

**Paul's letter to
the ROMANS**

A Study Guide
By Joshua Creel



Lesson 1

Paul & his purpose for writing

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek."

Romans 1.16

For centuries, Romans has meant much to a host of believers. For Augustine it was the knowledge that a new life was possible in Christ Jesus. For Luther it was the settling of his mind that “the righteousness of God” could save, rather than condemn, if one placed faith in Christ. For John Wesley it was the assurance that God “had taken my sins away, even mine; and saved me from the law of sin and death.” Their individual experiences with Paul’s letter to the Romans would propel movements that helped shape their times, and ours. Sadly, most of our experiences with Romans have not been so grande. Often times we have studied the letter in order to battle others over what is meant by statements such as “a man is justified by faith apart from works of the law,” (3.28) and “if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved,” (10.9).

Our modern struggles with Romans are often shaped by the circumstances and theological perspectives of those who lived long after Paul. Perhaps that is because Romans has typically been viewed as a theological treatise, rather than a letter written in particular circumstances with an author of a particular background. That’s not to say that Romans doesn’t contain much theological material to consider and digest, but when the theology is lifted from its original circumstances and forced into other contexts, theological disasters can ensue. So, before we rush headlong into Paul’s letter to the Romans, let’s spend some time examining the life of Paul and his purpose in writing to the saints in Rome.

Paul’s Background & Work

Paul’s roots in Judaism are well-known. He is introduced to us as Saul, chief persecutor of the early church (Acts 7.58; 8.1-3). Paul’s Jewish credentials were beyond reproach: “though I myself have reason for confidence in the flesh also. If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless.” (Philippians 3.4-6, ESV). Yet, the Lord sent Paul to the Gentiles, “to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.” (Acts 26.18, ESV). Paul, Hebrew of Hebrews and a Pharisee, sent to proclaim the gospel to the Gentiles! The drastic



change in Paul cannot be over-emphasized, but the tension between Jew and Gentile did not end with Paul's conversion; this tension would shape almost all of his future work.

Paul had almost completed three missionary journeys by the time he penned his letter to the Romans. Surveying his work as recorded in Acts we see that his usual habit was to preach first in the synagogues, but typically more Gentiles than Jews would respond to the gospel message. Furthermore, the Jews proved to be Paul's biggest opponent, persecuting him wherever he went. While proclaiming Jesus as the Christ was enough to engender Jewish opposition, Paul's inclusion of the Gentiles in those who can be part of God's people is what truly enraged his countrymen (see Acts 22.17-22). Little wonder that Paul often spoke about the reconciliation in Christ of Jew and Gentile:

- » "and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross." (Colossians 1:20, ESV)
- » "And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father." (Ephesians 2:17-18, ESV)
- » "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." (Galatians 3:28, ESV)

Tension In The Church

Tension in the church began immediately following the first Gentile conversion. Recall that the Lord called Peter to go and proclaim the gospel to Cornelius and his household, but it was only following the Holy Spirit coming upon the Gentiles that Peter concluded that they could be baptized (Acts 10.47). However, when Peter returned to Jerusalem "the circumcision party criticized him, saying, 'You went to uncircumcised men and ate with them.'" (Acts 11.2-3 ESV) Fast forward a few years we read of Jewish brethren proclaiming to their Gentile brothers in Antioch that "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved." (Acts 15.1 ESV) While Paul, Barnabas and the other apostles and leaders of the Jerusalem church were in agreement that Gentiles were not under the Law (Acts 15.6ff), tension between Jews and Gentiles in the church did not cease. Note that when Paul returned to Jerusalem following his third missionary journey, it had been reported among the Jewish brethren that Paul taught "all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children or walk according to our customs." (Acts 21.21 ESV) Of course, Paul was very aware of the tension within the church. One of his prior letters (Galatians) was written to combat doctrines similar to the one taught in Acts 15. Furthermore, one of Paul's purposes for his third journey was to raise money for needy saints in Jerusalem. As he explained to the brethren in Rome, Paul hoped this contribution from Gentile churches for their Jewish brethren would help to ease this tension in the church (see Romans 15.25-31).

But what about the churches in Rome? We are not told how the gospel first made it to Rome, but since there were Jews from Rome present at Pentecost (Acts 2.5-10) it is entirely possible that the news of Jesus' resurrection made it to the Imperial capital without further aid from the apostles. This coincides with other information found within Acts. When Paul first

journeyed to Corinth he met there two Jewish Christians, Aquila and Priscilla, who had come to Corinth from Rome. It is likely that when the gospel was first spread in the synagogues of Rome and that the earliest churches in Rome were comprised predominantly of Jewish Christians, with several Gentile proselytes joining their numbers. But then the Jews were expelled from Rome, a historical event that is confirmed by the Biblical text (Acts 18.2). What happened to the makeup of the Roman churches during that time? We can only guess, but it is possible that they took on a Gentile flavour and that by the time the Jews were allowed to return, there were more Gentile Christians in Rome than Jewish. And that resulted in tension between Jew and Gentile within the Roman churches. But Why?

David McClister argues that 3 cultural factors help to explain the situation (From The Pen Of Paul, Second Edition. Florida College Press). First, then as now, the groups to which one belonged determined a person's identity. Second, that notion of status permeated the Hellenistic world, so individuals and groups were constantly competing for status. Third, to the Jew there were two kinds of people: Jews and non-Jews (Gentiles). And they were the privileged group because God had made them His special people. And this is absolutely fundamental to understanding the book of Romans. McClister clarifies the issue well: "the Jews interpreted their (i.e., the group's) special relationship with God as a matter of status... It is for this reason that the Jews prided themselves in their unusual way of life according to the Law of Moses, for this distinctive way of life identified them as God's special people. When seen in this way, their obedience to the Torah was not so much viewed as earning them their salvation but instead was understood as the 'mark' or 'badge' that identified them as the people of God. Obeying the Law of Moses makes one a Jew, it makes one a member of God's special people... This question of the status of the Jewish people with God in light of the gospel stands at the heart of Romans. The Gentile Christians argued that Jewish rejection of the gospel left them (the Gentile Christians) as God's special people, but the Jewish Christians had Scriptural statements to the contrary on their side. To put the matter in different terms, there was an argument going on within the church at Rome. The two groups, the Jewish Christians and the Gentile Christians, were arguing over 'Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?' (cf. Matthew 18.1)" (McClister 202-203)

Because of the influence of Augustine, Luther, Calvin, etc. we are prone to see Romans as a treatise on personal salvation. It's not. It's a plea to unity among different groups in the church. "Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God. For I tell you that Christ became a servant to the circumcised to show God's truthfulness, in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs, and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy." (Romans 15.7-9, ESV) But what could unite the two groups?

The Solution To Jewish-Gentile Tension: The Gospel

- 1. The Gospel shows that both Jew and Gentile stand in equal need (Romans 1-3)**
- 2. The Gospel shows how salvation can be received by both Jew and Gentile (Romans 4-8)**
- 3. The Gospel shows God's true will for the Jews (Romans 9-11)**
- 4. The Gospel shows how all of our lives should look in Christ (Romans 12-16)**



Lesson 2

The Gospel Defined

Romans 1:1-17

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek"

Romans 1.16

The Greeting (vss. 1-7)

Romans 1:1-7 (ESV)

1 Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, 2 which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures, 3 concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh 4 and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord, 5 through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations, 6 including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ, 7 To all those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

1. Compare with other of Paul's greetings. Eph. 1:1-2; Phil. 1:1-2; Col. 1:1-2; 1Thess. 1:1. All of these greetings share a common structure:
 - Paul introduces himself (and any associates)
 - Paul states who he is addressing
 - Paul greets them with grace and peace.
 - These same elements are found in Romans, but there is much more said in the Romans introduction than in the others. This material is significant in setting the tone of Paul's message.
2. The gospel defined:
 - **The gospel and Paul's calling.** He makes it clear in vs. 1 that his calling to be an apostle was for the purposes of the gospel. Looking at Paul's conversion accounts we see that this entailed his mission to the Gentiles (Acts 9:15; 22:15,21; 26:16-18; cf. Gal. 1:15-16). We see this also in vs. 5.
 - » This gospel (including acceptance of the Gentiles) was not a Pauline invention, but one of God's promise through the prophets (vs. 2) An example of this is found in vs. 3-4. According to the flesh, Jesus was of David's seed (see Jer. 23:5-6; Ezek. 34:23-31; etc.) He was the Jewish Messiah. However, according to the Holy Spirit He was God's Son. This brings to our minds the prophecy of Psalm 2:7-8. The Son of God was not simply a Jewish Messiah, but Lord of the nations!
 - » In describing himself as Jesus' slave in vs. 1, Paul may have been alluding to another prophecy, the promise of God's Servant who would restore Israel and the nations (Isaiah 49:1-8). No, Paul was not claiming to be the Servant of prophecy, but as slave to

Christ he was aiding in His work.

- **The gospel's aim** was to “bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations,”
 - » True faith responds! Paul NEVER took issue with the necessity of obeying whatever God said. The issue that Paul will have with Law in this letter is to be seen as the tension between Jewish national sanctification (via Law) and the universal gospel message of justification via the gospel (i.e. obedient faith in Christ).
 - » There may be an intended contrast here between Jewish obedience to Law (i.e. circumcision, sabbath, etc.) and saving, obedient faith in Christ. Paul’s point again is that the gospel that teaches obedient faith was to be made available to all the nations.
 - » This was “for the sake of his name.” Thought seems to be that Gentile acceptance of the gospel would bring glory to Christ’s name (see Romans 15:9). Contrast with Jewish disobedience in Romans 2:24.
- **Gospel (vs. 1-4) = obedience of faith (vs. 5) = part of the called, loved & saints (vs. 6-7).**
 - » All of these are terms that the Jews took for themselves, but through the gospel they are extended to the nations. Not by Law, but through the gospel.
 - » This understanding will help us with such passages as Romans 8:28-30.

3. In short, the gospel as defined in these verses is the fulfillment of God’s promise that salvation could come to all (both Jew and Gentile). The gospel should produce “the obedience of faith” in those who hear (both Jew and Gentile), resulting in their being part of God’s called people, His beloved, His saints.

Paul's Desire To Visit (vss. 8-15)

Romans 1:8-15 (ESV)

8 First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is proclaimed in all the world. 9 For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I mention you 10 always in my prayers, asking that somehow by God’s will I may now at last succeed in coming to you. 11 For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you— 12 that is, that we may be mutually encouraged by each other’s faith, both yours and mine. 13 I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that I have often intended to come to you (but thus far have been prevented), in order that I may reap some harvest among you as well as among the rest of the Gentiles. 14 I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish. 15 So I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome.

1. They had been in his prayers (vs. 8-10). Paul both thanked God for their faith, and petitioned God that he could finally visit these saints. We know that Paul planned to visit them (Romans 15:22-24; Acts 19:21).
2. Paul was assured that if he visited them, both parties would be encouraged by the faith of the other (vs. 11-12)

3. The reason Paul hoped to visit: to reap fruit (vs. 13-15)

- Ties back with his apostolic commission. His whole purpose was to reap fruit for Christ, so his hope was to do that in Rome as well.
- Paul was indebted to the Gentiles. Not that Paul was in debt to them, but he was in debt to Christ his Lord! Again, it was the Lord's will that Paul carry His gospel to the Gentiles (Acts 9:15; 22:15,21; 26:16-18)
- Thus, Paul's true desire to visit Rome was tied to Jesus' desire for him to carry the Gospel to the Gentiles.

Theme Of The Letter (vss. 16-17)

Romans 1:16-17 (ESV)

16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. 17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, “The righteous shall live by faith.”

1. Why would anyone be ashamed of the gospel? If by “gospel” we simply mean God’s ability to save, it’s hard to imagine anyone being ashamed of it. However, in context of what we’ve already read, “gospel” involves God’s promised plan to incorporate the Gentiles into His saved people. Others of Jewish background would find this offensive and shameful. In fact, we have a recorded incident where another apostle was “ashamed” by this gospel (see Galatians 2:11-14).

2. However, in view of his obligation to the Gentiles, his apostolic commission, Paul was not ashamed of the gospel. He knew that this was God’s power by which both Jew and Gentile could be saved. It is God’s power to any who will believe.

3. It is in the gospel that God’s righteousness is revealed.

- This phrase has been the source of much debate and confusion. For Luther, Calvin and a host of others the “righteousness of God” was seen as man’s inability to stand right before his God. Since no man can do that of his own accord, he is dependant on God to make him righteous. Such theories as Calvin’s imputed righteousness (i.e. Christ’s righteousness is imputed to us) are the result.
- However, it is more in keeping with the Old Testament to speak of God’s righteousness as “his loyalty and faithfulness to his own promise/covenant word,” (McClister).
- In other words, the “righteousness of God” is His keeping the promises He made to save the Jews and the Gentiles (see again Isaiah 49:1-8). It is in the gospel that His promise is kept. It is in the gospel that God is faithful to His promise.

4. The phrase “from faith to faith” (NASB) is difficult and many interpretations are given. But in light of what we’ve already discussed, the best meaning seems to be, “from God’s faithfulness (to his covenant promises) to man’s response of faith.”

5. Paul concludes the thought with a supporting Scripture. Habakkuk 2:4 is again understood in terms of God keeping His promises. In Habakkuk’s day the promise was that God would save His faithful ones, even as the Babylonians were poised to destroy the nations. God kept His promise then, He keeps it now. His righteousness (covenant faithfulness) is fully revealed in the gospel.



Lesson 3

God's Wrath & Man's Unrighteousness

Romans 1:18-32

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

Romans 1.18

Romans 1:18–32 (ESV)

18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. 19 For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. 20 For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. 21 For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. 22 Claiming to be wise, they became fools, 23 and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things. 24 Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, 25 because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen. 26 For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; 27 and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error. 28 And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. 29 They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, 30 slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, 31 foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. 32 Though they know God's righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them.

God's Righteousness & His Wrath

1. Our text begins with the word "for," which points us back to the point Paul just made. We see two parallel statements in vs. 17 and 18:
 - "the righteousness of God is revealed," (vs. 17)
 - "the wrath of God is revealed," (vs. 18)
2. As we noted in our last lesson, the righteousness of God is best understood in covenant context. That is God will always be loyal and faithful to his covenant promises. In the context of vss. 1-17 God's covenant promise was that of salvation in His Son, salvation to all who would respond in obedience of faith. Available to all, whether they be Jew or Gentile.
3. God's wrath is the other side of the coin and should still be viewed in the context of covenant. If God is righteous in keeping covenant with those who have faith in Him, what of

those who broke covenant with Him through ungodliness and unrighteousness? Nothing is left for them, but His wrath.

4. Paul's point is that both God's righteousness and His wrath are currently being revealed.

While it is tempting to see God's wrath as end-time judgment, that is not Paul's point in this passage. No, just as God's righteousness is currently revealed in the gospel, so is His wrath to those outside of His covenant. How is that wrath revealed? We shall shortly see.

Man's Unrighteousness

1. The term "unrighteousness" figures prominently in this passage (it occurs twice in vs. 18 and once at the head of a litany of sins in vs. 29). If God's righteousness has to do with His keeping of covenant, it follows that man's unrighteousness has to do with failing to keep covenant.
2. However, the covenant under consideration is not the Mosaic covenant, but the covenant between Creator and creature.
3. It is a covenant based on what God has clearly revealed to all men: "His eternal power and divine nature," (vs. 20). These are clearly seen by natural revelation and show the vast distinction between Creator (God) and creature (man). However, even though "what can be known about God is plain... because God has shown it" (vs. 19), ungodly and unrighteous man has "suppress(ed) the truth" (vs. 18).
4. The consequences of man suppressing the truth about his Creator are dire. The covenant between Creator and creature is broken by man in that He forgets his Creator and takes for himself the preeminent position. This ungodly and unrighteous attitude of man is found throughout the section:
 - "who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth," (vs. 18)
 - "they did not honor Him as God or give thanks," (vs. 21)
 - "exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling man," (vs. 23)
 - "they exchanged the truth about God for a lie," (vs. 25)
 - "they did not see fit to acknowledge God," (vs. 28)
5. Man thought he was wise when he replaced the Creator with the creature, but he showed exactly how foolish he is! It was when man reversed the roles of Creator and creature that he departed into all of the sins listed in this passage. No wonder that God's wrath is being revealed from heaven!
6. Special note: while Paul is addressing the state of men in general, it seems likely that Paul's words found special application with the first man: Adam. What was Adam's (and Eve's) chief sin? That he desired God's position! (Genesis 3:5-6). This should be kept in mind when we discuss Adam's role in bringing sin into the world (Romans 5). As we will see, it was not that Adam's sin made all men guilty, but that he set the pattern of man placing himself in the position of God.

God's Wrath Defined: He Gave Them Over!

1. The phrase "God gave them up" is found 3 times in the text: vss. 24, 26, 28.

2. The phrase carries the sense of handing one over into another's control. I like the NLT's translation, "abandoned them to do whatever shameful things their hearts desired."
3. This is the wrath of God that is being revealed! Not some punitive measure for every transgression, but the Creator allowing the creatures to suffer the natural consequences of their leaving Him!
4. Since man refused to honor God and give Him thanks (vs. 21), since man exchanged God's glory for his own (vs. 23), God gave man up to the lusts of his heart (vs. 24), to dishonorable passions (vs. 26). Since man refused to acknowledge God (vs. 28), He gave man over to his debased mind resulting in all of the wickedness found in vss. 29-31.
5. The point: look around at sinful man. Look how far he has fallen without God's light and truth. That is God's wrath... He gave man exactly what he wanted, existence without God reigning in his life.
6. Finally note the phrase, "those who practice such things deserve to die," in vs. 32. Returning to the Genesis narrative we recall God's warning that death would ensue when man broke covenant with God (Genesis 2:17). Death did ensue, both physical (Genesis 3:19) and spiritual (Genesis 3:22-24). If salvation is found in God, death is found outside of God. Again, this is how God's wrath has been revealed; we live in a world characterized by death, characterized by rejection of its Creator.

Remember Paul's Point: The Gospel Is For Such People!

1. The Jew thought of the Gentile world in exactly the terms outlined by Paul in vss. 18-32. For the Jew, he was deserving of God's righteousness (through keeping of Mosaic Law), while the Gentile world without Law was deserving of death.
2. But Paul's point in vss. 1-17 was that the gospel of prophecy was one in which all men could be saved, both Jew and Gentile. That whoever would respond in obedient faith would become God's "called," "loved," and "saint."
3. So, Paul's point in vss. 18-32 was not to denounce man, but to point out man's problem: he had left his Creator and was suffering the natural consequences of that rejection. What should man do? There is only one thing man can do: respond to the gospel in faith and experience God's covenantal righteousness (vss. 16-17)!
4. This perspective should be kept in mind when dealing with any person in sin. So we find the outright condemnation of homosexuality in vss. 26-27. Those words cannot be read without coming to the conclusion that homosexual practices are abhorred by God. However, Paul did not write them to pronounce judgement on the homosexual. He wrote them to show that such practices occur when man replaces the Creator's will with his own. But if man, including the homosexual, will return in obedient faith he is assured that the righteous God will save!



Lesson 4

The Impartial God

Romans 2.1-16

"For there is no partiality with God."

Romans 2.11

But, I'm Not Legalistic!

Being charged with legalism can be very perplexing. After all, I don't think I can earn my salvation. I don't think that if I were baptized 100 times it would earn my entrance into heaven. Nor do I think that worshipping without instrumental music, fellowship halls and recreational facilities merits God's approval. I firmly believe that I am saved by grace through faith. Yes, faith is obedient, but I would never argue that my works earned God's grace toward me. I really don't know anyone who would make such an argument. So, why do we sometimes hear the charge of legalism?

That charge is sometimes made not because any of us (or we collectively) believe that we've earned God's favor by our actions, but that we belong to the right group. In other words, our identification with the **RIGHT** church that teaches the **RIGHT** gospel and that interprets the Scriptures with the **RIGHT** approach to authority makes us God's people. All others, since they aren't **RIGHT** must be **WRONG**.

IMPORTANT NOTE: do not interpret the preceding paragraph to mean that the church you worship with, the gospel that is proclaimed or the approach to authority are not important. **THEY ARE!** However, reliance on those things leads to a mind-set that can be described as legalism: I'm part of the right group, hence I'm saved. You're part of the wrong group, hence you're lost. Such a mind-set can lead one to gloss over his own failings/struggles because he's part of the right group. Likewise, good deeds and faith in others is discounted because, after all, they're in the wrong group.

It was this brand of legalism that was practiced by the Jews. They were part of the right group, they had the Law, they were God's people. The Gentiles? They were lost, and deservedly so! After all, those things Paul laid out in Romans 1:18-32 were deserving of God's wrath. The Jews were the **RIGHT** group. The Gentiles were in the **WRONG** group. (Note: The Jew-Gentile tension that Paul addressed is not an apples to apples comparison with the differences between the church and denominations. However, it's the attitude that I'm seeking to address)

It is this attitude that Paul destroys in our text. God would reward or punish each person (not each group) based on their reliance on Him and following Him. This was true for "the Jew first and also to the Greek."

The God Who Renders To Each Based On What He Has Done (Vss 1-11)

Romans 2:1-11 (ESV)

1 Therefore you have no excuse, O man, every one of you who judges. For in passing judgment

on another you condemn yourself, because you, the judge, practice the very same things. 2 We know that the judgment of God rightly falls on those who practice such things. 3 Do you suppose, O man—you who judge those who practice such things and yet do them yourself—that you will escape the judgment of God? 4 Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance? 5 But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed. 6 He will render to each one according to his works: 7 to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; 8 but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury. 9 There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek, 10 but glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek. 11 For God shows no partiality.

1. While the Jews are not specifically addressed until vs. 17, it seems that Paul has Jewish bias in mind in these verses. They had passed judgment on the entire Gentile world. And given how that world is described in Romans 1.18-32 weren't they deserving of that judgement?
2. However, Paul charged them with practicing the same things! It is doubtful that Paul meant they were guilty of all the sins found in 1.18-32, although several sins such as "arrogant," "boastful" and "unmerciful" would certainly have applied to the Jews. But recall that the great problem of the world was that man had reversed the rolls of Creator and creature. That was Adam's sin, a sin the Gentile world continued in with their deprivations. The Jews had done the same in making the Law the mark of salvation and "barring" the way to the Gentiles.
3. If the Jews knew that God's wrath would come upon Gentile iniquity, why did they think that it wouldn't come on them? It would! (vs. 2).
4. However, as we've already seen, the gospel is God's power to salvation to all (1.16-17). Rather than judging the Gentile world, the Jews should have embraced that God desired that all respond in obedient faith. The Jew should have recognized that God's call to repentance was to all! (vs. 4)
5. Tragically, the Jews had been known for their "hard hearts" in the Old Testament (Jer. 4.4; Ezek 3.7; Deut 10.16). Paul will later say that the true "Jew" is one who's heart is circumcised (2.29). A stubborn, hard heart can only result in God's wrath! (vs. 5) Recall that the world was already experiencing the "wrath of God" (1.18ff). Conscientious Jews who followed the Law may not have been experiencing the results of sinful behaviour like the rest of the world, but they were still sinners. Thus, God's wrath would still come upon them... it was being stored up (vs. 5).
6. They could be sure that God's wrath would be brought upon them because God is impartial! (vs. 6-10) This quality of God is stated throughout the Scriptures (Deut 10.17; 2Chron 19.7; Acts 10.34-35; Col 3.25; Eph 6.9). Thus, He will always reward the righteous. He will always punish the wicked. It does not matter which group you belong (Jew or Gentile, note

that both are mentioned in vs. 9 and vs. 10). What matters is whether you follow God.

7. NOTE: Calvin's doctrine of predestination cannot stand up to this passage. More about that in another lesson.

But What About The Law? (Vss 12-16)

Romans 2:12-16 (ESV)

12 For all who have sinned without the law will also perish without the law, and all who have sinned under the law will be judged by the law. 13 For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified. 14 For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. 15 They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them 16 on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus.

1. In our next lesson we will note how Jewish assurance of salvation was based on being the people who possessed and supposedly kept God's Law (i.e. the Mosaic Law). But as we go along in the text Paul will show that salvation isn't through the Law, but that the Law defined what is right and what is wrong. Violate Law and you perish with the Law. Sin against God without the Law and you perish without the Law!
2. Because the Law was not simply something to be read and heard. It was meant to be followed! (vs. 12; Deut. 30.11-14)
3. Furthermore, the Gentiles kept many of the precepts of the Law. Remember, they were under the original covenant between the Creator and the created (Romans 1.18ff). So, they may not have kept the Law delivered by Moses, but given that basic morality is common in all cultures, the Gentiles had all along been keeping aspects of the Law.
4. Paul's point: a day is coming when God will judge all. God will be impartial. God will punish those who sin, reward those who do good. This would be true of those who had the Law (Jews) and those who did not (Gentiles). Law will not save you.
5. Note Paul's use of the term "gospel" in vs. 16. We've already noted that the gospel reveals God's righteousness (i.e. faithfulness to His covenant promises) for all people: Jew and Gentile. But here Paul states that the gospel declares God's judgment on all men through Christ. In other words, before we can get to the good news of how we can all (both Jew and Gentile) be saved through faith in Christ, we must face the reality that we've all (both Jew and Gentile) sinned and are either experiencing the wrath of God or storing it up. The gospel starts with showing us how sick we are, then gives us the cure!



Lesson 5

What was the problem with the Law?

"For we maintain that a man is justified by **faith apart from works of the Law."**

Romans 3.28

"Yes, Paul says we are justified by faith and not works, but don't forget that James says 'faith without works is dead'." Ever said something similar? If not, you probably will. How have believers in Christ come to such radically different viewpoints about the necessity of following God's commands? Part of the reason may be that we've been using the wrong historical construct for Paul's words in Romans and other letters. It has long been assumed that the Jews, Pharisees in particular, were legalists who thought they could earn their salvation by their works. It is assumed that Paul, as a Hebrew of the Hebrews and a Pharisee (Phil 3.5) had once subscribed to this works mentality before being confronted by the Christ on the Damascus road (Acts 9), but the gospel given to him by Jesus was one where works were de-emphasized in favor of belief. Simply put, it has long been assumed that Paul's gospel replaced salvation by works with salvation by faith. However, there's a major problem with this interpretation of Paul's gospel: where do we read that the Jews thought they could earn their salvation by their works? As we will see, that concept is not present in the Scriptures. Rather, it's a construct formed during the Reformation and cast retroactively on Paul's gospel. But that leaves us with a question: what was Paul's problem with the Law?

Law & Covenant

When God delivered Israel out of Egyptian bondage and brought them to Mt. Sinai, He made this promise: "Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." (Exodus 19:5-6, ESV) Now, what was God saying to Israel? Was He telling them that by obedience they could earn His divine favor? Absolutely not! His favor was extended to them by grace, but if they were to continue in His favor they must observe His covenant Law. The Ten Commandments are spoken by God in Exodus 20, the preamble to the entire covenant Law. This covenant was ratified in Exodus 24 when...

1. God's words were read to 70 elders of Israel, representatives of all the people (vss. 1-3, 7)
2. The elders swore that "all that the Lord has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient!" (vss. 3, 7)
3. Blood from sacrificed animals was sprinkled on the altar and the elders (vss. 6, 8)

You will note that God's covenant, of which the Law was a part, was a covenant between God and the entire people of Israel, not a covenant between God and each individual Israelite. This is an important point as it places the Law in its proper context. Law was not a means of achieving or earning God's favor; Law was the means by which one maintained his place among God's covenant people.

The book of Deuteronomy continually stressed the need to follow God's Law so that the blessings of covenant would be enjoyed. The people should continue to keep God's Law and pass that Law on to their children so "that it may go well with you, and that you may multiply greatly, as the LORD, the God of your fathers, has promised you, in a land flowing with milk and honey." (Deut 6.1-3 ESV). A series of covenant blessings and curses were given in Deut 28. These blessings were inherent with being God's covenant people; these blessings required their faithfulness to the covenant. Likewise, failure to keep Law would exclude the people from God's covenant blessings, resulting in the curses enumerated in vss. 15-68. Other passages could be examined, but note the closing exhortation in Deut 30.15-20. Israel was exhorted to choose between life and death. Life for Israel could be chosen by following the Lord's commandments and statutes, but if they turned their hearts away from God, stopped following His commandments and served other Gods, they would have chosen death. Again, Israel was never told that they could earn God's favor through obedience. Rather, they were promised blessings within the covenant relationship, curses outside of the covenant relationship. Obedience to covenant Law was the means by which Israel was assured of their covenant standing, and thus assured that God's gracious promises would be fulfilled. It's a subtle difference, but a significant one. As Daniel prayed in reflecting on the failures of his people, "O Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, we have sinned and done wrong and acted wickedly and rebelled, turning aside from your commandments and rules." (Daniel 9:4-5, ESV) God is gracious, He keeps covenant. However, the people did not keep covenant, thus they did not experience the covenant blessings, but felt the wrath of God's covenant curses.

Recap of Major Points

- » **The Mosaic covenant was a national covenant made with Israel, not a covenant made with individual people.**
- » **God's covenant with Israel was based on His grace. Israel could never "earn" the special status of being God's people. That was a gracious blessing that God bestowed on the people.**
- » **The Law was of great importance because it was part of God's covenant with Israel. Faithfulness to God's covenant Law insured that the people were in covenant with their God, thus could receive His blessings.**
- » **Faithless disobedience to covenant Law was a breach of covenant, resulting in the curses of the covenant rather than the blessings that were part of the covenant relationship.**
- » **So, Law was of great importance not because Israel could "earn" God's blessings, but because it insured their place in the covenant where God's gracious blessings were to be found.**

The Law & Legalism

Legalism is typically defined as seeking to earn salvation by law keeping. As we've seen, that was not the purpose of the Mosaic Law, but that's not to say that legalistic tendencies did not develop among Israel. They certainly did, but it was not legalism as we define it or as the Reformation saw it. The legalism of Jesus' day and of Paul's day was a national one. The Jews saw the Law as defining God's chosen people, so Law keeping was emphasized because it kept you within the bounds of God's chosen people, Israel. This attitude toward Law and national Israel led to some very destructive attitudes towards others. So, the Pharisees disdained "tax collectors and sinners," because even though they were born of the Israelite nation, they had departed from God's covenant Law and therefore could not be part of His covenant. As Jesus says of them, they "trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and treated others with contempt," (Luke 18.9). The same contempt was expressed toward the common people who did "not know the Law," (John 7.49) and toward Jesus for perceived Sabbath violations (Matt. 12.1-14).

While the Pharisees viewed their fellow Israelites with contempt for failures in keeping covenant Law (and the burdensome traditions that had come to surround the Law), almost all Jews viewed the Gentiles with contempt. Since the Jews had the Law they felt assured that they were God's covenant people. However, the Gentiles were not God's covenant people, they did not have His Law. This helps to explain the Jew - Gentile tension which we discussed in Lesson 1, particularly the tension in the early church. This was why Peter was questioned as to how he could eat with the uncircumcised (Acts 11.3). You will note that the complaint was not that Peter preached that forgiveness could be had in Christ (and not in perfect Law keeping), but that Peter had dined with those outside of God's covenant, those without His Law. Likewise, the issue in Acts 15 was not that Gentiles needed to perfectly keep Law to be saved, but that they needed to take on the Law of Moses and be circumcised. This would bring them under the Mosaic covenant, insuring that they could receive the covenant promises of God. Finally, note again Paul's address to the Jewish mob in Acts 22. They patiently heard him out as he talked about his conversion to the cause of Christ, but it was only when he mentioned his mission to the Gentiles that the crowd cried out, "away with such a fellow from the earth, for he should not be allowed to live!" (Acts 22.22)

Recap of Major Points

- » The Jews of Jesus' day and of Paul's day were legalistic, but not in the way that is normally ascribed to them. They did not believe that they could earn salvation, but they did believe their salvation lay in the fact that they were God's chosen people, with God's Law.
- » This attitude was particularly prevalent among the Pharisees who viewed with contempt any who did not follow as closely the Law (and their traditions). This contempt was seen in their attitude toward "sinners", the common Jews and Jesus.
- » Most Jews viewed the Gentiles with contempt because they were a people not under God's covenant, without God's Law. This tension was seen in the early church as many Jewish Christians struggled to accept their Gentile brethren who didn't have the Law.

Paul's Problem With The Law

1. The problem was not with obedience! Whether in the Old Testament or the New Testament, obedience to God's will is exhorted and praised. Paul was certainly not lessening the demands of obedience, but sought to "bring about the obedience of faith," (Rom 1.5). Furthermore, the final chapters of Romans exhort the saints (both Jew and Gentile) to obey Christ in a variety of matters.
2. One main problem with Jewish reliance on the Law was that it hindered faith in Christ. Many Jews rejected Christ because they failed to realize that the Law was meant to bring them to Christ (see Galatians 3). They thought of the Law as the assurance that they were God's covenant people, when they should have viewed it as God's means of bringing them to Christ.
3. Within the church, the Jewish Christians were wrong in trying to bind Mosaic Law on their Gentile brethren. The Law did not justify the Jew before God, nor would it justify the Gentile. Both needed to place their faith in Christ. Only by trusting and following Him could Jew and Gentile be righteous.



Lesson 6

The True Jew

Romans 2.17-3.8

"But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart..."

Romans 2.29

Misplaced Boasting By The Jews (2.17-24)

Romans 2:17-24 (ESV)

17But if you call yourself a Jew and rely on the law and boast in God

18and know his will and approve what is excellent, because you are instructed from the law;

19and if you are sure that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness,

20an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of children, having in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth—

21you then who teach others, do you not teach yourself? While you preach against stealing, do you steal?

22You who say that one must not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples?

23You who boast in the law dishonor God by breaking the law.

24For, as it is written, “The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you.”

1. The focus of Paul's words in vss. 1-16 were on the impartiality of God, that both God's blessings and wrath would come equally on Jew and Gentile based on their works, not their nationality. But what about Israel's status as God's special people (Exodus 19:4-6, etc.). Did that mean nothing? Paul addresses that notion in this section.
2. The name "Jew" is taken from the name "Judah" who was the 4th son of Jacob, the one through whom the promised Messiah would ultimately come (see Genesis 49:10). It was the tribe of David and the name was taken for the southern kingdom when Israel divided after the death of Solomon (see 1Kings 12). Once Israel was taken captive by the Assyrians (see 2Kings 17) only the kingdom of Judah remained and the term "Jew" became synonymous for all Israelites.
3. The name has a literal meaning of "the praised one." It may be that Paul used the name purposefully here as the Jews thought that they brought praise to Jehovah as a nation, and were thus praised by Him. However, their boasting was unfounded.
4. The Jews boasted in the fact that they had God's Law (vss. 17-18). This made them boast that God was their God, that they knew His will, and thus they knew the correct course of action in all things (the sense of "approve the things that are essential"). This boasting in Law was reflected in the apocryphal work 2 Baruch: In you we have put our trust, because,

behold, your Law is with us, and we know that we do not fall as long as we keep your statutes. We shall always be blessed; at least, we did not mingle with the nations. For we are all a people of the Name; we, who received one Law from the One. And that Law which is among us will help us, and that excellent wisdom which is in us will support us.

5. Furthermore, since they were the people of the Law, they felt themselves qualified to lead the nations (vss. 19-20). This likely echoes the Messianic prophecy of Isaiah 42:6-7. The Jews viewed themselves as privileged and able to guide and give light to the nations. But for them, that would mean requiring the nations to keep the Law since they viewed it as “the embodiment of knowledge and of the truth.”
6. There was a problem, though: the Jews committed the very sins they warned against! (vss. 21-22) It’s interesting that the three sins Paul mentions (stealing, adultery and idolatry) have nothing to do with Jewish cultic practice (i.e. circumcision, sacrifices, feasts, etc.) but are from the 10 Commandments and stress basic morality (see Exodus 20.15,14,4-5).
 - Note: “do you rob temples” could reference the Jews giving less than their best to their God (see Malachi 1.14).
7. The result: God wasn’t being given honor or praise (a play on the name “Jew”) but was being dishonored! (vss. 23-24). The quotation is from Isaiah 52:5 where the destruction of God’s people brought dishonor on God. Now their misconduct and hypocrisy were bringing dishonor on Him! Their boasting was misplaced!

True Circumcision, The True Jew (2.25-29)

Romans 2:25-29 (ESV)

25For circumcision indeed is of value if you obey the law, but if you break the law, your circumcision becomes uncircumcision.

26So, if a man who is uncircumcised keeps the precepts of the law, will not his uncircumcision be regarded as circumcision?

27Then he who is physically uncircumcised but keeps the law will condemn you who have the written code and circumcision but break the law.

28For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical.

29But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter. His praise is not from man but from God.

1. It would be hard to overemphasize just how important circumcision was to the Jews. It was to be the perpetual sign of God’s covenant with Abraham as we read in Genesis 17.9-14. The mark of circumcision was so important to the Jews that to speak of the Gentiles was to speak of the uncircumcised. As we’ve already seen, the matter of circumcision/uncircumcision was a point of great tension when the gospel first went to the Gentiles (see Acts 11.3; 15.1)
2. However, if circumcision was just a mark in the flesh, it meant nothing! God had always stated that He sought for circumcised hearts (see Deut 10.16; Jer 4.4), so why would they rely on a physical marking?

3. No, physical circumcision (belonging to the covenant people of God) was only of value if they submitted to and followed God's will. Having already established that God is impartial (vss. 1-16), Paul applies the principle to the circumcised and uncircumcised. It is keeping God's will that counts! Don't forget that while the Gentiles didn't have the Law, they still had a covenant with their Creator (see Romans 1.18-23). These Gentiles could still follow the precepts of the Law, even though they didn't have the Law (Romans 2.14-15). Thus, their "uncircumcision" could be regarded as "circumcision" (Romans 2.26).
4. Vss. 28-29 put the matter bluntly: the true Jews (those who bring praise to God and are praised by Him) are not those who have the mark in their flesh, but in their heart. This one is truly praised, not by men, but by God!
5. This section helps us to see the problem that Paul was addressing. It was Jewish dependance on the outward. The fact that they had God's Law, the fact that they had the sign of circumcision. But if those things were not accompanied by hearts and minds given to God and following His will, they were useless!

Three Objections Answered (3.1-8)

Romans 3:1–8 (ESV)

- 1Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the value of circumcision?
- 2Much in every way. To begin with, the Jews were entrusted with the oracles of God.
- 3What if some were unfaithful? Does their faithlessness nullify the faithfulness of God?
- 4By no means! Let God be true though every one were a liar, as it is written, "That you may be justified in your words, and prevail when you are judged."
- 5But if our unrighteousness serves to show the righteousness of God, what shall we say? That God is unrighteous to inflict wrath on us? (I speak in a human way.)
- 6By no means! For then how could God judge the world?
- 7But if through my lie God's truth abounds to his glory, why am I still being condemned as a sinner?
- 8And why not do evil that good may come?—as some people slanderously charge us with saying. Their condemnation is just.

- 1. First objection: is there no advantage to being a Jew? (vss. 1-2)** Paul's answer is that there is definitely an advantage, because it was to the Jews that God's revealed will came! It should be noted that Paul does not say that they were entrusted with God's Law, but with His oracles. As we've noted, the oracles of God pointed to the salvation of the Jews AND Gentiles (see Isaiah 49.1-8). Furthermore, there is a play on "faith" in this passage. God "entrusted" (pisteuo) this message to the Jews, but they did not believe (apisteo)! (vs. 3)
- 2. Second objection: has our unfaithfulness nullified God's faithfulness? (vss. 3-4)** Thankfully God is not like man! His faithfulness has never depended on man's faithfulness. Yes, receiving the promised rewards demands that man be faithful, but God will always be faithful to His word. Vs. 4 emphasizes this point drawing on a passage where David confessed his sins to God (Psalm 51.4). The point is that God will always be faithful to His covenant

(with both Jew and Gentile). The whole world may be found to be unfaithful, but not God!

3. Third objection: if our sins confirm God's righteousness, how can He condemn us? (vss. 5-8). Paul recognizes that this is not a sound argument, and it certainly doesn't deserve a God-given response (I am speaking in human terms), but just to make it clear he affirms that the faithful God is just, and He will judge the world. Man's unfaithfulness may highlight the contrast with his faithful God, but that faithful God will judge. And as we will shortly see, that's a problem for all of us!



Lesson 7

The Justification of Man Romans 3.9-31

"For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law"

Romans 3.28

Man Cannot Be Justified By Works Of The Law (vss. 9-20)

Romans 3:9–20 (NASB95)

9What then? Are we better than they? Not at all; for we have already charged that both Jews and Greeks are all under sin;

10as it is written, “THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NOT EVEN ONE;

11THERE IS NONE WHO UNDERSTANDS, THERE IS NONE WHO SEEKS FOR GOD;

12ALL HAVE TURNED ASIDE, TOGETHER THEY HAVE BECOME USELESS; THERE IS NONE WHO DOES GOOD, THERE IS NOT EVEN ONE.”

13“THEIR THROAT IS AN OPEN GRAVE, WITH THEIR TONGUES THEY KEEP DECEIVING,” “THE POISON OF ASPS IS UNDER THEIR LIPS”;

14“WHOSE MOUTH IS FULL OF CURSING AND BITTERNESS”;

15“THEIR FEET ARE SWIFT TO SHED BLOOD,

16DESTRUCTION AND MISERY ARE IN THEIR PATHS,

17AND THE PATH OF PEACE THEY HAVE NOT KNOWN.”

18“THERE IS NO FEAR OF GOD BEFORE THEIR EYES.”

19Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, so that every mouth may be closed and all the world may become accountable to God;

20because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin.

1. Let's begin by recalling what we've covered so far. Paul's aim was to proclaim the gospel. The basic elements of the gospel were laid out in Romans 1.1-7. The gospel is the message of Christ (a message revealed in the prophets) that should bring about the obedience of faith (even among the Gentiles!) making them God's “called”, “beloved”, and “saints”. Truly, the gospel is where salvation and God's righteousness (faithfulness to His covenant) are found (1.16-17). And as we saw in the remainder of chapter 1, the Gentile world desperately needed the gospel! By leaving their Creator they were experiencing the wrath of God, the terror of living in sin and darkness!

2. But what about the Jew? This has been Paul's focus since the beginning of chapter 2. The Jew (literally “praised one”) thought he was safe and secure, not because he had kept the

Law perfectly, but because of the very fact that he had the Law! He was in covenant with God, as evident by the mark in his flesh (circumcision). But Paul went to great lengths to expose their faulty logic: God is impartial (2.1-16) and He will judge each according to what he does! Furthermore, the Jews had brought dishonor to their God by violating the Law (2.17-24) and so their circumcision was really uncircumcision (2.25-27). Impartial God wants people with circumcised hearts (2.28-29)! Those are the true people of God, the true Jews!

3. Having dealt with a series of objections (3.1-8) Paul sums up the point he has been trying to get across: We (the Jews) are no better than the Gentiles. Sure, it's easy to look at the wicked Gentile world (1.18-32) and conclude that they are deserving of God's wrath, but the plain and simple fact is that we are all under sin! (3.9).
4. To further emphasize his point, Paul uses a series of Old Testament passages, all showing the sinfulness of man. For reference sake, the quotations are as follows:
 - Vss. 10-12 (Eccl. 7.20; Psalm 14.1-3)
 - Vs. 13 (Psalm 5.9; 140.3)
 - Vs. 14 (Psalm 10.7)
 - Vs. 15-17 (Isaiah 59.7-8)
 - Vs. 18 (Psalm 36.1)
5. These passages are from the Jewish Scriptures, they are part of their Law, hence written to the people of the Law. These condemnations were to have the effect of closing every mouth and making all (Jews included) accountable to God (3.19).
6. Because justification cannot be found in works of the Law (3.20)!
 - It's important to define what Paul means by "works of the law". Luther, Calvin and most commentators since the reformation have treated this as legalism, i.e. salvation through law keeping. But that wasn't an issue for the Jews. They knew they sinned, and they regularly made sacrifices to have those sins forgiven! Furthermore, the issue was never about whether Jews or Gentiles should obey the revealed will of God. In fact, Paul has already stressed several times that they should! (see 1.5; 2.7,10,26).
 - Their problem was that they found security in the Law, it was what marked them as God's people. The Law, and particularly circumcision, had given the Jews a false sense of justification (i.e. right standing before God) and helps to explain why some Jewish Christians were insistent that the Gentile also follow the Law, namely circumcision (see Acts 15.1). As one commentator writes (and I believe accurately), the phrase "refers to a religious mode of existence, but a mode of existence marked out in its distinctiveness as determined by the law, the religious practices which set those 'within the law' (v 19) apart as the people of the law." (James Dunn, Word Biblical Commentary)
 - No, the Law could not justify. Rather, the Law actually showed the people just how sinful they were! (See also Galatians 2.16; 3.11; Romans 5.20; 7.7-11)

Justification Is Through Christ (vss. 21-26)

Romans 3:21–26 (NASB95)

21But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets,
22even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction;
23for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,
24being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus;
25whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed;
26for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

1. Recall that in 1.17 it was in the gospel that God's righteousness is revealed. Clearly, Paul has returned to that thought in this passage. You will note that God's righteousness is referenced 4 times in this passage. Recalling that God's righteousness is the means by which He keeps His covenant promises, Paul's point is clear: if justification isn't found in Law, then it is found in Christ. It is in Christ that God's righteousness is found!
2. That Paul is trying to convince Jewish brethren of this is clear by the number of Old Testament references found in the passage.
 - This was witnessed by the Law and Prophets (vs. 21). A host of Old Testament passages could be referenced here, but recall that many of them spoke of the inclusion of all people (Gen. 12.3; Psalm 2; Isa 49.1-8; etc.)
 - Redemption (vs. 24). The concept of being redeemed was significant to the Jews as their history was one of being redeemed by God (see Deut. 7.8; 9.26; Isa 41.14; Psalm 25.22; etc.)
 - Propitiation (vs. 25). Rendered literally as "mercy seat" in Heb 9.5. No doubt referencing that on the annual Day of Atonement, blood was sprinkled on the mercy seat so that Israel's sins could be forgiven (see Leviticus 16).
3. Each and every reference is to make clear that these Old Testament principles are only realized in Christ (not the Law!). We have all (Jew and Gentile) sinned and fallen short of God's glory. But God has been gracious and redeemed us in His Son. It is His Son that has made the sacrifice that has forgiven sins (those current, and those that had previously been passed over). And it can be had through faith! Faith is referenced 4 times in the passage, emphasizing that God's righteousness is found by faith in Jesus, not the Law. It is by faith in Christ that God is both just (faithful to His covenant promises) and the justifier (making both Jew and Gentile acceptable).

No Room For Boasting (vss. 27-31)

Romans 3:27–31 (NASB95)

27Where then is boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? Of works? No, but by a law of faith.

28For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law.

29Or is God the God of Jews only? Is He not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also, 30since indeed God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith is one.

31Do we then nullify the Law through faith? May it never be! On the contrary, we establish the Law.

1. What a pity it is that this passage is viewed by so many as setting faith opposed to works of obedience. That was the furthest thing from Paul's mind! Paul had no problem with obedience, in fact he stressed obedience as being necessary for salvation (1.5; chapter 6).

2. What Paul has done is describe two systems that are opposed to each other.

- The Law of works was the Jewish concept that their Law is what set them apart as the people of God. The primary work in their mind was circumcision, a matter already discussed by Paul in 2.25-29 and to which he returns in this passage and the discussion of Abraham in chapter 4. Paul IS NOT talking about the necessity of obeying God's commands of baptism, repentance, etc.!
- The law of faith is set opposed to the Jewish Law because this law is inclusive. Not all received the Law, but all can come to God through faith in Christ. True faith in Christ calls for one to give his life in sacrifice to Christ (12.1), to be His slave (6.16), to obey Him (1.5).

3. None can boast because all are on equal footing. This boasting was not an individual boasting of his merit, but the Jew boasting in his national covenant, a Law that set him apart from the Gentile world. Paul has refuted that concept, all reason for boasting is gone. After all, God is the God of the Gentiles too (3.29) and He is one who will justify both circumcised and uncircumcised by faith (3.30).

4. In vs. 31 Paul is probably answering a familiar charge against him, that he spoke against the Law (see Acts 21.21). Such was the furthest thing from Paul's mind. Paul was seeking to show the Jew that God's acceptance of all (Jew and Gentile) was at the heart of the Old Testament scriptures, it's why the Son of God came and is the basis of His rule (Psalm 2; Daniel 2.44-45). In doing so, Paul didn't nullify the Law... he established it by showing it's true purpose.



Lesson 8

Abraham's Righteousness

Romans 4

"Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness."

Romans 4.3

Background

1. Abraham was revered by the Jews, as both the physical and spiritual father of their nation. While Abraham was a great servant of God and a godly example to be imitated (Paul's exact point in Romans 4), the Jews had turned their physical descent from Abraham into another cause for boasting. So, John the Baptist warned the Jews, "do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham for our father,' for I say to you that from these stones God is able to raise up children to Abraham," (Luke 3.8). Similarly, in showing why they were rejecting Him, the Jews told Jesus, "We are Abraham's descendants and have never yet been enslaved to anyone..." (John 8.33).
2. Paul's focus beginning with Romans 2 has been Jewish grounds for boasting. The Jews had boasted in "works of the Law" believing that justification before God came through circumcision and having the Law. Paul has already cast that argument down, showing that only those who kept the Law could be justified by the Law. Since no one keeps that Law, no one could be justified on basis of the Law! (see 2.12-29; 3.9-20). Justification can only come through faith in Christ, not by works of the Law (3.21-30). AGAIN, Paul was not speaking of obedience to God's will vs. having faith in Christ, for having faith in Christ will promote obedience (1.5). Rather, Paul was contrasting two systems of justification: justification via circumcision and Law vs. justification via Christ. Paul summed up his argument by saying that justification via faith in Christ did not nullify the Law, but established the Law.
3. But what about Abraham? Paul turns his attention to this final pillar of Jewish boasting. Abraham was righteous before God and circumcision was a right given to Abraham. So, why shouldn't the Jew boast in circumcision? Why shouldn't Gentile converts be compelled to keep circumcision? As Paul will show, Abraham was justified by God by faith, not by circumcision (works of Law). And so, Abraham is the father of all the faithful... of the circumcised and uncircumcised.
4. Before we look at the text, let's note a few things about Abraham.
 - Paul's argument is based on a quotation found in Genesis 15.6, "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness."
 - As best we can tell, Genesis 15 occurs ~ 10 years after Abraham was originally called by God in Genesis 12.1-3 and 14 years before the sign of circumcision was given to Abraham (Genesis 17.9-14).
 - It should also be noted that both Genesis 15 and 17 deal with God's promise to Abraham that he would have many descendants (15.5), the father of many nations (17.5-6).

Promises that seemed unrealistic because Abraham did not yet have the promised heir.

- We should also note James' use of Genesis 15.6 in James 2.23 in making the point that Abraham was justified by faith AND works (James 2.21-24).
- Looking at the complete life of Abraham we see what was involved in Abraham's faith. First, Abraham trusted God. That is the main point of Genesis 15.6, that Abraham trusted that God would keep his promises even though they would not have seemed possible. Second, Abraham followed God in obedience. That was first seen in Genesis 12 when Abraham followed God's command to leave his home and country and go to Canaan. It was further seen in Genesis 22 when Abraham was willing to offer Isaac, trusting that God could even raise him from the dead (see Hebrews 11.17-19). So, while God's promises to Abraham were not dependent on "works of Law" (i.e. circumcision which came 14 years after Abraham was counted righteous), Abraham's faith was only complete in that it followed God's commands.

What Abraham Found (Vss. 1-8)

Romans 4:1-8 (ESV)

1What then shall we say was gained by Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh?

2For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God.

3For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness."

4Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due.

5And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness,

6just as David also speaks of the blessing of the one to whom God counts righteousness apart from works:

7"Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered;

8blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not count his sin."

1. Paul begins his discussion of Abraham with an interesting question, "What then shall we say was gained by Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh?" The idea behind "gained" is that of justification, in other words how did Abraham gain justification before God? He was the forefather of the Jews, so if he found justification by works of the Law (circumcision), then the Jews have something to boast of. But if he was found justified by faith, then the Jews have no boasting!
2. Paul quickly points out that Abraham's works gave him no reason for boasting before God. Yes, among men Abraham could boast about his works, but since Abraham found himself in the position of all other men (having sinned and fallen short of God's glory, 3.23), he could not boast before God!
3. But Abraham was justified by his faith! (Vs. 3) This verse is key to Paul's argument, so before moving on let's note a few things.
 - The term "counted" is important as it carries the idea of an account where amounts can

be either credited or debited. Paul's point is that justification can only be spoken of in this way when faith is under consideration. Abraham's works could not be credited as righteousness (not even circumcision) because Abraham's works were not perfect. However, he absolutely trusted God (faith) leading him to follow God. So, faith could be credited as righteousness.

- Note that it was his own faith that was credited. There is no room for the concept of Calvin that Christ's righteousness is imputed (or credited) to us. No, our own faith in God is what is credited.

4. Vss. 4-5 only expound upon vs. 3. Works cannot be credited by God's grace, because works only result in what is due. What is due each of us is death because we all sin (6.23). But through faith in Christ we can find righteous!

5. Vs. 6-8 includes a quote From Psalm 32.1-2, a confession of sin from David. This passage emphasizes the point that works cannot be credited as righteousness, because we sin. We should thank God that He forgives our sins and does not take them into account (i.e. credit them).

Who Can Be Found Righteous? (Vss. 9-25)

Romans 4:9–25 (ESV)

9Is this blessing then only for the circumcised, or also for the uncircumcised? For we say that faith was counted to Abraham as righteousness.

10How then was it counted to him? Was it before or after he had been circumcised? It was not after, but before he was circumcised.

11He received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. The purpose was to make him the father of all who believe without being circumcised, so that righteousness would be counted to them as well,

12and to make him the father of the circumcised who are not merely circumcised but who also walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised.

13For the promise to Abraham and his offspring that he would be heir of the world did not come through the law but through the righteousness of faith.

14For if it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void.

15For the law brings wrath, but where there is no law there is no transgression.

16That is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his offspring—not only to the adherent of the law but also to the one who shares the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all,

17as it is written, "I have made you the father of many nations"—in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist.

18In hope he believed against hope, that he should become the father of many nations, as he

had been told, “So shall your offspring be.”

19He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was as good as dead (since he was about a hundred years old), or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah’s womb.

20No unbelief made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God,

21fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised.

22That is why his faith was “counted to him as righteousness.”

23But the words “it was counted to him” were not written for his sake alone,

24but for ours also. It will be counted to us who believe in him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord,

25who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.

1. Could the Jews count themselves righteous since they kept the covenant of circumcision that was given to Abraham? Or is the righteousness of Abraham available to everyone? Those questions are at the heart of this section and the answer is clear: since Abraham was counted righteous according to his faith and not his works, this righteousness is available to all, both the circumcised and the uncircumcised.
2. Abraham was found righteous before circumcision (vss. 9-12). As we noted, the statement in Genesis 15.6 occurred ~ 14 years before the sign of circumcision was given in Genesis 17.
3. God’s promise regarding Abraham’s descendants was based on faith, not Law. Therefore, those who have faith are the true descendants of Abraham, not the ones who have the Law (vss. 13-17)
4. Abraham’s faith is described (vss. 18-22). Physically, Abraham and Sarah should not have expected a child. They were old. Their physical hope was dead. But Abraham trusted in God, “who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist.” So, he was fully assured that God would keep His promises. Note: the idea of following through on his trust is implied in this passage. This kind of faith, this absolute trust was credited.
5. We need to have the same kind of faith (vss. 23-25). Abraham believed in God who could give him descendants that did not yet exist (i.e. dead). We believe in God who raised Jesus from the dead. It is through Jesus that we can have sins forgiven and find justification. Will we fully trust God like Abraham? Will we follow God like Abraham?



Lesson 9

What Christ Has Done

Romans 5.1-11

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

Romans 5.1

Chapters and verses are handy in remembering and finding where a certain thought is found, but when we take up a chapter to read and study it, we must remember that it is found in a particular context. In other words, Paul didn't set out to write Romans 5, rather he has been developing his thoughts about the importance of the gospel, that through faith in Christ both Jew and Gentile could be justified before God. Let's review Paul's line of reasoning so far.

1. The gospel defined (Romans 1.1-17). The gospel, "the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes" was Paul's message to both Jew and the Gentile. Its aim was to bring about the "obedience of faith", making the Gentiles God's "called", "loved" and "saints". The Jew-Gentile tension is evident in this passage, nevertheless Paul was not ashamed of the gospel he proclaimed.
2. Man's need for the gospel (Romans 1.18-3.20). All men need the gospel because all sin. Paul's focus in this section is to show that all have fallen from God's glory (3.23). The Jew accepted that the Gentiles had fallen from God's glory, and Paul shows that to be the case in 1.18-32. But what about the Jew? Tragically, they had a false reliance on their national covenant with God, boasting in the Law and circumcision. Paul strikes down these means of boasting in chapter 2, emphasizing that only those who keep the Law could possibly be justified by the Law. Since the Jews committed transgressions under the Law, they had no means of boasting. Their inability to boast is further emphasized in chapter 3, particularly vss. 9-20. All need the gospel (Jew and Gentile), because all have sinned (both Jew and Gentile).
3. Justification is found in Christ (Romans 3.21-4.25). Again, you can see Paul's argument aimed at Jewish Christians who still thought justification lay with observance of the Law, particularly circumcision. NOTE: Paul has no issue with obedience to the commands of God, in fact faith is supposed to obey (see 1.5). The issue was whether justification could be found under the Law. The answer has been a resounding NO! Justification can only be found by faith in Christ. Chapter 4 shows that Abraham was justified by faith in God, not by works of the Law (i.e. circumcision). Taking Abraham as our example we know that his faith was a matter of being fully convinced that God would keep His word and faithful obedience on the part of Abraham. We are exhorted to the same kind of faith.

Chapter 5 serves as an important link between Paul's argument in chapters 1-4 and the issue of sin and the Law in chapters 6-8. The line of thought is something like this:

- » Salvation is achieved in Christ (Romans 5.1-11).
- » Sin reigned in Adam, but life reigns in Christ (Romans 5.12-21).

- » In light of what Christ has done, what should be our attitude toward sin?
(Romans 6.1-23)
- » Our wretched condition under the Law (Romans 7.1-25)
- » Our blessed condition in Christ (Romans 8.1-39)

As we've stated numerous times, Paul's point has been that salvation is by faith in Jesus Christ. So far, Paul has focused on faith over Law, but in chapter 5 Paul focuses on the object of faith: Jesus Christ. It's interesting that Paul used the words Jesus and/or Christ only once in chapter 2 (vs. 16), only 3 times in chapter 3 (vss. 22,24,26) and just once in chapter 4 (vs. 24). They are found 7 times in chapter 5 (vss. 1,6,8,11,15,17,21). By contrast the term "faith" is used only twice in Romans 5.1-2, and not again until Romans 9.30! Paul started this shift in chapter 4 by establishing how Abraham was righteous because of his faith in God; the God who "gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist" (4.17). We are called to follow in the steps of Abraham and "believe in him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification" (4.24-25). What Christ has done now takes center stage.

Salvation In Christ (vss. 1-5)

Romans 5:1-5 (ESV)

1Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

2Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

3Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance,

4and endurance produces character, and character produces hope,

5and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

Often times when we think of salvation we think of a single, point-in-time event; i.e. having our sins forgiven. But the salvation we have by faith in Christ is so much more!

1. We are justified, i.e. declared innocent and in good standing before God (vs. 1).
2. We have peace with God (vs. 1). Note that this is "through" Jesus (a thought repeated in vss. 11 & 21). Peace with God was a covenantal promise (see Numbers 6.22-27), but one that would truly be achieved in the Messianic covenant (see Ezekiel 34.25-31; 37.26).
3. We have "obtained access" into grace (vs. 2). The language would have brought to mind the Temple, and how limited access was to God. Not so in Christ (Hebrews 10.19). We who once fell short of His glory (3.23) now have "obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand".
4. And salvation isn't just about what we currently enjoy, but what is to come: "we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God" (vs. 2).
5. Vss. 3-4 deserve special attention. First, you will note the term "rejoice" in vss. 2 & 3. This

was the same word translated as “boast” in (Romans 2.17, 23). Paul had previously said that the Jews had no room for boasting (Romans 3.27). But those who are justified by faith can boast (rejoice) in God! Furthermore, they can exult even when facing tribulation! This may be aimed at the Jewish national covenant, that they boasted in their status as favored nation, believing that if they kept covenant Law all would go well (see Deut. 28). Paul’s point is that even when things do not appear to be going well, the Christian can still boast in His God, knowing that all will be well in the end.

6. Note: thus far Paul has not said much regarding the Holy Spirit (vs. 5 ; see Romans 1.4). The giving of the Spirit was prophesied to be a key aspect of the Messianic kingdom (see Isaiah 34:16; 44:3; Ezek 11:19; 36:26–27; 37:4–14; Joel 2:28–32). In Christ, that promise has been realized. Paul will return to this concept in chapter 8.

Assurance of Salvation (vss. 6-11)

Romans 5:6–11 (ESV)

6For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.

7For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die—

8but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

9Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God.

10For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.

11More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

1. Through Christ we have hope for the future... but what assurance do we have that this hope will be realized? Just consider what God has already done! Note Paul’s use of “much more” in vss. 9-10 (also vss. 15,17).

2. Note also the escalating descriptions of our condition:

- “weak” (vs. 6)
- “ungodly” (vs. 6)
- “sinners” (vs. 8)
- “enemies” (vs. 10)

3. The point: if God loves us enough to send Christ to die for us (when we were sinners and enemies no less), won’t He save us eternally now that we are reconciled to Him? Of course He will!

4. Through His death we have been reconciled to God, through His life (resurrected life) we are saved! This likely carries the idea of Jesus’ current role as our High Priest and mediator. We have every assurance, every reason to hope because now that we have been justified by faith in Christ, saved from our sins by His death, His current life secures our ultimate salvation.



Lesson 10

Adam & Christ Contrasted

Romans 5.12-21

"as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men"

Romans 5.18

Did we inherit sin from Adam? Often, that is the reason why believers turn to Romans 5.12-21, to examine if the doctrine of “original sin” is taught by Paul. Throughout the centuries, various theologians have argued that is exactly what Paul taught. So Augustine (AD 354-430) stated that man is “not able not to sin” and that Adam passed his sinfulness down to succeeding generations through natural procreation. This has served as the justification for infant baptism in not only the Catholic church, but many others as well. Over a thousand years later John Calvin (AD 1509-1564) would make original sin a major tenet of his theology: “For as Adam at his creation had received for us as well as for himself the gifts of God’s favor, so by falling away from the Lord, he in himself corrupted, vitiated, depraved, and ruined our nature; for having been divested of God’s likeness, he could not have generated seed but what was like himself. Hence we have all sinned; for we are all imbued with natural corruption, and so are become sinful and wicked.”

But was that Paul’s argument, or is this yet another case of people centuries removed from the letter reading their own cultural context into the words of the apostle? I certainly believe the latter to be the case. Before we move into the text, consider a few reasons why it should be apparent that Paul was not arguing that our sinful condition is the result of Adam’s original sin:

1. Scripture argues that each person is punished for his/her own sins, not as a result of Adam’s original sin:
 - » God declared to Israel that “The soul who sins shall die” (Ezekiel 18.20).
 - » Jesus stated that He would come in judgment and would “repay each person according to what he has done” (Matthew 16.27).
 - » Before penning Romans Paul had already written that “we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.” (2Corinthians 5.10).
2. Paul’s argument so far is that all men (both Jew and Gentile) are equally guilty before God. Why? Because both Jew and Gentile violated their covenant with God, thus “all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin” (Romans 3.9 see also Romans 2.6-10; 3.23). But if we’re all sinners because we inherited Adam’s sin, wouldn’t that have been Paul’s point from the beginning of the letter?
3. Finally, consider Paul’s argument in the passage itself. If he’s saying that we all became guilty of sin when Adam sinned, the logical conclusion would be that we all became righteous when Christ obeyed the Father (note vss. 18-19).

So, what is Paul saying? That’s what we want to examine in this lesson, not how others have skewed the teachings of the apostle. And with that in mind, it’s important to notice

the very first word of the passage: “therefore”. What Paul is saying in this passage builds on his earlier argument and he had just argued that our salvation in Christ is assured (note in particular Romans 5:9-10). Vss. 12-21 build on this point, showing that even though man’s experience since Adam is one of sin and death, justification and life are truly found in Christ. As you read and study this text, consider the contrasts between “one” and “all”. What Adam (one) and Christ (one) did had effect on “all”.

What Adam Brought (vss. 12-14)

Romans 5:12-14 (ESV)

12Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned—

13for sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law.

14Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come.

Perhaps we would do well to distinguish between “original sin” and “original guilt”. As we’ve already established, Scripture does not teach that we inherited Adam’s sin, i.e. that we are guilty because he was guilty. However, that’s not to say that Adam’s sin didn’t have huge ramifications for us. In fact Paul’s point is exactly that; Adam’s sin had huge ramifications for all of us! For me, a helpful way of looking at this is to see Adam as starting an epoch of human history. Note what defined this epoch:

THE EPOCH OF ADAM	
ONE ACT:	SIN (VS. 12)
TWO RESULTS:	CONDEMNATION & DEATH (VSS. 12,16)
EXTENT	ALL MEN (VS. 12)

If we go back to Romans 1:18-32, Paul’s argument will make even more sense. There we saw that the world was under God’s wrath, because the world left its Creator. When did that start? With Adam of course! Adam’s sin, substituting his will for the will of the Creator resulted in sin and death for all who followed (3:23). The epoch of sin and death began with Adam.

Before we move on, let’s note the two main passages used to bolster the “original sin” or “original guilt” position:

1. Vs. 12 states that “death spread to all men because all sinned”. Tragically, the Latin Vulgate translated this as “in whom all sinned” giving the interpretation that we all sinned in Adam. However, that’s not what Paul wrote nor is it the logical conclusion. Note that in vss. 13-14 Paul states that sin reigned from Adam to Moses even though the Law had not yet been given and “even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam”. Man didn’t die because of Adam’s sin, but because of their own... for sins different than the exact sin of Adam.

2. Vs. 19 states that “by one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners”. This is the more difficult verse, and if it were the only verse in Scripture on the topic perhaps we would do well to adopt the doctrine of original sin and guilt. However, as we’ve seen it’s not the only verse, nor does interpreting the verse as teaching we inherit Adam’s sin fit with the flow of Paul’s argument. Remember, if Adam’s sin automatically made us sinners, than Christ’s obedience automatically made us righteous. We need to read vs. 19 in light of vs. 18. Adam’s sin set the stage for where we all find ourselves: condemned because of all of us since the time of Adam have sinned and found ourselves deserving of death. Because of Adam’s sin, sin came into the world (vs. 12) and now we all find ourselves sinners (vs. 19).

What Christ Brought (vss. 15-19)

Romans 5:15–19 (ESV)

15But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if many died through one man’s trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many.

16And the free gift is not like the result of that one man’s sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brought justification.

17For if, because of one man’s trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ.

18Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men.

19For as by the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man’s obedience the many will be made righteous.

The picture is bleak, but let’s not forget Paul’s point in this passage. Having established the extent and certainty of salvation in Christ (vss. 1-11) the apostle is showing that the epoch of sin and death which started with Adam is now reversed in Christ; a new epoch has begun! This epoch is typified by:

	THE EPOCH OF ADAM	THE EPOCH OF JESUS
ONE ACT:	SIN (VS. 12)	OBEDIENCE (VS. 18)
TWO RESULTS:	CONDEMNATION & DEATH (VSS. 12,16)	JUSTIFICATION & LIFE (VSS. 16-17)
EXTENT	ALL MEN (VS. 12)	ALL MEN (VS. 18)

The epoch of sin and death began with Adam, but the epoch of righteousness and life began with Christ. His act of righteousness is directly contrasted with Adam's act of iniquity. So, if Adam's act resulted in many becoming sinners, then Christ's act results in many becoming righteous. This is the blessing of justification. No fear of God's wrath, but reigning in life! Here are a few notes about the text:

1. Note the use of "much more" in vss. 15 and 17. We saw how Paul used this argument in vss. 9-10 to show that if God would give His Son to save us from our sins, He would certainly save us from the wrath to come. Now Paul uses the same form of argument to show that if one man's sin brought death, the work of Christ would certainly bring life.
2. The idea of grace is prominent throughout the passage (note the frequent occurrences of the terms "grace", "free gift" and "gift"). God's grace which gave His son culminates in "righteousness" (vs. 17) and "justification" (vs. 18). However, that is not to say that man has no part in receiving God's grace. Paul's entire argument up to this point is that we can be righteous only through faith in Christ, not by our own deeds or by the Law (see Romans 1.16-17; 3.28; 5.1). In this section of the letter Paul is not discussing our need to have true faith, but rather the grace of God which is found in Christ Jesus (the object of our faith). Emphasizing God's grace in this section does not nullify the discussion of faith which already occurred.

What About The Law? (vss. 20-21)

Romans 5:20-21 (ESV)

20Now the law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more,

21so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Recall that the Jews boasted in the Law (see Romans 2.23; 3.27) but the Law didn't justify them, rather knowledge of sin came through the Law (Romans 3.19-20). Paul amplifies this point here, placing the Law firmly in the epoch of Adam and not the epoch of Christ. Adam did not sin under the Law, but he sinned as did everyone who came after him. The Law did not keep the Jews from sinning, rather it magnified their sins by showing exactly what they were doing was sinful to God! So, Paul lumps the Law in with the epoch of sin and death, the epoch of Adam. Grace, righteousness and eternal life belong to the epoch of Christ! However, that is not to say that the Law was sinful. Paul will make that point clear in Romans 7.7. The Law served a purpose by pointing out sin (see Romans 7.9), thus magnifying the grace found in Jesus.

	THE EPOCH OF ADAM	THE EPOCH OF JESUS
ONE ACT:	SIN (VS. 12)	OBEEDIENCE (VS. 18)
TWO RESULTS:	CONDEMNATION & DEATH (VSS. 12,16)	JUSTIFICATION & LIFE (VSS. 16-17)
EXTENT	ALL MEN (VS. 12)	ALL MEN (VS. 18)
THE LAW (VSS. 20-21)		



Lesson 11

Death... Then Life

Romans 6.1-14

"Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him."

Romans 6.8

What Happened When You Were Baptized?

Why were you baptized? Chances are passages such as Acts 2.38; 22.16 and Mark 16.16 will immediately spring to mind. You were baptized so that your sins would be forgiven, so that all the wrongs you once committed would no longer be held against you. While it is certainly true that baptism (having believed and repented) is God's means for forgiving our sins, there is some danger in equating baptism with forgiveness... if by forgiveness we only think of a point-in-time operation. In other words, if my baptism is simply the time my prior sins were forgiven, then what does it mean for my life now? What does it mean for my life going forward? It means a great deal, as Paul makes clear in this passage.

Of course, Paul didn't simply decide to begin discussing baptism. Rather, his words regarding its purpose flow from the argument in chapter 5. You will recall that in 5.12-21 we found two men and two epochs contrasted: 1)Adam and the epoch of sin and death, 2)Christ and the epoch of righteousness and life. Paul made it clear in 5.20-21 that the Law belonged to the epoch of sin and death, that under Christ it is grace that reigns. We understand from prior arguments that the new epoch is typified by faith in Christ, but is there a moment when one could say he transitions from the epoch of Adam to the epoch of Christ? Yes! This is where Paul's discussion of baptism comes in.

The Question: shall we continue in sin so that grace may increase? (vss. 1-2)

Romans 6:1-2 (ESV)

1What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?

2By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?

1. How could anyone ask such a question? While it is doubtful that any Christians in Rome were wilfully sinning with the notion that grace would cover all, there are a few reasons why Paul raises the issue here. First, it may have been the case that Paul's Jewish critics were charging him with a doctrine that made sin permissive. Recall again that Paul placed the Law on the side of sin (5.20-21) because the Law increased transgressions. But for the Jews the Law was viewed as a shield against sin, the assurance that they were God's people. Was Paul advocating lawlessness with his talk about justification by faith without the Law? Second, we know from Paul's Corinthian correspondence that the saints there were living as if their sins were covered by God's grace. Paul had just corrected those problems, and so makes it clear here that the gospel of justification by God's grace through faith leaves no

room for such behavior.

2. The answer to the question is itself another question: “How can we who died to sin still live in it?” This answer, which Paul will elaborate on in the following verses, is straightforward: a death has occurred! Sin was killing us. The only escape was to die to sin. And dying to sin results in life! Therefore, how could we go back into sin? Vss. 3-11 elaborate on this basic point, showing exactly when we died to sin and rose to life!

We died with Christ in baptism (vss. 3-7)

Romans 6:3-7 (ESV)

3Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?

4We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

5For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.

6We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin.

7For one who has died has been set free from sin.

1. Jesus’ death and resurrection serve as the apex of history. In His death the salvation of all men was possible. The penalty for sin was paid, now forgiveness can be found. In His resurrection the life-giving power of God was fully manifest. Now, Jesus lives a life in the presence of God.
2. Within this passage Paul makes it clear that it is by baptism we are joined with Christ in His death and resurrection. While the point of this passage is not to give the mode of baptism (Paul’s readers knew already that “baptism” meant immersion), the image of burial and resurrection does coincide with the act of being immersed in water and rising again.
3. However, let us not forget Paul’s main point: Christians cannot continue in sin! No, not that they are unable to go back into sin (as Calvin would claim), but anyone who properly appreciates that in baptism he has died with Christ, died to his old self, died to the epoch of Adam, and was raised by God’s glorious power to a new life... how could such a person go back? How could you enslave yourself again? You can’t, you won’t! “for one who has died is set free from sin.”
4. Note: it is interesting that faith is not mentioned in this passage at all, even though we know from 3.28 and other passages that justification comes by faith. Why didn’t Paul insert faith into this passage? Because Paul never thought of baptism as being opposed to faith, a work by which salvation was earned. No, that thinking belongs to Luther, Calvin and a host of others since that time. Baptism isn’t opposed to faith, it’s an extension of faith as is any act of obedience (see 1.5).

We now live with Him (vss. 8-11)

Romans 6:8–11 (ESV)

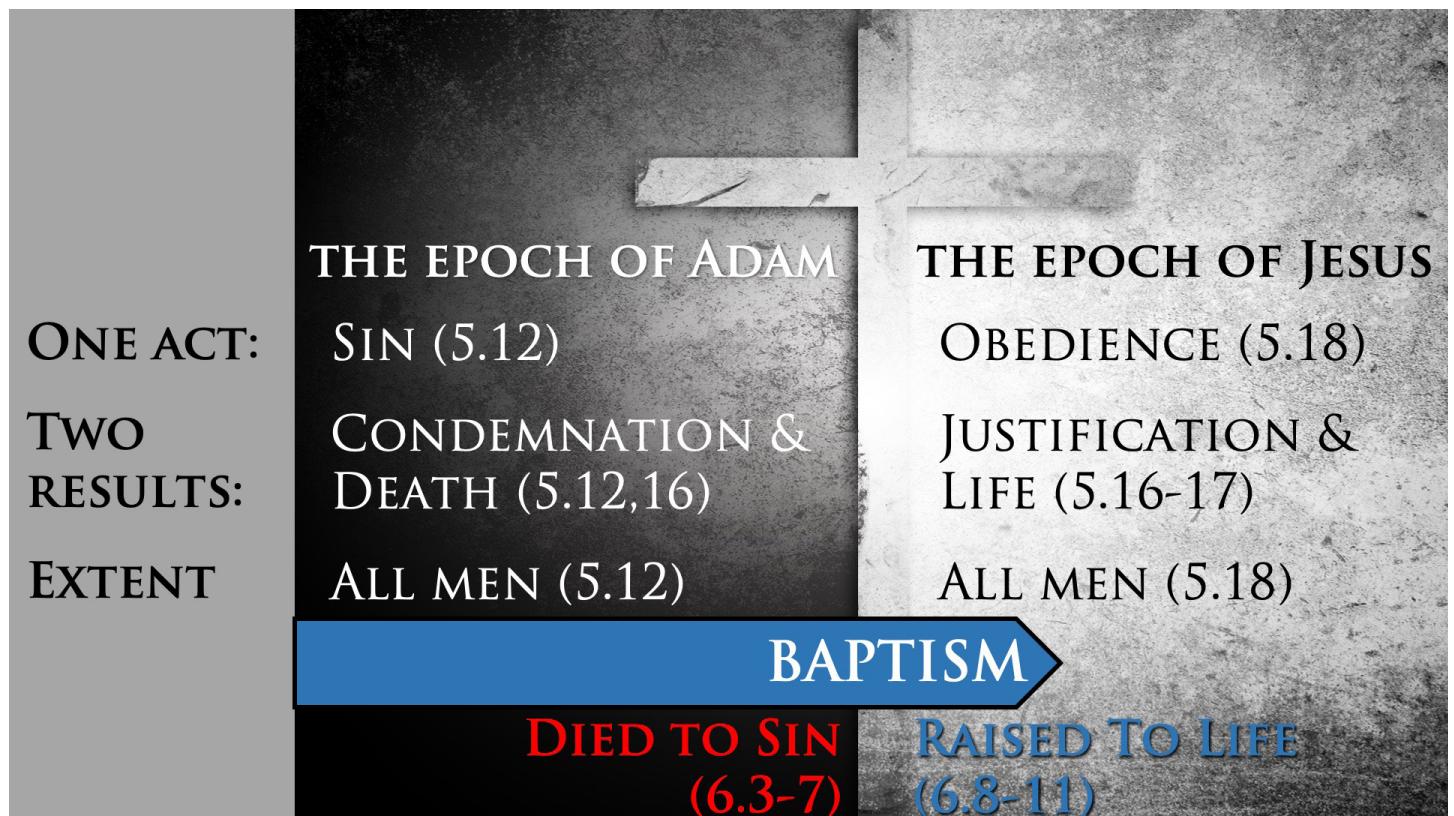
8Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him.

9We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him.

10For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God.

11So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

1. This is the other side of the death/baptism analogy. A dead Messiah wasn't much hope, but He was raised by God's glorious might (Ephesians 1.19-20; Col. 2.12). Likewise, in baptism we have died to sin, but then we are raised. Raised to what? To life!
2. Returning to the comparison made in chapter 5, those who place their faith in Christ transition from the epoch of Adam and sin to the epoch of Christ and life. Baptism is when the transition takes place! Having died to sin (the epoch of Adam) we are raised to live (the epoch of Christ). Who could possibly say that baptism was optional for the believer, something you should do, but not essential?
3. Returning to Paul's main point, how could a Christian return to a life of sin? Did Christ rise to die again? Absolutely not! Neither did you! Christ's life is one by the power of God, in the presence of God, for God. Your life is to correspond with His! So, "consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus."



So, act as the living and not the dead! (vss. 12-14)

Romans 6:12–14 (ESV)

12Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions.

13Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness.

14For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.

1. Paul's words in this passage clarify what he meant about Christian's having died to sin. He is not excluding the possibility (or probability) that Christians will sin again. He is excluding that one can be a Christian, yet under the reign of sin. The reign of sin belonged to the epoch of Adam, the epoch we died to in baptism with Christ.
2. You will note the presence of choice in this passage: it is up to us to present our bodies as either instruments of sin or instruments of righteousness.
3. However, this is possible because we are under grace, not under law. The Law shows what sin is, magnifies it. Grace in Christ not only forgives sin, but as our lives are molded to His life, we overcome sin (subject of chapter 8).
4. The point is clear: no, Christians cannot continue in sin so that grace can abound. We died to sin, we are raised to life. So act like it!



Lesson 12

Sin & The Law Part 1

Romans 6.15-7.6

"But now we are released from the law, having died to that which held us captive"

Romans 7.6

Paul had concluded his Adam - Christ contrast by placing the Law in the sphere of Adam, belonging to the epoch of sin and death, "Now the law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more," (5.20). This was perhaps Paul's most shocking declaration regarding the Law up to this point, leading to the questions that he addressed in chapter 6. Paul either anticipated the objections found in chapter 6, or he had already heard things similar (recall the rumors being circulated about Paul in Jerusalem, cf. Acts 21.21). The crux of the matter was if the Law increased sin, what did that mean for moral behavior?

The first question, "Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase?" was answered by appealing to the baptism each Christian experiences. By being buried with Christ in baptism we have died to the epoch of Adam, sin and death. As a Christian is raised out of baptism, He is raised to life. He now belongs firmly in the epoch of Christ, righteousness and life. Any Christian that recognizes what has happened by being buried with Christ in baptism will respond accordingly; he/she will present themselves as alive to God, fit for his use. No, we cannot continue in sin so that grace will increase. Rather, those who've experienced His grace recognize that they have died to sin!

But what about the Law? Paul had earlier charged that the Law came in so that grace would increase (5.20) and now in chapter 6 he says, "sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace," (vs. 14). Paul has again put the Law firmly on the side of sin. What does this mean for moral behavior? Is sin permissible since we are no longer under Law, but under grace? (vs. 15)

Christians Are Now Slaves To God (6.15-23)

Romans 6:15-23 (ESV)

15What then? Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means!

16Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness?

17But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed,

18and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness.

19I am speaking in human terms, because of your natural limitations. For just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness leading to sanctification.

20For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness.

21But what fruit were you getting at that time from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death.

22But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life.

23For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

1. It is interesting that in responding to a question about Law, Paul doesn't mention the Law again until chapter 7. However, since he has said that Law falls under the epoch of Adam, that it resulted in increased sinfulness, Paul addresses sin, the product of man's violation of Law. NOTE: Paul is NOT criticizing the Law. As he will explain in 7.7-13, the Law is holy and good. The fault lay with man who keeps violating the Law.
2. An interesting comparison of this passage can be made to 1.18-32. You will recall that the reason why the world was under the wrath of God was that it had left it's Creator (1.21) to follow after their own lusts and desires, to which God "gave them up." The tragedy was that ridding itself of God's yoke, the world had become enslaved to sin. But, in Christ we have died to sin and should no longer be enslaved to it. However, we are still enslaved to a Power greater than ourselves. Now, we have returned to being in submission to our Creator, we are enslaved to God.
3. Vs. 17 makes an interesting point, particularly given that Paul was answering objections to his criticism of the Law. While it is true that we are not under the Law (vs. 14), you will note that living in grace involves the following:
 - » Being obedient from the heart
 - » Having a "standard of teaching" that was delivered to us, i.e. doctrine.
 - » A typical Jew would have thought of the Law in similar terms: it was the teaching that was delivered, and it should be obeyed. So, while Paul has declared that we are free from the Law, this new epoch of grace still involves learning the will of God and following it.
4. Vss. 20-23 should be a sobering thought to all. What did we gain when we rejected God's yoke? Were we free? Not at all, we were enslaved to sin! And enslavement to sin can only result in death! So, return to the state of things as God originally intended, where He assumes His rightful position as Creator and we remember our place as His creation. Be enslaved to God, present your members as slaves to righteousness and you will receive what God always intended for His creation: sanctification and eternal life!

Christians Are Dead To The Law (7.1-6)

Romans 7:1–6 (ESV)

1Or do you not know, brothers—for I am speaking to those who know the law—that the law is binding on a person only as long as he lives?

2For a married woman is bound by law to her husband while he lives, but if her husband dies she is released from the law of marriage.

3Accordingly, she will be called an adulteress if she lives with another man while her husband

is alive. But if her husband dies, she is free from that law, and if she marries another man she is not an adulteress.

4Likewise, my brothers, you also have died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead, in order that we may bear fruit for God.

5For while we were living in the flesh, our sinful passions, aroused by the law, were at work in our members to bear fruit for death.

6But now we are released from the law, having died to that which held us captive, so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit and not in the old way of the written code.

1. Now, Paul returns to what all of this means for the Law. Given that the Law falls within the epoch of Adam, sin and death, we cannot be under the Law and under grace at the same time (6.14). Paul has already established that we died to sin (6.1-7), but what about the Law? Paul's point in this text is that we have also died to the Law.
2. Paul makes an analogy between living under the Law and marriage. A Jew would have been under the Law's jurisdiction so long as he lived, just like a woman was bound to her husband so long as he lived. To live with another man while her husband lived would have been adultery, but if her husband died she would be free to marry again.
3. Paul doesn't carry the analogy out in the way we would initially think. He does not say the Law (in the role of the husband) died, but rather we have died. Paul clearly has in mind the death, burial and resurrection of baptism that he detailed in 6.1-11. Dying with Christ in baptism frees one from sin, death and the Law which aroused sinful passions. Now we are raised to walk in life, joined to Christ to serve in the newness of the Spirit (which will be addressed further in chapter 8).
4. While the primary purpose of this passage is not about marriage, it does emphasize some truths found throughout the Scriptures:
 - » The permanency of marriage is emphasized, as we see that a woman was bound to her husband as long as he lived.
 - » The sinfulness of being joined to another outside of one's marriage is emphasized. A woman joined to another man who is not her husband is an "adulteress." This describes an ongoing state, not simply an action.



Lesson 13

Sin & The Law Part 2

Romans 7.7-25

"I was once alive apart from the law, but when the commandment came, sin came alive and I died."

Romans 7.9

No Problem With The Law, But It's Not The Spirit

Paul had firmly placed the Law on the side of sin and death (5.20-21; 6.14; etc.). Undoubtedly, some Jewish Christians began to accuse Paul of licensing sinful activity. After all, if we are not under Law, why would sin be wrong? Paul had emphatically stated that we cannot continue in sin, because when we were baptized into Christ we died to sin and the epoch of Adam, being raised to life and the new epoch of Christ (6.1-14). Furthermore, since the Law was placed in the old epoch of sin and Adam, we died to it too and are now joined to Christ (7.1-6).

But what does this mean for the Law? Paul has just stated that “while we were living in the flesh, our sinful passions, aroused by the law, were at work in our members to bear fruit for death” (7.5). Was the Law at fault? “Is the Law sin?” (7.7) In this passage Paul will endeavor to explain the connection between the Law and sin, placing the blame on flesh and on sin while declaring the Law to be holy, righteous and good (7.7-13). He will then relate his personal experience of living under the Law, desiring to do God’s will, but experiencing sin reign in His flesh (7.14-25).

All of this prepares us for the Spirit’s introduction in chapter 8. The Law may have been holy, righteous and good, even spiritual in nature, but it was not the Spirit. Significantly, the work of the Spirit and His contrast with the Law was revealed in the prophets:

- Jeremiah 31:31–33 (ESV) 31 “Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, 32 not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the LORD. 33 For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people.
- Ezekiel 36:25–27 (ESV) 25 I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. 26 And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. 27 And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.

Sin Took Advantage Of The Law (vss. 7-13)

Romans 7:7–13 (ESV)

7What then shall we say? That the law is sin? By no means! Yet if it had not been for the law,

I would not have known sin. For I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, “You shall not covet.”

8But sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, produced in me all kinds of covetousness. For apart from the law, sin lies dead.

9I was once alive apart from the law, but when the commandment came, sin came alive and I died.

10The very commandment that promised life proved to be death to me.

11For sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me.

12So the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.

13Did that which is good, then, bring death to me? By no means! It was sin, producing death in me through what is good, in order that sin might be shown to be sin, and through the commandment might become sinful beyond measure.

1. “Is the Law sin?” Of course not! Paul will rightfully describe the Law as “holy and righteous and good,” (7.12), even referring to it as “spiritual,” (7.14). In giving His Law, God declared that “if you diligently obey the Lord your God, being careful to do all His commandments which I command you today, the Lord your God will set you high above all the nations of the earth. All these blessings will come upon you and overtake you if you obey the Lord your God,” (Deut. 28.1-2). So, what was the problem?

2. The problem was man! Specifically, the problem was man when ruled by his flesh. When Paul speaks of “flesh” (Greek *sark*) he’s not simply referring to man’s physical bodies. After all, our physical members can be presented to God as instruments of righteousness (see Romans 6.12-13). Rather, “flesh” was the dominant principle of our old lives. “Flesh” typified our lives in the old epoch of Adam, sin and death. Thus, Paul said, “For while we were living in the flesh, our sinful passions, aroused by the law, were at work in our members to bear fruit for death” (Romans 7.5). Paul will return to the struggle of trying to serve God while in flesh in Romans 7.14-25, but having shown that the Law aroused sin when we were in the flesh, Paul must show that the Law was not at fault.

3. Law shows what is wrong, and Paul’s point was that when we’re dominated by flesh, we corrupt this positive aspect of law; we desire to do what is wrong simply because it’s wrong. Thus Paul could state that “apart from the law, sin lies dead”, i.e. sin uses the prohibition to entice the flesh. David McClister offers this explanation: “The Law of Moses, by its nature as an external law, had a serious problem associated with it in that it mainly addressed our actions, the things we do in the flesh. Even those parts of the Law that attempted to transform our inner selves (such as the tenth commandment which prohibited coveting) eventually became issues with the flesh... Like a parent’s good instruction to a little child, ‘Don’t touch the stove,’ the process of announcing that good commandment started a process in motion. The child was not thinking about touching the stove until the parent said something about it, then his natural curiosity takes over and drives him to touch the stove. In a similar, but more serious way, that part of us that wants to control itself (our flesh) found

itself excited by the Law's prohibition and prompted us to do the very thing God said not to do." (Blessed Be God, Page77)

- » You can see how this was true when Eve sinned in the Garden. God's commandment (Gen. 2.17) made one tree out of bounds. This commandment was for her good, but the commandment also increased her desire for it, a desire that Satan was able to prey upon (Gen. 3).
- » Consider also that Israel did not make an idol (Exodus 32) until after God forbade it (Exodus 20.4-5).
- » Paul says the same thing occurred with him and coveting. Coveting what others have is a "natural," i.e. fleshly, desire, but the Law declares it sinful. Being declared wrong intensified Paul's fleshly desire, leading to his spiritual death.

4. So, no fault should be found with the Law, but so long as man is governed by flesh the Law will only incite sin in him. What man needs is to be freed from the flesh, to be governed by the Spirit. This is exactly what Paul says happens in Christ, which is the focus of chapter 8.
5. While not the point of the passage, this passage does effectively destroy any notion of our inheriting Adam's sin (i.e. original sin). Note Paul's words in vs. 9, "I was once alive apart from the Law; but when the commandment came, sin came alive and I died." The Law, the command to not covet, was given ~1500 years before Paul lived (see Exodus 20.17), but Paul was spiritually alive before he came to understand the obligation of this commandment ("when the commandment came"). This is what we mean by speaking of an "age of accountability". While that phrase is not used in the Scriptures, the point is made in this passage and others (see Ezekiel 18.20; Isaiah 7.16). Paul died when he transgressed God's Law, not when Adam transgressed.

The Struggle Between The Inner Man & The Outer Man (vss. 14-25)

Romans 7:14-25 (ESV)

14For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am of the flesh, sold under sin.

15For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate.

16Now if I do what I do not want, I agree with the law, that it is good.

17So now it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me.

18For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out.

19For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing.

20Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me.

21So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand.

22For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being,

23but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members.

24 Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?

25 Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin.

1. The most important question to decide on when examining this passage is at what stage in life was Paul referring? Many hold (and reasonably so) that Paul was referring to his present, Christian life. The main reason for taking this position is that Paul uses the present tense. The other position is that Paul was speaking of his former life, when he was still under the Law and in the epoch of Adam. This position seems best for the following reasons:

- » Paul speaks of this time as being “sold under sin” (7.14). However, as we read in 6.7, “he who has died is freed from sin.” While we recognize and admit that Christians still sin (1John 1.8-10), that is a far cry from the bondage Paul is describing in this passage.
- » Paul will contrast this time with living under the Spirit in chapter 8. That existence is typified as being free from condemnation because “the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.” (Romans 8.2) What Paul is describing in 7.14-25 is anything but freedom.
- » It is best to treat the entirety of Chapter 7 as Paul’s explanation of the problems of living while dominated by the flesh. While the Law is not at fault, being holy, just and spiritual (7.12,14), the flesh is provoked by the Law to sin (7.5,14). Paul, having been a conscientious Jew, knew all to well the struggle of desiring to follow God, but seeing sin reign in his flesh. That agony is what Paul describes in this passage, but that agony could only be relieved by Christ and the giving of the Spirit (7.25, chapter 8)
- » But what about Paul’s use of the present tense? The best answer to me is that Paul is relating this as a personal story. Such stories, while occurring in the past, are often told in the present tense.

2. Paul’s point is simple, yet emphatic. While the Law may be holy, righteous and good, even described as “spiritual,” man in the flesh (belonging to the epoch of Adam) is sold into the bondage of sin. The Law may reveal the will of God to him, he may even desire to do the will of God in his inner man, yet he will find himself doing the very evil that he did not wish to do.

3. What did Paul mean by “no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me,” (vs. 17,20)? We can easily rule out one thing: Paul was not refusing to take responsibility for his actions. He has already stated that he was responsible for his own sin and spiritual death (vs. 9). The likely solution is that Paul has personified sin, emphasizing its power contrasted with his own will while in the flesh. This seems to agree with Paul’s words in vss. 18-19, 22-23 and the last portion of vs. 25.

4. Paul’s purpose has been to show the hopeless condition of a good man under the Law. The flesh is too weak, sin is too powerful. So, Paul exclaims, “Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?” (vs. 24) While Paul has applied this to himself, his intent was to convince his fellow Jewish Christians that they were not justified by the Law... they couldn’t be.

5. Man's hope? "Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!" (vs. 25). While Paul summarizes his former struggle at the end of vs. 25, he will return to the solution in chapter 8. Christ has freed us from this body of flesh, by giving us the Spirit!
6. Note: each of us can identify with Paul's struggle in this passage, but I would ask you to remember that Paul was speaking of his inner conflict under the Law, not in Christ. Christians will continue to have some struggles, even sin, but being in bondage to sin is what happens outside of Christ. If we are feeling "sold under sin" (7.5) and "wretched" (7.24) something has gone terribly wrong; we're "living in the flesh" (7.5) and not "according to the Spirit" (8.4).



Lesson 14

No Condemnation In Christ. Romans 8.1-17

" You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you..."

Romans 8.9

Our Need For A New Spirit

The importance of man being a spiritual being reaches back to the Creation account. In Genesis 1's abbreviated account of man's creation we see that man was created in God's own image (vs. 27), but in the fuller account of chapter 2 we see just how man was made in His image: " then the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature" (vs. 7). God, who is Spirit (John 4:24) breathed spirit into man. Being created in God's image has moral implications, for just as God is holy, righteous, faithful, etc., so was man who was created in His image. Thus, everything God created was "very good" (Gen. 1:31). Yet, as we know man did not remain very good. Because of his sin, unholy man was separated from holy God. The very nature of God's creation had changed!

We have noted this horrific change in our study of Romans. The gospel is needed because "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God," (3.23). The glory of God is His very nature that we have failed to uphold and emulate. Just like the first man, Adam, we were once created in His very image, but we have come to be defined by sin and death, we have all become part of the epoch of Adam, "just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned." (5.12) We, each of us, needed a new spirit. Significantly, God promised that His people would be given a new spirit; His Spirit! "Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances," (Ezekiel 36:25-27).

At the close of chapter 7 Paul lamented on his failures to keep God's will while he belonged to Adam's age (i.e. before he was a Christian). "I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? " (7.23-24). The answer was/is Christ. Chapter 8 expounds on that answer showing the complete transformation that occurs in Christ, including the new spirit that God had promised through Ezekiel. The age of Adam is over for the Christian. Everything has changed.

No Condemnation For Those In Christ Jesus (vss. 1-11)

Romans 8:1-11 (ESV)

1There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.
2For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.
3For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh,
4in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.
5For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit.
6For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace.
7For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot.
8Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.
9You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.
10But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness.
11If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.

The epoch of Adam was one of condemnation. Condemnation because all were guilty of sin. Condemnation because none kept God's Law. Condemnation because all were deserving of death (Romans 3.23; 5.18; 6.23). It was the condemnation Paul experienced under the Law while governed by his flesh. So, he exclaimed, "Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?" (Romans 7.24). Thankfully, in Christ everything has changed. So, Paul could exultantly proclaim that "there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." (8.1) The passage goes on to show why this statement is true.

1. There's a new dominant principle (law) in our lives (vs. 2). Many question what the two "laws" are in this passage, but the best option would be to take up what Paul described in 7.22-25 where there was the "law" of Paul's mind that wanted to serve God, but the "law" of sin in Paul's flesh prevented that and won. But in Christ, everything has changed. So, "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" refers to the Christian's ability to finally follow the Law of God, i.e. the law of my mind finally wins, while the "law of sin and of death" refers to the former reality of being unable to follow God, to succumbing to the flesh time and again.

2. Jesus has fulfilled the righteous requirement of the Law (vss. 3-4). Paul gives all credit to God, but says that God freed us from condemnation not through the Law (recall Romans 5.20-21; 7.7-12), but through Jesus. His perfect life in the flesh and His death condemned sin! What man could not do, even with the Law of God, God did through His Son! The result is that "the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us." God's Law was something

that was to be kept (2.13), something Paul desired to keep, but failed to keep (7.22-25). But now because Christ's death "condemned sin in the flesh" (vs. 3), it is now possible to walk according to the Spirit and not according to the flesh.

3. We now walk according to the Spirit and not according to the flesh (vss. 5-8). We can now do what was not possible before: we can walk according to the Spirit and not the flesh. Remember, this was the struggle Paul said he had, and even though he delighted "in the law of God, in my inner being" (7.22), he still found himself "captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members" (7.23). But because of Christ has done it is now possible to walk "according to the Spirit." Note, this is done with the full agency of man; man must set his mind on the Spirit and not on the flesh. Only when man sets his mind on the Spirit can he find life and peace. But wasn't that what Paul said he tried to do, yet he failed? Yes, but something occurs in Christ that changes everything...

4. God's Spirit not dwells within us (vss. 9-11). This is what makes the difference; we aren't in the flesh but in the Spirit. Yes, we still have human bodies, but we aren't dominated by the flesh anymore and that's because we now have the Spirit of God dwelling in us! Note a few things about this wonderful passage:

- » The terms "Spirit", "Spirit of God" and "Spirit of Christ" are used interchangeably (as is "Christ is in you"). To have one is to have them all!
- » This is the fulfillment of God's promise in Ezekiel 36.25-27, the reality proclaimed by Jesus (John 3.5) and the apostles (Acts 2.38).
- » I do not believe this is teaching that we receive God's Spirit that will dwell alongside our spirit, but rather that we are once again in God's image with a spirit like His (Genesis 1.27; 2.7).
- » But won't we make the same mistake as Adam, and thus find ourselves condemned? Yes, we will make mistakes, sin is still a problem. But the difference is Christ! He "condemned sin in the flesh" (vs. 3) and we are saved by His life (Romans 5.10). We are in Him if we have God's Spirit, and in Him is life!
- » Note: I take the phrase "the body is dead because of sin" to speak to the reality of our physical bodies dying, also the result of sin. We may have new Spirits, but our bodies still die. Yet, vs. 11 shows that our mortal bodies will also have life! Truly, there is no condemnation!

Application: we are debtors to live by the Spirit and not by the flesh (vss. 12-17)

Romans 8:12-17 (ESV)

12So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh.

13For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

14For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.

15For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the

Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!”

16The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,

17and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.

Recall that in Romans 6.16-19 Paul stated that we are all slaves of one of two masters: either of sin or of God. Paul returns to that idea in Romans 8.12-13 by saying we are “debtors, not to the flesh” but to the Spirit. The fact that in Christ, with His Spirit, we find ourselves free from condemnation is what makes us debtors to the Spirit! Note again that this involves the full agency of man (see Romans 6.19; 8.5-6), we must “live by the Spirit” and be “led by the Spirit of God”.

Furthermore, we have a new relationship with God; He’s now our Father! (vss. 15-17) Those who are still characterized by the flesh have a relationship with God based on fear. He is their Creator, but nothing more. He is the One who will judge them, who’s wrath they will experience. But in Christ, everything has changed. Our relationship is that of adopted sons, those who can approach God as their Father. We can do this because of the working of His Spirit along with our spirit (again the idea that our spirit is being transformed in the likeness of His Spirit. The family resemblance, if you will). Now, instead of fearing wrath and condemnation, we have become fellow heirs with Christ. This will necessarily involve suffering (the world has always hated God and will hate those who belong to Him), but the pattern of suffering and glory that occurred in Christ will also occur in us, the focus of our next lesson.



Lesson 15

Suffering In Perspective.

Romans 8.18-39

“...the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.”

Romans 8.18

In our study of Romans 8.1-17 we focused on the fact that in Christ, everything has changed. Whereas our lives were once typified by sin and condemnation (see 5.18), “there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus,” (8.1). Yet, Paul concluded this thought with a word about suffering, that we are heirs “provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him” (8.17). For many, suffering is associated with condemnation, but Paul has associated it with sonship. How can that be? How could God’s sons, His heirs, be made to suffer? Paul puts this into perspective in the following verses.

Suffering Contrasted With Glory (vss. 18-25)

Romans 8:18–25 (ESV)

18For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

19For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God.

20For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope

21that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.

22For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now.

23And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.

24For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees?

25But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

1. Suffering causes us to focus on the now. When we are in pain (whether physical or emotional) we have a hard time looking past the moment, seeing that something better is on the horizon. Paul knew that to be true, so if suffering is a part of sonship that could pose problems for weak brethren. But, if they would only look beyond the moment, then their present suffering wouldn’t seem so bad. “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us,” (vs. 18)
2. The next few verses detail what Paul meant by the “glory that is to be revealed to us.” Interestingly, Paul begins this discussion by talking about the future glory of the creation. “For

the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God.” There is much debate over what is meant by “creation”, but the most natural reading is that Paul means this world. Once again, Paul harkens back to the Creation account. God described everything He created as “very good,” (Gen 1.31), yet on account of Adam’s sin the creation was cursed (Gen 3.17). Note: I take the cursing of creation to be the consequence of the creation being separated from its Creator, which was necessitated by man’s sin. So, God didn’t change or corrupt the earth as punishment, rather since man’s punishment was separation from God, the earth suffered as well. So, Paul says “the creation was subjected to futility,” (vs. 20) that is it could not serve its intended purpose. But, it awaits “the revealing of the sons of God,” (vs. 19), the time when it “will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God,” (vs. 21).

3. What the creation is waiting for is “the revealing of the sons of God,” (vs. 19). What this means is further explained in vs. 23, “we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.” The point is this: we are now the sons of God (8.16-17), but there is still a way in which we must be revealed, that our adoption is made complete. This occurs when our body is redeemed, that is when the resurrection occurs. We are saved now, but not yet completely. We are His children now, but not fully. The completion of those things occurs when this body is changed (1Cor. 15.49-57). John speaks in the same way in 1John 3.2, “Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is.” His children now, but we are still waiting for our true revelation, when we will be just like Him!
4. Summing up, Paul is setting our minds on the time when everything is glorified. The sons of God will be glorified, and so will the creation. I admit that this poses some difficulty, especially when viewed in light of 2Peter 3.10-13. However, even that text speaks of our looking for “new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.” I confess that I do not know exactly what this means or this will all work out. But Paul’s point seems to be pretty clear: we await glory, the creation awaits glory. Glory is coming.
5. And that is the essence of hope (vss. 24-25). We do not have it yet, but we expect it. And since we expect it, we can patiently endure the suffering of now. After all, today’s suffering isn’t worth comparing to the glory that awaits! “For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison,” (2 Corinthians 4:17).

The Spirit Working For Us (vss. 26-27)

Romans 8:26-27 (ESV)

26Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.

27And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

1. But we have more than hope, that is the expectation of good in the future. We have the promise that God is aiding us now! “Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness...” (vs. 26).

While “weakness” is not defined, given the context it is likely referring to our current state, a state of suffering even though we are children of God. Compounding this weakness is the fact that “we do not know what to pray for as we ought,” that is we do not know how to fully address our Father when our need is so great. But the Spirit helps in our weakness!

2. Paul doesn't fully explain this, other than to say that “the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words,” (vs. 26). Some say that the Spirit here is not the Holy Spirit, but our spirit. That may be the case, however it seems that the Holy Spirit is in view. Why does He groan? Some conclude that the groanings here are our groanings (vs. 23), others that the term groan conveys feeling and not just the words. Perhaps.
3. This short passage produces many questions, questions that don't have easy answers, but don't miss the forest for the trees! The point is pretty simple: we may suffer now, we may not know how to seek God's aid when we are under such trial, but do not fear! Since we are in the Spirit and the Spirit is in us (the molding of our spirit, see discussion on 8.5-11), we have the assurance that God knows what is on our hearts; the Spirit conveys it to Him!

All Things Work Out For Our Good (vss. 28-30)

Romans 8:28–30 (ESV)

28And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.

29For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

30And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

1. What does it mean that “for those who love God all things work together for good”? Some conclude that this means there's a hidden message in every life event, that every conversation or encounter is part of God's special and specific plan for them. While not diminishing God's providential power, I do not think that is what is under consideration.
2. The theme has been overcoming suffering, specifically the suffering we can expect in Christ. The promise is that those who suffer with Him, will be glorified with Him (vs. 17). This passage seems to expound on that basic idea. Those who love God, are called according to His purpose. This text has no place for fanciful Calvinistic concepts regarding irresistible grace, etc. The point is plain: those who would love God will accept His call, the very gospel that Paul proclaimed (1.16-17). God has predestined that it is these that would be conformed to the image of His Son (of course it is! Who else but those who love God and accept His call could be conformed to His image?). But as we've seen, being conformed to His image involves suffering. But don't worry, it works out for our good, because those who are conformed to His image are justified, and ultimately glorified!

We Overwhelmingly Conquer (vss. 31-39)

Romans 8:31–39 (ESV)

31What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?

32He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?

33Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies.

34Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.

35Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?

36As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered."

37No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

38For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers,

39nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

1. In truth, this section needs little comment. The beauty of the passage should wash over us, strengthen us, cause us to fall to our knees in appreciation for the victory that God assures is ours.
2. Suffering makes us think that everyone is against us. That may be true, but the Christian's perspective goes beyond the moment to eternity. The Christian can truthfully say, "If God is for us, who can be against us?" (vs. 31). Need further proof of this, then look no further than what God has already done for His elect: He gave His Son! (vs. 32).
3. So, we can face every trial with the utmost confidence. We may well experience the ordeal that the Psalmist described in Psalm 44.22, being put to death for His sake, but that suffering will yield to ultimate glory. "in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us." (vs. 37). And if that is the case, nothing can separate us from His love! No wonder that Paul considered that "the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us," (vs. 18).
4. NOTE: we should observe that all of the things mentioned in vss. 35, 38-39 are external factors. None of these things can cause us to be separated from the Love of God in Christ. However, he does not address the inward factors, our own attitude and disposition. Truly, we are the only factor that could cause us to depart from so great a love.



Lesson 16

Election (part 1)

Romans 9.1-13

"not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel."
Romans 9.6

What This Chapter Is Not Teaching...

Tragically, for many of us when we hear the term “election” our minds turn to John Calvin and his doctrine of Unconditional Election. As we will see, Calvin’s doctrine is NOT what Paul was teaching, but given the prevalence of this false teaching and their reliance on this passage we need to briefly discuss the matter. Space will not allow for a thorough examination of Calvin’s theology, but a short primer at this point will suffice. All of Calvin’s theological teachings were based on two erroneous precepts:

1. Skewed notion of God’s sovereignty. While the Scriptures certainly maintain that God is absolutely sovereign, Calvin took it a step further. In Calvin’s mind for God to be sovereign He must be responsible for all things, both good and evil. As one Calvinist says, “Nothing in this world happens by chance. God is in back of everything. He decides and causes all things to happen that do happen. He is not sitting on the sidelines wondering and perhaps fearing what is going to happen next. No, He has foreordained everything ‘after the counsel of his will’ (Eph. 1.11): the moving of a finger, the beating of a heart, the laughter of a girl, the mistake of a typist – even sin.” (Palmer, Edwin H. The Five Points of Calvinism. P. 25)
2. The total depravity of man. “Total depravity means that natural man is never able to do any good that is fundamentally pleasing to God, and, in fact, does evil all the time.” (Palmer 13). Our minds might go to Paul’s words in Romans 7.21-24, but Calvin would take this a step further saying that man could not even believe on his own, thus the necessity of “Irresistible Grace” and a direct operation of the Holy Spirit on a person so that he might believe.

These two preconceptions are the basis for Calvinism, including the doctrine of Unconditional Election. After all, if God is sovereign then He MUST choose who will be saved and who will be lost, and if man is totally depraved he cannot do anything to be saved. Everything must be done by God, man is totally depraved.

Chapter 9 is one of the main texts Calvinists use to prove their doctrine of Unconditional Election. They would say the following:

1. God chose Isaac instead of Ishmael, and Jacob instead of Esau. (vss. 6-13) This proves that God elects some to salvation and others to condemnation. After all, “Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.”
2. God has mercy on whom He desires, and hardens whom He desires (vss. 14-18). Moses serves as an example of one who received God’s mercy, Pharaoh as one who was hardened by God.
3. Man has no right to question God (vss. 19-22). He is sovereign, He is the potter. We are but

the clay and have no right to question God's fairness in electing some to be vessels of mercy and some as vessels of wrath.

Before we move on to what Paul actually says in Romans 9, let's briefly show why Calvin's concept of election is rubbish.

1. It completely ignores the Jew/Gentile context of Romans. (vss. 23-24) Paul was not addressing how specific individuals were elected to salvation, but of how GROUPS were chosen to salvation. This discussion was necessary because so many of Paul's Jewish kinsmen (God's chosen people) had rejected Christ while the Gentiles were obeying the gospel.
2. It ignores the condition that is clearly laid out in the text: faith. The Gentiles were being accepted because they pursued the righteousness that is by faith, while the Jews did not pursue righteousness by faith, but by works of the Law (vss. 30-33)

Election is an important concept, but unfortunately false teaching has corrupted the thinking of many. God elected that those who put their faith in Christ would be saved; they would comprise the spiritual Israel (vs. 6). But what did this mean for national Israel? That's the issue Paul addresses in this section.

What This Chapter Is Teaching

Romans 9:1–5 (ESV)

1I am speaking the truth in Christ—I am not lying; my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit—

2that I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart.

3For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kinsmen according to the flesh.

4They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises.

5To them belong the patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ, who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen.

Chapter 8 speaks of triumph! In Christ there is no condemnation (Romans 8.1) and present sufferings are nothing when compared to the glory that awaits (Romans 8.18). But Paul knew that most his kinsmen did not share in this hope because they had rejected Christ. Paul did not glory in this, even though his countrymen persecuted throughout his work (see Acts 14.5,19; 17.5-9,13; etc.). Rather, he had great sorrow for his "kinsmen according to the flesh" (Romans 9.1-5). They were God's chosen people, the people who had been adopted by Him, received His covenant, etc. Yet, they had rejected Christ.

- When Paul says "I could wish" (vs. 3), this word is frequently translated as "pray" (see Acts 27.29; 2Cor. 13.7; James 5.16; 3John 2.) This was more than a wish, but a sincere desire from Paul to his God. It was similar to Moses' request in Exodus 32:32-33. Yet, only the Christ could stand in the place of others (see Galatians 3.13).
- Of particular importance is the final blessing of Israel: "from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ, who is God over all, blessed forever." (vs. 5) This was the purpose for which Israel was chosen, even as God had told Abraham that "in you all families of the

earth will be blessed,” (Gen. 12.3).

- I believe the ESV reading is correct, “Christ, who is God over all...”. Significantly, it was Jesus’ claim to equality with God which resulted in the Jews rejecting Him (see John 5.17-18; 8.58).
- The Jews viewed themselves as God’s chosen people, and with reason (see Exodus 19.4-6). However, they had missed the point of His election, that it was through them the Christ would come. So, in rejecting Christ the chosen people had become lost.
- This opening paragraph is of the utmost importance, because everything that Paul said afterwards is his answering Jewish objections to how God’s chosen people could find themselves in an unsaved condition.

Romans 9:6–13 (ESV)

6But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel,

7and not all are children of Abraham because they are his offspring, but “Through Isaac shall your offspring be named.”

8This means that it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as offspring.

9For this is what the promise said: “About this time next year I will return, and Sarah shall have a son.”

10And not only so, but also when Rebekah had conceived children by one man, our forefather Isaac,

11though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad—in order that God’s purpose of election might continue, not because of works but because of him who calls—

12she was told, “The older will serve the younger.”

13As it is written, “Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.”

Although most of physical Israel had rejected Christ, God had not failed because the true, spiritual Israel was not comprised of only physical Israelites (Romans 9.6-13). Recall that the true Jew was defined in Romans 2.28-29. Paul’s point in this passage was that simply being of physical descent from Israel, from Abraham, did not qualify one to be part of the Spiritual Israel. Not all from physical Israel were part of spiritual Israel. To bolster his point Paul appealed to the history of the Jewish nation. Ishmael was Abraham’s first son, but his heir was Isaac, the son of Promise (Romans 9.7-9). Likewise, Rebekah gave birth to two sons, but God chose Jacob instead of Esau (Romans 9.10-13). Paul’s point was that just as God had the right to choose who would comprise the promised nation, He now has the right to choose who is a part of the spiritual nation.

A note about vs. 13. The quotation is from Malachi 1.2-3 and was spoken ~1500 years after Jacob and Esau were alive. The quotation referenced the two nations that descended from Jacob and Esau: Israel and Edom. God’s “hated” of Edom was due to their actions, as was

evident throughout the prophets (see Jeremiah 49.7-22; Ezekiel 35.1-15; Obadiah; etc.). God's "love" of Israel was due to their standing as His chosen nation, the nation from whom the Messiah would come. This passage is NOT referencing God choosing Jacob (the man) to salvation and Esau (the man) to condemnation, as a Calvinist would assert. Rather, Paul was reminding his kinsmen that God choosing Israel as His special people was based on His grace, not Israel's merit.



Lesson 17

Election (part 2)

Romans 9.14-33

**"even us whom he has called,
not from the **Jews** only but
also from the **Gentiles**?"**

Romans 9.24

Paul began this section by describing his “great sorrow and unceasing anguish” over the fact that his kinsmen, physical Israel, had rejected Christ (9.2). Significantly, Paul returns to the feelings in his heart at the beginning of chapter 10: “my heart’s desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved” (Romans 10.1). I believe that in chapter 10 Paul resumes discussing the main point he had begun in Romans 9.1-5, leaving Romans 9.6-33 as an excursus and not the main point of his argument. However, the excursus was necessary to answer the objections of Paul’s kinsmen, to impress upon them that without accepting Christ all of their other advantages and their calling as God’s covenant people under Moses, meant nothing. This was where we left off in part 1 as Paul reminded his brethren that God had chosen Isaac and Jacob by His grace, and not because of any deficiency in Ishmael or Esau. In other words, Israel had not deserved God’s choosing them, but He had chosen them for a purpose. Thus, physical Israel could not object to the fact that God had determined that the real Israel (vs. 6) would be comprised of both Jew and Gentile; He had chosen those who would come to Him in faith!

God is not unjust in how He chooses those who serve Him (Vss. 14-18)

Romans 9:14–18 (ESV)

14What shall we say then? Is there injustice on God’s part? By no means!

15For he says to Moses, “I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.”

16So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy.

17For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, “For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I might show my power in you, and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth.”

18So then he has mercy on whomever he wills, and he hardens whomever he wills.

But how could God choose Israel to serve Him (by bringing the Christ into the world) and not save them? That seems to be the objection that Paul was addressing in this section (Romans 9.14-18), and once again the apostle used examples out of Israel’s past to bolster his argument.

The first example is a quotation from Exodus 33.19. This was part of the pronouncement God had made to Moses as He passed by, but the overall context is of God’s mercy to Israel, who had just made the golden calf in Exodus 32. God could have justly destroyed Israel, but He was merciful to them. Paul’s point in using this quote was to show Israel that God had mercy on

the undeserving when it served His purpose.

The second example is that of Pharaoh. God used Pharaoh as the means by which He would demonstrate His power. While He extended mercy to Israel in order to accomplish His purpose, He hardened Pharaoh. Pharaoh was not saved, but he was used to fulfill the purposes of God. It would be a striking point to the Jews, that if God could use Pharaoh and not be saved, He could also use national Israel to accomplish His purposes without saving them! Note: the Scriptures attributed Pharaoh's hardened heart to God and to Pharaoh (Exodus 8.15,32). As Robert Turner rightly observed, "God hardened Pharaoh's heart by demanding something his stubborn heard did not want to do."

This passage does not consider the salvation of individuals, but God's right and ability to use whomever He chooses and to extend mercy. Israel received mercy even though they did not deserve it. Pharaoh was hardened and it was deserved. Israel, God's chosen people, could not call God unjust for using them in His service but not saving them when they rejected the Christ.

God had used Israel to bring about the salvation of both Jew and Gentile (vss. 19-29)

Romans 9:19–29 (ESV)

19You will say to me then, "Why does he still find fault? For who can resist his will?"

20But who are you, O man, to answer back to God? Will what is molded say to its molder, "Why have you made me like this?"

21Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for dishonorable use?

22What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction,

23in order to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory—

24even us whom he has called, not from the Jews only but also from the Gentiles?

25As indeed he says in Hosea, "Those who were not my people I will call 'my people,' and her who was not beloved I will call 'beloved.' "

26" And in the very place where it was said to them, 'You are not my people,' there they will be called 'sons of the living God.' "

27And Isaiah cries out concerning Israel: "Though the number of the sons of Israel be as the sand of the sea, only a remnant of them will be saved,

28for the Lord will carry out his sentence upon the earth fully and without delay."

29And as Isaiah predicted, "If the Lord of hosts had not left us offspring, we would have been like Sodom and become like Gomorrah."

You can imagine Paul's Jewish objector asking, "Why does He still find fault? For who can resist His will?" If God uses people in His service in whatever way He chooses (as He did

with Pharaoh and with Israel), why would God find fault with those vessels of service? Vss. 20-21 are verses quickly recited by a Calvinist whenever the question comes as to why God would elect some, but not others. Doesn't that make God unfair? Doesn't He desire to save everyone (2Peter 3.9)? Their response is that we (the clay) have no right to question the potter. While Paul used those words, he did not apply them to the idea of unconditional election. Rather they were used in reference to how God used Israel to bring about His will.

Vessels of mercy and vessels of wrath are mentioned in vss. 22-23. Again, a Calvinist would apply this to individuals: vessels of mercy being those whom God elected to salvation, vessels of wrath being those condemned to Hell. But, allow Paul to define them and we see that Paul was not considering individuals, but groups. The vessels of mercy are clearly defined in vs. 24 as those who were called from among the Jews AND the Gentiles. Paul's quotation of OT prophets to show that the Gentiles were to be incorporated into the true, spiritual Israel bolsters the point that the Gentiles were always a part of God's plan of salvation. So, the vessels of mercy are not individuals that God chose, but the fact that God's chosen people would be from among the Jews and the Gentiles. So, it seems evident that the vessels of wrath under consideration were the members of physical, nation Israel, the very kinsmen that Paul lamented in vss. 1-5. God relented from destroying these vessels of wrath, knowing that through their service the vessels of mercy would come about. But since Israel had by-in-large rejected the Christ, only a remnant would be saved (vss. 27-29)

Spiritual Israel pursues righteousness by faith (vss. 30-33)

Romans 9:30-33 (ESV)

30What shall we say, then? That Gentiles who did not pursue righteousness have attained it, that is, a righteousness that is by faith;

31but that Israel who pursued a law that would lead to righteousness did not succeed in reaching that law.

32Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as if it were based on works. They have stumbled over the stumbling stone,

33as it is written, "Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense; and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame."

Recall Paul's point in vs. 6, that not all members of physical Israel are members of spiritual Israel. This passage shows why: Israel had pursued righteousness by works (reliance on OT covenant, Moses, circumcision, etc.) Spiritual Israel comprised of Jews and Gentiles pursued righteousness by faith in Christ.

Paul went on to show in chapter 10 how Israel could have faith, but he had now answered the charge of his Jewish objectors. Israel, God's chosen nation, had served the purpose of God by bringing about the Christ. They had served God's purpose in spite of the fact that Israel had been a wicked people deserving of destruction. Now, Christ had come. If they would have faith in Him they would be saved, if they did not then they had stumbled over the stone even as Isaiah had prophesied.

Thus, Paul's doctrine of election in this passage has nothing to do with God choosing which individuals would be saved, but how God could choose Israel to serve Him, yet not save them. They could be saved, but only if they would have faith in Christ.



Lesson 18

The Word of Faith

Romans 10

"The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart" (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim)"

Romans 10.8

It is important to remember that chapter 10 falls in a section where Paul is lamenting the fact that his Jewish kinsmen had mostly rejected the gospel. This is the topic of Romans 9, 10 & 11 (remember, Paul didn't write the letter in chapters). It's little surprise that Paul spends so much time on the lost condition of his kinsmen, since some were accusing Paul of being anti-Jew (see Acts 21.21). Paul's proclamation of the gospel fueled this misunderstanding since the gospel declared that justification could only come through faith in Christ and not through the Law, circumcision and physical descent from Abraham. Paul was not antagonistic to the Jews, he sorrowed over their rejection of Christ (9.1-3), but the fact that they pursued a righteousness of works rather than the righteousness of faith meant that they had stumbled (9.30-33).

As always, the broader context is essential to understanding the points made in individual verses and passages. Chapter 9 dealt at length with God's election, but it does not teach the individual / personal election professed by Calvin and others. Rather, just as Israel had been elected to serve God and bring about the Christ, now the elect are those who pursue the righteousness of faith. Context is key. Chapter 10 is best known for what Paul says about how one can be saved in vss. 9-11. Was Paul saying that sins are forgiven as soon as one believes something in his heart and professes Christ's name? Many say that's what these verses teach, but when the context is taken into account we will see that it's not so simple.

How Israel Went Wrong (Vss. 1-4)

Romans 9:1-4 (ESV)

1I am speaking the truth in Christ—I am not lying; my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit—

2that I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart.

3For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kinsmen according to the flesh.

4They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises.

1. The opening verse of chapter 10 echoes the opening of chapter 9. There, Paul expressed his sorrow over Israel's lost condition, here he said, "my heart's desire and my prayer to God for them is that they may be saved."
2. But, why was Israel lost? It wasn't for a lack of zeal (vs. 2). They had zeal in abundance, but their zeal lacked knowledge... knowledge of Christ. As we will see, this knowledge was available, but it had not been accepted. Paul could sympathize with their plight as his earlier life

could also be summed up as being zealous for God without knowledge (cf. Gal. 1.14; Phil. 3.4-6).

3. Vss. 3-4 echo some of Paul's points from chapter 9. Israel was a blessed nation, but it's greatest blessing was how God used them to bring about the Christ (9.4-5). Christ "is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes," (10.4), but the Jews had failed to see this. They continued pursuing the righteousness of the Law. For them, the Law was the end of righteousness, not the means to the end: Christ. This is how they stumbled over Christ (9.32-33).

The Righteousness of Faith (Vss. 5-13)

Romans 10:5-13 (ESV)

5For Moses writes about the righteousness that is based on the law, that the person who does the commandments shall live by them.

6But the righteousness based on faith says, "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?' " (that is, to bring Christ down)

7"or 'Who will descend into the abyss?' " (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead).

8But what does it say? "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart" (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim);

9because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

10For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.

11For the Scripture says, "Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame."

12For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him.

13For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

1. Righteousness cannot be based on the Law (vs. 5). Paul referenced Moses' statement in Lev. 18.5 that "if a person does them, he shall live by them." Paul had already stated that "it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified" (Romans 2.13). The problem was that no one kept the Law! (see Romans 3.9-23).

2. Righteousness is based on faith... faith in Christ! (vss. 6-8). In this section Paul made use of a quotation from Deut. 30.11-14. The point of the original quotation was that Israel had what they needed to be righteous; the Law was not hidden from them, it was theirs. They just needed to keep the Law. It's appropriate that Paul used the quotation in reference to Christ, because true righteousness could only come through Him. They did not have to ascend to heaven to bring Christ down (He had already come!). They did not have to descend into the abyss to bring Christ up (He had already been raised!). No, the word of faith was near to them! They just needed to believe in Him...

3. If they would believe in Christ and confess Him, they would be saved (vss. 9-13). Now we arrive at a passage that generates much controversy and discussion. Is salvation simply a matter of believing in the heart and uttering a confession? Again, consider the context. Paul had been lamenting the lost condition of his Jewish kinsmen. They were lost because they rejected Christ, namely Christ as their Lord. They could only be saved if they would believe in their hearts that Jesus was raised from the dead by God (proof of His Lordship, see Acts 2.32-36) and confess His Lordship with their mouths. The Jews weren't stumbling over baptism, they were stumbling over the Lordship of Jesus! Put it another way, if they would acknowledge and submit to His Lordship, baptism wouldn't be an issue... they would be baptized once they understood it was something that their Lord required of them. Paul had already made the case for baptism in Romans 6.1-11, to say that he rejected baptism in this passage is ludicrous.

Why Israel Had Not Believed (Vss. 14-21)

Romans 10:14-21 (ESV)

14 How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching?

15 And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!"

16 But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?"

17 So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.

18 But I ask, have they not heard? Indeed they have, for "Their voice has gone out to all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world."

19 But I ask, did Israel not understand? First Moses says, "I will make you jealous of those who are not a nation; with a foolish nation I will make you angry."

20 Then Isaiah is so bold as to say, "I have been found by those who did not seek me; I have shown myself to those who did not ask for me."

21 But of Israel he says, "All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and contrary people."

1. They needed the word proclaimed to them (vss. 14-15). To have faith in Christ, one must hear of Christ. To hear of Christ, Christ must be preached. The message of Christ has been entrusted to men, i.e. preachers. (Not an official title, but anyone who would herald the message of Christ). Paul's statement regarding their beautiful feet (quoting Isaiah 52.7) is interesting when the dangerous and difficult roads of his day are considered. Many went through great peril to proclaim the gospel (consider Paul's persecutions in 2Cor. 11).

2. They needed to heed the word (vss. 16-17). Faith does come by hearing, but for faith to be produced, the message must be heeded. The preacher can proclaim the message, but he cannot make the audience heed it!

3. Israel had no excuse (vss. 18-21). They had heard the message, but they would not heed it. They could not blame anyone but themselves for their rejection. God was not responsible for their rejection, even though He knew it would occur as was revealed in the prophets (cf. Isaiah 65.1-2). The Jews' rejection and the Gentiles' acceptance is considered further in chapter 11.

A Note About The "5 Steps Of Salvation"

"How can one be saved?" "He needs to hear, believe, repent, confess & be baptized!" We refer to this as the 5 Steps of Salvation. They aren't called that in Scripture, but we've adopted that name since each is required for salvation in the NT. It's not unBiblical to talk about the 5 Steps, but I don't believe it's the most Biblical way to describe man's role in salvation. A weakness I see in the 5 Steps approach is the arguments that arise over passages such as Romans 10.9-10 and Ephesians 2.8-9. Those passages don't mention repentance or baptism as necessary to salvation, so if the 5 Steps is what God said we must do to be saved, why aren't all 5 found in every passage? This is why I think it better to describe how one is saved in the following way:

- » Someone hears the Word (the message about Jesus and about His commands).
- » They put their trust in Him (faith)
- » Once they put their absolute trust in Him, they will do whatever He says they should do (including confessing His name, repenting of sins and being baptized to have those sins forgiven).

This approach emphasizes faith (because the NT emphasizes faith) while showing that everything God says we should do is part of our salvation.



Lesson 19

In This Way All Israel Will Be Saved (part 1)

Romans 11.1-16

"a partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And in this way all Israel will be saved"

Romans 11.25-26

Paul may have had great sorry for his Jewish kinsmen (9.1-3) and prayed to God for their salvation (10.1), but things were not looking good for most of them. They were lost, but their condition was their own doing and blame could not be lain at the feet of God. They may have been God's elect people, but they had pursued a righteousness of works rather than the righteousness of faith (9.30-32). They had heard the message of Christ, but had remained disobedient and obstinate (10.17-21).

Was that it? Had God rejected His people? That's the issue Paul dealt with in this chapter. The surprising answer is found in vs. 26, "and in this way all Israel will be saved." What did Paul mean by this? Some, including most premillennialists, assert that before the end of time (or in conjunction with the end of time), all of fleshly Israel will be saved. This verse is used as a primary proof text of their position. But, is that what Paul was saying? He had already stated that a remnant was what would be saved (9.27) and he made the same case for a remnant of Israel in the opening verses of chapter 11. Furthermore, Paul had stated in 9.6-7 that, "not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel, and not all are children of Abraham because they are his offspring". Finally, remember that the true Israel is comprised of those who are circumcised in the heart (2.28-29).

What this passage does is expound on how God's great promise to Abraham was fulfilled. You'll recall that God promised, "in you all the families of the earth will be blessed," (Gen. 12.3). Paul stated in Eph. 3.4-6 that the "mystery" was how the Gentiles could become "fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel." In Romans 11 Paul elaborated on how this occurred, showing how remarkable and improbable God's plan was! This was how all Israel would be saved!

The Remnant Of Grace (Vss. 1-6)

Romans 11:1-6 (ESV)

1I ask, then, has God rejected his people? By no means! For I myself am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, a member of the tribe of Benjamin.

2God has not rejected his people whom he foreknew. Do you not know what the Scripture says of Elijah, how he appeals to God against Israel?

3"Lord, they have killed your prophets, they have demolished your altars, and I alone am left, and they seek my life."

4But what is God's reply to him? "I have kept for myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal."

5So too at the present time there is a remnant, chosen by grace.

6But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise grace would no longer be grace.

1. The outlook for Israel was pretty bleak. The chosen descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob had missed out on God's righteousness as they tried to establish their own (see Romans 9.30-32; 10.3-4) and even though the gospel message still had the power to save (Romans 10.8-13) Israel was still disobedient (Romans 10.21). So, had God rejected His people? Of course not! Paul was living proof that some Jews (a remnant) had accepted the gospel message and put their faith in Christ.
2. Paul will speak of God's "people whom he foreknew" (vs. 2) those "chosen" (vs. 5) and "the elect" (vs. 7). I believe each refers to the remnant which Paul referenced in Romans 9.27. "To say that God "foreknew" his people Israel means that even before he singled them out for a central role in his redemptive plan, he knew in advance the kind of people they would be all along the historical path to the Messiah and beyond. Nothing about them—their weaknesses, their failures, their unbelief, their idolatries—took him by surprise. He foreknew all these things and chose them anyway, because he also foreknew that there would always be a faithful remnant who would turn to him with believing hearts, who would keep the messianic hope alive, and who would turn to the Messiah when he came." (Jack Cottrell, College Press Commentary)
3. Paul's quotation from 1Kings 19 in vss. 2-4 expounds on the idea of a remnant. In the days of Elijah, the vast majority of Israel had turned to Baal, but a remnant of 7000 remained true to Jehovah God. So, while the vast majority of Jews had rejected Christ, there was still a remnant of grace who believed in Him.
4. Unfortunately, vs. 5 is used by many as a proof-text for Calvin's doctrine of unconditional election. In their minds the remnant being chosen by grace is God choosing them unconditionally. But this interpretation makes a mockery of the context. Throughout Paul's letter to the Romans he had described the gospel of faith in Jesus as a matter of "grace" (see Romans 3.24; 5.2, 20-22; etc.) Paul's point was that even then, there were some of his kinsmen who put their faith in Christ; there was a remnant of grace among physical Israel. But what about the rest of Paul's kinsmen?

Israel's Hardening (Vss. 7-10)

Romans 11:7-10 (ESV)

7What then? Israel failed to obtain what it was seeking. The elect obtained it, but the rest were hardened,

8as it is written, "God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes that would not see and ears that would not hear, down to this very day."

9And David says, "Let their table become a snare and a trap, a stumbling block and a retribution for them;

10let their eyes be darkened so that they cannot see, and bend their backs forever."

1. The elect remnant (i.e. those who put their faith in Christ) had found God's grace. But what

of the rest? They were hardened. This is not a new thought as Paul had already spoken of God hardening various people in chapter 9:

- » God hardened Pharaoh by commanding him to do something that the “god of the Egyptians” would not do (Romans 9.17-18).
- » Likewise, Israel stumbled over the stumbling stone of Christ (Romans 9.32-33), likely in reference to the deity of Jesus (see Romans 9.5).

2. Just as Pharaoh was not excused for his hardening, neither was Israel. The works of Jesus should have convinced the Jews that He is the Son of God (see John 5.36), yet they would not believe that a man could be divine. However, while God was not to blame for their hardening, God had a purpose for Israel’s hardening. That is Paul’s point in this passage. Paul uses OT quotations from Isaiah 29.10 and Psalm 69.22-23 to bolster his point (note that Isaiah 29.13 also shows Israel’s blame in the matter).

3. Cottrell has some good thoughts on the idea of Israel being hardened: “The following facts concerning this hardening will emerge in the course of Paul’s argument, but may profitably be summed up before we go any further. (1) Whatever the nature of this hardening, it is not the cause of anyone’s unbelief. The only ones hardened are those who have already rejected God’s righteousness in Christ. (2) Whatever the nature of the hardening, it is not irrevocable and final. Those hardened are still able to come to faith, as the next point indicates. (3) God’s purpose for this hardening is to use it as a means of converting many Gentiles, which in turn will be a means of converting many of the hardened Jews themselves. Thus paradoxically the ultimate goal and result of the hardening is the salvation of those who are hardened! The sequence of events is as follows: the bulk of the Jews reject the gospel; they are hardened; as a consequence Gentiles are saved; as a consequence of this, many of the hardened Jews are made jealous and are saved; and as a consequence of this, even more Gentiles are saved!”

The Results Of Israel’s Hardening (Vss. 11-16)

Romans 11:11-16 (ESV)

11So I ask, did they stumble in order that they might fall? By no means! Rather, through their trespass salvation has come to the Gentiles, so as to make Israel jealous.

12Now if their trespass means riches for the world, and if their failure means riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their full inclusion mean!

13Now I am speaking to you Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry

14in order somehow to make my fellow Jews jealous, and thus save some of them.

15For if their rejection means the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance mean but life from the dead?

16If the dough offered as firstfruits is holy, so is the whole lump, and if the root is holy, so are the branches.

1. This section begins with another question: “did they stumble in order that they might fall?” Israel had stumbled in rejecting Christ, but was this permanent? Could they no longer be

saved? Absolutely not! They could be saved and Paul revealed how all was working according to God's wondrous plans.

2. Paul's basic argument in this text is simple: the Jews' rejection of Christ had opened the way of righteousness to the Gentiles (It's probable that Christ's crucifixion is in view here). Since the Gentiles were being saved, the Jews might be moved to jealousy (i.e. longing for the relationship with God that the Gentiles enjoyed) and would thus be saved.

3. A few notes on the text:

- » Paul speaks "full inclusion" of the Jews in vs. 12. (I believe this is a bad translation in the ESV. "Fulfillment" in the NASB or "fullness" in the NKJV is better). This is used as proof by some that all Jews will ultimately be saved. But one will note that the same term (fullness) is used of the Gentiles in vs. 25. Paul's point was that the salvation of the Jewish remnant is a part of God's plan. Paul goes on to say that the Gentiles inclusion would "thus save some of them" (vs. 14), so he was not saying all of Physical Israel would be saved.
- » Paul speaks of the first piece of dough and the root being holy in vs. 16, but he does not define it. It seems most likely that Paul has Abraham in mind, specifically the promise that was made to him (note vs. 28 where Paul says the Jewish people are still beloved "for the sake of the fathers"). Paul's point seems to be that what began as holy (national Israel's patriarchs) had not become unholy. However, what Paul would go on to show is that the "whole lump" and "branches" no longer refer only to Jews, but to Gentiles as well.



Lesson 20

In This Way All Israel Will Be Saved (part 2)

Romans 11.17-36

"a partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And in this way all Israel will be saved"

Romans 11.25-26

“Remnant” was a familiar concept to Paul and his kinsmen, one taken from their history. When Israel entered into a covenant with the Lord, He had laid out a series of blessings which would result from their faithfulness and curses which would result from their unfaithfulness, the last of which was captivity in a foreign land (Deuteronomy 28.64-68). However, the Lord also promised that when the people returned their hearts to Him, He would return them to the promised land (Deuteronomy 30.1-3). Those who would return would constitute the remnant (see Isaiah 10.20-22; Jeremiah 50.17-20; etc.). Israel would violate her covenant with the Lord and would go into captivity (the northern kingdom in 720 B.C., the southern in three waves from 605-586 B.C.). But God was true to His word and a remnant returned: “But now for a brief moment favor has been shown by the LORD our God, to leave us a remnant and to give us a secure hold within his holy place, that our God may brighten our eyes and grant us a little reviving in our slavery.” (Ezra 9.8 ESV, circa 457 B.C.).

However, the true fulfillment of the “remnant” wasn’t in the return of physical Israel to the promised land, but the salvation of a remnant in Christ (Romans 9.27; 11.5). Even though it was prophesied that most of Israel would be lost and only a remnant would be saved, it was still a tough pill for Paul (and his kinsmen) to swallow. Also, Paul knew that hope remained that more of his kinsmen would put their faith in Christ and be saved. After all, the “remnant, chosen by grace” was not a predetermined number of individuals, but includes all who will truly believe in Jesus (Romans 10.8-13).

True to the theme of Romans, Paul knew that in Christ the true people of God were now comprised of both Jew and Gentile. So while in this section Paul’s main concern is over his physical kinsmen, he also emphasized that the true Israel was comprised of both Jews and Gentiles. He knew that “all Israel will be saved” (Romans 11.26).

The kindness and severity of God (vss. 17-24)

Romans 11:17-24 (ESV)

17But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, although a wild olive shoot, were grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing root of the olive tree,
18do not be arrogant toward the branches. If you are, remember it is not you who support the root, but the root that supports you.
19Then you will say, “Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in.”
20That is true. They were broken off because of their unbelief, but you stand fast through faith. So do not become proud, but fear.

21For if God did not spare the natural branches, neither will he spare you.

22Note then the kindness and the severity of God: severity toward those who have fallen, but God's kindness to you, provided you continue in his kindness. Otherwise you too will be cut off.

23And even they, if they do not continue in their unbelief, will be grafted in, for God has the power to graft them in again.

24For if you were cut from what is by nature a wild olive tree, and grafted, contrary to nature, into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these, the natural branches, be grafted back into their own olive tree.

In vss. 11-14 Paul had revealed God's plan for bringing people to Him: Jewish rejection of Christ resulted in the Gentiles accepting the gospel; Gentile acceptance provoked the Jews to jealousy; some of the Jews would be saved. At this point Paul was addressing his Gentile brethren (vs. 13), brethren who may have wondered how the Jews who had so thoroughly rejected the Christ could possibly be brought to faith in Him. Paul pointed them back to the "root" of the Jewish nation, the patriarchs who had faith in the Lord (vs. 16). What had begun as holy had not completely fallen away.

In this passage Paul uses the illustration of a tree representing God's people. The people of God find their origin in Abraham and the Lord's promises to him (Genesis 12.1-3), thus Abraham is the root and physical Israel comprised the original, natural branches. By their rejection of God and Christ, many of the natural branches had been pruned, but the Lord had added to His people from among the Gentiles (the wild olive branches).

Before we look at a couple of doctrinal applications, it's important to note Paul's point of emphasis: arrogance. Paul was concerned that his Gentile brethren would become arrogant toward their Jewish brethren (vss. 18,20). Their arrogance was based on the Jews rejection, but Paul reminded them that not only would God graft any believing Jew back into His people, He would also remove any Gentile who fell away in unbelief. Paul will return to the matter of arrogance in chapters 12-15. It's a lesson we should take to heart, "do not become proud, but fear" (vs. 20).

The tree illustration in vss. 17-24 is an important one because it shows the standard used for branches being grafted in or cut off: faith! Vs. 20 states, "they were broken off because of their unbelief, but you stand fast through faith." Note the implications:

1. Election is not unconditional, but is predicated on faith.
2. Grace is not irresistible, but is received through faith.
3. "Once saved always saved" is patently false. As we've seen in Romans 8, there is great assurance for those in Christ but that assurance is only for those who continue in faith.

Finally, we would do well to "note the kindness and severity of God" (vs. 22). In context, God's kindness had been shown to the Gentiles who were grafted in, while His severity had been shown to the Jews who were broken off. Paul's point was that the nature of God has not changed: He will always be kind to those with faith and severe to those who do not believe. Which we experience, kindness or severity, is completely up to us.

In this way all Israel will be saved (Vss. 25-32)

Romans 11:25-32 (ESV)

25Lest you be wise in your own sight, I do not want you to be unaware of this mystery, brothers: a partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.

26And in this way all Israel will be saved, as it is written, “The Deliverer will come from Zion, he will banish ungodliness from Jacob”;

27“and this will be my covenant with them when I take away their sins.”

28As regards the gospel, they are enemies for your sake. But as regards election, they are beloved for the sake of their forefathers.

29For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.

30For just as you were at one time disobedient to God but now have received mercy because of their disobedience,

31so they too have now been disobedient in order that by the mercy shown to you they also may now receive mercy.

32For God has consigned all to disobedience, that he may have mercy on all.

Paul continued to address the possible arrogance of the Gentiles by warning them to not “be wise in your own sight” (vs. 25). Why? It all has to do with the “mystery”. Elsewhere, Paul defined the mystery as how the Gentiles would become part of God’s people (see Eph. 3.4-6). But in context the mystery involved the partial hardening of the Jews so that the “fullness” of the Gentiles could come in.

Note again that the term used for “fullness” in vs. 25 is the same term translated as “full inclusion” in vs. 12. This allows us to define what is meant by “all Israel” in vs. 26: the “all Israel” that will be saved is the fullness of the Jews (vs. 12) PLUS the fullness of the Gentiles (vs. 26). In other words, the full number of Jews and Gentiles that would place their faith in Christ, who would circumcise their hearts (see Romans 2.28-29; 9.6-7). Paul bolstered his point with quotations from Isaiah 59:20; 27:9. These quotations also argue against some end-time mass conversion of all Jews, because the “Deliverer” isn’t a figure we await, rather is Jesus. Paul wasn’t describing a future event, but what was happening even then.

So, even though it seemed to Gentile Christians that the Jews were their enemies, they should reflect on the fact that it was the Jews’ rejection of Jesus that paved the way for their salvation. Furthermore, the Jews were still loved by God since it was to their fathers (i.e. Abraham) that God made His promises. Those promises would not be revoked (vs. 29), so if any Jew would turn to Christ in faith, he would be saved.

Glory To God! (Vss. 33-36)

Romans 11:33-36 (ESV)

33Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!

34“For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?”

35“Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?”

36For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.

Paul concluded these thoughts, and the major theological section of the letter, with an exclamation of praise and wonder. Who could possibly foresee how God would save not only the Jews, but the Gentiles too? Who could know that the Jews' rejection of Jesus would bring about salvation for the Gentiles? Who could know that the Gentiles coming to God would provoke some of the Jews to reconsider and come back to God? Who would know that this was how “all Israel” would be saved?

The concluding verse is very relevant: “For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be glory forever.” Given the wondrous way that God has revealed His grace to both Jew and Gentile, He is certainly worthy of glory. As we will see in the concluding chapters, that glory is expressed in our actions.



Lesson 21

Living Sacrifices

Romans 12

"I appeal to you therefore... present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God..."

Romans 12.1

We have now reached the practical application section of Paul's letter to the Romans. However, we should note that the practical application only matters because of the theological doctrine found in the first 11 chapters. In other words, all of the instruction for godly living found in this section matters little unless viewed in light of the gospel proclaimed earlier. If God had not saved us through Christ, all the instructions found in this section would do nothing but give us a standard we could not reach. However, given that we can be righteous through faith in Christ (ch. 1-11) we can now offer ourselves to God as living sacrifices (12.1). As Cottrell says, "All doctrine is practical in the sense that it has implications as to how we ought to live; there is nothing more practical than sound theology. Also, all practical or ethical teaching is ultimately grounded in some theological truth such as the nature of God or the nature of man or the nature of salvation."

Furthermore, we should note that this section completes some thoughts found in the earlier theological section. Recall these statements:

- » Romans 1:5 through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations,
- » Romans 6:4 We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.
- » Romans 7:6 But now we are released from the law, having died to that which held us captive, so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit and not in the old way of the written code.

How was their faith to obey? How are we to walk in newness of life? How can we now serve in the newness of the Spirit? Practical ways of doing these is what we will study in this section.

While Paul shifted from theology to practice, he retained the line of thinking of the previous chapters. Recall that in Romans 9-11 Paul was addressing God's plan for his physical kinsmen, while warning his Gentile brethren against being arrogant (see Romans 11.18,20,25). So much of this practical section is aimed at HOW they can refrain from being puffed-up against each other. That is certainly a major theme in chapters 14-15, but note also the admonitions in Romans 12.3,10,16. In a letter that shows God's love for all (both Jew and Gentile), it is natural that Paul would exhort all (both Jew and Gentile) to love each other.

Finally, note throughout this section that commands are given. These are not suggestions, or things that Christians should try to do. No, they are commands. Those who have faith in Christ will aim to obey all that God has revealed in this section. They don't think doing so earns them God's favor, rather they are continuing to mold their spirits after God's Spirit.

Living Sacrifices (12.1-2)

Romans 12:1-2 (ESV)

1I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

2Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

“Therefore” is a key word. It links what’s coming to what’s already occurred. Significantly, chapter 11 concluded with praise and wonder at God’s plan for redeeming both Jew and Gentile. The closing exhortation was, “to Him be the glory forever. Amen.” The practical application that occurs in this section are all part of giving God the glory He deserves (note Romans 11.30-36). “The mercies of God” deserve nothing less than the complete sacrificing of ourselves!

Consider what an anomaly these 1st century Christians were in their society: everyone around them (both Jew and Gentile) offered animal sacrifices to their deities. However, Christians had ceased this cultic practice because Christ was the only sacrifice required (see Hebrews 10.12; etc.). But Paul’s point was that a sacrifice is still required; a complete sacrificing of ourselves. Here again the difference between the various cultic systems of the day and Christians is emphasized: they give of their best to their Gods, but Christians give themselves (see Romans 6.13,22). This is the “rational service” (better rendering than “spiritual worship”) God’s many mercies deserve.

Vs. 2 defines what is meant by “living sacrifice”. True sacrifices to God will not be conformed to this world, but will be transformed as their minds are renewed by what the Spirit has revealed. Furthermore, we see that having our minds renewed isn’t a simple matter of knowing what God says, but “discerning” (or “proving”) that will in our lives through our actions. Note the contrast with Romans 1.28: there we saw that God gave the world over to a “debased mind” which led to all manner of evil conduct. But Christians have had their minds renewed which leads to discerning His will in every area of life.

Sound Judgment Regarding Others... And Self (12.3-8)

Romans 12:3-8 (ESV)

3For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.

4For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function,

5so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.

6Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith;

7if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching;

8the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.

Let's not forget that Paul was dealing with brethren who were tempted to be arrogant toward each other (Romans 11.18,25). These words are aimed directly at them, emphasizing that not only are both Jew and Gentile members of the same body, they are valuable and needed in the body. The exhortation remains relevant as many Christians fall prey to the danger of "comparative religion", i.e. judging their spirituality in comparison to the failings of others. Doing so leads to overvaluing self and dismissing the worth of others. Paul says there is no place for that in the body of Christ.

His first point is that we are all members of the same body, and no two members of a body serve the same function. So differences in ability are to be expected... and appreciated! Paul's point in vs. 6 is significant: "having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us..." Any gift we have is a matter of God's grace. So, there is no room for boasting in front of others. Rather, we should focus on using our gifts, whatever gifts we have, to give glory to the Father by serving the body. After all, we are all "one body in Christ, and individually members one of another" (vs. 5).

"the measure of faith that God has assigned" (vs. 3) is a phrase used by some to claim that we can only have faith if God gives it directly to us (i.e. irresistible grace). However, we've already seen that faith is possible for all through His word (Romans 10.17). "Faith" here likely stands for one's progress in the faith. We will see in Romans 14 that there were real differences in where Jew and Gentiles were in their faith. The point here is to not judge others regarding where they are in the faith.

Genuine Love (12.9-13)

Romans 12:9-13 (ESV)

9Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good.

10Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor.

11Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord.

12Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer.

13Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.

At first it seems that this section doesn't have a common thread, but I think it best to see this entire paragraph as expounding on the concept of "Let love be genuine." It could be that Paul is speaking of their love for each other, but it seems more likely that he is speaking of their love for God (part of the "living sacrifice"), which certainly involves love of others. Simply put, Paul is calling for true love for God, a love seen in real commitment and action. True love for God does the following:

- It hates evil, wants nothing to do with it (vs. 9)
- It hold fast to anything that is good (vs. 9; cf. Phil. 4.8-9)
- It puts the needs of others first (vs. 10-11,13)
- It keeps its focus on God, even in times of trial and distress (vs. 12)

Being At Peace With All (12.14-21)

Romans 12:14–21 (ESV)

14Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them.

15Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep.

16Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight.

17Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all.

18If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.

19Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, “Ven-geance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.”

20To the contrary, “if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head.”

21Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

A variety of personal relationships are pictured in this passage: outside persecutors, brethren, enemies. God has instructions that should govern each and every relationship. The key thought of this section is found in vs. 18, “If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.” Peace depends on two parties, but what God demands of His people is that they strive for peace.

Perhaps the most difficult teaching is found in vss. 19–21, teaching that echoes Jesus’ words in Matthew 5.38–42. Vengeance almost feels natural, but God says that vengeance belongs to Him. Our duty is to mimic His behavior by loving our enemies (see Romans 5.8).



Lesson 22

Navigating This World

Romans 13

"The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light."

Romans 13.12

Chapter 12 began the application portion of Paul's letter to the saints in Rome, and application was needed. After all, if Christians are to have an obedient faith (Romans 1.5) and "walk in newness of life" (Romans 6.4), then some instruction in how to obey and walk is needed. The primary application in chapter 12 seems to be regarding relationships within the church, instruction needed given the temptation for arrogance and pride that arise as different groups are transformed into "one body in Christ, and individually members one of another" (Romans 12.5). However, not all of Paul's instructions have to do with inter-church relationships (see Romans 12.14-21). Paul will return to the relationships among brethren in chapters 14-15, but chapter 13 provides further instruction for how saints can live transformed lives among the world.

The Saint's Responsibility To Government (13.1-7)

Romans 13:1-7 (ESV)

1Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God.

2Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment.

3For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval,

4for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer.

5Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God's wrath but also for the sake of conscience.

6For because of this you also pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing.

7Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed.

This passage has often been abused over the centuries. It has been used to justify persecution by various governments, but more frequently the passage has been ignored. As Douglas Moo opined, "It is only a slight exaggeration to say that the history of the interpretation of Rom. 13:1-7 is the history of attempts to avoid what seems to be its plain meaning." (New International Commentary on the New Testament). This section is difficult for many Christians, particularly as we see our own government move further away from godly principles. What

must be kept in mind is that our submission to government has nothing to do with the merit of our leaders, but with honoring the will of God.

Paul's reason for giving these instructions is unclear, but a few options present themselves:

1. The gospel has redefined the people of God from a physical nation to all those who will put their faith in Christ (whether Jew or Gentile, Romans 1.16-17). That could pose political problem for Paul's Jewish brethren, who had enjoyed sanction of their religion by the Roman authorities. Rome recognized Jerusalem as a "temple city", i.e. a city devoted to a particular deity. As such, Rome would not carry imperial standards into the city and Jews throughout the empire were allowed to worship Jehovah according to the Law. So, what did this mean for God's people who aren't saved by the Law, but through faith in Christ? How would the Roman authorities treat this religion once it was fully established that Christianity wasn't a sect of Judaism?
2. Paul may have been guarding against a misunderstanding of his instruction that they must "not be conformed to this world (or age)". Since governments are of this world/age, then perhaps God's people don't need to heed them?
3. Paul could be preparing them for difficult days. Jewish Christians had already experienced difficulties in the capital during the reign of Claudius (see Acts 18.2). However, when Paul wrote this epistle it was during the early days of Nero's reign. Later in his reign Nero would descend into madness and violently persecute Christians, but the early days of his reign were typified by peace as he heeded the words of his advisor, Seneca. However, trouble was on the horizon, perhaps even alluded to in Romans 13.6-7 as Rome experienced significant unrest over taxes around the same time that Paul penned the letter.

Perhaps none of these are the reason for Paul addressing the matter. Perhaps he was simply aware that all men are prone to resent their rulers. Whatever the reason, we must consider that the New Testament is uniform in its exhortation for God's people to submit to earthly authorities (see Matthew 22.21; 1Peter 2.13-15; Titus 3.1; 1Timothy 2.1-2).

The passage itself is not difficult to understand and has an easy sequence to follow:

1. The command: be subject to the governing authorities (vss. 1a, 5a).
 - » "Paul calls on believers to "submit" to governing authorities rather than to "obey" them; and Paul's choice of words may be important to our interpretation and application of Paul's exhortation. To submit is to recognize one's subordinate place in a hierarchy, to acknowledge as a general rule that certain people or institutions have authority over us... It is this general posture toward government that Paul demands here of Christians. And such a posture will usually demand that we obey what the governing authorities tell us to do. But perhaps our submission to government is compatible with disobedience to government in certain exceptional circumstances. For heading the hierarchy of relations in which Christians find themselves is God; and all subordinate "submissions" must always be measured in relationship to our all-embracing submission to him." (Douglas Moo, NICNT)
 - » A Christian's primary allegiance is to Christ (Rev. 1.5), so if rulers make laws opposed

to His will we must obey Christ (Acts 5.29). However, if it's simply a matter of government making rules we don't like, we must obey and even honor rulers because our King says to do so.

2. The reason: all authority is instituted by God (vss. 1b).

- » This principle is stated in both the OT (Daniel 2.21; 4.17,25,32) and the NT (John 19.11).
- » There's an unstated principle in these words: if God institutes all authorities, then He will also hold those authorities accountable for their actions. Thus, the vengeance principle found in Romans 12.19-21 would apply not only to individuals, but to nations.

3. The consequences: punishment for resistance, approval for doing what is good (vss. 2-4, 5b).

- » The principles found in these verses are general ones. We know of many governments that oppress their people, but the general rule is that governments exist to administer justice among the people. This is the function that God has given them, and why they exist.
- » The Christian has two reasons to submit to the governing authorities (vs. 5b):
 - To avoid God's wrath, which can be given by the designated authorities (vs. 4).
 - Because of conscience, i.e. the saint knows that this is the will of God.

4. Application (vss. 6-7)

- » The issue of taxes may provide insight into the entire reason for Paul addressing the matter. "Those listening to his letter read out in Rome itself would know well enough what that reason was—the abuses, particularly of indirect taxation, which were causing increasing unrest in the capital at that very time. Paul must have been reasonably well informed of current affairs in Rome and would be well aware that Christian merchants and traders associated with the Jewish "superstition" were in a particularly vulnerable situation. Failure of a number of Christians to pay even an inflated tax might draw the authorities' attention to the little congregations and put them at risk. Paul's advice is not entirely clear as to whether he would have his readers pay excessive taxes without protest; but certainly his intention is clear that what the state could levy as a tax, indirect or direct, ought to be paid faithfully." (William Lane, WBC)
- » The wise man gave this instruction to his son: "My son, fear the Lord and the king, and do not join with those who do otherwise, for disaster will arise suddenly from them, and who knows the ruin that will come from them both?" (Proverbs 24.21-22) Paul's instructions amount to the same: we are to give all their "due" because God says we should, not because we want to.

So, what does this mean for a Christian's obligation to his government if that government is wicked and/or abusive to its citizens? I offer the following thoughts:

- » Don't be surprised. We've already been told to expect persecution and that what God has in store for us trumps anything we must endure now (see Romans 8.31-39).
- » Don't take God's prerogative into your own hands. Remember, it is He who establishes all authorities, thus He will judge and hold them responsible. If vengeance is due, He

will repay (see Romans 12.19-21).

- » Remember that the gospel is the most important thing, not our preferences or even our rights. Thus, we should strive to “live peaceably with all” because that provides the greatest opportunity for others to hear the gospel (see 1 Timothy 2.1-7).
- » Be submissive to the government in all things, unless that would entail disobedience to Christ (see Acts 5.29).

The Saint's Responsibility To Society (13.8-10)

Romans 13:8-10 (ESV)

8Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law.

9For the commandments, “You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet,” and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

10Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

Paul established that the saint has a responsibility to the ruling authorities, but what about society at large? How are God’s people to respond to the world at large; a world that may be antagonistic and hostile to God’s people (12.14)? In a word, love.

Loving others “fulfills the law”. This harkens back to the Lord’s words in Matthew 22.39-40 and is the basis for His commandment to His disciples (see John 13.34). Furthermore, Paul shows how the great commandment found in Leviticus 19.18 are the foundation for the final four of the Ten Commandments. Moral commandments are given because God is concerned with the effect our actions have on our own souls, and on the lives of others.

The Saint's Responsibility To Be Ready (13.11-14)

Romans 13:11-14 (ESV)

11Besides this you know the time, that the hour has come for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed.

12The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light.

13Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy.

14But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

I have no doubt that Paul was referencing the Lord’s return in this section. But, did Paul believe that the Lord’s return was imminent? We do disservice to the text if we read into it immediate predictions of Jesus’ return. As we’ve seen throughout the letter, Paul based his arguments on God’s revelations in the Old Testament. Consider what the OT revealed about the future:

1. Establishment of the Messianic Kingdom (Daniel 2.44-45).

2. Inclusion of the nations (Daniel 7.14).
3. Persecution by world powers (Daniel 9.24-27).
4. God's judgment on world powers (Daniel 9.27).
5. The end (Daniel 12.1-4).

From Paul's perspective, the Kingdom had been established and the nations were being brought into the people of God. What was next? Persecution and deliverance. I believe that Paul's words should be read in that context; trials were ahead, but so was deliverance!

The important point to take from the text is not an identification of when Christ will return, but the moral behavior that is expected of God's people. If "the day is at hand" then we need to walk in the light. If we only think of the present, these instructions are difficult. But if viewed in the light of eternity, each of us should strive to "put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh".



Lesson 23

Welcome One Another Romans 14-15.13

"Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God."

Romans 15.7

"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus," (Galatians 3.28). We believe that statement to be true because God declared it to be true. However, God's people don't always feel like they are one. We know that the unity we possess in Christ transcends gender, racial, generational and economic differences, in fact we marvel sometimes that such diverse people can share a common faith in Christ. Yet, sometimes we wonder if we actually possess a common faith, especially when we disagree over how a particular text should be applied or we disagree in how we practice our faith. Is it possible to be one body and yet have varying opinions in that body? That is the matter Paul addresses in this passage.

However, a word of caution must be given as we begin looking at this text. Paul is not addressing matters of revealed will. Disciples are to be taught the will of Christ (Matthew 28.20) and are to continue in His will (2John 9-11). Every teaching is to be examined to see if it accords with what Jesus said (1John 4.1), those who refuse to follow His will are to be admonished (1Thess. 5.14), those who will not repent are to be avoided (2Thess. 3.6). So, this passage CANNOT be used to justify teachings that are contrary to Scripture, or as a way of justifying immoral behavior so long as it doesn't offend a person's conscience. Paul is addressing matters of opinion in areas where God did not legislate. In such matters there is great freedom and Paul exhorts us to respect each other's opinions and practices in these areas.

It is plain from the text that Paul's immediate area of concern was the relationship between Jewish and Gentile Christians, particularly within the Roman congregations. Two issues are singled out:

1. The eating of meats (vs. 2).
2. The observance of days (vs. 5).

Both Jews and Gentiles had issues with meat. For the Jews, they had long lived under a Law that forbade them from eating certain "unclean" meats (Leviticus 11). They were now free to eat these meats, but many would have a hard time doing so with a clear conscience. Likewise, Gentile Christians may associate meats with idolatrous worship (see 1Cor. 8.1-8). While it would be possible to eat meat not offered to idols, some had a hard time doing unless they were absolutely sure the meat had not been offered to an idol. So, to some the eating of any meat would have been a conscience issue. Regarding the observance of days, it is unlikely that Paul was referencing any civic days since most of those would have been in honor of a Roman deity. He probably has in mind the Jewish observance of the Sabbath and Jewish Feast Days. While such days were no longer binding (Col. 2.14-17), some of the Gentiles may have viewed any observance of them as living under the Law.

Jew-Gentile tensions have been a constant theme in Paul's letter to the Romans. Paul's presentation and defense of the gospel was due to the Jewish notion that the Law maintained significance in marking out God's covenant people, thus excluding the Gentiles unless they also observed the Law. But, as Paul ably pointed out, salvation could only be attained through faith in Christ Jesus. The Jew-Gentile tension was also prevalent in chapter 9-11 where Paul lamented Israel's loss, all the while showing how the Jews could be brought in and warning the Gentiles against any arrogance on their part (see 11.18). So, we are not surprised to see that at the end of this section Paul exhorts the saints to "welcome one another," (15.7) because Christ came to serve both the circumcised (15.8) and the Gentiles (15.9). The relationship between Jew and Gentile in the church was very much on Paul's mind!

Refrain From Judging (14.1-12)

Romans 14:1-12 (ESV)

1As for the one who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not to quarrel over opinions.

2One person believes he may eat anything, while the weak person eats only vegetables.

3Let not the one who eats despise the one who abstains, and let not the one who abstains pass judgment on the one who eats, for God has welcomed him.

4Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? It is before his own master that he stands or falls. And he will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make him stand.

5One person esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind.

6The one who observes the day, observes it in honor of the Lord. The one who eats, eats in honor of the Lord, since he gives thanks to God, while the one who abstains, abstains in honor of the Lord and gives thanks to God.

7For none of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself.

8For if we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. So then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's.

9For to this end Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.

10Why do you pass judgment on your brother? Or you, why do you despise your brother? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God;

11for it is written, "As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God."

12So then each of us will give an account of himself to God.

Paul began by instructing them to "welcome" the "one who is weak in faith". While Paul did not define what he meant by "faith", it is clear from the context that he was NOT speaking of someone being weak in their conviction that Jesus is the Lord, or in their trust in God. Rather, the already mentioned issues of meats and holy days posed a problem for some (i.e. weak members) and not for others (i.e. the strong, see 15.1). The last thing on Paul's mind was belit-

ting someone because of their conviction.

The theme of this section is on judging others. Three times in this section Paul warned against judging: “not to quarrel over opinions” (vs. 1), “Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another?” (vs. 4), “Why do you pass judgment on your brother? Or you, why do you despise your brother?” (vs. 10). If God had not legislated regarding the necessity of eating meat, why should they judge a brother if he refused to do so? If God had not forbidden a Jew from observing the Sabbath, why should Gentile Christians condemn them if they did? Three points are stressed:

- » Do not judge a person that God has accepted.
- » Whatever your practice (in matters of liberty) be fully convinced in your own mind
- » We all live and die for Christ, so by extension we are doing the same for the family of Christ.

Be Sensitive To Conscience (14.13-23)

Romans 14:13–23 (ESV)

13Therefore let us not pass judgment on one another any longer, but rather decide never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of a brother.

14I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself, but it is unclean for anyone who thinks it unclean.

15For if your brother is grieved by what you eat, you are no longer walking in love. By what you eat, do not destroy the one for whom Christ died.

16So do not let what you regard as good be spoken of as evil.

17For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

18Whoever thus serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men.

19So then let us pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding.

20Do not, for the sake of food, destroy the work of God. Everything is indeed clean, but it is wrong for anyone to make another stumble by what he eats.

21It is good not to eat meat or drink wine or do anything that causes your brother to stumble.

22The faith that you have, keep between yourself and God. Blessed is the one who has no reason to pass judgment on himself for what he approves.

23But whoever has doubts is condemned if he eats, because the eating is not from faith. For whatever does not proceed from faith is sin.

While addressing the “strong” in this passage, Paul revealed the beauty of a heart longing to serve God. Paul understood that the “weak” were not partaking of meats or were observing certain days because it was what their conscience demanded. And conscience issues are sin issues!

Three times in this section Paul states the severity of violating one’s conscience: “it is unclean for anyone who thinks it unclean,” (vs. 14) and “whoever has doubts is condemned if

he eats, because the eating is not from faith. For whatever does not proceed from faith is sin,” (vs. 23). The “strong” (probably Gentiles) were no doubt ready for the “weak” (probably Jews) to grow up, to realize that there was nothing unclean about meat. They wanted them to eat with them! Paul issues a strong warning: “if your brother is grieved by what you eat, you are no longer walking in love. By what you eat, do not destroy the one for whom Christ died,” (vs. 15). Again, these were not matters of doctrine, no commands of Christ were being violated. These issues called for patience, understanding and love. But Paul feared that bad attitudes would lead to pressure, pressure would lead to violated conscience, and a violated conscience would be sin (sin for the person who violated his own conscience, sin for the person who through lack of love encouraged his brother to violate his conscience).

In this we see a picture of what a Christian’s heart should be toward his brethren: “So then let us pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding” (vs. 19) and “It is good not to eat meat or drink wine or do anything that causes your brother to stumble.” (vs. 21) Christians may be at liberty to eat meat and observe certain days, but they are not at liberty to cause others to stumble. Only when we truly view the needs of others as more important can we truly say that we are pursuing peace.

Imitate Christ (15.1-13)

Romans 15:1-13 (ESV)

1We who are strong have an obligation to bear with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves.

2Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to build him up.

3For Christ did not please himself, but as it is written, “The reproaches of those who reproached you fell on me.”

4For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.

5May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus,

6that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

7Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.

8For I tell you that Christ became a servant to the circumcised to show God’s truthfulness, in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs,

9and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. As it is written, “Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles, and sing to your name.”

10And again it is said, “Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people.”

11And again, “Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles, and let all the peoples extol him.”

12And again Isaiah says, “The root of Jesse will come, even he who arises to rule the Gentiles; in him will the Gentiles hope.”

13May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.

Perhaps Paul had already said enough, but he capped off his argument with an appeal to the life and mission of the Master, Christ.

1. The reason why we are to serve others and not please ourselves is that Christ came to serve others (vss. 1-6).
2. We should accept each other because Christ came to serve both “the circumcision” (Jews) and the Gentiles (vss. 7-13).

When we have the same attitude toward each other that Christ has towards us, we can confidently expect the blessing found in vs. 13: “May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.”

Some application:

So many principles in this section need to be applied in any situation where brethren are dealing with each other. We need to refrain from judging each other on matters of opinion (whether those opinions are related to our faith, we must be sensitive to each other’s conscience and we must always emulate the love of Christ. However, remember that there are some important keys to applying this text to any given situation:

- » The strong were practicing something God had given them liberty to do (14.14). If this were a matter that God forbade, they would be sinning.
- » The weak were not refusing to practice something God required. If this were a matter God required, they would be sinning.
- » If either party compelled the other party, they would be sinning (see Acts 15).

Particular application could be made to how we should treat new converts/members. Each one will come to us with a particular history and background. Their conscience may prick them over things that are not issues for many of us. Consider a few examples:

- » A converted Catholic may choose to not eat meat on Fridays.
- » A converted Jew may choose to keep the Sabbath as a day of rest and prayer.
- » A converted Muslim may never be able to eat a ham sandwich.
- » Christmas could be a big issue for many. While it would be wrong for us as a congregation to set up Christmas as a special, holy day, many do see Christmas as a day worthy of reflection and remembrance of Jesus’ birth (regardless of the unlikelihood that Jesus was actually born on that day). Their conscience may move them to “keep Christ in Christmas”.

The principles outlined in this section must be used in dealing with these and a host of other matters of opinion and conscience. Let us always strive to “welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God” (15.7).



Lesson 24

A Minister Of Christ

Romans 15.14-16.27

***“the grace given me by God,
to be a minister of Christ
Jesus...”***

Romans 15.15-16

Paul had accomplished the purposes for which he penned his letter to the Roman Christians. He had explained the basis for justification that God has made possible in the gospel, that all men can be justified ONLY by faith in Christ. In doing so he not only showed how the Gentiles could be saved without observance of the Law, but also answered Jewish objections and questions about how the “chosen” people could still be lost. Furthermore, Paul detailed the benefits that are found in Christ, the new life and new Spirit that belongs to those who are in Him. He reflected on the Jews’ rejection of the gospel, longing for their salvation and revealing how God’s plan would bring about the salvation of “all Israel,” that is all the Gentiles and Jews that would have faith in Christ. Paul then sought to make application of the wonderful truths of the gospel, namely that Christians should give themselves completely to the will of God (i.e. living sacrifices) and that they should pay particular attention to each other, respecting each others conscience.

As Paul concluded his letter, he gave these Christians a glimpse into why he wrote to them, why he was going to Jerusalem and why he hoped to see them. Everything Paul did was “because of the grace given me by God, to be a minister of Christ Jesus...” (15.15-16).

Paul’s Work As A Minister Of Christ Jesus (15.14-33)

Romans 15:14–33 (ESV)

14I myself am satisfied about you, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able to instruct one another.

15But on some points I have written to you very boldly by way of reminder, because of the grace given me by God

16to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles in the priestly service of the gospel of God, so that the offering of the Gentiles may be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

17In Christ Jesus, then, I have reason to be proud of my work for God.

18For I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me to bring the Gentiles to obedience—by word and deed,

19by the power of signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God—so that from Jerusalem and all the way around to Illyricum I have fulfilled the ministry of the gospel of Christ;

20and thus I make it my ambition to preach the gospel, not where Christ has already been named, lest I build on someone else’s foundation,

21but as it is written, “Those who have never been told of him will see, and those who have

never heard will understand."

22This is the reason why I have so often been hindered from coming to you.

23But now, since I no longer have any room for work in these regions, and since I have longed for many years to come to you,

24I hope to see you in passing as I go to Spain, and to be helped on my journey there by you, once I have enjoyed your company for a while.

25At present, however, I am going to Jerusalem bringing aid to the saints.

26For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make some contribution for the poor among the saints at Jerusalem.

27For they were pleased to do it, and indeed they owe it to them. For if the Gentiles have come to share in their spiritual blessings, they ought also to be of service to them in material blessings.

28When therefore I have completed this and have delivered to them what has been collected, I will leave for Spain by way of you.

29I know that when I come to you I will come in the fullness of the blessing of Christ.

30I appeal to you, brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God on my behalf,

31that I may be delivered from the unbelievers in Judea, and that my service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints,

32so that by God's will I may come to you with joy and be refreshed in your company.

33May the God of peace be with you all. Amen.

Romans probably was not an easy letter to pen. Paul loved his brethren dearly, whether they were Jew or Gentile. He had a special commission to the Gentiles (vss. 15-16), but he also longed for the salvation of his kinsmen (see Romans 10.1). Within this letter Paul had to say some hard things to his kinsmen, all the while warning the Gentiles of any arrogance on their part. As Paul said, "on some points I have written to you very boldly," but the reason for Paul's boldness was his gracious call to be a minister of Christ. Being a minister of Christ meant that Paul needed to write these things to the Roman Christians, no matter how difficult it was for him to do so.

Paul's call to be a minister of Jesus also dictated where and how he preached the gospel. His desire was to "preach the gospel, not where Christ has already been named," (vs. 20), but in new territory. Paul said that was the reason he had not yet been to Rome (vs. 22), but his hope was to go to Rome and ultimately make his way to Spain (vss. 23-24). As far as we know, Paul never made it to Spain, but he would make it to Rome, just not in the way he foresaw.

Paul could not go to Rome at the time, because he was going to Jerusalem bearing a contribution for the needy saints there (vss. 25-28). We know of this collection from other passages, namely 1Cor. 16; 2Cor 8-9, but here we get a glimpse into what Paul hoped this contribution would achieve: harmony between Gentile and Jewish Christians. After all, the Gentile Christians had shared in the Jews' spiritual blessings, so they should help in their physical needs. Paul

was going to put his “seal on this fruit of theirs,” (vs. 28) and hoped that this service would “be acceptable to the saints,” (vs. 31).

But there were dangers. The Jews had persecuted Paul everywhere he had been, and he knew there could be trouble in Jerusalem when he arrived. For that reason, he urged the saints in Rome to pray for him, that he would be “delivered from the unbelievers in Judea,” (vs. 31). As we know from Acts 21-28, things did not go as Paul hoped. He was “rescued” from a Jewish mob, imprisoned by the Romans and ultimately arrived in Rome wearing chains. Yet, through it all, Paul remained a “minister of Christ Jesus.”

Greetings (16.1-16)

Romans 16:1-16 (ESV)

1I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a servant of the church at Cenchreae,
2that you may welcome her in the Lord in a way worthy of the saints, and help her in whatever she may need from you, for she has been a patron of many and of myself as well.
3Greet Prisca and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus,
4who risked their necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks but all the churches of the Gentiles give thanks as well.
5Greet also the church in their house. Greet my beloved Epaenetus, who was the first convert to Christ in Asia.
6Greet Mary, who has worked hard for you.
7Greet Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen and my fellow prisoners. They are well known to the apostles, and they were in Christ before me.
8Greet Ampliatus, my beloved in the Lord.
9Greet Urbanus, our fellow worker in Christ, and my beloved Stachys.
10Greet Apelles, who is approved in Christ. Greet those who belong to the family of Aristobulus.
11Greet my kinsman Herodion. Greet those in the Lord who belong to the family of Narcissus.
12Greet those workers in the Lord, Tryphaena and Tryphosa. Greet the beloved Persis, who has worked hard in the Lord.
13Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord; also his mother, who has been a mother to me as well.
14Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas, and the brothers who are with them.
15Greet Philologus, Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints who are with them.
16Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ greet you.

Most of the names in this passage are unknown to us. Prisca and Aquila were known companions of the apostle (see Acts 18-19) and Rufus could be the son of Simon who bore

Jesus' cross (see Mark 15.21). However, a point needs to be made from this section. We know of the work Paul did because of what Luke records about him in Acts and because of Paul's own letters. But there were many others engaged in the work, doing whatever they could in the cause of Christ. We don't know what they did, but as was said of Persis, they "worked hard in the Lord." (vs. 12). Our names will most likely not be remembered in 100 years, probably not in 60. Doesn't matter. All that matters is that we also work hard in the Lord.

One other note: you may notice that several of the Gentile brethren Paul greets are named after pagan gods (Hermes and Olympas for example). I point this out only to emphasize the cultural gap that would have existed between Jewish and Gentile Christians in the church.

Warning Against False Teachers (16.17-20)

Romans 16:17–20 (ESV)

17I appeal to you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught; avoid them.

18For such persons do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites, and by smooth talk and flattery they deceive the hearts of the naive.

19For your obedience is known to all, so that I rejoice over you, but I want you to be wise as to what is good and innocent as to what is evil.

20The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

Paul had gone to great lengths to explain the truth of the gospel to these saints, but he knew that false teachers would try and pervert the truth. It is likely that Paul had Judaizing teachers in mind, like those we read about in Acts 15 who wanted to compel Gentile converts to accept circumcision and the Law.

We should share in Paul's wish for all Christians, that we "be wise as to what is good and innocent as to what is evil," (vs. 19), realizing that the only way we can do that is to follow in the Word that has been clearly delivered from God. We have every reason to believe that the NT authors delivered God's Word to us. Let's stand on them, and not give heed to the latest fad teaching that makes its way around.

Greetings From Paul's Co-Workers & Doxology (16.21-27)

Romans 16:21–27 (ESV)

21Timothy, my fellow worker, greets you; so do Lucius and Jason and Sosipater, my kinsmen.

22I Tertius, who wrote this letter, greet you in the Lord.

23Gaius, who is host to me and to the whole church, greets you. Erastus, the city treasurer, and our brother Quartus, greet you.

25Now to him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages

26but has now been disclosed and through the prophetic writings has been made known to all nations, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith—
27to the only wise God be glory forevermore through Jesus Christ! Amen.

- » Brief historical note, the Erastus in vs. 23 may be the same Erastus mentioned in this Corinthian inscription: “Erastus in return for his aedilship laid [the pavement] at his own expense.”

It is fitting that Paul concluded this letter with a doxology, a word of praise to God. Significantly, Paul phrased the gospel as the means by which God should be praised. The gospel is what could strengthen them, it is what has now been made known to all nations, it is what compels the men to have obedient faith. Thus, the gospel is reason to glorify God! “to the only wise God be glory forevermore through Jesus Christ! Amen.”