are the worst sinners in our country, but could it be that message God was giving in our Lord's day: "Except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish." There are undoubtedly many dear Christians who have lost their homes, maybe some who have died have been people of God. I don't know. But Paul was directed by the Holy Spirit to tell us that "the wrath of God is continuously being revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold (hold down, suppress) the truth in unrighteousness."

Are we in America guilty? Are people throughout the world guilty? What is the charge against the people of the world, the Gentile world, but also the Jewish world?

There are three charges here:

- 1) Ungodliness.
- 2) Unrighteousness.
- 3) Suppression of the truth.

What is "ungodliness"? Basically it is man's rejection of God Himself, a refusal to render to God the worship, the praise, the obedience which all people owe to Him. Trench explains "ungodliness" as "a deliberate withholding from God of His dues of prayer and service, a standing, so to speak, in battle array against Him (p. 242). "Ungodliness" is rebellion against God. When the people of Israel cried out for the Lord Jesus Christ to be crucified, they were being ungodly. When Jews and Gentiles alike have worshiped idols and all kinds of false deities, they were being ungodly. When Pharaoh said, "Who is the LORD, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not the LORD, neither will I let Israel go" (Ex. 5:2), he was guilty of ungodliness. The case against the Gentiles is headed by man's evil treatment of God. There is a move to get God out of our pledge of allegiance, and off of our coins.

What is "unrighteousness"? It is just another name for sin. It is a refusal to accept what God has declared to be right, and what is wrong. Haven't we been told for a long time that there is really no absolute right and no absolute wrong, that truth is always relative? What about dishonesty, adultery, abortion, homosexuality, even murder? We do our own thing and have done our best to eliminate the word "sin" from our vocabulary and from our lives.

What is "the truth"? The Lord Jesus said in His prayer in John 17, "Thy Word is truth" (John 17:17). So to suppress the truth is to do all we can to get away from the Bible so we won't have to think about it.

Now it is easy to point an accusing finger at the world, but what about us? Do we always treat God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit, the way we should? Do we seek Him daily? Do we worship Him? Are we determined to live for Him?

Are there sins in our lives that we excuse or try to overlook, thinking that we will do something about them some day? And how about the Bible? Do you read it daily? Do you apply it to yourself when you read it?

Have you made it “a lamp to your feet, and a light to your path”? Do you delight in it? Do you eat it like Jeremiah said he did?

There are many men who stand in the pulpits of the world who do not believe in the wrath of God. They tell us that God is too good to condemn anyone. Some men who have been evangelical in the past now are saying that there is no hell. What does the Bible say? It says that “the wrath of God” continues to be revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men (whoever and wherever they may be), who hold down the truth in unrighteousness.” God is not silent today. People just are too blind to recognize His action when they see it. The wrath of God can be defined as “an abiding and settled habit of mind ... with the purpose of revenge” (Trench, p. 131). God has only had one attitude toward sin, which is expressed here in verse 18, *and that has never changed, and never will change. God's case against man is overwhelming. We all need to make sure that we are seeking by His grace to please Him.*

November 3, 2003

The wrath of God is a subject which has not been given the attention, especially in recent days, that it deserves. Psalm 7:11 tells us that “God is angry with the wicked every day.” Paul told the Athenians on Mars Hill that God “now commandeth all men everywhere to repent” (Acts 17:30), and then he went on to tell them why:

31 Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead (Acts 17:31).

The day of judgment has been set. We do not know when that will be. But what we do know is that there is no hope of turning to God after we die. If we are to be saved, it has to be now! And with the uncertainty of life, a person is a fool to postpone turning to Christ. When Paul finished his message on Mars' Hill, we read this concerning the reaction of those who heard him: “Some mocked: and others said, We will hear thee again in this matter.” How did they know that they would hear Paul speak about the Gospel again? They didn't! And they were putting themselves in the same danger as those men did who “mocked.”

But now as we go on into verses 19 and 20 we have the first of two reasons as to why some people are going to experience the wrath of God. And this is in addition to all of the examples of the wrath of God which we have in the Bible, such as, the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden, the destruction of the world at the time of the flood, the plagues that God brought upon Egypt, and on and on.

But here is the first reason. And as we look at it I want you to remember what Paul told the Athenians about the coming judgment of God. He said that God “will judge the world in righteousness.” He is going to judge unrighteousness *righteously*. Some people are always saying, in defense of the wicked who haven't heard the Gospel, that God will not judge people and send them to hell if they have not heard the Gospel. So they are saying, in effect, that if God judges such unrighteous people, that he would not be righteous. Now let us see what the Bible tells us about that.

1:19 These two verses show why God will be righteous in sending any person to hell who does not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Look at what God has done for every person who has ever been born into the world. “Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them.” Our psychologists don't tell us this. And a lot of Christians don't know this, but God has planted in every human heart the realization that there is a God. “God hath showed it unto them.”

We have two interesting words in the first part of this verse. The first is an adjective, “known.” It means that God has disclosed a notable truth to man so that it is not only known, but well known. What is the result? It is

“manifest in them.” What does “manifest” mean? It means that God makes it evident, very apparent, that He exists!

And where did God disclose it to men. Paul said, “in them.” This means that it is an inner conviction of the heart, down where it requires no proof to convince us that it is true. But how do we know that it is there? “For God hath showed it unto them.” We are told here what God did for Adam and Eve when He created them, and He has put this conviction in the heart of every child who has been born from that day to this. God did it! “God hath showed it unto them.”

What is the meaning of the word “showed”? “Manifest” and “showed” are from the same root. The word “manifest” is an adjective taken from the verb “showed.” “Manifest” is a translation of the Greek word φανερόν; “shewed” is the translation of the Greek word ἐφανερώσεν. They have the same relationship to each other as the verb *reveal* and the noun *revelation*. So anything that is revealed is a revelation, and a revelation is something that must be revealed.

Now all three of the words that we have been looking at in this verse, “known,” “manifest,” and “showed,” are words which speak of truth that has been revealed by God to every person who has ever been born. I don’t know how the Apostle Paul, speaking under the direction of the Holy Spirit, could have made it any clearer. People may be convinced later on, or try to convince themselves, that there is no God, but God has made sure that that truth is embedded in the mind and heart of every person at birth. Any person who says that is not true is arguing with the infallible, unchangeable Word of God!

Paul enlarges further on this truth in verse 20.

Now we know that God is invisible. God is present here this morning. Read Psalm 139 if you want to learn about the amazing presence of God although He is invisible. And this is what makes these verses, 19 and 20. God has placed in the human heart a strong conviction that there is a God Whom neither he nor anyone else has ever seen. “From the creation of the world” means that what Paul says here about human beings and their knowledge that there is a God, goes back to the very beginning of time, to the beginning of creation. “Clearly seen” as Paul went on to say means “being understood.” We use the word *see* that way, don’t we? If someone explains a difficult mathematical problem to us, and we understand it, we say, “Oh, I see!”

What is it that God has revealed about Himself? “His eternal power and Godhead.” This is the equivalent of saying, “His eternal sovereignty and Deity.” What tremendous truths these are! We come into this world on a solid basis of true theology, knowing that there is a God, a personal God, that He is eternal, and that He is powerful!

I love to think about these truths in connection with children. We have four children, and we did not have to try to prove to any one of the four that there is a God, or that we could talk to Him. We didn’t have to prove that He hears our prayers, or that He is good. Sometimes children are so convinced of the power of God that they have no hesitation in asking Him to do the impossible.

“Being understood by the things that are made” is translated in the NASB, “being understood through what has been made.” So there is not only the inner conviction of our hearts but the external evidence that we are everything in this world, and the earth itself, were made, i.e., created.

But now look at the way verse 19 ends. “So that they are without excuse.” Nobody can truthfully say when he stands before God in the day of judgment that he didn’t know there was a God. People boast about what they are going to tell God when they stand before Him at the Great White Throne judgment. But no one will be

surprised to see that there is a God. No one will even be inclined to say, "Oh, I didn't know that You existed."

So there is here a twofold revelation from God. The first is in our consciences; the second is in creation. So when God judges such people for their "unrighteousness," He is perfectly righteous in what He does.

Now as we go on to verses 21, 22, and 23, we see what men have done in spite of what God has done to make Himself known. And we see evidence of this every day.

2. Man's rejection of God (Rom. 1:21-23).

1:21 Note that it is God Who has made the approach to man, not man to God. But man, because of his sinful nature, has rejected the evidence that there is a God, that is, "when he knew God," that there is a God to Whom he is responsible, he did not, and does not, glorify Him as God. He did not humble himself before God. He did not seek to learn more about God. Instead, he chose to live as though there is not God. "Neither was thankful." He was thankful for the truth that God had given him, nor recognize that God was the source of his very existence and the Provider and Supplier of all of his needs, or give Him proper worship. Instead, he "became vain in his imaginations." The word "imaginations" in Greek is the word from which we get our word, *dialogue*. It speaks of the way man turned away from the truth and has tried to reason things out for himself. But in doing so he "became vain." He became foolish (a fool), and morally he became wicked. In Eph. 4:17 and 18 Paul speaks of unregenerate Gentiles who "walk in the vanity of their mind." And then he added:

18 Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart:

19 Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness (Eph. 4:18-19).

This is happens when anyone suppresses the truth. Review Rom. 1:18b. Man is born a sinner ever since the sin of Adam. But things go from bad to worse when man turns away from the truth in his conscience, or the testimony of creation, or the testimony of Scripture. Consequences are overwhelming not only for time, but often for all eternity.

And so "their foolish heart was darkened." This is the work of the Devil. Cf. 2 Cor. 4:3-4. When the light is rejected, then darkness overcomes the sinner. And how great that darkness can be! Pride takes control.

1:22 Man has always boasted in his wisdom. The biggest fools in the world as those who reject the truth of God in preference for their own wisdom. Paul indicted the wisdom of the world in his letter to the church at Corinth. Read 1 Cor. 1:19-25. For a man to treat the truth of God with contempt is to bring himself to the level of a simpleton.

But not only does the suppression of the truth affect the sinner, his ideas about himself, and his ideas about who he is and what he can do, but, as verse 23 shows, it changes his ideas about God.

1:23 Man makes his own god. He becomes an idolater. He turns from "the incorruptible God" to lifeless images of men, birds, fourfooted animals, and creeping things.

God is incorruptible; man is corruptible. God does not get older and wear out and finally die, like man does. Man rejects the incorruptible and chooses the corruptible. God is not only incorruptible, but unchangeable. He does not and cannot change. He cannot get better or worse because He has always been perfect, and always will be. And yet man in his sin and spiritual blindness prefers the corruptible. God's revelation of Himself to man is totally righteous. Man's response is totally unrighteous and worthy of divine judgment.

Stifler makes this interesting comment in his commentary:

There was the Apollo of the Greeks, the eagle of the Romans, the bull of the Egyptians, and the serpent of the Assyrians. Paul may be giving in this verse the historical development of idolatry, from its highest phase to its worst (p. 32).

November 10, 2003

And now we come to the third point in God's case against the Gentiles. It is:

3. God's rejection of man (Rom. 1:24-32).

1:24 Three times in these verses, in 24, 26, and 28, we have the same verb: παρέδωκεν. *God handed them over.* It was like He said, "You don't want Me, then you are going to experience the consequences." And this threefold use of παρέδωκεν indicates that God does this in three successive stages, according to Brown in the JFB series. Robertson said, "These people had already willfully deserted God Who merely left them to their own self-determination and self-destruction .. ." (IV, p. 30). Lenski adds this which helps us to understand the nature and full extent of what God does in such situations:

This is more than permission to fall into uncleanness, and it is less than causing this fall. God's action is judicial. At first God always restrains by moral suasion, by legal and other hindrances; but God is completely cast off, when the measure of ungodliness overflows, his punitive justice hands the sinners over completely (παρέδωκεν) to their sins in order to let the sins run to excess and to destroy the sinners. Thus God uses sin to punish itself and the sinner. Since they are determined on self-destruction, justice decrees that destruction (*Romans*, p. 108).

Here, in the first use of παρέδωκεν it is apparent that when God's restraining hand off of any person, persons or nations, man, because of the evil nature of his heart will proceed to destroy himself. And they do it "between themselves," *i.e., with each other.* All of society can be affect, as was the case in Sodom and Gomorrah.

How did their sin get started?

1:25 It started with the rejection of the truth which God has placed in every man's heart. So in these days when people do not read the Bible, nor even have a Bible in their homes, they can be guilty of turning the truth of God into a lie. *Idolatry is one of the many indications that those who are involved in it, are under the judgment of God!* Some say that men originally sought to worship God by working His creatures, but it was not long until the creatures themselves were the objects of man's worship. Idolatry is lit., the lie.

The saddest part about idolatry is that it robs God of the glory which rightfully belongs only to Him. The Creator is forgotten; the creature is deified. And this definitely is not the way things are supposed to be. Paul, after mentioning the Creator, add, "Who is blessed forever. Amen." This showed that Paul had not made the stupid mistake that millions of Jews and Gentiles were making in his day. Remember that the Caesars used deifying titles, like Augustus, and demanded that their people worship them. Long ago God had said through His prophet Isaiah, "I am the LORD: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images" (Isa. 42:8). But men give His glory to graven images in spite of what He has said.

There are many professing Christians who worship images of Christ claiming that they are worshiping Christ. These verses condemn that, and call such worship idolatry. However, false worship does not have to have graven images. Our generation is often described as one in which God has been humanized, and man has been deified. Celebrities of all kinds are treated with worship-like adoration, and it often makes no difference what

they do, people still adore them. Americans as a whole are guilty of this form of idolatry.

And then we come to the Apostle Paul's second use of the verb παρέδωκεν.

1:26 Lenski ties this and the following verses with what has gone before by pointing out that as the word "uncleanness" in verse 24 describes the sin of verse 23, so the phrase in verse 24, "to dishonor their own bodies between themselves," or *with each other*, is described in verses 26 and 27.

And here in these verses we see that just as idolatry is evidence of the judgment of God, so is homosexuality!

When people reject God, He gives them over to be dominated by the "vile affections" that are in their hearts. Notice the expression in verse 24, "through the lusts of their own hearts." This is what the homosexual is demonstrating, the "vile affections" that are in his heart. "Vile" means that they are shameful, disgraceful, corrupt. Paul used this word in 1 Cor. 15:43 to describe the offensiveness of a dead body. "Vile" speaks of that which is contemptible, despicable. "Affections" are in this context uncontrollable sexual lust. Man, who thinks of himself as free, not subject to anyone or anything, finds himself the hopeless slave of the passions that are in his heart. God graciously restrains sin, even with unbelievers, otherwise life would be impossible in this evil world in which we live. But when He withdraws His restraint, as is the case in verses 26 and 27, then that sinner is plunge into the depth and filth of sin – even affecting women. Rosie O'Donnell let the world know that she was a lesbian. Now she has been demonstrating how corrupt she has become. We are reading in these verses about modern America, but the curse of homosexualism literally envelopes the world. I don't see how we can deny the fact that we are headed for the Great Tribulation!

Verse 26 deals with the lesbians; verse 27 deals with male homosexuals.

1:27 Men do the same as the women. Adultery is wrong, and it will bring the judgment of God. Cf. Heb. 13:4:

4 Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.

But at least there is some explanation for adultery. In verse 27 women do that which is contrary to nature, turning to other women for their sexual gratification, and now we read that men do the same, "leaving the nature use of the woman," *i.e.*, in marriage. Instead they "burn," they are set on fire, and there is no fire so hot and so uncontrollable, as that which women show to another women, and men show to other men.

But that is not all that the Apostle Paul had to say. He went on to say that those who engage in such activity will be "receiving in themselves that recompense of the error which was meet." The NKJV translates this phrase, "receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due." What is the penalty? HIV! Aids! And a lot of other possibilities. You see, as we learn in Rom. 6:23, "the wages of sin is death." Death is the penalty, also the reward, for sin. This has been clear since the beginning of human history. And that penalty does not end with physical death. Death is not only physical, but it is also spiritual, and can ultimately lead to eternal death. This is the reward that you never want to receive. You would think that when homosexuals see other homosexuals dying such a terrible physical death, they would turn from their sin. But they are blinded to it all, and they cannot turn from their sin unless they turn to God. It is only through the Gospel that sinners can be delivered from the tyranny of sin.

But we are not finished with God's portrait of the depravity of man. Do you know what depravity means? It means that by nature man is evil, corrupt, immoral, a sinner by nature and so a sinner by choice. The rest of our

chapter gives us conclusive proof of all of this. Even with all of the tragic evidence of sin around us every day, still men and women, young people and children, persist in their sin. That is what verses 28 through 32 tell us.

1:28 Even after all of the evidence we have of sin all around us, and even in us, this verse tells us that people still do not want to have anything to do with God. And we see that all of the time. The Democrats – and I don’t see how any Christian can be a Democrat (although some Republicans are just as bad) -- the Democrats supports ungodliness. Let the President or any of his Cabinet say anything about God, and they are going to hear about it. The Democrats really believe in the separation of church and state – they want to keep anything having to do with God out of our national affairs. They support abortion, and a judge put on hold our President’s attempt to stop partial birth abortion before the ink in his signature was dry. Our courts will let a man who has mercilessly killed a couple of dozen women, and maybe more, spend the rest of his life in jail instead of giving him the death penalty. The Bible tells us that murder is a sin, and if governments don’t deal with it as sin punishable by death, that government will come under the judgment of God. We wonder why our children are becoming murderers when we subject them to all kinds of violence on TV and in the movies, and then tell them by the way we deal with criminals that even if you kill someone, the chances are that you can get away with it. The Democrats put our President’s judicial recommendations on hold, or flatly reject them, because they don’t want anyone to upset their godless policies. The battle lines are being drawn. The enemy is closing in on Christians who are seeking to live to please the Lord. We need to pray that the Spirit of God will open blinded minds to what is really going on, so that they will repent and turn to the Lord. Legally it is OK to be a homosexual, but the Word of God declares that it is definitely a judgment from God.

But now let’s see how this chapter ends.

We have seen that idolatry in any form is a judgment from God. We have seen that homosexuality and lesbianism are judgments from God. Now in verses 28 through 32 we are going to see that God judges sin with sin.

What ominous words these are: “And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge. For the third time we read that “God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient”! This goes back to verse 21 and 22. (Read.) This states very clearly that man’s problem is mental. The Bible tells us that “the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy [One] is understanding” (Prov. 9:10). In Prov. 1:7 says practically the same thing: “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction.” We have it again in Psa. 111:10: “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do His commandments: His praise endureth for ever.” Job was talking about the weather, about the wind and the rain and the lightning, as what God does, and then Job said what God has said to men. The words are in Job 28:28:

28 And unto man he said, Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding.

We are so God-less that we talk about Mother Nature as in charge of the weather! Who is Mother Nature? If you can find her, I can assure you that Mother Goose is her next door neighbor. God is in charge of the weather. He created the sun, and He keeps it shining. If we could really do away with God, you and I and all of creation would be gone. He holds everything together, and sometimes He shows us that He does.

Twice in our Bibles, once in Psa. 14:1, and again in Psa. 53:1, we read these words: “The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.” But that is not what the Hebrew text says. Lit. in both chapter the Hebrew needs to be translated, “The fool hath said in his heart, ‘NO GOD.’” Many feel that what the fool says, instead of denying that there is a God, that he says, “NO GOD FOR ME”! The fool says, “I don’t want have anything to do with God.” In the thought that we have from Romans 1, fools are people who do not want to have God in their knowledge. They don’t want to have anything to do with God. They don’t want Him or His Word, nor do they

want to have anything to do with His people. They wish that it was true that “there is no God.”

I hope you are getting the picture here. Before Adam sinned, he loved God, and he loved being with God. But after he sinned, he hid himself from God. God didn't tell him to hide. That was just what he did. And men have been trying to hide from God ever since. This is what is wrong with our country. We don't want to have anything to do with God. Oh, we will listen to someone sing, “God, Bless America,” at a world series game, but after the singing is done, they would prefer that God not stay for the rest of the game.

Well, what is price that has to be paid when we tell God to stay out of our lives. Oh, we might not verbalize our feeling, but that is how we feel naturally. The fact that you and I want God, we want to learn of Him, we look to Him to take care of us and to provide for us, if evidence of the grace of God in us.. We want to be like Him, and we are looking forward to seeing Him some day, and being with Him for all eternity. But the fact that these statements describe us is all due to the work of the Gospel in our hearts bringing about the new birth, making us new creatures in Christ.

But what happens to people who do not want God, nor do they want to give Him any place in their lives?

Verse 28 tells us that “God gave them over,” the same word *παρέδωκεν*, “to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient.” What is “a reprobate mind”? It is a mind which has the disapproval of God. The NASB translates “reprobate” as “depraved.” It is a mind which does not think like God thinks. In fact, it is a mind that rejects the thoughts of God which are revealed in His Word.

But notice the words “to do.” Our thinking controls our doing. There are two very important verse in Proverbs with reference to the way we think and how this affects what we do, even the way we talk. Here are the verses, and I am reading from Prov. 23:6-7:

6 Eat thou not the bread of him that hath an evil eye, neither desire thou his dainty meats:

7 For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he: Eat and drink, saith he to thee; but his heart is not with thee.

(Repeat the verses.)

Now look again at our text. God judges those who reject him, or even those who just ignore Him, by delivering them over to a life without God. But we can make an added statement about the verb “to do.” It is a present, active verb which means *to do and to keep doing*. Lenski said this:

God gave men up to a mind that acted the fool in moral matters. Instead of doing what their own natural moral sense approved as fitting and proper from the moral standpoint ... they kept doing what they themselves adjudged as not being fit and proper morally. Reprobating God, the only effective moral guide and control, their own mind became reprobate by leading them to doing constantly what even they knew and acknowledged as bad (*Romans*, p. 118).

And then Lenski asked this question: “What do you think of a mind which reasons like that?” (*Ibid.*). Calvin called “a reprobate mind,” a mind that is *perverted*.

Years ago I wrote this paragraph in my notes regarding “not convenient”:

These are things “forbidden, shameful.” These would be things contrary to man's nature (as described earlier in this chapter), contrary to his duty as a creature of God, and so contrary to the will of God.

Note: The implied emphasis on the absolute nature of right and wrong.

1:29 “Being filled with all unrighteousness” – that is, all kinds of unrighteousness. And then he gave an extended list. If a person is “filled” with unrighteousness, then there is no room for righteousness. This kind of a person doesn't go back and forth between good and evil; his life is all evil before God. Let me give

you a brief word of explanation for the following sins. *Be sure to notice that the Apostle Paul made frequent references to the Law of God.* And he brings in the Law in his discussion of sin in anticipation of the point that he will make in Rom. 3:20:

20 Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.

Now let us consider the meaning of the following sins.

- 1) "Fornication" – This is not in all MSS, but it is in some, so I define it. Thayer says that it is a word for all illicit sexual intercourse (p. 532). Haldane says that it "includes all of the violations of the seventh commandment (p. 67). The seventh commandment is "thou shalt not commit adultery."
- 2) "Wickedness" – Man's inclination to do evil, that which makes a man indulge in sin.
- 3) "Covetousness" – It speaks of man's intense desire to get all that he can for himself, and to get it any way that he can. It is often linked with the grossest of sin. Cf. Ex. 20:17.
- 4) "Maliciousness" – This is the habit of a person's mind which makes him do wicked things. See 2).
- 5) "Full of envy" – The word "full" shows how this is dominant in the human heart. Envy differs from covetousness because it does not necessarily mean that a person wants to be equal to another person, nor to have what he has, but he just wants to see the other person pulled down, and deprived of what he has. Pilate knew that this was the reason the Jews wanted Christ crucified. Cf. Matt. 27:18; Mark 15:10.
- 6) "Murder" – Envy led Cain to murder Abel. As we have just seen, envy made the Jews to murder our Lord.
- 7) "Debate" is argument, strife, contention, quarreling. This is one of the major sins of politicians. But it is in all of us.
- 8) "Deceit" – Cf. Rom. 3:13. This is trickery. Judas was guilty of this sin. It is dishonesty in business.
- 9) "Malignity" – This is the attitude that puts the worst possible meaning on others actions, charging them with the worst possible motives. So it is a false accuser.
- 10) "Whisperers" – This is when a person makes a secret attack on another while trying to keep anyone else from knowing where the attack comes from.
- 1:30** 11) "Backbiters" – The word means *to talk down someone*. This is the person who loves to spread scandal, even publicly, whether a person is present or not, and whether a person knows it or not. What the "whisperers" do in secret, the "backbiters" do in public.
- 12) "Haters of God" – Cf. Rom. 5:10; 8:7.
- 13) "Despiteful" – The person who does wrong, regardless of how it affects others, just for the pleasure that he gets out of it. Like "the Green River killer. But a person can be "despiteful" without being violent.
- 14) "Proud" – Haldane says that this describes "persons puffed up with a high opinion of themselves, regarding others with contempt, as if they were unworthy of any intercourse with them" (p. 69).
- 15) "Boasters" – He is a person who boasts about what he does not have. Thayer calls him "an empty pretender" (p. 25).
- 16) "Inventors of evil things" – This is the person who is always looking for something evil to do.
- 17) "Disobedient to parents" – The rebellion of children against their parents is sin, and a violation of the fifth commandment.

1:31 The five words in this verse all begin with an *alpha privative*, an "a" attached to the beginning of a word to turn the word from a positive to a negative. One of the five, "implacable," is not in the best MSS, but I include it because it is in the Textus Receptus from which we get our KJV.

- 18) "Without understanding" – which Lenski translates as "senseless." He is unwilling and incapable to understanding the truth of God's Word.
- 19) "Covenant breakers" – This person refuses to abide by any agreement. He is dishonest, saying he will and then he doesn't.

20) “Without natural affection” – This is a mother who forsakes her child. Or a father who will desert his family. It speaks also of a child who turns against his parents. Obviously it is the destruction of the family. We see this often today.

21) “Implacable” – This is the word that does not appear in the best MSS. This is the person who refuses to be reconciled to another person with whom he has had trouble. He would rather be at war than to make peace.

22) “Unmerciful” – This is a person who is totally unlike God Who is always rich in mercy. This is the person who does not respond to those in trouble. He would rather see the trouble increase rather than to provide any relief.

1:32 Now we come to a conclusion of this charge against all men, but particularly of the Gentiles.

“Who” speaks of all people who fall into any or all of the categories above. “Knowing” means *to know fully*. The verb is ἐπιγινόντες, an aorist, active participle. They are fully acquainted with the fact that God has declared His displeasure with all of these sins. But they continue to do them. And not only that but they applaud, they approve, they encourage those who do them – which only adds to their condemnation, and increases their judgment before God.

Years ago I came across the following sober and frightening summary of this last verse of Romans 1. It is found in Volume XIX-II, pp. 82 and 82 of Calvin’s commentary on the Bible:

Though this passage is variously explained, yet the following appears to be the correctest interpretation, that men left nothing undone for the purpose of giving unbridled liberty to the sinful propensities; for having taken away all distinction between good and evil, they approved in themselves and in others those things which the knew displeased God, and would be condemned by His righteous judgment. For it is the summit of all evils, when the sinner is so void of shame, that he is pleased with his own vices, and will not bear them to be reprov’d, and also cherishes them in others by his consent and approbation. This desperate wickedness is thus described in Scripture: “They boast when they do evil” (Prov. 2:14). “She has spread out her feet, and gloried in her wickedness” (Ezek. 16:25). For he who is ashamed is yet healable; but when such an impudence is contracted through a sinful habit, that vices, and not virtues, please us, and are approved, there is no more any hope of reformation.

November 17, 2003

John Brown, a Presbyterian pastor in Edinburgh, Scotland in the late 1800's, had this to say about this latter part of Romans 1:

The details in the latter part of the first chapter of the downward course of mankind, are absolutely frightful, and we might have been apt to suspect the apostle of exaggeration, were there not abundant evidence, in the pages of contemporary pagan literature, that the darkest features of the picture are drawn from life (p. 14).

Those word were written about 1880. If Dr. Brown were alive today he would say Romans 1:18-32 is a description of contemporary life. How we need to be praying that the Lord will never let us be pleased with any sin in any way. Instead, we as Christians need to love what God loves, and hate any and every thing which is displeasing to Him.

Now we go on to the next point in this book of Romans. But let me review the message of the book thus far.

I. PRESENTATION (Rom. 1:1-17).

Briefly to summarize these first seventeen verses, the Apostle Paul identified himself as an apostle of Jesus Christ, separated by God for the preaching of the Gospel. He was prepared and eager to fulfill his calling in

Rome and was not ashamed of his message in any way because he knew that the Gospel, and only the Gospel, was the message of salvation for all people whether they are Jews or Gentiles. In the Gospel the righteousness of God has been revealed, a righteousness to be received by faith.

Having made all of this clear, Paul then went on beginning with the eighteenth verse of chapter 1 to show that all men are under the judgment of God because of sin. And so we give the next major division of the book the title:

II. CONDEMNATION (Rom. 1:18-3:20).

We have just completed:

A. The Case against the Gentiles (1:18-32).

One reason that the Gentiles are called “heathen” is because the Gospel was not given initially to them. The OT teaches us that especially from Abraham on, God’s dealings were with Abraham and his descendants. And, as Paul will emphasize in chapter 3 of Romans, they were at a distinct advantage over the Gentiles because the Word of God was given to the Jews. But that did not mean that God had left the Gentiles totally in the dark. God placed in every man’s heart the consciousness that there is a living God with Whom we have to do. Also creation itself was another way in which God manifested His presence. Creation had to have a Creator. But man has closed his heart to all of this. Even when men have recognized the existence of God, instead of seeking Him, they turned to idols, and worshiped them. So when men show that they do not want to have anything to do with God, God gives them over to their sin, not only to commit sin, but to be brought under the dominion of sin. So it is very clear that the Gentile world is under the judgment of God and desperately in need of a Savior.

Now we are ready for the next point under CONDEMNATION, which is:

B. The Case against the Jews (2:1-3:8).

We need to understand that spiritually and morally, by nature, there is no difference between Jews and Gentiles. All are born sinners. All are under the judgment of God. We are all descendants of Adam, and under the curse of sin. But because of the way God had chosen to give His Word to the Jews, the Jews were inclined to feel that they were not in the same position before God as the Gentiles. In fact, they were inclined to feel that they were better than the Gentiles, and closer to God because they were Jews. Furthermore, they felt that the only way that the Gentiles could get right with God, was basically to embrace the religion of the Jews. That is why in the early church circumcision became such an issue. Jews did not feel that Gentiles could be saved unless they were circumcised. Paul gets to that subject here in chapter 2.

As we have noticed, at the end of chapter 1 Paul mentioned “the judgment of God.” And Paul said that men know that there is going to be a time when they will stand before God to be judged. But they go on sinning anyway! Now that theme, “the judgment of God,” continues on into chapter 2. (Read the first two verses.) And it goes right on down to verse 16. (Read.) Notice that in verse 16 Paul again mentioned the Gospel. In verse 17 Paul makes it clear that he has been speaking to Jews from the beginning of chapter 2, and his emphasis continues to be on the Jews until we get through verse 8 of chapter 3.

So I am going to call the first part of this section dealing with the Jews, but secondarily also with the Gentiles:

1. The righteous judgment of God upon all (2:1-17).

2:1 The word “therefore” indicates that Paul is taking the truth that he has presented in chapter 1 and apply it to any Jews who would read this epistle. The Jews were well known for their criticism of Gentiles, which also involved belittling them. But the verb which Paul used here indicated that Jews generally did more than criticize; they passed a sentence on the Gentiles, condemning them like they were acting on God’s behalf. But Paul told them that they were “inexcusable,” they had no defense. They were as guilty as the Gentiles. This word, ἀναπολόγητος, is only used one other time in the NT, and it is in Rom. 1:20 where it is translated, “without excuse.”

Paul’s language is very strong here, as is indicated by “O man,” because it is very important that every person understands that he, or she, is under the judgment of God., a judgment from which there is no human way out! But why did Paul say this? Because they did the same things that they were condemning the Gentiles for doing. Paul was speaking in the singular here (including the word “doest”) because he wanted every Jew to recognize that he was guilty before God. “Doest” is from the Greek verb, πράσσω, which means to do something habitually. The present tense of πράσσω emphasizes the practice of sin, that which they did over and over. So in judging the Gentiles, they were judging themselves. This is the verb that appears twice in 1:32 where in each case it is translated “do.”

So if we judge someone else for sin we are committing, we are incriminating ourselves.

2:2 To help the Jew see that he really was under divine judgment, Paul declared that God was righteous in judging all who did such things (referring back to the latter part of chapter 1). And the Jews were recognizing this by being critical of the Gentiles because of their sinning. Stifler said that “what is known needs no proof.” So the Jews were right in the criticism of the Gentiles, but very wrong in that they did not see their own guilt.

2:3 And so Paul asked the Jew if he felt that by pointing out the sins of the Gentiles that this would exempt them from the judgment of God. Haldane brings out that to escape the judgment of God would mean that they would not be judged by God, and so they would not be condemned by God, and so would escape the verdict. The condemnation of others often produces a self-righteous effect upon ourselves. And so Paul asked them the question that we have in this verse. Everyone who reads the Bible needs to answer the questions that are found in the Bible, and this question is no exception.

2:4 Here Paul gave the Jews another question to answer. He was obviously thinking about Jews who really knew the Lord. On what basis had they been saved? Was it because they were Jews? Were there things in their lives which made God look upon them with favor? Why had God saved them? Upon what basis has anybody been saved, whether Jew or Gentile? Was it because God especially needed what we could do? These are questions that we all need to ask, not just once in a while, but very frequently.

To answer these questions we need to go to verses like Eph. 2:8-9. Or Titus 3:3-7:

3 For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another.

4 But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared,

5 Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;

6 Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour;

7 That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

In the second chapter of Titus Paul wrote about “the grace of God that bringeth salvation ... hath appeared to all men” (Titus 2:11). None of us deserved to be saved. We deserved just the opposite. One of the greatest mysteries of all time is why God loved us enough to send His love to die for us.

So Paul had in mind the Gospel as he wrote to Jewish believers. And he asked them if they were not despising “the riches of His,” *i.e.*, *God’s*, “goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?” He didn’t say anything about the fact that they were Jews. Being Jews was not a factor as to why God had saved them. It was a big factor in why they needed to be saved.

To despise the “goodness and forbearance and longsuffering” of God meant that they had thought little or nothing of these glorious attributes of God as they related to their salvation.. When we are thinking about why and how we were saved, we need to think about God, not ourselves!

“The riches of His goodness” – “Riches” always speaks of an abundance. This word is sometimes translated in our KJV as “gentleness,” or “kindness.” But we understand “goodness.” Vine says that this word speaks of “goodness in action” (II, 165). The more we know about salvation, the more we realize how unworthy we have been, as Jacob once said, “of all the mercies, and of all the truth,” or faithfulness, which God had bestowed upon him. See Gen. 32:10. God in His goodness has blessed us with “all spiritual blessings in Christ.” Foundational to all is His love for us. All of these blessings certainly were not deserved. If God had given us what we deserve, He would have had nothing to do with us. But His goodness is not all.

“Forbearance” – This speaks of the way He has put up with us instead of immediately judging us. God has shown great self-restraint in putting up with us in our sins and in our rebellion against Him. He has tolerated us far beyond what we deserve. When we look back upon our lives, we marvel that He did not go ahead with His judgment of us.

“Forbearance” and “longsuffering” go together. God’s forbearance is amazing, but what is so amazing about it is how long He puts up with us in our sin. If we had been in His position, we would have proceeded with the judgment which we so greatly deserved. Don’t you marvel today at God’s forbearance and longsuffering with people in their pride, their selfishness, their greed, their immorality? We can always see why He should judge others, but we are so slow in realizing how many reasons we have given Him to bring us to judgment.

Paul was saying to this Jew which represented the whole nation, “Instead of having a lot of merits in your favor, you were daily piling up demerits.” So when we look at ourselves in our sin, and then God in His absolute holiness, we can look and look but never find a single reason why He should have saved us, but many reasons why He should not!

But it is all of this summed up in “the goodness of God” that has brought us “to repentance.” It was not our merit, but His mercy which brought about our salvation. According to 2 Tim. 2:25 even repentance doesn’t come from us, but it is a gift of God. And so we sing, “Boasting excluded, pride I abase; I’m only a sinner saved by grace.”

2:5 Our trouble was with our heart. This was the problem with the Jew. It was hard and unrepentant. And this is what adds to our condemnation. Paul was talking to a Jew, but we need to see how these same truths apply to us as Gentiles.

What is a hard heart? It is a stubborn heart, an obstinate heart. It is a heart that refuses to change even when it knows that it is on the wrong course. When Paul told the Athenians that God “now commandeth all men every where to repent: because He hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness” (Acts 17:30-31), we read the “some mocked” (Acts 17:32), they were showing that they had hard and “impenitent” hearts. People know that they need to repent and turn to God, but they feel safe and content just to put it off, or to turn it down altogether, thinking that there is no reason to be in a hurry about getting right with God. And they think that things are just at a standstill. But what is actually happening? Instead of enjoying “the riches of God’s

goodness” (v. 4), they are amassing a treasure of a different kind – they are treasuring up unto themselves “wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.” That day is coming. The time has already been appointed. We have some evidence of what it is going to be like even in history. Think of the great Flood. Think of Sodom and Gomorrah. Think of the destruction of Jerusalem, and the captivity which followed with its sword, pestilence, wild animals, and famine. God’s wrath has been and is continually being revealed. But the full “revelation of the righteous judgment of God” is yet to be revealed. Ultimately it means HELL! Cf. Rev. 20:11-15. John the Baptist is his preaching said,

36 He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him (John 3:36).

As terrible as the final judgment will be, it will be a “righteous judgment of God.” Why? Verse 6 gives us the answer.

2:6 To “render” is *to pay off what is due* (Thayer, p. 61). Here is Robert G. Lee’s *Payday Someday*. And it will be “to every man according to his deeds.” Even the good works of men are as “filthy rags.” Cf. Isa. 64:6:

6 But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.

To try to present our good works to God instead of trusting in the work of Christ is an abomination to God. And people will realize that in that day when it will be too late to change.

Verses 7 through 11 make it clear that there are only two classes of people in the world, not Jews and Gentiles, that is, not a division along racial lines as the Jews would like for us to think, but a division of those who obey the truth of God, and those who do not.

2:7 Here in verses 7 and 8 we have a *μὲν* and *δὲ* contrast, which translated into English means *on the one hand, but on the other*. So we would read, “To them on the one hand,” and then follow in verse 8, “But unto them *on the other hand*.” Paul was explaining the two and only two possibilities, although there are certainly differing degrees within both categories. Paul was not teaching that we are saved by what we do, but he was indicating that what we *do* is evidence of what we *are*.

As we come to verses 7-10 an important point needs to be made. *We know that the Apostle Paul was not teaching salvation by works. But he was indicating here that the way a person lives is the evidence that he is saved, or that he is not saved.* This is a truth that is often, we could even say, most frequently, overlooked when we speak of salvation. As Paul will go on in this chapter to show that a person can know a great deal of truth, like the Jews did, without really being saved. We often meet people who claim to be saved, but their lives are a denial of their claim. They may understand the Gospel, and be able to tell us what it is, but they still live like people who know nothing of the Gospel. I have known church officials who were unfaithful to their wives, who would swear when they got made, who were dishonest in business, who would not hesitate to tell a lie if it could be for their advantage. There are many who profess to be Christians who never read the Bible, never attend church, and I could go on and on. But somewhere in the past they have made a profession of faith, they have gone forward in some evangelistic meeting, or they have been baptized and belong to a church, and so they say very confidently that they are Christians. Paul is going to be mentioning Jews in this chapter who thought that they were the people of God because they were Jews, or because they had the law and tried to live by it, or because they were circumcised. But they gave no evidence in their lives that they really knew the Lord in salvation. Paul knew all about them because he used to be one of them!

We used to have a Baptist evangelist here in the State of Oregon who preached that if you did not know *when* you were saved, you could not be sure that you were saved. That is not what the Bible teaches. What Paul taught, and what John taught, and what James taught, and what Peter taught, *and what our Lord taught*, was that

if you are saved, your life will show it. Concerning swearing James taught in James 3:10, "Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing." And then he immediately added, "My brethren, these things ought not so to be" (Jas. 3:10). Earlier in that same epistle he raised the question, "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him?" (Jas. 2:14). And then he went on to explain, "Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone" (Jas. 2:17). And then to make clear what he meant he told those who were objecting to such teaching, "Show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works" (Jas. 2:18b). He even added: "Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble" (Jas. 2:19). But we don't believe that devils, or demons, are saved, or ever will be saved. But they believe that there is one God. At that point their theology is right. People think that because they believe the Bible, or believe in the Deity of Christ, and even believe that He died for sinners, that they are saved. But you can believe all of that with your head without really knowing the Lord in your heart..

Salvation includes repentance of sin before God, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, renouncing all confidence in ourselves or in our works. I have been listening to some tapes by John MacArthur on Luke 9, especially this verse:

23 And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me (Luke 9:23).

MacArthur believes that when the Lord said this he was preaching the Gospel, and I agree with him. To be saved means to be changed. As Paul said in 2 Cor. 5:17:

17 Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

We have weakened the Gospel by not telling people what it really means to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and the changes that the Lord makes in our lives. It is ridiculous for believers to be arguing about whether a person can accept Christ as Savior, without accepting Him as Lord. You can't receive the Lord as your Savior without having Him as your Lord.

So the judgment of God is not going to be based merely upon what we say we believe, but upon what our lives show that we are. Verse 7 is a believer; verses 8 and 9 are about an unbeliever; verse 10 is a believer again.

Verse 7 has to do with those who are righteous before God. "Patient continuance" is the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints. They live with eternity in view, ending finally when we are with the Lord in the fulness of "eternal life."

2:8 Here, "on the other hand," we have an entirely different group. The "contentious" are those murmur against the Word of God, those who quarrel with God, those who show "their natural enmity against God by disapproving of His government or authority" (Haldane, p. 85). They "obey unrighteousness." What will they get? Their reward begins with "indignation and wrath" here in verse 8, two words for anger, the first being outbursts of anger; the second, continuing wrath. But there is more in verse 9.

2:9 Continuing from verse 8 and the result of "indignation and wrath, there will be "tribulation," or affliction; and "anguish." The first speaks of man's spirit and how he will be in great anguish; the second speaks of his physical distress. Trench (p. 204) says that it speaks of a man in a cell who can "neither stand, walk, nor lie in it at full length." And Paul says that these apply equally to Jews and Gentiles who do not know the Lord.

2:10 Here Paul reverted back to those he was describing in verse 7, the righteous, those who really know the Lord. Note we have here again, as in verse 7, "glory" – the ultimate condition of the Lord's people. Instead of tribulation and anguish, they are honored by God, and are at peace. These are those who do that which is "good" in God's sight. And note again that Paul emphasized that this will be true of both Jews and

Gentiles, not because of their race, but because of their faith. Cf. 1:16; 2:9.

2:11 This explains the last words of verse 10: "To the Jew first, and also to the Gentile." Whether a person experiences eternal blessing or eternal judgment does not depend upon their race, but upon their faith. The Jew may be mentioned first in each instance because he is the one who has had the greatest light. And so both with respect of blessing or judgment he is mentioned first.

"No respect of persons with God" lit. means that *God does not accept the face of anyone*, according to Hodge, p. 53. There is none of this in God, but there is hardly anything else in man. It was very apparent in Paul's day also. The Jews hated the Gentiles, and the Gentiles hated the Jews. This truth was taught in the OT, so no devout Jew would deny it. Cf. Deut. 10:7; 1 Sam. 16:7; 2 Chron. 19:7; Job 34:19. Isa 64:6.

So this is one major difference between God and men. Our tendency to respect persons is an evidence of our depravity.

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2:12 This verse gives us a very important statement regarding the heathen, or the Gentiles, who do not have the Law. They will perish! And this is explained even more in verse 14. Even though they do not have the Word of God, they will perish because they are sinners. The latter part of this verse has to do with the Jews. They have the Law, and they will be judged by the Law, which means that they, too, apart from God's intervention by His grace, will die, because no one is able to keep the Law perfectly. So instead of being saved by the Law, they will be judged more severely because they have the Law. Cf. Rom. 3:19-20.

Haldane pointed out from this verse that some expositors agree that all Gentiles are guilty before God, but that they will not be condemned. "But the language of the Apostle precludes the possibility of such a supposition. It is not said that those who have sinned without law, but that they shall '*perish without law*.' The language, then, does not merely assert their guilt, but clearly asserts their condemnation" (p. 88).

Note that the translators of the KJV felt that verses 13-15 were parenthetical and explanatory of the statement in verse 12, and that the thought of verse 12 is completed in verse 16. So let us go on to see how Paul explained both the guilt and condemnation of the Gentiles as well as of the Jews.

2:13 The Jews are the ones who heard the Law. This implies that they knew it, understood it, and accepted it. But the Law required more than all of that. It required obedience. Bishop Moule said, "Law is never for a moment satisfied with applause, with approbation; it demands always and inexorably obedience" (p. 64). The big issue is how can men be "just before God." God is the Judge. He is the One Who must approve or reject men. The Jews were not saved because they had the Law; the Law required perfect obedience. Cf. Gal. 3:10, 21; Jas. 2:10; and what we have just seen in Rom. 3:19-20. There are no second chances.

But at this point Paul moved back to the Gentiles in verse 14.

2:14 We learned in chapter 1 that God has given all men a twofold testimony of His existence. The first is in the consciousness of God in the hearts; the second is that creation itself demands a Creator. Now Paul is going to tell us another interesting truth from revelation. It is this: THE VERY TRUTHS CONTAINED IN THE LAW BY NATURE ARE RECOGNIZED EVEN BY THE GENTILES SO THAT THEY KNOW THAT THERE IS ONLY ONE GOD, THAT IDOLATRY IS WRONG, THAT IT IS WRONG TO TAKE THE LORD'S NAME IN VAIN, THAT IT IS WRONG TO STEAL, TO MURDER, TO LIE, ETC. What does this show? See verse 15.

2:15 This is an amazing fact revealed in Scripture, but not admitted by men, and usually denied even by believers who are not as knowledgeable about the Word of God as they should be. (Read v. 15.)

“Which show” could be translated, *which prove*. What God wrote upon the tables of stone, He has written upon the heart of every man, both Gentiles and Jews. Man by nature understands that there are some things that are right, and other things that are wrong, not in a relative way, but in an absolute way which admits no compromise! And we need to understand this. Men by nature do not understand the grace of God, or the Gospel. These have to be preached, or declared, to them. But God has written upon human hearts enough to for them to understand what is right and what is wrong before God.

Now there are three expressions in this verse that we need to understand:

- 1) “Their hearts” – This is the inner man. This is where this knowledge is, where he understands the truth contained in the Law. So man by nature not only knows that there is a God, but he has a basic understanding of what pleases and displeases God; what is right before God, and what is wrong. So the KNOWLEDGE is there, in his heart.
- 2) “Their conscience” – This is where approves of what God has written upon his heart, and consequently he disapproves of everything else.
- 3) “Their thoughts” – This speaks of man’s God-given ability to arrive at proper moral judgments. The words “the mean while accusing or else excusing one another” means that what God has written in our hearts is the basis upon which we not only judge ourselves, but each other. Going back to 2:1, this was what the Jews were doing to the Gentiles, condemning them of sin, but because of the blindness of their own hearts, failing to see that they also were guilty before God and deserving of His final judgment.

All of this means that from the knowledge that God has placed in our hearts, we know that there is a God and we need to seek Him, to know Him, and to learn from Him what He has done and can do to take away the guilt that we feel in our hearts. We know that in addition to all that God did for us at creation, His Spirit has come to convict of sin, righteousness, and judgment. See John 16:7-11.

So now we can see why God’s judgment of sinners is a “righteous judgment” (Rom. 2:5). And we can see why all men are “without excuse” (Rom. 1:20; 2:1).

2:16 And so we should not be surprised to learn that God has declared that He has already set a judgment day, but He has not told us when that will be. *But it is already on the divine calendar!* Cf. Acts 17:31. Jesus Christ will be the Judge. As the Judge He is the only One Who will be excluded from judgment. He is without sin! “According to my Gospel,” which means that a part of the Gospel message is the prediction of judgment. This is what we are saved from—from the penalty of our sins. Christ bore our sins on the Cross. Our penalty has been paid in full. And there is no other way of salvation. Paul called it “my Gospel” not because it was different from what John preached, or what Peter preached. There is only one Gospel. Paul called it “my Gospel” because he had made it his own by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and because this was the message which he always preached.

These are amazing truths, aren’t they, truths which we would never have known if God had not revealed them in His Word. But they are the truth! And we need to keep them in mind for ourselves, for all other people, and especially when we are able to speak to sinners about Christ and the Gospel.

November 24, 2003

William R. Newell has pointed out in his commentary on Romans that there are SEVEN GREAT PRINCIPLES OF GOD’S JUDGMENT revealed to us in this second chapter of Romans:

- 1) It will be “according to truth” (v. 2).
- 2) It will be according to accumulated guilt (v. 5). And I would add that it will be a “righteous judgment.”

- 3) It will be according to our “deeds,” or works (v. 6).
- 4) It will be without “respect of persons” (v. 11).
- 5) It will be according to our performance, not knowledge (v.13).
- 6) It will include “the secrets of men” (v. 16).
- 7) It will be according to reality, not religious profession (vv. 17-29).

This last point is what we come to now.

2. The particular case of the Jew (Rom. 2:17-29).

What Paul has already written about God’s judgment upon sin, applies equally to Jews as well as to Gentiles, but because of the place the Jews have had in the plans and purposes of God, their case demands greater attention than Paul has given to them up to this point.

2:17 Do you know what a protasis is? And what about an apodosis? These are words which we use in grammar to distinguish between. A protasis is the subordinate clause in a conditional sentence which is usually introduced with the word, “if.” An apodosis is the principal clause in a sentence, and it is usually introduced with the word, “then.” So when we say, “If you think it is going to rain today, then you had better take your umbrella with you.” The, “if you think it is going to rain today,” is the protasis; “then you had better take an umbrella with you,” is that apodosis.

Well, we have a protasis in verse 17 and an apodosis in verse 21 in these verses we have come to beginning with verse 17. Some of the Greek authorities say that verse 17 should somewhere have the word “if” in it. The NASB does. So does the NIV. And the ESV does also. When you get down to verse 21, you find in a “then” in the ESV, a “therefore” which is just like a “then” in the NASB, and a “then” also in the NIV. It is not quite as clear in the NKJV, but it begins in verse 17, “Indeed you are called a Jew,” and then in verse 21 there is a “therefore.” The old KJV has a “therefore” in verse 21, but the protasis is not as clear here in verse 17 as it should be. But nevertheless it is there.

Some Greek scholars think that verse 17 should begin, “But if,” as it does in some MSS. Others have “behold.” It is very clear in all translations that if the Jew makes all of the claims for himself that he obviously did, and which are mentioned in verses 17 through 20, then he ought to be able to give the right answer to the questions which Paul addressed to him in verses 21, 22, and 23.

So paraphrasing what Paul said here, it would read something like this: “Look, since you are called a Jew ...” Or, “Look, if you call yourself a Jew and the Gentiles call you a Jew also,” because it was true that both Jews and Gentiles used this term for the Jews, setting them apart from all other people who were classed as Gentiles. By this the Jews meant that they were a special group of people, and there is no doubt from Scripture itself, that they were!

The term “Jew” comes from Judah, and goes back to the time when the northern kingdom of Israel was separated from the southern kingdom of Judah. And the very term excluded the Gentiles, making the Jews think that they were superior.

“Restest in the Law” – but obviously they did not rest, or trust, in the Lord. They took special pride in the fact that God had given them the Law, but He had not done a similar thing for the Gentiles. “Makest thy boast of God” – which means that they felt that God had given them special favor and a privileged relationship with Himself which He had not given to any other nation. Note that instead of being humbled by the goodness and grace of God, it made them puffed up with pride.

2:18 The boastful claims continue with “and knowest His will.” So they knew more, they claimed, than the Gentiles did. To a certain extent this claim was true, but we need to remember here that the Apostle Paul said that “knowledge puffeth up” (1 Cor. 8:1). Again they were claiming that this indicated that they were the favored people. “Approvest the things that are more excellent” means that because they had the Law they were able to discern between that which pleased God, and that which was displeasing to Him. Brown in the JFB series said that their approval was in thought, but not necessarily in action. And all of this was because they were “instructed out of the Law” from their earliest Jewish training. Hodge says that the Greek verb for “being instructed” refers to oral instruction pointing to all of the effort and time that was put into their learning.

2:19 Consequently they felt convinced, they believed with all of their hearts, that they were in a position to help everyone else, but unaware of their own many spiritual needs. They felt fully qualified to guide the blind, to give light to those in darkness, to instruct the foolish, and to teach the babes. And so they believed that it was the Gentiles who were blind, in darkness, foolish, and untaught.

It is true that all are spiritually blind, meaning that they can't see where they are going. But, as our Lord said, if you have a blind man leading another blind man, both are going to fall into the ditch. See Matt. 15:14; Luke 6:39. “A light to those who are in darkness.” But, again, quoting our Lord, “If the light which is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness”(Matt. 6:23). Truth in the head, but not in the heart, is not light, but darkness. And yet the Lord has given His Word that we might have light, have the truth, in a world that is characterized by darkness. A blind man in darkness has a twofold problem. Give him sight, and he still has the darkness.

2:20 The boasting continues. “An instructor of the foolish.” The word “foolish” is defined by Thayer as meaning that the Jews considered the Gentiles as almost incapable of understanding the truth, of perceiving and judging the truth if it were given to them. And so the Jews were not inclined to think that there was truth that they needed to know, or that the knowledge of Scripture was more than an academic matter. A person does not really understand the truth until it makes a difference in his or her life.

“A teacher of babes” – They felt that they had to deal with the Gentiles as you would babies, infants, starting at the ground and working up. Not only do all of these terms reflect the pride of the Jews, but also their scorn for the Gentiles. In many things the Jews were right. They believed that they had “the form of knowledge and of the truth in the Law.” “Form” speaks of the absolute and unchanging character of the Word. Calvin said that “the form” could never mean just an outline or a summary, but that it was the complete truth, perhaps, as far as it had then been revealed. The Jews felt that they had a right to claim these titles simply because, as Paul said, “Thou hast ...”

These were tremendous claims made by the Jews. But how much of it was true? Beginning with verse 21 the Apostle Paul asked some questions of the Jews to make them see (which he already did see, but which they did not see) what their own great needs were before God. And so now we are ready for the apodosis. Paul wanted them to see that the Word was not given just for them to hear, but nothing else. His questions bring out the importance of being “doers.” We need to be hearers first, but not stop there. We need to follow up with the doing. Paul was applying Rom. 2:13.

November 25, 2003

2:21 The questions that Paul asked in this, and in the next two verses, are questions which we all need to ask ourselves.

First, regarding teachers. *The teacher is not just to be a channel of information, but he is to be a living example*

of what he teaches. This was the charge that our Lord brought against the scribes and the Pharisees. Listen to what He said to the people and to His disciples about their teaching. These words are found in Matt. 23:1-4:

- 1 Then spake Jesus to the multitude, and to his disciples,
- 2 Saying, The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat:
- 3 All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not.
- 4 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.

God holds us responsible for the truth that we *know*, but according to Rom. 2:6 He is going to judge us also according to our deeds. A grave responsibility rests upon the teacher of the Word. Remember what James said in his epistle which lays such a strong emphasis on *doing* what God has told us to do in His Word. I am reading from the NKJV:

My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment (James 3:1-2).

Paul began by reminding the teacher of the Law that he should be his own first student. I remember that Dr. Mitchell used to say very frequently that the truth we get in our hearts needs to drop down about eighteen inches until it gets into our hearts. How can we expect our teaching to affect the lives of those we teach if it has not affected our own lives? And this applies not just to pastors, but to everyone who teaches the Word, even fathers and mothers who teach their children. We need to be very, very careful that we are teaching the truth of the Word of God, but we need to be equally careful that we are seeking by God's grace to be and do what we are telling others that they need to be and do. One of my teachers used to tell us in seminary that when we point a finger at anyone else, we are pointing three fingers at ourselves. It is just as important, or even more so, for me to hear what I am saying to you today, as it is for you to hear it. I need to be my own best pupil.

Next Paul moved on to the eighth commandment: "Thou shalt not steal." Again referring to our Lord's words in Matthew 23, listen to the charges He brought against them. First in Matt. 23:14:

- 14 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation.

And then also in Matt. 23:25:

- 25 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess.

Paul warned Timothy about "the love of money" and about riches in general when he said,

- 9 But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition.
- 10 For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.
- 11 But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness (1 Tim. 6:9-11).

My Dad, who was a business man, not a pastor, but a Christian, told me before I ever went off to school to prepare for the ministry, that there were three things that could ruin a pastor: laziness, women, and money. His words were very, very true. And evidently Paul knew, from his days as a Pharisee, that the love of money was a problem in the lives of many Pharisees. So Paul was actually placing a twofold indictment against the teachers in his day: stealing and covetousness.

I find it very alarming that in many of our seminaries today the students are taught to tell churches what they expect in the way of a salary and other benefits when they are being considered for the pastorate of a church. Can you imagine the Apostle Paul doing anything like that?

2:22 Paul's next question had to do with adultery. Perhaps you have noticed that the ten commandments of the Mosaic Law are interrelated. Stealing and coveting are related, as we have just seen. So are adultery and coveting related because the first thing the Jews were told not to covet, was their neighbor's house. The second was "thy neighbor's wife," which was adultery.

However, the Lord Jesus, in His Sermon on the Mount, explained it even more in detail. Listen to His words found in Matt. 5:27 and 28:

27 Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery:

28 But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.

It is the look that leads to lust, and the lust that leads to sin. James explained it in his epistle with these words:

13 Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man:

14 But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.

15 Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death (James 1:13-15).

Perhaps you remember also the occasion mentioned in John 8, verses 1 through 11, where the scribes and Pharisees brought a woman to Him who they said had been taken in the very act of adultery and, according to Moses, should be stoned. But the Lord responded by saying, "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her" (John 8:7b). Do you remember what happened? We are told in verse 9:

9 And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst.

What did this mean? It meant that they were all guilty of the very sin of which they were charging the woman.

December 1, 2003

Barnes, in his commentary, made this statement:

There is no doubt that this was a crime very common among the Jews ... The Jewish Talmud accuses some of the most celebrated of their Rabbis, by name, of this vice (Grotius.). Josephus also gives the same account of the nation.

In Matt. 12:39 our Lord called the Jewish leaders "a sinful and adulterous generation." He may have been speaking of them in a spiritual sense, but many commentators feel that our Lord meant it literally because adultery had become so common among the Jews, and even among their leaders.

What credibility would a teacher have who taught that adultery was evil, and yet practiced it himself?

But then the Lord went on to another violation of the ten commandments: idolatry! Paul asked them if they "committed sacrilege," which usually means robbing temples, or stealing things that those who worship in the temples would consider sacred. But probably what Paul had in mind here was doing what those who worship idols do, and that would be letting anything else have the place in their hearts which God alone should have. Take, for example, the way the Lord responded to the Devil when the Lord took Him up into a high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world, promising those kingdoms to Him if He would fall down and worship him, that is, the Devil. But the Lord responded with these words:

Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve (Matt. 4:10).

So to worship anyone but the Lord, or anything but the Lord (money, possessions, positions, and the like), is committing sacrilege. Very, very few people would escape such a condemnation. And certainly the Jews were not exempt. Malachi, in his day, charged the people of God with robbing God of tithes and offerings, and then

using what should have been given to the Lord for their own personal and selfish purposes. Cf. Mal. 3:8-9. This was another point that Paul probably had in mind.

Paul would have made a good prosecuting attorney. But he has one more question to ask, and we find that in verse 23.

2:23 To make their boast in the law, would mean that they felt superior to the Gentiles because God had given them the Law, but He had not given it to the Gentiles. But even though they had it, had they broken it (which they and everyone else surely had), instead of glorifying God had they brought dishonor upon Him?

Again quoting Barnes, he made an excellent point in commenting upon this verse. This is what he had to say: By boasting of the Law, they proclaimed their conviction that it was from God. By breaking it, they denied it. And as actions are a true test of man's real opinions, their breaking the Law did it more dishonor than their boasting of it did it honor. This is always the case. It matters little what a man's speculative opinions may be; his practice may do far more to disgrace religion than his profession does to honor it. It is the life and conduct, and not merely the profession of the lips, that does real honor to the true religion. Alas, with what pertinency and force may this question be put to many who call themselves Christians!

We honor God when we obey Him, and we dishonor Him when we do not obey him. And Paul went on to remind the Jews that this is what was happening.

2:24 Although the Jews boasted because of their relationship to God (Rom. 2:17), and boasted because God had given them the Law, yet because of their sins in disobeying the Law, they had caused the Name of God to be blasphemed by the Gentiles. This is what Nathan the prophet told David about his sins of adultery with Bathsheba and the murder of her husband, Uriah, to conceal his sin. Cf. 2 Sam. 12:13-14:

13 And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the LORD. And Nathan said unto David, The LORD also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die.

The Lord told His people through Isaiah the prophet that He was sending them into captivity because "My Name continually every day is blasphemed" (Isa. 52:5). This is what Paul told Timothy to tell those who were servants:

1 Let as many servants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honour, that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed (1 Tim. 6:1).

What does it mean to blaspheme the Name of the Lord? It is to cause someone else to speak evil of the Lord. Sometimes when a non-Christian has had trouble with a Christian because the Christian has treated them in an ungodly manner, the non-Christian will say, "Well, if that is what it means to be a Christian, I want nothing to do with it." To blaspheme is to despise. Whenever we who are Christians act in a way that a Christian should not act, we bring reproach upon the Lord's Name.

Next Paul brought up circumcision was an advantage that the Jews were prone to bring up as giving them a place above the Gentiles.

2:25 Paul himself, as an unbeliever, took great pride in the fact that he had been "circumcised the eighth day" (Phil. 3:5). But that had not saved him. Circumcision became a major problem in the early church as Gentiles began to be saved. Some said, as we learn in Acts 15:6, that if a man were not circumcised, he could not be saved. The Jews evidently felt that the failure to answer all of his questions in verses 21-23 in the right

way, would not condemn them if they had been circumcised. Paul probably felt this way himself before he was saved. But Paul told them that if they did not keep the Law, they were no better than the heathen Gentiles because it was not having the Law, or being circumcised, was the important part. What was important was obeying the Law. Without obedience to the Word of God, their circumcision would become uncircumcision.

But then in verse 25 Paul went on to speak of the Gentiles.

2:26 On the other hand, if a Gentile sought obey the Law, or as Paul expressed it, “keep the righteousness of the Law,” then the fact that he was uncircumcised would be counted for circumcision.

We need to keep in mind that the Apostle Paul here in verses 25 through 27 is speaking hypothetically, which he often does in getting his point across. No Jew by circumcision could be saved even if he sought to obey the Law. But a Gentile who sought to keep the Law, even though he was uncircumcised, was better off than a circumcised Jew who used his circumcision as a substitute for obeying the Law. Robert Haldane expressed it this way:

The supposition, then, as to the obedience of the Gentile, though in itself impossible, is made in order to prove that, before the judgment seat of God, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision enters at all into consideration for justification or condemnation. If an uncircumcised Gentile keep the Law, his uncircumcision would avail as much as the circumcision of the Jew. The reason for this is, that the judgment of God regards only the observance or the violation of the law, and not extraneous advantages or disadvantages, and as is said above, with God there is no respect of persons. In reality, then, the Jews and Gentiles were on a level as to the impossibility of salvation by the Law; in confirmation of which truth, the inquiry here introduced is for the conviction of the Jew on this important point. But what is true upon a supposition never realized, is actually true with respect to all who believe in Jesus. In Him they have this righteousness which the law demands, and without circumcision have salvation (p. 102).

I call your attention again to the place Paul is taking us in Rom. 3:20:

20 Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.

So the argument of Paul is this: Suppose that the Law could save, who is better off, the Jew who feels that his circumcision is sufficient without obedience to the Law, or the Gentile who, although he is uncircumcised is seeking to keep the Law. The answer is: the Gentile. But in actuality neither can be saved by keeping the Law, and so the Jew is not moved one step closer to God by his circumcision. Remember we are in the section of Romans where Paul is seeking to show the Jews their condemnation before God.

But Paul makes one more point regarding all of this in verse 27.

2:27 Therefore it follows that since circumcision does not enter at all into the consideration of salvation, if a Gentile seeks to keep the Law, or actually keeps it (purely a supposition), and the Jew does not keep the Law, then isn't the Gentile in a position where he can act as a judge over the Jew? Again quoting Haldane: The reason of this conclusion is, that in the comparison between the one and the other, the case of the circumcised transgressor would appear much worse, because of the superior advantages he enjoyed (*Ibid.*).

Paul's reason for what he has just said in verses 25 through 27, is given in verses 28 and 29.

2:28 At this point the Apostle left his suppositions behind, and declared plainly what the truth is. We come again to the term, or title, the “Jew.” Go back to verse 17. To be a Jew, and to be able to be called a

Jew, was the equivalent of saying that a person was a child of God. The Gentiles called the Jews, Jews, and the Jews spoke of themselves as Jews. “Behold, thou art called a Jew” (Rom. 17:1). But just because you are called a Jew, and have Jewish blood running in your veins, and look like a Jew, and behave like a Jew, is that what it takes to make you a child of God? There was a time when the Apostle Paul would have answered that question with a resounding, “Yes!” But would that have been the right answer? No! Paul said here in verse 28 that it was not a matter of outward looks or behavior, but as he went on to say in verse 29, it all has to do with the inward part of man, with his heart. Not even circumcision can make you a Jew, a child of God, one who is truly saved.

2:29 Man by nature is a sinner, and his sin makes him a hypocrite. We have learned in chapters 1 and 2 of this great epistle of Paul to the Romans, that man has a God-given consciousness that there is a God, and that this awareness of God’s existence is intensified by creation. Even reason itself tells us that creation must have a Creator, and that Creator has to be more than a man; He has to be God. More than that, we have learned that God gave the Law to the Jew, and that the purpose of the Law was not that man would and could be saved by keeping it, but that, as we have also seen looking ahead to Rom. 3:20, “by the Law is the knowledge of sin.” So man, trying to make himself acceptable to God, works on the outside. The Jew looked upon himself as being especially favored because of God’s special dealing with him. God gave Him circumcision, and God gave him the Law. These three made him think that these outward gifts were sufficient for salvation. *But man is never changed working from the outside to the inside. The change must be made inside, and then changes will begin to appear outwardly.*

So verse 29 gives us the truth. To be a child of God, there must be an inward change, not by the circumcision of the flesh, but by the circumcision of the heart and the spirit, not by the Law. True salvation is not to seek the approval and praise of men, but the approval of God. The Jews gloried in their name, and they gloried in their circumcision, neither of which was sufficient for the salvation of their souls.

Now Paul was addressing his fellow-Jews. He was not saying that “Jew” and “Christian” are synonymous terms. But what he said here about the Jew, is equally true of the Gentiles. It is the Gospel according to Rom. 1:16 that is “the power of God unto salvation, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek” – not only to the Jew, but also to the Greek, or Gentile, and there is no other way to be saved.

How many Gentiles there are who seek to make themselves acceptable to God by what they do! They do good works. They pay their money to the church. But none of those things can change the heart. Only God can change the heart, and He does it through the Gospel. Only the Gospel brings the praise or the approval of God. The Gospel does not tell us about what man is to do for himself, but what God has already done in Christ to make helpless and hopeless, defiled sinners, into saints. God gives a new heart. The change has to take place inside first, and then the outer changes will come. See 2 Cor. 5:17.

Now as we approach chapter 3, Paul has placed the Jews and the Gentiles on the same level as far as sin is concerned, and as far as salvation is concerned. And so the Jew then asks the question with which chapter 3 begins, “What advantage then hath the Jew?”

January 19, 2004

3. The Jew’s defense (Rom. 3:1-8).

There are three. The first is in verses 1 and 2. The second is in verses 3 and 4. The third is in verses 5 through 8. Bishop Moule explained the situation here very clearly. He wrote:

As the Apostle dictates, there rises before his mind a figure often seen by his eyes, the Rabbinic disputant.

Keen, subtle, unscrupulous, at once eagerly in earnest yet ready to use any argument for victory, how often that adversary had crossed his path, in Syria, in Asia Minor, in Macedonia, in Achaia! He is present now to his consciousness, within the quiet house of Gaius; and his questions come thick and fast, following on this appeal of his, alas, almost impenetrable conscience (p. 78).

And so in raising these objections Paul was answering questions which he had answered many, many times. I think that we can see how defensive unregenerate Jews would have been, and often were. To them it seemed like Paul was ignoring history, that he was a traitor to his people, that it meant nothing to him that God had chosen and called Abraham, that the Law had been given to Moses, and that the prophets were Jewish. And all of this was in response to what Paul had just written, and what he undoubtedly had taught many times, that the Jew was under condemnation just like the Jew, and perhaps under greater judgment because the Jew had been given more light.

And so the question which Paul had heard by the Jews in their own defense, was, is there then any advantage that the Jew has over the Gentile?

January 26, 2004

Having seen the objections raised against the doctrine of sin by which Paul had shown that both Jews and Gentiles were all under divine condemnation, we now move on to consider:

C. The Charges confirmed by Scripture (Rom. 3:9-20).

3:9 The Jews were never ready to give up their contention that they had advantages before God which placed them before the Gentiles. By this they meant that it was more likely and easier for God to save a Jew than it is for Him to save a Gentile.

But Paul's denial of that conclusion is very strong. "No, in no wise" is the equivalent of saying, "Absolutely not!" And when he went on to say, "We have before proved," it was like saying, "Go back over what I have just written, and read it again." The words "before proved" would be better translated, *already charged*. He had shown that Jews and Gentiles alike were "under sin." Cf. Gal. 3:22, "But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe."

What does it mean that we are all "under sin"? This is where all of us are by nature, held in bondage, under sin's dominion, and unable to escape. It is both a statement of the total depravity of the human nature, but also the hopelessness of our situation.

So from the evidence in man's experience, Paul has charged everyone with sin, the Jew just like the Gentile. The charges themselves are very convincing. But now the Apostle Paul is prepared to confirm those charges by his references to the Word of God.

Before we get to those verses let me give you four important points that Dr. Lloyd-Jones made four observations about what we have covered so far, especially about the Jews. And they are well worth our consideration:

1) First is "the tragic blindness of the Jews with regard to their own Scriptures" (*The Righteous Judgment of God*, p. 192). Cf. 2 Cor. 3:12-16. Even the Apostle Paul, with all of the knowledge of Scripture which he had

before he was saved, was totally blind to the meaning of Scripture. We see the same thing in Gentiles today, and often with people who attend church on a regular basis. They know many of the facts of Scripture, but they don't see its application to their own lives.

2) Doctrinally, the passage which we are considering at the present time shows the universality of sin. Every person who has ever lived, with our Lord as the one exception, was born under sin. So it makes no difference whether a person is a Jew or a Gentile, his or her problem is sin. All people are sinners by nature. David was referring to this when he said, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and In sin did my mother conceive me" (Psa. 51:5). We will see more about this in the verses which follow.

3) These chapters at the beginning of Romans teach us "the terrible character of sin" (*Op. cit.*, p. 194). And we need to realize that it is only because of the gracious restraining hand of God upon all people that we are not a lot worse than we are.

4) And then finally, Dr. Lloyd-Jones mentioned that it is important for us to understand these opening chapters of Romans in order to understand our need for the Gospel. The Gospel, as Paul told us in Romans 1:16 is "the power of God unto salvation." Reading this we all should be inclined to ask, "Salvation from what?" And the answer is, "Salvation from sin, its power, its degradation, and from its penalty.

And now we come again to:

3:10 "As it is written." I emphasized the meaning of this expression last week. It means not only that the evidence of man's sin has been written down, but also that *it stands written*. The Word of God is not going to change. The charge is written down, and the Lord sees to it from generation to generation that the record remains. What power there is in those words, "It is written"! It points to the Scriptures as the ultimate authority concerning the truth. And so we see that Paul reserved his greatest evidence for God's judgment upon man until the last where he would hope it would bring deep conviction of sin to every reader.

Paul had just stated that the chief advantage that the Jew had over the Gentiles, was that the Word of God had been committed to them. God has never dealt with any nation like He has dealt with the Jews. But how tragic it was that these Jews were blinded not only to the truth of Scripture, but also to the character of God. Remember that just as it is necessary for people, Jews and Gentiles alike, to know that they are sinners before they will show any interest in the Gospel, so it is necessary for all people to understand something of the nature of God before they can understand the awfulness of sin, and how sin in any form is totally abominable to God.

The quotations found in verse 10, 11, and 12 are from Psalms 14 and 53. Let us turn to those passages and read them, noticing how similar they are. Like all repetition in Scripture, the fact that these verses in Romans are found twice in the OT, and once here in the NT, is unquestionably an indication of how very important they are.

(Read Psalm 14, and then Psalm 53.)

There are six statements in all here in Rom. 3:10-12, all taken, as we have seen, from Psalms 14 and 53.

The first is: "There is none righteous, no, not one." No one measures up to what he has to be in order to be accepted by God. That applies both to character and works. Salvation is "not of yourselves" and "not of works." Everyone stands condemned by this statement. And Robertson said that "this sentence is like a motto for the rest, a summary of what follows" (IV, 344). Adam Clarke said,

God Himself is represented as looking down from heaven to see if there were anyone who feared and sought after Him; and yet He, who cannot be deceived, could find none! And therefore we may safely conclude there was none to be found.

This statement can be made for all generations from the beginning of time, and it will be until the end of time. All six of the statement given from Psa. 14 and Psa. are universal in their application.

3:11 The second is: "There is none that understandeth." This included the Jews. When they put the Gentiles down, they were exalting themselves. They thought they understood about their relationship to God, and had no hesitation in saying that it was better than any Gentile. But by nature they were just as confused. To understand means *to able to put things together*. Nobody is able to understand the reason for man's sinful behavior. Human psychology and psychiatry do not have the answer. And when anyone tries to explain the sinful nature of man, he is branded as a fool. And this is exactly what the Bible says. See 1 Cor. 2:14.

The third of these six statements is: "There is none that seeketh after God." In Rom. 8:7 Paul wrote that "the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." When Adam sinned, he did not seek God; he hid from Him. The Bible tells us at the end of the story of Zacchaeus that "the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). No man, woman, young person, or child will ever seek God on his own. Man can go through the most trying circumstances because of disease or war or financial reverses. He may curse God, but he will not seek God. The only time that anyone will seek God is when the Lord is dealing with him by His Spirit. So when God looks down from heaven He has never found a single person who seeks Him. "There is none that seeketh after God." You and I can see evidence of this every day we live.

Apparently no one knows who wrote the words to the hymn that tells about seeking the Lord, but whoever he or she was, he really had a grip on the truth. Most of you know the words:

I sought the Lord, and afterward I knew
He moved my heart to seek Him, seeking me;
It was not I that found, O Savior, true,
No, I was found of Thee.

There are plenty of religious people in the world, plenty of church goers. And there are many people who never go to church who will pray when some problem arises. But Paul was talking about people who seek *God!* He was speaking about people who want to know God, to worship God, to be accepted by God, to glorify God, and to live for Him. Nobody seeks God for Himself. No one seeks God to learn from Him how to be accepted by Him. But there are lots of people who want to tell God all that they are doing for Him. Paul was right when he said, "There is none that seeketh after God."

3:12 The fourth statement from Psalms 14 and 53 is: "They are all gone out of the way." This is what Isa. 53:6 says, isn't it? We have a verse in our Bible Memory book that says the same thing, but in different words. I refer to Prov. 16:25, "There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." And you will find this same verse Prov. 14:12. This explains why there are so many cults and false religions in the world. Man is naturally inclined to choose error instead of the truth. Even the Jews to whom God gave the Law have mostly tried to use it as a way of salvation. Just as it is true that man left to himself will not seek God, so it is also true that if he decides to turn to God, he will go the wrong way every time. This along with all of these other statements is sin. Sin is not only doing what is wrong in God's sight, but it is also a failure to do what is right in God's sight.

The fifth statement is: "They are together become unprofitable." Sandy and Headlam in the ICC, p. 75, say that "unprofitable" means that "they are like milk that has turned sour and bad." This means moral corruption. The trend in the world is always downward. People who substitute anything for the truth of the Gospel always become worse rather than better, and move farther away from God rather than to Him. And notice that they always have plenty of company: "They are together become unprofitable." The person who does not seek God for Himself, and so goes astray, has plenty of company.

Our Lord Jesus Christ said that "wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many

there be which go in thereat" (Matt. 7:13).

The final statement in these three verses (10, 11, and 12) is; "There is none that doeth good, no, not one." Notice how Paul keeps saying that there are no exceptions to what he is saying about who are still in the same condition spiritually in which they were born. To be righteous is to measure up to God's standard of righteousness. To do good is to do what is good in God's sight. In Rom. 8:8 Paul said, "So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God." It is hard for us to understand this but we are told in Isa. 64:6-7:

6 But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.

7 And there is none that calleth upon thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee: for thou hast hid thy face from us, and hast consumed us, because of our iniquities.

This concludes what we can call the first group of indictments against the human race. These are descriptions of man as God sees him.

Now because all of the above is true, the Apostle Paul is going to show us how sin has affected man's mouth, then how it has affected man's ways, and finally how it has affected his relationship with God.

The first, how sin has affected man's mouth, is in verses 13 and 14. There are four statements there for us to consider. The second is verses 15 through 17, where three statements are made. The last stands by itself and is the most tragic of all, how sin has affected man's relationship with God. This is in verse 18.

3:13 Three of four statements are in this verse having to do with man's mouth.

"Their throat is an open sepulchre." The word that is translated "throat" here is actually the Greek word from which we get our English word, larynx. This is where our vocal cords are and so that which gives us our voice. The Bible has a lot to say about our mouths, our tongues, the way we talk. I have never smelled a body that was decaying, but the odor apparently is sickening. When our Lord approached Lazarus' tomb, his sister Mary said, "Lord by this time he stinketh: for he hath been dead four days" (John 11:39). This statement is taken from Psa. 5:9 where David was speaking of his enemies, and he said,

9 For there is no faithfulness in their mouth; their inward part is very wickedness; their throat is an open sepulchre; they flatter with their tongue.

This speaks of foul, offensive language, that which is corrupting and wicked. Shedd said in his commentary, "Little is known of Jewish literature, other than the Old Testament Scriptures; but some portions of Greek and Roman literature stink like a newly opened grave" (p. 69). Such speech is shameful beyond description. The garbage that comes out of some people's mouths, is unbelievable. Paul even had to warn believers not to use corrupting language. Cf. Eph. 4:29

29 Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.

Next Paul said, "With their tongues they have used deceit." All of these terms are indications of man's depravity. This statement is probably also, like the preceding one, from Psa. 5:9, and is the LXX's rendering, "They flatter with their tongue." Flattery is always deceitful, and is used to obtain the speaker's objective. So man because of sin is guilty of language which cannot be trusted.

And then Paul said, "The poison of asps is under their lips." Dr. Lloyd-Jones tells the asp or the adder has poison contained in a little bag at the root of its lips. Its fangs lie in a horizontal position in its mouth, but when it gets ready to strike, it throws back its head, opens its mouth, the fangs drop down, and as the snake strikes its victim the fangs press on that bag of poison which is injected into the victim, and unless the victim receives

immediate attention, it will die.

This can be likened to the enticements that come from the world to attract people to places where they are going to be poisoned. Much of our present day entertainment is poison like that, and many a young person has become the victim, which often ends in death. The drug scene is like that. And it is taking people to hell every day.

The fourth and last statement about the tongue and the mouth is in verse 14.

3:14 “Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness.” “Full of cursing” means that the wicked will take words which are usually used in prayer, and turns them into cursing. This includes the Names of Deity, or Their attributes. Nothing is sacred or out of bounds for unregenerate sinners. “Bitterness” is speech which shows bitter hatred. It is illustrated by the response of wicked men in the judgments of the book of the Revelation when instead of repenting of their sins they curse God for what He is doing.

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February 2, 2004

Verses 19 and 20 give us a twofold conclusion that the Apostle Paul had reached after speaking of both the Jew and the Gentile in their relationship with God:

- 1) First, in verse 19, both Jew and Gentile are “guilty” before God – guilty of sin and deserving of nothing but judgment at the hand of God.
- 2) Second, in verse 20, no man can save himself. If he could, it would have to be in accordance the Law given to Moses. But the Law was not given for that purpose. It was given to convince men that they are sinners in violation of God’s Law.

So then the question has to be faced: How can a man become righteous before God? This ought to take us back to Rom. 1:16 and 17. There Paul declared that he was not ashamed of the Gospel because it is the power of God unto salvation. In the Gospel the righteousness of God is revealed. But what is the righteousness of God? It is the absolute and total moral perfection of God. But that is not all that Paul had in mind. What Paul was concerned about was how guilty sinners can achieve the righteousness that it takes to be acceptable to God.

Man’s immediate answer is, “I will make myself acceptable to God.” And so he starts to work at it in his own way. He will probably start by quitting some of the bad things that he has done. Maybe he has occasionally used the Lord’s Name in profanity. So he decides that he will try to quit that. He doesn’t know anything about church, but he decides that he will try that. He doesn’t know the difference between churches, but he decides on one, perhaps where the most people seem to be going. The offering is taken, and he feels that this is probably another way in which he can please God. Man’s first response to the conviction of sin usually is that *he must do something about it*. The question of the rich young ruler is characteristic of both Jews and Gentiles. You will see it in two NT passages: Mark 10, beginning with verse 17, and also in Luke 18, beginning with verse 18. Luke gives us a similar account in Luke 10, verse 25, but that was asked by a lawyer who was trying to trap Jesus by the answer that He would give.

Man’s response to the conviction of sin always is, “What can I do to get rid of this load of sin?” Years ago I heard Dr. Lewis Johnson say that he believed that eventually the rich ruler was saved because of what we read

in Mark 10:21, "Then Jesus beholding him loved him..."

However, there is a verse that is given two times in the book of Proverbs which we need to know, and to keep in our minds. I am referring to Prov. 14:12 and 16:25. (Quote.) We often hear people saying (and sometimes they are professing Christians who say it, "You can do whatever you want to do," or, "You can become whatever you want to be." Man has been able to accomplish many things which in the past were thought impossible, such as walking on the moon. But there is one thing that man has never been able to do, and he never will! *Man cannot make himself acceptable to God. Man cannot save himself from the eternal judgment of God.* How do we know this? Because the Bible says so!

Cf. Eph. 2:8 and 9; 2 Tim. 1:9; Titus 3:5. Salvation is not a reward for good things that we do, but salvation is God's gift to sinners who could never get it any other way. The person who sins (and this includes every Jew and every Gentile) will die under the judgment of God. Who has sinned? Cf. Rom. 3:23; Ecc. 7:20, "For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not." There are many good people upon the earth according to our standards. We met many of them on our recent trip to Texas. And in Denver those who help you are not allowed to take tips. And they are perfectly do help you without pay. They were really good to us. But nobody is good according to what God requires. God is absolutely righteous, and He requires righteousness from all who would be accepted by him. But we learned from Rom. 3:10, where Paul was quoting from Psalm 14 and Psalm 53, that "there is none righteous, no, not one." And this was God's conclusion when He looked down from heaven to see if there were any that really understood their need of God, *and He did not find a single one!* Besides, if you could live righteously from this day on, what about all of the sins that have been charged against us in the past?

So we come to this conclusion. We need a Savior. We can't save ourselves, and none of our fellow human beings can save us because they are in the same plight that we are. Therefore, there is only One to Whom we can look for our salvation, *and He is God! And this is why the Gospel is so very, very important.* Cf. Rom. 1:16 and 17.

And so I repeat: As we come to Rom. 3:19 and 20, Paul has brought us to the place where we have to admit two things:

- 1) We are all guilty before God.
- 2) There is nothing that we can do to save ourselves.

And this is what makes the rest of Romans 3 so amazing, and so wonderful, and so very, very, true. And what God has done, is not just one way out of many for us to be saved. *It is the only way.* Cf. John 14:6; Acts 4:12. And so now we are ready for Rom. 3:21-31.

(Read Rom. 3:21-31.)

In our outline this is:

III. JUSTIFICATION (Rom. 3:21-5:21).

A. Justification explained (Rom. 3:21-31).

Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones makes a very good point regarding the passage before us that we need to be aware of as we come to deal with the doctrine of justification. It is this: The Apostle here is not teaching righteousness as an attribute of God (although we all should know that it is forever true that God is a righteous God, and that there is no trace of unrighteousness in His character, nor in His works). But the question here is not whether or not God is righteous, but how can man partake of God's righteousness which is the only standard which can

possibly accepted by God. In other words, how can the righteousness of God become mine. How can my sins be removed from the charges which are against me in heaven, and be replaced with the righteousness of God instead? This is the Gospel. This is the only way of salvation. There is no other. This is where hopelessness goes, and by God's help my salvation is secured.

3:21 Everything from Rom. 1:18 to 3:20 is very dark and condemning. But at this point we see where our help comes from, and what God has done to meet us in our helpless and hopeless condition. Nobody will ever see their need of salvation until they are convicted of their sinful, lost, and hopeless condition before God. Paul is now ready to deal with the major, major question, how can guilty sinners be forgiven of their sins, and be declared righteous before a holy God?

VI. DISPENSATION (9:1-11:36).

A. Paul's burden for Israel (9:1-5).

B. Paul's vindication of God (9:6-33).

C. Paul's defense of the Gospel (10:1-21).

1. Paul's burden for Israelites ignorant of the true Gospel (10:1-4).

Romans 10 gives us Paul's defense of the Gospel, and in the first four verses we see his burden for the Jews who were ignorant of the true Gospel.

Verse 1.

It was not just that which would have brought great delight, perhaps the greatest of pleasure, to Paul for Israel to be saved, *but he prayed for it*. It is so easy for us to hope that something will happen, like the salvation of a friend, but we don't always pray for it. And we can be sure that Paul would not have prayed for it if he had not believed that Jews still could be saved. He did not consider the case of the Jews hopeless.

Verse 2

Sincerity is always commendable, but it is not a substitute for the truth. A person can be very sincere and wrong at the same time. Many Jews were very devout. In fact, Paul's statement here would indicate that most of them were zealous. This meant that they were fervent in trying to please God. They were "on fire"! But all of the work they were doing was worthless because it could not produce the result that they were after: acceptance with God. They were working for their salvation, but salvation can never be earned by works. If it could, the death of Christ was the greatest mistake that was ever made. But it was not a mistake. It was 100% necessary. But the Jews did not understand the grace of God.

It is surprising, but the word "grace" is not found in this chapter. It is used four times in one verse in chapter 11, verse 6. But the chapter that has the word "grace" the most in Romans is chapter 5. Cf. vv. 2, 15 (2x), 17, 20, and 21. Grace means undeserved, unmerited. Grace and works are in total contrast with each other. The ignorance of the Jews (and of a lot of Gentiles) was demonstrated by the fact that they sought salvation by what they were doing for God instead of in what God would do for them.

Verse 3

And it was because they were seeking to establish their own righteousness that they had no idea that a righteous standing before God could not be obtained that way. The result of their works was just the same as if they had not been working at all.

Verse 4

Here Paul stated the reason why they could not be saved by observing the Law. In fact, Paul had taught the Romans earlier that the Law was not given as a way of salvation, but to show the Jews their sin. See Rom. 3:19-20.

But what did Paul mean that "Christ is the end of the Law for righteousness to everyone that believeth." What does the word "end" mean?

“The end” is the translation of the Greek word, τέλος. It means that the coming of Christ and His work on the Cross brought an end to the Law. Paul expressed this truth in Galatians 3, beginning with verse 19 and reading down to the end of the chapter, but especially through verse 26. The Law was never given to save, but as a means of restraining the people of Israel until the Lord Jesus Christ should come. The Gentiles were never put under the Law. If they had, they would have had a priesthood, a temple, and all of the ceremonies and laws that went with it, not just the ten commandments. But with the coming of Christ, He offered a perfect sacrifice for the sins of Jews and Gentiles, and when we trust in Christ we are placed in Christ, and He becomes our life.

Beginning with verse 5 and going down through verse 13 Paul states *what the Gospel is* (although he does not use the word “Gospel” in this chapter until he gets down to verses 15 and 16. But he had mentioned it before, starting with the first verse of the Gospel (1:1), and following that up in verse 9, 15, 16, and then in 2:16. See also 11:28. See also 15:16, 19, 20, and 29. Paul mentioned the Gospel for the last time in Romans 16:29.

But in addition to these verses where the word “gospel” is used, the message of the Gospel is found throughout this epistle, in passages like Rom. 3:21-31 and Rom. 5:1-11. When Paul mentions “the righteousness of God,” he is talking about the Gospel, as Rom. 1:16 clearly indicates. And throughout this epistle he makes it clear that the Gospel is for both Jews and Gentiles, and that there is no other way for anyone to enjoy the favor of the Lord.

2. The true Gospel – for Jews and Gentiles (10:5-13).

Verse 5

At this point Paul quoted Moses in Lev. 18:5:

Ye shall therefore keep my statutes, and my judgments: which if a man do, he shall live in them: I am the LORD.

After saying in verse 4 that righteousness is *by believing*, or *faith*, Paul went on in this verse to say that there is a righteousness which is “of the Law,” but it comes by *doing*. And a person not only has to do all of it, but he has to keep doing it. Most people have already violated the Law before they even hear about it (e.g., even children of Jewish parents). Paul said in writing to the Philippian church that before he knew the Lord, “touching the righteousness which is in the law,” he was “blameless.” But this was not true righteousness. It was self-righteousness. It was an external righteousness, but not the righteousness which is of the heart. Nor is it possible that anyone except our Lord ever kept all of the commandments

I think you all will remember the story in Matthew 19:16-22 in which a rich man came to him asking how he could “have eternal life.” Let me read that story for you.

16 And, behold, one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life ?

17 And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.

18 He saith unto him, Which? Jesus said, Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness,

19 Honour thy father and thy mother: and, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

20 The young man saith unto him, All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet?

21 Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou

shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me.

22 But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions.

He undoubtedly was stretching the truth in saying that he had kept all of the commandments from his youth on up to the present, especially if the commandments were enforced like the Lord said they were. If the Lord had asked him for money, this rich man would probably have paid for it. But when the Lord told him to sell all that he had, and to follow the Lord, he went away very unhappy. To follow the Lord would have meant to trust the Lord completely, not his money, but that was too much for him. There is a righteousness that is the result of our doing, but that is man's righteousness, not God's. God's righteousness comes only through Christ. Cf. 2 Cor. 5:21.

The righteousness of the law is a righteousness that is the result of man's doing. But Paul contrasts this with the righteousness of God which is what God imputes to us, puts to our account, not the result of what we do, but by faith in what God does. It is not a reward, but a gift. We don't work for it, but we receive it by faith.

In verse 6 Paul refers to Deuteronomy 30, verse 11 and following.

Verses 6 and 7

So Paul was saying here that Moses in Deuteronomy 30 was talking about the Gospel. If God's righteousness is different from Law-righteousness, then it must be with God and somebody needs to go after it to tell us what it is. Otherwise it is hidden and we will never find out what it is. Paul adds words of explanation to the passage in Deuteronomy to help us understand how we find out what the Gospel message is. If Christ is the end of the Law, then someone needs to bring Christ down to us. Or if it is in deep, then we must bring up from the dead. But Paul said here that they were not to ask the question, "Who shall ascend into heaven?," or, "Who shall descend into the deep?" Why not? Because Christ has come down. And He has been raised from the dead. And God has given the truth in His Word, and He brings that to us to show us that God's righteousness is to be found in the coming of Christ, His death on the Cross, and His resurrection from the dead.

Verse 8

What does it say? Even the language of Deuteronomy 30:11-14, to which Paul was referring here in verses 8 through 10, portrays for us the work of Christ in which the righteousness of God is to be found. This is what Moses wrote in Deuteronomy 30:

11 For this commandment which I command thee this day, it is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off.

12 It is not in heaven, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it?

13 Neither is it beyond the sea, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it?

14 But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it (Deut. 30:11-14).

In the case of the Romans, the Gospel was to be found, discovered, revealed, in the preaching of the Apostle Paul. And he was doing it here in this epistle which he was sending to them.

What was the message? It is the Gospel, which Paul called here, "the word of faith, which we preach." And it is contained in the next two, very familiar verses.

Verses 9 and 10

The ministry of the Apostle Paul was very unique. There is no evidence that any of the apostles sought him out before he was saved to give him the Gospel. There is no evidence that prayer was being offered by the people of God for the salvation of Saul of Tarsus. But unknown to any of those early Christians was the fact which the Lord Himself announced to Ananias before he sent him to find Saul, that Saul was, as the Lord said, “a chosen vessel unto me, to bear My Name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel” (Acts 9:15).

And now look to see where Saul of Tarsus got his training. See Gal. 1:11-19.

Now let us look at the Gospel in verses 9 and 10, based upon Moses words in Deut. 30:14. Salvation involves both the mouth and the heart. Confessing with the mouth the Lord Jesus means saying about Him what God has declared about Him, and acknowledging Jesus as Lord. If He is to be our Savior, He is also our Lord. And that is enough to solve the controversy about Lordship salvation. If we believe that God has raised the Lord Jesus from the dead, it assumes faith also in His death and the reason for it. Man believes in his heart for salvation, and his mouth forever afterwards gives confession of Christ.

The Gospel was very apparent even before the days of Moses. Even Abraham believed in the Lord, and it was accounted to Him for righteousness. From Abel's sacrifice on through all of the sacrifices that were offered under the Law, the picture was of an innocent sacrifice being offered for the forgiveness of sins. Every one of those typified the coming death of Christ, and the Passover most of all. So the way of salvation was not something that even the Jews had to go after, but by faith they were to *believe* for salvation. The reference to Deuteronomy 30 continues in verses 9 and 10 of our chapter in Romans.

Robert Haldane, in his commentary on Romans, which is considered by many to be the best ever written, had this to say about these important verses:

Moses gave the Israelites a law which was to abide with them for their constant instruction. They were not obliged to send a messenger to heaven to learn how they were to serve God, nor to search out wisdom by their own understanding. Nor had they to send over the sea to distant countries, like the heathens, for instruction. God by Moses taught them everything with respect to His worship and service in the fullest, clearest and most practical manner. *This was a shadow of the clearness of the revelation of the righteousness received by faith, which we are not left to search for by means through which it never can be obtained. Salvation is brought nigh to us, being proclaimed in the Gospel by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The word is in our mouth. We receive the righteousness He has brought, not by any efforts of our own in seeking salvation, and laboring to keep the law of God, by the belief of the word which was published at Jerusalem, announcing salvation to the guiltiest of mankind* (p. 505, italics mine).

No people, either Jew or Gentile, ever asked for either the Law or the Gospel. Both were brought down from God by God. Both were gifts from God. “The Law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ” (John 1:17). Moses was the messenger of the former; the Lord Jesus the embodiment of the latter.

The mouth and the heart are both involved in salvation. Either one of the two statements in verse 9, and repeated in verse 10, is salvation if genuine because it will always be accompanied by the other. A person who confesses Christ by his mouth, does so because he believes in his heart.

To confess the Lord Jesus is to confess Jesus as Lord. And it is to say the same thing that the Bible says about Jesus Christ. Paul said in 1 Cor. 12:3,

3 Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed:

and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost (1 Cor. 12:3).

There, of course, have always been those who confess Christ as their Savior who are not telling the truth, even though they may think that they are. Perhaps they have gone forward in a meeting, and think that that makes them a Christian. But no one can truly confess Jesus as Lord except by the Holy Spirit. And the confession is not just once, but never to be repeated. It is a lifelong confession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Confession is not the cause of salvation, but the evidence.

Notice the order given to the mouth and the heart is reversed, probably to show how inseparable they are.

Verse 11

This verse is a quotation from the latter part of Isa. 28:16. It is translated there that the one who believes will not “make haste,” or as Vine translates it, “shall not have to move,” that is, to go on to anyone else because our Lord, and He alone, is the answer to our need for righteousness. The NASB translates that part of the verse, “will not be disappointed,” and in the margin has, “will not be put to shame.” So this the true and only way to be saved. And that this applies to both Jews and Gentiles, is brought out by verse 12.

Verse 12

The one Gospel is all that either a Jew or a Gentile needs to find perfect righteousness with God. Salvation is ours with only a call. This, of course, means to call in faith. But it certainly implies that the one who is saved will continue to call on the Lord, recognizing that He is a living God, and looking to Him for the supply of every need spiritually, physically, and materially. One writer has expressed it this way:

By calling on the name of the Lord, all the parts of religious worship which we render to God are intended. It denotes a full and entire communion with God. He who calls on the name of the Lord, profoundly humbles himself before God, recognizes His power, adores His majesty, believes His promises, confides in His goodness, hopes in His mercy, honors Him as his God, and loves Him as his Savior. It supposes that this invocation [or calling] is inseparable from all other parts of religion. To call on the name of the Lord, is to place ourselves under His protection, and to recourse to Him for His aid. . . In thus calling upon the Lord, a believer, like Enoch, walks with God (Haldane, p. 511)

Verse 13

This is cited from Joel 2:32. Sandy and Headlam estimate that the Apostle Paul quotes from the OT in all of his epistles almost ninety times. And for Paul, it was always in support of his teaching. Haldane makes a good point when he said that “the interpretation of the Apostle is as infallible as the prophecy itself” (p. 511). And in this way Paul again indicates that salvation in OT times was the same as in the NT. They may not have had as much light as we do now because we can look back upon the finished work of Christ with all of the explanation we have, particularly in the epistles of the NT. But nevertheless, salvation has always been the same – although salvation in the OT was to believe in a Redeemer that was to come; today we look back to that same Redeemer who has come.

At this point the Apostle Paul goes on to emphasize how important therefore is the preaching of the Word.

Now we come to the third section in this chapter:

3. The priority upon preaching the Gospel (10:14-17).

Verse 14

At this point Paul raises a very practical problem. If both Jews and Gentiles can only be saved by calling upon the name of the Lord, which means to call upon the Lord, Paul asks, "How then shall they call on in whom they have not believed?" Note that Paul put believing before calling. Here Paul was indicating that to call upon the name of the Lord not only means being saved in the first place, but a continual calling upon the Lord after we are saved. It is not simply an act of faith, but the act of faith followed by a life of faith, a life, as we have already indicated, of continually calling upon the Name of the Lord. So this question really is, *how can you live as a Christian, calling upon the Lord, if you are not a Christian*; that is, if you have not previously trusted in Christ. The answer is: no one can!

But the problem is still deeper. And so Paul asks a second question: "Or how shall they believe in Him of Whom they have not heard?" Again the answer is: they can't! A person has to hear of Christ before he can believe in Christ.

This leads to still a third question: "And how shall they hear without a preacher?" Here we come face to face with the ways of God.

There are several different ways that God could have made the Gospel known. He could have spoken from heaven to every person on the face of the earth, like He did to Abraham when Abraham was about to kill Isaac. But that was an exception to the usual way that God speaks. Or the Lord could have spoken through angels. He has done that often through Scripture. He did it with the Apostle John on the Isle of Patmos when he revealed to him the truths found in the book of the Revelation. When Cornelius, the Roman centurion, wanted to know how to be saved, an angel of God appeared to him in a vision, and told him to send for Simon Peter. Why didn't the angel tell Cornelius? He knew the Gospel. It was because that was not the ordinary way in which the Gospel is spread. That is why Paul asked that next question, the fourth one, which we find in verse 15.

Verse 15

The fourth question is: "And how shall they preach, except they be sent?" Godet states it very simply:

No calling without faith; no faith without hearing; no hearing without preaching; no preaching without sending (p. 385).

We might think that God has placed the fortunes of the Gospel entirely in the hands of men if it were not for that last word in the fourth question, the word, "sent." Who does the sending? The basic answer is: GOD DOES!

Let me read to you from the Gospel of Matthew a passage that applies directly to the answer to this fourth question. Listen to these words:

35 And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.

36 But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd.

37 Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few;

38 Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest (Matt. 9:35-38).

One thing to watch for when you are reading your Bible, is to take special note of the things that we are told to pray for. This is one of them. Who is "the Lord of the harvest"? It has to be God. What is the harvest? It is the work of spreading the Gospel message. Who does God send? OT prophets? Yes. The NT apostles? "Missionaries? Yes. Pastors? Yes. Is that all? No. Elders? Yes. Deacons? Yes. Is that all? No! Who else

is sent? We all are. See Acts 1:8. Now I am not saying that everybody ought to go to Bible School or to Seminary, but we all are to go – whether to the other side of the earth, or to the neighbor next door. It is God Who sends us. It may be to a relative, or to a familiar friend, or to someone we have never met before, what we could call “a chance acquaintance,” and yet we know that with God nothing happens by chance. To some God calls to go to another country, to learn another language. To others God calls to the ministry of the Word. Sometimes the Lord impresses us to write to a particular person, or to go to see someone. God is “the Lord of the harvest,” and the work would have died long ago if He had not continued to burden His people to give the Gospel to others. It used to be that it was hard to find a person in the USA who had not heard at least some part of the Gospel. But you have no trouble today finding people who do not have a Bible, have never owned one, and many who have never seen one or heard the Gospel.

But when we are instruments in God’s hand for the spread of the Gospel, that’s when people are grateful for our feet which brought us to them. Read the last part of Rom. 10:15 which is a quotation from Isaiah 52:7. The best reading seems to be, “How beautiful are the feet of them that bring glad tidings of good things!” The word “beautiful” in the Greek means, *how delightful, how welcome*. The word that Isaiah used in Isaiah 52:7 means *to be at home*. On one occasion Jesus’ feet brought Him to the home of Mary and Martha of Bethany. And you will remember that Mary sat at Jesus’ feet to hear His Word. And twice in John’s Gospel we are told that Mary anointed the feet of our Lord with a costly ointment, and wiped His feet with her hair (John 11:2; 12:3).

Somebody was instrumental in our hearing of the Gospel. It might not be someone we knew. But someone, and many times it is more than one someone, who was instrumental in our coming to Christ. And we could never thank the Lord enough for them. But how are our feet being used to take the Gospel to others? To see others come to Christ, and then to nurture them in the Lord, is one of the greatest blessings that the Lord can give us.

Preaching does not just mean speaking from a pulpit to a congregation of people. That is one thing it means. But preaching means proclaiming the Gospel, telling the good news of salvation, and Spurgeon used to say that the best preaching is done when we are talking to just one person who needs the Savior. It is our responsibility to tell others about the saving grace of Christ; it is God Who determines how His Word will affect those who hear.

Let us remember the words of Paul to the believers at Corinth when he spoke about preaching:

- 21 For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.
- 22 For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom:
- 23 But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness;
- 24 But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God (1 Cor. 1:21-24).

So throughout time God has been sending his messengers to preach the Gospel. Enoch “prophesied” (Jude 14), but how many were saved under his preaching. As far as Scripture is concerned, it is silent on whatever success Enoch saw from his preaching. We are not sure that anybody believed his message. But the point is that they had heard!

Noah is another one we need to consult. He is called in Scripture, “a preacher of righteousness” (2 Pet. 2:5). And he preached for one hundred and twenty years. How many were saved under his ministry? The most we could say would be seven – his wife, his three sons and their wives. But we are not sure about any of them. How many heard? Hundreds, probably thousands. God has not fallen down on His job as “the Lord of the

harvest.” People are continually hearing The Gospel. Many people can repeat John 3:16 or some other Gospel verse. But the number of those who have heard and believed, is very, very small. And so Paul said, “But they have not all obeyed the Gospel. And even Isaiah who ministered to the nation of Judah, said, “Lord, who hath believed our report?

Verse 16

And now we come to the fourth and last section of Romans 10 which I have called,

4. Scriptural support for Paul’s teaching (10:18-21).

Verse 18

Paul does a very interesting thing here. He quotes from Psalm 19 which has to do with creation, and says that just as God has used creation to carry the message to all men everywhere, of the existence of God, so in like manner the message of the Word of God has gone everywhere with its message of the Gospel. Many people say that they do not believe there is a God, but the message is going out continually, day and night, by the sun in the daytime and by the moon and stars at night, that there is a God, a mighty God, an infinitely wise God, a good God, and there is not a nation but what that message is heard day after day, week after week, month after month, year after year, and generation after generation. Plus, as we learned from Romans 1, God has placed in every man’s heart the consciousness that there is a God.

Now Paul was using that all of that is an illustration of the spread of the Gospel in his day and through his ministry. Cf. Rom. 15:14-25. (Read and explain.) Paul had actually run out of places to preach, that is, where Christ had not been preached throughout the Empire. He had preached to many who had been saved through his preaching, but he had also preached to many who had not been saved. *But at least they had heard.* Now Paul was using this to show, just from his ministry, that there were multitudes of people, more than he could count, who had heard the Gospel.

Another illustration of this use of Scripture is to be seen in 1 Timothy 5:17 and 18, especially the first verse quoted in verse 18. Who would think that Deut. 25:4, which Paul quoted in verse 18, would have anything to do with the way a church should provide for its pastor? But it does! The second quotation is from the teaching of our Lord, that “the laborer is worthy of his reward.” Cf. Luke 10:7.

See also Luke 20, verses 37 and 38 where we have a quotation from Exodus 3:6. Who would think in reading Exodus 3:6 that the Lord in saying this to Moses was teaching the resurrection of the dead? But that is what He was doing! The Word of God has a width and depth to it which only the Spirit of God can show us. This passage is also evidence that the NT is a commentary on the OT. In understanding the Word of God we do begin with the OT, but we move from the OT into the NT where the OT is made clearer.

But as great and far reaching the ministry of Paul had been, he was only a small part of what God was doing everywhere. We often get discouraged and are inclined to think because of the prominence of evil and ungodliness in the world, that the work of the Gospel has come to a standstill. But it hasn’t! It never has, and it never will. And just as certainly as creation continues to carry its message of a living God, the Creator of heaven and earth and all that is in them, so the same is true of the Gospel. If you and I could see what is actually taking place in the world through the work of the Gospel, we would be dumbfounded! Paul would have us know that while there are many who have not believed the Gospel, there are not many who have not heard the Gospel, or

who have not had any contact with the Gospel whatsoever.

I know of a man who was raised in church, who memorized many verses of Scripture, who was able to pray, or at least say prayers in public meetings. But as he grew older, he fell into deep sin and actually got involved in prostitution. I am sure that when his path crossed with true Christians, many of them would be inclined to say, "This man needs to hear the Gospel." The truth is that he had heard the Gospel. He could tell you what the Gospel was. He had heard it hundreds of times as a child and as a young man. *But he had not believed.* He thought that he had, but his life demonstrated that he had not. So his problem was not ignorance; his problem was that although he knew the Gospel, and had memorized many verses, he had never believed what he had heard. And so we need to remember that it is not enough to know the facts of the Gospel. Saving faith comes not just from the head, but from the heart.

Commenting on this verse and the unusual way in which Paul has used it, Haldane said,

It is not, then, as setting aside the literal application of such passages that the Apostles quote them in their spiritual import, nor in the way of accommodation, as is so often asserted, to the great disparagement both of the Apostles and the Scriptures, but as their ultimate and most extensive signification (p. 516).

This first of the four last verses in this chapter is from King David. The next is from Moses.

Verse 19

He introduced this second quotation with a question: "Did not Israel know?" What is he referring to? Did not Israel know *what*? Did not Israel know that Gentiles would be saved? Of course they did, and Paul cited Deut. 32:21 as proof. (Read the quotation.) Speaking to the Israelites concerning those who were "no people," or "not a people," he had to be speaking of Gentiles! God would use Israel's rejection of Himself as a time He would be provoking the people of Israel to turn back to the Lord. He would not be provoking Israel to turn farther away from Him, but to cause them to turn back to Him.

So, as far back as Moses' day, it was a part of the plan of God that the Gospel would go to the Gentiles, and many of them would be saved. So what was happening in Paul's day, was not an afterthought with God, but it was a part of the eternal plan of salvation which we know now was established before the foundation of the world.

Next Paul went on to Isaiah.

Verse 20

This verse, and verse 21, are quotations from Isaiah 65:1 and 2.

Paul said that Isaiah was very bold, and he was. It is never easy to preach an unpopular doctrine, especially when you are pointed out to the people you are addressing that what they are doing is wicked and will ultimately lead to their being cast off by the Lord. Neither the prophets of the OT, nor the apostles of the NT, were guided in their preaching by that which would be acceptable to the people. Paul told Timothy in 2 Timothy 4 that "the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine," but he was to go on preaching the Word anyway. Prophets and apostles and preachers are not to take their guidance from the people, but from the Lord.

But Paul did not mean that the Gentiles would not seek him, but that they would not seek him of their own accord. Neither did they on their own inquire concerning the Lord. This is true both of Jews and Gentiles.

Paul mentioned in chapter 3, again quoting from the OT, that “there is none that seeketh after God.” So for Gentiles to find the Lord after the Lord had been manifested to them, meant, and the Jews would understand this, that God would turn from Israel to the Gentiles, and that the Gentiles would respond in a way that the Jews had not responded to God. This would have made Isaiah’s ministry even more difficult because it would have made him appear to the Jews as a traitor. How thankful all of us can be for those who are faithful in preaching the Gospel and the truth of God’s Word even when it can lead either to imprisonment, or to death.

Verse 21.

What about Isaiah’s ministry to the Jews? This is what Isaiah expressed in Isaiah 65:2. Please turn with me to Isaiah 65 and follow as I read the first two verses:

1 I am sought of them that asked not for me; I am found of them that sought me not: I said, Behold me, behold me, unto a nation that was not called by my name.

2 I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people, which walketh in a way that was not good, after their own thoughts (Isa. 65:1-2).

And so, although God had repeatedly warned the children of Israel all throughout their history concerning their sin, yet Israel sought to maintain what Godet called a “monopoly” on God. But God never intended that only Jews would be saved. And so, in the light of their rebelliousness and idolatry, it would seem that the Jews would be the ones who would be excluded, and the Gentiles saved.

Godet concluded his notes on this chapter with the following paragraph:

Yet there is a mercy which, where the sin of man abounds, yet more abounds. It (*i.e.*, mercy) has a last word to speak in this history. Its work toward the rebellious seems closed; but is far from being so. And chapter xi proceeds to show us how God, in the overflowing of His grace, reserves to Himself the right to make this severe and painful dispensation issue in the most glorious result.

VI. DISPENSATION (9:1-11:36).

- A. Paul's Burden for Israel (9:1-5).**
- B. Paul's Vindication of God (9:6-33).**
- C. Paul's Defense of the Gospel (10:1-21).**
- D. God's Faithfulness to Israel (11:1-32).**
 - 1. God's Rejection of Israel - Partial: the Remnant (11:1-10).**
 - 2. God's Rejection of Israel - Temporary: the Gentiles (11:11-16).**
 - 3. God's Rejection of Israel - Ended (11:17-32).**
- E. Paul's Doxology (11:33-36).**

We have now come to:

- D. God's Faithfulness to Israel (11:1-32).**
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I have borrowed two words from Godet's outline on Romans 11, "Partial" and "Temporary." I couldn't improve on those two words, and that is the reason I have used them.

11:1

What Paul had so strongly affirmed in chapter 10, that God has in this dispensation turned in grace to the Gentile world, and was saving Gentiles, does this mean that God has "cast away His people," that is, the people of Israel? This would mean that there is no future for the nation Israel, but, even more than that, it would mean *that from that point on no Jew would be saved!* This draws from the Apostle Paul a very strong denial. In the Greek it is, *μη γένοιτο*. Paul used this expression ten times in Romans. See 3:4, 6, 31; 6:2, 15; 7:7, 13; 9:14; 11:1, 11. A more correct translation would be, *let it not be*. The KJ translators have translated it, "God forbid," to show that Paul was not only responding to that which is false, but to that which is impious [the emphasis is on the first syllable], or even blasphemous. He meant that you could never think such a thing about God, and that it is a sin to do so.

And then Paul went on to say that he was an example that God was still saving Jews! The "I" is emphatic. If, in turning to the Gentiles, God was saying that He was through with the nation, then Paul would not have been saved. But he had been saved, and so he was living proof that God was still saving Jews. And, in addition, it meant that God had not forsaken His purposes for the nation Israel. This surely ought to silence the talk of those who say that God is finished dealing with Jews and the nation of Israel. Such talk is the ultimate of anti-Semitism. God was not for the present dealing with the Jews like He had up to the time of Christ, but just as Gentiles were saved in OT times while God was dealing primarily with the Jews, so now that He had turned to the Gentiles, He was not forsaking the Jews.

Even our key verses of the epistle, Romans 1:16 and 17, teach that it is still true that Jews are being saved. To say that the key verses say that we need to go to the Jews before we go to the Gentiles, is another false interpretation of Scripture. Historically it went to the Jew first, as we learn from the OT, but then following the coming of Christ, and as a result of the Jews' rejection of Christ as a nation, the door has been opened for a special time when God is calling Gentiles to Himself. But Paul was "an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin," living proof that [go on to verse 2]

Verses 2-4

“God hath not cast away His people which He foreknew.”

Let me spend some time speaking about that verb, “foreknew,” because it is usually misunderstood by those who do not understand the sovereignty of God in salvation.

Most Christians, true Christians, believe that God is omniscient, that is, that He knows all things. He has known the end of all things from the beginning. He is never surprised when certain people are saved. He knows who is going to be saved, not because He has known ahead of time what they are going to do (that would make man the one who decides who is going to be saved and who is not going to be saved) – no, He knows who is going to be saved because He has chosen every person who ever has been saved or who ever will be saved. The Apostle Peter spoke of the people of God as “elect according to the foreknowledge of God” (1 Pet. 1:2). So foreknowledge with God is not just what He knows that men will do, and that He knows it ahead of time, *but it means that He has predetermined by His own divine election who will be saved!*

And so God not only knows ahead who is going to be saved, but foreknowledge means that He has *determined* who is going to be saved by His sovereign decree. Actually, even for God to foreknow anything, makes it certain, because it is impossible for God to be wrong. But to give us even further confidence in what God is doing in salvation, He has sovereignly chosen and called those whom He has ordained for salvation from the foundation of the world.

Back in Romans 8, verse 29, Paul used the word “foreknew.” And it follows Romans 8:28 where Paul wrote that God works all things together for good, but then he added those for whom it is true, and he stated it two ways:

- 1) “To them that love God.”
- 2) “To them who are the called according to His purpose.”

Those two expressions include every believer. We all love God or we wouldn’t be saved, but we are also “the called” ones.

With regard to salvation, the Bible speaks of two kinds of calls which come from God. There is the general call, and that is where we read, “Whosoever will let him come . . .” But then there is the effectual call. That is when God deals with individuals whom He has chosen, calling them to Himself. When this happens, then we come, as Saul of Tarsus did on the road to Damascus. We can urge people to come to Christ, but they only come when in their hearts they realize that God is calling them.

Paul then cited an illustration from the life of Elijah who thought that God was no longer working with the Jews and that he was the sole survivor of the people of God in Israel. Cf. 1 Kings 19:10, 14, and 18. There were seven thousand in Israel who had not worshiped Baal, but had remained true to God. It is a good reminder to us that God is always doing more than we perceive that He is doing. We look at the professing church today and see so much that we know is not pleasing to the Lord. And because the people who are involved in such activities are usually in large groups, we think that they represent the work of the Lord in our day. But that is never the case. It wasn’t so in Israel, nor is it in the church today. The Lord has many more who are true to Him and true to His Word than we know, or than we believe there are. That ought to be encouraging to us.

In verse 5 the Apostle Paul made the application to the day in which he was living. Notice the words, “at this present time.”

Paul had mentioned the “remnant” in 9:27, the only other time he used the word “remnant” in this epistle. What is “the remnant”?

That word always makes me think of my mother, and the sowing that she did. She always had material left over which she called *a remnants*. That is what “the remnant” of Israel is. They are the survivors, that group within the nation who know God, and love Him, and are true to Him. They are the elect within the nation. Although Paul did not use the word “remnant” in the last two verses of Romans 2, yet he was talking about the remnant in Israel, those who are the true Jews, not just by blood, but by divine election and the new birth. That is why Paul added, “according to the election of grace.”

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Those two expressions include every believer. We all love God or we wouldn’t be saved, but we are also “the called” ones.

With regard to salvation, the Bible speaks of two kinds of calls which come from God. There is the general call, and that is where we read, “Whosoever will let him come . . .” But then there is the effectual call. That is when God deals with individuals whom He has chosen, calling them to Himself. When this happens, then we come, as Saul of Tarsus did on the road to Damascus. We can urge people to come to Christ, but they only come when in their hearts they realize that God is calling them.

Paul then cited an illustration from the life of Elijah who thought that God was no longer working with the Jews and that he was the sole survivor of the people of God in Israel. Cf. 1 Kings 19:10, 14, and 18. There were seven thousand in Israel who had not worshiped Baal, but had remained true to God. It is a good reminder to us that God is always doing more than we perceive that He is doing. We look at the professing church today and see so much that we know is not pleasing to the Lord. And because the people who are involved in such activities are usually in large groups, we think that they represent the work of the Lord in our day. But that is never the case. It wasn’t so in Israel, nor is it in the church today. The Lord has many more who are true to Him and true to His Word than we know, or than we believe there are. That ought to be encouraging to us.

In verse 5 the Apostle Paul made the application to the day in which he was living. Notice the words, “at this present time.”

Paul had mentioned the “remnant” in 9:27, the only other time he used the word “remnant” in this epistle. What is “the remnant”?

That word always makes me think of my mother, and the sowing that she did. She always had material left over which she called *remnants*. That is what “the remnant” of Israel is. They are the survivors, that group within the nation who know God, and love Him, and are true to Him. They are the elect within the nation. Although Paul did not use the word “remnant” in the last two verses of Romans 2, yet he was talking about the remnant in Israel, those who are the true Jews, not just by blood, but by divine election and the new birth. That is why Paul added, “according to the election of grace.”

It has never been the intention of the Lord to save all Jews, anymore than it has been the purpose of God to save all Gentiles. Among both groups, which is to say among all of the people of the world, God has His elect, those whom He has chosen for salvation. But it is an “election of grace.” This means that God was not obligated to save anyone, but according to His grace He has determined to save those whom He has chosen. But when you bring this “election of grace” down to individuals who have been saved, or are being saved today, or will in the future be saved, *no one has been saved by anything meritorious which God has seen in them*. Those whom He has chosen to save are just as worthy of eternal judgment as anyone else, but God, for reasons known only to Himself, has chosen some among the condemned to be saved.

And so let me add another point as far as the grace of God is concerned. Grace means, in addition to the fact that in salvation I am receiving what I do not deserve, yet at the same time we need always to remember that grace means that I will never get what I deserve to get: eternal judgment. We may have trouble accepting the truth of the grace of God, but since God is God, and salvation is of God, we need to remember three things:

1) He would have been perfectly righteous if He had decided to save nobody.

2) He also would have been perfectly righteous if He had decided to save everyone.

But the third point that I am going to make, is the one that the Lord’s people usually have trouble with. It is this:

3) We must also realize that God is perfectly righteous if He determines to save some, but not all.

I sometimes illustrate it this way: If I see a little child on a winter day, out in the cold, and I buy a pair of shoes for that child, I am not to be condemned because I don’t buy a pair of shoes for every little child who is in the same condition. God has thrown the door of salvation open to everyone, and that is why we have in the Gospel verses like John 3:16. Or Revelation 22:17:

17 And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.

But we learned back in Romans 3:11 that “there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God.” And so since God has determined to save some, He chose, He calls, and He draws. In John 6:44 we have our Lord’s own words telling us that “no man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.” I didn’t come to the Lord of my own free will, and neither did you. By nature we willed not to be saved. But God had other plans for us. He chose us in eternity past. He called us in different ways, but always with His Word. But we still would not come. And so he drew us, and then we came!

Now in verse 6 Paul went on to explain the meaning of grace.

Verse 6

Now if God saves us by grace, then it can’t be of works. If it were possible for me to do works sufficient for my salvation, then God is obligated to save me. Salvation then becomes a reward for what I have done. If that is true, then grace is not grace because grace means that salvation is an undeserved gift. Cf. Eph. 2:8-9.

The latter part of verse 6 is not in the best MSS, but it certainly is true that if salvation is of works, then it can’t

be of grace for the very reason I have explained. So salvation cannot be of grace and also of works because to the extent that I do some work to obtain salvation, It can't be by grace; it can't be a gift. If I work for it, then I am rewarded by God for what I have done, and at least a part of the glory is mine.

Verse 7

And so Paul asked, "What then?" This means, in the light of the truth regarding salvation, what has happened? It had to be said that as far as Israel as a whole nation is concerned, they had not obtained what they were seeking. What were they seeking? They were seeking acceptance with God. The tense of the verb, a present, indicates real persistence in seeking acceptance with God, and the verb would indicate also that, as Paul wrote, the search was still going on.

But how were they seeking it? They were seeking it by works. But it never can be obtained in that way. Has the purpose of God failed then? No. Why? Because "the election hath obtained it." The word that Paul used here, "election" (ἐκλογή) instead of "the elect" (ἐκλεκτός) puts the emphasis upon God's work of choosing instead of on the people whom He has chosen. So the glory goes to God, not to those whom He has chosen. And the point is, not that they will at some time in the future get it, but that they have it now! This is God's efficacious grace! Who are "the rest"? They are the remainder of the nation who have not been chosen. What has happened to them? They are "blinded," or *hardened*. Godet says that this is "to deprive an organ of its natural sensibility" (p. 395). The next three verses of the text explain what this actually means (present), or has meant (in the past). And so we are to understand that just as God has chosen some, He has blinded others. And yet every person stands responsible to God for their reaction to the Gospel. Sanday and Headlam say in their commentary (ICC, p. 314),

The idea is . . . that a covering has grown over the heart, making men incapable of receiving any new teaching however good, and making them oblivious of the wrong they were doing.

So the non-elect can work feverishly and tirelessly, thinking that they are doing the right thing, and that they are going to be successful, while all of the time thinking that success lies ahead. The Lord was referring to people like this as He concluded His Sermon on the Mount. Let me read to you what He said:

21 Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.

22 Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?

23 And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity (Matt. 7:21-23).

In our text, notice that our translators have indicated by the parentheses, that the last three words of verse 8 complete the idea that Paul was expressing here in verse 7: that those whom God hath not chosen are "blinded . . . unto this day."

But we can't tell by looking at people whether they are elect or non-elect. And so we give the Gospel to everyone, knowing as our Lord said, that "all that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out" (John 6:37). We know that it is not true that world is full of people who want to be saved, but can't, but the world is full of people who are not even slightly interested in the Gospel of the grace of God. They may be religious, even very religious, but they are not interested in what God, and only God, can do for them, but in what they can do for God.

At this point the Apostle Paul did what we have seen him do before many times: he confirmed from the OT the teaching that he was giving in his NT epistles. And we need to remember that his quotation of OT Scriptures is just as inspired as were the same words when given in the OT. Let us notice what they are.

Verse 8

The quotation in this verse is from Deuteronomy 29:4 and Isaiah 29:10. Deuteronomy 29:4 says, “Yet the LORD hath not given you an heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear, unto this day.” If you turn to Deut. 29 and read from the first verse, you will see that Moses, in delivering this final message to the people of Israel, was telling them in verse 4 that God had not given them “a heart to perceive,” or “eyes to see, and ears to hear, unto this day.” This was because of their repeated rebellions against the Lord. God had performed all kinds of miracles in caring for them, but they looked upon it all just as a matter of course. They had not profited from “the table” that God had repeatedly spread before them in their deliverance from Egypt and in their journey toward Canaan.

This finds a parallel in America today. Most people are completely oblivious to the blessings that God has bestowed upon us as a nation. And so they don’t give God the glory. Instead they take the glory to themselves. But the truth is that people will not see it unless the Lord opens their eyes, hearts, and ears. The school district that is not allowing their students to be thankful for God, is an illustration of how normally intelligent people can be totally ignorant of spiritual realities.

So in quoting from Deuteronomy and from Isaiah’s prophecy, the Apostle Paul was showing that such ignorance has characterized the history of Israel from its beginning.

But it will be helpful for us to read the context of the other passage to which Paul was referring, Isaiah 29:10, so please turn to Isaiah 29 and follow in your Bibles while I read verses 9 through 14. **(Read.)**

You can see that what Paul wrote here, is not a direct quotation, but what we might call a commentary on what Isaiah wrote. You and I do not have the right to say that our commentary on Scripture is to be received on a par with the Scriptures, but Paul was writing under the direction of the Holy Spirit just like Isaiah was. So we can accept Paul’s words in Romans 11:8 as we can Isaiah’s word in Isaiah 29:10.

But since we are studying Romans at the present time, and not Isaiah, let us focus our attention on Romans 11:8.

Paul applies what Isaiah said about the eyes to both the eyes and the heart, although we can see in Isaiah 29:13 that in that verse Isaiah did mention the heart. And we all know that we don’t have to look very far before we see much evidence in the people around us of spiritual blindness and spiritual deafness. We are all born this way – blind to the truth and unable to really hear the message of the Bible. But just as the Lord opened the eyes of the blind when He was here on earth, and opened the ears of the deaf, so this is what He has done for those of us who are saved. God has enabled us to understand and to receive the truth of His Word. Seeing and hearing means understanding and receiving. The blind in our Lord’s day did not give themselves sight, nor did the deaf enable themselves to suddenly hear. They came to the Lord, *and He did for them what they could not do for themselves. He enabled them to hear, and He enabled others to see!*

One of the great tragedies in the professing church today is that this is a basic truth which a lot of preachers do not understand. I had lunch with one of our men yesterday and he told me about a church in the Portland area that had had a godly Pastor whom God had used for the blessing of hundreds, and perhaps thousands of people. But the Lord took him to heaven. He was followed by a man who came to church looking like he was going to some sports event, and he would even dismiss the people at the close of the service without prayer. Evidently the new pastor thinks that he knows more about how the Lord is going to bless than what he can learn from the Bible. And there are a lot of men speaking from the pulpits of our country just like him. They are trying to be

“cool.” They are trying to make people feel that they are regular guys, and their object is to make people “feel good.” Lucille and I have visited a church when we have been on vacation, and the last time we were there (and it probably will be the last time) from the pastor’s appearance in the pulpit I wouldn’t have been a bit surprised to learn that his shirt was his pajama top!

What ought to be the main ingredients of a true NT ministry? This is not a problem to find out if people, and even pastors, will take their guidance from the Word of God? Let me give you the three things to look for in a true NT ministry:

1) The pastor’s main concern is for his own personal holiness of character and of living. Instead of putting on sport shirts and blue jeans, we need to “put on the Lord Jesus Christ” as Paul will tell us when we get to the end of Romans 13.

The second and third essentials of a true NT ministry are given to us in Acts 6. The work in Jerusalem had grown in a most amazing way following the death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ. Three thousand people were saved in one day. This is not the claim of some modern day evangelist, but it is the record given to us by the Holy Spirit. But with the increase of people who needed to be cared for, what was the concern of the apostles? They saw that if they did not get some help, they would be drawn away from what their main work was. And so you will find if we you read the opening verses of Acts 6 that the apostles considered their work to be (and here are the second and third points):

2) Prayer, and

3) The ministry of the Word.

The more we depend upon ourselves and the gadgets that are available today, the less we are going to pray, and the less time we are going to give to the ministry of the Word. I don’t believe that anyone is truly saved apart from the direct application of God’s Word by the Holy Spirit to his, or her, heart. If pastors want their people to be holy, they must be holy. If they want their people to pray, they must pray (and pray continually). And if we want our people to live by the Word of God and to love it, then it had better be true of us that when people come to hear us, that they hear the Word which we love. The essentials of a true NT ministry are holiness of life, prayer, and the Word. Nothing more, nothing less, and nothing else, will bring the blessing of the Lord. God is the One Who has blinded people, and has stopped up their ears, and closed their hearts. And if they are going to see and hear and understand, it has to be in God’s way, not ours.

Let us move on to verses 9 and 10. We can take them together because they are from the same place: Psalm 69, verses 22 and 23. (Read.) The first quotation here in verse 8 is from Moses in Deuteronomy 29:4 combined with Isaiah 29:10; the one we have in verses 9 and 10 is from the Holy Spirit through David in Psalm 69:22, 23. David mentioned “a snare” and “a trap”; Paul added “a stumblingblock, and a recompense unto them.” But we must remember that both men were speaking by the Holy Spirit, and so Paul’s statement here in Romans 11 must be accepted as being equally authoritative with David’s in Psalm 69. Paul’s additions can be considered as a commentary on Psalm 69.

Verse 9

How many of you are familiar with the word *imprecatory*? It is an adjective which can often be used to describe some of David’s Psalms. An imprecatory Psalm is a Psalm in which the psalmist is praying for God’s judgment upon evildoers, especially upon those who should have helped him, but instead who added to his misery. Psalm 69 is, at least in part, an imprecatory Psalm. And it involved more than just the two verses which Paul was quoting here in Romans 11. **Let me read to you verses 20 through 28.**

In addition to being an imprecatory Psalm, we need to recognize that it is also a Messianic Psalm. To be sure it speaks of difficulties that David was having, but David’s troubles were prophetic of the even greater sufferings

of his greatest Son according to the flesh, our Lord Jesus Christ. "Their table" was an expression of the marvelous way God had provided for Israel as a nation. Psalm 23:5a would apply here where David said, "Thou preparest me a table in the presence of mine enemies." Concerning our Lord, you will remember that when He and His disciples were in Samaria, and the disciples had gone into the city to get food, returning they found the Lord talking with the Samaritan woman. They were surprised at this, but when they urged the Lord to eat, He said to them, "I have meat to eat that ye know not of" (John 4:32). So with Israel, with David, and with our Lord, God had always been faithful to them, but in the case of Israel in particular, they had failed to see in God's provision for them physically, evidence of His goodness to them, and proof also of His desire to provide for them spiritually. If we can't see the goodness of the Lord in His provision for us physically, it is certain that we won't see His goodness in providing for us spiritually. The very fact that people can sit down to a meal without bowing their heads and their hearts in thanksgiving to God, is evidence that they don't recognize that the food before them is evidence of God's goodness toward them physically and evidence of His desire to meet their every need.

So what was intended to be a blessing, becomes a curse, not by any failure in God, but because of the sin and the unbelief of man. But here, the emphasis is upon Israel's rejection of their Messiah.

But continuing on with verse 9 (and its quotation of Psalm 69:22). David just used two words, "snare" and "trap," but Paul evidently enlarged upon them to emphasize the extent of God's judgment upon Israel, but also to elaborate on what David's words actually meant.

The story of the deliverance of the children of Israel from Egypt and their journey from Egypt to Canaan, is full of instances in which the Lord was preparing the table, supplying the needs, for the children of Israel. But in their rebellion against the Lord the people of Israel were blinded to the goodness of the Lord, and what should have been a great encouragement to them became "a snare," and "a trap," and "a stumblingblock, and a recompense unto them." What do these four words mean?

- 1) "A snare" – Thayer said that this was a kind of a trap set for birds which caught them without warning. So the blessings that God had poured out on his people constituted a "snare" for them because of their rebellious hearts. What should have been a blessing to them, a constant blessing, trapped them and brought them into deadly peril.
- 2) "A trap" – Two words for a trap (this, and the one before under 1 above) emphasized the accuracy of what David was praying. This kind of trap was evidently used for trapping wild beasts. So it indicated that even the most prominent among the people of God, those who were looked upon as being strong, would be snared by their spiritual blindness and deafness.
- 3) "A stumblingblock" – That which should have drawn them to the Lord, and filled their hearts with gratitude toward Him for His faithful care and protection, became the cause of their destruction. You may remember what the Apostle Paul said to the Corinthians about this in his first letter to them. His words are found in 1 Cor. 1:23-24:

23 But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness;
24 But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.

Cf. also Rom. 9:30-33. The big stumblingstone to the nation Israel, has been Christ.

- 4) "A recompense" – This means that the judgments which God brought upon them were entirely just. They were reaping what they had sowed. God was repaying them for their sinful behavior. Their deafness and their blindness could have been cured by the Lord, but in their rebellion they did not ask Him to help them. They might repent briefly after a time of judgement, but soon after they would return to the old ways.

These words are taken from a prayer of David against the people of Israel. And this would indicate that David

felt that God was justified in His harshest dealings with Israel. The prayer is continued in verse 10.

Verse 10

The rebellion of the children of Israel was so constant and so intense that David prayed that it would even increase. He was thinking in terms of what the nation deserved – so that they would never see! “And bow down their back away.” This is the result of any rebellion against God. The burden of sin upon the rebel is *backbreaking*! No person ever comes out ahead by rebellion. Often when we insist on having our own way, God grants our request. But the result is never what we think it is going to be. It is never good, but always bad and to be regretted. Take the story of the prodigal son in Luke 15. Judas is an example also. The cost of rebellion against God is high, and, in some cases, high for all eternity!

So here we have the cause behind God’s rejection of His people, Israel, as a nation. As we look at Israel today we see a pitiful example of a nation that turned its back upon the Lord at the time of our Lord’s first coming into the world. Today it is a nation seeking its own way, sovereignly preserved, but due for even greater suffering in the days ahead.

But even with God’s judgment presently upon Israel as a nation, it is only partial. And the reason for saying it is partial, is found in verses 4 and 5 of our chapter. It is in the “remnant”! Elijah lived in a dark, dark day in Israel’s history. And he felt that he was the lone survivor of those who really loved the Lord and who walked with Him. *But he was mistaken. God had reserved for Himself seven thousand in Israel who had not turned to Baal worship.* And right at the beginning of this chapter Paul declared that God had not cast away His people permanently, and the proof was that Paul himself, a Jew, had been drawn to Christ, and saved.

But with the beginning of verse 11 we come to the second division of our chapter:

2. God’s Rejection of Israel – Temporary: the Gentiles (Rom. 11:11-16).

So the big question which Paul by the Holy Spirit is answering in chapter 11 has to do with the question: Is there a future for Israel, or have the Jewish people sinned away their place in the plans and purposes of God?

Well, we know that Jews are still being saved, and the Apostle Paul was Exhibit #1. And if we read the book of Acts we see that probably more people were saved on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2 than during the entire ministry of our Lord while He was here on earth. When the Lord spoke to His disciples just before His ascension back to the Father, He told His disciples to begin their ministry in Jerusalem, and on out into all Judea, and on into Samaria. And now we come to what Paul had to say about that here in Romans 11.

Verse 11.

He introduces the question, “Have they stumbled that they should fall?” The question seems to suggest that it still may be possible for individual Jews to be saved, but what about the nation Israel?

I think that it is important to note that in verse 7 the Apostle Paul began speaking specifically of the nation, Israel. And Paul immediately followed that with singular pronouns, meaning that he was speaking of the nation as a whole. And then, even though in verses 8, 9, and 10 he used the plurals pronouns (them, they, their), yet the context seems to indicate that he has the whole nation in mind. “Have they stumbled that they should fall?” Does God have plans for the nation Israel that are yet to be fulfilled? The Apostle Paul believed that He did, and he indicated that any other idea would be a contradiction of the very nature of God. “God forbid.” *Let it not be! It is inconceivable that God would do such a thing.* Let us always remember that the failure of men,

whether Jew or Gentile, never can nullify the purposes of God. If God can forget His promises to Israel, what is to keep Him from forgetting His promises to the Church? Consider that Paul wrote to Timothy in his second epistle to him: “If we believe not, yet He abideth faithful: He cannot deny Himself” (2 Tim. 2:13).

We see in the book of Acts how the door was gradually opened to the Gentiles, beginning with Peter going to the house of Cornelius in Acts 10, but seen very clearly in the ministry of the Apostle Paul who carried the Gospel to all corners of the Roman Empire, and ultimately to Rome itself. The book of Acts begins in Jerusalem, but then to the uttermost parts of the earth as the Gospel has been taken up to the present time.

What, then, is God’s purpose in setting aside Israel as a nation at the present time? It was twofold:

- 1) It was as we have seen in Scripture, to open wide the door of salvation to the Gentiles.
- 2) To provoke Israel to jealousy, and so to bring them back.

But this suggests another problem. If God turns back to Israel, what is going to happen to the Gentiles? Will the Gentiles then fall away? This is a question that ought to be of vital interest to the Church, the body of Christ. There are Jews in the body of Christ, just as there were Gentiles who became proselytes of the Jews. But the Church, the body of Christ, is predominantly Gentile. What is the answer?

Verse 12

The last line of verse 11 intimates that there will be a restoration of the nation Israel. Now, in this verse, the Apostle Paul clearly teaches that it will. The “fall” of the Jews had led to “the riches of the world,” and “the diminishing” of Israel had led to “the riches of the Gentiles,” showing what he meant by referring first to “the world,” is an example of Hebrew writing where two statements are made which mean the same thing, but they are said for emphasis and to make the meaning very clear.

So the point is that if the Gentile world has profited from the fall of Israel, then for God to turn back to Israel to bring that nation to its fulness, we have one of Paul’s favorite expressions with regard to the Gospel, “how much more their fulness”!

The word “diminishing” with reference to Israel implies anything but a total departure from Israel; it indicates a change in emphasis, the fewer Jews will be saved, but more Gentiles. The word “fulness,” which is the Greek word πληρωμα, according to Godet (p. 401), has but one fundamental signification . . . It always denotes: that with which an empty space is fulfilled.” God’s plan from the very beginning (see Gen. 12:3) has not been just the salvation of the Jews *or* the salvation of the Gentiles, but the salvation of both Jews and Gentiles. And so finally both objectives will be brought together. So in the future we can expect to see greater numbers of Jews turning to the Lord.

All of this means that the Gentiles have nothing to fear from the restoration of Israel. In fact, greater blessing for Israel will result also in greater blessing for the Gentiles. Even Moses understood this great truth. Haldane pointed his readers to Deut. 32:43:

43 Rejoice, O ye nations, with his people: for he will avenge the blood of his servants, and will render vengeance to his adversaries, and will be merciful unto his land, and to his people.

Verse 13

Then Paul, writing to a predominantly Gentile church, the church at Rome, and in agreement with his calling, addressed the Gentiles, repeating what he had said to alleviate any fears they might have, magnified, or glorified his “office.” The word translated “office” in the Greek text is διακονίαν. Paul was speaking of the parti-

cular calling that he had from the Lord. Thayer (p. 137) says that this word has reference to the ministry “of those who execute the commands of others.” And we see this in what the Lord told Ananias in Damascus when he had been told to go to Saul of Tarsus. The Lord’s words to Ananias, or part of them, are given in Acts 9:15-16:

15 But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel:

16 For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.

What an amazing situation this is – a Jew, who formerly hated Christians, and felt very much the same way about Gentiles, is miraculously transformed, and sent by God, to reach Gentiles for the purpose of preaching the Gospel to them that they might be saved! And all of this is in complete agreement and fulfillment of the eternal plan of God for Jews and for Gentiles. Cf. Gen. 12:3.

For Paul to say that he *magnified* his office, or calling, shows that he delighted in the ministry for which the Lord had saved him and called him to do. *And he carried it out until he saw the Gospel spread throughout the entire Roman Empire!*

But what was it that he wanted to say to them? What did he want them to understand? Look with me at verse 14.

Verse 14

Far from giving up on the salvation of Jews, or deserting them in favor of the Gentiles, it was Paul’s hope that somehow the Spirit of God would use his ministry to the Gentiles to stir up a feeling of jealousy among the Jews, and that God would use that to make the Jews more receptive to the Gospel message. And often when Paul went to a new city to preach the Gospel, he began by going to the synagogue to preach the Gospel there. In the words, “provoke to emulation,” Paul was using the same verb that he had used back in verse 11.

With reference to the Jews, notice that Paul did not say that he hoped to save *all of them*, but “some of them.” The “some” would be the elect Paul had spoken of in verse 5 of our chapter. He expected to see more Gentiles saved than Jews, but he still expected to see “some” Jews turn to Christ. And he did!

Verse 15

This verse is a repetition of what Paul had written in verse 12. Paul was not dealing here with just how this will be done, or when, but that it will happen. The preaching of the Gospel has always been difficult. It was difficult in OT times. It was difficult when our Lord was here on earth. It was difficult when the Church began, and it is difficult today. But a day of great acceptance of the Gospel is coming, both among Gentiles and among Jews. Part of this may be before the Church, the body of Christ, is raptured, but it will certainly be seen following the Great Tribulation when the Lord returns to earth to reign. It will truly be “life from the dead.” Haldane refers to it as a time of “unexampled blessing both to Jews and Gentiles” (p. 534). This will come with the reign of Christ upon the earth. But even then now all Jews, nor all Gentiles, will be saved. But God will complete the calling of His elect from among the Jews and the Gentiles so that all of His elect from both groups will be saved. God’s purposes in salvation will be fully accomplished. All of this will be a clear indication of the goodness of God, the grace of God, the love of God, the power of God, and the wisdom and knowledge of God which Paul exalts in the last four verses of our chapter.

Speaking of “the reconciling of the world,” Trench says on page 292 of his *Synonyms of the New Testament*, that God has “laid aside His holy anger against our sin, and received us into favor, a reconciliation effected for us once for all by Christ upon His Cross.” And we know that it is not because either the Jews or the Gentiles

deserve such blessing, but it is given to undeserving sinners, which we all are, because of the love and grace of God and of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Verse 16

Here Paul used two illustrations to show in a third way that there is a future for Israel. The first was the salvation of Paul (11:1). The second was the remnant (11:5). And now we come to two illustrations, one from the Law, and the other from nature, which give us a third reason for believing that there is still a future for the nation Israel. Paul was thinking about Israel as he gave these illustrations.

From Jeremiah 2:2 and 3 it seems that “the firstfruit” must be those who were saved in OT times. This is what the verses in Jeremiah tell us:

2 Go and cry in the ears of Jerusalem, saying, Thus saith the LORD; I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown.

3 Israel was holiness unto the LORD, and the firstfruits of his increase: all that devour him shall offend; evil shall come upon them, saith the LORD (Jer. 2:2-3).

And it would seem then that “the lump” is the whole nation of Israel. And “holiness” is probably used here in its primary meaning with reference to Israel, that it was *set apart* from all other nations and *set apart to* and *for* God. So the elect tell us something of great importance about the whole nation.

In the second illustration about the root and the branches, it seems that the root would refer to Abraham, and the branches, like the firstfruit, to the elect within the nation. And in the next section of this chapter beginning with verse 17 and going down through verse 32, Paul began in the seventeenth verse to speak of the branches of Israel, and the wild branches of the Gentiles which were grafted in to the tree. All who are saved, whether Jews or Gentiles, are the seed of Abraham. The elect among the Jews are the natural branches; the elect among the Gentiles are those branches which have been grafted in to the tree and its root.

What is there of practical importance for us today to be found in this chapter thus far?

- 1) We learn what a serious thing it is to turn away from the Lord, and to reject His Word.
 - 2) We have another great lesson in the faithfulness of the Lord. He is working all things out according to His will, and no man, or group of men, not even a nation, can nullify the purposes of God.
 - 3) It is very true that God works all things together for good, as we learned in Romans 8:28.
- And there are undoubtedly other lessons, but these are the major ones.

So verses 11 through 16 definitely show that God’s rejection of Israel is *temporary*. But now we move on to the third main division in Romans 11.

3. God’s Rejection of Israel – Ended (Rom. 11:17-32).

Paul had already touched upon this in verses 11 through 16, but now he deals with it in greater detail. And first we have a solemn warning to the Gentiles.

Verse 17

We need to recognize that in this passage the Apostle Paul was addressing Gentiles as a group as well as Jews as a group. Notice that, in speaking of the Jews, he said, “And if some of the branches be broken off.” He has already shown that some Jews were being saved, e.g., the Apostle Paul, and other Jews who were of the elect. But some in the nation had been “cast away.” That is, they were not going to be saved. But it is also true that

God was not then dealing with the nation of Israel as He had in OT times. The emphasis upon Israel continued into and through the ministry of our Lord on earth. In proof of that we have our Lord's words recorded for us in Matthew 10:5-6:

5 These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not:

6 But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

This continued on into the book of Acts and the ministry of Paul and Barnabas. The real turning point came when Paul and Barnabas were in Antioch of Pisidia which was one of the town in Galatia. The Lord did a mighty work there, but it was there also that there was intense opposition from "the Jews," *i.e.*, the leaders of Israel, the scribes and Pharisees. They sought to undermine the ministry of Paul and Barnabas. We read about it in Acts 13. Listen to the way Luke described it:

44 And the next sabbath day came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God.

45 But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming.

46 Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles.

47 For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth.

48 And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.

49 And the word of the Lord was published throughout all the region.

50 But the Jews stirred up the devout and honourable women, and the chief men of the city, and raised persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them out of their coasts.

51 But they shook off the dust of their feet against them, and came unto Iconium.

52 And the disciples were filled with joy, and with the Holy Ghost (Acts 13:44-52).

This did not mean that Paul never preached to the Jews again, but it was a real turning point in his ministry toward the Gentiles. Remember his words back a few verses in Rom. 11:13.

"Thou" here in verse 17 is a reference to the Gentiles. Hodge says that this is "one of the most worthless of trees, to express the degradation of their state, considered as estranged from God" (p. 368). Normally the shoot of a good tree would be grafted into a wild olive tree, but here it is just the opposite: the bad was grafted into the good! So there was nothing good about the Gentiles which caused the Lord to turn to them. Naturally both Jews and Gentiles were totally unworthy of salvation. God was dealing with them according to His will, His eternal plan. But the Gentiles being grafted into the good olive tree. That is, they were made partakes of the promise made to Abraham to partake of "the root and fatness of the olive tree." This speaks of an abundance, a root and a tree that was sufficient to sustain all of the branches.

Verse 18

It always seems, even in our relationship with God, that whether we are Jews or Gentiles, we are always inclined toward pride. And it is impossible for a person to be proud without belittling others. We as believers in Christ need to be extremely careful about this, and to judge pride in our own lives whenever it shows its ugly head. As I have said, we are all unworthy of salvation because we are all sinners. If God gave any of us, Jews or Gentiles, what we deserve, He would have nothing to do with any of us.

What Paul said here was that the Gentiles were not to boast *against* the Jews. "Boast against" is the verb. Lit. it means *to boast down*. And Paul meant that they were not to do it now, nor tomorrow, nor ever! This is behavior which totally unbecoming to anyone who is experiencing the blessing of the Lord. We are never to

leave any room for pride. Pride in this instance would give the impression that the Gentile branches were sustaining the root, when just the opposite was true.

But the Gentiles did not let go of their pride easily as we see in verse 18.

Verse 19

They would at least say that the Jews were broken off so that the Gentiles could take their place by being grafted in. The Gentiles were not saying that it had always been the plan of God that salvation would include Gentiles. God told Abraham that “in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed” (Gen. 12:3). However, in making this statement (an aorist passive), the Gentiles were indicating that they did not graft themselves in, but they were put there by God. Branches don’t cut themselves off, neither can a branch from one tree graft itself into another tree. So, regardless of how you consider this situation, the Gentiles had no reason to be boastful that God had turned toward them.

One thing that the Gentiles were inclined to forget was that salvation came to them through the Jews, it did not go from the Gentiles to the Jews. God gave His promise to Abraham. It continued to be proclaimed through Jewish prophets. Even our Savior was a Jew. And Paul and Barnabas were Jews. So Gentiles have every reason to be thankful for the Jews, and grieved that many Jews rejected the Gospel. Instead of boasting them down, we need to be praying them up!

But what was the real truth about the branches of Israel being broken off, and the Gentiles grafted in? The answer is given to us in verse 20.

Verse 20

“Well” is translated in the NASB, “Quite right.” That is, there is an element of truth in what the Gentiles were saying, but it was not the complete truth. The full truth was that they were “broken off” because of unbelief. And those of the Gentiles who were standing, were standing by faith.

At this point we need to go back to read the last verses of Romans 9. I will begin reading with verse 22 and read down to the end of the chapter. **(Read Rom. 9:22-33).**

Now what was Israel’s unbelief (as Paul called it here in Rom. 11:20)? Their unbelief was that they sought it by works, not faith, even though it was the works of the Law. Nobody has ever been saved by obeying the Law. We can’t produce a single person who was saved by obeying the Law. The Law condemns; it does not save. It is very clear that during our Lord’s ministry, the Jews (the religious leaders of the Jewish people), believed that salvation was dependent upon who you are (a Jew), and what you do, which had almost completely deteriorated to observing the Sabbath Day.

The Gentiles, on the other hand, were responding in large numbers to Paul’s preaching of salvation by grace through faith. And they stood as a people before God by faith. But this was no reason for them to be “high-minded.” Instead, it should make them fear.

A person who is “highminded,” is a person who has a great opinion of himself. He is arrogant. He is in love with himself. I heard two well-known Bible teachers described by one who knew them both, as “super egos.” If that is true, it certainly should not be.

Geoffrey Wilson, in his excellent but brief commentary on Romans, made this statement to help us see what Paul was saying:

It should be noted that Paul does not represent fear as an emotion which is incompatible with the exercise of faith, for those who truly trust God also have learned wholly to distrust themselves. Self-confidence and confidence in God are polar opposites. On more than one occasion the apostle puts forward the fear of failure as a proper stimulant to Christian endeavor . . .

Here are the verses he mentioned:

- 1) 1 Cor. 2:3 - "And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling."
- 2) Eph. 6:5 - "Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of heart, as unto Christ."
- 3) Phil. 2:12 - Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, workout your own salvation with fear and trembling."
- 4) Heb. 4:1 - "Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it."
- 5) 1 Pet. 1:17 - "And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear."

What kind of fear is this? I think we have an excellent answer to that question in those two verses which I believe Dr. Lockwood found music to fit them, and we have them as insert C in our Trinity Hymnal:

In the sweet fear of Jesus, Let me begin each day,
Fearful lest I should grieve Him, Fearful lest I should stray;
Fearful lest earthly longings ever my heart should share,
Taking the throne of Jesus, Placing an idol there.

In the sweet fear of Jesus, Let me begin each day,
Serving or resting, always Under His gentle sway;
All that I say, directed, All that I plan conceived,
With the remembrance present: Jesus must not be grieved.

If you haven't memorized those two verses, you ought to. And then repeat them often, not only at the beginning of each day, but throughout the day. This is the sense in which we need to fear the Lord. You will remember that Solomon said that this is the starting point of all true wisdom. Christians ought to be characterized as people who fear the Lord.

Verse 21

This is why we need to fear. As Gentiles we need to realize that Jews have more going for them than Gentiles do. And so Gentiles need to realize that there is even more possibility that they will be cut off than there was for the Jews. Paul was not saying here that if a person is saved, he can lose his salvation. He was speaking to Gentiles as a group about Jews as a group. There should be no such thing as antisemitism in the world. The Jews today as a people are far from the Lord, and they may have some characteristics and habits that are offensive to us. But we need to remember that they still are a special people to God, and we are instructed to "pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee" (Psa. 122:6).

The words, "take heed," is another expression for *fear*.

Verse 22

“Behold” is always a word to pay attention to something of great importance. Turning from both Jews and Gentiles, Paul was ready to give a lesson in theology. Here he was directing our attention to God!

He points out that there are two sides to God’s nature. He is good, and He is severe. He is love, but He is also righteous and will not tolerate evil. People who think that they can do whatever they want to do without any consequences, only think that because they are spiritually dead. Just because they don’t believe in God, doesn’t mean that there is no God. Or, just because He doesn’t strike them dead even though they do what they know is wrong repeatedly, doesn’t mean that they won’t face the judgment of God, possibly here, but surely hereafter. Bishop Trench, in his *Synonyms of the New Testament*, says that God by nature is gracious and love and that there is an absence at such times of that which harsh and austere. But at other times, when His will is being violated, He will cut off, be abrupt, condemn, and bring judgment. The Greek word for “severity” is a word which describes “a precipitous cliff” (Thayer, p. 69). Men tempt God, and tempt Him, and tempt Him, and suddenly for them it is like falling off of a steep cliff. Just yesterday morning I read Proverbs 29 like many of you did. The very first verse says, “He, that being often reproveth hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.”

The price of Israel’s rejection of Christ, their Messiah, has been very, very high. And yet our country, knowing Israel’s history, is walking the same path that leads to destruction. There is a steep cliff ahead, and we need to warn people of what is most certainly to come.

God has extended His goodness to us. Every blessing that the Gentile world has enjoyed, has come from God. The Gentile world has been blessed with the preaching of the Gospel. As we learned in Romans 1, although the Bible was not given originally to Gentiles, yet God has placed in our hearts a consciousness of His existence, and a sense of right and wrong. But, in addition, we have the Word of God in our language. The experience of Israel ought to be a lesson to us. Paul wrote to the church at Corinth, speaking of Israel’s past history,

11 Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.

12 Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall (1 Cor. 10:11-12).

But the next verse gives a word of hope for Israel. Now to prepare us for the conclusion of this part of the chapter leading up to Paul’s doxology, let me point out that verses 23 and 24 tell us what God *can do*, verses 25-27 tell us what He *will do*, and verses 28-32 tell us *why*. It is all amazing account of the sovereignty of God in the fulfillment of His work of redemption as it includes both Jews and Gentiles according to His original plan established before the world was.

Verse 23

Verse 22 has to do with the character of God; verse 23 has to do with the power of God. It is one of a number of verses in the Bible which tell us what God is able to do.

The word of hope is this. If the Jews depart from their unbelief, their rebellion against God, and their desire to substitute works for faith, and turn in faith to God, “God is able to graft them in again.” They can’t do it, but God can. And as Paul tells us before this chapter is concluded, God not only is able to do it, but He is going to do it. And He will not only graft them in, but before that He will convict them of their sin, then draw them to His Son, and save them. Zechariah truly prophesied in Zechariah 12:9-10,

9 And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem.

10 And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace

and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn.

And this is what the Apostle Paul went on to explain in verse 24 and following.

Verse 24

Paul loved that expression, “much more,” or as we have it in this verse, “how much more.” Cf. Rom. 5:9, 10, 15, 17, 20; 11:12, and here in 11:24.

So Paul’s argument is, if God could cut off a branch from a wild olive tree, and graft it contrary to nature into a good olive tree, then certainly, even “much more,” can He graft the natural branches back into their own olive tree. It is not what the natural branches can do for themselves, but it is what God does for them as He did before with the branches from the wild olive tree.

Paul was not trying to show that the Jew is naturally worthy of salvation while the Gentile is not. But he was showing that it is more to be expected that the Jews would again be included than it is to think that the Gentiles ever would be included.

So in verses 23 and 24 Paul tells us *what God can do*. In verses 25 through 27 he tells us *what God will do*.

Verse 25

We seem to be running into this word “mystery” quite frequently lately. On Sunday morning we considered together “the mystery of godliness.” On Sunday night, a “mystery” related to the coming of the Lord in 1 Cor. 15:51. And here we have it again. Turn over to 1 Cor. 2, and you will see it again in verse 7. It is a secret that God kept to Himself until His time came to reveal it. The fact that it is a revelation is confirmed in verse 10 of 1 Cor. 2. So it is not something that had previously been revealed, at least in some cases, its details (and in other cases not at all, but it is something, a truth, a purpose that God ordained “before the world began,” but which He did not reveal fully, or not at all, until after the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul did not want them to be ignorant of the mystery that he was about to write about, truth which obviously had to be revealed to Paul by the Holy Spirit. And here is an important point: ignorance of the truth leads to pride! But it is also true, as Geoffrey Wilson wrote in his commentary on Romans: “Spiritual ignorance is dispelled only by divine revelation” (p. 193).

Paul said, “lest ye be wise in your own conceits.” The rendering in the NASB is, “Lest you be wise in your own estimation.” Remember the previous warnings against pride. See verses 18 and 20. Whether we have Jewish blood or Gentile blood in our veins, we all have a problem with pride. And it can even enter into our relationship with God. I heard Robert Shuler say on TV last Sunday that the real meaning of Christmas is that Christ came “to restore human dignity.” He was talking about self-esteem and self-confidence, and the like. The Lord didn’t need to do that because we already have far too much pride. Those words of a humanist like Shuler indicate a total blindness to what man’s present condition is, and what his primary need really is.

What is going on today? As I have tried to bring out in my outline of this chapter, God partially, but only for a time, has *hardened*, but only partially and temporarily “until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.” When God’s purpose with the Gentile nations is completed, then He will turn again to deal with Israel in a way similar to the way He worked with them in OT times and up until the ascension of Christ. That does not mean that Gentiles will not be saved after that, but simply that God has a plan for the Gentile nations just as He does

with Israel, and He has planned how He is going to fulfill His purposes with both.

Verse 26

“And so all Israel shall be saved.” This is taken by many expositors to mean that every Jew is going to be saved at that time, that every Jew who lives at that time will be saved. But “all Israel” has been explained to us before. See Romans 9:6 ff. Salvation is always and only of the elect. And even verse 28 confirms this. It means that there is a time coming when God again will deal with Jews as He has in the past. This will start during the Great Tribulation and carry over into the Millennial reign of Christ on earth. The fact, not the time, is confirmed by the verses Paul quoted at the end of verse 26: Isaiah 59:20-21. This is what these verses say:

20 And the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the LORD.

21 As for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the LORD; My spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the LORD, from henceforth and for ever (Isa. 59:20-21).

Verse 27

Lenski felt that this verse was taken from Isa. 27:9. This harkens back to the Abrahamic covenant, and is continued in the new covenant. Cf. also Jer. 31:31-34, esp. verse 34b where the Lord spoke to Jeremiah about the forgiveness of Israel's sins. He said, “For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.” Lenski made this comment: “The heart of the covenant which God made with Jacob (Israel) is this taking away of sins” (p. 731).

Verse 28

After telling us *what God will do*, from this verse on to verse 32 Paul explains why God does what He will do.

With reference to the Gospel and salvation, they have become enemies, blinded, hardened, rejectors of the Gospel, but this opened the way for the Gospel to go to the Gentiles. However, this does not mean that God has no further purpose for the Jew, and for the nation of Israel. But because of the promise of salvation God made to the fathers', *i.e.*, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the patriarchs, the elect still are elect, and God will without doubt bring them to salvation.

The thought is continued in verse 29.

Verse 29

On “the gifts,” see Romans 9:4 and 5. The “calling of God” must refer primarily to His call of Abraham and his seed. They are absolutely “without repentance.” That is, God is not going to take them back. He is not going to cancel them. God doesn't do business that way. Man's unfaithfulness never nullifies the faithfulness of God – never! Remember 2 Timothy 2:13. “The Lord is faithful” (2 Thess. 3:3). Cf. Heb. 10:23, “Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for He is faithful that promised.” God never regrets any promise that He has made, nor does He regret that He made the promises to the people to whom He made them. We often regret our promises, but God never does!

What security there is here for all Jewish and Gentile believers! And what an encouragement this ought to be to us to pray for backsliden believers as well as for people we know and love who are not trusting in Christ.

In verses 30 through 32 the Apostle Paul continues with the same emphasis. And not the prominence of the word “mercy” in all three of these verses.

Verse 30

Here Paul is speaking of the Gentiles and to them, *i.e.*, Gentile believers. In times past, and this is probably a reference not only to the individual Gentile, but to God’s dealing with the Gentiles when the focus was upon Israel. Yet now when Israel rejected the Messiah, and the door was opened to the Gentiles, it spelled “mercy” for the Gentiles.

There are two words that we all use very frequently, words which are found often in the Bible, that we need to define as well as to distinguished between them. One is the word “mercy” which we have here in verses 30, 31, and 32. The other is the word “grace.” And this word is found in this chapter also, in verses 5 and 6. Paul also used it frequently in Romans 5. See verses 2, 15, 17, 20, 21.

Mercy also finds its way into this book. In addition to the verses we are currently considering, see verses 15, 16, 18, 23.

We know that both of these words are involved in our salvation – the grace of God, and the mercy of God. Ephesians 2:8 tells us that it is “by grace through faith” that we are saved. In Titus Paul wrote about “the grace of God that bringeth salvation” (Tit. 2:11), but then in Titus 3:5 he said that it was “according to his mercy He saved us.” What is the difference, or is there a difference?

The answer to that question is that while they are very similar, yet there is a difference. Archbishop Trench, who was born in 1807 and died in 1886. He taught New Testament Greek in Oxford University’s King’s College for many years, and was a conservative high-churchman, according to one of his biographers, “of the best type. He wrote a book called, *Synonyms of the New Testament*, which was published by Cambridge in 1854. You all undoubtedly know what a synonym is, but just so we will all know, let me give you the dictionary definition. Synonyms are “two or more words of the same language having the same or nearly the same essential meaning.” Two words in the Greek language that fall into that category and “grace” and “mercy.” And the Bible would certainly be an important source of help in explaining these words by the way they are used in the Scriptures.

Archbishop Trench says in his *Synonyms* that a simple way of remembering the difference between these salvation words is that grace has to do with guilt, but that mercy has to do with misery. And both of them have to do with sin. The Greek word for grace is χάρις, pronounced *karis*, sometimes spelled *charis*. The greek word for “mercy” is ἔλεος, pronounced *eleos*. In the copy of Trench’s book that I have, he has five pages devoted to these two words, but I just want to read most of one of those pages to you because they give such a good description of these words. And you will see from his description that he really understood the truth of salvation. Listen to what he wrote:

In the Divine mind, and in the order of our salvation as conceived therein, the ἔλεος precedes the χάρις. God so *loved* the world with a pitying love (here in was the ἔλεος), that He *gave* His only begotten Son (herein the χάρις), that the world through Him might be saved . . . But in the order of the manifestation of God’s purposes of salvation the grace must go before the mercy, the χάρις must go before and make way for the ἔλεος. It is true that the same persons are the subjects of both, being at once the guilty and the miserable; yet the righteousness of God, which it is quite as necessary should be maintained as His love, demands that the guilt should be done away, before the mercy can be assuages; only the forgiven are blessed. He must pardon, before He can heal; men must be justified before they can be sanctified. And as the righteousness of God absolutely and in itself requires this, so no less that

righteousness as it has expressed itself in the more constitution of man, linking as it thee has done misery with guilt, and making the first the inseparable companion of the second. From this it follows that in each of the apostolic salutations where these words occur, χάρις precedes ἔλεος (1 Tim. 1:2; 2 Tim. 1:2; Titus 1:4; 2 John 3; . . .); nor could the order have been reversed. Χάρις on the same grounds precedes εἰρήνη (1 Cor. 1:3; 2 Cor. 1:2; and often) (p. 171).

I would only add to Trench's words here what he also mentioned in his article on these two words that both are gifts from God for which we have no part to pay, nor does God expect it. And both cases we receive the very opposite from what we deserve because of our sins.

And so here in verse 30 Paul was saying that we Gentiles who did not believe God in the past, have now obtained mercy through the unbelief of the Jew.

Verse 31

This verse is about the Jews. It was the purpose of God that through the mercy in salvation that God has extended to the Gentiles, the Jews might be provoked to jealousy (see verse 11) so that they would turn to Christ to receive mercy from Him.

Verse 32

So, as we come to the conclusion of what Paul had to say about the salvation of Jews and Gentiles, it is clear that both groups are guilty of sin, and under the judgment of God, with nothing to commend either group to God. And so their only hope is in the love and mercy and tender compassion of a holy God. But as Trench brought out, it was through the death of our Savior that our sins were atoned for. Consequently God has extended the call of salvation to all, but we all are so hardened in our sins that God not only has to call, but He has mercy upon those whom He chooses to have mercy. And He graciously draws His elect to Himself, never to turn any of them away.

And this point the Apostle Paul was obviously overwhelmed by the grace and mercy of God, and how God in His infinite wisdom had an eternal plan for reaching both Jews and Gentiles, that He bursts out in his heart and through the pen of Tertius (see 16:22) with praise and adoration to the God of our salvation.

And so we come to:

E. Paul's Doxology (11:33-36).

Verse 33

In Psalm 113:2 and 3 we have these two wonderful verses:

2 Blessed be the name of the LORD from this time forth and for evermore.

3 From the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same the LORD's name is to be praised.

The Apostle Paul sent this word to the believers at Ephesus:

20 Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ (Eph. 5:20).

If we were to literally fulfill these words, and we should, we would never do anything else. But neither the Psalmist nor the Apostle Paul were that unreasonable as to expect we would never do anything but praise and thank and worship the Lord. What they meant was this was the spirit in which we are to live. No matter what happens in our lives, there is always something, and often many *some things* for which we can and should praise

the Lord. And this leads me to ask, “What have you praised the Lord for today?” And I also need to ask, “What have *I* praised the Lord for today?” As you sit here in this class, and as I stand before you, what are we in our hearts giving thanks to the Lord for? Were our first words in prayer this morning, words of praise? And will our last words before we go to sleep tonight, be words of thanksgiving? I confess to you that I have a lot to learn about this. We can always find things to complain about, and we are born experts in that. It takes us a long time to get our babies to smile at us, but they are born crying because they are unhappy about something.

Psalm 113 begins with the words, “Praise the Lord.” And it ends with the words, “Praise the Lord.” How easy it is to read over those verses without ever thinking about praising the Lord.

Paul, in coming to the end of the doctrinal part of his letter to the church at Rome, found himself praising the Lord. His heart was overwhelmed with the truth of the Gospel. Barnes, in his commentary on Romans, in commenting upon the word “riches” here in verse 32, had this to say:

The word denotes the abundant blessings and mercies which had been conferred on sinful people by the gospel. These were vast and wonderful. The pardon of sin; the atonement; the hope of heaven; the peace of the gospel; all bestowed on the sinful, the poor, the wretched, and the dying; all bespeak the great mercy and rich grace of God. So every pardoned sinner may still exclaim. The grace of God which pardons him is felt to be indeed wonderful, and past comprehension. It is beyond the power of language to express; and all that the Christian can do, is to follow the example of the apostle, and sit down in profound admiration of the rich grace of God.

Above everything else we need to be thankful for our Lord Jesus Christ, the gift of God, and the Gospel which has been provided for us. He got to this point in dictating his letter to Tertius (see Rom. 16:22), and his heart was overwhelmed to the point that he had to offer his praise to God. I hope that the truth we have learned in studying Romans has had the same effect upon us.

Paul’s words here are not many, but they are worth memorizing and making our own. Let’s see what he had to say to his fellow-believers in the church at Rome.

Some MSS of the NT indicate that verse 33 ought to read, “O the depth of the riches and the wisdom and the knowledge of God” – so that he was marveling at three things, and not just two. “Depth” ought to remind us of the vastness of an ocean. It speaks of that which is really incomprehensible in the fullest sense of the word. It is that which is unfathomable and unsearchable. We can never reach the bottom of these great truths.

What did Paul mean by “riches”? Right here in Romans see 2:4; 9:23; 11:12. But see also Eph. 1:7, 18; Col. 2:2.

What did he mean by “wisdom”? Here is probably refers to the glory of the Gospel, God’s plan of salvation. It includes, as we have seen God’s way of justifying sinners, then sanctifying them, and ultimately glorifying them. And all of this being provided for Jews and Gentiles alike in all generations.

But then how does the word “knowledge” apply? We can think of the possibility, theoretically, that God would provide this wonderful salvation, but that nobody would want it. The Bible tells us that “there is none that seeketh after God.” We know that is true, not only because it is in the Word, but because we know how people in the world feel about the Gospel. In my younger days I used to hear missionaries appealing for young people to go to the foreign mission field by saying that people in all of the nations of the earth are waiting to hear the Gospel. But I learned later that that was not true. Foreigners don’t want the Gospel any more than Americans want the Gospel.

So what has God done? This is His knowledge. He not only knew what acceptance with God required, the

death of a perfect substitute. but He chose those whom He was going to save. He sent the Holy Spirit into the world to make sure that they heard the Gospel, that they were convicted of their sinful and lost condition. But that same Holy Spirit would draw the elect to Christ, cause them to be born again, and grant them faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

God did not waste the work of His Son. And throughout human history we have seen, and are seeing, God's work of salvation upon undeserving sinners. It is all by grace, a gift, not by works. And we are commissioned to take the Gospel to the whole world, not knowing who will be saved, but knowing that some, even many, will be saved.

And the way God goes about this, and the people that He saved, just cannot be fully understood. We cannot understand how two people will listen to the same message of salvation; one will be brought under deep conviction of sin, and seek the Savior; the other will go away untouched by the Gospel. Or how a person may reject the Gospel for years, and then ultimately be saved. Just about the time we think that we have the Lord figured out, then He does something that we have never even considered.

Verse 34

Verse 33 has to do with God and His great and glorious Gospel, making sure that Christ did not die in vain. But in this verse and verse 35 we look at man. Three times Paul asks "Who . . .?"

The questions in this verse are taken from Isaiah 40:13 and 14. Let me read those verses for you:

13 Who hath directed the Spirit of the LORD, or being his counsellor hath taught him?

14 With whom took he counsel, and who instructed him, and taught him in the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and shewed to him the way of understanding? (Isa. 40:13-14).

Paul asked a very similar question which we find in 1 Corinthians 2:16:

16 For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.

Barnes has an excellent comment on this verse and these questions:

It is designed to express the infinite wisdom and knowledge of God, by affirming that no being could teach him, or counsel him. Earthly monarchs have counsellors of state, whom they may consult in times of perplexity or danger. But God has no such council. He sits alone; nor does he call in any or all of his creatures to advise him. All created beings are not qualified to contribute anything to enlighten or to direct him. It is also designed to silence all opposition to his plans, and to hush all murmurings. The apostle had proved that this was the plan of God. However mysterious and inscrutable it might appear to the Jew or the Gentile, yet it was his duty to submit to God, and to confide in his wisdom, though he was not able to trace the reason of his doings.

The Scriptures make it clear that our salvation *in its entirety* was all planned before the foundation of the world and so it was before there were any human beings to give God advice. We often think that we know of ways that are better than God's, but they never are, and never could be!

Remember that we are expected to answer the questions that we find in the Bible. But make sure that you are answering them correctly.

Verse 35

What is the answer to this question? No one! None of us, and no one else, *ever* took the first step in our rela-

tionship with God. It always and only starts with God.

There is a hymn in our Trinity Hymnal which expresses this truth in a very wonderful way. We don't know who wrote the words, but it was written in the early 1900's. And it's a hymn that really needs to be in every hymnal. But sometimes we don't really pay attention to the words of a hymnal until we read them without the music. Listen to the words of this hymn. It is #397 in our hymnal:

I sought the Lord, and afterward I knew
He moved my soul to seek Him, seeking me;
It was not I that found, O Savior true,
No, I was found of Thee.

Thou didst reach forth Thy hand and mine enfold;
I walked and sank not on the storm-vexed sea,
'Twas not so much that I on Thee took hold,
As Thou, dear Lord, on me.

I find, I walk, I love, but, O the whole
Of love is but my answer, Lord, to Thee;
For Thou wert long beforehand with my soul,
Always Thou lovest me.

So no man has ever done something for God, so that God has been obligated to save him. That would be salvation by works. But salvation is by grace. *Nobody has ever deserved salvation. We deserve hell.* So God was not rewarding us for something we have done when He saved us. If He had rewarded us, He would have condemned us eternally. But instead of giving us what we deserved, if we are saved, He gave us what we could never deserve, never earn, never pay for.

And now we come to this wonderful last verse of the doctrinal section of Romans, a verse which give us the Gospel "in a nutshell." That phrase is often used of John 3:16, but it is true also of Romans 11:36.

Verse 36

This is what salvation is. It is:

- 1) It is "of Him, ἐξ αὐτοῦ.
- 2) "And through Him," καὶ δι' αὐτοῦ,
- 3) "And to Him, καὶ εἰς αὐτοῦ, are all things, τὰ πάντα.

This means concerning salvation that God is its Source, God is its Power, God is its Goal. From start to finish salvation is all of God, for His glory *forever*.

And then Paul added, "Amen." *so be it!* Paul wanted us all to leave it like that, and his prayer was that it would be fully realized in the experience of all of the elect.

But we are not finished with the epistle at the end of this chapter. We now have come to the practical section of the epistle. Now we walk by faith, and by God's grace through Whom we are saved, we seek to be conform to the likeness of Christ. But it is important that we have the truth of salvation firmly fixed in our minds and hearts as we now learn how the Lord wants us to live.

The Epistle of Paul to the Romans

VII. Exhortation (12:1-15:33).

All of the writers of Scripture wrote under the direction of the Holy Spirit. This is what the Apostle Paul had in mind when he wrote to Timothy, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God" (2 Tim. 3:16). Peter said the same thing although his words were different: "Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit" (2 Pet. 1:21). Every book of the Bible is equally inspired of God. That is the reason that we rightly speak of the Bible as *the Word of God*.

Having said that, we can tell as we read through the Bible that the Lord used the personal characteristics of the writers so that we observe that Paul had his own style of writing, Peter had his, John had his. That is true of all of the writers of Scripture. In the book of Romans we have a good example of what was Paul's style. In his writings, in some more than others, but in all to varying degrees, it was his practice to deal with doctrine first, and then apply the doctrine with practical exhortations. Dr. Griffith Thomas, in his commentary on Romans, expressed it this way: "After doctrine comes duty; after revelation, responsibility; after principles, practice" (p. 318). Others say that with Paul, creed comes first, followed by conduct. This does not mean that there are no exhortations in the doctrinal section, nor does it mean that there is no doctrine in the practical section. But it does mean that the main emphasis in the first part of Paul's epistles is doctrine, followed by the application of the doctrine in daily practice.

Now there is an important truth in what we need to know when we see what the Apostle Paul has done. In the first eleven chapters of Romans, we have doctrine. Doctrine simply means teaching. And I am sure that you will agree with me when I say it is wonderful doctrine. It is the most thorough explanation of the doctrine of salvation that we have in all of the Bible. But now we have arrived at the practical section where Paul was telling the Romans how the people who are described in the first eleven chapters, should live.

In the last chapter of 2 Timothy Paul told Timothy that "the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts" that is, their desires, what they want to hear, "shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears." That is, they will look for teachers who will tell them what they want to hear, but not "sound doctrine," but just a practical, "how to," kind of ministry. A lady in the church I previously pastored, said about my ministry, "We have had enough of meat and potatoes; what we want is some dessert!" What she meant was, "We don't want doctrine; we just want practical teaching." But what did Paul say would happen when people did that? He said this: "And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables" (2 Tim. 4:4). I am sorry to have to say that the church in America has done this to a great extent, and, as a result, our bookstores are loaded with books that profess to teach about the Christian life, but much of it has little or nothing to do with the teaching of Scripture. Doctrine is the foundation of practical experience. If you don't know the doctrine of salvation, you will never be able to live the Christian life.

Take driving a car, for example. Most of us had learned a lot of doctrine about an automobile before we ever drove a car. Suppose you were teaching someone to drive who had never seen a car. You have to tell them, "I am going to teach you how to drive that bunch of metal (or plastic today) that has four wheels. We tell them to get into the car. We tell them about the steering wheel. We tell them about the ignition, and that it requires the right key. In my day my Dad explained to me what the clutch was, and what the brake pedal was, and that it is what you use when you are going to stop the car. But then you have to explain about speed limits, and about red, and yellow, and green lights. All of that is doctrine. And the person who doesn't understand that doctrine is not going to be able to drive that car.

We have been studying about God, about man, about sin, about condemnation, about Jesus Christ, about justification, about sanctification, about the Holy Spirit, about glorification, about the coming of the Lord -- all

of this is doctrine. We would be crazy to get into a car with a person who said that they were not interested in the doctrine of driving, they just wanted to drive!

The same applies to the Christian life. We need to know what a Christian is, before we can do what a Christian does. It is not altogether like driving a car because we don't have to know everything in order to begin to live the Christian life. There is in the Bible the doctrine of prayer. There is the doctrine of faith. There is the doctrine of hope. There is so much to learn. That is why we read our Bibles. That is why we go to church, or it ought to be the reason that we go to church. We want to learn how to live, but we need to continue to learn the great doctrines, the great truths, of Scripture so we will know what God wants us to be and how He wants us to live. So when people seek to discourage you about doctrine, just joy down in your mind that they don't know what they are talking about. Get away from them, and stay away! The way Paul wrote Romans, which was the way the Holy Spirit directed him to write shows that doctrine is extremely important. It is basic. It is foundational. In exhortation we are building upon the foundation as we seek to obey the Word of God. But we can't do it by ourselves. The Lord Jesus told His disciples, "Without Me ye can do nothing" (John 15:5). And He sent the Holy Spirit into each one of us, to help us. But, you see, that is all doctrine; that is all teaching.

Now we never leave the doctrine behind. I need to read and study the whole book of Romans over and over and over again. And you do too. But we don't want to make the other mistake by thinking that because we understand a little doctrine, we don't need to hear the practical exhortations. Some people stop with the doctrine. Don't do that? Both are equally important. When the Lord struck down Saul of Tarsus as he was on his way to Damascus, Saul asked Him two questions. The first was, "Who art Thou, Lord?" The Lord said, "I am Jesus Whom thou persecutest." That was doctrine. The second question was, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" That was a practical question. And Paul spent the rest of his life learning Who the Lord was, and what the Lord wanted him to do.

Romans 12, 13, 14, and 15 give us the practical section of Romans. That is why I have called it Exhortation. It covers a lot of ground. And it is just as important in a practical way as the first eleven chapters are important in a doctrinal way. The book of Romans would not be complete if it ended with chapter 11. Nor would it be complete if it began at chapter 12. We need both parts. And you can see that the Apostle Paul tied them together with the word "therefore" in verse 1 of chapter 12.

You know when you are playing a game like many did on New Year's Eve before the meeting we had when Gary spoke to us, after which we observed the Lord's supper, you usually find in a game where your men move around a board, that there is a particular place where you find the word "start." The Christian life is not a game; it is a life, a very wonderful life, but it is important to know how and where to "start." That is what Romans 12:1 and 2 is; it is the starting point.

For several years now there has been a serious controversy going on among Bible teachers as to whether or not when the Lord Jesus Christ becomes your Savior, He also becomes your Lord. There are true Christian teachers who believe that the two are not connected, that the Lord Jesus can be your Savior, but you can make Him Lord of your life later on. Others (and I am in this other category) believe that when the Lord Jesus becomes our Savior, He also becomes our Lord. In proof of what I believe, I would cite a couple of verses right here in Romans: Romans 10: 9 and 10:

9 That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.

10 For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

That first part of verse 9 can be translated this way: "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord." And it is translated that way in the NASB: "that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord." And verse 10

ends with these words: “and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” So this would mean that only a confession that made by the mouth that Jesus is Lord can be taken as a true confession of salvation.

Now I say that because Romans 12:1 and 2, is an acknowledgment of the Lordship of Jesus Christ in our lives as Christians. To present our bodies as a living sacrifice to God, means that we are recognizing His authority over our lives, and that we are submitting ourselves to Him. And it is ridiculous to think that we can present ourselves to God as a living sacrifice, but not recognize that this is also a recognition that the Lord Jesus is the Lord of our lives. After all, don’t we call Him, the *Lord* Jesus Christ? How can we call Him “Lord,” if indeed He is not our Lord?

So the Christian life begins with the recognition that God is our Lord, Jesus Christ is also our Lord, and even the Holy Spirit is our Lord, and we give ourselves to God as a living sacrifice. I will come back next week to explain these two verses, but I want all of us to understand that this is the starting point of the Christian life. If you haven’t faced this matter in your life before now, you need to do it now. In 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 Paul had this to say to the believers in the church at Corinth:

19 What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?

20 For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's (1 Cor. 6:19-20).

In line with what we have been talking about as doctrine and practice, verse 19 and the first part of verse 20, are doctrine; the last part of verse 20 is the practical part, what they were to do. The Lord Jesus bought us when He died for us. So we belong to Him, not to ourselves. And we need to present our bodies as a living sacrifice to Him, to do His will and to live for His glory. This is the starting point of the Christian life.

Now as you read through these chapters you will see a variety of exhortations on different subjects. And it is not easy to outline what the Apostle has said. But what we need to notice is that the Apostle Paul in giving us these exhortations, was emphasizing the importance of Christian character in the Christian life. Let me briefly point out what I mean.

Read verse Romans 12:3. What was Paul really talking about? I think you will see that he was talking about humility. We all have to admit that pride is a big problem with us. We want to be recognized for what we do, and we are easily hurt if someone offends us. We as God’s people need to be characterized by humility.

To emphasize the importance of humility, Paul went on in verses 4 through 8 to speak of our oneness in the body of Christ. So our oneness of heart and life is also an important part of our lives as Christians. We are all members of Christ’s body even though we are different parts with different gifts. We need each other. Paul had a lot to say about this in his letter to the Corinthian church.

What came next? In verses 9 through 15 Paul was talking about love.

In verse 16, the first statement, he came back to our oneness, and right away spoke again of humility. In verse 17 he mentioned that a Christian is one who does not do wrong to someone just because that person has done some wrong against him. We are to live, in so far as it is possible, in peace with everybody. If there needs to be revenge, we leave that to the Lord. So we are kind to our enemy so as not to be overcome with sin, but to overcome sin with that which is good in the sight of God.

I think you can see from what I have point out, what Paul was doing. He was emphasizing the kind of people we are to be if we are truly saved. God’s ways and the world’s ways are completely different, and we need to be recognized as God’s people, saved people, by our conduct.

I won't go through all of chapters 13, 14, and 15 right now like I have gone through chapter 12, but I do want to point out the idea in chapter 13 where Paul was talking about what was one of the most corrupt governments there has ever been, and he brings up taxes and other things that we have trouble with. But how is a Christian to act toward his government? Verse 1 of chapter 13 emphasizes *submission*. A person who refuses to pay his taxes may be a Christian, but he is a stupid Christian. Have you ever seen that bumper sticker which says, "Question Authority"? The powers that be are ordained of God, and if you resist the power, you are resisting God. Don't think of possible exceptions. Get this principle firmly fixed in your mind. The Lord could have done away with the Roman army and the Jewish authorities, but He didn't. Instead, He submitted Himself to them. Why? Because He had not come to do His own will, but the will of the Father Who had sent Him. The child of God has to learn submission.

But now as we conclude for today, I want to point out some special verses in this chapter, which stand out in importance much like the first two verses of chapter 12, verses that help us to see the point that Paul was making with the Roman church, and then with all other believers, as he wrote this epistle.

One of those verses is Romans 13:14. Here he told the Roman Christians to put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and not to give any place in their lives to the flesh.

Now think of the characteristics that we have seen in what Paul had to say as far as we have gone. We have talked about humility. We have talked about oneness, unity. We have talked about love. And then Paul went back to emphasize oneness and humility. He emphasized leaving our feeling of getting even to the Lord, and not to take matters in our own hands, to overcome evil with good, and not to let evil overcome us.

What was Paul really saying? He was saying that a Christian is one who is putting on Christ. This means that while all of these qualities are not a part of us by nature, we find them in the Lord Jesus Christ, and we trust Him to give us humble hearts. We trust Him to make us one with our fellow believers. We trust Him to give us love, to make us want peace, to love our enemies, and to live in submission to others. As we go through any day, even today, and come into situations that are hard for us to handle, we need to ask ourselves what the Lord would do in the situation we are facing. And then we need to give us hearts to do His will, and the strength to do it. Without Him we can't do anything to please God. That is why we have to put on Christ.

Look with me at another couple of helpful verses: Romans 14:8 and 9.

And in closing I want you to look at two of Paul's prayers in chapter 15. The first is in verses 5 and 6. The second is in verse 13.

If we are going to "prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God," we are going to have to know God and to spend much time doing what Paul was doing in these last two passages I have pointed out to you: *praying*.

The Christian life is a supernatural, a superhuman life. Only the Members of the Godhead can enable us to be like Christ in our daily life. We have to be justified. And we are being sanctified. Ultimately we will be glorified. But it is all of God, all through Christ, and all by the power of the Holy Spirit. Being what God wants us to be is beyond us. But we can say what Paul told the Philippian believers: "I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me." The Lord was sufficient for Paul, and He can and will be sufficient for us. But we need to trust Him.

Now we are ready to begin the exposition of these four chapters: Romans 12, 13, 14, and 15. May the Lord Himself make us as eager to obey the exhortations as, hopefully, we have been to believe the doctrines.

12:1 The word “therefore” is a word which ties chapter 12 with what has preceded it, not only, in this case, with chapter 11, but with all of the preceding chapters. We move on in chapter 12, as I have emphasized, from the doctrinal section to the practical section of the book. The word “therefore” shows not a change in subject, but an inseparable connection. What we are going to read in chapters 12 and following is the logical sequence of what we have read in chapters 1 through 11. Whether a person is a Jew or a Gentile, if he is a true believer in Christ, it is to be expected that the doctrine, speaking of what God has done, is doing, and will continue to do, will have some very definite and long-lasting effects in that person’s life. But these are effects in which we definitely have sacred responsibilities. The words in these chapters are telling us what we are to do, or not do, what we are to be, or not be. But to have the connection impressed upon our minds, I want to read to you the last four verses of chapter 11, and then go on into the first two verses of chapter 12. (Read.)

We need to remember as we read through this practical section that we are reading the words of *an apostle*. He speaks with divine authority and under the direction of the Spirit of God.

“I beseech thee” – This can be used from anything that is a wish or a plea to an exhortation or a command. And we must think of it in the latter. Paul was depending upon the Holy Spirit both to impress and enable his readers to do what he was actually urging them to do. As I have explained, this is really the starting-point of the Christian life. So he was pleading with them, urging them, to do what he was telling them to do.

“By the mercies of God” has to be a reference to what God had done in saving them. But it is also a special word for “mercies” which speaks of the way God feels about us, what Thayer (p. 103) calls “the inward feeling of compassion which abides in the heart,” God’s heart, toward us. So it is a word which expresses not only God’s love for us, but His deep love for us, an abiding love which means that God is concerned about our greatest welfare. The child of God who does not take the exhortations of the Word seriously in order to do what he wants to do, is not only missing great blessings, but exposing himself to great dangers. We live in a very evil world, ruled over by the Wicked One, and wicked people, who are determined to make us fall. The best defense against our enemy is to be strongly committed to doing the will of God.

“That ye present” – We could translate this “to present” since it is an aorist, active infinitive, which Robertson says indicates *to do it now, and to do it completely*. It is the verb *παρίστημι*. We had it back in Romans 6, verses 13, 16, and 19. (Read.) These are examples of exhortations in the doctrinal section. But it is also the technical Greek word for offering a sacrifice, a priestly function. The NT clearly teaches that we are priests ministering to God, and it tells us the sacrifices that we are to bring to Him, the first of which is ourselves, *our bodies*.

We need to remember that it is not our souls that are saved, but our bodies also. Note Paul’s prayer in 1 Thess. 5:23. In 1 Cor. 6:15 we are told that our “bodies are the members of Christ.” And in the last two verses of that chapter in 1 Cor. we read this:

19 What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?

20 For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s (1 Cor. 6:19-20).

So our bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit, and so we are to glorify God in our bodies and in our spirit “which are God’s.” When Christ died on the Cross, God was buying us for Himself. So when we offer ourselves to the Lord, we are actually giving Him what already belongs to Him. *But how important it is for us to know this, and act upon it. We are not our own; we belong to the Lord.*

Most sacrifices are put to death. That was true of OT animal sacrifices. And it was supremely true in the case

of our Lord Jesus Christ. Many Christians have given their lives for their faith in Christ, and someday we may do the same. But what God wants are *living sacrifices*, as our verse says, “holy, acceptable unto God.” We are to be holy in both meanings of the Word: first, set apart for God (which we are to do), and second, seeking to avoid sin in daily living, as well as pursuing righteousness. All of this is what is well pleasing to God.

“Which is your reasonable service” – The KJV translation here is the best. The word translated “reasonable” is the Greek word λογικὴν from which we get our English word, *logical*. And so “reasonable” is a good translation. It is very reasonable that if God has purchased us by the blood of His Son, delivering us from the penalty and power of our sin, that we should give ourselves to Him to live for His glory.

“Service” is the translation of λατρείαν, which speaks of *priestly* service. Our priestly service begins with the offering of ourselves to God. This is the word that is used in Hebrews 9:1 and 6. For other sacrifices that we are to offer to the Lord, see Hebrews 13:15 and 16:

15 By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name.

16 But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.

See also Philippians 4:18:

18 But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, wellpleasing to God.

The Apostle Peter has also given us this teaching in 1 Peter 2:5:

5 Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

So, in the light of all that God has done for us in Christ, which Paul has expounded in the first eleven chapters of Romans, it is entirely consistent with what is reasonable, or logical, that we present ourselves to God as living sacrifices. To fail to do this, or to fail to live for the Lord in all things, is sin of the greatest magnitude! It is to live in a most unreasonable and illogical way.

When Adam and Eve sinned, their thinking was perverted. This was evident in the fact that they refused to take the responsibility for what they had done. And man has been doing that ever since. Evolution is another example of perverted thinking. How can any man look at the universe in which we live, even at the amazing way in which our bodies function, and not admit that there must be a God Who created us and everything in this universe of ours. It is because his mind has been perverted by his sin. How is it that when people talk about the weather, they speak of Mother Nature? It is because their minds have been perverted. How can we look at tragic events like the recent tsunami, and not believe that this is a judgment from God for the whole world to take as a warning? It is because the human mind is perverted. How can anyone live and not recognize that we are such finite creatures, dependent moment by moment upon God for our very existence? It is because sin has corrupted our thinking. And our thinking in these basic things when we turn to Christ and to the Word of God.

Notice that there are four primary verbs in these two verses. We have already discussed the first one:

1) “Present.”

The second is a negative:

2) “Be not conformed.”

The third goes along, and follows the second:

3) “Be ye transformed.”

The fourth one shows the purpose:

4) “That ye may prove.”

The second and third shows how to do the first, and the fourth tells us what the result of the first three verbs

will be. So it is very important that we understand what these verbs mean, and what is expressed by the tense in which the Apostle Paul wrote them. I have mentioned that “present,” “present your bodies,” is an aorist infinitive, meaning that *we are to do this now, and to do it completely*. That is, Paul was expressing urgency and the need to present every member of our bodies to the Lord.

Now we move on to verse 2.

12:2 “And be not conformed” – To be conformed to this world, or, more correctly, this age, is “to adopt the external and fleeting fashion of this world” (Sandy & Headlam, p. 352). It speaks of outward conformity to the world of men: their habits, their talk, their actions and way of living, and their dress.

There used to be a Christian organization whose motto was, “Geared to the Rock; anchored to the times.” The latter part of this expression is exactly what the Apostle Paul was telling the Roman believers that they were *not* to do. In fact, you can’t be geared to the Rock and anchored to the times. If you are one, you can’t be the other. The radio station over which we broadcast the Trinity Bible Hour, they are continually talking about “today’s Christian radio” as though it ought to be different from yesterday’s Christian radio. The Bible does not change. God certainly does not change. And while fashions in the world are constantly changing, yet people do not change. And it is right at this point that the professing church is in trouble today. We are so concerned about keeping up with the world that we are constantly drawn away from the Word of God. Paul’s epistle to the Romans has not been revised since the day Paul wrote it (or the days). And Romans harmonizes with every other book in the Bible. In fact, I have been saying that this book gathers together all that the Bible has to say about salvation. Paul was in 100% agreement with the Apostle John’s words in 1 John 2:15-17: “Love not the world ...”

Now we do not present our bodies as a living sacrifice to God, and then move on as though that matter has been settled once and for all. That is the goal of Christian living. But in order to reach that goal we need to be careful not to allow ourselves at any point along the line to be conformed to this world. The Christian who is concerned about being like the people in the age in which he lives, is not really presenting his, or her, body as “a living sacrifice. William Hendriksen, in his comments on Romans 12:2, translates the beginning of this verse in this way: “And stop allowing yourselves to be fashioned after the pattern of this (evil) age” (Vol. 2, p. 404).

“Be not conformed” is a present imperative passive. And if you remember your grammar, you know that the passive voice is the one in which the subject is acted upon. This means the world, the people of the world, and the whole character of this world in which we live, is constantly putting us under pressure to be like they are. And we all feel that pressure. The Bible is right up-to-date on this point, as it is on every point. And we have all felt that pressure, and feel it every day. It is not that we are to try to be as strange as we can, but if we follow the pattern of the world in its dress, its speech, its pleasures, its music (or so-called music), we are not only not going to make progress spiritually, but we are going to be “going down hill” as far as our walk with the Lord is concerned. We need to get our guidance from the Bible, not from the world, and that is exactly why the Apostle Paul wrote chapters 12, 13, 14, and 15 in this book of Romans. The kind of life style that the Apostle Paul taught is completely in contrast with what the people of the world wants us to be.

Everyone one of us who claim to know the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior, are responsible to see that we are not submitting to the pressure of the world to live the way they live. The way people in the world live, is to put themselves first; we as the Lord’s people are taught to deny ourselves and to put the Lord first in our lives. How many times have you heard someone say that they have come out of their troubles because they have learned to believe in themselves? That is not the solution of our troubles; that is the reason we are in trouble. As long as we trust in ourselves, or in other people, rather than in the Lord, our troubles are not only going to

continue, but they are going to get worse! And you can put that down as the absolute truth! Listen to some words which James wrote along this line. You will find these in James 4:6-10:

- 6 But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.
- 7 Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.
- 8 Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded.
- 9 Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness.
- 10 Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.

So we definitely have to be on the defensive if we are to survive in this world. But let us go on to see what else the Apostle Paul had to say on this extremely important subject.

He said, "But be ye not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed. Now again we have a present passive imperative. And that is why Dr. Hendriksen translated this second verb in verse 12 like this: "But continue to let yourselves be transformed." Now these are not instructions for one who does not know the Lord; it is for those of us who know the Lord. At the same time that the world, our own flesh, and the Devil are seeking to get us to conform to this evil age, there is another power being exercised in our lives to make us different from the world and, instead, pleasing to God. What is that power? It is the power of the Holy Spirit as He uses the Word in our lives to make us like the Lord Jesus Christ. Do you remember what the Apostle Paul told the Galatian churches along this line? Let me read to you Galatians 5:16-26:

- 16 This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.
- 17 For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.
- 18 But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law.
- 19 Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness,
- 20 Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies,
- 21 Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.
- 22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,
- 23 Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.
- 24 And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.
- 25 If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.
- 26 Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another.

"Be ye transformed" means that we cannot live the way the Lord wants us to live in our own strength. We need the Lord's help. That is the reason every child of God has the Holy Spirit living in him, to teach him (or her), to empower him, to restrain him, to guide him. In fact, all Three Persons of the Godhead indwell us, and They are constantly working in us to resist the world and to submit ourselves to God. This is where the charismatics are misled. They are trying to get something, or Someone, Whom God has already given them.

But now let us ask the questions: But how does the Holy Spirit work in us, and what does it mean to "be transformed"? Let's take the second part first: "Be ye transformed."

The Greek verb is μεταμορφοῦσθε, a second person plural passive imperative. This is the Greek verb from which we get our English word, metamorphosis. This is the process by which a tadpole becomes a frog, or how larva in a cocoon becomes a butterfly. It is described in the dictionary as "a marked change in character and appearance." To be conformed is to manifest fully and outwardly what you are by nature. This is all that an

unregenerate person can be. But for us as the children of God, to be transformed is to show outwardly and inwardly what you have become by the grace of God. But this is not our work. It is the work of the Holy Spirit in us. And yet we are responsible to see that we are not conformed to this world, just as we are responsible to see that we are being transformed.

Now how does the transformation take place? It is by “the renewing of your mind.”

I heard of a mother who was talking about the behavior of her daughter who is not a child of God, and the mother said this: “She is just not thinking straight.” And she was exactly right. This is why people live the way they live in this world of ours; they are just not thinking straight. The things that they pursue, are the very things that will destroy them. We are seeing in our day how several corporate executives have been caught doing the wrong things in their pursuit of money. All you can say of them is that with all of their intelligence, they are just not thinking straight. This is what sin has done to all of us. Solomon tells us that a man who commits adultery is a fool. He is just not thinking straight. Our memory verses this year, beginning with the first seven verses of the book of Proverbs emphasize the fact that basically what we all need is wisdom, knowledge, understanding, discretion. And we are told that “the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge.” A man or a woman may have a Ph. D., and be extremely intelligent in science or history or any other area of knowledge, but if he or she does not fear the Lord, he is a stupid fool. Learning has to start with God. And the people who would like to get rid of President Bush because he professes to be a Christian, are demonstrating that they are the fools, not the President.

Read the first three chapters of 1 Corinthians where the Apostle Paul explained to them that the wisdom of this world, is foolishness to God.

Let me remind you of what the Bible says was the reason for the universal flood in which all but eight people were destroyed from earth. The tsunami which we have heard so much about, as terrible as it was, was nothing compared with the flood. And here is the reason, stated in Genesis 6:5:

5 And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

This also takes us back to Romans 1 and what the Apostle Paul had to say about the foolishness of man. Let's go back to that chapter to refresh our minds concerning how foolish man has been ever since Adam and Eve sinned against God. **(Read Romans 1:18-32.)**

See also Eph. 4:17-24:

17 This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind,

18 Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart:

19 Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.

20 But ye have not so learned Christ;

21 If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus:

22 That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts;

23 And be renewed in the spirit of your mind;

24 And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.

We all have been in that category, and if there are some sins that we have not committed, let us thank God

because the capacity is there for all of us. And so when we think of what God has saved us from, let us have the same attitude that the Apostle Paul had as he thought of people who did not know the Lord, and so still were deceived and living in sin. Cf. Phil. 3:18-19:

18(For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ:

19 Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things .)

So when we are saved, we need a complete renewal, a renovation, of the way we think. Now to do this, we need the Word. We need to read it, read it daily, and read it thoroughly. But reading alone, as essential as it is, is not enough. We need to be taught, and to make sure that we are being taught by the right people. *But one area in which probably most of us are the weakest is in meditation.* We need to think about what we read. And one good aid to meditation is the memorization of Scripture when we concentrate on every word of Scripture.

We all are thinking continually, whether saved or unsaved. The problem with most people is that they are thinking about the wrong things. And the minds of people who do not know the Lord are so corrupted by sin that they can't think about the truth. But the tragedy in the lives of many Christians is that they give no time to meditation. Cf. Joshua 1:8; Psalm 1:2; 1 Tim. 12-16; Phil. 2:5; 4:8-9.

We are to meditate on the Word to know what we are to believe. We are to meditate on the Word to know what we are to do. And it is meditation, under the Lord's blessing, that gives us the desire to do God's will. As we read and meditate, God works.

The result will be that we will "prove," which gives the idea of testing and approving "the will of God." We are convinced that it is "good," i.e., right, "acceptable," and perhaps the idea here is that it is well pleasing to us, and "perfect," meaning complete. We don't need to go beyond the Word of God to find the will of God.

So when we present our bodies, we are doing that which is "acceptable to God," well pleasing to Him. And when we draw away from the world and seek the transfiguration which comes from God, we find that it all totally pleasing to us.

Let us make sure that we not only understand what the Apostle Paul has written in the first two verses of Romans 12, but let us make sure that we have done, and are doing, what we had told us to do – or not to do.

Now we move on to the second subheading of this chapter:

B. The Christian in the Church (12:3-16).

12:3 I am using the word "Church" here in its larger meaning, i.e., for all of the body of Christ, but it would have special application for each of us to the local members of that body of which we are a part.

Beginning with verse 1 of chapter 12 here in the book of Romans, the Apostle Paul was expressing himself about spiritual growth, the maturity of everyone who believes in Christ. Back in Romans 8:29 we learned that God has predestined us "to be conformed to the image of His Son." This means that we are saved to be made like the Lord Jesus Christ.

In learning about the doctrine of salvation, we learned that the justification of every child of God is the same. We don't grow in justification. One believer is not more justified than another believer. When a person

accepts Christ he is as justified as he ever will be because his justification is in Christ. To be partially justified would mean that we are only partially acceptable to God. And that, in turn, would mean that Christ did not do a perfect work of saving us when He died on the Cross. A child who is saved today, is just as justified as a man or a woman who has known the Lord for fifty, or sixty, or seventy, or even more years. And this justification is never threatened. We can't lose it. Our acceptance with God is settled. The promises of salvation are unchangeable and irrevocable.

At the same time that we are saved and declared righteous before God (that is our standing), the effect of salvation will begin to be seen in our lives. This is the work of Christ by which we are being sanctified. Here we are different. A child who is saved today, will not be like an adult spiritually who has walked for many years in fellowship with the Lord. They both are perfectly justified, but they are different as far as their sanctification is concerned. And our differences are probably going to carry over into eternity. It is sad to say, but some Christians are very diligent in reading and studying the Word, in memorizing the Word, in meditating on the Word, very diligent in prayer, very diligent in seeking to live in obedience to the Word of God, while others are not so diligent. None of us lives all of the time the way we should in obeying Romans 12:1 and 2 and all of the other exhortations of Scripture. Let me read to you what the writer of the book of Hebrews wrote to some of the Hebrew Christians who would receive that epistle. The words I am referring to are found in Hebrews 5:11-14. Listen to what he had to say to them:

11 Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing.

12 For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat.

13 For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe.

14 But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

As the Apostle Peter concluded the second of his two epistles, he expressed very clearly what was his purpose in writing both of those letters. I am sure you will remember his words. At least, I hope you do. Here they are, and you will find them in 2 Peter 3:18:

18 But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen.

From the time we are saved until the Lord takes us to heaven, we all need to grow and to keep growing. While the older we get, the weaker we get, yet the older we get in the Lord, the stronger we should be. Paul expressed it this way in 2 Corinthians 4:16: "... , but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day."

In the book of Colossians the Apostle Paul expressed the purpose he had in his ministry, obviously a purpose which the Lord had given him. Listen as I read Col. 1:21-29:

21 And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled

22 In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight:

23 If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister;

24 Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church:

25 Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God;

26 Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to

his saints:

27 To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory:

28 Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus :

29 Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily.

We hear these days the saying about the education of our children, “no child left behind.” Well, that was how Paul felt about the sanctification of the people of God. He did not want to leave any child of God “behind,” but he wanted all of them to grow, and to keep growing, and to become more like the Lord Jesus Christ. So that is Paul’s purpose in these chapters in Romans. He is telling us how we are to grow. Growing as a Christian comes about through obedience, obedience to the Word of God.

Well, what does Paul say here in verse 3?

Verse 3, along with verses 4 and 5, are a warning. Paul was speaking because it was his responsibility to say what he was saying. “The grace given unto me,” as he said, was the authority, and the enablement, to be an apostle, and especially an apostle to the Gentiles. See Rom. 11:13.

But what is his emphasis? It has to do with their thinking, in particular, the way they think about themselves. Donald Grey Barnhouse says that there are twelve verbs in the Greek language which have to do in some way with *thinking*, but Paul used just one of the twelve four times in this one verse to express himself to the saints at Rome. It is the verb *φρονέω*. The first time the preposition, *ὑπέρ* is attached to the beginning of the verb as a prefix. Here it means *more than*, or *over and above*. And so the translators have given it the translation, “to think more highly.” And then the fourth time the verb is used, it is translated “soberly.” It all amounts to being level-headed, or holding to a true estimate of oneself. Barnhouse also pointed out that in the Greek world this verb was used in wills where the one making out the will was said to be “sane and in his right mind.”

All of this is very interesting in the light of what Paul had written about the need for each believer to be “transformed by the renewing of your mind.” Every Christian needs to get his thinking straightened out, and in this verse Paul indicated that the place to get started is in what we think about ourselves. Most of us think more highly than we ought to think *about ourselves*. A proud person is not thinking straight about himself. The people who tell us that we can do anything that we want to do, is not thinking straight. This is one part of the way that sin has corrupted our thinking: the way we think about ourselves. God has given each one of us gifts, but not every gift. Cf. the parable that the Lord taught about the Pharisee and the publican who went to the temple to pray. See Luke 18:9-14. Think also of James and John who wanted to sit at the right hand and the left hand when He would come in His kingdom. Think also of Peter who declared that He would never deny the Lord even if all of the other disciples did. These are examples of those who thought more highly of themselves than they should have. They needed a renewal of their minds.

On the other hand, remember what John the Baptist said about not being worthy to untie the Lord’s sandals. Cf. Matt. 3:11. And of the centurion who had a sick servant, but he did not feel worthy to have the Lord come to his house. Cf. Matt. 8:8.

“According as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.” On this phrase Barnes had this to say:

But let an object be regarded as the gift of God, and it ceases to excite pride, and the feeling is at once changed into gratitude. He, therefore, who regards God as the source of all blessings, and he only, will be an humble man.

However the Lord may have gifted us, we must remember that it is a gift, a gift of grace, a gift to be exercised

by faith. When Paul was talking about those who saw the Lord following His resurrection, he concluded the list of those who had the special blessing, by referring to himself with these words found in 1 Cor. 15:8-11:

8 And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time.

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.

10 But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.

11 Therefore whether it were I or they, so we preach, and so ye believed.

If we are looking for some of the reasons that the Lord used the Apostle Paul as he did, we have it in his words about himself in these verses in 1 Corinthians 15.

Solomon said in Proverbs 16:18, "Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall." And twice he reminded us that "before honor is humility" (Prov. 15:33; 18:12).

The greatest example of humility who ever lived was our Lord Jesus Christ. Cf. Phil. 2:5-8.

12:4 This is Paul's description of the Church. He compares it with the human body. Each one of us has many members in our one body. That is, we have eyes; we have ears; we have a tongue; we have hands; we have feet; and so on. So obviously they do not all have the same function. My hands can't do what my eyes do; my ears can't do what my feet do. Paul had written about this previously in his first epistle to the Corinthians, in chapter 12.

So in the NT we read about the Church, the body of Christ, and we read about churches, local churches, like the church at Rome, the church at Corinth, the churches of Galatia, Trinity Bible Church, and so on. Every true believer is baptized at the time of salvation into the universal body of Christ. Cf. 1 Cor. 12:13. See also Eph. 4:1-16. Now not every member of a local church, is necessarily saved. Not every pastor is necessarily saved. Local churches have become so corrupted through the years, the Bible has been ignored, and the Gospel has been corrupted. Therefore, we need to get back to the Bible to learn about the Church, the true Church, so that we will understand how to carry on the work of the local church.

The Church and Israel are distinctly different. There is no Church in the OT. The Church, the body of Christ, began on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2. The Lord spoke of the Church as "My Church." Cf. Matt. 16:13-20, especially verse 18 where He spoke of the Church as future. It is by the baptism of the Spirit, which, as I have said, takes place at salvation, that we become members of the body of Christ. It is not something that we have to seek; we simply need to understand it, and to live in the light of this great truth. So true believers can go to different local churches, but, if they truly know the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior, they are both members of the one body of Christ. I personally don't believe that it Scriptural to speak of a local church as "the body." Those who truly believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior are a part of the body of Christ, they are members of the body of Christ, but the body of Christ is made up of all true believers today regardless of what local church they might belong to, or even if they do not belong to any local church (although I find it difficult to believe that a true believer would not want to be a part of a true, NT, local church). But we do find that people come, and they go, as far as local churches are concerned. But a true believer will not forsake "the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is" (Heb. 10:25). Cf. 1 John 2:19 also.

Who am I talking about when I use the expression, "true believer"? I am talking about a person who know that he, or she, is a sinner, and that they have turned to Christ, trusting Him to save them on the basis of His death on the Cross. A true believer knows that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and that He not only died for sinners, but that He was raised from the dead, and is now in heaven with the Father, and some day, and we believe soon, will come again to take the living members of His Church to heaven.

The members of our physical bodies were not made to work in opposition or conflict with each other. If they do, there is something wrong. So God has placed us in the body, not to work against each other, but to function as members of one body.

And so, in verse 5 Paul went on to apply what we know about our physical bodies to the one body of Christ.

12:5 “So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.” Christ is our Head; we are all members of His body. This means that we have an eternal relationship with Christ, but we also have an eternal relationship with each other. The word “so” at the beginning of this verse, has the same force as if Paul had said, *in the same manner*, or *thus* (according to Thayer, p. 468).

In connection with Paul’s comments in verse 3 which led him to speak of the body of Christ, Barnhouse said this:

It is sad to contemplate the fact that the old Adamic estimation of self carries over into the Christian life, but this verse [3] proves that it does. Believers are to have a reduced estimation of self, and this exhortation would not be first in the list if too high an estimation of self were not a common failing among Christians (Vol. 9, p. 35).

So it makes it absolutely necessary for each one of us to guard against the tendency which is in all of us, to think of ourselves more highly than we ought to think. That is why we need, by God’s grace, to be “transformed by the renewing of our minds.” God’s will for us is that we humble ourselves, and that we constantly on guard against any and all expressions of personal pride. In this connection we need to remember the words of our Lord Jesus Christ which are found in Matt. 11:28-30:

28 Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

We are not to measure ourselves, as one writer has said, “by our own yardstick,” nor by comparing ourselves with other believers, but by measuring ourselves with Christ. Paul said in 2 Cor. 10:12:

12 For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.

Understanding the truth about the body of Christ, which teaches us about our relationship to Christ as our Head, and of our relationship to each other as members of His body, is basic in dealing with the disastrous effects of personal pride upon ourselves, but also upon our fellow-believers in the body of Christ.

12:6 As the different members of our physical bodies are made with certain gifts, that is, the ability to perform in certain ways, so we all need to realize that God has given us in Christ certain “gifts” which we are to exercise as members of Christ’s body, the church. And Paul goes on to mention what some of these gifts are. There may be some overlapping of these gifts, but never so that the same gift in two different believers are in conflict with each other.

Expositors differ in explaining the meaning of the gift of prophecy. NT prophets, as well as OT prophets, were primarily preachers. Only in a secondary way were they able to predict future events. They were to proclaim the truth. Originally prophets spoke under the direction and inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Isaiah and Jeremiah are examples of OT prophets. Paul and Peter and Matthew are illustrations of men who wrote under the direction of the Spirit of God. But now the preaching of men is confined to what God has revealed in His Word. There have been no added revelations from God since the NT was completed. God enables men to proclaim

the truth “according to the proportion of faith.” Link this with the phrase in verse 3, “the measure of faith.” God is the One Who gives us the understanding of the truth which we all have. He give more to some than He does to others. The understanding of the truth that we have, is in proportion to the effort that we put forth in seeking to understand the truth. Cf. Prov. 2:1-7. No one has perfect understanding. And God has not revealed all of the truth. Even the Apostle Paul said, “Now we see through a glass darkly” (1 Cor. 13:12). But what we know by faith, we are to declare. No one has any reason to boast about what he knows about the truth of God’s Word because what any of us has in the way of true understanding, we have received from the Lord. And the prophet of the Lord is to be continually seeking by faith a great understanding of the Word. But he has to be careful that he does not seek to add to the Word, or, on the other hand, to take away from the Word. But let him prophesy!

12:7 Here we have the gift of ministry. Perhaps this is the place where we seek to answer the question, *How do I find out what my gift is?* The best answer I know to that question is, by the way the Lord seems to be using me. It would also seem that if God has given me a certain gift, I will enjoy and be blessed in exercising that gift.

What is the gift of ministry? The Greek word for ministry is the word from which we get our English word, deacon. But the apostles used the same word in Acts 6:4, “the ministry of the Word.” Actually the word speaks of anything that we do to minister in special ways, particularly to other members of the body of Christ. Thinking of our physical bodies, our hands minister to other parts of our bodies, putting food into our mouths. Our feet and legs minister to our bodies by taking us where we want to go. So although there are particular men who have been appointed by the church to minister in any way that they are needed, yet you don’t have to be a deacon before you can minister in this way. All of us need to keep our eyes and ears open to be aware of other believers who need help, possibly in a physical or material way, but especially concerning spiritual needs. Dr. Barnhouse called this “the gift of standing by.”

Teaching is another gift. Not everyone is given this gift. I have heard Dr. John MacArthur say that there are many men in the ministry who have no business being in the ministry. They don’t teach, and many of them don’t want to teach. They don’t study the Word so that they know what to teach. But the person who has the gift of teaching is going to want to teach, is going to be blessed in teaching, and will see people growing in the Lord as a result of his teaching. And this gift is not just exercised from the pulpit, or even just in a Sunday School class. But it can be exercised very profitably when one person teaches just one other person. We speak of this as “one-on-one” teaching.

12:8 “He that exhorteth.” I have called the second main division of Romans, exhortation. Paul was a superb exhorter. An exhorter is not only one who instructs people as to what they should do, or what they should not do, but he inspires them into action. He is also an encourager, a comforter. Vincent, in his *Word Studies in the New Testament*, says that teaching is aimed at the understanding; exhortation at the heart and the will. Sometimes you will find that the person who has the gift of teaching, also has the gift of exhortation. This is always an important part of teaching. Dawson Trotman of the Navigators was an excellent teacher, but he was great at exhortation. He would talk about Scripture memory, and if you were listening to him, you could hardly wait to get started. I had teachers like that in seminary. I could hardly wait to get out to do what they exhorted us to do, and it was usually because they were already doing what they were telling us to do.

“He that giveth.” Paul was not saying here that some have a special gift for giving, but others are not responsible to give. Every person who knows the Lord, should want to honor the Lord with what the Lord has given to him. Many words have been used to translate the word that Paul used here, such as sincerity, or, as it is in the KJV, “simplicity,” even liberally, as in James 1:5. But it all boils down to the fact that he is giving as unto the Lord, and not to have the praises of men. He has a sincere desire to glorify the Lord with His giving.

“He that ruleth.” This is lit. the person *who is placed in front*. Wuest says that this means doing things promptly, eagerly, and with all the strength that he has to put in it. “Diligently” is a good translation.

“He that showeth mercy, with cheerfulness.” The Good Samaritan in the Lord’s parable is a good illustration of showing mercy with cheerfulness. There are people in the church who act like they would rather pay to help someone in need, rather than being paid for it. They are never happier than when they helping someone else.

Sandy and Headlam describe it this way:

Cheerfulness in all paths of life, a cheerfulness which springs from a warm heart, and a pure conscience and a serene mind set on something above this world, was a special characteristic of the early Christian (Acts 2:46; 5:41; Phil. 1:4, 18; 2:18; 1 Thess. 5:16) (p. 358).

12:9 At this point the Apostle turned from speaking about particular gifts to deal with specific characteristics of godly behavior that are to be used in the exercise of those gifts, but also practical exhortations which apply to all believers in the pursuit of holiness. It is in doing what we are supposed to do, or in not doing what is inconsistent with the life of a child of God, that we are becoming what the Lord wants us to be. Holiness comes from God, but we partake of it by being obedient to the Word of God. There is no such thing as a holy, disobedient child of God. Instead, under the blessing of the Lord, the more obedient we are to the Word of God, the more holy we will be, if our obedience really comes from the heart. This is a fact that we all need to understand.

So these verses, down to the end of chapter 12, are the general characteristics which should be observable in every child of God. Each of us needs to be careful that, under the blessing of God and the guidance of the Spirit, these verses describe us. And so on each point we need to ask ourselves, *Is this a description of me?*

Paul mentioned “love” first to indicate that all of the following characteristics must be exercised in love. Paul’s reference to “dissimulation,” or hypocrisy, in connection with love, seems to indicate that Christians were inclined to speak of their love for each other, but that it was not genuine, it was not real. That can often be the case, too, when we talk about loving God. Calvin said that Christians often claim to love each other when in reality just the opposite is really the case. Peter, in exhorting believers concerning true Christian character and behavior, said,

8 And above all things have fervent charity [love] among yourselves: for charity [love] shall cover a multitude of sins (1 Pet. 4:8).

Haldane said,

Believers ought to throw the mantle of love over the numerous faults into which their brethren may fall, in their conduct toward them, and thus to hide them from their eyes, forgiving their faults, even as God, for Christ’s sake, has forgiven them (p. 564).

And so Sandy and Headlam say that “love is the ruling thought” (p. 360) in this passage, and we could add, concerning everything in the Christian love, lit. *unhypocritical love*. Love to be unhypocritical must come from the heart, not just from our lips. Paul told the Corinthian believers that we show ourselves to be true ministers, servants, of God “by love unfeigned.” God knows, and we know too, when we only pretend to love each other while in our hearts we may feel just the opposite.

Paul went on to say, “Abhor that which is evil.” He, of course, was talking about all kinds of sin. We are not just to avoid it; *we are to hate it*. But in the context of this statement it would seem that Paul was saying that when we say we love someone, and pretend to love them, but don’t really love them, this is “evil”; this is SIN!

Let’s make sure that we understand the word, “abhor.” We need to be horrified about sin. And the idea in this is a strong emphasis on separating ourselves from it, whatever sin it might be. We need to have strong convic-

tions against sin not only because of what sin does to us, but because of the harm that our sin can do to others. It is said about our Lord in Hebrews 1:9, quoted Psalm 45:6-7, that He “loved righteousness, and hated iniquity,” and so God “anointed Him with the oil of gladness above His fellows.” We are inclined to sin thinking that it will give us pleasure, when just the opposite is true. Holiness brings true joy, not sin.

So we are not just to think of sin that is something that is wrong, but something that we must hate. When Jethro, Moses’ father-in-law was advising him as to the kind of men Moses needed to help him, he told him to love not only for “men of truth,” or faithful men, but men who *hated covetousness*. See Exodus 18:21. And we are instructed in Jude 23 to hate even “the garment spotted by the flesh.” This, it seems, has to do with the clothes we wear.

The Psalmist said in words recorded for us in Psalm 119:163, “I hate and abhor lying: but thy law do I love.” And Solomon said in Proverbs 8:13, “The fear of the LORD is to hate evil: pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate.”

But the Apostle Paul added another exhortation to show that we cannot truly hate evil unless we “cleave to that which is good.” Negatives need to be replaced with positives. We can only and truly hate evil by cleaving to that which is good. So what does it mean to “cleave” to anything? Bishop Moule says that it means to be *fastened, or glued, wedded* to anything. In other words, we are to make that which is good *a part of ourselves*. Well, then, what is good? God is the supreme good, and the same goes for the Lord Jesus and the Holy Spirit. The Word of God is good. God’s people are good although none of us is perfect. But Paul had just told the Roman believers that we are fellow-members of the same body, the body of Christ. So when a child of God begins to neglect being with the people of God, that is not good. We need to take special notice of that which is called good in the Word of God, and cleave to it! Read it daily, and as often as you can each day. Meditate on it. Memorize it. Obey it. Do what the Psalmist said that he did. “Thy Word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against Thee” (Psa. 119:11).

There is a lot of practical truth in verse 9, but there is more to come. How are we doing when we apply what we are reading to our own lives?

12:10 This verse has to do with our relationship to each other in the family of God.

One of the first evidences that we have been truly saved, is that there will be in our hearts a love for the brethren. There are different words used to describe our relationship to each other as Christians. We have already had one here in Romans 12: we are all members of one body, the body of Christ. But now here in this verse we have another: we are all members of the family of God. We call God, “Our Father.” So this means that we need to love each other the same way we love those who have the same father and mother that we do. Families are so torn apart today. Many children don’t even live with both a father and a mother because of divorces. We speak of non-functional families, families that don’t act like families. I had students when I was teaching at Multnomah who had trouble enjoying the truth that God was their heavenly Father because they had been so grossly mistreated by their earthly father. But many of us can say that we feel closer to our brothers and sisters in Christ than we do to our biological brothers and sisters. Often our brothers and sisters in the flesh do not share our faith in Christ, so we feel more at home with fellow-believers than we do with our natural kin.

But we all know that our relationship with each other in the family of God often leaves much to be desired. And it must have been this way in the early days of the church for Paul to give such an exhortation. Paul meant that each believer is responsible to make sure that a strong family relationship with others in the family of God is maintained. And we can do this without compromising with the truth. There must never be such a compromise in the family of God. But we need to emphasize those major points upon which we agree than others

where there might be disagreement.

A good example of brotherly love was demonstrated by George Whitefield on one occasion when someone asked him about another Christian leader who lived at the same time. Whitefield was a Calvinist, and the other man was John Wesley, an Arminian. That person asked Whitefield if we could expect to see Wesley in heaven. Whitefield responded by saying, "No, I don't think that we will." But then he went on to explain. He said, "I think that John Wesley will be so close to the Lord, and we so far back, that we probably won't be able to see him." I hope that Wesley felt the same way about Whitefield. We all, like the Apostle Paul, "now see through a glass darkly." But the day is coming when we will be "face to face" with the truth. And it is interesting that Paul said this in what is often called, the love chapter of the Bible – 1 Corinthians 13. Whitefield was being "kindly affectioned" toward Wesley "with brotherly love; in honor preferring one another." You see, what often mars our fellowship is that we forget to speak the truth "in love" (Eph. 4:15). If we who call ourselves Calvinists, were more loving, there might be more of God's people who would be asking us for a reason for the hope that is in us. Cf. 1 Peter 3:15.

Charles Hodge said in his commentary on Romans, "Christians should love each other . . . as if they were the nearest relatives" (p.369).

12:11 "Not slothful in business" – This verse has to do with "serving the Lord." "Business" is probably not the best translation. The same word is translated "with diligence" in verse 8. The idea is that in "serving the Lord, we are not to be slothful, lazy, or that we should look upon whatever we do for the Lord as something that we can do when we can get around to it. The NASB translates this phrase, "Not lagging behind in diligence." Many, even among the Lord's people, there are those who are truly saved, but they soon fall by the wayside. Perhaps they feel that the Lord is not working like they would like to see Him work. Prayers are not being answered. People are not being saved. Only the Lord can keep us faithful in such times. A word that is akin to diligence is the word perseverance. Another is faithfulness. Our responsibility is to be faithful to the Lord even when the results are meager.

This is the negative side that we have been talking about. The positive is, "fervent in spirit, serving the Lord."

So instead of growing cold and falling by the wayside, we are to be prompt and diligent, refusing to give up, eager to serve the Lord. "Fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." This is in agreement with what Solomon said in Ecclesiastes 9:10:

10 Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest.

Perhaps the best way to describe the meaning of a word or phrase, is with an illustration. These same words, "fervent in spirit," are used to Acts 18:25 to describe Apollos. Let me read to you how Luke describe him in writing the book of Acts:

24 And a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures, came to Ephesus.

25 This man was instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in the spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John.

26 And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue: whom when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly.

27 And when he was disposed to pass into Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him: who, when he was come, helped them much which had believed through grace:

28 For he mightily convinced the Jews, and that publickly, shewing by the scriptures that Jesus was Christ (Acts 18:24-28).

Apollos was “fervent in spirit.” I don’t think that the word “spirit” here refers to the Holy Spirit (although Apollos probably was filled with the Holy Spirit. But the phrase means that he was “fervent,” on fire, *in his own spirit*. This was a way of saying the he was genuinely fervent. It was not just a lot of external enthusiasm, but it came from within, from his spirit, or, to state it another way, *from his heart*. Almost everything having to do with the Christian life can be counterfeited. That is what a hypocrite is, an actor, one who assumes a role which is not a true portrayal of what he is inside. But if we are truly “serving the Lord,” we need to remember that we might deceive people by our outer appearance, but we cannot deceive the Lord. He looks on the heart.

The life of a Christian can be described as “serving the Lord.” And Paul’s word for “serving” here indicates that he is talking about *a bondservice*. It is not just when we are preparing to teach, or actually teaching, but whatever we do, we are to do for the glory of God, even down to what we eat and drink. Cf. 1 Corinthians 10:31. And it would apply to the way we respond to the exhortations given here in this passage which we are considering. We must not delay in doing what the Lord asks us to do. Nor should we do it reluctantly or half-heartedly, but do it immediately, and joyfully, and continuously, and fervently. It is like a pastor I heard say that he would rather do what he was doing without pay than to get paid for doing anything else. The word “fervent” in Greek was used of boiling water. The Apostle Paul was himself an excellent example of being “fervent in spirit.” And our Lord, even more so. He was determined to do the will of the Father, and to finish the work that the Father had given Him to do, regardless of the opposition, and regardless of the cost. In living holy lives we are serving the Lord as He loves to be served.

Now before we go into verse 12, let me give you a statement from John Brown, who was a Scotch Presbyterian, and who ministered in Edinburgh back in the 1800's. He believed that at this point there was another turning point in Paul’s exhortations, and he described in the following words which I want to read to you. He said, The apostle having thus enjoined on the Roman Christians the cultivation of a warm and diffusive charity towards all men, and a tender and respectful brotherly affection towards each other, and a diligent and fervent prosecution of the service of their common Lord, proceeds to give them a variety of advices, all of them having a reference to that state of privation, self-sacrifice, and exposure to persecution, in which, as Christians, they were placed. These reach to the end of the chapter. Some of these advices refer to the tempers they should cultivate, and the duties they should perform as individuals, in the circumstances in which they were placed; some refer to the manner in which they should behave to(ward) their persecuted brethren; and others, to the manner in which they should conduct themselves toward their enemies (pp. 462, 463).

12:12 “Hope” is a word with special significance for the child of God. In everyday language we use it to express a degree of uncertainty. We hope this will happen, or we hope that that will not happen. But it is exactly the opposite in many places where it is used, such as here in this verse. “Hope” has to do with the future, but it is absolutely certain. As Haldane again has said, “hope is founded on faith, and faith on the divine testimony” (p. 565). Brown said that hope “signifies the expectation of future good” (p. 463). “Hope” is an important word in Romans. Paul used it fifteen times. Cf. 4:18 (2x); 5:2, 4, 5; 8:20, 24 (4x), 25; here; 15:4, 13 (2x). Whatever is promised in the Word, we can hope for with absolute and total certainty. Abraham could hope for a son since God had promised him a son. We can hope with real confidence in the promises of God because “he is faithful that promised.” The greatest hope we have is “the blessed hope” of the return of our Savior. So day after day we are to be “rejoicing in hope.” We are to be happy about it. In writing to the church at Colosse, Paul spoke of “the hope that is laid up for you in heaven.” In that great thirteenth chapter of 1 Corinthians Paul said that “love . . . hopeth all things” (1 Cor. 13:&). This is what sustains us and keeps us moving along in the service of the Lord. But we have to train ourselves to rejoice in hope. All things are under the sovereign control of our God, His Son, and the Lord Jesus Christ. Our Lord gives us victory over the world, the flesh, and the Devil. The battle gets severe at times, but we persevere in the hope that we have in the Lord. We even are to be “rejoicing in hope.” The world has nothing to compare with our hope. This is to

sustain us through all of the trials of our lives. Sanday and Headlam wrote in their commentary, The Christian hope is the cause of that Christian joy and cheerfulness of disposition which is the grace of Christian love (p. 362).

And that is probably why the Apostle Paul followed “rejoicing in hope” with “patient in tribulation” and “continuing instant in prayer. There is usually a purpose even in the order in which Paul mentions things, even exhortations, in his letters.

And so after “rejoicing in hope,” we have “patient in tribulation.” Referring again to 1 Corinthians 13, “love” also “endureth all things.” Sanday and Headlam point out “how strongly, even thus early, persecution as a characteristic of the Christian’s life in the world had impressed itself on St. Paul’s phraseology” (p. 362). And yet the Lord Jesus told His disciples that they were to expect from the world what the world had given to Him. Do you remember His words which are found in John 15? Let me read them to you:

18 If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you.

19 If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.

20 Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also.

21 But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me.

22 If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloke for their sin.

23 He that hateth me hateth my Father also.

24 If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father.

25 But this cometh to pass, that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, They hated me without a cause (John 15:18-25).

This is why people hate our President. He has declared his faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. They hate Christ, and so they hate those who belong to Christ. But remember: this includes you and me too.

But notice what the Lord said about tribulation: “Patient in tribulation.” What is tribulation? It is affliction. It is suffering. It is persecution. Sometimes it is just abandonment. It includes everything that the world does to hurt us. But what does it mean to be patient? Does it mean that we don’t fight back? Yes. Does it mean more than that? Yes. The word patient which Paul used here means that we persevere. There used to be a saying among Christians that we are to “keep on keeping on”! Just because they don’t like our message, doesn’t mean that we quit giving it. Again an illustration from Scripture will help us to understand what Paul meant when he said, “**patient** in tribulation.”

Peter and John formed a team in preaching the Gospel. Undoubtedly the other apostles teamed up in pairs to do the same thing. But we are told specifically about Peter and John. They had healed a man in Jerusalem who had never walked. He was lame from birth. And he was forty years of age at the time he was healed. But this led to a great opportunity to preach the Gospel. The priests, the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees, and some of the elders told Peter and John that they were not “to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus” (Acts 4:18). This meant that they were to stop preaching the Gospel *immediately*! What did they do? Did they agree not to, and then went ahead anyway? Or did they promise that they wouldn’t, but then went underground?

What did they do? They told those Jewish leaders this:

19b Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye.

20 For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard (Acts 4:19b-20).

Now that is perseverance. That is what it means to be patient. You graciously tell your enemies what you are going to do, and (and this is important) you get prepared to take the consequences. They had a mission given to them from the Lord, and they were prepared to follow through even if it mean death!

The Apostle Paul was like that too. As he met with the Ephesian elders for the last time on earth, he said this:

22 And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there:

23 Save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me.

24 But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God (Acts 20:22-24).

That is perseverance. Lit. the word patient means *to remain under*, under the will of God, regardless of the opposition, determined to please God rather than men.

But let us remember that we can only act like Peter and John and Paul acted under persecution by the grace and power of the Holy Spirit. According to tradition, all three of those men died rather than stop preaching the Gospel. They died, but the Gospel continues to this very day. So we need to persevere in doing God's will even when we are being persecuted, and even when it may cost us our lives.

A short time later Peter and John were arrested again, and were told again not to speak in the name of Jesus. Just before this they were beaten, and then let go. These beating were often with anything less than forty stripes, but usually not much less. How did it affect the apostles. Acts 5: 41 and 42 tell us:

41 And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name.

42 And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.

These are amazing stories that are absolutely true. This is being "patient in tribulation."

But this is not all that we must do. Next Paul said, "Continuing instant in prayer."

"Continuing instant" is another verb which can be translated, *persevering*, *persevering in prayer*. And being in the present tense, it means *praying all of the time*. It means that we are to pray without ceasing. We can give ourselves to prayer in a special way when trouble is near, but we are not to wait for that. Prayer is to be just as much a part of our lives as it is for us to breathe. Let me give you another illustration. Paul and Silas were beaten for preaching the Gospel in Philippi, and then thrown into the inner prison where there would be the least possibility and their feet were locked in the stocks. Their backs were bleeding and sore. What did they do? Well, it seems that they were so miserable that they could not sleep, and so we are told that "at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them" (Acts 16:25). And about that time the Lord sent an earthquake, and you know rest of the story: the jailor and all of his family were saved! When Paul and Silas couldn't do anything else, they prayed and sang praises to the Lord. And the Lord heard them, and then great things happened.

Now we are ready for verse 13.

12:13 Here Paul turned from what the people of God were to do for themselves to what they ought to be doing for others who were in the family of God: "Distributing to the needs of the saints." The teaching of the epistles is that the church is to do what they can to help others in their church, or other churches, who are in special need. I find it very interesting that the Greek word which is translated here "distributing" is the verb from which the Greeks got their word which is translated *fellowship*. And this has led to the idea of *sharing*. When we have fellowship with each other, we are sharing the truth with each other. We are sharing what the

Lord is doing in our lives with others who share with us what the Lord is doing in their lives. But Paul was talking here about another kind of sharing, sharing what we have with others in the church who do not have what they need – food, clothing, bedding, money to pay bills. And this is not just when people are without these items. It can be when there is sickness so that preparing food is a problem. You find in the epistles that the saints in Jerusalem were among those who were having the worst times. And so churches throughout the Empire would take up collections, and certain ones would be delegated to take the monetary gift to the saints in Jerusalem. The church is not a social institution to take care of a whole community. It is certainly free to help others outside of the church when that is possible. But believers are obligated under God to do what they can to care for their people in need.

Paul himself was the recipient of this kind of support. Cf. Phil. 4:10-20. (Read.) So this would include support for missionaries and pastors and any others who are devoting their lives to serving the Lord.

Notice how Paul referred to the Lord's people. They are "saints." I heard a reporter ask a Catholic if the Pope was going to be a saint. He'd better be, or it will be too bad for him. A saint is one whom the Lord has set apart for Himself. He is one who belongs to the Lord, and is very dear to the Lord. Every person who is trusting Christ for salvation, is a saint. You don't become a saint after you die. If you die without Christ, there is no hope that you will ever be saved. So all true Christians are "saints," people who have been saved by the Lord, who belong to the Lord, as, as saints, are very dear to the Lord.

And along with what we have been talking about, we need to be "given to hospitality." This means opening our homes to Christians who are passing through, or to believers we know who for any reason temporarily have no place to stay. I can think back on times when Lucille and I have had some of the Lord's people in our home as some of the greatest blessings we have ever experienced as a family. Cf. the first three verses of Hebrews 13:

- 1 Let brotherly love continue.
- 2 Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.
- 3 Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body (Heb. 13:1-3).

When we seek to be a blessing to others, however that may be, we always find that in being a blessing, we are blessed.

12:14 While we as Christian are saints, set apart for the Lord, being made holy, yet we are still in the flesh, still human, and prone to react like other human being do. But as we are taught, for example, in Isaiah 55:8 and 9, that our ways are vastly different from God's ways, and that His ways are infinitely better than our ways, so as His people we have to learn his ways. My natural reaction to someone who persecutes me, is to let him know that I don't like what he has done, and to hope that something bad will happen to him. By nature we don't seek our enemies welfare, but trouble at least equal to what he has done to me. However, the Lord's way is that we are to be a blessing to everyone regardless of what the circumstances might be. So if someone persecutes me, I am to speak well of him, and even to him. I can say sincerely, "the Lord bless you." Or you can tell him that you will pray for him.

The Apostle Paul was here reflecting what the Lord Jesus taught while He was here on earth. You find His words concerning our enemies in Matt 5:43-48:

- 43 Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy.
- 44 But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which spitefully use you, and persecute you;
- 45 That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.

46 For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same?

47 And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so?

48 Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

Obviously, this is not easy. Obedience to the Word of God never is easy. We need the Lord to work in us both to will and to do what is pleasing to Him. Now this is one thing that really pleases Him. And if it pleases Him, it is going to be good for us, and that means that it will bring blessing to us. One commentator has said that the Apostle really is repeating the command in the first part of verse 14, when he said in the latter part of the verse, "Bless, and curse not." And that in doing this Paul was recognizing not only that it really needed to be done, but that it would be hard to do it because it is so contrary to what by nature we would rather do or say. But that is one reason why we have to be praying continually. In prayer we are expressing our dependence upon the Lord, and seeking the grace and strength to do what He wants us to do so that we won't do what we otherwise would do.

12:15 I think we can see as we go through these exhortations, that in all of them love is being exercised in doing, or in not doing, as the case may be – and I am speaking of both our love for God as well as our love for the people of God. But even with those who are our enemies, those who try to make life miserable for us mainly because we are Christians, God's love in us is brought out in our behavior. It is probably easier for us to weep with those who weep than it is for us to rejoice with those who rejoice.

Let's say that you are a member of the Philadelphia Eagles, and you have been working hard with your team so that you can beat the New England Patriots, and then you lose by just three points. You see the Patriots jumping up and down, so happy that they have won their third Super Bowl title, wouldn't you find it rather hard to rejoice with those who were rejoicing. Or if you work for a company, and you have worked hard for an advancement, just to see someone else, perhaps someone who made life difficult for you, get the position, could you rejoice with those who rejoice. Or if you are a young unmarried man, and you have gotten interested in a young unmarried lady, both of you are Christians, but suddenly another young unmarried man comes along and the young lady you are interested in falls in love with him, and they get married. Wouldn't it be hard to rejoice with those who rejoice?

Perhaps you have been in a situation different from any of these, but you have been left behind while others were rejoicing where you had hoped to rejoice. If there are two pastors in a certain city, and people seem to leave one church to go to the other, can the pastor who is being deserted rejoice in the blessing that seems to come to the other pastor, while people are leaving him? It's no problem to rejoice over a marriage where you have no interest, or in the birth of someone's baby unless you have not been able to have a baby. Life is hard, and we all are on the wrong side at some time or other. But the Lord's Word stands: "Rejoice with those that do rejoice."

But I'll tell you that the one who has learned to rejoice with those who do rejoice, is going to be the one who will be the most inclined to weep with those who weep. If you have wept over some real disappointment or tragedy in your life, you will probably be the first to go to those who are weeping.

When I went to Dallas Theological Seminary, I went there to be under the ministry of Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer. In those days it meant something to be "a Dallas man." Dallas men were known to be expositors of the Word, and that is what I wanted to be. When I became a student I soon learned that Mrs. Chafer was in a bed in their home, and she had not known him for three or four years. She was unconscious. During the summer before school started one of our students and his wife had been out during the summer months working with the Child Evangelism Fellowship in various camps. His name was Alan Hamilton. During the summer his wife came down with an illness. I am not sure that I remember what it was, but it seems that it was a strep throat infection. After a few days she died, and he came back to the seminary alone.

Shortly after Alan's wife died, Mrs. Chafer died too. Alan's wife had been buried when Mrs. Chafer's funeral was conducted. Dr. Harry Ironside was at the seminary for special lectures at the Seminary. He and Dr. Chafer had been friends for many years. After the message all of us who were students filed by the open casket. I have never forgotten what happened when Alan got there and went over to Dr. Chafer who was standing by the casket. Dr. Chafer was a short man; Alan was about the tallest in the student body. But suddenly both of those men were locked in each other's arms, and the tears were flowing, not only down their cheeks, but the same thing was happening to most of the rest of us. Paul said, "Weep with those who weep."

But there doesn't have to be one death, or two, for this verse to apply. Believers cry for many different reasons. It is good to remember that "Jesus wept" when Lazarus died. He is touched with the feeling of our infirmities. We often weep over our sins, don't we? And when you are with someone who weeps over their sins, doesn't it move you to tears? Often a mother will be moved to tears when her little child has been frightened for some reasons, and begins to cry. Paul didn't use any illustrations here. He just said, "Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with those that weep." These are emotions at the two ends of the spectrum of life, aren't they? We experience joy unspeakable at times, but live in a vale of tears. The word here is sympathy. Our Lord is touched with all the feeling of our infirmity, and if we are to be like He is, we need to learn to rejoice with those who rejoice, really rejoice, but also to weep with those who weep.

12:16 Here the Apostle Paul was appealing for unity among believers. Many years ago now an attempt was made to unify all church in what was called *the National Council of Churches*. A more recent name is *the ecumenical movement*. This was an expansion of the same idea that the NCC had, only on a world-wide basis. And it has been a movement to unite all religions. With the drift toward modernism that many churches have taken, the only way there could be a unification of churches was to minimize the importance of doctrine. It was argued that doctrine divides us, so we need to find the points upon which we can agree and let the others go. The only trouble about that was that the doctrines upon which churches could not agree were the major doctrines of the Bible. For example, the Bible. Is it the Word of God, or does it just contain the Word of God? Another example was Christ – was He the Son of God, or was He just another of the prophets? Did He rise from the dead, or did His disciples just say that He was truly raised? If He was raised from the dead, was it a physical resurrection, or just spiritual? On and on I could go. It was immediately apparent to true Christians that there could be no unity if those, and other great doctrines of the Scripture were denied. So you had churches pulling out of the major denomination, and either going independent, or establishing denominations based upon the doctrines of Scripture.

As I have pointed out in previous lessons, doctrine, biblical doctrine, is foundational. Without the doctrine of the Bible, anyone is at liberty to describe what a Christian is. We have even seen how men like Billy Graham sought to bring Roman Catholics and liberal Protestants together with evangelical churches for the purpose of evangelism. The whole idea is utterly ridiculous. It is like mixing oil and water.

I call your attention to the word, the verb, *mind*. It speaks of the way a person thinks, but it also includes a moral interest in thinking the right way. It speak of being convicted, deeply convicted about what you believe. It is rare that you find a person like that. President Bush is a person like that. People call him stubborn because he won't move over and make room for the liberals. Why should he? So much of what they stand for is wrong, terribly wrong. They support abortion and gay lifestyle living and marriages. They would put us under the UN, and now they are finding out that the UN is full of corruption. Saddam Hussein would still be defying the UN if he were still in power.

But in churches you find the same kind of confusion, the same kind of compromise with the world. There is no attempt to seek God, to repent of our sins as a nation, to recognize that what has been wrong is the past, is still wrong, and it will always be wrong. We jump first one way, and then another, in our attempt to satisfy the

“rights” of everybody, but where are the people who show any concern for the rights that God has over our lives. He is our Creator, and for many of us, He is our Savior, our Lord. The church of Jesus Christ needs to stand united about the Bible, about Christ, about salvation, about the way we should live. It is all in the Bible, and much more, but we keep moving away from the Scriptures. And the more we do, the worse it is going to get.

Now we are not going to change the world, but we have a responsibility as the Lord’s people to study the Word, learn its truth, and then refuse to let anyone move us one word away from the truth of God’s Word. And this includes both its doctrine, and its practice. When our Lord was here on earth He pointed out the disastrous effect of division. And you find His words in Matthew 12:25 and Luke 11:17. Let me read Matthew’s account to you:

Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand (Matt. 12:25).

You see again that our main problem has to do with our minds and the way we think. The world today would have us believe that for all of us to be united in our thinking, is a sign of weakness. But the opposite is true, and this is where the Word of God comes in. We have to work to think like we should because no one is thinking right unless he or she is thinking in agreement with the truth of Scripture. Let us never apologize to anyone about the Bible – never! May we as Christians be determined to settle our differences by coming together in a spirit of love and humility to see what the Bible teaches.

Long ago David penned these words under the direction of the Holy Spirit:

- 1 Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!
- 2 It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments;
- 3 As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the LORD commanded the blessing, even life for evermore (Psa. 133:1-3).

Listen to Paul’s words in Eph 4:1-6

- 1 I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called,
- 2 With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love;
- 3 Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.
- 4 There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling;
- 5 One Lord, one faith, one baptism,
- 6 One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.

Listen to the way Paul began his first letter to the church at Corinth:

- 10 Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.
- 11 For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you (1 Cor. 1:10-11).

To the church at Philippi Paul wrote in Philippians 2:2, “Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.” And then he added in Phil 3:15-16:

- 15 Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you.
- 16 Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing.

We have been learning in our Bible Memory this winter has been that one of the things that the Lord hates is “he that soweth discord among brethren” (Prov.6:19).

But we are not through with verse 16. Paul added to what we have just been considering, “Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate.” The verb “mind” in this statement is the same verb that we had in the first statement of this verse. It is the verb *φρονέω*. So it has to do with the way we think, and the things we do because of the way we think.

The word “men” is not in the original Greek of this statement, so it could actually read, “Mind not high things, but condescend to things of low estate.” Or it could read, “Mind not high men, but condescend to men of low estate.” In other words, it includes both, men and things.

James wrote about this very problem in the second chapter of his epistle. Cf. James 2:1-10.

There is always the idea that if you get the football players, or the girls on the yell squad, you will get the rest of the students. Or if you get the politicians in Washington, you will start a revival that will sweep over the whole country. But that is not true. When the Lord chose His disciples, He did not aim at the leaders of the Jews, He chose fishermen, and even one publican. It is true that he chose Nicodemus and Saul of Tarsus, a Pharisee, but they were exceptions rather than the rule. Joseph and Mary were not rich people. Read also 1 Corinthians 1:26-31. It doesn't mean that when we build our churches we must have the finest building with all of the latest equipment. If we get that, let us be thankful, but remember that the blessing of the Lord does not depend on buildings or the latest technology. I think I got a better education over fifty years ago in buildings in Dallas, Texas where we didn't even have air conditioning than you can get today.

The word “condescend” which Paul used here is an interesting word. Lit. it means *to be carried away with something* – either men or things. Paul wanted the Roman Christians to understand how important this point was! Rome was the kind of a city where people were inclined to feel that the higher a man was, either politically or financially, the more desirable he would be if he were a Christian. Paul, when he spoke of the “low” as compared with the “high” he was not contrasting the rich with the riffraff of Rome. But he was contrasting the high and the mighty with those “have nots,” who nevertheless were responsible people, seeking to do what was right, who worked hard to support their families, but who lived on a level like people in our Lord's parables who had to be paid every day because they did not make enough to have much of a reserve on hand.

Good, hardworking poor people are often the cream of the crop. Do you know that Spurgeon's Tabernacle was made up mainly of poor people? They didn't have much but the Lord, but their material needs made them understand how great were the spiritual needs of people, and so they gave themselves to prayer. And when we get to heaven we may find that they, humanly speaking, were the making of Spurgeon's ministry.

So Paul was saying that in seeking people with the Gospel we ought to go after those who are in the lower segments of society, and we ought to be satisfied if we don't have the latest equipment and the most lavish facilities for our churches. I am not saying that it is wrong to possess these things, nor is it wrong to seek to lead high society people to Christ. But he was saying that the low places, and lowly people, and less than the best of things, should have the greatest priority with us.

We can say also that Paul was teaching contentment. It is easy to feel that if we had more influential people and better facilities, that we would be able to serve the Lord better. That is not true either. God gives us what we have in the way of people and in the way of property. And we are to serve the Lord with what we have because that is the way the Lord gets the greatest glory.

“Be not wise in your own conceits.” Lit. this could be translated as Matthew Henry translated it, “Be not wise by yourselves.” This means that none of us is to think that we know it all, that we know more than anyone else, and so we really don't need anyone else. We even have to guard ourselves against thinking that we know more

Bible than anyone else does. There is always more that we need to learn. And there are always people around us who can teach us. We are always to exercise what we know with the greatest humility. We all need each other. There is no such thing with the Lord as a one man ministry. S & H (p. 364) said that this part of verse 16 Paul may have taken from the first part of Proverbs 3:7, "Be not wise in thine own eyes." Conceit and pride are never to be displayed in the behavior of those of us who know the Lord. Even Paul said, "Now we see through a glass, darkly" (1 Cor. 13:12).

12:17 Behind many such statements in Scripture is the fact that we are going to meet with opposition of various kinds from the world. The Lord did not hide this fact from His disciples, nor did the apostles hide it from those who were saved under their ministries. The Lord Jesus told His disciples, "In the world ye shall have tribulation" (John 16:33). Paul told Timothy, "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Tim. 3:12). As Paul and Barnabas were completing their first missionary journey, they retraced their steps, ministering where they had been before in Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch,

22 Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God (Acts 14:22).

But we are not to do people in the world, nor even to profess believers in Christ, as they do to us. What the people of the world sometimes do to the people of God is contrary to what we would expect from other human beings, that is, normal human behavior. We often hear the expression, "man's inhumanity to man." What others do to us is never justification for us to retaliate in kind. John Brown made this comment, however, which is helpful:

This command does not prohibit Christians from availing themselves of the institutions of society [*i.e.*, courts of law] to defend their persons, property, and reputation from lawless violence, or to obtain redress when they have been injured, or to secure themselves from a repetition of the injury; *but it does forbid everything in the nature of vindictive retaliation* [italics mine] (pp. 472, 473).

There is a tendency in all of our hearts to want to get even with people who wrong us. This is what Paul was dealing with here in verse 17. Keep verse 14 in mind. And, as Haldane brings out, it is only by faith, trusting the Lord, that we must not only work to overcome this tendency in our practice, but also in our hearts.

The contrast in this verse is between κακός and καλός; the former is translated "evil," the latter, "honest."

The same principle is expressed by the Apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 8:21, "Providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men," where "honest" is also a translation of καλός. Getting even is a way of life in the world, but we as the people of God are not to play like the world does. One of the main ideas in καλός is that of having everything as it ought to be, and really as the world expects it to be in the lives of the people of God. Or to state it another way, in καλός the idea is one of completeness, or beauty, which was very desirable to the Greek mind. Quoting Brown again, he said,

To provide things honest in the sight of all men, is to add to the substantial virtues of Christianity, such as piety, truth, justice, beneficence, chastity, and temperance—a temper and a behavior fitted to command the respect and esteem of mankind at large. Christians ought assuredly "not to be conformed," in order to avoid the contempt and secure the good will of the worldly. But they are carefully to avoid acting in a way which might necessarily sharpen their (*i.e.*, the world's) dislike and strengthen their prejudice in reference to Christianity and Christians, and give plausibility to their misrepresentation of both. There should be nothing mean, nothing suspicious, about the character and conduct of a Christian (p. 473).

Note how love figures into all of this.

12:18 Peace ought always to be our primary objective, but not at the expense of true doctrine, nor of holy

conduct. Remember that the Lord Jesus in His Sermon on the Mount, said, "Blessed are the peacemakers; for they shall be called the children of God" (Matt. 5:9). "As much as lieth in you" means that the reality of our relationship with the Lord and our walk with Him will be tested to the limit. It is not a matter of "peace at any price" because we must never seek peace with men if it means compromising with the truth.

As usual, Haldane has an excellent comment on verse 18. Here is what he said:

... it may sometimes be impossible for Christians to obtain peace. When this is the case, they must submit to it as one of the greatest afflictions; but we ought to recollect that it is God who giveth us peace with men, and to seek it from Him with ardent prayer, as well as from men, by unremitting endeavors after it. When deprived of it, we ought also to inquire whether there be not a cause of this in ourselves; for "when a man's ways please the Lord, He maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him" (Prov. 16:9) (p. 572).

But Haldane added a word of caution from Calvin, to the effect we should not be so anxious to secure the approval of men that we refuse to accept, for Christ's sake, "the hatred of any human being, when necessary" (*Ibid.*).

12:19 As we began this series of brief, but extremely important exhortations, I pointed out that love is a dominant theme throughout. You see this in verse 9a, all of verse 10, 13, 14, 15, and even the first part of 17. However, giving such brief commandments for the Roman believers to follow, could seem overwhelming to the reader, or to the one who is hearing someone else read the epistle. But to show that that was not the case, as Paul comes down to the conclusion of these exhortation, he suddenly injects some love of his own for the people of God. And he did this by calling them, "Beloved" (an adjective formed from the root of the verb, ἀγαπάω, or most of you will know the Greek word, ἀγάπη).

Back in Romans 5:5 Paul had reminded the Roman believers that "the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is in us." It is the love which God exercised toward us, "commendeth . . . toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8). There is no love like the love of God. It is an undeserved love. There certainly was nothing in us that would attract His love. If His love had been based upon our merit, God would have turned away in disgust, even in wrath! He loves the unlovely (because that is what all of us were, and still are, in many respects). Now if the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts, it is going to manifest itself. But it is not through our self-effort, but a love that flows out by the power of the Holy Spirit. No child of God who reads over these commands thoughtfully, is ready to say as the children of Israel said about the Law: "All that the Lord hath spoken we will do" (Ex. 19:8). We know that it is only by the grace of God that we can do anything that the Lord wants us to do, if it is going to be real obedience. John Brown had this to say about Paul addressing the Roman believers as "beloved":

The cause of the apostle's prefacing this prohibition with the compellation "Dearly beloved," is to be found either in the earnestness which he felt in pressing this matter on their attention – so important to individual Christian improvement, as well as to the credit and progress of the Christian cause – or to impress on the minds that his urging them not to avenge themselves, did by no means proceed from indifference to them and their interest, or want of sympathy under the wrongs done to them (Brown, p.475).

What Paul wrote to Timothy later, that "all that shall live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution," was true for the believers in Rome. It is true for us today. The key words in that statement are "live godly." Godliness is the result of obeying what Paul had been telling them to do. The world has no place for *godly living*. It is convicting to them. They want to get rid of it. And when they can't get rid of it, they will persecute it.

So Paul was very sympathetic with them. He had experienced the opposition constantly himself. So he knew that he was teaching a way of life that was going to get them in trouble with the people of the world, but it was, at the same time, a way of life that was going to bring the blessing of God. The Lord Jesus Himself had taught

what Paul was teaching here. Do you remember the last two Beatitudes found in Matthew 5:10-12?

10 Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

11 Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.

12 Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

Remember that Paul was not talking about getting arrested for breaking the law in some way. He was talking about being persecuted “for righteousness’ sake,” or for Jesus’ sake.

In telling the Roman believers to do, or not to do, these things, he was not trying to get them into trouble. He loved them too much to do anything like that. But in love he was telling them what the Lord wanted them to do, and warning them to expect trouble for being holy in a wicked world.

“Avenge not yourselves” – This is a repetition of what Paul had already said in verses 14, 17, and 18, and the theme which is carried out now to the end of chapter 12. To avenge ourselves is to take revenge on someone who has done something bad to us. It is the old principle established in the Law – the Lord spoke of this also in His Sermon on the Mount. We find his words in Matthew 5:38-42:

38 Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye , and a tooth for a tooth:

39 But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.

40 And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also.

41 And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain.

42 Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.

The quotation that the Lord was referring to came from Exodus 21:22-25. There the idea is retaliation. You were allowed to get even under the Law. But that changed following the coming of Christ. And, as I think we have seen before, the Lord spoke specifically of this as He brought His Sermon on the Mount to a close. Let me read to you again from Matthew 5:43-48:

43 Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy.

44 But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;

45 That ye may be [become] the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.

46 For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same?

47 And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so?

48 Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

There is in all of us the inclination to feel that if someone does something bad to us, we want to do something just as bad to them, and maybe a little worse. The Lord was not saying that we just take whatever people want to do to us, let them walk all over us like they would a rug, or clean their feet on us like they would a doormat. Nor does it mean that we are to give people whatever they want, and as much as they want. It is all in the context of getting even. But it does mean that instead of always wanting to get even, we respond positively to people, seeking to keep whatever peace there may have been before, rather than prolonging the trouble by changing blows with someone who has hit us. God wants His children to suffer wrong rather than to try to get even.

Now the reason for this is that vengeance is the Lord’s business, not ours. Look at the way the Apostle Paul presented it. He said, “for it is written.” Greek scholars tell us that this means, *it stands written*. There are

some things in the OT that do not apply to us today. "Eye for an eye" is one of them. But when the Lord said, as He did many times, "It is written," He meant that what He was about to say still applies. For example, when the Devil tempted the Lord three times, three times the Lord responded by saying, "It is written," *it stands written*. And each time our Lord quoted an OT passage, those three happened to be from the book of Deuteronomy – Deut. 8:3; 6:16, 13. Our Lord said, "It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone . . ." Then He said, "It is written again, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." And then a third time He said, "It is written, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve." These are truths that applied in OT times, and they applied in our Lord's day, and they still apply. They will always apply. Why? Because "it is written," and it is a part of the OT that *stands written without any change*.

This what Paul was saying here in Romans 12:19. God has always been the One Who defends His people, the One Who takes vengeance upon their enemies. And just think how many, many times He did this, often wiping out whole nations. The Lord reserves the right to do nothing. But if we leave it up to Him, He will repay those who wrong us in ways that we never could. It not only stands written, but it is written that He said it: "saith the Lord"! Moses said it, but he was simply repeating what the Lord had said to him. And so Moses could say, as he said over and over again, "Thus saith the Lord."

So it is very clear that Paul here was claiming divine authority for what He was writing. If any believer did not like what Paul was saying, their argument was with the Lord, not with Paul.

Now let us see what follows.

12:20 "Therefore" – It is conclusion time. If we see that our enemy is without food, is hungry, what are we to do? Shall we just close our eyes to what we have seen, and go away? Should we tell him that he is getting what he deserves? No to all of this. Paul said, "Feed him." "If he thirst – give him drink." Why? What is the purpose? What did Paul say? "For in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head."

This also was taken from an OT passage:

21 If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink:

22 For thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head, and the LORD shall reward thee (Prov. 25:21-22).

Sandy and Headlam say that some explain this as meaning that we will be consoled by knowing that our enemy is eventually going to be punished by the Lord, and he will get what he deserves. But that is a purely self-centered attitude which is entirely out of keeping with the meaning of the context of the verse. Instead, as S & H go on to explain,

Coals of fire must, therefore, mean, as most commentators since Augustine have said, 'the burning pangs of shame,' which a man will feel when good is returned for evil, and which may produce remorse and penitence and contrition (p. 365).

We never really know how the Lord is going to work, but we always need to keep in mind why we are here on earth. The moment we are saved, we are totally prepared to go to heaven, and the Lord could immediately call us "home." But He doesn't! Why? Why does He leave us here? I can think of three possible reasons which are all supported by Scripture:

- 1) We are left here to glorify God by the lives we live, the words we say, the works we do.
- 2) We are left here that we might grow in the Lord, grow in our likeness to the Lord.
- 3) And this third one especially applies in this case: we are here to be witnesses of the Lord Jesus Christ and His power to save His people from their sins.

Our Lord is our great Example of what Paul was saying here. When He was suffering and dying on the Cross,

and the crowd around Him was saying all of those terrible things about Him, and to Him. What did He do? What did He say? Did He call on the Father to strike them all dead? No, but He could have? What did He say? You know as well as I do that He said, "Father, forgive them: for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34).

You see, our enemies would not be our enemies any longer if they were to be saved. In 1 Corinthians 2:7 and 8 Paul wrote these words which apply here:

7 But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory:

8 Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory (1 Cor. 2:7-8).

One of the most notorious enemies of the Lord, and the Lord's people, and the Gospel, was Saul of Tarsus. I doubt if there was a single Christian in those days who really believed that Saul could, or would, be saved. But he was miraculously saved by the personal intervention in his life of the Lord Jesus Christ. What happened? He became probably the greatest preacher of the Gospel, and the most fruitful missionary that the church has ever had. When Saul of Tarsus was saved, the church lost an enemy, but gained a great friend.

So we must never dismiss from our minds the hope that that person who is making life miserable for you or me because we belong to the Lord, may, in the providence of God become a very dear friend and a brother or sister in Christ.

And so how did Paul conclude this section?

12:21. Don't you think that one of our greatest problems is that we let evil doing get the best of us, and by our own attitude we become the victims instead of the victors. We don't win the battle with evildoers by committing more evil, but by returning good for evil. That is a lesson that we all need to learn. When we are saved, we need to learn God's ways. We are not to try to force our ways on God. His ways work; our ways always, without exception, fail. So by the grace of God, let's start winning some battles, doing God's work in God's way, taking His Word by faith, and by prayer look for God's blessing.

I don't know who John Brown was quoting, but I want to read to you the words he wrote down as he concluded in his comments on this chapter:

This noble sentiment is peculiar to Christianity. It is said, "Nothing like this moral precept is to be found in the heathen classics, and nothing like what it enjoins ever existed among heathen nations. The idea of overcoming evil with good never occurred to men till the gospel was preached to them: it never has been acted on but under the influence of that Gospel. On this principle, God shows kindness to sinful men; on this principle, the Savior came into our world, and bled, and died; and on this principle all Christians should act in treating their enemies, and in their attempts to bring the race of man to the knowledge obedience of the truth as it is in Jesus. . ." (p. 482).

In a way, this verse is really a summation of the practical exhortations found in this chapter. And so Paul's concluding exhortation is, not that we are to be conquered by evil. Nor are we simply to tolerate it. And we certainly should not increase it. WE ARE TO CONQUER IT! "Evil" is something that is inclined to hurt; "good" would be anything that could help.

As an illustration of what Paul was talking about, let me read to you about his treatment of Saul on a certain occasion, and the effect that it had upon Saul. Cf. 1 Samuel 24:8-19. And it is especially appropriate as we come to the next section which has to do with *the Christian and his government*.

I thought that Barnhouse made a statement in connection with this verse, that is well worth our remembering. He said this:

We are not to consider what others deserve to suffer, but what we are required to do. As to the use that others make of our kindness, that is no concern of ours; we have only to obey God and leave all events to Him (*God's Discipline*, p. 97).

Barnhouse's title for this section was, "How To Get Along With People." These words of the Apostle Paul are greatly needed among the people of God today.

Romans 13

VII. Exhortation (12:1-15:33).

A. The Christian's Living Sacrifice (12:1-2).

B. The Christian in the Church (12:3-16).

C. The Christian in the World (12:17-21).

And now we come to the fourth point in this division I have called, Exhortation:

D. The Christian and His Government (13:1-7).

Let me remind you as we come to this section on government and governmental leaders, that these words were written at a time when Jews and Gentiles alike were under one of the worst governments that ever existed. But in OT times we see Israel under Egyptian rule, under Assyrian rule, under Babylonian rule, and several others before we get into the NT and Roman rule. For the people of God it was truly "the worst of times." But again we see that Paul was teaching the will of God; he was not adapting his message to Rome and citing exceptions which might give the people a loop hole for civil disobedience. So if Paul's words applied when Rome was in power, they certainly apply under ours. In reading through the early history of Israel as a nation as the people went from Egypt to Canaan, we see repeated instances when the people rebelled against Moses. This, too, was a violation of the will of God. And so Paul began by stating a principle that we all need to keep in mind – ALWAYS!

13:1. It is good to start with the basic truth which applies to all, whether believer or unbeliever. "Every soul" is a Hebraism which means unbelievers as well as believers, or believers as well as unbelievers. And it is emphatic! It means everybody, everywhere, generation after generation! God's will for all of us is to be submissive to our government regardless of what political party may be in power, and regardless of the type of government we may be under. To "be subject" means *to be submissive*, and submissive means *obedient*! There may be times when a government requires its people to do something that is clearly against Scripture. That is another problem. But Paul was not talking about that here. He was speaking of the basic commandment for every citizen of every country.

But why? "For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God." The two words for power in this statement are the same in Greek, the word ἐξουσία. It means *authority*. The one who has authority (by definition) is the one who has the right to make decisions, and the right to enforce them.

Notice the word "ordained" – "ordained of God"! A more accurate translation would be, "the powers that presently exist (present tense) have been ordained (perfect passive - something that was determined in the past, but exists in the present) by God. God has a reason for all that He does. In studying the life of Moses we have seen that the Lord told Moses to say this to Pharaoh:

16 And in very deed for this cause have I raised thee up, for to shew in thee My power, and that My Name may be declared throughout all the earth (Ex. 9:16).

God did not give Pharaoh power because he was an example of goodness and justice, because he wasn't good in any sense of the word. But the Lord gave him power in order to show that His power, God's power, was even greater than Pharaoh's power, and that that message might reach "all the earth," not only in those days, but the message has come down even to our day. Regardless of how great a governmental leader might be, the power of God is infinitely greater. The Bible gives us many examples of that. Remember how the Lord responded to Pilate when Pilate was angered because the Lord would not answer him. We have this exchange:

10 Then saith Pilate unto him, Speakest thou not unto me? knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee?

11 Jesus answered, Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above: therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin (John 19:10-11).

Those who are always trying to get rid of God in connection with government, need to understand this. President Bush is our President, not primarily because he received more votes than John Kerry, but because God has appointed him to that position. God is very intimately involved in all governments, and no court, no judge, no politician, and no world leader can change that. God has His own purposes for what He does and so the sooner we recognize that God is sovereign in all governments, the better it will be for all of us. When Daniel began to interpret Nebuchadnezzar's dream for him, he said, "He that revealeth secrets," referring to God, "maketh known to thee what shall come to pass" (Dan. 2:29).

Just before this when the Lord had revealed the meaning of Nebuchadnezzar's dream to him, this what we read earlier in Daniel 2:

19 Then was the secret revealed unto Daniel in a night vision. Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven.

20 Daniel answered and said, Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever: for wisdom and might are his:

21 And he changeth the times and the seasons: he removeth kings, and setteth up kings: he giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding:

22 He revealeth the deep and secret things: he knoweth what is in the darkness, and the light dwelleth with him (Dan. 2:19-22).

As much as politicians may try to get rid of God in our government, they are doomed to failure before they even start. What they are up against is the power of a sovereign God. I hope we all understand what Paul was declaring here. He was speaking by the Spirit of God. When God puts an evil man at the head of any government, it is evidence of divine judgment. When He puts a good man at the head of any government, it is evidence of His grace and mercy.

13:2 You have seen that bumper sticker which says, "Question authority"? The person who printed that bumper sticker, and the person who put it on his car, needs to read this verse. To question the authority which God has established, whatever that authority might be, is "taking on" God.

The word "therefore" is the first word in verse 2 in the Greek text, making it very emphatic, meaning that if you resist "the power," you had better realize what you are doing. You are not just taking on the human authority, but you are "taking on" God! To "resist" is to oppose God. And those who take on this course of action, are asking for "damnation." Resisting what God has ordained is to face the judgment of God. The meaning here is not that of eternal judgment, but present judgment inflicted by the government. It could mean a fine, or arrest, or, depending upon the nature of the resistance, it could mean even death!

13:3 This is a verse which all governmental leaders need to understand. They are to support that which is "good," and they are to be "a terror . . . to the evil." This means, of course, that which is good in God's sight, and that which is evil to God. The word "terror," according to Thayer, stands for *that which strikes terror into a person's heart*. Governmental rulers are put in the position that they have to support that which is good and righteous in God's sight, and to condemn and punish that which is contrary to the will of God. So

rulers do not have their position to enforce their own personal agenda, but to know and to support the will of God. So we are supposed to fear the consequences of disobeying our leaders. If we do that which is right, we must expect to have the praise, the commendation, the reward of those who are our leaders. Submission to the ruler also includes submission to those who are appointed by him.

Joseph in Egypt and Daniel and his friends in Babylon, are examples of those who sought to do right before God and who refrained from doing evil.

13:4 Here is another verse which the ruler of any government, and those who are appointed to work with him, are to know, and work accordingly. Caesar was to know that he was “a minister of God.” I think our President realizes that, and that is probably the main reason that he receives the criticism that he does. Everyone in government is to recognize that he or she is “a minister of God.”

The word translated “minister” is *διάκονος*, the Greek word from which we get our English word *deacon*. But basically it means *a servant, one who executes the commission of the one who has appointed him*. Or to state it another way, he is one who is under authority, and his main responsibility is to do the will of the one who has appointed, or ordained, him for the position he holds. So no ruler of any government has sovereign power. He has power, great power, but there is One Who has power over him, One to Whom he is responsible.

Now most politicians in our country are concerned about what people want, not what God wants. In fact, it is safe to say that most politicians don't give a thought to what God wants. And yet if they are to be ministers of God for good, knowing God's will, supporting it personally and in the work that they do, is to be their highest priority. Instead of getting rid of the ten commandments on government property, that is one place where they ought to be.

Why did Paul mention “the sword,” and that rulers do not bear the sword “in vain.” What was the sword used for, to slap criminals on the wrist, and send them to prison for rehabilitation? Or, worse than that, put them on probation. I heard some lawyers talking last night about this serial killer that they have in custody. One of them said that he was not in favor of capital punishment. I would like to tell that lawyer, “Buddy, that is not your privilege.” One reason we have so much crime in our country is because we don't deal with criminals in a Biblical way. And when leaders in government fail to support the will of God, they are going to fall under the judgment of God. One major job of governmental leaders is “to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.” Instead, we legalize that which is abominable to God – abortion, homosexuality (and even same sex marriages). Adultery has become a way of life. We learned early in Romans that when people don't want to have anything to do with God, He gives them over to experience the results of what we do. And that is exactly why we are where we are today in our own country.

13:5 “Wherefore” – Here is another conclusion. “It must needs be,” or *we are constrained to be, it is absolutely necessary that we be submissive*. In other words, we have no choice, no other option, but to be submissive, “not only for wrath,” or not just because we can be punished if we aren't submissive to those over us, “but also for conscience sake.”

The word “conscience” is an interesting word. Lit. it means *with knowledge*. It used three times in Romans: in 2:15 and 9:1, and here.

In Romans 2:15 we are told, taking verse 14 with it, that although the Gentiles were never given the law of God as the children of Israel received it through Moses, yet God has written the law in our hearts, so that in our consciences we have the law, and we agree with it. We know that it is wrong to steal, to murder, to lie, etc. In our consciences we have the knowledge of what is right and wrong – and all of this about God and from God.

These are at least a part of the knowledge that makes us responsible before God. Now we, and also the Israelites, can add to that knowledge through the reading of the Scriptures. The more we know of the Word, the sharper our consciences become. The conscience is a God-given regulator which keeps us aware of what is right and what is wrong according to God.

This word for conscience, *συνείδησις*, is used 32 times in the NT. We all have it, and so the person who claims that he, or she, does not know right from wrong, is not telling the truth. But in some cases, there are people who have violated their consciences to the point that it is like it has been “seared with a hot iron” (1 Tim. 4:2). All of us need to be very sensitive to evil, both from the fear of incurring the wrath of God, but also from violating our consciences. “The fear of the Lord is to hate evil: pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate” (Prov. 8:13). Guy King in his short but very helpful commentary on 1 Timothy, had this to say about the searing of the conscience:

Their conscience, once so sensitive, is now “seared,” as flesh would be by the application of a “hot iron,” rendering it almost dead. Time was when they would shrink in horror from uttering a “lie,” but, now that conscience is silenced, they can do it without blushing, with the tongue of “hypocrisy” in their check. How, if unchecked, evil grows in a man, on a man (p. 72).

The fear of punishment by the government as well, as the fear of God, are both designed by God to keep us out of trouble.

13:6 This is a good verse for tax time, isn't it? Whether our leaders are corrupt or honorable, we are to be submissive. In the USA we have developed the attitude that, if I don't like it, I don't have to do it. That kind of an attitude will not only not bring the blessing of God, but it will bring His judgment, plus the judgment of his minister – the governmental leader.

The more corrupt a government becomes, the more inclined we are to think that we are released from the obligation to be submissive. But that is not the case. If we do the wrong thing, the Lord will deal with us. But if the government does the wrong thing, the Lord will deal with it. Judgment may not come as fast as we would like for it to come because God is a God of patience and compassion. But the time comes when judgment falls, and we don't want to be on the receiving end of it.

Some say that an attitude like that which the Apostle Paul has expressed here would ultimately lead to tyranny is an unscrupulous person should become the head of a state. But such an attitude fails to take into consideration that God is sovereign over all of the nations of all the earth. Haldane said,

If He puts His children into the hands of men, He retains these men in His own hand, and they can injure them in nothing without His permission (p. 585).

And then he reminded his reader of Proverbs 21:1,

The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water: He turneth it whithersoever He will.

Here Paul used a different word for “ministers.” It is the word *leitourgoi*. It speaks of priestly service. And just as the priests under the Law were to collect the tithe to be used in the service of the Lord, the government collects taxes from its citizens to be used for the benefit of those who give it. So we can look upon the tithe as a tax. It was not like the offerings that the people brought; this was required from all the people. Probably the tithe received by the Levites was misused on many occasions just as our taxes are often misused. But God does not hold us responsible for that. We are responsible to pay; the leaders are accountable to God as to how the taxes are used. It would be really wonderful if our politicians on all levels understood this because God is going to hold them responsible whether they know it or not. In suppressing anything that has to do with the Bible governmental leaders are rejecting the truth that God has given about the work that they are doing.

And now we come to a conclusion, or a summation. The word “therefore” is not in the Greek text, but it is

suggested by the very nature of the verse.

12:7 “Render to all their dues” means that we are to pay what we owe. And it goes beyond money, and yet it includes money. The verb “render” in the Greek goes beyond mere giving, it speaks of discharging an obligation that we have, even of paying a debt. Our debt is fourfold:

1) “Tribute to whom tribute (is due).” This is the same word that Paul used in verse 6. This is the word that the chief priests and the scribes used when they asked the Lord the question, “Is it lawful for us to give tribute unto Caesar, or no?” That is, *Is it right for us according to our Law as Jews, to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?* Of course their purpose was to get the Lord to say something which they might use to bring charges against the Lord before Caesar. You remember the Lord’s answer:

23 But he perceived their craftiness, and said unto them, Why tempt ye me?

24 Shew me a penny. Whose image and superscription hath it? They answered and said, Caesar's.

25 And he said unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which be Caesar's, and unto God the things which be God's.

26 And they could not take hold of his words before the people: and they marvelled at his answer, and held their peace (Luke 20:23-26).

2) “Custom to whom custom.” Paul used the word τέλος which actually means *an end*, or *total*. It seems that they were asking if they were required to pay all of it. And so the word raised the question if they could pay part of it, but not all that the government required. Paul’s teaching was they they did not have the right to decide that they would pay part, but not all.

3) “Fear to whom fear.” The root of this word “fear” is the same as the verb in verse 4, “be afraid.” They were to fear the consequences of disobedience as Paul had already indicated in verse 4, “for he beareth not the sword in vain.” We are to pay (among other reasons) because we are afraid of the consequences of not paying. The sword, as we have seen, was an instrument of death.

4) “Honor to whom honor.” Christians, of course, could not worship the Emperor, but they were to honor him, to respect him, as the head of the government under which they were living.

Most of this would run contrary to their natural feelings and desires. But, as Henriksen mentioned in his commentary, Paul was indicating that the believers were to do more than to pay their taxes. They were to do it willingly, in obedience to the Lord, respecting the office of those over them even when they really could not respect the persons occupying the office. There are real benefits attached to the kind of behavior that Paul was teaching. And it could actually benefit the preaching of the Gospel. People who refuse to pay their taxes, if they claim to be children of God, will have little or no respect from the people in the world. Let us make sure that we take these words to heart because they apply just as much to us today as they did those believers living in Rome under a wicked ruler.

At this point we come to a new section in the chapter, but it is not totally unrelated to what we have just covered.

E. The Christian and Love (Rom. 13:8-11).

13:8 We as Christians have many obligations. First of all, we are obligated to God, We actually have a debt with God that we can never pay. But we are obligated to praise Him. We are obligated to obey Him, We are obligated to trust Him. We are obligated to serve Him. We are obligated in all that we do, to glorify Him.

But we have obligations to people as well – to our spouses, to our children, to our neighbors, to the people we do business with, and the list could be much, much longer. We learned in the last part of chapter 12 that we have an obligation to love our enemies.

We know that the love we show to others is not always the same. We don't love strangers like we love our family. We don't love people in the world the way we love each other as the people of God. But what does this love, this ἀγάπη, mean. It means that we are concerned about them. It means that we seek to help them. It means that you want to benefit them. It means that appreciate them, and show esteem for them. It means that you value them. It means that we are interested in them. What the world calls love is not always love. It is passion, or lust. But a man who will take advantage of a woman does not love her. Adultery is not love; it is lust, and lust is not love. When we read in our Bibles that "God so loved the world," we are to understand that He is concerned about everybody. He seeks our good, our highest good. He wants to help us. He delights in us.

When a man opens a door for a lady, this is an expression of love. When you do anything to help another, even simple things, kind things, thoughtful things. Even when a parent disciplines a child, unless it is done in anger, that, too, is an expression of love. When you show interest in another person, and do something to help them, to make life easier for them, that is love. The Samaritan who helped the man who had been beaten and robbed by thieves, he was showing love.

This is the way we as Christians are to live. And in different ways and to differing degrees, we are to love everybody. Verse 8 tells us that love is the fulfilling of the Law. So love can be shown in negative ways. If I worship God Himself without the use of images, I am showing love for Him. If I honor my parents, I am showing love for them. If I don't steal, or lie, or if I don't covet, or if I don't take the Lord's Name in vain, in all of these I am showing love.

Now when Paul said, "Owe not man anything, but to love one another, he was saying that this is our God-given debt toward everybody, Christian or non-Christian. We are obligated by God to show love to everyone. Now this verse is often used to say that we are not to have any debts. It surely includes debts, but it goes far, far beyond that. A literal translation of the first part of the verse would be, *Do not keep on owing anyone*. I don't think that the Apostle Paul was saying that it is wrong to buy a home on time. But what he was saying was that if you do, keep up with the payments. Don't obligate yourself for more than you can pay so that you are failing to meet your obligations month by month. I think it is almost criminal for these loan companies to be after us all of the time to mortgage our homes, take out some of the equity we have built up, so that we can spent it on something else. Credit cards can be a convenience, or they can be a snare. Money problems have ruined lives, and you will often find that debt is a major cause for the breakup of marriages. So we should not obligate ourselves for more than we can handle financially month by month. It is best to stay out of debt altogether. If you owe people a debt which you cannot pay, you certainly are not manifesting love. And you would find it very difficult, actually impossible, to witness to someone when you are behind in your obligations to them.

But owe no man anything is mentioned primarily concerning love. Don't let opportunities to help other, or to show your interest in others, slip by. You can show love when you are driving your car by the consideration that you show toward others.

In verse 9 Paul used some of the illustrations that I have used from the Law, the ten commandments.

13:9 Committing adultery, murdering, stealing, lying, coveting, and all of the rest is "comprehended in this saying, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." "Comprehended" means *summed up*, or *gathered all together in one*. We need to be just as concerned about others as we are about ourselves. No person in his

right mind deliberately does himself harm. God has placed in all of our hearts a desire for self-preservation and personal happiness. And we are to take the concern that we have for ourselves, and do unto others as we would like for them to do to us. What a different world this would be if that were the way everyone lived. But people don't live that way. However, we as the Lord's people ought to be different, and we will be different if we really want to please God.

13:10 These verses that we are covering here in Romans 12 give us one of the best definitions of love that can be found in the Bible. And here in verse 10 Paul adds to what he has already said. "Love worketh no ill to his neighbor." Instead of saying, "A Christian worketh no ill to his neighbor," or "A child of God worketh no ill to his neighbor," or "One who is born again worketh no ill to his neighbor," he said, "Love worketh no ill to his neighbor." Is the love of God so manifest in our lives that people call us, "Love"? It should be!

And who is my neighbor? He is anybody I meet during the course of any day. I looked up the definition for "Neighbor" in the dictionary, and it said first, anyone who lives near you. But the second definition was "any human being." That is the way it is used in verse 9. It is found in Leviticus 19:18 where again we have words to help us understand what it means to love:

18 Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the LORD (Lev. 19:18).

And it is quoted in Matt. 5:43; 19:19; 22:39; Mark 12:31; Luke 10:27; here in Rom. 13:9; Gal. 5:14; and Jas. 2:8.

I am sure that all of you remember the incident when a Pharisee asked the Lord what was the great commandment in the Law, and the answer He gave. This was the Lord's answer:

37 Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

38 This is the first and great commandment.

39 And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

40 On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets (Matt. 22:37-40).

When the Lord said that "all the law and the prophets" hang on these two commandments, He meant that, as Alfred Plummer said,

But here He [our Lord] points out that these two great principles cover not only the elementary principles of the Pentateuch, but the more advanced teaching of the Prophets; they are the life and soul of all the moral and spiritual teaching of the Old Testament (*An Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*, p. 309).

Every other commandment in the OT is subordinate to these two, and summed up by them.

But let us move on, always remembering these important verses that we have covered. But now we come to the last part of chapter 13:

F. The Christian and His Hope (Rom. 13:11-14).

13:11 The truth has to be taught, and then it has to be applied. Paul began chapter 12 by telling us that we need to present our bodies a living sacrifice to God, not being conformed to this world, but being transformed by the renewing of our minds, to prove "what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God." And then he proceeded to tell us what that means, and all that it involves. We probably all should probably commit these two chapters to memory, and then meditate on them every day.

In these verses Paul spoke of:

- 1) Telling the time.
- 2) Recognizing the danger.
- 3) Knowing the answer.

At this point in the epistle Paul reminds us that we don't have forever to do what the Lord wants us to do. And why? Because the Lord is coming. We don't know when it will be. But he reminded us of a very self-evident truth. It is this: "For now is our salvation nearer than when we believed."

When Paul wrote about our salvation being nearer than when we believed, he said about all that we can really tell about the time. What did He mean about our salvation being nearer? Aren't we saved now? Why does he speak of it as being in the future, nearer, but still future. What was he talking about? He was speaking of salvation in the future tense. Do you remember what the three tenses of salvation are:

- 1) The past tense, when we were saved, the time when we believed and were declared justified. We may not know exactly when that was, but we assuredly know that we are saved! JUSTIFICATION is the word for salvation in the past.
- 2) The present tense, we are being saved. We are growing in the Lord. We are being sanctified by the Spirit, made more and more like the Lord Jesus Christ. The work of salvation in us is not yet complete, but we are experiencing SANCTIFICATION. This is what Paul was concerned about as he wrote chapters 12 and following.
- 3) The future tense, we will be saved. The work of salvation will be complete. "We shall be like Him [Christ] for we shall see Him as He is." This is GLORIFICATION. And when will this be? When the Lord Jesus Christ returns. So Paul was writing here about the return of the Lord.

Paul used two different words here which are translated time. The first is in the expression, "knowing the time." The word here is *καιρός*. This means that there is a definite, limited, measured period of time which God has set, before the Lord will return. The second word is in the expression, "high time." It is the Greek word *ώρα*, meaning *hour*, to indicate that the longer time which was originally set for the return of the Lord, has now come down to the final hour. I am sure that is why the KJV translators rendered the simple word *hour* as "high time," to show the shortness of the time that remains. And so little time remains for us "to awake out of sleep." The hour in which we live calls upon us to be awake spiritually.

Paul will mention other dangers in verses 12 and 13, but here mentions "sleep." Living in a world like we live in, the first danger that we face is that of being asleep. This expression speaks of being cold hearted, not realizing what is going on, comfortable and satisfied, but really indifferent. Time is passing by which can never be reclaimed, and we can be spiritually asleep, unconscious of the passing of time, and unconcerned about it. Paul spoke of the believers in Rome as though they were asleep and needed to wake up. This problem probably affects more of the Lord's people than we realize, but we need to make sure that it doesn't affect us.

Can you think of a time when you really loved the Lord more than you do now? Can you think of a time when you read the Bible more faithfully than you do now, and when you enjoyed it more? Can you think when you loved to pray more than you do now, and when you prayed more? Can you remember a time when you were more faithful in attending the services of your church, when you looked forward to being with the Lord's people more than you do now? These are signs of spiritual sleep, or sleepiness.

Regardless of when the Lord will actually come, it is always time to stay awake. But because of the imminence of His return, it is even more imperative that we be awake.

13:12 Here Paul touches on the time in a different way. "The night is far spent, the day is at hand." He was talking about the night of the Lord's absence, and the day is when the Lord will be with us, or rather

when we will be with Him. I think that when we look at conditions in the world we all are inclined to wonder if the coming of the Lord is not near. It's exciting to think about it, isn't it? Some day, and perhaps it will be soon, the day that the Lord's people have been looking for for over 2,000 years will actually come. It can't be very much longer. We are to expect the day to come soon. "The night is far spent." That means it is very advanced. It is about over. Sunrise is near. "The day is at hand." So what should we do? Shall we just sit and wait for the dawn to break? The answer is, No! What are we to do?

Have we grown so accustomed to sin that it doesn't bother us, or shock us, like it used to? Are we involved in the works of darkness? People have become more and more brazen about the works of darkness, the sins of the flesh. What if the Lord should come and find us living like we are living today, how would we feel about it? The contrast between the works of darkness and the armor of light is like that of conformation to the world as compared with the renewing of our minds. Peter said God has called us out of darkness into His marvelous light (1 Pet. 2:9), and so we are walk, to live, as children of life (to add a word from Paul - Eph. 5:8). What a tragedy it is today that there is so much darkness among the Lord's people, or those who profess to be His people, and so little light, so little holiness.

There can be no compromise with sin. All of it needs to be "cast off," as that which is not only worthless, but positively harmful to us, and to those around us, and a grief to God.

"The armor of light" suggests not only defense, but offense! The word translated "armor," ὅπλα (pl.), would better be translated *weapons*. This should bring us to Ephesians 6:10-18. And we find Paul at this point using a figure of speech which was a favorite of his: putting something off, and putting something else on. We are in a warfare. And it is only the light of God's Word, used by the Spirit, and personally applied to our lives, that can bring the light back and prepare us for the conflict in which we are all involved. This is not something that can be handled corporately; it requires our individual attention for ourselves! And Paul's words indicate that we should hesitate in seeing that all of this is done. It must be done now!

Cf. 1 Cor. 6:7; 1 Thess. 5:5-10; Rom. 6:12-13.

13:13 "Let us walk" – a word which Paul uses 33 times in his epistles, and it is used 16 more times in epistles which were not written by Paul. It shows that what Paul is saying was not just to be limited to a single act, but it was to be a way of life. It cannot all be done at once, but it requires our constant attention.

"Honestly" means in a manner that is becoming to a child of God. Our walk and our talk must be consistent with each other. People in the world will hold the child of God to higher standards than they hold for themselves. If we are to have a testimony to the world, our walk is what will impress them that we are what we claim to be. The NASB translates "walk honestly" as "behave properly."

Now, if we are to do this, we must pay attention to what we are not to do as well as what we need to do. And so Paul added here six negatives which Paul put in three pairs:

- 1) "Not in rioting or drunkenness" – Carousing and drunkenness go together. The person who drinks will do and say things that he would never be guilty of when he is sober. So the Christian must stay away completely from "the bottle."
- 2) "Not in chambering and wantonness" – "Chambering" is adultery, sexual promiscuity. "Wantonness" is to show no restraint whatever.
- 3) "Not in strife and envying" – A child of God should never be a trouble-maker. He must not be contentious or jealous, belittling others to put himself in a good light. He must not want what others have, or even want to take away, or see others lose, what they have. We are not to make enemies of other people, but always seek to be friends.

But what is the best and only safeguard against such behavior that is not consistent for one who knows the Lord Jesus Christ? This takes us to verse 14.

13:14 We are to “put on the Lord Jesus Christ.” In Ephesians the Apostle Paul expressed this truth with the words we find in chapter 4, verses 17 through 32 (and even into chapter 5). **(Read Eph. 4:17-32.)**

Here we need to remember the purpose for which we have been saved. It is that we would be like Christ! Therefore, to put Him on us, is to live our lives in obedience to His Word. Cf. 2 Cor. 3:18. It is to seek to live like our Lord lived. He is not only our Savior, but as our Savior, He is our life. “Christ liveth in me” (Gal. 2:20). Man was originally created in the image and likeness of God. The image was marred by sin, but it is being restored, and so much more, in our salvation. Christ is our Example, as we are told in 1 Peter 2:21-24:

21 For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps:

22 Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth:

23 Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously:

24 Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.

Still more evidence of what it means to “put on Christ,” is given to us in Peter’s second epistle. I will read verses 2 through 4 of chapter 1:

2 Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord,

3 According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue:

4 Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust (Peter 1:2-4).

We become like Christ by seeing Him in the Word, by obeying His commands, and by believing His promises.

The last verse in Romans 13 concludes with these words: “And make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.” “Flesh” here refers to our old nature. We are to provide for the needs of our bodies, but not for its lusts. This means that we are to be as cautious as soldiers are in a time of war. Making provision for our flesh means that we are to be careful about what we look at, about what we read, about our conversation with others, about where we go, and even to the thoughts that we think. A person who looks at pornographic materials, wherever it might be – in magazines, on TV, or anywhere else – is feeding his flesh, making provision for his flesh.

We can all see the relationship even in English between the word “provision” and the word *providence*. The word which Paul used here can also be translated *providence*. For example, when Tertullus, whom Luke called “a certain orator,” began to bring charges against Paul before Felix, he made this flattering comment to Felix:

2b Seeing that by thee we enjoy great quietness, and that very worthy deeds are done unto this nation by thy providence,

3 We accept it always, and in all places, most noble Felix, with all thankfulness (Acts 24:2b-3).

He meant that Felix had always had them in mind, looking ahead and planning to do good things for the Jews. And so Paul was saying that when we make provision for the flesh, we are exercising providence, looking ahead, planning our lives with the gratification of some sinful lust in mind. Solomon warned against going near the door of the house of a prostitute. See Prov. 5:8. One of the best ways to avoid sin is to stay out of places where we are going to be tempted. James described the progressive nature of sin in James 1:14-15

14 But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.

15 Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.

It is significant that Paul mentioned putting on Christ first, and then warns about making provision for the flesh. It is a strengthening of our relationship with the Lord that motivates us to keep from making provision for our old fleshly, sinful nature with all of its lusts.

The exhortations of this chapter are priceless in pointing the way to a life of fellowship with God, and at the same time and consistent with such a life, a life of deliverance from our sins. May the Lord enable us to do, by God's grace, the exhortation which Paul has given us, both positive and negative, by the Holy Spirit.

But now we must move on to the next chapter and a new division in our outline.

G. Strong and Weak Christians (Rom. 14:1-5:7).

Paul's emphasis so far in the practical section of this epistle, has been upon spiritual growth. He has been addressing himself to all of the people of God in Rome. But in spite of all of the teaching, preaching, and praying that Paul did, or any other servant of the Lord may do, there are always going to be two groups of believers in any church – those who are spiritually strong, and those who are spiritually weak. And among those two groups there are going to be varying degrees of strength, and varying degrees of weakness. There will be those who are very strong; others who are stronger than most, and growing. There will be weak, growing saints; and there will be those like we read about in 1 Corinthians and the book of Hebrews, who may have been saved long enough to be teachers themselves, but actually need to be taught again the basic truths of the Christian faith and life. In addition to the strong and the weak, there are always those also who *profess* faith in Christ, but who have not really been saved. So we continue to teach and pray, trusting the Lord to use His Word for His own glory, and for the spiritual needs of those who are sitting under the ministry of the Word.

As we begin this section I want to read to you what Paul wrote about true Christian unity in his Ephesian epistle. You will find it in Ephesians 4. With such a wide variation of spiritual maturity and growth among the Lord's people, we always need to be concerned the oneness of the people of God. **(Read Eph. 4:1-16.)**

In Psalm 133 we see that the saints in OT times were exhorted also concerning true spiritual unity. **(Read Psa. 133.)**

But as we talk about unity, a word of warning needs to be sounded concerning the church situation today. Most church leaders today are concerned about the lack of unity among churches, and so for many years (and probably this has been true to some extent in every generation) there have been those who have worked hard to bring all denominations together, basically disregarding the importance of true Christian doctrine, that is doctrine which is based upon the teaching of Scripture. But now that emphasis has extended to the uniting of **all religions!** It is called *the ecumenical movement*. This is an effort on a worldwide basis to unite all religions. The major obstacle that stands in the way as far as true Christians are concerned, it means abandoning the doctrines of Scripture for the sake of unity. *Such unity is not what the Apostle Paul was teaching. It was a unity among the true people of God based upon the teachings of Scripture.* So we must beware of any effort that will draw us away from Scripture. We must abide by the teaching of Scripture. Any attempt at unity that overrules or ignores the teach of Scripture, is of the Devil. There is only one, true revelation from God, and that is the Bible. There can be no unity among those who believe that Jesus Christ is God's Son, and that He is the only Savior, and those who don't believe those truths. A salvation by grace and a salvation by works are just as

impossible to unite as oil and water. This is what the Apostle Paul was teaching in 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1. (Read.) But having said this, let us all be reminded that although we must stand by the truth of the Word of God, we must always *speak the truth in love*. See Ephesians 4:15. We are to speak the truth in love among ourselves, and we must speak the truth in love as we seek to win others to Christ.

But now let us see what Paul had to say beginning with Romans 14.

14:1 A particular responsibility regarding Christian unity rests upon those who are strong, meaning those who are more mature, those who have the greater understanding of the truth of the Word of God. The Bible gives us the truth, the absolute truth.

I would remind you of what I have pointed out on other occasions, that the expression, “the faith,” standing for the doctrinal teaching of Scripture. Perhaps here it has reference primarily to *the Gospel*. Sandy and Headlam, in their commentary on Romans, speak of “weakness in faith.” But I am surprised at that because the Greek makes it clear that Paul was not just address those whose faith was weak. It is true that some had a weak faith, but Paul was speaking of those whose understanding of “the faith,” the doctrines of Scripture, with probably an emphasis as S & H go on to point out, to “an inadequate grasp of the great principle of salvation by faith in Christ” (p. 384). If I might attempt to make their statement even clearer, I would say that Paul was speaking of those who had an inadequate understanding of the great *doctrine of salvation* by faith in Christ *alone*! The person who seeks to add the eating or not eating of certain food, or the observance of certain days to faith in Christ, are trying to make themselves more secure in salvation by what they do. And so that is why we can say that their understanding of the Gospel is inadequate. That is probably one reason why Jerry Bridges says that we ought to preach the Gospel to ourselves *every day*!

And this is why it is important to preach the Gospel to a congregation of people where most of them we know are already saved. We all need to be grounded in the truth of God’s Word, all of the truth of God’s Word, and the basic, foundational truth is the Gospel. The reason so many of the Lord’s people reject the teaching of the doctrines of grace, is because their understanding of the Gospel is inadequate. Today much of the preaching of the Gospel is man-centered, but in the Bible it is God-centered.

We want to bring everyone along in the understanding of the Scriptures, “but,” as Paul said here, “not to doubtful disputations.” What did he mean by this?

The NIV renders this part of verse 1, “without passing judgment on disputable matters.” The NASB has it this way: “But not for the purpose of passing judgment on his opinions.” The word “doubtful” is the translation of the Greek word from which we get our word, dialogue. We don’t convince people of the truth simply by throwing into a defensive mode by arguing with them. People are won to the truth by being exposed to the truth. This is brought out in Psalm 39:6 where we are told, “in thy light shall we see light.” Paul told Timothy along this line,

24 And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient,

25 In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth;

26 And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will (2 Tim. 2:24-26).

Arguments usually widen the gap between people, whether we are dealing with another believer, or with someone who makes no claim of being a Christian. Even in church we need to give people the opportunity just to sit and listen to the truth instead of bugging them because of what they believe.

14:2 Why did Paul say that? Because you have a difference between people. “One believeth that he can eat

all things.” This does not mean that he pays no attention to what is good for his health, as opposed to that which is harmful. There are some things that we don’t eat because it might raise our blood pressure, or be bad for us in other ways. No, what Paul was saying here that the one man who is stronger knows that his salvation does not depend upon what he eats. Paul said this in 1 Corinthians 8:8:

8 But meat commendeth us not to God: for neither, if we eat, are we the better ; neither, if we eat not, are we the worse .

Salvation is not gained or lost by what we eat. But the weak brother, and he is a brother, believes that he will be more secure in his salvation if he doesn’t eat meat.

In verse 3 the Apostle Paul continued to address the stronger brother first.

14:3 The word “despise” can be translated in various ways, to look down upon, to treat with contempt, to condemn, or to judge. Such an attitude causes further division. We may be right in our conviction, but we are not going to help our brother by criticizing him.

But then Paul went on to counsel the weaker brother. He has to avoid the same kind of an attitude that the stronger brother must avoid. We are all inclined to be critical of those who have a different opinion from ours. This is true also regarding politics. Politicians cause further division because they don’t discuss (for the most part), but they dispute. And so the division in our nation in a greater way. Americans need to cultivate friendship, not enmity, which is always the result of argument. But to understand what Paul is saying here is most important for those of us who know the Lord.

What is important for all of us to remember is this: Whether a person is strong or weak on the Gospel, or any other truth of Scripture, God has accepted both because Paul was talking about differences among true believers. As I have said, there are many weak believers. But even those who are strong, can always be stronger. So we need to help each other to grow in the Lord.

But then Paul adds another point in verse 4.

14:4 Paul was great in asking questions. Questions are designed to make us think. And so he said, “What right do any of us have to pass judgment upon another man’s servant? On a human level, that is really none of our business? And the same is true of our place in the family of God. You and I are not the judges that everyone else is responsible to. Another man’s servant is responsible to his master, not to us. He is not going to be judged on the basis of what I think! His master is his judge, and here the Master is the Lord. It is important for all of us to realize that our main responsibility is to the Lord.

But then Paul adds a further point to which we would all have to agree: “God is able to make him stand.” Philippians 1:6 applies equally to all believers – to the weak as well as the strong! The strong has not made himself strong; God has made him strong. Christ has made him strong. The Holy Spirit has made him strong. Whatever strength we have, we owe to the Lord. Paul said, “I can do all things through Christ which (or Who) strengtheneth me” (Phil. 4:13). Whatever strength we have, ought to humble us, not make us feel that we are above anyone else. We need to be confident that, if a person really knows the Lord, the Lord is going to make him stand. It may take time, but we need to remember how much time it has taken the Lord to bring us to whatever state of maturity we are in.

14:5 The same thing applies to days. And here we have another point of difference among believers. The background for this point was most likely the Sabbath Day, and how it was to be observed, or not observed. Many believers are inclined to treat the first day of the week like the Jews under the Law were required to treat the seventh day of the week. Paul is not talking about whether we should go to church, or not

go to church. We are clearly taught in Hebrews 10:24 and 25,

24 And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works:

25 Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

Not to go to church is clearly a sin. God never intended that any of us should try to "go it alone." We need each other. We need to encourage each other. But we all need the ministry of the Word. Paul is going to bring in another principle later in this chapter to help us decide what is right for us, and what may be wrong. But here he makes it clear that how we observe the Lord's Day is a matter of personal conviction.

The word "esteemeth" has to do with making a decision. And Paul added that "every man" should "be fully persuaded in his own mind" as to what is the right thing to do.

14:6 The reason that Paul could say what he did at the end of verse 5, was because he was assuming that regarding a certain day, or not regarding, as well as eating or not eating, it was all being done as "to the Lord." This means that they all wanted to please the Lord. They were concerned about pleasing Him, and they knew that they were accountable to Him and would some day stand before Him for judgment. This is to be seen in the word "regardeth." It means that pleasing God was the motive here of everyone concerned. That is not always the case, but it was here. This, of course, was very commendable.

And Paul explained in verse 7 why these believers, the weak and the strong, were doing, or not doing, as the case might have been. A legalist, while mistaken in why he does what he does, yet at the same time can be very devout, very devoted to the Lord, in what he, or she, does. However, he who does not eat is mistaken into thinking that he makes, or keeps, himself more secure in his salvation. Charles Hodge said this:

No Christian considers himself as his own master, or at liberty to regulate his conduct according to his own will, and for his own ends; he is the servant of Christ, and therefore endeavors to live according to His will and for His glory (p. 421).

14:7 And so it is generally agreed among all believers that we are not to live to please ourselves. We did that before we were saved. But God has put a new and different desire in our hearts, and that is to please the Lord so that we may glorify Him. If you consider yourself to be strong, you need to remember this in dealing with those who are weak. Their problem is not in their hearts, but in their understanding. Pleasing the Lord applies in death as well as in life.

Paul did mean by what he wrote in this verse that every child of God lives and dies for the Lord, but he meant that this is how every child of God should live. This is the normal Christian life. With most of us, what we know is far ahead of how we live. If we would live according to what we know, all of us would be better than we are. Knowledge comes first, knowledge of the Word, but then practice much follow. Our lives need to be in agreement with what we know, and our knowledge must be learned from the Word.

I have never owned the Barnes commentary, but a few years ago I got it on my computer. And I have really appreciated the insight that he often has in his remarks on particular passages of Scripture. He made a good statement about what it means to live to ourselves, and I would like to read it to you. This is what he had to say:

To live "to ourselves" is to make it the great object to become rich or honored, or to indulge in the ease, comfort, and pleasures of life. These are the aim of all people but Christians; and in nothing else do Christians more differ from the world than in this; see 1 Peter 4:1-2; 2 Cor 5:15; 1 Cor 6:19-20; Matt 10:38; 16:24; Mark 8:34; 10:21; Luke 9:23. On no point does it become Christians more to examine themselves than on this. To "live to ourselves" is an evidence that we are strangers to piety. And if it be the great motive of our lives to live at ease (Amos 6:1) - to gratify the flesh, to gain property, or to be

distinguished in places of fashion and amusement - it is evidence that we know nothing of the power of that gospel which teaches us "to deny ourselves, and take up our cross daily.

God created us for His glory. Three times in Ephesian 1 Paul said, "That we should be to the praise of His glory," or something very similar to that which means the same. Our lives are to be centered in God, not in ourselves. And we need to seek His glory, not our own. John the Baptist stated it this way, speaking of our Lord, "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30).

What is stated negatively in verse 7, is stated positively in verse 8.

14:8 The NASB translates this verse,

For if we live, we live for the Lord, or if we die, we die for the Lord; therefore whether we live or die, we are the Lord's.

Those of you who have read John Piper's works, know how he emphasizes the glory of God. The glory of God in eating and drinking was stressed by the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 10:31 where we find these words: "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, of whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."

The object of both life and death are to be "for the Lord," *i.e.*, to do His will for His glory. And we are always doing one or the other, and so this includes all of our existence. Time-wise, it means always and in everything!

We belong to the Lord. We have been purchased by our Lord for God, for God's glory. We are under a divine obligation to do God's will.

14:9 This one of those very important verses which expresses for us the purpose that Christ had in His death.

We know that He died to save us from the penalty and power of our sins. But all of that was for the same purpose that Paul has been stressing here. It was that He might be Lord both of the dead and the living. Notice that this is different from saying the living and the dying. Dead means after dying, while dying speaks of the process. So the Lord died to be our Lord during our lives here on earth, when we die, and after we die for all eternity. This is another passage that answers the question about when the Lord becomes our Lord. It was at the Cross that that was settled. So for every child of God it can be said, and needs to be said, "He is our Lord." If He is my Savior, He is my Lord. And what a glorious honor it is for us that we are His bondservants, and He is our Lord.

Sandy and Headlam make an interesting observation here concerning the resurrection of Christ. They said: The Lordship of Christ is in the theology of St. Paul always connected with His resurrection, not His life [*i.e.*, His life on earth], which was a period of humiliation. Both "died" and "revived" are in the aorist tense which speaks of a single act, not something that we do continuously like His life on earth if that had been the point that the Apostle Paul was making.

The best translation of this verse is as it appears in the NKJV, if there are two words here for the resurrection. But the best MSS seem to approve the reading in the NASB, "For to this end Christ both died and lived again, that He might be Lord . . ." where there is just one verb for the resurrection (omitting "and rose")>

At this point Paul has firmly established the fact that the Lord is our Lord. And so he had some questions to ask. The first was (and is): "But why dost thou judge thy brother?" After all, we are not the judges; we are not the Lord; the Lord is Lord. The second question: "Or why dost thou set at nought thy brother?" Both verbs in these two questions are in the present tense speaks of things that were going on continuously, as contrast with something that had happened only once, or very infrequently. These issues had caused a lot of trouble between the believers, and there were no signs that it was going to stop.

Haldane believed that the two questions were for the two groups he was addressing: the weak brother first, and then the strong brother. The weak brother was inclined to judge the strong brother, and the strong brother was inclined to show contempt for the weaker brother, probably considering him a hopeless case. And with these attitudes neither was going to help the other. And it is evident that both sides were forgetting a very important appointment that we all have with God and with Christ. The better MSS say “the judgment seat of God” here; but in 2 Corinthians 5:10 we have “the judgment seat of Christ.” We read in John 5:22 that “the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son.” So Christ is the Judge, but He judges on behalf of the Father, and the Father will fully support the Son in His judgment. So in one sense it is “the judgment seat of God,” but in another it is “the judgment seat of Christ.”

But the point that Paul was making was that we are not going to be in the final judgment where we judge each other, but where we will be judged by Deity. Our judgment is often biased and faulty. We probably hardly ever get everything right. So, while we want to be acceptable to each other, I am not your judge, and you are not my judge. The Lord is going to be our Judge, and His judgment will be right.

This was not an empty threat or reminder. Paul had Scripture to back him up. This is the way we should all teach, or speak, the truth. He wrote, “For it is written.” Bishop Moule gives the force of these words, which is, “It stands written.” Not only was what he was about to say, “written,” but “it stands written.” That means it was true when Isaiah wrote it, *and it is still true!* More recent translations can be helpful to us, but don’t waste you time on any translation that changes the Scriptures. God’s Word is very precious to Him, and He is not going to tolerate any changing of it – either to add to it, or to take away from it.

But what does it say?

14:11 This is a quotation from Isaiah 45:23. (Read it as it appears in the OT.)

23 I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear.

So God has taken an oath that what is said here will most certainly come to pass. He does not say *when*, but He declares its absolute certainty. In the NT the “as I live, saith the Lord,” is God making known that there is no doubt but that we all will be there! There is going to be a great humbling before the Lord. Knees will bow. And the tongue will confess its sin. Dr. Chafer once told us in his class that the one fact about this that takes all of the fear and dread out of such a statement, is that the Judge Who will be sitting on the judgment seat, will be the same Savior Who died for us. The Judge will be the One we love, but what is even more important, *the One Who loves us!*

14:12 At that point in time, when we stand before the Lord, we will not be accusing others before the Lord, but we will be talking to the Lord about ourselves. As Bishop Moule said, our accounting will not be “about the faults or errors of” our brothers and sisters in Christ, but about ourselves. See p. 386. Cf. also 1 Corinthians 3:11-15. The judgment will not have to do about whether we go to heaven or hell. Or, as Bishop Moule expressed it, “not that of glory or perdition” (*Ibid.*). It will be a time when our rewards will be determined.

The word translated account is the familiar Greek word, *λόγος*. And so it means that our account will be given verbally, and perhaps will include the motives behind what we have done. We don’t know if others will be listening to our accounting of our works. My own idea about this is that we will be called before the Lord by ourselves. There will be no jury; the Lord Himself will hear us. But it certainly means that we must be very careful about *what we do*, and *why we have done it*. Has it been done for our glory, or has it been according to the will of God and for His glory? Let us not waste our time with “wood, hay, and stubble,” that which will not stand the test of fire, but with “gold, silver, and precious stones.”

This next verse is a verse which ought to be committed to memory by all of us. The word “therefore” indicates that the Apostle Paul has reached a conclusion from what he has been saying especially in this chapter, and up to this point.

(Quote verse 13.)

14:13 Sometimes words of criticism are directed against us. And it is all the more harmful to us when the criticism is unjust and undeserved. We may be seeking to serve the Lord according to our best understanding of the Word of God, when someone shoots a dart of unjust criticism our way. Amy Carmichael who served the Lord for over fifty years in India without ever taking a furlough, was speaking to someone who was a guest at Dohnavur. This guest was talking about her father who had suffered from the injustice of others. And Amy Carmichael asked her, “What has been the effect upon him of all the trouble?” And this was the answer she received: “It has left him unable to think an unkind thought of anyone” (*Gold By Moonlight*, p. 80).

The Lord has many ways of teaching us His will. Of course the best way is for us to learn His will from the Word, from a verse like this. I don’t know the background of this incident which Amy Carmichael recounted. That is not important. The important thing was this reaction of evidently some unjust criticism that was directed his way. We are not to retaliate when we are criticized by criticizing the one who has criticized us, but from the way we may have been hurt by the criticism which has been directed toward us, we are to learn not to criticize others. Paul was saying here in this verse that what we see in the life of someone else that we feel critical about, may be because of something in our lives which needs to be corrected.

Paul was not saying that we are to ignore problems that we see in others, but he was saying that criticism can only make a bad situation worse. The first thing that we need to do when we are inclined to criticize another person because of something in their lives that we know is wrong, is to pray for them.

Think of the Lord’s response to the woman taken in the act of committing adultery according to John 8:1-11.

Paul’s word here in verse 13 is very strong, but he softens it somewhat by including himself in his exhortation to the church. A. T. Robertson translates this, “Let us no longer have the habit of criticizing one another.” The verb is probably even stronger than just being critical. It means to pass judgment upon a person in a condemning way. To be the one who says what is right and what is wrong. Instead, the Apostle Paul indicates that we ought to be harder on ourselves than we are on anyone else. When the Lord saved us, he called us into a great, and, what He intends to be, a loving fellowship. We are all in the family of God. Notice he spoke of “his brother’s way.” Instead of being judgmental of each other, we ought to be devoted to helping each other. We are not enemies, but we are friends. So we want to make sure that there is nothing in our lives which would cause another brother to “fall” – and the NT idea of falling is *to fall into sin*. Our criticism may cause the one we criticize to sin by becoming angry. Or it may cause them to want to retaliate. Or, what is more likely, it may discourage them to the point that they want to give up.

We as husbands and wives need to keep this in mind. As parents we need to remember Romans 14:13. It is not that we are to avoid discussion or discipline, but the attitude we have when we do it, is of the utmost importance.

14:14 Now as we come to verse 14 and we see that Paul is referring to what is clean as compared to what is unclean, we should see that he was speaking of food and the observance of certain days as a means of making ourselves more acceptable to God, or to make ourselves either more deserving of salvation, or more secure after we are saved. An “unclean” person under the Law was a person who because of who he was, e.g., a leper, or a Gentile, or because of what he had done, being guilty of sin of any kind, was prohibited from

taking part in offering sacrifices to the Lord, or from participating in any of the feasts of the Lord.

At this point I would like to call your attention to a passage in 1 Corinthians 8 where the Apostle Paul was writing very much in the same vein as he was writing here to the believers at Rome. Please turn on just a few pages in your Bible to 1 Corinthians 8. I want to read from verse 4 down to the end of the chapter (v. 13). (Read and explain.)

Going back now to Romans 14:14, Paul said that the Lord Jesus had convinced him that there was nothing unclean in and of itself. Take, for example, a ham sandwich. The Jews under the Law were forbidden to eat pork. If they did they were unclean. But there is nothing in the NT that forbids eating a ham sandwich (unless your doctor tells you that it would not be good for your health). You see, Paul is not talking about dietary matters; he is speaking of what we eat, or days we observe, or anything that we might do, *to make ourselves more acceptable to God*. Our position in Christ is so secure that nothing can change it. And our position in Christ is so complete that nothing can be added to it, nor does anything need to be added to it. So people who refrain from eating foods, or who eat certain foods, with the idea that eating or not eating can affect their relationship, or their standing before God, are weak in their understanding of the Gospel. The same thing applies to the observance of the Sabbath, or Lenten, or any other days. We are not saved by our works either before or after we are saved. Salvation is all of God, all of the grace of God. Works for a Christian are very important, but not to obtain salvation, nor to secure salvation. I hope this is very clear to all of us.

So, if your doctor tells you not to eat certain foods, then don't eat them if you want to remain healthy. But the person who tells you that what you eat, or don't eat, determines your salvation, don't believe him (or her). However, there is another side to the story!

It is this (as you see in the second half of verse 14): If a person considers something to be unclean, to him it is unclean. Now Paul is back where he was at the beginning of this chapter. What is Paul telling us here? He is telling us that we should never encourage a person to violate his conscience. He may be mistaken, but be very careful when you are dealing with his conscience. People who have a strong conscience make good Christians. We must be careful not to violate our own consciences. The conscience is a God-given indicator which every person has which tells him what is right and wrong. I hope you remember that in Romans 2:14 and 15 Paul spoke of our consciences. Listen to what he said:

14 For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves:

15 Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another (Rom. 2:14-15).

The conscience is mentioned 31 times in the NT. Look up those verses. They are a very important part of all of us, the conscience. It isn't actually mentioned here, but what Paul said in the latter part of verse 14 is descriptive of the conscience.

In this latter part of verse 14 Paul was not speaking just of believers, but of any person. But in verse 15 he applies what he is saying specifically to "thy brother."

14:15 If I have a brother in Christ, who feels that he cannot eat meat (probably meat that was offered to an idol), and he sees you eat meat, or knows that you eat meat, he is grieved, and you are not walking in love. That is what charitably means – *κατὰ ἀγάπην*. And I hope that you remember that this kind of love is a love which causes you to want to do well to others, to leave them in a better condition than when you met him.

Now if you and I don't act in a loving way toward a brother, and we offend him by what we are doing, then we are *destroying* him. Those who believe that it is possible for us to lose our salvation, interpret this as meaning

that we have the capacity to cause someone else to lose their salvation.

Paul got into this same subject with the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 8:3-13. (Read.) Now I would like to read to you Charles Hodge's statement about verse 11 in 1 Corinthians 8, and the same would apply to the statement that Paul made here in Romans 14:15. (Read Hodge, Charles, *An Exposition of 1 and 2 Corinthians*, pp. 88e-89d.)

But let me add that when we come to a passage in the Bible which seems to teach that we can lose our salvation we need to fall back upon those passages which clearly teach whether we can, or cannot, lose our salvation. Bible, we need to take the clear teaching of Scripture as our starting point. And so we ask ourselves the question: Does the Bible teach that we can lose our salvation? And the answer is, "No! Absolutely not!" For example, John 10:27-30, where we have the words of the Lord Jesus Christ Who said, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them . . ." And then take the last five verses of Romans 8 – verses 35-39. But it is possible for us to have a devastating effect upon a brother, from which he may not recover. And we must always keep this in mind. I meet a brother, or a sister, in Christ. By my contact with him, or her, I am either going to help him, or hurt him. If I don't do either, I have hurt him because I have lost an opportunity to minister to him. *This must be a very important matter for the Apostle Paul to spend so much time on it, not only here in Romans, but in some of his other epistles. I may meet a brother with whom we are not in doctrinal agreement, but he is a brother. We are going to be in heaven eternally with each other. I must do whatever I can do to help him along the way, and trust that he will do the same for me. Instead, it is easy to be critical, and get into an argument so that we part, neither of us has been helped, but, on the contrary, we are hurting.*

14:16 So it is possible for my liberty in Christ to have an evil, a bad effect, on someone else.

Obviously Paul was not saying that we have to try to please everybody. In fact, he warned the Galatians about doing that very thing. And it seems that he was not talking about all kinds of meat, just meat that had been offered to idols and was being sold in the market place. So although you have perfect liberty to eat meat offered to idols (because it was good meat), yet Paul did not want his liberty to become a stumblingblock to anyone else. He might convince a person that eating that meat was OK, but that did not make him a Christian. And he went on to say this in verse 17.

14:17 This is a good text from which to preach the Gospel. Our mission is not to convince them that it is alright to eat meat, but wrong to insist on observing the Sabbath. When they understand the Gospel they will see that these other matters have nothing to do with salvation.

"The kingdom of God" here speaks of salvation. It speaks of the fruit of the Gospel. To be born again is to enter into the kingdom of God. We are not saved and forgiven so that we can live any way that we want to. We are "bought with a price." We belong to God. We are under His authority. We are citizens of heaven. We are the Lord's bondservants. *But we need to show who we are by the way we live.* Verse 18 clearly indicates that Paul, in mentioning "righteousness" and "peace" and "joy in the Holy Spirit," as what it means to serve Christ. And we ought always to remember in living for the Lord we are serving Him. We can never repay the Lord for what He has done for us, but, by the grace of God, we can live for Him. That is all that He wants us to do. The Christian life is a life of serving Christ. And what an honor that is for us! Before we were saved there was nothing that we could do that would please Him. After we are saved, everything we do can be pleasing to Him. Listen to these words from the book of Proverbs:

8 The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD: but the prayer of the upright is his delight (Prov. 15:8).

27 The sacrifice of the wicked is abomination: how much more, when he bringeth it with a wicked mind? (Prov. 21:27)

Now I want you to anticipate what is coming between now and the end of the chapter concerning these three words: righteousness, peace, and joy:

- 1) Righteousness is that which is pleasing to God, that which is acceptable to Him. That is inverse 18.
- 2) Peace is in verse 19.
- 3) Joy is in verse 22.

Paul really summarizes the Christian life, life in the kingdom of God, with these three words.

Behind the word “righteousness” is the idea that God has a standard of life, a standard that is high. In fact, it is perfection. God’s standard for us is not only different from the world’s standards, but it is a holy standard, a standard that really delivers us from sin. The object of the Christian life is primarily to please God. Using the word that Paul used in verse 18, it is being and doing that which is acceptable to God. Before we were saved, God was not at all in our thoughts. But now, since we have been saved, we think about Him all of the time, and we know, or should know, that the main objective in all that we are, all that we say, all that we do, and even in all that we think, is to please God, to be acceptable to Him.

In just a moment we will see a little bit more about a righteous life, but before we go on to verse 18, let me say a word about “peace,” and then about “joy in the Holy Spirit.”

Being saved, “we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom. 5:1). But having peace with God, we need to have peace in our hearts, and we need to be known as men and women of peace. Remember what Paul has already said about peace in 12:18. (Read.) It bothers us when we are “on the outs” with anyone, whether with a Christian, or with a non-Christian. We live in a world that is characterized by hatred and selfishness and pride. Turmoil and unrest is everywhere. People have always said, “Peace, peace, when there is no peace” (Jer. 6:14; 8:11). We are not “peaceniks,” but we are to be people of peace, true peace, the peace of God,” which Paul said “passeth all understanding.” Peace follows righteousness. Psalm 85:10 tells that “righteousness and peace have kissed each other.” Isaiah 32:17 teaches us that:

17 And the work of righteousness shall be peace ; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever.

We have been learning in our study of the book of Hebrews that Melchizedek, the king of Salem, was, by interpretation, the king of righteousness and the king of peace. See Hebrews 7:2. And in James 3:18 that “the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.” Peace means having a harmonious relationship with others. Of course, nothing can compare with the peace that believers enjoy with each other. This is what it means to have fellowship one with another.

And then Paul mentioned “joy in the Holy Spirit.” I usually read “Spirit” instead of “Ghost” because the original say *Spirit*. Actually all three of these spiritual traits are “in,” or “by the Holy Spirit.”

Now in emphasizing the relationship between righteousness and peace, we can make the same statement with “joy.” Righteousness leads to peace, and righteousness and peace lead to joy. Everybody wants to be happy, but only the child of God knows how to find joy, true joy, untarnished joy. Sin brings a certain amount of pleasure, but it is not true joy, lasting joy. Joy is the result of a righteous relationship with God, and a peaceful relationship with both God and man. And this is brought out very clearly in verse 18:

14:18 The one (and it can only be a child of God) who serves Christ by seeking to please God first, and then by walking peacefully with men, all men (where it is possible), and finds his greatest joy in doing so, is “acceptable to God, and approved of men.” When we make it our primary aim to serve the Lord by being acceptable to God, and peaceful with men, we should not be surprised to find that we have the approval even of people who do not know the Lord. They may not want to turn to the Lord, but they are thankful that we have. And so it is not surprising that what Paul said in verse 18 is followed by what Paul said in verse 19.

14:19 Having commended such a life to us, Paul now exhorts us concerning what we are to do about it. His exhortation does not mean that they were not living like they should. Of course, some of them were not living the life that he had been describing. But now he tells them to make what he has been saying the object and pattern of their daily lives. "Follow" is probably not the best translation of the verb which Paul used here. It really means *to pursue it. If they were already seeking to serve Christ as Paul had described it, they were to intensify their efforts to excel, to abound, even more! But for those who were primarily concerned about pleasing the Lord, they were get running in the race.* Right here it would be good to refer to what Paul told the Corinthians about running in the race of life. You will find his words in 1 Corinthians 9:24-27. Let me read them to you:

24 Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain.

25 And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible.

26 I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air:

27 But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway (1 Cor. 9:24-27).

The Christian life is a race. We are not competing with each other, but we must all be running to win. I don't know much about track, but I know that nobody runs in a race expecting, or wanting, to come in second. I have never been to the dog races, but recently I saw a clip on TV news, and there was no dog in the race who wanted to come in second. Paul says, "Run that you may obtain." Obtain what? Obtain the prize. What is the prize? There are going to be many rewards given in heaven, many crowns. But what is going to mean more than anything else is to have the Lord say to us, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant. Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

How do we run? By reading our Bibles. By prayer. By obedience to the Word. By ministering to one another. Here in Romans 14:19 Paul was speaking about edifying one another. You see, when you and I help others in their walk with the Lord, encourage them in their walk with the Lord, that is a part of our race. When we help others, we run better!

Remember that toward God the word is glorification. Toward other believers it is edification. And toward the world it is evangelization. But the word for all of us is, RUN!

Now at the end of verse 20 Paul came back to the subject that he had been talking about: eating meat offered to idols.

14:20 Here we have another exhortation, but we have had it before. See verse 15, and remember Charles Hodge's explanation which I read to you. Can you and I destroy the work of God? Of course not! But we can cause problems if we are not careful. Would we want to destroy the work of God? Certainly not. Then let's not live like we don't care what the Lord is doing in a fellow believer's life. We want to be instruments of edification for others. Paul said that the matters of the kingdom of God aren't governed by food. But for a brother or sister who has a conscience about it, it would be evil for him to eat. So don't force him to do something against his conscience. Instead, remember the three words, and concentrate on those: righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit.

14:21 But not only am I not going to force a weaker brother to violate his conscience, but I am not going to eat meat, or drink wine, or do anything that would make my brother stumble, anything that would offend him, or weaken him. We must always remember that our responsibility toward each other is that we might build each other up, not tear anything down. Paul was not talking about sin, or a rebellious heart, or pride, or

any sins like that. He was talking about things people do to make their salvation more secure, or to add to the perfect and finished work that our Lord has already done for our salvation. Obviously if people have this idea about salvation, they need to be led out of it. But that is not to be done by despising the ground that they presently stand on. It is to be done by prayer and patience and further teaching of the truth.

14:22 But now, while Paul has been asking the stronger brother to respect the conscience of the weaker brother, the question arises, Is Paul asking the stronger brother to violate his own conscience? And so we read, “Hast thou faith?” Grammatically it could also be translated as a statement: *Thou hast faith*. By this Paul meant that the stronger brother was rightly convinced, as he said in verse 1, “that there is nothing unclean in itself.” He was not saying that there is no sin, but in the context he was saying that neither salvation initially, nor the Christian life afterwards, is made better or made worse by what we eat or don’t eat. By faith he was convinced that this was true, and it was true. It still is true. The truth does not change. But here we need to remember 1 Corinthians 8:8-9:

8 But meat commendeth us not to God: for neither, if we eat, are we the better ; neither, if we eat not, are we the worse .

9 But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to them that are weak. Paul was not asking the strong to sin against their consciences. That would have been just as bad as to ask the weaker brother to sin against his conscience. *But Paul was asking the stronger brother not to do what his faith and his conscience told him that he was free to do, so that he would not be a stumbling block to the weaker brother who had not yet come to where the stronger brother was in his faith.*

Paul told the stronger brother to have his faith “before God.” That is, if the stronger brother refrained from what he had a perfect right to do, the Lord would understand why. But along with that, the stronger brother is not condemned, or guilty, because in a point like this he conducts himself, as Paul has suggested, so as not to offend the conscience of the weaker brother. And this is what will make the stronger brother *happy*, or “blessed.” This is a beatitude to be placed alongside of all of the other beatitudes of Scripture.

14:23 If we convince a brother to eat meat when his faith has not given him that liberty, *i.e.*, his faith is not yet that strong, then he sins, he condemns himself, because “whatsoever is not of faith is sin.” A person’s faith here means the place where he has come in his understanding of the truth.

Hodge summarized Paul’s teaching in this verse with these words:

He wished to convince the stronger Christians that it was unreasonable in them to expect their weaker brethren to act according to their faith [*i.e.*, the faith of the stronger Christian]; and that it was sinful in them so to use their liberty as to induce these scrupulous Christians to violate their own consciences (*Op. cit.*, p. 428).

These are very important truths for us to remember. If we encourage a weaker brother to do what his conscience tells him is wrong, even though it may not be wrong, we are sinning and we are encouraging our weaker brother to sin. And so this must never be done. On the other hand, if we refrain from doing that which the weaker brother does not believe that he can do, we are exercising Christian love, and may be putting ourselves in a position where eventually we will be used to strengthen our weaker brothers faith. Our objective must always be *edification* in dealing with each other as brothers and sisters in Christ.

Romans 15

This chapter is really a continuation of chapter 14, but, as we can see from verse 1, he addressed the stronger believers first. However, as we read down through the chapter, he gradually includes everyone. This is apparent, I believe, at verse 5. Then he spoke to the Jews, “the circumcision,” and then to the Gentiles where he

included four passages from the OT to show that it had always been a part of the plan of God to reach the Gentiles with the Gospel.

15:1 Chapter 15 begins the same way that chapter 14 began: addressing those who are strong in the faith, in this instance, those who know that what we eat or don't eat has nothing to do with either our justification or our sanctification. Remember 1 Corinthians 8:8,

8 But meat commendeth us not to God: for neither, if we eat, are we the better; neither, if we eat not, are we the worse.

But those who are strong enough in their faith to know this, must not look down on those who don't understand this because "we . . . ought," meaning that *we have an obligation to God and before Him*, to put up with their infirmities, and not to be determined to do what we have the right to do. Self-control is a unique characteristic in these days, but it ought to be prominent in the lives of those of us who know the Lord. We live in a time when people insist on doing what they feel that they have a right to do. We as Christians do not have pleasing ourselves as our first priority, but we want to please the Lord, and pleasing Him includes helping others in any way that we can.

"The infirmities of weak includes their errors, their inconsistencies, and their immature habits. "The weak" are lit. *those who who are not able*. They may be very positive and outspoken in what they have to say, but are like a stubborn child who will not listen to reason. And so we graciously "put up with" them, and pray that they will grow in their understanding of the truth. Paul expressed it this way in his letter to the church at Philippi:

4 Look not every man on his own things, but ever man also on the things of others (Phil. 2:4).

15:2 This verse states positively what verse 1 states negatively.

In Paul's statement here he was making sure that all of the strong would know that he was talking to them. I hope you remember the definition of a neighbor which we talked about in Romans 13:9 and 10. By definition it is someone who lives near you, but the larger meaning is "any human being." Here in 15:2 Paul was speaking of some other believer. We must always keep in mind the "good" for every believer is that which make him more like the Lord. Cf. Rom. 8:28. And this is what "edification" is, growing into a greater likeness of Christ. We must never overlook this glorious objective that is ahead for every child of God. We don't want to tear down, but to build up.

15:3 Examples always help to clarify our teaching. The greatest example of one Who lived to please others was our Lord. Paul spoke of Him here at "Christ," the Anointed One, the One Who came not to do His own will, but the will of the Father Who sent Him. Cf. John 6:38. The whole suffering and death of our Lord is what Paul cited as our Example of seeking to please others. The quotation is from Psalm 69:9. To reproach a person is to seek to discredit him. All of us have reproached the Lord. And that is sin. But when our Lord died for us, He took our crimes against God upon Himself and paid for them just as though He was the One Who had shown such disdain for God.

The work of Christ stands as an illustration of what our attitude ought to be toward each other. If the Lord did that for us, then we should seek to do whatever we can do for the edification of those for whom the Lord died.

15:4 From this OT quotation Paul went on to point out one of the main reasons that the Lord has given us the OT, and the preserved it for us. It was for our learning. It contains nothing but what can be profitable for us and which we need to learn. Through all the years that have passed since the OT was written (and now we can include also the NT), God has not changed. The Lord Jesus Christ has not changed. The Holy Spirit has not changed. And we can say also that the Word of God has not changed. The Scriptures are designed to give us patience, endurance, perseverance, and comfort, or encouragement and exhortation, that we might have

hope that God's purposes will prevail. And this is truth we need to apply, not only to ourselves, but to those weaker brothers who sometimes seem so hopeless.

But notice what Paul did next!

15:5 He offered a prayer using those same two words which were so necessary for the strong Christians to be able to deal profitably with those who were weak.

After saying that the Scriptures will give us patience and comfort, he addressed God as "the God of patience and consolation" – the same two words that he had used in verse 4. So the patience and comfort that we need, we find in the Scriptures, but they come from God through His Word, "the God of patience and consolation." *And so being in God, the supply is inexhaustible!*

But one thing that this verse tells us, is that we need to do a lot of praying about our relationships to each other in the church. In His Word God tells us what to do, but then we come back to the Lord and ask Him to enable us to do what He wants us to do. Undoubtedly our biggest failure is that we don't pray for each other as much as we should. Paul taught the stronger brethren how they should treat the weaker, but even before he finished writing to them, he prayed for them, and he wrote down the very prayer that he was praying for them. Paul was great at that. Paul's prayers in his epistles are priceless in helping us to learn how to pray. When you and I write to people we pray for, it is a good thing not only to tell them that you are praying for them, *but actually write out your prayer*. It probably may make them think, and if they truly know the Lord, they will be thankful that you are concerned enough about them to pray for them.

Paul prayed that they would be likeminded toward each other, the Greek says, "according to Christ Jesus." They were to treat each other in the same way that the Lord would treat them. He is the pattern; He is the Example.

The purpose behind it all is given in verse 6.

15:6 "That ye may with one mind [inwardly] and one mouth [outwardly] glorify God." Who is He? "Even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." In those days "God" many different things to different people. The same is true today. There are many Christians who think that when a Muslim speaks of God, he is speaking of the same God that we Christians worship. But he is not! And so we, too, must add that the God we worship is "the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

And so Paul here was not only telling the strong believers (with the weaker ones listening to what he had to say), that they should glorify God, but he was telling them one of the main ways in which we glorify Him. And that is by being likeminded. This does not mean that we agree on every point (although we must agree on the basic doctrines). But it does mean that there is a harmonious spirit among us, and that where we may disagree on some details, yet we do it in love and with a desire to see each other growing in the Lord.

15:7 Consequently it is important that we "receive" one another. The word "receive" is used here in the same sense that it is used in 14:1. And it will help us to receive each other if we remember that Christ has received all of us "to the glory of God." None of us is all that we should be. But the Lord has received us, and He blesses us, and uses us as He continues to teach us. We must have that same attitude toward one another. There is nothing on earth like the fellowship that we enjoy with each other, and with God the Father of us all, and with Jesus Christ the Savior of us all.

At this point in his writing Paul touched upon one of the sore points which made fellowship difficult especially

among the weaker believers. That was the Jew-Gentile problem. And it was especially difficult for Jews who became Christians. And this basically was at the root of the problem concerning foods that could be eaten or should not be eaten, and what to do about the Sabbath Day. Perhaps you remember how the scribes and Pharisees were after the Lord constantly because He healed on the Sabbath Days. To them this was working. And the Jews were still quite exact about what they could eat and what they could not eat, and even whom they might eat with, and whom they would never eat with. Circumcision also was a problem. Many believed that a Gentile could not be saved unless he was circumcised.

Paul spoke about the Jews, the circumcision, in verse 8, and then he quoted from five OT passages in verses 9, 10, 11, and 12.

15:8 Hodge said that this verse begins a confirmation of verse 7. Christ obviously received Jews who believed because His ministry on earth was almost exclusively to the Jews. Paul called them “the circumcision” because circumcision was the obstacle to fellowship with Gentiles among many of them. Christ came in confirmation of the promises that were made to the fathers of Israel. “The fathers” basically were Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. From Jacob it went to Judah and all of the sons of Jacob. The Gospel of Matthew was written primarily to the Jews, and that is why you have so many OT quotations in Matthew’s Gospel which showed from the OT that there was no possibility that Jesus of Nazareth was not the Messiah when so many OT prophecies were fulfilled in His coming. Our Lord was born a Jew, and He came to minister to the Jews. He died to save Jews. His coming is one of the greatest evidences that the Bible is the Word of God. It was impossible that one could come in fulfillment of so many prophecies and promises, and not be the Messiah.

One of the clearest references to the salvation of the Gentiles is in Genesis 12:3. (Read verses 1-3.)

But the Jews were not the only ones involved in God’s gracious plan of salvation. The Gentiles were also included. And at this point Paul quoted five OT passages which proved that even before Christ came, it was the purpose of God to save Gentiles also. The NT gives abundant evidence of the truth, the reliability, the absolute trustworthiness, and the divine inspiration of the OT.

What are the references?

15:9 The first one is found in **Psalms 18:49**. The writer of this verse was David. He, of course, was a Jew who lived about 1000 years before Christ came to the earth. It helps us to understand what David meant when we see how Paul used it here in Romans 15:9. Both David and Paul wrote under the inspiration of the same Spirit of God.

David was speaking prophetically saying that he would give thanks to God among the heathen, or Gentiles, evidently for saving them. He would sing praises to the name of the Lord for saving Gentiles.

15:10 In this verse we have a quotation from **Deuteronomy 32:43**. Moses wrote this Psalm. It was to remind the children of Israel of the faithfulness of God when after Moses died, they would turn in rebellion and disobedience away from the Lord. This was to remind them of the goodness of the Lord, and His faithfulness to them in past days in order that they might turn back to the Lord. So it is a song of Moses who lived approximately 1500 years before Christ came to the earth. It is a very brief statement, but clearly speaks of salvation for the Gentiles. Moses said, “Rejoice, O ye nations, with His people,” who would be the Jews. To rejoice with them, would mean, according to Paul, that the nations, or the Gentiles, were rejoicing for the same reason that the Jews were rejoicing. That would be for the salvation of God.

15:11 The third quotation is from **Psalm 117:1**. It calls upon the nations to praise the Lord first, and then calls upon the people of Israel to praise Him also. And they both praise the Lord for the same thing: "For His merciful kindness is great toward us: and the truth (probably faithfulness) of the Lord endureth forever." These words are expressive of salvation, and both Gentiles and Jews are praising the Lord for the same thing.

We don't know who wrote this Psalm, but its importance is seen in the fact that it is not only the shortest of all of the Psalms, but it is said to be at the very center of the Bible. And so these details would point in a special way to the fact that God ordained His salvation for Gentiles as well as for Jews, and all on the same basis, His merciful kindness and His faithfulness.

15:12 This verse contains two verses from Isaiah, and both of them are from the eleventh chapter. The first is from **Isaiah 11:1** and **Isaiah 11:10**. Actually the truth we are after is found in verse 10 alone.

Jesse was the father of King David. So the root of Jesse is David. So this has to do with the Messiah. In Matthew 1:1 our Lord is called "the son of David, the son of Abraham. So the title "the root of Jesse" clearly refers to Christ, the Messiah, the Savior. The quotation in Romans differs as to its wording from what we read in Isaiah 11:10, but the meaning is not changed. The difference is due to the fact that NT quotations from the OT were generally from the Greek translation of the OT, the Septuagint, often referred to by the letters LXX. But this is clearly an indication that Gentiles were to be saved. Isaiah, the writer, wrote about 700 years before Christ came to the earth.

And so "it is written" (v. 9), *it stands written*. Nothing can erase it. Concerning these texts:

- 1) One is from the Law.
- 2) Two are from the Psalms.
- 3) Two are from a Prophet.

Paul cited these as his authority. He cited them as the Word of God. One verse could prove it, but all of them together give overwhelming evidence.

So there can be no argument against the fact that the OT predicted that salvation is for the Gentiles as well as for the Jews. It went to the Jews first, but then to the Gentiles. Cf. Acts 1:8.

The church at Rome was predominantly a Gentile church. So this was an important point that the Apostle Paul was making. And it is a point for which we can be eternally thankful. But we need to remember that there is only one Gospel. For both Jew and Gentiles it was, and is, "by grace through faith" in our Lord Jesus Christ. No Jew is worthy of it; no Gentile is worthy of it. For both the Jew and the Gentile it is that we should be to the praise of God's glory.

Charles Hodge made this comment at the end of his discussion on verse 12:

In the fulfillment of this prophecy Christ came, and preached salvation to those who were near and to those who were far off. As both classes had been thus kindly received by the condescending Savior, and united into one community, they should recognize and love each other as brethren, laying aside all censoriousness and contempt, neither judging nor despising one another (p. 436).

But now, as we move on to the next verse, verse 13, we come to another prayer.

15:13 The word "hope" is found in the following verses in this book of Romans: 4:18 (2x); 5:2, 4, 5; 8:20, 24 (4x), 25; 12:12; 15:4, 13 (2x) – a total of 14 times. Thayer, in his Greek lexicon, defines a Christian's hope as the "*joyful and confident expectation of eternal salvation*" (p. 205). So it does not speak of uncertainty, but absolute certainty. It speaks in the Bible of that which is yet to come, but certain to come. It has to do

with what I have called *salvation in the future tense*. It includes the coming of our Lord, seeing Him, being with Him and being like Him. It includes the elimination of our sin nature and all the results of sin: sickness, pain, and death. And, according to Titus 2:13, we are to be

13 Looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and our Savior, Jesus Christ;

14 Who gave himself for us, that HE MIGHT REDEEM US FROM EVERY LAWLESS DEED AND PURIFY FOR HIMSELF A PEOPLE FOR HIS OWN POSSESSION, zealous of good works (Titus 2:13-14 - NASB).

Paul's prayer here in Romans 15:13 has to do with this hope. He called God, "the God of hope." He is the One Who has given us this hope, and Who has secured it for us. It is for all of us, Jewish believers and Gentile believers alike. Consequently it is Paul's request that this God of hope would "fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Spirit." This is fulness of joy and fulness of peace. To abound in hope is to have it in abundance, to excel in it, to overflow. But notice that it all comes "in believing," that is, by faith, and through the power of the Holy Spirit. This is one way to describe the filling of the Holy Spirit. What a prayer! How greatly we need this, especially in these days. No one can possibly take our hope away from us.

But the thing to remember, and the reason we find Paul writing about this here, is because we need to remember that this hope belongs to all believers, the strong and the weak, the Jew and the Gentile – all believers. And we need to entertain the same hope for all believers. Philippians 1:6 applies to every believer.

This is the truth that can minimize our differences and increase our fellowship.

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This is the truth that can minimize our differences and increase our fellowship.

AT THIS POINT THE CHARACTER OF THE EPISTLE CHANGES BECAUSE NOW THE APOSTLE PAUL BEGAN TO SPEAK OF HIS MINISTRY, AND YET IT IS HIS MINISTRY OF THE TRUTH THAT HE AS COVERED IN THE PRECEDING CHAPTERS. There were five specific things that Paul wanted the believers in the Roman church to know about what God had called him to do, and how he intended to fulfill it. And so in verses 14 through 33 Paul described his ministry:

- 1) AS IT RELATED TO THIS EPISTLE (vv. 14-16).
- 2) AS TO ITS SPHERE (vv. 17-19).
- 3) AS TO ITS NATURE (vv. 20-22).
- 4) AS TO ITS FUTURE (vv. 23-29). These verses are divided into two sections.
 - a) Verses 23-24). This was his extended plan.
 - b) Verses 25-29). This was his immediate plan.
- 5) AS TO ITS NEEDS (vv. 30-33): Prayer.

15:14 In this latter part of chapter 25 Paul repeated some of the facts about his call from the Lord with respect to the preaching of the Gospel as it applied to the Gentile world. We know from the book of Acts as well as from his other NT epistles that he preached the Gospel to the Jews as well as to the Gentiles. But his calling was primarily to the Gentiles as Peter's calling was primarily to the Jews. He mentioned this in Galatians 2 where we read in verse 7b "that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter." And then he added in verse 8:

8 For he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles.

(Read also from Romans 1, verses 1-7, and verses 13-17.)

Notice how gracious the Apostle Paul was in speaking of the Roman believers. He did not want them to think that they didn't know anything, but instead he was convinced of three things:

1) "That ye also are full of goodness" – This seems to be a reference to the godliness of their lives, evidence that they understood the practical effect of the Gospel upon their lives.

2) "That ye also are full of knowledge" – This was a reference to their understand of the doctrine of the Gospel.

But he was able to go one step further:

3) "That ye are . . . able also to admonish one another."

It takes the first two in order to be qualified to do the third. They were able to exhort each other, and even to warn each other, because they were well grounded in the truth and seeking to live out the truth in lives that were pleasing to the Lord, *i.e.*, consistent with the truth. And while Paul has not hesitated to exhort them in this epistle, yet there has been an absence of rebuke such as we see in many of Paul's epistles.

So Paul was not writing because he knew that there were problems in the church at Rome, but, as he went on to say, because he felt constrained to do so because of the nature of his calling. The church at Rome probably had Jewish people in it, but it was predominantly Gentile. And so Paul did not feel that he would really be true to his calling if he did not present the Gospel to them by letter, hoping that eventually he would be able to go to them in person. So his epistle was not meant to be a rebuke of them, but an encouragement to, and commendation of, them.

15:15 And what I have said concerning verse 14 is exactly what Paul went on to say in this verse. He was "putting" them "in mind," which means *reminding them* of truth they already knew, to fulfill His calling and to write the truth more deeply into their hearts and minds.

This ought to remind us of what the Apostle Peter said about his own ministry. I am referring to his words in 2 Peter 1, verses 12 through 16:

12 Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth.

13 Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance;

14 Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me.

15 Moreover I will endeavour that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance.

16 For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty.

And this is important for all of us to understand about the ministry of the Word. We need to hear the truth over and over. Pastors should not hesitate to preach from texts that they have preached from before. I actually did that last Sunday night. I preached from that same text on the last Sunday of August last year, in 2004. I didn't preach the same message, but I obviously was teaching the same truth. I doubt if anyone remembered that I had done that, and that is even more of a reason to believe that we need to preach from the same text providing we spend additional time in study and praying when we go the same text a second, or third, or more times than that. And this is a good reason for reading the Bible at least once a year. You will often see truth in a very familiar text that you have never seen before.

When Paul spoke in this verse "of the grace of God which was given" to him "of God," he was referring to his calling to go to the Gentiles. And he went on to say as much in verse 16.

15:16 And so this is why the epistle to the Romans. (Read the verse.) Cf. also Ephesians 3:16-18, another passage in which Paul was speaking of the distinctive ministry that he had:

6 That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel:

7 Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power.

8 Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ (Eph. 3:6-8).

This is a wonderful statement of the ministry that Paul had been called of God to do. His words indicate that his ministry was a priestly ministry in which he was ministering on behalf of our Savior, Jesus Christ, to the Gentiles, and, as he preached the Gospel and Gentiles were being saved, he was offering to God a sacrifice of redeemed Gentiles, which was well pleasing to God, and “sanctified,” or *purified by the Holy Spirit*.

Notice one distinctive thing about verse 16 is that all three Persons of the Godhead are mentioned. His appointment was from Jesus Christ. His message was God’s Gospel. And it was the Holy Spirit who made his ministry acceptable to God. What a holy calling the Apostle Paul had! Such a ministry under the blessing of the Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, was certain to experience the blessing of God. But Paul wanted in this verse to make it clear that the glory belonged to the Three Persons of the Godhead, and not to himself. And so he said in verse 17.

15:17 Beginning with this verse Paul speaks of *the sphere of his ministry*. It had not yet included to Rome, but he had been used extensively throughout the Roman Empire.

By the word “glory” in this verse, Paul did mean that he had any reason for boasting. By “glory” he meant praise and thanksgiving to God. God was to be glorified for what had been accomplished through his ministry. He was only the instrument through whom the Gospel had been preached, and Gentiles, believing in Christ, had been saved. No one was more amazed at the blessing of God than Paul was. He called himself the chief of sinners. He said that he was not worthy to be called an apostle. Solomon said that “before honor is humility.” And God honored His servant because he humbled himself under the mighty hand of God. Men can gather large crowds, but the condition of the preacher’s heart is what determines his usefulness as a servant of the Lord.

15:18 This is a negative statement. Stated positively Paul said that he was only going to speak of that which Christ had wrought by him. He attributed the fruitfulness of his ministry to Christ, Christ working through him, to be sure, but Christ was the One Who did the work in the hearts of Gentiles. God constrained men to believe, but it was through the “word and deed” of the Apostle. So much depends upon the life and speech of the Lord’s servant. The power comes from Christ, but He uses His truth, the Gospel, through His servants who speak the Word, and whose deeds, or lives, give evidence of the truth of the Gospel. At the same time we have to remember that it is God Who works in us “to will and to do of His good pleasure” (Phil. 2:13). None of us has any reason to glory in ourselves. If people are saved through the testimony of our lives and lips, it is only God Who deserves the glory. When a beautiful house is built, it is the architect and the builder who are to be praised, not the tools that they have used. When people are saved, it is not the person or people who have given that person the Gospel who are to be praised, but the Savior Who does the work of salvation.

15:19 “Through mighty signs and wonders” in this verse needs to be added to “word and deed” in verse 18. These were done “by the power of the Spirit of God.” As “signs” the evidence was clear that it was a work of God; as “wonders” they carried with them the evidence that salvation was truly a work of God. We don’t see the miraculous works that often accompanied the preaching of the Gospel in the early days of this age, but the power of Christ and the power of the Spirit still are the way in which the Gospel becomes effective in the salvation of those who hear the Gospel. Paul’s responsibility, and our responsibility, is to preach, to declare, to proclaim the Gospel message, but it is God Who determines where and when and with whom the

Gospel is to be fruitful in the salvation of those who are lost.

Now to appreciate the extent of Paul's ministry we all need to consult a map of the Roman Empire. He mentioned that "from Jerusalem, and round about to Illyricum" he had "fully preached the Gospel of Christ." We know where Jerusalem is, but where is Illyricum?

Illyricum is that area, a region (not a city) east of Italy, on the eastern shore of the Adriatic Sea, just north of Greece, known also as Dalmatia. And so it was just across the Adriatic Sea from Italy, close to Rome, but not quite there. Paul's ministry had covered a very wide area and was of one of many ways in which God had confirmed the apostolic ministry of the Paul. We have no record in Scripture of Paul preaching in Illyricum, but he was in that area on his second missionary journey. He did not say here that he had gone to Illyricum, but that it was "round about to Illyricum." Barnes, in his commentary, referred to Paul as "one indefatigable man," and that is what he was.

In all of this extensive area (from Jerusalem to Illyricum) Paul said that he had "fully preached the Gospel of Christ." It was the same message everywhere, and there was nothing about the message that Paul held back on. To the elders of Ephesus Paul said that he "kept back nothing that was profitable unto you" (v. 20), and then he went on to say that he had said this in reference to the Gospel. Later on in that same twentieth chapter of Acts it is recorded that Paul said to them that he was "pure from the blood of all men" (v. 26) because he had "not shunned to declare unto" them "all the counsel of God" (v. 27).

This is a very important point about the ministry of Paul that we not only need to understand, but to follow in our ministry. The Gospel is not popular in the world, and it never has been. Everywhere that Paul went the people either had their own false religions, or a corrupted form of a Christless Judaism. Paul held back on no part of the Gospel. He believed (as he expressed in Romans 1:16) that the Gospel was "the power of God unto salvation." And, as a result, God wonderfully blessed his ministry. It seems that today we are more concerned about pleasing people than we are about pleasing God. So that it is not unusual to hear preachers talk about some of the temporal benefits that they declare the Gospel has (such as, the prosperity Gospel), which is not the Gospel at all. May the Lord give us more men who will fully preach the Gospel *of Christ!*

15:20 At this point Paul began to speak about the peculiar nature of his ministry. It was to preach the Gospel where it had not been preached before. That, by itself, would have made his ministry particularly difficult, and even dangerous.

Paul was a pioneer missionary. This is what many Bible teachers consider that Paul had in mind when he spoke in Ephesians 4:11 about "evangelists." He firmly believed that God had His elect in every place, and that it was a part of his calling to reach those places and those people who had never heard the Gospel before. And there are people like that in every generation. There are people like that throughout the Portland-Vancouver area. They are the people that we need to reach. Others were doing the same. Instead of building upon the foundation that others had laid, his calling was to go to those who had not heard the Gospel at all. Paul's ministry was definitely a planting ministry, as he told the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 3:6, "I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase." And then he added in verse 7,

7 So then neither is he that planteth anything, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase.

Then in verse 21 Paul did what he did earlier in this chapter in verses 9 through 12, he cited an OT passage to justify the preaching of the Gospel to the Gentile world.

15:21 This is a quotation of Isaiah 52:15. This is a verse out of the OT which further justified the preaching of the Gospel to Gentiles. That is why Paul had not made a special effort to go to Rome before. The

Romans already had the Gospel. In the Isaiah passage Isaiah was describing “the astonishment of the nations and kings at the suffering of the servant of the Lord” (Sandy and Headlam, p. 408). And Paul used that verse, and rightly so, to explain “the extension of the knowledge of the true servant of the Lord [the Messiah] to places where His Name has not been mentioned” (*Ibid.*).

15:22 This was why Paul had not gone to Rome before. And he had told them why at the beginning of this epistle. See Romans 1:13 ff. It was not that he had not wanted to go. Nor was it that he had not intended to go to Rome. But it was that the Lord kept opening doors for Paul where people had not heard the Gospel before. “Much hindered” means *many times he had been hindered*. As long as God kept opening doors in places where the Gospel had not gone before, Paul felt that going to those places was clearly the Lord’s will for him.

This is not the calling of every servant of the Lord, but Paul knew that it was what God had called him to do.

At this point Paul began to speak about the future of his ministry. In verses 23 and 24 he spoke of *his extended plan*; in verses 25-29, about *his immediate plan*. Notice the words, “But now,” at the beginning of verse 23, and you will see the same words at the beginning of verse 25. They mark out the division between what Paul said he wanted to do ultimately, in contrast with what he expected to do first.

15:23 “But now” – at the present time in Paul’s ministry he seems to have covered the area so thoroughly that he spoke about in verse 19, that there was no area left which had not heard the Gospel. Paul had faithfully done the work that the Lord had appointed him to do. For many years he had had “a great desire” to go to Rome. Stifler in his commentary estimated “these many years” as being about fifteen. See 1:13.

15:24 Paul would do that on his way to Spain. He was intending to expand his ministry as far as Spain. And so it was his plan that, when he went to Spain, he would stop by on his way to visit them in Rome. He hoped that they would support him in his trip to Spain, but first he wanted to spend some time, perhaps an extended time, in fellowship with them.

Regarding his trip to Spain, Paul evidently felt (and this was a part of his teaching), that those who had the Gospel had a responsibility to support those whose calling it was to go. But his visit with them was going to have to wait for a time because he had another responsibility to fulfill before he would be free to come. And so then he went on to speak more about his immediate plans.

15:25 Scholars differ as to where Paul was when he wrote this epistle to the believers at Rome, but it seems very likely, and probably most likely, that Paul wrote from Corinth. Sandy and Headlam believe, on the basis (at least in part), that Paul wrote from Achaia. Both are in the same general area. So Paul was going east instead of west to Rome. And his purpose in going to Jerusalem, in contrast with what he had been saying, was to minister to the saints there. So this shows that while Paul was called to carry the Gospel to Gentiles who had never heard the Gospel, there were many times in his life when he ministered to the saints (as his epistles show), and sometimes, as in the occasion mentioned here, to Jewish saints. And verse 26 tells us *why* he was doing this.

15:26 Why was he going to Jerusalem? It was because an offering had been taken by the saints in Macedonia and Achaia for the poor saints in Jerusalem. Jerusalem was a place where Jewish people who heard the Gospel, and had trusted in Christ, were having a difficult time. They were severely persecuted. Many of them had lost their jobs because of their faith. And so throughout the Empire the people of God, and particularly Gentile believers, often sent money to help the saints in Jerusalem with the necessities of life. And Paul went on to say in verse 27 why the churches outside of Jerusalem had a responsibility before God to do what they were doing.

15:27 Paul said that since the Gospel had gone out into the Gentile world through the Jews, it was only right that the Jews in their affliction and poverty, should be ministered to “in carnal things” (food and clothing) by Gentile believers. And for Paul to take part in getting this offering to the believers in Jerusalem, shows how strongly he supported the Gentile churches in what they were doing. It was a sacrifice which came from the hearts of the Gentiles, in part to show their gratitude to God for the Gospel which had come to them from Jewish believers like Paul, as well as from other Jews. The Lord was a Jew. All of the apostles were Jews. And so the indebtedness, spiritually of the Gentile believers to the Jewish believers, was very understandable.

15:28 And so when Paul had finished his mission to Jerusalem, he would be free to go at last to Rome.

15:29 He was so certain that it was the Lord’s will for him to take this contribution to the saints in Jerusalem, that instead of feeling that this was an obstacle in the way, he believed it would enable him through his obedience to God, to go on then to Rome “in the fulness of the blessing of the Gospel of Christ.” When we know the will of God, and do it, that paves the way for greater blessing in the things ahead that need to be done. This is a Biblical principle that we must not overlook. This is what we all should want: the fulness of the Lord’s blessing.

Now, having spoken of his plans, which he felt convinced were of God, Paul spoke of his greatest need, *the need for prayer!* This takes us through the remaining part of chapter 15, verses 30 through 33.

15:30 The first thing that we see in this verse is the fact that the believers in Rome should be praying for Paul.

Many of them may have felt that because Paul was an apostle, or because the Lord had blessed his ministry in such an unusual way, or because so many others were already praying for him, that their prayers were not really necessary. If so, they were totally wrong. In fact, the position that he held in the early church was all the more reason that they should pray for him. He would have been a special target of Satan, and the main weapon that believers have against Satan is prayer. And so Paul expressed his desire for their prayers in the strongest language: “Now I beseech you, brethren.” He was pleading with them, imploring them, actually begging them to pray for him!

But how? The word “for” in “for the Lord Jesus Christ’s sake” and “for the love of the Spirit” probably should be translated “by the Lord Jesus Christ” and “by the love of the Spirit.” In each case it is διὰ with the genitive case which speaks of the instrumentality of the Lord Jesus Christ and the enabling power of the Holy Spirit. He was not just asking them to say a prayer on their own, but he was asking them to look to the Lord for the power and wisdom and faithfulness that they would need to pray effectually, as well as to the love of God which had been shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Spirit Who had been given to each one of them. We rarely here prayer spoken of in these terms. But this is true prayer, exercised by the power of the Lord Jesus Christ our Intercessor, and motivated by God’s love which is already in our hearts. This would be love for God, love for Christ, love for the Gospel, love for the elect, and love for Paul as the Lord’s servant. It is this love which binds the hearts of believers together in a great fellowship of prayer. We won’t be faithful in prayer, nor fruitful, apart from the enabling power of Christ, motivated by the love of God produced in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. It is very important for all of us to understand what Paul was talking about.

Paul used this same verb, “beseech,” with διὰ (instrumentality) in Romans 12:1.

As Paul went on he did not simply say *that you pray for me*, but he said, “That ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me.” The verb translated “strive together” is συναγωνίζομαι. And it is the only time this verb appears in the NT. We have ἀγωνίζομαι in Colossians 4:12 in connection with the praying of Epaphras, and where it is translated “laboring fervently.” Our Lord is said to have been “in agony” (ἐν ἀγωνίᾳ) in the Garden of Gethsemane according to Matthew 26:42 and Luke 22:44. The background of the word has to do

with fights in the public games. It means a violent struggle with an enemy. Paul uses the word here in relation to prayer meaning that it is like a mortal struggle with an enemy. And our enemy is the Devil. He is seeking to defeat us, and we are seeking to defeat him. This explains why there are comparatively few people who really pray.

But Paul was not asking the saints in Rome to do something that he was not doing. He was struggling with the enemy also by prayer – “that you strive together with me in your prayers to God for me.” This was *how* they were to pray.

But what were his requests?

15:31 In the Greek text the two requests given in this verse are stated as two parts of one request. Paul was looking for the Lord’s blessing on his trip to Jerusalem. But there was the possibility of trouble from two sources:

- 1) “From them that do not believe in Judaea.”
- 2) From “the saints” in Jerusalem.

In other words, from the world and from the church.

In going to Judaea Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, was going into Jewish territory. The hatred of the Jews for the Gentiles was just as strong in Paul’s day as it had been when the Lord was on earth. And even many of the saints among the Jews were opposed to Paul because he did not enforce the Law upon the Gentiles. No true servant of the Lord is going to be “the man of the year” in this world, nor will a true child of God ever be citizen #1. And notice the way speaks of the opposition from those who do not believe, he anticipated trouble when he got into Judaea, even before he got to Jerusalem.

It is always the case, as Paul expressed it to the believers at Corinth: “A great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries” (1 Cor. 16:9). We need to keep both of these points in our minds as we pray for the work of the Lord.

The last of Paul’s requests are in verse 32, actually one request although there are two parts to it also. The first part has to do with how he would come (“with joy by the will of God”); the second, with what would take place after he got there.

15:32 As far as Paul’s coming to Rome, the words “with joy” have the place of emphasis – “that with joy I may come to you by the will of God.” This is not to minimize “the will of God,” but to emphasize the real need for joy in the ministry of the Gospel. Paul had learned the importance of saying, “the Lord willing.” He wanted very much to go to Rome, but only if it was the will of God. But he did not just want to go; he wanted to go “with joy.” That would depend in part on how his ministry would have been accepted by the saints in Jerusalem. Somehow Paul felt that his time in Rome would be a time of joy and refreshment, spiritually and physically, where both he and the Roman Christians would find mutual strengthening and blessing for the days ahead. He was weary in the battle, but not weary of the battle.

15:33 This was really Paul’s concluding word in this epistle. What would be the result if God answered the requests that he had given to the saints in Rome? It would be an increase in their relationship with “the God of peace.” For the God of peace to be *with* them, not only meant the reality of His presence, but the blessing of peace which His presence would bring. May the blessing of the Lord have the same result in our lives.

The Epistle of Paul to the Romans

VIII. Salutation (Rom. 16:1-27).

This is the concluding chapter of the Roman epistle. There are five parts to this chapter.

- A. The Commendation of Phoebe (16:1-2)**
- B. Greetings to believers in Rome (16:3-16).**
- C. Admonition and Encouragement (16:17-20).**
- D. Greetings from Paul's companions (16:21-24).**
- E. Paul's Doxology (16:25-27).**

Part of this chapter could have been like a page from his prayer list. I am referring to verse 3 through 16. If Paul did not have a prayer book, they were names which were written on his heart, and for whom he must have prayed. It shows that the Apostle Paul was very much involved with people, the Lord's people. From the references we have to prayer in his epistle, he must have spent much of every day praying for people he knew throughout the Roman Empire.

A. The commendation of Phoebe (16:1-2).

16:1 However, the first one he mentioned was a lady by the name of Phoebe, and in his remarks Paul commended Phoebe to the believers at Rome. And at least these first two verses were his commendation of Phoebe to the church at Rome. She evidently was going to Rome from Cenchrea which was the eastern port of Corinth. This is an indication that Paul was in Corinth when he wrote this epistle to the church at Rome. Further, it may be an indication that Phoebe was the one who carried this epistle to Rome. This is the only time that she is mentioned in the NT, but from what Paul said about her in these first two verses, she had been an active helper in his ministry, as well as to many others.

She is called "a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea." This probably means that she did what older ladies who were mature in the faith did, and that was to minister to the poor and the sick of their own sex, which would include the widows. Why she would have been going to Rome, we are not told. But that she was going seems certain by Paul's reference to her here, commending her to the church at Rome. The verb "commend" lit. means that he was *standing with* her.

16:2 Although the believers at Rome (at least most of them) would not have known Phoebe, this note from Paul meant that she would be welcomed in the church at Rome, and that they would support her in whatever needs she might have. This was the ordinary way some well-known believer would commend another believer to an individual or church where that person had not been known before. When Paul wrote to Philemon about his runaway slave, Onesimus, Paul's letter assured Philemon that Onesimus had really been saved, and that Philemon should not hesitate to take him back.

Paul referred to such letters when he wrote the following to the church at Corinth:

- 1 Do we begin again to commend ourselves? or need we, as some others, epistles of commendation to you, or letters of commendation from you?
- 2 Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men (2 Cor. 3:1-2).

Beginning with verse 3 and going down through verse 16 we have a series of greeting to believers in Rome. In our outline it is:

B. Greetings to believers in Rome (16:3-16).

The word “greet” which appear repeatedly through these verses, means *to wish a person well*. It normally would have to do with physical well-being, but among believers it would carry with it a hope, and most likely, a prayer for the blessing of the Lord upon them. Haldane mentioned in this custom which was common among unbelievers, that what Paul did shows that there is not harm, and probably some good, in following such customs that people have who don’t know the Lord. To wish people a “good day” that even Christians are concerned about the health and welfare even of people that we do not know. We ought to be interested in people and do whatever we can to be kind and helpful to them.

A. T. Robertson traced the movement of Aquila and Priscilla from Rome to Corinth to Ephesus, then back to Rome, and eventually to Corinth. At the time Paul wrote this Roman epistle, they were in Rome, and, as verse 5 indicates, the church at Rome was meeting in their house. Paul called them his own “helpers in Christ.” It is common to speak of the people in Hebrews 11 as being in the NT “hall of fame.” Well, there is also a NT “hall of fame,” and Paul would give Aquila and Priscilla that honor. They were tent makers like he was, and so he had two real connections with him. They were his “helpers,” and had been on more than one occasion. At one time they were used by the Lord to save the Apostle Paul from death. Paul didn’t mention when that was, probably because everyone knew about it. But Paul gave them thanks here, and said that “all the churches of the Gentiles” were likewise thankful because after that event, whatever it was and whenever it was, it was before Paul had gone into some areas to preach the Gospel to Gentiles who had been saved under his ministry.

This helps us to understand that in the day when we stand before the Lord to receive our rewards, we are going to be surprised when we see people receiving rewards who worked behind the scenes here on earth.

Now these greetings were probably to be delivered by Phoebe.

16:5 Paul sent greetings to the whole church.

But then he saluted a man named Epaenetus. This is the only time that Paul mentioned him, but the fact that Paul called him “my wellbeloved,” means that Paul was especially fond of him. The best reading of this verse seems to be Asia, instead of Achaia. Corinth was located in the territory known as Achaia, but it seems that Epaenetus was from the Roman province of Asia. That was the territory where the seven church of Revelation 2 and 3 were located. For Epaenetus to have been “the firstfruits” of Asia meant that he was the first of many who followed in that province where the Gospel was especially blessed by the Lord, and many, many came to the Lord. So Paul had a good reason to be thankful for Epaenetus. He was the first to come to Christ, but many more followed him.

16:6 There are six Marys mentioned in the NT. It is very unlikely that this Mary is mentioned anyplace else in the NT. Some scholars feel that she may have been a Gentile because Paul did not claim any relationship with her. But some place, other than Rome, she had “bestowed much labor” on Paul. It is interesting to see how many women Paul mentioned as having been helpers to him in the work that the Lord had called him to do.

16:7 Andronicus and Junias were Paul’s kinsmen, that is, related to him by blood (which seems to be the idea in the word “kinsmen” which Paul used. Some say that they may have been husband and wife. It may be that they were brother and sister since when Paul spoke of them as related that he used the plural. Of course one could have been related by marriage through the other to Paul. The only conclusion that we can come to about how they were related to Paul is that we just don’t know.

But there are several facts that we do know. They both had been saved before the Apostle Paul was saved. They were well-known to the apostles. And on some occasion (and again Paul did not say because the fact was

probably known in Rome, they had been imprisoned along with the Apostle Paul. It is interesting to learn even a little about the people who were friends of the Apostle Paul, many of whom had served the Lord with him in different places.

16:8 Sandy and Headlam say that Ampliatus was a common slave name among the Romans. He, too, is only remembered here.

16:9 The same appears to be true of Urbanus, *i.e.*, that this is a Roman slave name. Perhaps the mention of Ampliatus is what brought the name of Urbanus to mind. If these were slaves, or former slaves, it is interesting to think of how they were associated with Paul in serving the Lord. God is no respecter of persons. He saves the free and He saves the slaves, makes them brothers in the family of God, and makes them useful in the service of the Lord.

Stachys is a rare Greek name, so it seems that he must have been a Gentile. But in some ancient findings it has been linked to a member, or members, of the imperial household. If so, we have a slave and a member of the royal family mentioned together in the same verse. In Philippians 4:22 Paul mentioned believers who were in Caesar's household. Believers may be separated in many ways by birth and social standing, but in Christ they all stand on the same ground.

16:10 Nowhere else in Scripture do we find Apelles mentioned, but he is given a tremendous commendation by the Apostle Paul. Apelles was "approved in Christ." This means that in some special way he had gone through some testing, and had stood firm against the trial he had gone through. We don't know the circumstances, but we see the result and that is what matters. It was not that he just had the approval of the church, but that he had the approval of the Lord, and had shown in some unmistakable way that he truly belonged to Christ.

In Aristobulus we have a family mentioned, the first one. The idea that Aristobulus was no longer living, or that his family and household servants were believers, but he was not, are mere speculations which cannot be proved.

16:11 Herodion was another of Paul's relatives. And then Paul mentioned another family, the household of Narcissus, but the phrase, "which are in the Lord," seems to indicate that there were members of this family who were not in the Lord.

16:12 Tryphaena and Tryphosa were probably sisters, and maybe even twins. Paul commended them for their labor. He used a word which speaks of working until they were weary. It indicates that they did not spare themselves in the work that they did, so great was their love for the Lord.

Another woman who fell into the same category with Tryphaena and Tryphosa was Persis. She devoted herself tirelessly to the work of the Lord and to the Lord.

16:13 The name Rufus is usually linked to a man by this name, mentioned in Mark 15:21 as one of the sons of Simon the man from Cyrene who was forced to carry the Cross of our Lord. If this is true, it would appear that his father, Simon, was not living at this time. But being called "chosen in the Lord," there must have been indisputable evidence in his life that he really knew the Lord.

We have no other evidence that Paul had a brother by this name, and surely if that had been the case here, Paul would have made that clear. But what he probably meant was that he knew that Rufus was a true believer because he had been in his home many times, and that Rufus' mother was more like a mother to him as well.

16:14 We can only speculate why Paul mentioned these five men together. They may have been very close friends. Their names suggest that they were a combination of slaves and free men.

And then Paul simply listed more names in verse 15.

16:15 Here Paul added four more names and the unnamed sister of Nereus. Paul obviously believed that they all were true believers in the Lord Jesus Christ.

16:16 The people of God are characterized by love for one another. The holy kiss was so-called to distinguish it from that which would be sinful. It was an expression of affection for men with men, and for women with women. It amounted to a cheek to cheek show of affection, in much the same way that we shake hands with each other. Paul was encouraging them to greet each other, not to do it on his behalf. The very way that Paul mentioned those whom he knew in the church, many with loving terms, was further evidence that we as the people of God need to love each other, to seek each other's spiritual blessing. On the other hand we should never participate in anything that would tend to divide believers, or to harm any child of God in any way.

Paul, as an apostle, had the right to sending greetings to all of the believers in Rome from "the churches of Christ" throughout the Empire. These were local churches, and they were called churches. That name has been set aside by many groups of believers today, and that is further evidence of the degeneration that has become so common among those who profess to be Christians. A church is a called-out group of people, called out of the world, called to be different from the world, but left in the geographical world to spread the only message of salvation that there is, and to join together for the exaltation and glory of the Triune God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The holy kiss was to stress the importance of holiness of life among every member of the body of Christ.

Now we are ready for the second division of this last chapter of Romans:

C. Admonition and Encouragement (16:17-20).

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C. Admonition and Encouragement (16:17-20).

16:17 Many who have written commentaries on Romans, find it somewhat surprising that, at the end of an epistle which is, as Sandy and Headlam said, "so completely destitute of direct controversy" (p. 429), we should come upon such a strong warning against false teachers. There is no hint in the epistle that these teachers were already in Rome, but Paul, who was well-acquainted with the tactics of their Enemy, the Devil, knew that for Paul to have written, and for him to be planning to go there, false teachers would not be far behind. In fact, Paul was obviously concerned that the false teachers might get to Rome before he did. And this may be an added reason for Paul's writing at this particular time.

It is a reminder that we are in a warfare, and as far as time is concerned, it is unending. It is a spiritual warfare against God and His truth. And the demonic forces are so great in number that he is capable of waging war everywhere at the same time.

But we can learn an important lesson from Paul at this point in the epistle. What had he been doing throughout this epistle? Even though he knew they were well taught, and were blessed with many who were capable of teaching the truth of God, yet he wrote to them almost like they knew nothing, or very little at the best, to make sure that they had in writing a clear, thorough explanation of the Gospel and its bearing upon their daily lives. So his realization that the church at Rome would not be excluded from the Devil's "hit list" (so to speak), we see here at the end that a deep concern which had been in Paul's heart all along as he wrote, suddenly could not be suppressed any longer, and here it boiled over.

Paul used this word three times in the practical section of this epistle: first, in 12:1; second, in 15:30; and third, here in 16:17. In the first two he was making an earnest appeal to them, hoping and expecting that they would respond in a positive way. Here in verse 17 of chapter 16 it carried with it not only an appeal, but a warning. It could hardly have been stronger. And being a command in the present tense, he meant that this is something that they were to do constantly. They were never to let up on their vigilance concerning false teachers. They were to expect that people, sometimes men, sometimes women, sometimes both, who were causing divisions, introducing strange doctrines or perversions of true doctrine.

I want to read to you what Charles Hodge, who taught the Pauline epistles at Princeton Seminary from 1822 to 1878, had to say about this verse, and particularly on the words “divisions and offenses.” Here is what he said:

There were probably two evils in the apostle’s mind when he wrote this passage; the divisions occasioned by erroneous doctrines, and the offences or scandals occasioned by the evil conduct of false teachers. Almost all forms of error which distracted the early church, were intimately connected with practical evils of a moral character. This was the case to a certain extent with the Judaizers; who not only disturbed the church by insisting on the observance of the Mosaic law, but also pressed some of their doctrines to an immoral extreme; see 1 Cor. 5:1-5. It was still more obviously the case with those errorists, infected with a false philosophy, who are described in Col. 2:10-23; 1 Tim. 4:1-8. These evils were equally opposed to the doctrines taught by the apostle. Those who caused these dissensions, Paul commands Christians, first *to mark* (σκοπεῖν), i.e., to notice carefully, and not allow them to pursue their corrupting course unheeded; and, secondly, *to avoid*, i.e., to break off connection with them (p. 450).

What Dr. Hodge was saying is that you can’t effect what people believe without also affecting the way they live. Any departure from the truth of the Word of God is to be viewed with suspicion and dealt with immediately. Solomon wrote long before the Apostle Paul, that one class of people that the Lord hates are those who sow discord among brethren. See Proverbs 6:19.

As we sit here today there are thousands of people, and others who join with them, in watching for an suspicious person or activity which could threaten our security as a nation. It does not cease day nor night. It is, as we have learned to say, 24-7 – twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. That is what Paul was exhorting the people of God in Rome to do.

16:18 The people whom the Apostle Paul was talking about did not serve our Lord Jesus Christ (note the use which Paul made here of our Lord’s full Name and Title. They may talk about Him, but they are not serving Him. Actually they are His enemies, and they are serving “their own belly.” This means that they were seeking to exalt themselves. They are seeking our money, or to gain power over us, or perhaps even have sensual objectives. But the key to understanding what they are doing is where their teaching departs from or is never found in the Word of God. But it also has to do with what they teach, not just about “Jesus,” but about “our Lord Jesus Christ.” Note “our Lord Jesus Christ” in verses 20 and 24.

But beyond knowing what their objectives are, *how do they do it?*

“By good words and fair speeches.” “Good words” are those which appear to be true. They may be partially true, but not completely true. They are spoken for the effect that they will have, not for their truthfulness. “Fair speeches,” on the other hand, are words of flattery and praise, to make a person feel good about himself. False teachers become masters at knowing how to manipulate people. Their method is to “deceive the hearts of the simple.” Satan used deception to tempt Eve into sin. Cf. 2 Cor. 11:3 where Paul said that “the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety.” He is a master deceiver, and he is busy doing his evil work every day.

What did Paul mean by “the simple”? This is the person who is unsuspecting. He does not believe that others will harm him, or do evil to him. In a word, he is naive. He is untaught, but thinks that he knows. That is why Paul took the time to write this epistle to the Roman church. Generally, they were well taught. But Paul was particularly concerned about those who had been exposed to the teaching of the truth, but who did not really understand it.

16:19 Here Paul was ending on the same note with which he began. See Romans 1:8:

8 First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.

As a church they were well taught, given to obedience, progressing in godliness. But even those who are well-taught can be deceived and fall into sin if they grow satisfied with what they know, and do not keep pressing on to greater understanding and obedience to the Word. None of us is safe. And so Paul said, after recognizing the godly character of the people of God in Rome, that he wanted them remain wise concerning that which is good in the sight of God, but simple and undefiled as far as sin is concerned.

The Devil has deceived many who profess to know the Lord, that if they are going to know what sin really is, they must experience sin. But that is not the way to learn about sin. When we sin we are blinded to its nature and to its effect. If we want to learn about sin, the best way is by seeing how sin is exposed for what it is in the Bible. Sin will fill the heart with a lot of misery and regrets. True joy is found only in knowing the Lord and living in obedience to His Word.

16:20 As I pointed out to you in our brief survey of this last part of the epistle, this verse is a prayer. Paul prayed before he taught, and he prayed after he taught. He knew that his teaching would not reach the hearts of the people of God unless the Lord put it there.

Paul addressed God as “the God of peace.” He had done this in Romans 15:33. He did it again in Philippians 4:9:

9 Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.

And we find it yet again in that great benediction in Hebrews 13:20-21:

20 Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant,

21 Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

God is “the God of peace” because He is the only true source of peace that there is. We live in a world which talks a lot about peace, but it is largely like it was in Jeremiah’s day: “Peace, peace, when there is no peace” (Jer. 6:14; 8:11). Peace means true happiness. Peace is not dependent upon outward circumstances, but upon a right relationship with God in our hearts. Peace is not dependent upon who we are, but upon Who God is. Peace does not come through sin, but through the forgiveness of sin. Cf. Romans 5:1. Peace is one thing that we need every day. Peace comes in answer to prayer. Cf. Philippians 4:6-7. Peace is strength. We learn this from Isaiah 26:3-4, keeping our minds focused upon the Lord. What Paul had just been writing about in verses 17 through 19, will bring peace to our hearts. Peace is the heritage of those of us who know the Lord. The Lord Jesus Christ is “the Prince of peace” (Isa. 9:6). It must be one of our two greatest needs for the apostles to introduce their epistles with “grace and peace,” or “grace, mercy, and peace.” And you have both of them here: “the God of peace” and “the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

And one of the greatest reasons for our peace is that He is a defeated foe. He seems to have things going his

way today, but he was defeated at the Cross. “Shortly” obviously did not mean today or tomorrow from Paul’s perspective. It can begin at any time. But “shortly” means that it is going to happen quickly when it does take place. The bruising of Satan is what the Lord promised in Gen. 3:15,

15 And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.

But notice here that it is not the Lord’s feet that Paul was speaking about, but “your feet,” the saints’ feet. The victory will be ours, but it was secured for us, first, by the promise of God (as we have seen), and, second, by the work of Christ on the Cross:

14 Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil;

15 And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage (Heb. 2:14-15).

“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.” The best MSS reading is, “The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you.” This is a special way to express endearment to the Lord. This is the way Stephen spoke to the Lord as he died: “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” This is true in Hebrews 13:20, “Now the Lord of peace...”

And so this ends this section on admonition and encouragement.

And now we come to:

D. Greetings from Paul’s companions (16:21-24).

In verses 1 through 16 of this chapter Paul had sent his greetings to his friends in Rome. Now in these verses he sends greetings from his friends who were with him in Corinth. There are eight names here.

16:21 Timothy is often mentioned at the beginning of Paul’s epistles, and so it is unusual for him not to be mentioned until the end. We don’t know why this was, but possibly because this epistle was of special importance, as we have seen in chapter 15, as coming from Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles. He was very special to the Apostle Paul, as Paul said in his letter to the church of Philippi. See Philippians 2:19-24.

Robertson says that Lucius was not Luke, but probably Lucius of Cyrene mentioned in Acts 13:1. Jason was Paul’s host in Thessalonica. See Acts 17:5-9. And Sosipater, Robertson said, ‘may be the longer form of Sopater of Acts 20:4. They probably were not blood relatives, but simply fellow-Jews.

16:22 Evidently Paul had poor eyesight, and so he used others to write for him as he dictated to them. This is the only time that Tertius is mentioned in Paul’s epistles, even though in other epistles he said that others had written for him. Tertius may have been involved in some of the others such as in 2 Thessalonians 3:17; 1 Corinthians 16:21; Col. 4:18.

16:23 Gaius was the man in whose home Paul was staying in Corinth. He is mentioned in 1 Corinthians 1:14. It may have been that it was in Gaius’ home that the church at Corinth met. That may be what Paul was indicating when he mentioned “the whole church.”

Erastus is mentioned again in 2 Timothy 4:20. Paul called him here “the chamberlain of the city,” *i.e.*, of the city of Corinth. He was a prominent official in the city government, possibly the manager of the city’s property.

This is the only place that Quartus is mentioned. Paul called him “a brother,” probably meaning *a brother in the Lord*.

It would seem that the church in Rome would have known these men. Otherwise we would wonder why Paul would mention them. But this is like many details given to us in Scripture, we just don’t know anything but what is mentioned in the text.

16:24 This verse may have been added at a later time. So it is not found in the more reliable MSS.

Now we come to the final point of the epistle:

E. Paul’s Doxology (16:25-27).

This has been called “the finest of Paul’s doxologies” (Robertson, IV, 430). It is unusual because of its length and also because it contains so much doctrine. Sandy and Headlam said that “all of the great thoughts of the epistle are summed up” here (S & H, p. 432).

16:25 When Paul began this epistle, he stated in verses 11 and 12 of chapter 1 what his main purpose would be if he were able to come to them in Rome. This is what he said:

11 For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established;

12 That is, that I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me (Rom. 1:11-12).

Now, at the end of the epistle, he mentions that this was his purpose in writing this epistle. He used the same Greek verb in 16:25 that he had used in 1:11. What does it mean? It means that he really wanted to see them grounded in the truth of the Gospel. Paul expressed it this way in his Ephesian letter,

14 That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;

15 But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ (Eph. 4:14-15).

Paul was laying a foundation in Romans that, under the blessing of the Lord, would form a solid foundation for every believer in Christ who was in Rome. When Paul wrote to the Galatian churches, he said this:

6 I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel:

7 Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ (Gal. 1:6-7).

We could add to this Paul’s words to the church at Corinth. Paul charged them with living as men and not as the people of God should live. And going through the epistle we see how he dealt with first one problem and then of another. But this is what he said near the beginning of the epistle:

6 I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel:

7 Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ (Gal. 1:6-7).

The problem is the same everywhere, in all churches. Believers need to be grounded in the truth, established in the teaching of God’s Word, so that when trials come along, or false teachers appear on the scene, the people of God will not be moved. It is really discouraging today to see how quickly people follow one movement, and

then another comes along, and off they go after something else. And they move around like they were on wheels instead of being built on a solid foundation.

Now Paul was one of the greatest teachers who ever lived, second only we might say to our Lord Jesus Christ. He had written the greatest work on the Gospel that has ever been written. It was written so that it would be read, and Paul has sought to explain the truth as clearly as he could under the blessing of God. But what was he doing in these last verses of this great masterpiece? *He was committing his work to God, telling the people that God was the only One Who could see that they were established in the truth.* Paul did not want them trusting in him. He certainly did not want them to be trusting in themselves, nor in each other. *He wanted them to know that only God could establish them, could make them strong and consistent and stable in the truth. And this was his prayer that the Lord would be doing just that in the life of every child of God in Rome – and everywhere else!* We can read Romans, and I hope that you will continue to read it. We can study it, as we have. Even if we were to memorize it (and I can't think of any better way that we could spend our time). But God is the only One Who can establish us in the truth! I hope that all of us understand this great principle of Scripture, and that we never forget it. It is up to us to see that we read and study and possibly memorize this letter, but we need to be trusting the Lord to make it profitable and fruitful and joyful to us. We are only going to be strong in the Word, and unshakeable, if we are looking to the Lord to teach us and to empower us to live as God wants us to live.

But how did Paul go on to explain what he meant.

He was speaking about being established in the Gospel. Remember what Jerry Bridges has told us so often, that we need to preach the Gospel to ourselves every day. Why? So that God may establish us in the truth of the Gospel in such a way that we will never move away from it. Do we really believe that salvation is all of God? I hope you remember that the Gospel does not just tell us how we are saved, but it includes what happens to us after we are saved, and the glorious creatures we are going to be when the work is finished – not my work, or your work, but God's work! It begins with justification, moves on to sanctification, and finally is completed in glorification.

But know also it has to do with "the preaching of Jesus Christ." Jesus Christ is the reason we are justified, and He is the reason we are being sanctified, and He is going to see to it that we are glorified. Jesus Christ is the Gospel.

But then Paul added, "according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began." You see, our salvation was planned by the Members of the Godhead before creation came into being. It was all before the foundation of the world. God determined how there could be salvation, and even chose those whom He was going to save. The Lord Jesus Christ was appointed by God to be the Savior. And it is the work of the Holy Spirit to convict us of our sins, and to draw us to Christ by faith.

Now all of this was revealed progressively through Scripture. It was all planned in eternity past, but it was not all made known all at once. God was slowly revealing this great secret which was revealed bit by bit as we go through the OT. But when Christ came, the whole secret was revealed. And with the writing of Paul's letter to the church at Rome, for the first time in all of human history, the revelation has been completed. Doubtless there will be other wonderful things that we will learn when we get to heaven, or when the Lord comes, but the revelation of the Gospel is now complete. Nothing needs to be added to it (and so don't believe those who come along claiming to make our Bibles more complete), and nothing can be taken away from it – and woe to any person who tries to do either.

Now move on to verse 26, but notice that verses 25, 26, and 27 are just one long sentence.

16:26 Now this revelation has been “manifest,” revealed, completed. And it is “by the scriptures of the prophets.” Paul was referring here to the NT prophets. A prophet is one who receives his message from God, and delivers it to the people. The Apostle Paul was one of these prophets. So were Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. So were James and Peter and Jude. We need them all. They wrote about the Gospel “according to the commandment of the everlasting God.” It was ordered by God. Its writing was supervised from beginning to end by God, and it has been sent out to the nations of the earth “for the obedience of faith.” The whole story is told in this doxology.

But who gets the glory? Read on in verse 27.

16:27 The wisdom of God is seen in creation. And it is certainly seen in the unfolding of history. But nowhere is the wisdom of God more evident than in the Gospel. Who would ever have had the wisdom to plan and provide such a salvation except God. Paul couldn’t have done it. Isaiah couldn’t have done it. Moses couldn’t have done it. Abraham couldn’t have done it. Who did?

The glory goes, all of it, to God, Who in heaven and earth is really the only one who is wise. But we are so lacking in any kind of merit with God that even seeking to glorify Him for this wonderful, amazing, all-sufficient salvation, we can only bring our praises to Him “through Jesus Christ. And it is going to be this way forever! And then Paul, perhaps quite exhausted with all of this truth, and overwhelmed with the debt of praise that we all owe to God, said, “Amen.”

The book of Romans is finished. But the praise that is to be offered to God for salvation, will never come to an end. I almost feel that the book of Romans ought to be completed with a prayer such as comes at the end of the book of the Revelation: “Even so, come, Lord Jesus.” But I am not going to run the risk of doing that mainly because I am going to have my time occupied, as you are, until the Lord comes and even after that glorious event, with praising God that He ever chose me to be one of His sheep.

– The End –