Introduction to Romans

by Dr. Jack L. Arnold

Some men have stated that the Book of Romans is the “most profound writing that exists.” This book is great both because it is part of God’s Holy Scripture, and because it is great literature and logic. It is the greatest of philosophies, and it is more than a philosophy because it states clearly how sinful men can know God. It is undoubtedly the clearest statement of the divine plan for the redemption of men that God has been pleased to give us. If we had only the book of Romans, we would know most of what is essential to Christianity. This book satisfies the simple mind, and yet the most brilliant intellect cannot plumb its depths.

Every major revival in the two thousand years of Christianity has been directly or indirectly tied to the Book of Romans. Chrysostom had the book read to him twice a week, thinking that Romans was the apex of Christian truth. Luther was converted when he read Romans 1:17, “The just shall live by faith,” and from this came the Protestant Reformation. John Wesley was stirred to action when he heard a group of simple Christians discussing the book of Romans in a prayer meeting at Aldersgate in London. From this came the great Wesleyan revivals in England and America.

Law schools have been known to require their students to memorize Romans because of its masterful logic. Never has there been a book like Romans — it is profound in doctrine but extremely practical.

Martin Luther said concerning Romans:

“It is the true masterpiece of the New Testament, and the very purest gospel, which is well worthy and deserving that a Christian man should not only learn it by heart, word for word,
but also that he should daily deal with it as the daily bread of men’s souls. For it can never be too much or too well read or studied; and the more it is handled the more precious it becomes, and the better it tastes.”

David Brown said about the book:

“Not only every sentence teems with thought, but every clause; while in some places every word may be said either to suggest some weighty thought, or to indicate some deep emotion.”

Dr. Francis L. Patten, the late president of Princeton University said:

“The only hope of Christianity is the rehabilitating of the Pauline theology. It is back, back, back to the incarnate Christ, and the atoning blood, or it is on, on, on to atheism and despair.”

THE AUTHOR

It would be impossible to understand the heart beat of this epistle without understanding the background of the man who wrote it — Paul.

Before his conversion to Christ, Paul was known as Saul of Tarsus. He was a staunch Pharisee in the Jewish religion, and a good and sincere man. A Pharisee might go to the temple three times a day and pray seven times a day. Saul made every attempt to keep the Law of Moses, and he thought this would secure him a good standing in heaven. He was blinded by his religion and sincerity, for he was trying to gain merit with God by good works:
“If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless” (Phil. 3:4b-6).

He was so sincere about his religion that he had Christians persecuted and even murdered in the name of God:

“And I persecuted this way unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women” (Acts 22:4).

“I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them. And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities” (Acts 26:9-11).

In all Saul’s religion and good works, he was a lost and condemned sinner, for he knew not that salvation is by God’s grace through faith in Jesus Christ. He was just like many of us today who are baptized church members. Some of us work in Sunday school and church, and think these things will bring merit before God. Those of us who think this way are trusting works rather than Christ for salvation.

Saul was one of the great intellects of his day. He spoke Hebrew, Greek, Aramaic, and probably Latin. He was a Roman citizen, trained in Jewish philosophy and religion, and was well acquainted with the Greek
philosophers of his day: Platonians, Aristotelians, Epicureans, Stoics, etc. Saul and was one of the best trained, outstanding men of his day, and had one of the finest minds. He was headed to the top in Judaism, and had he not become a Christian, he probably would have become a great leader in the Jewish religion.

Even with all his intellect, however, Saul was separated from God because of his sin. Just as Paul did, many people today use intellectual argument as a smoke screen to the deeper problem of sin.

Saul was also a zealot for what he believed. He was the greatest Jewish evangelist. He was sincere, but sincerely wrong, about the fact that his religion, zeal, and good works would fit him for heaven. His religion, zeal, and intellect were stumbling blocks to him so that he could not and would not accept Jesus Christ as the Son of God, the Sin bearer for his sins.

Jesus Christ sovereignly intervened in Saul’s life to bring him from darkness to light, converting him to Christianity. This marked the great turning point in Paul’s life, and he became the greatest Christian of all time. After his conversion, he was no longer called Saul, but Paul. Paul comes from Latin and means “little.” Before salvation, he was known as Saul, a great man, but after salvation, he was Paul, the little saint. Contact with the living and resurrected Christ changed Paul’s whole life!

The conversion of Paul is one of the strong arguments for the reality of the Christian faith. This young, zealous, brainy and talented Jew — who probably would have become the most powerful person in Jerusalem, and probably would have been famous throughout the Roman world — cast over everything to become a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ. God took Paul, a Jew who hated Gentiles, and made him the Apostle to the Gentiles.
He was a recipient of the grace of God. Apart from a supernatural new birth, there is no way to explain why Paul did what he did!

THE RECIPIENTS

The church at Rome was predominantly a Gentile church with only a handful of Jewish converts. Rome was the great commercial, military, and cultural center of the world — “all roads led to Rome.” People from all over the empire came there to establish businesses and to live.

It is thought that the church in Rome contained many of Paul’s converts who had trusted Christ before moving to Rome. This was true of Aquila and Pricilla: “Greet Priscilla and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus: who have for my life laid down their own necks: unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles” (Rom. 16:3-4). There were undoubtedly converts in Rome from the Day of Pentecost, and many had responded to Christ in that great city through the witness of the laymen who lived there.

As far as we know, no apostle had been to Rome before Paul wrote, and it is quite obvious that Paul himself had not been there:

“Now I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that oftentimes I purposed to come unto you, (but was let hitherto,) that I might have some fruit among you also, even as among other Gentiles” (Rom. 1:13).

“Yea, so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man’s foundation” (Rom. 15:20).
Yet the church at Rome acknowledged Paul as their Apostle. This argues against the idea of Roman Catholicism that Peter was the first apostle to Rome.

Most of the converts in the church at Rome were probably from the middle class (business people). There were also some slaves, and some even of Caesar’s household, yet they were all bonded together in Christ. Groups of believers gathered all over the city, meeting in various Christians’ homes:

“Likewise greet the church that is in their house. Salute my well-beloved Epaenetus, who is the first fruits of Achaia unto Christ. . . Salute Apelles approved in Christ. Salute them which are of Aristobulus’ household. Salute Herodion my kinsman. Greet them that be of the household of Narcissus, which are in the Lord. . . Salute Asyncritus, Phlegon. Hermas, Patrobas, Hermes, and the brethren which are with them” (Rom. 16:5,10,11,14,15).

THE TIME OF WRITING

The Book of Romans was written around A.D. 58. Paul had been a Christian for twenty years by that time. He had known and walked with the living and resurrected Christ for many years, was educationally, spiritually, and emotionally prepared to write this phenomenal epistle.

THE THEME

The theme of Romans is “Righteousness.” This is shown in verses 16 and 17 of the first chapter:
“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.”

Romans shows us how a man guilty before God and under the penalty of sin can attain a righteousness that will make him acceptable before God. This righteousness is found in the gospel of Jesus Christ. The good news is that God will give a person righteousness that will make him acceptable to God. This righteousness is found in Christ alone, and a person must come to Christ to receive this free gift of righteousness.

The book may be outlined as follows:

| 1:1–3:20 | Man’s need of righteousness |
| 3:21-26 | God’s provision of righteousness |
| 4:1-25 | By faith, man receives this righteousness |
| 5:1-21 | Jesus Christ is this righteousness |
| 6:1–8:39 | Righteousness can be experientially produced in the Christian by the Holy Spirit |
| 9:1–11:36 | Why Israel rejected this righteousness |
| 12:1–16:27 | Producing practical righteousness in the Christian life |
CONCLUSION

As we proceed to study the book of Romans, we will benefit from it most if we read it in light of the gospel Paul and the other apostles proclaimed. Namely, if we believe on Christ, three things happen to us immediately:

1) We receive the forgiveness of sin: “In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace” (Eph. 1:7).

2) We receive Christ’s righteousness: “For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him” (2 Cor. 5:21).

3) We receive eternal life: “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house” (Acts 16:31).
The Gospel
A Study on Romans 1:1-3a

by Dr. Jack L. Arnold

The twentieth century has brought more confusion to the minds of men about the meaning of Christianity than any other period in the history of the church. Today even the very simplest terms and teachings of the faith are not understood. Terms such as “saved,” “blood,” and “hell” are emotional words associated with people who are narrow, uneducated, bigoted, or who are soapbox preachers. While it is true that some groups have misused these terms, they are perfectly good biblical words, and when properly understood, have deep spiritual meaning.

One of the terms most misunderstood by those outside of Christ, and most misused by those who are Christians, is the word “gospel.” This message will concentrate our attention on the words of Paul in Romans 1:1, “the gospel of God.”

THE MINISTRY OF PAUL (ROMANS 1:1a)

Paul. A Pharisee in the Jewish religion, Paul trusted his good works to get him to heaven. He was so sincere about his religion that he persecuted and murdered Christians in the name of God. Before he became a Christian, Paul was blinded by religion, good works, and sin. He was sincere, but sincerely wrong. When the Lord Jesus appeared to him on the road to Damascus, he was saved. When he came personally to know the resurrected and living Christ, his whole life was changed.

A servant of Jesus Christ. Paul, who had been a slave to sin, self, and religion, became a bond slave of Jesus Christ. He was appointed by
God to be a Christian, and he voluntarily gave himself over to be a slave to Jesus Christ and His work.

Slavery to Christ brings progressive freedom from sin and self in the Christian life.

**Called to be an apostle.** Paul was sovereignly called by God to be an apostle. He did not choose this position himself; God gave it to him.

**Separated unto the gospel of God.** Paul was set apart for this special ministry by God alone. He was separated and committed to the gospel and this is why he said, “For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel” (1 Cor. 9:16)!

In one sense, every Christian is called to the ministry of proclaiming God’s gospel.

THE MESSAGE OF PAUL (ROMANS 1:1b-3a)

**The gospel of God.** “Gospel” means “good news,” and it has its source in God; he is its originator and instigator. The gospel is a message of glad tidings from God, and it ever continues to be God’s message of salvation to lost men.

The message of the gospel is not that man can saved by his own deeds and efforts. By nature, every human being is trained to think in terms of the merit system. No Christian is opposed to good works, but good works can never make one a Christian. “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost”
(Titus 3:5). Every Christian believes in good works as a result, not the cause, of salvation.

The reason men cannot do enough good works to gain merit before God is that they are sinners, separated from God. The best of their works falls short of what God requires of them. “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23).

Men are sinners by nature and by act. All of us tend to compare ourselves with other people, and usually we feel that we are as good as most folks and better than some. But how do we stack up next to the holiness of God? He is absolutely holy and righteous. If a man has committed one evil act, that man is placed in a different category from God’s. Man is a sinner when compared to God’s holiness. Because God is holy, he must judge sin; if he does not judge sin he cannot be God. Since men are sinners, they stand in line for God’s judgment.

Sin is an attitude of indifference to God and is characterized by an attitude of active or passive rebellion. You will observe that I am not saying that sin is just a matter of getting drunk, committing murder, or being immoral. These are sins, too, but they result from prior sins which are often much more passive. You may then ask, “What are the symptoms of a life separated from God?” In addition to the grosser sins, there are: worry, irritability, lack of purpose in life, no goal, no power, no real interest in living, utter boredom, an inferiority complex, frustration, a desire to escape reality, and fear of death. As Paul wrote in Romans 3:23, all men have sinned.

Unsaved men may be alive physically, but they are all spiritually dead before receiving Christ. “For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom. 6:23).
Pull out the plug of a floor lamp from its wall socket; contact with the electrical current is broken and the light goes out. Man, because of sin, broke fellowship with God. He needs to get plugged back into God. He needs power to live for God.

All men will face an eternal judgment:

“It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment” (Heb. 9:27).

“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness” (Rom. 1:18).

This is bad news. If I had only this to tell people, I would jump off a bridge because this is a black picture of man’s true condition. Unless there is a way to solve the sin problem, man is in a hopeless and helpless condition, going headlong into a godless eternity!

The good news is the gospel: God has devised a way to solve the sin problem. He sent Christ, His perfect and sinless Son, to die in the place of sinful men. “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

Christ died for sinners. “But God commendeth his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom 5:8). By believing in Christ, one can receive forgiveness from sin, be declared right before God, and have eternal life:

“Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by him
all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses” (Acts 13:38-39).

“He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life” (John 5:24).

This is the good news, and it is just as true today as it was two thousand years ago.

**Which he had promised afore by his prophets.** The gospel is not new. The basic or elementary facts of the gospel were in the Old Testament, but they were not clearly revealed. Someone has put it this way:

“The New is in the Old concealed,  
The Old is by the New revealed.  
The New is in the Old contained,  
The Old is by the New explained.”

The Bible itself repeatedly testifies to this fact:

“For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?” (John 5:46-47).

“How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit” (Eph. 3:3-6).
“Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into” (1 Peter 1:10-12).

**In the holy Scriptures.** Paul placed the foundation for his faith in the Scriptures of the Old Testament. The Bible was his authority for everything. If we are rightly to understand Christianity and the salvation that is found in Christ, then we must know what the Bible teaches on the subject:

“Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; by which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the Scriptures” (1 Cor. 15:1-4).

**Concerning his Son.** The gospel concerns Jesus Christ. It all centers on what Christ has done for men. If you want to know how to be a Christian, learn about the person and work of Christ for fallen men. You must then believe this message and receive Christ personally. “But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name” (John 1:12).
When Keith Shubert was ministering with Campus Crusade for Christ at Temple University, he told me about great things God was doing there. One of the good things was that the religion department had allowed Keith to present the conservative position of theology. This came about because of Dr. Van Buren, who was the head of the religion department, a liberal, and one of the three leaders of the “God is dead” movement. Keith met Dr. Van Buren and explained to him the work of Campus Crusade for Christ. In the process he shared with him “The Four Spiritual Laws.” Dr. Van Buren said that he did not believe the gospel. Then Keith asked him, “Dr. Van Buren, do you know God in a personal way?” Dr. Van Buren became very quiet and said nothing for about a minute. Then he said, “Keith, you are the first person to ever ask me that question. I never thought about God being personal.” Dr. Van Buren did not receive Christ then, but Keith had given him the gospel, and Dr. Van Buren had such admiration for Keith that he invited him to speak in his religion classes.

CONCLUSION

There is much confusion on how to become a Christian today. Some folks say, “I’m too bad to become a Christian,” but Christ clearly stated that he died for ungodly people. Others think that they have to clean themselves up before Christ will accept them. Not so. We must come as we are — as unworthy sinners — and he will cleanse us. Still others think that becoming a Christian is giving up some things. Certainly becoming a Christian is changing our attitude about sin, but it is not giving up anything; it is receiving the person of Jesus Christ who can give eternal life and forgiveness of sin. Still others say, “If I receive Christ, it will take all the fun out of life.” Nothing could be further from the truth. Christ will only remove those things from our lives hinder our experience with him. Experiencing Christ is far more fulfilling than the
“fun” sins he removes from our lives. When Christ comes into the life, he brings stability, purpose, and new horizons of adventure.

How do you become a Christian? Acknowledge that you are separated from God because of sin, and believe that Christ died in your place and for your sin. Invite him into your life as personal Lord and Savior by faith, and trust that his work on your behalf, and only his work, is sufficient to save you. “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.” Our eternal destinies hang on what we do with Christ in this life!
INTRODUCTION

This message from the Book of Romans will concentrate on the words “Son,” “his Son Jesus Christ our Lord,” and “the Son of God” from Romans 1:3-4. The question is, “Whose son is Jesus Christ?”

Some years ago a very nice lady and her teenage daughter came to my door selling the Watchtower magazine. Knowing that they were Jehovah’s Witnesses, I declined their literature and asked them if they had trusted Jesus Christ as their personal Savior. They said that they had. Then I asked the leading question, “Who is Christ? Doesn’t the Bible say that he is God?”

“Oh, no,” the woman replied, “the Bible doesn’t teach that Jesus is God. He certainly is a divine son but not God.” She went on, “You don’t believe in the Trinity, do you?”

“I most certainly do,” I answered. “The church from its very inception has held to this concept of the triune God.” I went on to explain to her that if she did not believe that Jesus Christ was the God-man, God incarnate, then she couldn’t be a Christian because the very foundation of Christianity rests upon the fact that Jesus Christ is both God and man and to remove this fundamental tenet of Christianity is to destroy the Faith. I explained that if she did not change her belief about Jesus Christ she would go into a Christless eternity. She was willing to call Christ a son, the first created being from God, and in that sense a divine creature, but she would not say that he was God incarnate, the one who is very God and very man.
Christ asked the religious men of his day, “What think ye of Christ? whose son is He?” (Matt. 22:42). Is he a mere natural son? Is he a created son? Or is he the eternal Son, the second person of the Trinity?

The “gospel of God” which was promised by the Old Testament prophets and preached by the apostles concerns God’s Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. The gospel is summed up in God’s Son, who is one with the Father.

“God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high” (Heb. 1:1-3).

The one who is coequal with the Father is the very Christ whom all Christians worship.

God’s Son is called: “Jesus,” which speaks of him as the savior who delivers his people; “Christ,” which speaks of him as the Anointed One and the Messiah of the Old Testament; and “Lord,” which speaks of his deity and sovereign authority.

THE SON OF GOD AND THE TRINITY

In the Bible the term “Son of God” is used to declare the deity of Christ — that Jesus Christ is God. The word “Son” is used to express the eternal relationship of the Father to the Son. This is involved in the doctrine of the Trinity. The Bible refers to the Father as God: “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord” (Deut. 6:4). It calls the Son God: “But unto the Son he saith, ‘Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a
scepter of righteousness is the scepter of thy kingdom’” (Heb. 1:8). In Acts 5:3-4 the Holy Spirit is also called God:

“But Peter said, Ananias, ‘Why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land? While it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.’”

Yet they are one: “Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost” (Matt. 28:19).

The Bible does not teach three gods (tritheism) or one God with three manifestations (modalism). The Bible teaches three persons subsisting in one Godhead; it teaches one essence or nature and three distinct personalities.

The Trinity is a mystery and incomprehensible to the human mind, but it is biblical. This is a divine riddle where one makes three, and three makes one. Perhaps God is trying to communicate to us in a heavenly language which we cannot completely comprehend. Our minds can no more comprehend the Trinity than a nutshell will hold all the water in the sea. To me, this is a definite proof of the inspiration of the Bible — no man could have conceived of a God in trinity; this could only come by special revelation from God. One of my sons once told me that he could not understand the Trinity. “Neither can I,” I assured him.

We live in the realm of trinities and accept them as everyday occurrences. One trinity is ice, water and steam. Another is an egg: shell, white and yolk. Still another is light: actinic, which is neither seen nor felt (the Father); luminiferous, which is seen but not felt (the Son); calorific, which is felt but not seen (the Holy Spirit). Of course, these illustrations do
not do justice to the doctrine of the Trinity, but they do help us begin to conceive of the real existence of the Triune God.

We accept the doctrine of the Trinity by faith because the Bible teaches it. “Where reason cannot wade, there faith may swim.” The doctrine of the Trinity is not against reason but above it; it is divine revelation. Jesus is the eternal Son of God, and the title “Son of God” refers to the fact that he is God. Someone has said, “If one tries to understand the Trinity, he loses his mind; if he rejects the Trinity, he loses his soul.”

THE CLAIMS OF CHRIST

Christ claimed to be one in essence, substance, or nature with the Father:

“‘I and my Father are one.’ Then the Jews took up stones again to stone him. Jesus answered them, ‘Many good works have I shewed you from my Father; for which of those works do ye stone me?’ The Jews answered him, saying, ‘For a good work we stone thee not; but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God’” (John 10:30-33).

Jews, because they were monotheistic, wanted to stone the Lord, for they understood that he was claiming to be God.

Christ claimed that to have seen Him was to have seen the Father: “Jesus saith unto him, ‘Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me bath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, ‘Shew us the Father?’’” (John 14:9).

Christ claimed to be eternal: “Jesus said unto them, ‘Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am’” (John 8:53).
When directly questioned by the high priest, Jesus Christ claimed to be the Son of God: “Again the high priest asked him, and said unto him, ‘Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?’ And Jesus said, ‘I am; and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven’” (Mark 14:61,62).

Further, Christ made indirect claims that showed him to be God. For example, he called himself the bread of life: “And Jesus said unto them, ‘I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst’” (John 6:35). He also proclaimed himself the light of the world. “Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, ‘I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life’” (John 8:12). Christ claimed to be the way, the truth, and the life: “Jesus saith unto him, ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me’” (John 14:6). Who but God could make these claims?

THE CLAIMS OF OTHERS

The Apostle John said that Christ was God. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (John 1:1).

The Apostle Paul said about Christ:

“And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory” (1 Tim. 3:16).

The Apostle Thomas witnessed that Christ was God: “And Thomas answered and said unto him, ‘My Lord and my God’” (John 10:28).
THE WORKS OF CHRIST

The Bible states: that Christ is the creator and sustainer of the world; that he pardons sin; that he raises the dead; that he rewards the saints; that he judges the world; and that he imparts eternal life. Who can do these things but God?

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE DEITY OF CHRIST

Early in the fourth century there was a major controversy in the church in North Africa between Arius, a bishop, and Athanasius, a deacon. Arius believed that Jesus Christ was the first created being of the Father but that he was not deity. Athanasius, seeing the folly of this position, defended the fact that Jesus Christ was co-eternal with the Father, noting that if Christ were not God and eternal, he could not grant eternal life to believers. He was saying that there can be no salvation for men unless Christ is God. Arius said that Christ was homoiousias (like God in substance, but not God). Athanasius said that Christ was homoousias (the exact substance of God, thus that Christ was God). They divided over an iota in the Greek, the equivalent of the English letter “i.” In A.D. 325 at the Council of Nicea, the church declared its support for Athanasius’ position. It condemned Arianism as heretical, and affirmed the truth that Jesus Christ is very God and very man. This has been the official position of the church since that time. Interestingly, before Nicea, Athanasius suffered for his belief and was exiled eight times for his trinitarian convictions. But he “hung in there,” and preserved in the church the biblical view of the Trinity. Men used to say, “Athanasius against the world and the world against Athanasius.” Thank God for a faithful deacon! We ought never to think that theology is unimportant.

Today, Jehovah Witnesses are almost a duplicate of the Arian heresy condemned sixteen hundred years ago.
Even though many who had professed belief in Jesus Christ turned away from him after they heard his teaching on salvation and the requirements for discipleship, Peter realized that Christ alone had the words of eternal life, for Christ was the eternal Son of God:

“Then said Jesus unto the twelve, ‘Will ye also go away?’ Then Simon Peter answered him, ‘Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God’” (John 6:67-69).

There is no salvation unless Jesus Christ is God.

CONCLUSION

“What think ye of Christ? Whose son is he?” You have only two choices and you must decide on one or the other: Christ is either the eternal Son of God, coequal with the Father, and true deity, or he is a mere man. If he is only a man, then Christianity is a farce!

C. S. Lewis, a fine Christian scholar who before his conversion to Christ was a leading atheist in England, stated:

“I am trying here to prevent anyone from saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him (Christ): ‘I’m ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don’t accept his claim to be God.’ That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic — on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg — or else he would be the devil of hell. You must make your choice as to whether this man was, and is, the Son of God; or else a madman or something worse. You can shut him up for a fool, you can spit at him and kill him as a demon; or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God. But let us not
come with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.”

Your eternal destiny hangs upon what you do with the person of Jesus Christ. Reject the fact that he is God, and the Bible states that your destiny is eternal punishment. Accept him as your Lord, God, and savior from sin, and the Bible states that your destiny is heaven. Again the question is asked, “What think ye of Christ? Whose son is He?”
Why I Believe in the Virgin Birth:  
A Study on Romans 1:3b and Luke 1:26-35

by Dr. Jack L. Arnold

We have already seen that Paul proclaimed Jesus Christ to be the Son of God. He was true deity, coequal and coeternal with the Father. It is clear that Christ himself and the writers of the New Testament claimed that Jesus Christ was God.

We will now look at the last part of Romans 1:3, concentrating our attention on the words “which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh.” This verse states that Jesus Christ was also a man. He is both God and man — perfect humanity and undiminished deity united in one person forever. He is unique in all the universe!

You may ask, “How can God become man? How can the infinite become finite? How can the eternal be limited to time?” We will look at these questions and others as we study the implications of Jesus Christ’s supernatural virgin birth.

First, it is important to acknowledge that many people today reject the notion of a miraculous virgin birth. There are many reasons, however, why such a wonderful miracle is completely reasonable and believable. One does not have to be a fool or an exegetical incompetent, nor does he have to commit intellectual suicide to believe in the virgin birth. It is grounded on the solid reality of historical fact, and it is very logical when viewed from a Christian context.

The virgin birth has been an essential teaching throughout the history of the Church. One of the earliest creeds we have is the Apostles’ Creed which states:

“I believe . . . in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary.”

THE BIBLE TEACHES THE VIRGIN BIRTH

Luke 1:26-35 clearly states that Jesus was to be born of the virgin Mary. The Greek word *parthenos* that is used here means “a woman who never new a man sexually.” The word used in Isaiah 7:14 is *alma*, which may be translated “maiden” or “virgin.” Matthew 1:18-25 also makes it clear that the Holy Spirit conceived Jesus in Mary’s virgin womb. Human reason says this conception by the Holy Spirit is a biological impossibility, but such reason fails to account for the supernatural and the power of God. The one born would be a holy thing (Luke 1:35) — sinless.
The Bible teaches the virgin birth. It is understandable for a person to deny the virgin birth of Jesus, but for him to claim that the Bible does not teach the virgin birth is sheer foolishness. Because the Bible teaches the virgin birth, I believe it. It is revealed truth from God.

**THE PERSON OF CHRIST**

From all eternity Christ was God. He is a supernatural being. It is not incredible to believe that a supernatural being came into the world in a supernatural manner. The deity of Christ expects and demands the virgin birth.

**THE POSSIBILITY OF MIRACLES EXISTS**

To accept the virgin birth means that one must accept the concept of a miracle. Belief in the possibility of miracles rests in one’s view of God and the world.

During the 1920’s the Church in America experienced a terrible rift in the Liberal-Fundamentalist Controversy. Liberalism had infiltrated every major denomination. The fundamentalists, who believed in an inspired and infallible Bible, attempted to ward off the liberals. They centered their arguments around five points of doctrine, five “fundamentals” essential to the preservation of biblical and historical Christianity. These points were: (1) an inerrant Bible; (2) the virgin birth; (3) the deity of Christ; (4) substitutionary atonement; and (5) the physical resurrection and the physical second coming of Christ. The virgin birth, then as well as now, was a key issue — for if Christ was not born of a virgin, then he was not God, and if he was not God, then he could not grant men eternal life. Furthermore, to deny the virgin birth was to deny the supernatural, and if one denied this miracle, he could deny them all.

No Christian is against science, for the true facts of science and the Bible will never conflict. However, when a scientist leaves the realm of true fact and begins to speculate as to the meaning of certain data, this is where the Christian might take issue. There are many fine scientists who are Christians. Nevertheless, atheistic science states that the world is operating according to certain fixed or regular laws of nature. This is called “uniformitarianism,” the belief that all things exist as they always have existed, and that all physical phenomena continue according to inviolable natural laws. They reject the supernatural, faithfully adhering to a closed system with no possibility of miracles.
The Christian believes that God is the Creator and Sustainer of this universe, and that he is sovereign over his creation. He who created the apparently fixed laws of nature can intervene into his creation whenever and however he pleases — even if such intervention appears to “violate” the “laws” of nature. A recognition of God admits the possibility of miracles.

Science is not in a position to judge a miracle. It deals with the regular and normal laws of nature such as gravity. Scientific knowledge advances through observation and experiment, working with data supplied by the five physical senses. But a miracle involves the spiritual realm, not the physical, and cannot be dealt with on a scientific basis.

A miracle cannot possibly conform to any known law, or it would not be a miracle. The Christian who argues for a miracle is not against the regularity of nature as a general principle, but is against the necessary regularity of nature in every instance. God can change or suspend natural law if he chooses to do so. All laws are God’s laws, and he is free to change these laws at any time.

The issue then is God. If God exists, then the possibility of miracles exists. The virgin birth is just one of the hundreds of miracles God has done!

FULFILLED PROPHECY

In Isaiah 7:14, which was written in 700 B.C., the prophet predicted the virgin birth, and it came about just as predicted (cf. Matt. 1:22, 23). Liberals who have denied the virgin birth have tried to change the date of the writing of Isaiah to make it just a little before the time of Christ. This theory was soundly disproved by the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls. These scrolls were written at least two hundred years before Christ.

Over three hundred prophecies about the first coming of Christ were literally fulfilled; the mathematical possibility of their being fulfilled in one person by sheer chance or accident is 1 in $84 \cdot 10^{97}$ — that’s 84 with 97 zeros after it!

A SUPERNATURAL SIGN

The virgin birth was to be a sign to Israel and to the world that Jesus Christ was the God-man. “Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel” (Isa. 7:14). The Jews require signs to
believe(1 Cor. 1:22), and a sign must be extraordinary if it is to have much impact. What is more extraordinary than a virgin birth?

CHRIST WAS SINLESS

Many theologians believe that the immaterial part of man (the soul, the sin nature, etc.) is passed on through natural generation. If one adopts this perspective, then every person born into this world has received a sin nature from Adam through his parents. Had Christ had a normal birth, he would have inherited a sin nature like all other children born into the world. In this view, Christ’s virgin birth prevented his inheritance of a sin nature.

While this is not the only (or even the best) explanation of how the sin nature is inherited, the fact that Jesus actually was sinless from the time of his birth indicates that his birth and his person were absolutely supernatural. By whatever means sin is communicated from Adam to his posterity (natural generation, direct imputation, etc.), the fact that this sin did not infect Jesus demonstrates his supernatural birth.

THE CURSE ON THE ROYAL LINE WAS REMOVED

When David was king of Israel, God promised that his seed and his kingdom would be established forever:

“And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build an house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever. I will be his father, and he shall be my son. . . And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever” (2 Sam. 7:12-14,16).

Later Isaiah prophesied that this seed would be the Messiah:

“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this” (Isa. 9:6-7).
The one qualified to occupy the throne of David would have to be a person who had the blood and royal right to be king. He had to be able to trace his lineage through his fathers (male ancestors) directly to David. Jesus’ genealogy, especially as outlined in Matthew 1:1-17, makes Jesus’ claim to David’s throne clear. There were many potential rulers before Jesus who might have reigned on the throne of Israel, but they could not reign because the nation was in bondage because of its sin. Joseph was in the royal line, one of these potential rulers.

Jehoiakim (sometimes called Jechonias or Coniah) was a king in the royal line of David. Because of Jehoiakim’s sin, God put a curse on him and his children stating that none of his seed would ever sit on the throne of David (Jer. 36:30-31).

How could the problem be solved? One way that theologians have answered the question is by arguing that the curse on the royal lineage did not apply to Jesus because he was the adopted son of Joseph rather than the natural son of Joseph. Because the curse applied to Jehoiakim’s natural bloodline, it did not affect Jesus who was not Joseph’s natural son. By marrying Mary and taking the unborn Jesus under his protecting care, Joseph became Jesus’ legal father, thereby enabling Christ’s claim to David’s throne. Christ became the legal Messiah, the royal Messiah, the uncursed Messiah, and the true Messiah.

CONCLUSION

Christianity is not worshiping the babe, born of a virgin, but the God-man who came to be the perfect sacrifice for the sins of men. If you will believe that Christ is your personal Lord and Savior, you will come to understand that Christ died for you. Then you will receive eternal life, Christ’s righteousness, and the forgiveness of sins.
The Resurrection of Jesus Christ:
A Study on Romans 1:4
by Dr. Jack L. Arnold

Is there life after death? Is there a resurrection of the body after this temporal existence? Skeptics say it is make-believe. Secularism calls it a phantom. Materialism ignores it. The scoler discounts it. Yet, in the inner recesses of every man’s heart a still, small voice asks the question about life after death. Would God have placed this desire to live after death so deeply in the human heart if it were only a myth? Christianity says there is life after death, and a resurrection of every man’s body.

Jesus Christ, through his own resurrection from the dead, came to assure men that there is life after death and that all men are to receive a resurrected body. Assurance of resurrection is directly related to the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead!

In a world of atheistic science, philosophical confusion, and religious superstition, does the Christian have any objective basis to believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ? Is it intellectually sensible to believe in the resurrection, or is it just an emotional, religious spree, a hopeful myth with no reality? Every Christian must face this honestly.

The Bible teaches that Christianity rests upon the resurrection of Christ from the dead. The resurrection will stand up to the most rigorous and exacting examination and remain unshaken.

One scholar said, “The resurrection is the best attested fact in history.” Anyone who wishes to throw doubt upon the fact of the resurrection may do so, but in so doing he will reject all acknowledged standards of historical proof and doubt the trustworthiness of all historical records. In all history a certain amount has to be taken upon trust. Some sources have to be accepted, otherwise there can be no history. As a historical source, the New Testament record qualifies without prejudice. Even if a person does not acknowledge the inspiration of Scripture, he must, if he is intellectually honest, recognize the New Testament as reliable history.

THE FACTS OF THE RESURRECTION

The proofs of the resurrection will not convince an unbeliever of the truth of Christ. He will not accept the resurrection until he is converted. The proofs, however, can help the believer be strengthened in his faith.
The Old Testament prophesied the resurrection. “For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption” (Psalm 16:10).

Christ told His disciples that He would rise again:

“And he began to teach them, that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again” (Mark 8:31).

As the God-man, Christ had to keep his word concerning his resurrection. If he deceived his disciples, he could not be trusted. If we cannot accept his words concerning his resurrection, then we cannot accept anything else Christ taught.

On the first Easter morning, the body of Jesus was not in the grave — the tomb was empty. Some explanation must be given for this fact. The one piece of evidence which would have squelched the faith of the early Christians in the risen Christ was not produced by the world: the dead body of Jesus Christ (cf. Luke 24:38-43, the resurrected body).

It is one thing to reject the resurrection fact; it is quite another to try to explain away the biblical record. Men have tried to explain the empty tomb in a number of ways:

The “wrong tomb” theory: Some say that the women who found the tomb empty were at the wrong tomb. There were four women. Did they all make the same mistake? Mary Magdalene went to the same tomb later that morning and she made no mistake. If the ladies made a mistake about the tomb, then so did the angels, for they were in the tomb.

The “swoon” theory: Some say that Jesus only swooned on the cross, and was not really dead when placed in the tomb. The soldiers and the centurion pronounced Jesus dead, and Pilate was convinced that he was dead. Jesus’ side was pierced with a spear to assure death. Is it logical that Jesus, after having been beaten to a pulp and crucified with a horrible wound in his side, could have survived for thirty-six hours in a cold, damp tomb with no food, water, or medical care? Would He have had enough strength to wiggle out of a mummy-like burial wrapping and remove the heavy rock covering of the grave? It would take more faith to believe these things than to believe the resurrection!

The “disciples” or “stolen body” theory: Some say that Jesus’ disciples took the body of Jesus away. How did they get past the guards? The disciples were skeptical and in unbelief. They had no real reason to steal the body. Would the disciples later preach a lie? Would they be beaten, jailed and martyred for what they knew to be a fairy-tale?
The “spiritual resurrection” theory: Some who want to retain the Bible but to dismiss the resurrection argue that the resurrection was only spiritual. To say this, however, these scholars generally do one of two things: 1) they reject the Bible’s explicit claims of the resurrection in favor of speculative reconstructions about the Bible’s development; or 2) they engage in dishonest exegesis. To suggest that the resurrection was only spiritual is to deny the Bible’s historicity and/or its clear teaching.

These arguments are the best that non-Christians have to offer, but they fail to satisfy normal human intelligence and reason.

According to John 20:5-7, the grave clothes were found lying completely intact. We are told in John 19:39-42 that Christ’s body was wrapped with linen and spices weighing about one hundred pounds. It was customary to wrap the body from the feet to the shoulders and to place a napkin around the chin and head, leaving the neck and face open. The spices were of powder and sticky ointment, and would harden the wrappings when they dried, making it impossible to unwrap the linen clothes. The napkin about the head was wrapped together in a place by itself. This could be translated “twisted up” in a place by itself. It may well be that the napkin was still in the rounded shape as it had been about the head.

Christ appeared to people at least fifteen times after his resurrection. He appeared to individuals and groups, to men and women separately and corporately. He appeared in different geographical locations and under various circumstances. He even appeared to five hundred people at one time. A lawyer, practicing today, would have no trouble winning a case if he could produce such an array of witnesses.

The changed lives of the disciples after the resurrection attest to the reality of the resurrection. After Christ’s death on the cross the disciples were despondent, disillusioned, and at the point of despair. Yet later, as recorded in Acts, they had become men who endangered their lives for the person of Christ and went everywhere teaching the death and resurrection of Christ. Doubtful Thomas became a missionary to India. Peter, who had denied Christ, became a staunch believer who died a martyr’s death. This can only be explained by the resurrection. Skeptical brother James was not even converted until after the resurrection, but he became the leader of the church in Jerusalem. These men were convinced that what Christ said was true!

The fact that there is a church today that is made up of believers all over the world shows that people have experienced the resurrection power of the living Christ. If someone had tried to run a business down through the years as the church has been operated, it would have passed out of existence long ago! The fact that the church is here today is evidence of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.
Three thousand souls were saved on the Day of Pentecost. Had any of these doubted the resurrection, they could have walked a short way and examined the tomb or they could have talked to the Jewish leaders or the disciples. The disciples proclaimed the resurrection with authority.

The Lord was resurrected on the first day of the week, and so the day of worship for Christians was changed from Saturday to Sunday. If the resurrection had been a hoax, the day would no doubt have reverted back to Saturday. Every Sunday is resurrection day for the Christian.

Church history is also evidence of the resurrection of Christ. From the earliest days, the resurrection was depicted on Christian tombs, in drawings found in the catacombs, and in the writings and hymns of Christians. It is a part of every historic Christian creed.

THE RESURRECTION AND THE NON-CHRISTIAN

God is going to judge the world by Jesus Christ, who was raised from the dead:

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

All men are going to be raised from the dead. Those who have done good by believing in Christ will be resurrected to eternal life; those who have done evil and rejected Christ will be resurrected unto eternal damnation:

“The Father . . . hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man. Marvel not at this; for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation” (John 5:26-29).

This resurrection of the dead and the judgment of God is also described in Revelation 20:11-15.

THE RESURRECTION AND THE CHRISTIAN
Our salvation depends upon the death and resurrection of Christ — he was raised for our justification: “Who was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification” (Rom. 4:25).

John 5:29 (quoted above) states that those who have believe on Christ will be resurrected unto eternal life.

The resurrection of Christ guarantees the Christian’s resurrection:

“But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ’s at his coming” (1 Cor. 15:20-23; see also 1 Cor. 15:12-18).

**CONCLUSION**

The thought that there is existence after death belongs to every man, but the assurance that there is eternal life and a bodily resurrection unto life belongs only to the Christian.

Men who have scoffed at death, and put up a bold front about it, have often had quite different thoughts on their deathbeds:

Voltaire, the French skeptic, said on his deathbed, “I am abandoned by God and man! I shall go to hell! 0 Christ! 0 Jesus Christ!”

On his own deathbed, Tom Paine, a great mocker of the Christian faith, said, “I would give worlds, if I had them, if the Age of Reason had never been published. 0 Lord, help me! Christ help me! Stay with me! It is hell to be left alone!”

Death can never be such a terror to the Christian. He knows that Christ has taken the sting out of it. By his resurrection Christ has “abolished death, and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.” Here are the testimonies of some Christians at death:

Michelangelo said, “I die in the faith of Jesus Christ, and in the firm hope of a better life.”
David Brainerd said, “I am going into eternity; and it is sweet to me to think of eternity; the endlessness of it makes it sweet. But 0! what shall I say to the eternity of the wicked? The thought of it is too dreadful!”

Augustus Toplady testified, “The consolations of God to such an unworthy wretch are so abundant that he leaves me nothing to pray for but a continuance of them. I enjoy Heaven already in my soul.”

What a sense of joy and triumph comes to the Christian when he knows that at the end of this temporal existence there is resurrection to eternal life with Jesus Christ forever!

Do you know that your sins are forgiven? Do you know that you have eternal life? Do you have the assurance that you will be resurrected to eternal life? To believe in Christ’s death for sin and his resurrection for justification is to have forgiveness, eternal life, and assurance of future resurrection to live with Christ forever.
The Grace of God
A Study of Romans 1:5-7

by Dr. Jack L. Arnold

The Grace of God. What does it mean? Christians speak of it so freely, but understand and appreciate it so little.

If someone were to give you a million dollars as a gift with no strings attached, what would be your reaction — surprise, thankfulness, unworthiness, reciprocation? You would probably first be grateful, then wonder, “Why me? I haven’t done anything to deserve this.” Then you might think about the person who gave you the gift: “What a gracious person. What can I do to show my appreciation?” God is a God of grace who does far more than give a million dollars. He gives salvation with no strings attached to whomever he pleases, and all anyone can do is receive the gift and say, “Thank you.”

God’s grace is centered in the person and work of Jesus Christ. At the beginning of Romans, Paul tells us that he was separated unto the gospel — the good news that Christ has come to give sinners the forgiveness of sin and eternal life. The gospel concerns Jesus Christ.

Christ was truly man: “made of the seed of David according to the flesh” (Rom. 1:3); and he was truly God: “declared to be the Son of God with power” (Rom. 1:4). Christ is perfect humanity and undiminished deity united in one person forever — the unique person of the universe.

Because of the person and work of Christ, the grace of God has been brought down to men.

GRACE TO THE APOSTLE PAUL (Rom. 1:5)

“For by whom” — It was through the resurrected and living Christ that Paul and other apostles (we) received the grace of God. This shows that Paul believed in the resurrected Christ who dispensed grace and apostleship.
“We have received grace” — Paul put grace before apostleship, for a person must be saved before he can serve Jesus Christ. “Grace” means “unmerited favor.” It means that no person can buy his salvation, he cannot work for his salvation, he is not worthy of his salvation. It is all a gift from the sovereign God. Salvation and sanctification are from God alone.

Paul knew he was an undeserving sinner and had no right to a free and gracious salvation: “For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me” (1 Cor. 15:9-10). Paul knew that God could have justly condemned him to eternal hell as a sinner. But because of God’s grace, Paul became a Christian and God made him an apostle. Salvation is always “by grace through faith” (Eph. 2:8). God is always the ultimate cause of a man’s salvation — a person only appropriates God’s gift by faith. God’s grace did not make Paul a fatalist, but he labored harder than others because he appreciated his salvation. He realized that even the labor was by the grace of God.

“Apostleship” — Having been saved, Paul was appointed by God to be an apostle. Grace and salvation always precede service! Paul knew that he had received his apostleship from Christ.

A man must be called into the full-time ministry. A preacher, teacher, or evangelist must have a calling from God. We must ask God to call our young people to the ministry. How many young folks have been forced into the ministry? Or how many have raised their hands at some emotional meeting asking for full-time Christian service and never made it or, if they made it, were unsuccessful and unhappy?

Donald Grey Barnhouse used to say:

“Don’t be a minister if you can help it. If you can be happy as president of a bank, or as head of a factory, or as pitcher for the New York Yankees, or as Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, or President of the United States, or anything else on this earth, then God has never called you into the ministry.”
At seminary our teachers used to tell us, “If you can do anything else in life, don’t go into the ministry.” Then they continued, “If your heart beats only for Christ and the Bible, and to reach men, then you are called to the ministry.”

Every person that God has ever called into the ministry is in the ministry, but there are many people that have never been called to the ministry who are trying to preach and teach and are unhappy and unsuccessful.

“For obedience to the faith among all nations, for his name” — Paul was called by God to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ to all the nations of the world so that individuals might obey the gospel. This could be translated, “obedience which is a result of faith,” or “faith which is obedience.” Men are called upon to obey the gospel.

Faith obeys the command to believe. This is not just intellectual assent, but is also commitment to the person of Jesus Christ. Men are called to repent: “And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent” (Acts 17:30). They are called to believe: “And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved” (Acts 16:31). Men are to obey these commands. (Other passages dealing with the obedience of faith include: Rom. 10:14-16; 2 Thess. 1:8; Heb. 5:9).

The gospel is to be declared; it is not pleading with people to believe. Christians must declare this message faithfully to everyone, but they do not bear the responsibility of changing people’s hearts or convincing people through their powers of persuasion. Only the Holy Spirit has the power to change hearts, and to bring men to repentance and faith.

The spreading of the gospel is to be “for his name.” It is to be done for God’s glory and not for our own.

Note that Romans both begins and ends with the phrase “obedience to the faith” (Rom. 1:5 and Rom. 16:26).
GRACE TO THE ROMAN CHRISTIANS (Rom. 1:6-7)

“Among whom are ye also the called of Jesus Christ” — From among the nations God is calling a people to salvation. The Roman Christians were a part of this small group of called ones in Paul’s day.

The Bible speaks of two kinds of calls. There is a general call when the gospel goes out calling men to place their faith in Christ: “For many are called, but few are chosen” (Matt. 22:14). Many men have heard this call and refused to come to Jesus Christ. The other call is the efficacious call of God to salvation. This is when God calls a person directly to salvation and the person responds by believing in Jesus Christ:

“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose” (Rom. 8:28).

“But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God” (1 Cor. 1:23-24).

When God gives this call, men always respond to Jesus Christ! Salvation begins with God and ends with God — it is all of grace.

“To all that be at Rome” — This letter was not written to every person in Rome, but to all who had believed in Jesus Christ.

“Beloved of God” — Because of God’s grace, the Christian is a special object of God’s love. God loves the world in that he has provided a Saviour (John 3:16), but Christians are special objects of his love — he loves us because we are his children by faith in Christ Jesus. The Christian has been accepted in the beloved, Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:6). He is beloved of God because of his relationship to Jesus Christ.

“Called saints” — This should be translated “called saints,” not “called to be saints.” God called every one of these Roman saints to sainthood.

“Saint” comes from the same root as “sanctified,” from the Greek word which means “to set apart.” At the moment of salvation every Christian is set apart unto God.
for salvation: “the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord” (1 Cor. 1:2).

The Roman Catholic Church teaches that after death people may become saints, but that no one is a saint in this life. When a person has been an exceptionally good church member in this life, his time in purgatory is limited. While the person is still in purgatory, the church appoints a committee to look into the past life of the person to find reasons why the person should be made a saint. (The committee is organized like a courtroom and its head is known as the “avocatus diaboli,” the devil’s advocate.) If the person is found innocent (by this time he is probably out of purgatory), he becomes a saint. This view is far from the biblical teaching on the subject of a saint.

The Bible teaches that a person does not become a saint through the church, but is made a saint the moment he believes on Jesus Christ. He is separated unto God. Those who are saints are to live saintlike lives! If you have believed in Christ, you are Saint Jim, Saint Jane, Saint Jack, Saint Bettie, etc.

Dr. H. A. Ironside of Chicago, a great Bible teacher of some years ago, was on his way to the Pacific coast for a Bible conference. At that time the trip took about four days by train. On the train there was a party of nuns. Dr. Ironside made their acquaintance and began to read the Bible to them and speak to them of Jesus Christ. They were delighted and interested in what he had to say for they did not read the Bible themselves. On the third day, Dr. Ironside asked them if they had ever seen a saint. They all said that they had not and could never see one — that they would give anything to see a saint. Then Dr. Ironside astonished them by saying, “I am a saint; I am Saint Harry.” He then opened the New Testament to the first chapter of Romans and the first chapter of 1 Corinthians and showed them that everyone who believes on Jesus Christ is a saint.

“Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ” — Paul began with grace for salvation and then exhorted his readers to experience in their lives God’s grace and peace, to make these things a reality by faith. A Christian can have an inner peace or assurance while he is in the midst of conflict. The source of this peace and grace is God!
CONCLUSION

The Bible says that it is by grace through faith that one is saved. If anyone at any time becomes a Christian, it is by God’s grace alone. Yet this gracious gift of salvation can only be made a reality as one believes that Christ died for his sins and that Christ is the Lord of his life.

If you feel a struggle going inside of you, this is God’s general call which says you must respond to Jesus Christ or face eternal separation from God. If you turn to Christ and believe on him as personal Lord and Saviour, then you can rest assured that you have received God’s efficacious call to salvation.

If you are a Christian you are a recipient of God’s grace and you can sing:

Oh! the love that drew salvation’s plan,
Oh! the grace that brought it down to man,
Oh! the mighty gulf that God did span
At Calvary!
God’s Power
A Study on Romans 1:8-17

by Dr. Jack L. Arnold

In the first seven verses of the first chapter of Romans, Paul gave a formal introduction of himself and his message. He declared: 1) his apostleship; 2) the gospel, his message; 3) the deity and humanity of Christ; 4) the resurrection of Christ from the dead; and 5) the grace of God shed upon the Roman Christians in providing for their salvation. This formal introduction gives us an insight into Paul’s doctrinal convictions.

In verses 8-17, Paul gave a more personal introduction. While he had never been to Rome, Paul showed his intense interest in the Romans and his desire to be with them. This personal introduction showed something of the heart of the Apostle Paul. He was not only a man who had many doctrinal convictions, but he also had a heart for Christ, for the gospel, and for people. He had both a head knowledge and a heartbeat for Christ.

PAUL’S LOVE FOR OTHER CHRISTIANS (Romans 1:8-13)

“First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all.” Paul was a man of prayer. He prayed for other Christians even though he didn’t know many of them personally. He ever thanked God for any grace he found in any saint.

In this verse he stopped to thank the Lord for the outward evidences of the reality of Christ in the Roman Christians. The thing that spurred Paul to prayer was the great work of God in the Romans.

Many personal prayers and public prayer meetings would be more vital if we were prompted to pray by deep spiritual reasons. Many prayer meetings are nothing more than a roll call at an infirmary.

The order of prayer is to the Father, through the Son, in the power of the Spirit.

“That your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.” The “faith” here is faith in Christ or doctrine that is applied to life. The words “your faith” do not emphasize the attribute of faith, but what was believed. These people were sound in doctrine and life and this was heralded throughout the entire Roman world.

The church at Rome became famous for its faith. Churches today are famous for all kinds of things: architecture; stained glass windows; organs; choirs; the cantatas that are sung
at Christmas and Easter; a preacher who is suave and eloquent; the number of millionaires who attend; and so on. A church should become famous because of its doctrinal soundness and its willingness to stand for and propagate the truths of the Bible.

Notice that the Romans’ faith became known through the spoken word, without television, radio, telegraph, newspapers, or other modern means of communication. When a group of Christians are obedient to the Lord and propagate their faith, it doesn’t take long for a whole city or state or even nation to be talking about them.

“That without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers.” It is obvious that Paul believed in prayer for he was constantly praying for these Romans. Prayer is never easy; it is work. Prayer works, prayer is work, and prayer leads to work. If we sit around and wait for God to move us to pray, we will find ourselves praying very little.

“Making request, if by any means now at length I might have a prosperous journey by the will of God to come unto you.” Paul prayed that he could go to Rome and that he would have smooth sailing. Years passed before he finally went to Rome, and he went not by a prosperous journey, but by a perilous journey with many dangers and even shipwreck.

God gave Paul his desire but he did not have an easy journey. Often God grants our desire when we pray, but accomplishes it in a way quite different from what we had hoped. Paul’s journey was in the will of God, but not according to his human plans.

“For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established.” Paul may have meant a gift of the spirit, but probably thought more in terms of some other type of spiritual blessing. He may have wanted to share the gospel with them through his teaching ministry so that they might be better instructed in the truth.

We must always preach the word — the whole counsel of God. Someone has said, “Sermonettes by preacherettes make Christianettes.” Nothing but the Word of God will establish a Christian. You cannot find even one Christian on this earth who has developed in strength of wisdom and witness in the Lord who has attained it by any other means than the study of and meditation on the Word of God:

“Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth” (John 17:17)

“As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby. (1 Pet. 2:2).

“And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified” (Acts 20:32).
“That is, that I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me.” Paul recognized the importance not only of the ministry of church leaders to the laity, but also of the ministry of the church to its leaders. While Paul spoke specifically of comfort, he may also have had in mind exhortation and teaching. Certainly Paul was able to benefit the Roman Christians in these ways, but the Spirit had been teaching the Romans too, and they probably had things to teach Paul. God help the pastor who cannot learn from his flock!

Paul rarely emphasized a sharp distinction between laity and clergy. He knew the Romans had a ministry to him, and that church leaders in general were men who needed the laity just as the laity needed the clergy. A man called to be a pastor, teacher, or an evangelist has an appointed office from God, but he is a human being like everyone else. He is one of the fellowship and should be accepted in the light of these things.

“That oftentimes I purposed to come unto you, (but was let hitherto).” Paul had planned many times to visit Rome but was hindered. He didn’t say whether it was God or Satan who hindered, but all was under the sovereignty of God. This shows that the human plans of the apostle were no more inspired than those of Christians today.

“That I might have some fruit among you also, even as among other Gentiles.” Paul desired to go to Rome that he might preach the gospel so that some would respond to Jesus Christ. He expected fruit when he told others about Christ.

PAUL’S LOVE FOR THE GOSPEL AND THOSE OF CHRIST (Romans 1:14-17)

“I am debtor” The New American Standard Bible says, “I am under obligation.” Paul felt himself obligated to the whole human race. He was a debtor to God for his salvation and he was a debtor to mankind because he had been entrusted with the gospel. The possession of the gospel makes one a debtor to all who have not heard.

Those who know the gospel have a sense of debt to all who do not know. There must also be a sense of duty and responsibility if the gospel is to get to others.

“Both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise and the unwise.” The Romans and the Greeks considered only those who spoke the Greek language and who had adopted the Greek culture to be civilized; all others were barbarians. The Christian is obligated to take the gospel to all types of people whether or not they are considered by others to be civilized. Christianity is cross-cultural.

The terms “wise and unwise” or “wise and foolish,” as in the NASB, refer to the educated and the uneducated, the intelligentsia and the common folk. The gospel is for both
the refined college professor and for the “down and outer” on skid row.

I am ready (eager) to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also.” Because of his debt to humanity, Paul was ready and willing to preach the gospel. Someone has said, “No person has the right to hear the gospel twice until everyone in the world has heard it once.” Yet the average so-called Christian in America has heard the gospel many times and feels no real obligation or burden to tell others of this message. John Guest once said,

“The unbeliever does not believe the Bible and does nothing about it; he is operating on his convictions. But Christians claim to love Christ and the Bible and do not spread the good news of Christ to others. It is not the unbeliever who is dishonest and two-faced but it is the professing Christian.”

Paul had a desire to spread the good news of Christ and he made himself available to tell others. He was a yielded vessel for God’s purpose. He was conscious that his one purpose was to preach the gospel.

A generation ago there was a wealthy man in the Midwest who was an outstanding Christian layman. When asked what he did, he would reply, “I am a witness for Jesus Christ, but I pack pork to pay expenses.” Christians should always keep in mind the fact that they are Christ’s witnesses. There is nothing wrong with careers in fields other than ministry, but we must all remember that the work of the ministry should not be left to ministers alone. We are all witnesses for Jesus Christ, no matter what we do to pay expenses.

The last words of our Lord on this earth were, “Ye shall be witnesses unto me” (Acts 1:8). I question seriously whether any person in this world who professes to be a Christian is in reality a Christian if he makes no move whatsoever to tell others about it! If we are not willing to be witnesses, we have no right to call ourselves Christians. Evangelism is the heart beat of Christianity.

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ” Paul never shirked an opportunity to tell others about Christ. He never held back the gospel; he gloried in it completely. He was never a coward or a traitor to the person of Jesus Christ.

People are ashamed to witness because of what others will think about them. They are afraid of world opinion and social pressures. But God has promised to bless us if we will be faithful witnesses.

“For it is the power of God unto salvation.” Paul was convinced that the gospel was God’s power to bring a person to faith in Christ:

“For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us
which are saved it is the power of God. . . But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God” (1 Cor. 1:18,23,24).

Paul expected fruit because he knew that when he faithfully proclaimed the gospel some would respond to Jesus Christ. He knew the power to convert men was in the gospel and not in him.

What is the gospel? The gospel is good news; it is concerned with the fact that Christ died for the sins of men, was buried, and rose again on the third day to declare those men righteous:

“Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; by which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures” (1 Cor. 15:1-4).

All who will believe this and trust their salvation only to Christ will be saved, for the gospel is God’s power unto salvation. The gospel story is all about man’s complete ruin in sin and God’s perfect remedy in Christ.

What is salvation? Salvation means “safety” and indicates that a man is set free from the guilt and penalty of sin, that he no longer stands under the wrath of God.

No one can become a Christian until he sees that he has a need for a Saviour. A person must see himself as a sinner, estranged from God, spiritually dead, without hope, without strength, and incapable of doing anything to gain merit before God. A person must realize that without Christ he is lost and headed for eternal judgment. Once a person realizes that he is a sinner, then and only then will he flee to the Saviour who alone can forgive sin. The simplest formula for Christianity is: I deserve hell; Jesus Christ took my hell; there is nothing for me but his heaven.”

“To everyone.” The gospel is for everyone; the offer is unlimited. It is for the whole human race. Anyone who desires to be a Christian may be one.

“That believeth.” While the gospel is offered to all, the reality of salvation belongs only to those who believe. Here “believe” means “trust or entrust oneself to Christ as one’s only hope of salvation.” It is committing or abandoning oneself to Christ alone as the way of salvation. This is not just mental assent, but commitment to Christ! One believes that
Christ died for his sins, bore his punishment, and rose again on the third day for his justification.

“To the Jew first, and also to the Greek.” Here Paul expressed the historical presentation of the gospel as it went first to the Jews and then to the Gentiles. This does not mean that the Jew is always to have the gospel presented to him before it goes to others; it is precedence, not preference!

“For therein is the (a) righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith.” The gospel tells sinful men of a righteousness that God gives men when they believe on Christ and that makes them acceptable to him. God’s wrath must come down upon all men, for all are sinners, without any personal righteousness that will make them acceptable to God. But through the death of Christ, God can give a person righteousness which makes him right before God. This righteousness is neither felt nor experienced but becomes the possession of every person who places his faith in Jesus Christ as personal Lord and Saviour! This righteousness is “out of faith into faith,” that is, by faith from start to finish.

“The just shall live by faith.” Salvation is by faith and not by works. A person can be declared righteous before God only by faith — not by good works, not by baptism, not by church membership. Only Jesus Christ can offer the forgiveness of sins and credit to one’s account a righteousness that will give a perfect standing before almighty God. Those who have been declared righteous are to continue to walk by faith.

CONCLUSION

If you will trust Jesus Christ, abandoning yourself to him as your personal Saviour, you will receive the forgiveness of sin and be given a righteousness that will make you, a sinner, acceptable to God.
Many times I have spoken to people about their need of Jesus Christ to save them from the wrath to come, and they have replied, “Surely God wouldn’t send anyone to eternal punishment. He is a God of love!” Such a statement shows a complete misunderstanding of the biblical concept of God. It is true that God is love, but he is far more than love; he is also absolutely holy and just: “Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity” (Hab. 1:13). God has love towards sinners in that he makes provision for men to receive forgiveness (John 3:16), but God also hates sin. As God, he must judge sin and sinners to satisfy his own perfect justice and holiness.

The wrath of God is not an easy subject, but a minister is to proclaim the whole counsel of God. The Bible teaches that God’s wrath burns hot against sin and sinners. Unless a person receives God’s remedy for sin in Christ, there is no hope for him and his destiny becomes the lake of fire.

There are three basic attitudes towards God’s wrath: 1) Some deny the Bible completely, thinking it was written by men and not to be taken seriously. Thus, “hell” is nothing more than a fairy tale. These rank rejecters are few and far between, but they are consistent with their convictions. 2) Others believe in God and accept many of the moral and ethical teachings of the Bible, but deny that the Bible teaches eternal punishment after this life. They say that “all the hell that men will ever experience is here on earth.” These are deluded and misguided people who cannot see the impossibility of accepting the ethical teachings of Jesus while denying his teachings of sin and hell. They are not only illogical and deceived, they are also intellectually dishonest. 3) Some believe the whole Bible, including the concept of a literal hell and eternal punishment for all people who do not receive God’s solution to sin in Christ’s atoning death. This is what the Bible teaches, whether or not man wants to accept it.

Paul contrasts a righteousness which is revealed in the gospel (Rom. 1:17) and God’s wrath which is revealed from heaven (Rom. 1:18).

A RIGHTEOUSNESS FROM GOD (Romans 1:17)

Paul tells us that there is a righteousness that God gives to man whenever he receives Jesus Christ as personal Savior. This righteousness is in the gospel. What is the gospel? Christ died for man’s sin and rose again from the dead to declare men righteous. This is a
fact of history, and becomes a spiritual reality when one places his faith in Jesus Christ. The last part of Romans 1:17 says, “The just shall live by faith.”

The first part of Romans 1:17 states the theme of the Book of Romans: righteousness.¹

In Romans 1:18–3:20 Paul shows men why they need this righteousness from God. He begins by stating that all men are under God’s wrath (1:18), and concludes by declaring all under sin and separated from God (3:9-12). This is a horrible, tragic picture of the true condition of man. It is not hard to understand that God’s wrath comes down upon men because all men are sinners and separated from God!

In Romans 1:18–3:20 Paul divides all humanity in terms of Jew and Gentile. He shows in 1:18-32 that all Gentiles, who had no specific or special revelation from God, are guilty sinners and stand in line for God’s judgment. In 2:1–3:8 he shows that the Jews, who were moral and religious, and who had much revelation from God, were sinners in line for God’s wrathful judgment just as the Gentiles.

Man must see his sinfulness before he seeks the Savior. He must see his sickness before he seeks a remedy. He must see his ruin before he longs for God’s righteousness, and he must see that he is lost before he will flee to the Son of God to be found.

WRATH FROM GOD (Romans 1:18)

In Romans 1:18-32 Paul categorizes all Gentiles of every time and place. The wrath of God burns hot against all Gentiles whether they have ever heard the gospel or not. Gentiles are lost because they are sinners separated from God, and by nature in active rebellion against God. Paul’s point is that all Gentiles have a concept of a supreme being, and at one time in history had a clear concept of the one true God. Because of sin they have reacted to the truth of monotheism and rejected whatever truth they once knew about God.

“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven.” The Greek word for “wrath” is orge, which means “an indignation that has risen gradually and become more settled.” This shows God’s “slow boil” towards man’s continual and progressive rebellion to him. It indicates that God is longsuffering, but that he will eventually bring judgment. This wrath “is being revealed.” It is a continual and never-ending process. God never tolerates sin, neither in time

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¹ For an outline of Romans refer to lesson 1 of this series.
nor eternity! There are many today who play “loose and free” with God. They think that because they are getting away with sin now God will not judge them in eternity.

There was once an unbelieving farmer who wanted to show a group of Christian farmers in a community in the west that he could have bigger and better crops than the Christians if he labored on Sundays. He had forty acres of land right across from the local church. This man would work all day Sunday while the Christians were in church worshiping the Lord. Through the spring, summer, and fall, he plowed, disked, harrowed, dragged, fertilized, drilled and cultivated the field, and finally cut, stacked, and husked the corn and carried it to the crib. Then he wrote a letter to the editor of the local newspaper pointing out that he had done all this on Sundays and yet had the highest yield per acre of any farm in the area. He asked the editor how the Christians could explain this. The editor printed the letter, but with great common sense followed it with the simple statement, “God does not settle His accounts in the month of October.” God settles His accounts in eternity!

“Against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.” Ungodliness speaks of sin towards God, man’s utter failure to acknowledge and submit himself to God. It is his constant indifference and rebellion to God. Unrighteousness is sin towards man. If man is capable of terrible acts towards God, how much more will he do terrible things to men! Men are guilty of great inhumanities one to the other, from crimes of murder to the destruction of reputation. Man lives only for himself, not for God or for others. God’s wrath is against men because of their sin. A holy God must judge sin in order to be consistent with his own character. If he did not, he would not be God!

“Who hold the truth in unrighteousness.” In this context, “truth” refers to the concept of a supreme being. Gentiles everywhere have this concept of God, although it may take different forms such as a force or an image.

Paul’s point is that men have enough understanding of God to be condemned but not enough light to be saved.

“Who hold.” The thought here is that men have a concept of God but, instead of seeking more truth, they suppress the truth they do have. They have knowledge, but they do nothing with it. They hold the truth in unrighteousness — “men love darkness rather than light.” Thus, they rationalize and mock the truth of God, and attempt to substitute anything for God in their lives. Yet, they are only acting according to their natures.

Any psychologist can tell you that when truth is repressed, or smothered and refused recognition, it creates serious tension and complexes. Men become ridden with guilt; they become restless; they become dissatisfied and torn. This is why we see in life the
phenomenon of people all over the world being continually beset by the same problems, troubled with guilt complexes, such as a restless unsatisfied spirit. Man’s reaction to this is to run even further from God, to crowd him out of life, even to reason him away if possible.

How can man have the truth of a supreme being and yet reject this truth? Man was created in the image of God, with will, intellect, and emotion. He has a will to choose, a mind to know, and emotions to love God. In the Garden of Eden man had as perfect or pure a concept of the true God as man can have. In Genesis 2:17, God put only one prohibition before Adam and Eve: they should not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. This test was to show man’s submission to and dependence on God. It was clearly stated that if man disobeyed God and ate the fruit, he would die both physically and spiritually. He would lose fellowship with God. Adam and Eve ate of the tree and at that moment died spiritually (lost fellowship with God) and began to die physically. They declared their independence of God, showing the failure of submission and a desire to please only themselves.

At this point the image of God in which man was created became marred with sin. Man’s will, intellect, and emotions were corrupted. Sin became a basic part of the immaterial man. The image was not lost, but sin had taken its toll on man’s personality. Man still retains God’s image, but is corrupt because of sin.

“Whoso sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God made he man” (Gen. 9:6).

“Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God” (Jas. 3:9).

God had to rescue or save Adam and Eve. He killed an animal and made coats of skin to cover them. This shedding of innocent blood pointed to Christ!

The Bible teaches that the sin nature, a basic part of man, has been passed on from our first parents, Adam and Eve, to the whole of the human race so that every person born into this world has a sin nature.

“Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me” (Ps. 51:5).

“Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others” (Eph. 2:3).
This sin nature in all men makes itself known in acts of rebellion. By nature, a person wants to be independent of God and to live only for himself. His inherent desire is not to be in submission to and under the authority of God, and this desire according to his nature. You never have to teach a child to be bad. Why? Because his nature is corrupt, and he will act badly simply by acting according to his nature.

From Adam and Eve to Noah, men had a concept of the one, true God, but it was corrupted because of sin. The longer the race went on, the more the concept of God was perverted. Finally, men became so corrupt that God destroyed the world by a flood. Only Noah and his family were saved — the wrath of God fell on the rest of humanity. After the flood, Noah and his family began to repopulate the earth. At first they had a sound concept of the one, true God, but as time went on, man’s sin caused him to move further and further from the true concept of God. Men became very corrupt, and were guilty of idolatry and other gross forms of worship. Today men have an inkling that there is a supreme being, but because of sin the concept of God as presented in the Bible has been lost. When men pervert the true concept of God, they are only acting according to their depraved, sinful natures. Whatever truth men have they reject or suppress because all are sinners by nature and choose to rebel and act independently of God. Thus God’s wrath comes down on all men everywhere because they are sinners.

A few men have maintained the true concept of God — those who have been saved through Christ Jesus.

CONCLUSION

When some people read Romans 1:18, they say that they don’t want this hard teaching of the Apostle Paul on God’s wrath; they want the moral and ethical teachings of the “meek and lowly Jesus.” This kind of thinking is fallacious, for Jesus Christ had more to say about God’s wrath and about hell than all the other New Testament writers put together. He taught that there is a literal place called hell, and that it is characterized as a place of unquenchable fire, a place where the worm never dies, and a place where there is screaming and gnashing of teeth. Hell is a reality — that is what Jesus taught.

In their mockery of God, some people say, “If there is a literal hell, I won’t mind going there because I’ll be there with all my friends and we will have a good old time together.” How arrogant and naive! Hell will be a place of misery and everlasting punishment. Man will have no happiness there for he will be separated from God’s grace for eternity. God knows hell is real, and is so serious about it that he has sent his Son Jesus Christ to die for the sins of men so that they might not have to go there.
While Christ made an atonement at the cross for men to have their sins forgiven, the forgiveness he purchased by his atonement will not be applied to you until you trust Christ as personal Lord and Savior. Until you believe the gospel and trust Christ you are under the wrath of God:

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

Righteousness from Christ or wrath from God, which will it be?
Are the Heathen Lost?
A Study on Romans 1:18-23

by Dr. Jack L. Arnold

Are the heathen lost? The answer to this question has never been a problem to Bible-believing Christians – the Bible, church history, and missions all give evidence that the heathen are lost, that they are under the wrath of God and are headed for eternal punishment without Christ.

There are many who have taken issue with evangelical Christians over the condition and destiny of the heathen. Some of these take the position that the Bible is not the word of God; they deny sin, hell, God’s wrath, and any form of punishment after this life. These folks are not Christians in any sense of the word; they think no one is lost. Another more subtle and dangerous position is taken by some who call themselves Christians. They say that they believe in the wrath of God and eternal punishment for those who have heard, but they do not believe that God will judge the heathen who have never heard about Christ. They say that the heathen are victims of their culture and environment, and that a God of love would never punish them for their sin. Such a statement shows a wrong understanding of the Bible, of God, and of sin. There is a good possibility that a person who holds this view is not a Christian at all, for he does not understand the true meaning of the death of Christ for sin.

Romans 1:18-23 deals with the problem of the heathen being lost. When we consider this subject, we need to remember that our standard of truth must be God’s Word, not our own fallen ideas or feelings about what God should do. Thinking emotionally without examining the Scriptures on the subject, many people think it is not fair for God to judge the heathen.

The portion of Scripture we are considering shows that all men are sinners, both Jews and Gentiles, and therefore are under the wrath of God. This section says nothing about salvation, but rather shows why all men are condemned before a holy God. Paul shows that if it can be proven that all men have sin to any degree at all, then a holy and just God must condemn all men. This has nothing to do with men hearing or not hearing the gospel. It has to do with the sinful condition of men’s hearts. Sadly, many preachers and teachers have soft-pedaled sin until the fear of God has vanished away.

The section of Scripture we are considering deals with the Gentiles in particular, showing that all are under God’s wrath, whether or not they have heard the gospel. The educated Greek, the cultured Roman, the scientific American, an ignorant bushman in the jungle – all are sinners. Paul shows that Gentiles are guilty because they have rejected the light that God has given them. He pictures the religious apostasy of Gentiles from the
original revelation of God that they possessed. He does not tell us when this apostasy took place, but he indicates that it is conclusive and that the effects continue even today.

There are four basic premises for understanding this passage of Scripture: 1) the section is not talking about salvation, but condemnation; 2) God has given all men some light about himself; 3) the light that men have has been rejected by them; 4) the problem is not what would happen if men sought more light. This last premise is another problem in itself. Paul concludes that “none seeketh after God” (Rom. 3:11). His point is that the natural man, because he is a sinner by nature, rejects whatever light God gives him. It is man’s very nature to reject God and to rebel against him.

REVELATION OF THE WRATH OF GOD (Romans 1:18)

“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness.” The wrath of God comes down on all men who are sinners, specifically here on Gentiles who hold the truth in unrighteousness. Paul looks back to primitive man, not savage man. Far back in the history of men (Gentiles), all had a concept of the true God — they were monotheists — but because men are sinners by nature, they corrupted the knowledge they had about God and rejected the true God of Scripture. They held truth about God, but suppressed it and rationalized this concept, loving darkness rather than light. Fallen men are sinful and have a bent or leaning towards sin, and they followed their sinfulness further from God.

I have many friends who are serving the Lord Jesus in some of the major colleges and universities in the country. The question of the heathen comes up quite often and my friends answer the question as to whether or not the heathen are lost by saying, “The destiny of the heathen ultimately rests in the hands of an all-powerful, all-wise, and all-loving God.” This answer usually soothes the questioner, and it contains nothing but true statements. Still, it is not an honest answer because it implies that God is not also a just God whose righteous wrath condemns sinners to hell. Paul tells us that the wrath of God comes down upon all Gentiles because they are sinners. Whether or not they have heard the gospel has nothing to do with the sin question. We must never hedge on the issue of the heathen.

REVELATION OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD (Romans 1:19-20)

“Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them.” The “because” points to the cause for the wrath of God upon the Gentiles. They had truth about God manifest in them (in their conscience or mind) which was given by God. However they willfully rejected this light. This was not ignorance, it was willful rejection of the truth.
We are not told that everything that can be known of God was revealed to the heathen, but simply that they had knowledge of God that rendered their rejection inexcusable. No one lives and dies without some revelation from God — a universal revelation which reaches everyone, everywhere, in every age. But whatever knowledge men have they reject willfully because they are sinners by nature.

“For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead.” God has revealed Himself in nature or creation, and this verse says that this is clearly seen by the Gentiles. What man can discover about God from creation is limited but accurate. It can be determined that God is supreme (eternal power) and is a being (Godhead). God is a supreme being! Creation can show us that God is one, good, wise, all-powerful, etc., but it can never show the extent of God’s love, mercy, and grace toward sinners. This is special revelation.

The revelation that the heathen has may be compared to elementary education. The special revelation of Jesus Christ and his work for sin may be compared to college education. The Gentiles had only an elementary revelation, but rejected even that.

From creation, enough knowledge may be gained to understand that God is every man’s Creator and should be worshiped as such. No man should fall into idolatry. The simple evidences of creation have been rejected. When one understands this, it is not hard to understand why God should reveal his wrath against men.

“So that they are without excuse.” A better translation is, “for the purpose that they are without excuse.” The thought is that God revealed himself to the Gentiles in nature that they might be without excuse. The rejection of this revelation simply pointed out the real problem — men are sinners and under the wrath of God. No Gentile can plead ignorance for his sinful condition because he has rejected God’s revelation in creation. This revelation is sufficient to show a man he is without excuse, but it does not follow that it is sufficient to bring him to salvation.

REJECTION OF KNOWLEDGE (Romans 1:21-23)

“Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God.” Although the Gentiles had a knowledge of God through creation and conscience, they refused to worship Him. This rejection was sin. The knowledge they had of God convicted them of their sinful condition, so they refused to believe it.

Paganism and idolatry are not steps in human evolution as man advances from slime to divinity. Heathenism is a declension, not an upward reach. The great pagan
nations once knew more than they do now. Man is not in the process of evolution towards God but is in revolution against God!

“Neither were thankful.” Men were hardened to God’s goodness and disrespectful of his person. They were ungrateful. Shakespeare well wrote,

“I hate ingratitude more in a man
Than lying, vainness, babbling, drunkenness,
Or any taint of vice.”

“But became vain in their imaginations [reasonings].” Men became empty of divine reasoning and purpose. This is intellectual rebellion; men do not want to submit to the authority of God, so they rationalized away God and their responsibility to him. People who reject God almost invariably do it in the name of education or progress.

“And their foolish heart was darkened.” Intellectual rebellion brings moral degeneracy, and so there is moral rebellion. The result is moral blindness. Why all this? Because men left their concept of God.

“Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools.” Because they pretended to be wise and turned from God, men’s folly became more obvious. They became fools when they left the true concept of God and chose idolatry. Can there be a greater folly than worshiping an image of a beast rather than worshiping God?

“And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things.” The degeneracy described is from man down to creeping things. Oh, the depravity of the human heart! Men show utter contempt for God – insult, impiety, disrespect. They would rather serve a creature than the Creator.

Behind all the great idolatrous systems is pure monotheism, but this intimate knowledge of God made men uncomfortable in their sins, so a host of lesser deities and divinities were invented as go-betweens, and eventually the knowledge of the true God was lost.

Men today even have idols besides those made of wood and stone. Germany got rid of God and accepted Hitler. Communism rejected divine revelation and made a god of the state. Americans reject God for materialism, sex, and prestige. However, a Christian can never justify idols of any kind. We must not represent God by anything corruptible.
ARE THE HEATHEN LOST?

Scripturally speaking, the heathen are the Gentiles, whether they have heard the gospel or not:

“But when it pleased God, . . . to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen” (Gal. 1:15-16).

“They gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision” (Gal. 2:9b).

Today, however, “heathen” has come to mean those who have never heard the gospel.

All heathen are lost because they have some knowledge of God even though they may not have heard the gospel. They reject what they know, preferring idolatry and sin rather than service to the Creator. When God said they “are without excuse” (Rom. 1:20), he meant what he said! He also declared that all men, Jew and Gentile, are under the condemnation of sin:

“As it is written, There is none righteous, no not one: There is none that seeketh after God” (Rom. 3:10-11).

“For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23).

Men cannot plead ignorance, injustice, cultural or environmental differences; they can only plead guilty. It is not a matter of belief, for men are condemned already.

“He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil” (John 3:18, 19).

Men are condemned because of sin but saved because of faith in Jesus Christ.

Some say that the heathen are not lost because they have not heard the gospel, and that it is only those who have heard the gospel and rejected it that are lost. If this is true we should never go to those who have never heard because we will only condemn them by presenting Christ, thereby robbing them of heaven which they already possess apart from Christ. How ridiculous! If the heathen are not lost, there is no need for the training of missionaries preachers, and teachers which the Bible obviously values so highly (cf. Rom. 10:13-15).
Romans 2:12 says, “For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law.” This is a definite reference to the heathen.

If all men are sinners and under the condemnation of God, then it is logical that no man deserves heaven – all deserve hell. If a single individual is saved from the just penalty of his sin, it is purely and simply because of God's mercy. The heathen in Africa are lost, and the heathen in America are lost. When anyone from either group is saved, it is because of God’s sovereign grace.

If the heathen are not lost, then there is no need for the gospel. “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth” (Rom. 1:16). If the heathen are not lost, there is no need for Christ, the only escape from sin and eternal punishment:

“Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me” (John 14:6).

“Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).

If a person can get to heaven apart from the cross, then the cross has no purpose. If I ever thought that the heathen could be saved apart from saving faith in Christ, I would leave the ministry and Christianity, for the death of Christ for sin would have no meaning.

CONCLUSION

God has made a general revelation of himself to all men in nature. Even though they are unable to escape the consciousness that he exists, men reject even this revelation and substitute many things for God. This general revelation cannot save a person, but God has made a special revelation of himself in Christ and in the Bible, and this revelation is able to save one from his sins and the lake of fire.

Will you ask God to help you move from your limited concept of God, which is not able to save you, to a personal and intimate knowledge of Christ who is able to give you a free and gracious salvation? God’s sovereign grace is able to save anyone who believes on Christ, whether he be a heathen in Africa or a heathen in America.
The Consequences of Rejecting Light
A Study on Romans 1:24-32

by Dr. Jack L. Arnold

There are some messages that a true minister of the gospel loves to present, but there are others he would rather bypass if possible. I would prefer to exclude this message, but as an expositor of the whole counsel of God, I must present it with conviction. I truly hope that you will not be offended because of the horrible and debased picture of man that Paul paints in these verses.

In Romans 1:18–3:20, Paul is setting out to prove that all men, Gentiles and Jews, are devoid of any righteousness before God. He seeks to prove that all men are guilty before the holy God, standing under his wrath, and will ultimately face eternal punishment unless they receive God’s only answer to the sin problem — the death of Jesus Christ for sin.

In Romans 1:18-32, Paul shows that all Gentiles are guilty before the holy God and are under his wrath. These Gentiles are of every kind: the educated Greek; the cultured Roman; the wealthy American; the scientific Russian; and the ignorant bushman. All have sinned and come short of the glory of God.

Paul’s point is that sometime in the past Gentiles had a true concept of God as he revealed himself to them in nature, but the Gentiles, being sinners by nature, rejected this revelation. They had enough revelation of God to be condemned, but not enough to be saved. Salvation is found only in Christ. They knew that God existed, but they did not like to retain thoughts of him because it brought conviction to their souls. Thus, they turned to idolatry. Gentiles were originally monotheistic, but because of sin they became polytheistic.

The process of rejection went something like this: 1) Men willfully rejected God as he had revealed himself to them. 2) They made up their own code to live by and thought up their own concept of God, creating a works-based system of salvation. 3) They then made substitutes for God: idols. 4) With hardened hearts to God and his laws, they became immoral.

The purpose of this message is to show what happens when men reject the light that God has given them. What has been said of the Gentiles is true of each one of us, for they are our ancestors, and we have all inherited a sinful nature from our original human parent Adam. What has been said of the Gentiles is true of nations as well as of individuals. I will try to apply this message to the Gentile world of Paul’s day, to us today as individuals, and to us today as a nation.
We must remember as we read this horrible list of sins that not all these things break out in every member of the human race, but that the seeds of all these things are an inherent part of the makeup of every one of us. One of the colossal blunders of the human race is the thinking that all men are naturally good, or that there is a divine spark in every man which must merely be fanned to flame.

Three times Paul said that God gave up the Gentiles for their rejection of the knowledge of God that they had (1:24,26,28).

GOD GAVE THEM UP TO IMMORALITY — Romans 1:24,25

“Wherefore.” The consequence of the rejection of the light God gave the Gentiles about himself was that God gave them up. He turned them over to their own evil deeds and let them destroy themselves through their own immorality. (See “the process of rejection” above.)

“God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonor their own bodies between themselves.” Because they rejected Him, God withdrew from the Gentiles his restraining grace and abandoned them to sin. Men abandoned God, so God abandoned men and left them to their own folly to destroy themselves through immorality. When men reject the light God has given them, God is under no obligation to give more light, and he has every right to abandon them for this rejection. Sin in the religious realm is often punished by sin in the moral realm. The rejectors then fell into immorality, making their own rules for morality and transgressing God’s laws for holiness of life. The result was sexual perversion of every kind, leaving God’s order for sex as stated in Scripture. At its root, sexual immorality is rejection of God.

There are those in responsible positions in the United States who are concerned about crime, immorality, and wanton living in this country. America has had a sound Christian foundation, but the nation today is rejecting her foundation and the result is immorality. Americans say, “We believe in God. We aren’t idolators!” Idolatry does not necessarily involve the worshipping of a stone or stick. It is any substitute for God (cf. Col 3:5 where covetousness is idolatry). Materialism, sex, prestige, and pleasure have become the gods of most Americans. All men are idolaters if they reject the God of Scripture.

“Who changed the truth of God into a (the) lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.” The Gentiles willfully exchanged the truth they had about God for a lie. This may refer to idolatry in general because the Old Testament called the gods of the Gentiles lies (Jer. 13:25). However, this may also refer to Satan who is the father of lies and idolatry. “Ye are of your father the devil,
When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it” (John 8:44). Men turned from God to Satan. They worshiped any created thing, even Satan, rather than worshiping God. What contempt!

GOD GAVE THEM UP TO UNNATURAL PRACTICES — Romans 1:26,27

“For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature.” The word for “women” here is a low form of the word “females,” indicating that they were lower than animals. The Greek says “female and male,” not “woman and man,” purposely withholding the more dignified term in order to show how contrary to nature and propriety their actions were. These women were guilty of lesbianism, unnatural relationships with other women.

“And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which was unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet.” Men became guilty of homosexuality. This verse teaches that at the root of homosexuality is the rejection of God. Men learned and intentionally devoted themselves to homosexuality, manifesting utter contempt for God and the order he created.

The Greeks and the Romans, while producing some brilliant minds, did not condemn homosexuality. Even Plato, the great Greek mind, practiced it. The practice was also a part of many pagan religions.

Few sins are more degrading than homosexuality. It injures men’s health, changes their dispositions, renders many of its practitioners effeminate, debases their character, brings horrible guilt, and produces great mental strain. America in particular is guilty as a nation of these same sins, just as were the Gentile nations of Paul’s day. Today our culture condones and even endorses the bold “Gay Liberation Movement,” gay churches, gay teachers, gay businessmen and more. Just as the homosexual Gentiles in Paul’s day, our modern homosexuals are trapped beneath the weight of their sin and desperately need the forgiveness offered in Christ.

GOD GAVE THEM OVER TO A REPROBATE (REJECTED) MIND — Romans 1:28-31

“And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge.” The Gentiles refused to retain an accurate concept of God. They loved their sin and wanted their own kind of god. They wanted to live as though the true God did not exist and as if they were not accountable to him. Men today talk of believing in a supreme being, but have their own
concept of God, conjecturing that he will tolerate their gross immorality. They reject the idea of a God of holiness and justice who will judge their sin. The picture Paul paints perfectly portrays most Americans, who want enough religion to be respected by all but little enough to be comfortable in their sins.

"God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient." The minds of the Gentiles were tested with the revelation of God, and they rejected God and failed the test. Men’s minds became so corrupted that they could no longer tell right from wrong.

"Being filled." These people were filled to the brim with all kinds of sins. What Paul says of these heathen is true in all its essential features of men of all generations. Wherever men have existed, they have shown themselves to be sinners, ungodly and unrighteous, and so justly exposed to the wrath of God. The implication is that these Gentiles committed these sins without caring whether they were sins or not. When men sin and do not know that they sin, they stand condemned before God. But when men sin and do not care that they sin, they await an even more terrible judgment.

In this representative list, Paul names twenty-three sins that were common in his day, and that are by no means uncommon today:

"Unrighteousness" is the injustice men do to each other. It is the desire to oppress others, to give treat them inhumanly.

"Fornication" is any kind of promiscuous sexual activity, before or after marriage. Cicero spoke of fornication as unblamable, a thing universally allowed and practiced, and which he had never heard condemned, either in ancient or modern times. Similarly, rarely is a voice raised against premarital sexual relationships today. This is the age of sexual freedom, of liberation from all God’s restraints and from “Puritanical teachings.” The cry for “new morality” is simply old sin, sugar-coated in philosophical terms.

Some time ago Peggy Hart, who was working with Campus Crusade for Christ on the campus of the University of Colorado, wrote:

"The attitude of complete detachment isn’t just toward Christ, it is toward anything except drinking, sex, and all forms of gross immorality. These kids are hollow and empty, trying to fill the vacuum inside with beer and sex, which makes them emptier. I’ve never seen it so out and out before. Daily I talk to girls who talk only of sex and sleeping with guys."
“I’m not trying to be sensational or alarming. This is reality — the cold, hard facts of what the ‘sweetest, nicest, little freshman’ is faced with daily.”

Christians are not against sex — they are for it — but always in the marriage union. In this union, and only in this union, God has ordained that sex should take place.

“Wickedness” is moral deficiency of every kind. As early as the summer of 1966, Senator Herman E. Talmadge of Georgia made this statement at a Senate Prayer Breakfast:

“For too long now, most of the people have been indifferent to the fact of crime. In the past decade, we have seen crimes of violence increase 40%, and crimes against property rise 61%, although our population growth was only 10%. There is a forcible rape every twenty-six minutes; a robbery every five minutes; an aggravated assault every three minutes; a car theft every single minute; a burglary every twenty-eight minutes.”

“Covetousness” is the desire to have more, an itching for more and more. This is materialism at its peak!

“Maliciousness” is evil done intentionally and with no fear of breaking the law. Sadly, we also live in an age where there is very little respect for law and authority.

“Full of envy” means coveting what someone else possesses, being discontent with another’s superiority or advantage, or trying to “keep up with the Joneses.”

“Murder” is taking another’s life with an evil motive. It seems today that our society protects the murderer and criminal so that men are no longer afraid of the law of the land.

“Debate” describes a contentious person, a troublemaker, one who has a chip on his shoulder. There is much social unrest in our land today.

“Deceit” is an act of deception or a deliberate attempt to mislead. In our day deception is part and parcel of politics, business, and even religion. It has become, quite simply, a way of life.

“Malignity” is a disposition that makes the worst of everything.

“Whisperers” are those who secretly tell information that will hurt the character of others.
“Backbiters” practice open and unrestrained gossip which maligns others. Chysostom said, “Gossip is worse than cannibalism.”

“Haters of God” are those who have carnal minds that are at “enmity against God” (Rom. 8:7). Today, men hate the true God of Scripture and often blaspheme against God openly and proudly.

“Despiteful” means insolent and insulting.

“Proud” describes an arrogant person, one who puts himself above others.

“Boasters” are pretenders and braggarts.

“Inventors of evil things” are people who constantly think up new vices, luxuries, tortures, etc. Unfortunately, in the name of entertainment, movie and television writers and producers often engage in this type of activity. Some people also try to stimulate their minds in this area by taking drugs.

“Disobedient to parents” describes disrespect for the family unit. Never before have children in this country flaunted their disobedience to parental authority as they do today.

“Without understanding” shows an inability to grasp or comprehend facts. People without understanding may rationalize their behavior. Alcoholics are a good example of this. There are more alcoholics in our country today than ever before.

“Covenant breakers” are those who are faithless and disloyal, those who do not keep their word. Today a man’s word means nothing. Neither does the word of a nation — treaties are often but scraps of paper.

“Without natural affections” is lacking the ability to love “loved ones,” such as family members. In the United States one out of every two marriages ends in divorce. A large percentage of homicides in this country take place in families or with “lovers.”

“Implacable” is the inability to get along with other people. It describes one who cannot be appeased.

“Unmerciful” means having no natural pity for suffering, being unforgiving and hard.
GOD’S JUDGMENT — Romans 1:32

“Knowing the judgment of God.” Those who do the sins listed above have a “still small voice” that tells them what they are doing is wrong and that they will eventually be judged by a righteous God.

“That they which commit such things are worthy of death.” The Gentiles, knowing God’s judgment, realize these things will bring moral, physical, and spiritual punishment and death. Yet they continue to sin because they “love darkness rather than light.”

“Not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.” The Gentile not only does his own sin, but also actually delights, applauds, and approves when others do the same thing. “Misery loves company,” and “birds of a feather flock together.” Men rationalize away their sin because “everyone is doing it.” This salves the conscience, but it will not ward off the wrath of God which burns “against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men” (Rom. 1:18).

CONCLUSION

I have painted a bleak picture of the Gentiles, our ancestors if we are not Jewish, and have shown that the crimes and sins of these ancients are the very same ones that plague us and our country today. Why? Because men are still rejecting the light that God has given them. America is rapidly becoming the kind of society in which the early church. The Greek and Roman cultures were very corrupt, but “where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.” True, this is a dark day for our country; our society has never needed Jesus Christ more than it does this very hour. It may be that God is about to abandon our nation for rejecting the gospel. Yet this can still be a glorious day for the gospel, for men today desperately need the forgiveness of sin and a purpose for living which only Christ can give. Christ alone can save a person or a nation from destroying itself through deep involvement and pleasure in sin.

The early church was made up of vile sinners who had been saved by grace (1 Cor. 6:9-11). How many people today would give anything for a new start in life because they have messed up their own lives so much? If only they could find forgiveness for the guilt that plagues their souls! To all who flee to him for salvation, Christ says, “Your sins are forgiven. Go and sin no more.”
You Too Are Guilty, Oh Moral Man!
A Study on Romans 2:1-5

by Dr. Jack L. Arnold

In Romans 1:18–3:20, Paul shows us that all men are guilty before a holy God because all are sinners. The fact of one’s sinfulness leads to the inevitable result of God’s judgment on him for all eternity, unless he receives God’s only answer to the sin problem: Christ’s death on the cross for sin. Men are lost without Christ.

Your best resolutions
must wholly be waived,
Your highest ambitions
be crossed.
You need never think you
are going to be saved,
Until you have learned
you are lost.

Picture a courtroom scene: God is the judge, the Apostle Paul is the prosecutor, and each individual is a defendant. As Paul brings men before the bar of justice, each is pronounced a sinner before God, guilty and deserving punishment. When each person pleads his good works, the judgment is “Guilty!”

In Romans 1:18-32, Paul brought the Gentiles before God and proved them sinners because they had been given light and had rejected that light because they were sinners by nature. These pagan Gentiles turned to religion, idolatry, and immorality, and became guilty of the most hideous sins.

In Romans 2:1-16, Paul brings the moral man before a holy God to show that he is also guilty and stands in line for God’s judgment. In context, this section seems to apply to the moral Jew who was liberal in his theology and religion (although the Jew is not mentioned until verse 17), but Paul seems to take it beyond the moral Jew and to apply it to all moral people everywhere. There were some among the Gentiles, and many among the Jews, to whom the descriptions of sins in chapter 1 did not fully apply because these people had not given themselves over to idolatry and hideous vice. So in this section, Paul proceeds to show the moral or ethical man that he too is a sinner. These are the “do-gooders” and Paul shows that even they are sinners, not because of unrighteousness, but because of self-righteousness! Paul shakes them from this self-righteousness by showing that judgment is their just desert unless they repent. He does not feed the ego of the do-gooder, but drives home judgment.
THE CHARGE — Romans 2:1

“Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man.” Paul says that the moral or ethical man is without excuse, and warns that judgment will come upon the cultured, refined, and civilized sinner, whether Jew or Gentile. The moral man is simply a refined sinner or a respectable sinner.

“Whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself.” This tells us why the moral man is without excuse. He passes judgment on the horrible acts of sin committed by others, and thinks himself so much better than they. He is guilty of pride! He condemns himself as he looks down his nose at people who do gross sins. He may think himself superior in race, civilization and culture, wealth, education, or ethics in general. Any person who has consciously or unconsciously judged and condemned an immoral person has proven himself a sinner under God’s wrath. If the moral man can judge those beneath him by his moral standards, then God, who is above him, can certainly judge him by His standards.

Fear of judgment is the most potent teaching to bring a self-righteous person to Christ. There are two basic reasons men turn to Christ: 1) they have a sense of need; 2) they have a fear of judgment.

I once heard a dear Christian lady give her testimony. She said that as an unsaved person she had possessed no outward vices. She had been happy. She had felt that she had purpose in life. She had had good mental and physical health, and a good husband. She had liked the life she lived and had seen no real need for Christ. One time she had heard a preacher speak on hell, and she had laughed to think that any man could hold such a ridiculous belief. She thought that all men were basically good, and that a loving God would not judge anyone, least of all her. But later, in the quietness of her room, she could not throw out the possibility that she might be judged and cast into hell. The thought haunted her day and night. It was out of the fear of facing eternal judgment, and that alone, that she turned to Jesus Christ for salvation. Of course, now that she has received Christ, she sees how wrong she really was as an unsaved person. She praises the Lord for preachers who preach on the realities of judgment and hell because it shakes up those who are complacent and self-righteous.

Men tend to judge their lives by the lives of other people. When they do, most see themselves as better than others. However, when we compare out lives to a holy God, there is no question that “all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.” When we are walking down a street among other people, we can see who is tall and who is short, and we can make all kinds of comparisons. If we look down on these same people from the top of
a tall building, however, they all appear to be the same height. When God views us, even though we all sin to different degrees, he sees us all as sinners — we all fall short.

“For thou that judgest doest the same things.” A moral person must be condemned because he practices to some degree the sins of the heathen Gentiles. The sin may be only in thought, but it is there nevertheless.

“Ye have heard that it was said by them of old tine, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment; and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire” (Matt. 5:21,22).

“Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart” (Matt. 5:27,28).

The sin may also be actually practiced, but covered with a cloak of education, social prestige, culture, etc. Sin is relative for the moral man — it is what he makes it.

A construction worker walked into a fried chicken restaurant and ordered two chicken dinners to take out. Instead of a sack with his order, the clerk accidentally handed him a sack containing the day’s receipts, $825. When the man and a lady friend arrived at Newport Beach to enjoy their picnic dinners, he discovered the money. He promptly drove back to the restaurant to return it. When the restaurant manager started to report to the police that the money had been returned, the construction worker said, “Please don’t use my name. This lady is not my wife.”

THE FIRST PRINCIPLE OF JUDGMENT — Romans 2:2-4

Paul lists seven basic principles God uses in judging the moral man: 1) truth (2:2); 2) goodness (2:4); 3) accumulated guilt (2:5); 4) works (2:6); 5) impartiality (2:11); performance (2:13); and 7) God’s omniscience (2:16).

“But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things.” Paul acknowledges that men are sure of God’s judgment upon the evil acts of the heathen. The moral man is sure that unrighteousness should be punished, but he does not see himself as unrighteous because he is comparing himself to other men. The moral man is confident that he will escape God’s judgment because he is a good person. He rarely
thinks of himself as guilty, but knows others should be judged. When stopped by a policeman a fellow said, “Officer, what are you bothering me for? Why don’t you go out and catch some of those teenage speedsters and leave us law abiding citizens alone!” We expect God to punish others who need it, but not us.

The judgment of God will be according to truth. It will be fair, according to the reality of the facts of the case. It will be according to God’s holy nature and character. He will consider the facts and will not be prejudiced. The person who says in self-righteousness, “I just cast my life into the hands of a just God who knows I have done the best I can,” is deluded. God’s truth penetrates right through man’s sham and hypocrisy!

God is a realist. Psychologists say that we all have a mental image of ourselves, and that we usually think ourselves to be quite nice people. But God sees us as we really are.

“And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God?” Man puts up a defense mechanism and rationalizes the judgment of God. He can actually do or think the very things for which he condemns others, but still think that somehow he will escape the judgment of God. He feels himself to be so much better than others. The reasoning of the moral man is but human speculation. God tells us that the good man will be judged. He shall not escape God’s judgment. If he has judged someone else even once, criticized even one time, ever thought an evil thought, or practiced any kind of sin — stretching the truth, losing his temper, gossiping, etc. — he falls into the category of “sinner” and stands under God’s wrath. There is no escape from this judgment; it is inevitable; it is certain. One who continues in the sin of self-righteousness cannot escape this judgment!

THE SECOND PRINCIPLE OF JUDGMENT — Romans 2:4

“Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering?” The moral man shows his contempt for God by despising God’s goodness. He may or may not give intellectual assent to God, but he takes all the credit for everything good that happens. God deals with all men as His creatures in common grace — He provides home, children, daily food, prosperity, friends, health, etc. With the very breath that God gives him, the moral man prides himself on his efforts and accomplishments.

The moral man despises God’s forbearance. God delays His punishment so men may repent and turn to Him, and the moral man mocks this. He thinks there will be no judgment. But the moral man shall not have the last word; there is no escape from God’s judgment. The moral man despises the longsuffering of God who is patiently holding back His judgment so that man might turn to Christ, but man only laughs at the concept that God is a God of wrath.
“Not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?” The good acts of God are designed to bring the moral man to repentance, but man is willfully ignorant of this, living only for himself and his morality. To repent means to change one’s mind. God is waiting for men to change their minds about Jesus Christ, lest they have to face His inevitable wrath. Rejection of God’s goodness is enough to bring the wrath of God upon men, and if men do this, God will judge them by that same goodness.

THE THIRD PRINCIPLE OF JUDGMENT — Romans 2:5

“But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath.” Because he is constantly despising God’s goodness, the moral man is storing up guilt which will be credited to his account at the judgment day. He does not want to know the truth — he hardens his heart to the fact that he is a sinner. He goes on living in a dream world of fantasy about his own condition and his responsibility to God. Hardening of the arteries may take one to an early grave, but hardening of the heart against God will take one to the lake of fire!

“Against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.” Judgment is coming for all men, moral and immoral. It will be a righteous judgment, according to truth. There is no escape!

CONCLUSION

God will judge all men, moral and immoral, self-righteous and unrighteous, good and bad:

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

“And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee” (Acts 24:25).

The thought of judgement should chill one’s blood.

The truth of the Scriptures is that no man need stay condemned and no man need fear death or judgment. God has made a provision in the death of Christ whereby He can be just
and judge sin and sinners, and yet forgive sinners if they trust in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior:

“For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil” (John 3:17-19).

The moral man must realize that God does not and will not save those who think themselves to be good. He saves only those who acknowledge that they are sinners: “I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance” (Luke 5:32).

The prophet Ezekiel, when pleading with Israel to repent lest they fall into judgment, said:

“Say unto them, As I live saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die?” (Ezek. 33:11).

Your answer must be that you die because you have refused to accept God’s one solution to your sin problem. God’s answer is Jesus Christ.
Principles of Judgment
A Study on Romans 2:1-16

by Dr. Jack L. Arnold

Daniel Webster was once asked, “What is the greatest thought that has ever entered your mind?” He replied at once, “My responsibility to my Maker!” Like Webster, each person born into this world should understand that he is responsible to his Maker. Men must prepare now to meet their God because they most certainly will meet Him: “Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel” (Amos 4:12).

Romans 1:18–3:20 proves all men to be sinners who are guilty before a holy God. These chapters do not speak about salvation — the subject at hand is condemnation! Romans 2:1-16 deals specifically with the moral Jew, but applies directly to all men everywhere. Even the moral man is guilty before God. He is the respectable sinner or the do-gooder. He may not be guilty of gross unrighteousness as the pagan Gentiles described in the first chapter, but he is guilty of self-righteousness. Because he is proud of being better than other people, he criticizes others and becomes guilty of the sins of pride and criticism. In these verses Paul drives home the fact that judgment is coming upon these individuals. The fear of judgment can shake a self-righteous and self-sufficient person out of complacency about his relationship to God and Christ.

There are many wonderful, good, moral people in this world who do not know Christ as personal Lord and Saviour. They may be outwardly humble, but inwardly proud because they cannot bring themselves to think that they are sinners separated from God. No self-righteous person will be saved until he admits that he is a sinner. Why? Men cannot be saved (delivered) until they see that they have a need for the Saviour.

In this section Paul sets forth seven principles by which all men, even the moral, will be judged by God. In the preceding lesson we saw three of these principles:

*According to Truth:* God’s judgment will be in strict accordance with His holy nature. It will be according to the true facts of the case, completely free of prejudice.

*According to God’s Goodness:* God has blessed moral men in common grace — friends, health, children, money, etc. — and this should cause them to repent, acknowledging their sinful condition and turning to God through Christ. But they reject God’s goodness, so God will judge them by that goodness.
According to Accumulated Guilt: Men continue to harden their hearts toward God and to live only for themselves. Thus they are simply storing up guilt for the final judgment day. Men condemn themselves by their own rejection of truth.

JUDGMENT ACCORDING TO WORKS — Romans 2:6-8

In this section Paul contrasts knowing and doing. His point is that works evidence or demonstrate either the reception or rejection of truth. Does the moral man really do what he says? Paul maintains that deeds reveal the true attitude of the heart.

“Who will render to every man according to his deeds.” Every man will be judged according to his works, and those works will prove inadequate for salvation.

Some take this verse out of context and think it means that God will reward all men for their works. This is a judgment passage, not a blessing passage. Many people think God has a scale in which he weighs a person’s good and bad deeds, and that if the good outweigh the bad, the person will go to heaven. This simply is not the biblical picture. Good works cannot get a person to heaven:

“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast” (Eph. 2:8-9).

“But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags” (Isa. 64:6).

Men will ultimately be judged by even their good works. Works that are “good” in human terms are still not good enough to be meritorious for salvation. All those works will be insufficient to save:

“And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man
according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire” (Rev. 20:11-15).

“To them who by patient continuance [perseverance] in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life.” Here Paul contrasts the works of the saved with those of the unsaved. He is not speaking of how a person is saved, but of the evidence or outward demonstration of an inward reality. Only the saved man is producing works acceptable to God, but even these are not able to save. The Christian will never be judged for his sins because Christ has paid that penalty, but he will be judged for his works. “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad” (2 Cor. 5:10). These works can never bring salvation.

The unsaved man will be judged for his sins and his works. He will plead his works, but there will be no forgiveness for his sins.

The believer has immortality, glory and eternal life in Christ, but by exercising faith in his daily life he seeks the reality of these things he already possesses.

“But unto them that are contentious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath.” Those who do not obey the truth, that is, the light God has given them, stand under the wrath of God. God will judge according to the result of obedience or the lack of obedience to truth in a person’s life.

JUDGMENT ACCORDING TO IMPARTIALITY — Romans 2:9-11

“Tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also the Gentile.” The wrath of God is coming upon all those who do evil. It is upon every soul; none will be free of this judgment. No person can plead innocent; all will know themselves to be guilty. This judgment will come first on the Jew and then on the Gentile. Why? Both have rejected God’s light, but the Jew had so much more light. Possibly judgment of the Jews will be greater!

“But glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile.” These blessings are for those who give genuine evidence of inner salvation by their good works. Possibly the Jew who has responded to Christ will be rewarded before Gentiles who have received him.
“For there is no respect of persons with God.” God is holy and just, and shows no favoritism towards any man. His judgment is impartial! Background, education, position, or privilege will not alter God’s judgment on any man. Neither breeding nor ancestry will help. The notorious and the respectable will be judged without partiality. Men will not be able to influence or buy off God.

I remember reading the story of a traffic policeman who pulled a motorist over to the side of the road and asked for the driver’s license. As the officer read, he said, “This license says that you have to wear glasses while you are driving. Where are your glasses?”

The driver, who was obviously not wearing glasses, pointed to his eyes and said, “I have contacts.” The policeman said, “I don’t care who you know or what contacts you have, you are going to get a ticket!”

There are too many of us, it seems, who think that if we have contacts with the right people, we can buy off the judgment we deserve. This does not work with God. No one can influence him so that he will go easy on us. God is without partiality!

JUDGMENT ACCORDING TO OPPORTUNITY — Romans 2:12-15

One might agree that it is right to judge the immoral Gentile, but still ask if it is right to judge the moral Gentile who never heard of Christ. Both Jew and Gentile will be judged by the law they possess. The case can be stated like this: The Jew has the written revelation of the Old Testament including the Mosaic Law, and the Gentile has natural revelation including the law of his conscience. Both break the laws they have and show themselves to be sinners condemned by their own laws. Therefore, God will judge them because a holy God must judge sin.

“For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law.” The heathen who does not have the Mosaic Law will perish without that law. Note well, this verse says the heathen will perish!

“And as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law.” God will judge the Jew by the written Law of Moses.

“For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified.” The doer of the law is hypothetical, for no one but Christ has ever kept the Mosaic Law perfectly.
“For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves.” The most pagan Gentile has a sense of right and wrong. He has a natural impulse or native instinct concerning many of the things written in the Mosaic Law — natural affections, respect for persons, care for others, murder, etc. — but he cannot live by this law of his conscience.

Every society, whether a pagan group in Africa or the Mafia in America, has its own moral code, but men break their own moral codes. Who has ever lived up to his own ideals? Who has never deliberately done wrong at some time? God will not judge men by some artificial standard, but by the very standard man himself accepts. He measures us by our own yardstick and we come up short every time!

“Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another.” The law of conscience either accuses man of his wrong or else makes excuses for the wrong that is done. Either way it proves that all men are sinners!

JUDGMENT ACCORDING TO GOD’S OMNISCIENCE — Romans 2:16

“In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel.” God’s omniscience will scrutinize every man’s life, and God alone knows the inner recesses of the heart: “Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight; but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do” (Heb. 4:13). God will judge us according to the secrets of our hearts that no one else in all the world knows. These are the secret things that we wouldn’t tell another soul about: our thought life, our secret sins! Samuel Johnson said, “Every man knows that of himself that he would not tell his dearest friend.”

Christ will be the one through whom God judges the world: “Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead” (Acts 17:31). This was not known in the Old Testament.

CONCLUSION

Why has God given these certain principles of judgment? Why has he been so strict to point up the fact that all men are sinners? Is it because he wants you to despair? Is it because he wants you to realize that when you stand before him there is no chance? Does he tell you this to torment you? No! God has recorded in Romans 2 what we all already know
about ourselves — that we fall short of our own standards and also fall short of his standards, proving ourselves sinners.

He tells us that we are sinners and under judgment so that we might turn away from ourselves and give serious consideration to the gospel of his Son, Jesus Christ. In the gospel of Jesus Christ, God has made a way by which he can offer a righteousness which is perfectly acceptable to him — a righteousness that we cannot obtain ourselves, but which has been obtained for us by the work of another, Jesus Christ. In the gospel there is a way by which we may stand before God perfectly acceptable to him, without any doubt, without any possibility of failure!

God’s wrath is balanced by God’s love, and God’s love is seen at the Cross, where Christ died for the sins of men:

“Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood” (Rev. 1:5b).

“Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins” (1 John 4:10).

“And the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me” (Gal 2:20b).

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

Have you utterly cast yourself upon the love of God and the person of Christ to save you from your sins and the wrath to come?
Judgment for the Religious Man
A Study on Romans 2:17-29

by Dr. Jack L. Arnold

In Romans 1:18-3:20, Paul showed all men to be sinners and guilty before a holy God, lacking any kind of righteousness that would make them acceptable before God and needing a spiritual righteousness that only Christ could give them. He proved the pagan Gentiles guilty before God because they had rejected the light God had given them and had broken their own self-made laws. He also proved the moral Jews and Gentiles guilty before God because they were self-righteous and were proud because they did not do the grosser sins of the pagans.

In Romans 2:17–3:8 Paul shows that the religious man is guilty before God. He uses the Jews as his prime example: they had the Mosaic Law and broke it, proving themselves sinners; they did not practice what they preached, they professed but did not possess; and they had outward form but no inward reality.

The context of this passage is about religious Jews, but its truths may be applied to any and all religious people. The word “religion,” in its narrowest sense, may be applied only to Christianity, for Christianity is the one true religion. However, in its broadest sense, religion refers to any works system whereby a person tries to gain merit before God. In this sense, religion is the enemy of Christianity.

Carl Marx said, “Religion is the opiate of the people!” With this statement I wholeheartedly agree. Ritual, ceremony, vanity, pride, etc., which characterize religious people, can certainly put them to sleep. But Christianity is not just a religion — it is a living, real, vital, and dynamic relationship with Jesus Christ. Religion is not just Mohammedanism, Confucianism, Zen Buddhism, etc. Religion can be seen in Judaism, Roman Catholicism, Protestantism, and Fundamentalism — it is possible to have perfect doctrine and a putrid heart. There are many people today who are attached to form, ceremony, liturgy, and religious precepts and practices who are at the same time aliens to the grace of God. They have church without Christ; religion without regeneration; ritual without redemption from sin; outward liturgy without inward reality; and form of service without fear of God.

When God begins to probe the hearts of religious people, they begin to throw up the usual religious jargon about church, good works, baptism, etc. These are just smoke screens or excuses, for the real issue is Christ.
RELIGION BOASTS OF ITS CREEDS — Romans 2:17-18

“Behold, thou art called a Jew, and restest in the law, and makest thy boast of God, and knowest his will, and approvest the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law.” God chose the Jews as his people, gave them special revelation in the Mosaic Law, and separated them from all the nations of the earth. He did this out of his love and grace, and this should have humbled them. Instead, it made them extremely proud. The Jews became guilty of national pride.

There are many people today who plead their creeds when someone speaks to them about their personal relationship with Christ. They say, “I’m a Presbyterian,” or “I’m a Baptist,” or “I’m a Methodist.” Maybe they are hyper-spiritual and say, “I’m an independent!” Men are proud of their churches and their creeds. Some actually feel that God will accept them because they go to a particular church or hold to a certain theology. In his grace God has given a great background to many denominations — Latimer to the Anglicans, Wesley to the Methodists, Calvin to the Presbyterians, Luther to the Lutherans — but this is no cause for pride. The recitation of the Apostle’s Creed or the Lord’s Prayer, or the carrying of a respected reference Bible to church does not impress God. These things may fool men, but they do not fool God in the least. His question is always, “What effect does the truth have on you? You have knowledge, but what does it do to you? How does it affect you? Does it make you more rigid and unbending, more legalistic and demanding, or does it make you loving and honest and more compassionate for people?”

RELIGION BRAGS OF ITS GOOD WORKS — Romans 2:19-20

“And art confident that thou thyself art a guide of the blind, a light of them which are in darkness, and instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, which hast the form of knowledge and of the truth in the law.” With the privileges given the Jews came certain responsibilities. The Jews were to take the knowledge of Jehovah God to others. They were to be guides, to give light, to instruct and to teach. Instead they took a “holier than thou” attitude, thought themselves better than Gentiles, and became sickeningly pious. They were proud of their position and good works. They had the outward form of the law and held it to the letter, but there was no inner reality of Jehovah God. The law was to point them to God and to Christ, but they stopped short at the facts of the law and did not know its reality. They had the law but no inward experience with God.

When presented with their need for Jesus Christ, many people today will talk about their church membership, show their baptismal certificate, say they are doing the best they can, talk about how nice they are to others, or enumerate how many times they go to church. This attitude shows that they are guilty of pride. Some in Fundamentalist circles today feel
they have all the truth and everyone else is apostate. They keep, or think they keep, the Bible to the letter, but they are hard, cold, cantankerous, divisive, and proud. They separate themselves from anyone who does not think just like they do! I rather think that many Fundamentalist churches are filled with people who hold the law to the letter, but have no inner reality of Christ. We are told in 2 Timothy 3:5 that in the last days of the church before the Lord returns, men will have a form of godliness but deny the power thereof. There may be an outward show of Christianity with no inner reality!

RELIGION IS HYPOCRITICAL — Romans 2:21-23

Paul’s point was that the Jews were guilty of the very things they preached against. He asked five questions, all anticipating an affirmative answer. The glaring inconsistency between profession and practice is brought out in these verses:

“Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself?” Yes, they did not teach themselves! The Jews, thinking themselves teachers, actually needed to learn and practice the law they were teaching others.

“Thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal?” Yes, they stole as well. Stealing takes many different forms. It involves taking objects, taking time, and failing to give liberally of one’s monies. A religious person might not rob a bank, but still fail to give his money liberally to the Lord’s work.

“Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery?” Yes! Adultery is committed with the mind as well as the body: “But I say unto you, that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart” (Matt. 5:28). I fear many ministers and priests are guilty of adultery!

“Thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege?” Yes! The Jews, by and large, hated idolatry, but they still robbed God of his honor by disobeying him. Men today go piously to church on Sunday and live like the devil the other six days of the week, making a mockery of God.

“Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonourest thou God?” Yes! The Jews held to the law, but continually broke it by their attitudes and actions, proving themselves guilty sinners before God.
Paul’s point is that it is neither the possession nor the exposition of the law that counts, but the application of it. Many people go to church and soak in the message, but do nothing with it. This is religion at its best!

RELIGION BRINGS DISGRACE TO GOD — Romans 2:24

“For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you, as it is written.” Because of the hypocritical acts of the Jews, the name of God was mocked among the Gentiles. They concluded that the God of the Jews was like the Jews themselves, and so they wanted nothing to do with Jehovah. Religious people actually hurt the cause of Christ. In their colonial exploitation, men have conquered, enslaved, starved, dominated, and murdered other people, and have done it in the name of God. During the Spanish Inquisition, multiplied thousands were slaughtered by the Roman Catholic Church in the name of Christ. The squabbling and divisiveness of modern Fundamentalists makes people want to avoid them. People look at the lives of many who profess Christ and want no part of it. People profess more than they possess.

RELIGION CLINGS TO OUTWARD RITUAL — Romans 2:25-29

In this section, Paul deals with the subject of circumcision and strips the Jews of their last refuge. They thought that the physical sign of circumcision, symbolizing membership in national Israel, guaranteed their salvation. Paul showed that true circumcision is of the heart (spiritual), and that physical circumcision is only an outward symbol which is of no effect without the spiritual reality.

“For circumcision verily profiteth, if thou keep the law: but if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision. Therefore if the uncircumcision keep the righteousness of the law, shall not his uncircumcision be counted for circumcision? And shall not uncircumcision which is by nature, if it fulfil the law, judge thee, who by the letter and circumcision dost transgress the law?” Circumcision was only profitable for a Jew if he had the inward reality and desired to keep the law. Such a desire could only come if one had been regenerated. Those who kept the law of conscience, without the physical sign of circumcision, would actually judge the Jews who had the Mosaic Law and did not keep it. What a blow to the pride of Jews to think that Gentiles could judge them!

“For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.” The thing that really matters is a faith relationship towards God. It is an attitude of faith; it is of the
heart, not the flesh. Men should never trust in outward ritual or ordinances for salvation. Ritual without regeneration of the heart is only religion. True ritual is actions instead of words. If there is no heart meaning, ritual is cold, hard and lifeless.

CONCLUSION

Many folks want enough religion to make them comfortable, but shun the reality of Christianity which might make them uncomfortable.

Millions of Christians live in a sentimental haze of vague piety with soft organ music trembling in the lovely light from stained glass windows. Their religion is a thing of pleasant emotional quivers, divorced from the intellect, and demanding little except lip service to a few harmless platitudes. I suspect that Satan has called off the attempt to convert people to agnosticism. If a man travels far enough away from Christianity, he is always in danger of seeing it in perspective and deciding that it is true. It is much safer from Satan’s point of view to vaccinate a man with a mild case of Christianity so as to protect him from the real thing. (Chad Walsh, *Early Christians of the Twenty-first Century*).

In his book, *Basic Christianity*, John R. W. Stott wrote:

“You can believe in Christ intellectually and admire Him; you can say your prayers to Him through the keyhole (I did for many years); you can push coins at Him under the door; you can be moral, decent, upright and good, you can be religious and pious; you can have been baptized and confirmed; you can be deeply versed in the philosophy of religion; you can be a theological student and even an ordained minister — and still not have opened the door to Christ. There is no substitute for this.”

Jesus Christ said of religious people, “This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me” (Matt. 15:8). The way to have a proper heart relationship with Christ, that is, to be spiritually circumcised, is to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sin, for eternal life, and for a righteousness that makes one acceptable before God. Real, living, dynamic Christianity can be had:

“If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for
the same Lord over all is nigh unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Rom. 10:9-13).
How Shall God Judge the World?
A Study on Romans 3:1-8

by Dr. Jack L. Arnold

In Romans 1:18-3:20 the Apostle Paul presents his logical proof that all men are sinners, devoid of any kind of righteousness in themselves that would make them acceptable to a holy God. He proves the pagan, the moral man, and the religious man guilty and standing in line for God’s judgment. One reason Paul is so methodical in proving all men sinners and under God’s wrath is so they will look outside of themselves for help. He wants them to look to the person of Jesus Christ who will give them a righteousness that is acceptable before God. This is spiritual righteousness that is accredited to a person’s account the moment he believes on Jesus Christ: “And be found in him [Christ], not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith” (Phil. 3:9).

In Romans 2:17–3:8 Paul shows that the Jew is guilty before God. In a previous lesson we saw that the possession of the Mosaic Law did not exempt the Jew from God’s judgment. The very law he possessed he could not keep. Thus, he was a sinner and stood in line for God’s judgment. Paul also showed the Jew that circumcision in the flesh is only a symbol of what should be an inner reality. The Jew could be outwardly circumcised and not have a true heart relationship to God. Many were trusting their circumcision, their ancestry and law-keeping, for salvation rather than trusting in the holy, righteous and loving God. Paul reduced the Jew to a position of equality with the Gentile. Both were sinners. This brought up the problem of whether there was any advantage to being a Jew at all if possession of the Mosaic Law and having the sign of circumcision could not save.

The section we are dealing with in this lesson is not easy to interpret, and the essence of it will again be taken up in Romans 9. Here I will give the gist of the argument and take up the related subject of eternal punishment.


“What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God.” The Jews had a tremendous advantage because they had been given the Old Testament, written revelation from God. God had also given them many wonderful promises: they were to have a great land, be a great nation, the world would be blessed through them, and the Messiah was to come through them. But this made the Jews proud, and they were not responsible in carrying out the Word, either in their own lives or in giving it to others.
There is an application for us. Today God has given Christians His written revelation in the Bible. Will we be like the Jews and become proud, or will this make us humble and cause us to feel the responsibility for sharing the Word with others? Jews, who had much light and did nothing with it, will have the greater judgment. The Protestant world has been given much light too, and if we do nothing with it, we too will have the greater judgment.

THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD — Romans 3:3-4

“For what if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect? God forbid; yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged.” What if the Jews did not believe and were not faithful to God? Would this destroy the faithfulness of God? Would he be like the Jews and forget his judgment upon them? No! God is true and every man a liar. Paul quotes the Old Testament to show that when men judge God they always find him to be true to his nature, and his judgment to be just.

God will not respect the religious heritage of the Jews. One’s religious background cannot make him a Christian. I have spoken to people about their need of Christ as personal Saviour and they reply, “My father is a Baptist minister,” or, “My sister is a fine Christian,” or, “I’m the daughter of a Methodist father.” It makes no difference if your grandmothers, grandfathers, mother and father — all your relatives — are Christians, because salvation cannot be inherited from kinfolks. You must be saved through the new birth and by trusting in Jesus Christ.

History has recorded that none the children of the famed evangelist D.L. Moody ever came to know Jesus Christ as personal Lord and Saviour. They could not get to heaven on their father’s reputation as a Christian.

THE JUDGMENT OF GOD - Romans 3:5, 6

“But if our unrighteousness commend the righteousness of God, what shall we say? Is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance? (I speak as a man) God forbid: for then how shall God judge the world?” If man’s sin stirs God’s righteousness against that sin, is God unrighteous for bringing his wrath upon sin? How wrong it is to speak of God as being unrighteous, for he is perfect righteousness! His judgment will be just. After all, God is going to judge the world in righteousness. Judgment upon sin is inevitable!
JUDGMENT BRINGS GLORY TO GOD — Romans 3:7-8

“For if the truth of God hath more abounded through my lie unto his glory; why yet am I also judged as a sinner? And not rather, (as we be slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say,) Let us do evil, that good may come? whose damnation is just.” Paul shifts to the first person to soften his argument which is: If sin, which is part of the plan of God, brings glory to God (and it certainly will), then God will not judge me for my sin (which is a wrong conclusion). Thus, the more man sins, the more glory God is going to get, so let us keep sinning. Everything is going to turn out all right; the end justifies the means! The person who argues like this has a just condemnation! Sin will bring glory to God, but a holy God will judge sin and man is always held responsible for his acts! God must judge the evils of man’s heart.

I remember reading an illustration about a sailing ship on a voyage with a cargo of huge cannons. These guns were chained down so they could not move about as the ship rolled or tossed. A sailor carelessly managed to release one of the guns one day and did not properly fasten the chain again so the gun was free. A storm came up and the gun began to roll back and forth in the hold of the ship. As the storm mounted in fury, the gun rolled back and forth and began to batter against the bulkhead of the ship. It was soon apparent that the ship was in grave danger because the gun was about to batter its way through the side of the ship. The man who was responsible for leaving the gun loose slipped into the hold and, at the risk of his life, managed to get hold of the gun and fasten a rope around it. Each time he would make a move, the gun would lurch and he would barely escape with his life. He finally secured the gun. When the danger was over, the captain called him up on deck and gathered the whole ship’s company together. He commended the sailor for his bravery and his heroism and gave him an award — a cash prize that would be his when the ship docked. The man began to feel proud of himself because it had all worked out so wonderfully. But as soon as the captain had concluded the words of commendation, he ordered the man to be tied to the mast and shot through the head for his carelessness which resulted in putting the ship in danger.

This shows us something of God’s character. His justice cannot overlook sin. He sees us for what we are. None of our hollow defenses can fool him. How we cling to our pride, self-respect, self-confidence. How we hate to be stripped of our defenses! But this is sure to come about in God’s judgment. God wants man to swallow his pride and come to the Lord Jesus Christ as an undone sinner for salvation.
A LITERAL HELL

The doctrine of a literal hell is not popular today, but it is biblical. Some people call themselves Christians but do not believe in a literal hell, yet the Bible teaches it and we should not deny it or pretend it is not there. This doctrine contends that men exist forever and must, because of the unavoidable divine judgment for sin (in every form), be forever separated from God in a state which is conscious torment. If law is to have authority, there must be punishment and enforcement of that punishment. Man has broken God’s law because of sin, and sin must be punished or God’s law has no authority. Jesus Christ had more to say about eternal punishment than anyone else.

A number of different words are used to describe or designate hell, and some are translated “hell.”

1) “Hades” is the state of death, the grave, a place of punishment: “And in hell [hades] he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom” (Luke 16:23).

2) “Gehenna” is the word translated “hell” in Matt. 23:33: “Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?” The name was originally applied to a valley southwest of Jerusalem. It was the place where wicked idolators sacrificed their children to Molech by causing them to pass through the fire. Hence it was considered impure and was called the “Valley of Spittle,” an utterly despised region. Fires were continually burning there to consume the refuse of Jerusalem. As a result it became a symbol of the place of eternal torment.

3) “Tartarus” is a part of hell for angels who sinned: “For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell [Tartarus], and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment” (2 Pet. 2:4).

4) The “abyss” or bottomless pit is the name used for hell in Rev. 9:1,2,11. Verse 2 says, “And he opened the bottomless pit; and there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit.”

5) The “lake of fire” describes hell in Rev. 20:14,15. “And death and hell (hades) were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.”

The story of the rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16:19-31 is an account of what goes on in hell.
From the accounts in God’s Word, we conclude that heaven and hell are definite places.

The punishment in hell is described as:

1) Eternal fire: “Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels” (Matt 25:41).

2) Outer darkness: “But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Matt. 8:12).

3) Torment: “And he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: and the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night” (Rev. 14:10b-11a).

4) Eternal punishment: “And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal” (Matt. 25:46).

5) Wrath of God: “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness” (Rom. 1:18).

6) Second death: “But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death” (Rev. 21:8).

7) Eternal destruction: “Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power” (2 Thess. 1:9).

8) Damnation (condemnation): “And not rather, (as we be slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say,) Let us do evil, that good may come? whose damnation is just” (Rom. 3:8). “But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation” (Mark 3:29).

9) Perdition: “But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition” (1 Tim. 6:9).

These descriptive words are figurative language to explain the realities of hell. All figurative language has a literal truth to point out. This language speaks of separation and punishment.
What will the punishment be? It will be total absence of favor with God; total separation from God; an endless disturbance of life because of the dominion of sin; physical suffering in body and soul; and spiritual and mental suffering.

Is the punishment eternal? The word eternal is used of God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, life, etc. It is used seven times in connection with the destiny of the wicked (Matt. 18:8; 25:41,46; Mark 3:29; 2 Thess. 1:9; Heb. 6:2; Jude 1:7). Eternal punishment and eternal bliss are placed side by side in Matthew 25:46. Punishment is described as “unquenchable fire,” and as a place where the “worm never dies” in Mark 9:48. It was said of Judas, the son of perdition, that it would have been better if he had never been born (Matt. 26:24). This would hardly be said of a man who might have a second chance or be restored millennia later, or even of one who was simply annihilated at death. Torment of those who worship the beast is said to be forever and ever (Rev. 14:10-11). The beast and the false prophet are alive after 1,000 years of punishment in the lake of fire (Rev. 19:20 cf. 20:10).

What will be the degree of punishment? Men’s punishment will be commensurate with their sinning against the light which they have received, but nevertheless it will be eternal for all of them. (Luke 12:47,48; 20:17; Rom. 2:5,6; Matt. 11:24; Rev. 20:12,13).

CONCLUSION

Some time ago Dr. Gowland of Methodist College in England spoke in our city and said something like this:

“Heaven is not a place; hell is not a place. There will be no brimstone and no pearly gates and we will not join a choir to sing. When Jesus descended into hell as the Apostles Creed declares, it was to the depths that a spirit can go. Eternal life doesn’t mean endlessness. It has nothing to do with time. Eternal life is a quality of depth, not length. Heaven and hell are qualities of the mind. We don’t know what heaven and hell are like, for no one has gone and returned. And there are no thought forms to describe dimensions not entered.”

Will we believe the Bible or will we believe what men think the Bible should teach? Liberal ministers, who are deceiving millions of people, young and old, shall have the greater condemnation. The Bible teaches eternal punishment. If a man does not want to believe it, that is his business — but he certainly should not call himself a Christian.

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whossoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world: but that the world
through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God” (John 3:16-21).
Paul or Peale?
A Study on Romans 3:9-18

by Dr. Jack L. Arnold

In the world today there are two fundamental philosophies concerning the basic nature of man. The most prominent view is that man is basically good with a spark of divinity within him which can be fanned into something great. This view may take many forms, but it has at its root the basic goodness of man and it is quite popular today. The other philosophy, which is the biblical position, is that all men are basically evil, separated from God because of sin, and in a helpless condition as far as their relationship to God is concerned. This view is not popular today.

The goodness of man is the philosophy of Norman Vincent Peale. He starts from the humanitarian assumption that man is inherently good, but is the result or product of a bad environment. He holds that man, by his own inward resources, can stir the good qualities in himself and rise above his environment. This is the power of positive thinking applied to the nature of man. Peale’s philosophy is evident in his statement:

“The art of being yourself at your best is the art of unfolding your personality into the man you want to be. By the grace of God you are what you are. Glory in your selfhood. Accept yourself but go on from there. Champion the right to be yourself. Dare to be different and set your own pattern. Live your own life and follow your own star. Respect yourself. You have the right to be here and you have important work to do. Don’t stand in your own shadow. Get your little self out of the way so that your big self can stride forward. Make the most of yourself by fanning the tiny spark of personality within you into the flame of achievement. Create the kind of self you will be happy to live with all your life. Be gentle with yourself. Learn to love yourself, to forgive yourself, for only as we have the right attitude toward ourselves can we have the right attitude toward others” (from “This Week,” San Francisco Chronicle, [date unknown]).

This sounds great, but it is not biblical and it cannot work. Almost all educators today hold that man is basically good.

The philosophy of Paul, and of the Bible as a whole, diametrically opposes the Peale’s thinking. Paul begins with the power of negative thinking. He shows what man is really like, that man is a sinner by nature, by imputation, and by acts, that in himself man has no merit to give him a right standing before God. Paul sets forth this philosophy so that man will see what he really is, come to the end of trusting himself for salvation, and entrust himself to the
person of Jesus Christ alone for the forgiveness of sin. After Paul shows that all are guilty, he presents the positive teaching on salvation, free and gracious, in Jesus Christ.

The basic question men face as they wrestle with Paul’s teaching is, “Can it be that Paul is appealing and Peale appalling?” As far as the natural mind is concerned, Paul is appalling and Peale is appealing. But Paul becomes appealing when men admit their sinful condition and turn to the Saviour for forgiveness.

In previous lessons we have seen that the pagan, the moral man, and the religious man are all sinners, condemned before God. In Romans 3:9-18, Paul paints another dark picture of men, showing that they are all totally depraved.

GOD’S CHARGE — Romans 3:9

“What then: are we better than they?” Paul puts himself in the same category with other Jews and asks the question, “Are we Jews better by position than the Gentiles?” The Jews are not better, they are worse because they have been given much light and have spurned it, thus having the greater condemnation.

“No, in no wise: for we have proved [charged] both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin.” Paul charges that all men are under sin. He has shown that they are sinners by nature. “Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me” (Ps. 51:5). They are also sinners by acts: “Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others” (Eph. 2:3). All men are in rebellion to God. To be under sin means to be dominated by sin, to be under its power, under its rule, under its empire, under its sway, under its control. The charge is definite, detailed, and final; it leaves not the faintest ray of hope for the sinner apart from the Lord Jesus Christ who alone can forgive sin.

Men may reject the fact that they are sinners by nature and deny that they do acts of sin. You may be one who does this, but what are you going to do with the declaration from God that you are a sinner, lost, undone, and under sin? You may ignore it, but that does not change the facts of the case!
MAN’S CHARACTER — Romans 3:10

“As it is written.” In this section Paul picks out fourteen accusations against man, and quotes the Old Testament to prove his point — he appeals to divine revelation, not human understanding.

Jesus Christ taught the sinfulness of men when he said, “If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him” (Luke 11:13)? One cannot be a follower of Christ and deny his teaching on the sinfulness of man!

“There is none righteous, no, not one.” There is not one righteous person on this earth:

“The fool has said in his heart, ‘There is no God,’ They are corrupt, and have committed abominable injustice; There is no one who does good” (Ps. 53:1 NASB).

“Indeed, there is not a righteous man on earth who continually does good and who never sins” (Eccl. 7:20 NASB).

“The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; Who can understand it” (Jer. 17:9 NASB).

“For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23).

No person, in himself, has any righteousness that would commend him to God. Apart from Christ who alone can give spiritual righteousness, man is in a hopeless and helpless condition, unable to save himself.

This is called the doctrine of total depravity. It is total, not partial. Man can do nothing to save himself! This doctrine does not mean that unsaved men cannot do good things, for many unregenerate people reach high levels of morality, but their good works fall short of God’s holy requirements for salvation. Total depravity is a very difficult concept for natural men to understand; all men think too highly of themselves. They refuse to acknowledge God’s description of men. Even some Christians refuse to acknowledge that men are totally depraved.

Just how unrighteous and corrupt is man? He is completely dead because of sin. “And you were dead in your trespasses and sins” (Eph. 2:1 NASB). A dead man cannot respond. No man can respond to Jesus Christ unless God works a miracle in him, giving him the ability to believe. But God does this; he makes dead sinners come alive!
“But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus, in order that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast” (Eph. 2:4-9 NASB).

MAN’S CONDITION — Romans 3:11-12

“There is none that understandeth.” No man in his natural mind can understand God, for the carnal mind is an enemy of God:

“But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised” (1 Cor. 2:14 NASB).

“Because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so; and those who are in the flesh cannot please God” (Rom 8:7-8 NASB).

Man is devoid of the true knowledge of God.

Unsaved men think they know God and even write books about him, but when their thoughts are compared to Scripture it is clear that they have no spiritual concept of God: “And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God” (2 Cor. 4:3-4 NASB). The gospel is hidden from men because Satan has blinded their minds. Blind men cannot see unless a miracle is performed. God must enact the miracle of regeneration if men are to see the truth of the gospel.

“There is none that seeketh after God.” No fallen man in his natural state has ever sought the holy God of Scripture. While men may seek a god, they do not seek the God. You may ask, “What about the heathen? Don’t they have religion, and aren’t they seeking God to the best of their ability?” Actually, these religions are an attempt to get away from the one, true God of Scripture.

Banish from your mind the idea that any fallen man has ever had a holy thought, or loved a holy God, in his natural heart. By nature, fallen man does not want God. He will
speak about some kind of god that he can use and bargain with, but he does not want a god to rule his life; he wants a tool to use for himself.

We believe that men are saved by grace. Grace expresses the truth that God himself seeks, convicts, persuades, gives, and finally perfects all those who are saved through Christ. God’s sovereign grace goes ahead of, and brings into being, all human response to himself. Men can only be saved by God’s grace; all anyone can do is accept the gift of salvation through faith. God takes the initiative and draws a person to Jesus Christ. “No one can come to Me, unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day” (John 6:44 NASB). Christianity is supernatural because the total work of salvation is a work of God!

Men who believe in sovereign grace for salvation are often accused of taking verses out of context. The verses we are dealing with are in context. They clearly show that no man in his natural state is seeking out God.

“They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable.” Man, through his stubborn rebellion, has become useless and is unable to fulfill his original purpose. He was created to have fellowship with and to glorify God, but he has willingly left God and so cannot fulfill this original purpose. If fellowship is to be restored, God must intervene.

“There is none that doeth good, no not one.” As far as God is concerned, no person is practicing good. A woman may think her wash very white until she puts it against the pure white of new fallen snow which makes it look yellow and dingy. All of man’s human righteousness looks yellow and dingy next to God’s absolute holiness.

MAN’S CONDUCT — Romans 3:13-19

“Theyir throat is an open sepulcher.” Man opens his mouth and what comes out can be compared to the putrifying smell of decaying flesh. The stench is more than God can take.

“And He was saying, ‘That which proceeds out of the man, that is what defiles the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts and fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness. All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man’” (Mark 7:20-23 NASB).
When you are sick and go to a doctor, the first thing he does is tell you to open your mouth so he can look at your tongue and throat. What comes from man’s mouth really tells what man is! He is sick and in desperate need of Christ!

“With their tongues they have used deceit.” Man tries to cover up what he really is by a smooth tongue, and he may deceive men this way, but he cannot hide what he really is from God.

“The poison of asps is under their lips.” Men destroy others by malicious words that come from their lips.

“Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness.” Through their cursing and swearing, men simply show that they are sinners who actually hate God.

“Their feet are swift to shed blood.” Men are quick to murder or make war. History is full of men exploiting other men, ruthlessly killing and dominating individuals and nations. Some of this has been done by professing Christians!

“Destruction and misery are in their ways.” History is but the record of one nation conquering another by destruction, looting, and enslaving.

“And the way of peace have they not known.” The harder man seeks for inner peace and political peace, the further he seems to move from it. Natural man cannot know the way of peace because he does not know the Prince of Peace.

The United Nations is a worthy ideal, but it has not been able to produce or preserve peace. It cannot because men are sinners. Frequently, the outcome of U.N. activity is friction, trouble, disturbance, and bloodshed. It is not wrong to work for peace, but this does not mean that it will come in any large measure because the basic nature of man has not changed. Men can find peace with God through Christ, but the world will never know political peace until it serves the King Jesus Christ.

“There is no fear of God before their eyes.” Natural men do not reverence and fear God. They couldn’t care less what God thinks about them; they are actually indifferent to God. Most men will tell you that they believe in a god, but almost all of them act as though God does not exist.
CONCLUSION

Jesus Christ is the Great Physician, and he has diagnosed the case of every person in the world: all are sinners and in a hopeless and helpless condition. But will they accept his remedy? If you only think you are sick, you may not call a doctor. But if you know you are sick and can call a doctor, you are a fool if you do not! Unless you admit your sinful condition, God will not save you. Jesus said, “They that are whole have no need for the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance” (Mark 2:17).

You may say, “How do I know that Christ will call me to salvation if I do acknowledge my sinfulness and need of salvation through Christ?” Jesus said, “For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10). If you have any desire to be saved, it is because Jesus Christ is seeking you. If you will call upon the name of the Lord and trust only on Christ to deliver you from your sins, you will be saved. Christ has promised. “For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Rom. 10:13). When you believe, you will see that it was not you who sought and called on Christ, but Christ who sought and called you, and by sovereign grace brought you to salvation. Oh, what provision has been made for us in Christ Jesus!
The Major Purpose for the Mosaic Law
A Study on Romans 3:19-20

by Dr. Jack L. Arnold

An old German educator said, “The first principle of teaching is repetition, the second principle is repetition, and the third principle is repetition.” This is our ninth lesson on the sinfulness of man. Paul has proven the pagan, the moral man and the religious man guilty before a holy God, and under his wrath because they are sinners. In Romans 3:9-18, he shows that all men are so sinful that they are in a helpless and hopeless condition in their natural state. Unless God sovereignly intervenes in his life with the miracle of the new birth or regeneration, a person stays in his sins and will perish. Romans 3:19-20 is Paul’s final indictment against man. He brings the Mosaic Law, namely the Ten Commandments, to the forefront to show that the Law does not save men, it only condemns them.

THE MOSAIC LAW PROVES A MAN GUILTY — Romans 3:19

“Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law.” The Jews prided themselves on the Mosaic Law. They were under it as the chosen people of God. Paul now removes this last prop and shows the Jew that his own law proves him guilty and a sinner before God. In a Jew’s mind, keeping the Law of Moses was salvation, but Paul says the law condemns; it does not save.

“That every mouth may be stopped.” The reference is primarily to the Decalogue or the Ten Commandments. These commandments are:

1. You shall have no other gods before me.
2. You shall not make yourself a graven image.
3. You shall not take the name of the Lord in vain.
4. Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.
5. Honor your father and mother.
6. You shall not kill.
7. You shall not commit adultery.
8. You shall not steal.
9. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.
10. You shall not covet.

What Jew or other person who has ever lived can say he has never broken any of these laws? A person is a sinner if he breaks one of the laws only once. When he faces the Law
honestly, it shuts his mouth for he knows he is guilty. Law that is not kept demands retribution!

In a church I used to pastor, I visited a man who had a pseudo-Christian background. He went to church twice a year and felt like no one was really a sinner, although people might do wrong at times. He turned and pointed to the Ten Commandments on a plaque on the wall and said, “If a man lives these every day, that is enough!” He was so proud and vain that he did not realize this Law only pointed out the fact that he was a sinner because no one, except Jesus Christ, has ever kept the Law perfectly. The thing on which he prided himself actually condemned him.

It isn’t enough to have this code hanging on your wall, nor is it enough to subscribe to the Law mentally. The question is, “Do you always obey it?” The answer always has to be, “No.”

“And all the world may become guilty before God.” The word “guilty” should be translated “under judgment.” The Mosaic Law has reference to all people. The Jew stands as a representative of the human race as far as the Law is concerned. His guilt demonstrated the guilt of the human race.

A man had a large ranch in the desert. He was told that it was worthless for pasture or farming, but he fenced off twelve acres, broke it, harrowed it, fertilized it, sowed it, and cultivated it. He reaped only sagebrush and cactus! He knew it was no use trying out the rest; it was all good-for-nothing, as far as agriculture was concerned. It was like this with God and Israel: He gave them his Law, instructed them, disciplined them, warned them, restrained them, protected them, and sent his Son to them — whom they rejected and crucified. The Gentiles joined in this. All are under the judgment of God. There is no use for further tests.

Our children, relatives, friends, neighbors, acquaintances, business associates — the whole world — all are under the judgment of God and need Christ as their Saviour.

THE LAW OF MOSES CANNOT SAVE A PERSON — Romans 3:20

“Therefore [because] by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight.” “Justified” means “declared righteous.” No person can be declared righteous before God by his good works. No amount of good works can save a person.

If the Law is looked upon as a standard for living, then men will naturally come to consider it proper for God to take into heaven those who come nearest to keeping it. They think that God is like their public school teachers who set a certain mark as passing, letting
most of the people in the class get by and flunking very few, giving some an “A” for sincerity and others no mark at all for their failures. But God, by the very nature of his being, cannot pass anyone who does not meet his standard. If he would let people into heaven who were only 99.44 percent righteous, then heaven would be .56 percent imperfect and defiled. God must mark by perfection or he cannot be God.

“For by the law is the knowledge of sin.” The Mosaic Law served as a way of life for the Israelites, but no Jew could keep it perfectly. This proved him a sinner in line for God’s judgment. No man can be justified or have a right standing before God by his works. Man must receive Jesus Christ who alone can give him a righteousness that will make him acceptable to God.

WHAT WAS THE PURPOSE OF THE LAW IN THE OLD TESTAMENT?

If the Mosaic Law only points out sin, what was its purpose in the Old Testament? It was given specifically for Israel as a gracious provision to instruct Israel in righteousness and to keep them separated from the Gentile world as God’s holy people.

“And Moses called all Israel, and said unto them, Hear, O Israel, the statutes and judgments which I speak in your ears this day, that ye may learn them, and keep, and do them. . . Ye shall observe to do therefore as the Lord your God hath commanded you: ye shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left. Ye shall walk in all the ways which the Lord your God hath commanded you, that ye may live, and that it may be well with you, and that ye may prolong your days in the land which ye shall possess” (Deut. 5:1,32,33).

The Law had three aspects and 613 commands. The moral law was the commandments and Decalogue. The ceremonial law was about the tabernacle, feasts, priesthood, circumcision, sacrifices, etc. All pointed forward to Christ. The civil law was about such things as sanitation, crops, quarantine, diet, lawsuits, and crime.

The Law was a unit. To keep the Law, one had to keep all of it. Breaking one command made a person guilty:

“For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them” (Gal. 3:10).

“For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law” (Gal. 5:3).
“For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all” (Jas. 2:10).

The Law was a rule of life, not a way of salvation. Neither Moses nor any other Jew was ever saved by keeping the Law. Abraham was saved by faith before the Mosaic Law was even given: “And he believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness” (Gen. 15:6). Moses was saved by faith in God’s promises of blessing, and in his promises of forgiveness through sacrifice:

“For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul” (Lev. 17:11).

“And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission” (Heb. 9:22).

The shedding of the blood of animals pointed forward to the death of Christ, the perfect sacrifice for sin. Like Abraham, Moses was saved by grace, through faith in the promise of Messiah to come. But Moses proved, demonstrated, and gave evidence of his salvation by attempting to keep the Mosaic Law which was God’s rule of life for Israel.

The Law was perverted by the Jew. God never gave the Law of Moses with the thought that anyone (except Christ) would ever keep it perfectly. He gave it as a rule of life for the Jew, never as a way of salvation. But the Jew soon confused the keeping of the Law with salvation, making the two synonymous. Law and tradition became the basis of salvation in the Jewish mind.

Even Christendom has become bogged down in its traditions and rules, and has failed to see that Christianity is not good works, church membership, or baptism, but a vital relationship with Christ, entered into by faith in his death for sin and his resurrection.

CONCLUSION

One cannot be justified by doing the deeds of the Mosaic Law. This is shown in the passage we have just studied and in other verses of Scripture:

“Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we may be justified by faith in Christ, and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law shall no flesh be justified” (Gal. 2:16 NASB).
“I do not nullify the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly” (Gal. 2:21 NASB).

“Now that no one is justified by the Law before God is evident; for, ‘The righteous man shall live by faith’” (Gal. 3:11 NASB).

“Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through Him forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, and through Him everyone who believes if freed from all things, from which you could not be freed through the Law of Moses” (Acts 13:38, 39 NASB).

If a person is to be saved, he must receive a righteousness outside himself that will make him acceptable to a holy God. He must have a perfect righteousness to stand in the presence of a perfect God. This righteousness can only be found in Christ: “And may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith” (Phil. 3:9 NASB).

When Christ died he had our sins on him, and when we believe in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour we receive his righteousness: “He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Cor. 5:21 NASB). Because we have Christ’s righteousness, which is positional and not felt or experienced, God accepts us. “But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption” (1 Cor. 1:30 NASB). We are accepted, not because of who we are or what we have done, but because we are related to Jesus Christ who is perfect righteousness. If anyone is going to heaven, it will be on Christ’s righteousness, not his own.
Justified Freely
A Study on Romans 3:21-24a

by Dr. Jack L. Arnold

Many Bible scholars have called Romans 3:21-31 the greatest paragraph in the Bible. It is loaded with truth and summarizes the whole of salvation. Words such as “sin,” “righteousness,” “justification,” “redemption,” “propitiation,” “grace,” and “faith” all appear in this short paragraph. It you cannot define these concepts and apply them to your life, you do not understand salvation and can never appreciate it as you should.

In the first three chapters of Romans, Paul has taken us to the depths of sin and shown us what we are really like in God’s sight: filthy, unlovable, condemned, and under his wrath. In our natural or unsaved state, we are rebellious sinners, in a helpless and deplorable condition, separated from God because of sin, and spiritually dead. We are lost and in line for judgment, devoid of any righteousness that would make us acceptable to God!

RIGHTEOUSNESS AND THE LAW — Romans 3:21-23

“But now.” The words “but now” begin the logical argument that grows out of man’s sinfulness. In man there is no hope for salvation — but God, through Christ, has made a way for men to have hope and to find salvation from sin.

“The righteousness of God [a righteousness of God].” God has provided a righteousness through the death of Christ whereby men can be accepted before him. This is a righteousness of which God is the author, which comes from him, which he gives, and which is acceptable in his sight. It comes as a result of one’s union with Christ. This righteousness is not found in man but in Christ: “For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him” (2 Cor. 5:21). This righteousness is positional, spiritual — not felt, but imputed to one’s account. It deals with one’s standing before God.

Why must men have righteousness? God is righteous. Because he is perfect righteousness, he must judge sin. It is true that God is love, but we must remember that he is also righteous and just. Those who say that because God is love there will be no eternal judgment for sin do not know the God of Scripture, but show their ignorance of the Bible. God demands righteousness. If man is to have fellowship with God in time and eternity, he must have a perfect righteousness.
Most men feel that they really are not so bad, and that God will let them get by his judgment on some lower scale such as human works. Not so, but God provides the righteousness men need. God has provided a righteousness that men may have, and that he will accept, but it is found only in Christ, who provided a substitutionary atonement for sin. Because of Christ’s sacrifice, God is able to impute righteousness to the one who believes in him.

“Without the law [apart from law].” Apart from any legal system, including the Mosaic Law, there is a righteousness, but no amount of human effort can produce it. It is impossible to be saved by ethics, morals, good works, keeping the Ten Commandments, practicing the golden rule, doing the teachings of the Sermon on the Mount, being a church member, having water baptism, putting money into the collection plate, etc. There is only one way to get to heaven, and that is to trust in Jesus Christ completely and totally as your substitute for sin and Lord of your life.

“Being witnessed by the law and the prophets.” “Law and prophets” refers to the Old Testament. This righteousness was not something totally new to the Jews:

“And he believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness” (Gen. 15:6).

“The Lord hath made known his salvation: his righteousness hath he openly shewed in the sight of the heathen” (Ps. 98:2).

“Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, the Lord our Righteousness” (Jer. 23:5-6).

In the Old Testament, the tabernacle, the sacrifices, the law, and other things bore witness to the righteousness that was to come.

“Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of [in] Jesus Christ.” This righteousness is available to all who will place their faith and trust in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. The verse actually says “through faith.” Faith is the means whereby the sinner lays hold of Christ. The cause of salvation is always God.

“Unto all.” This does not mean that everyone has it, but that it is available to anyone who will receive Jesus Christ. It is not based on culture, education, heritage, refinement, good works, baptism, church membership, or any human work. It is for all who will believe.
“And upon all.” Some scholars do not think these words should be in the text, but there is not enough evidence to prove that they should not be there. A person can be clothed in the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ; he can trade his sin for Christ’s shining robes. When God saves us, he does not merely throw a robe of righteousness around the nakedness of our fallen being. Rather, he reckons us as being as perfect as the Lord Jesus Christ himself. When you look through rose-colored glasses, everything is seen in a rosy hue. The glorious truth of the gospel is that when the Lord God Almighty looks at the one who has trusted completely in the work of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross of Calvary, he sees that person in all the holiness of Christ. How many times have I heard people say, “Oh, if I could only start my life over again. If I could get rid of my past. I’d give anything for a new life.” Any sinner can get a new life in Christ and find acceptance with God!

“Them that believe.” This righteousness is only available to those who accept Christ. It is not for all men; it is for Christian men. Paul is not teaching universalism:

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

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

“Verily verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life” (John 5:24).

Men must believe God’s Word about the work of his Son. They are responsible and accountable before God as to what they do with Christ in their lifetime on earth.

“For there is no difference: For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.” There is no distinction among the Jews or Gentiles, for all are sinners who constantly fall short of God’s requirements. There may be degrees of actual sinfulness, such that some people sin much worse than others, but from God’s standpoint even the least of these sinners is guilty enough to be eternally condemned.

God is infinitely perfect, and the words “glory of God” mean the sum of all his attributes, his perfection. All men fall short of God’s requirements of perfection. From Newport pier in California, one can see Catalina Island on a clear day, 36 miles away. Some people might be able to jump further than others, but no one makes it from the pier to the island; all come short. Just so, all come short of God’s perfections.
RIGHTEOUSNESS AND GRACE — Romans 3:24a

“Being justified.” This means “being declared righteous.” The person who trusts Christ receives his righteousness, and God declares that sinner righteous in his standing before God. A person is justified, not on the basis of his own works or person, but on the basis of Christ’s person and work for him. Justification includes both a negative (the forgiveness of sin) and a positive (the imputation of righteousness) side. If it were possible for everyone in the world to be forgiven and stop sinning, this still would not save them; they would still need a perfect righteousness. When a man is justified, he is accepted because of Christ, and all his life — past, present and future — is seen as righteousness in Christ.

“Freely.” This means “without a cause.” Justification is a free gift; it was given without a single cause in man. Our justification does not have its roots in us. If it did, we would always be in constant doubt as to whether we had properly fulfilled the requirements. Its roots are in God and in his Son, Jesus Christ.

Near, so near am I to God,  
Nearer I cannot be;  
For in the Person of His Son  
I’m just as near as He.

Dear, so dear am I to God,  
Dearer I cannot be;  
The love wherewith He loved His Son,  
Such is His love to me.

“By his grace.” It is by God’s unmerited favor that any person is justified. It is all of grace: “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast” (Eph. 2:8-9). Will we believe the Word, or will we trust our reasoning and feelings?

Sovereign grace, o’er sin abounding;  
Ransomed souls the tidings swell,  
‘Tis a deep that knows no sounding;  
Who its length and breadth can tell?  
On its glories  
Let my soul forever dwell.

When we understand this, we can see the true basis of our salvation. There was absolutely nothing in men that could recommend them to God. God did not sit in heaven and look down upon earth until he found something in some men that recommended them to him. He
gave salvation to men who deserved hell. There will not be one person in heaven who deserved to be there except the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the only one who merited heaven. But an innumerable company who merited hell are going to be in heaven simply because the grace of God decided that they should be there.

CONCLUSION

God will justify any person who will admit that he is sinful and come to Christ for forgiveness and righteousness. Christ alone is the only hope of the sinner! When you come to Christ, by an act of your own will, you will then come to understand that it was God’s grace that drew you to the Saviour. You will then sing as millions of others have:

Amazing grace, how sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found;
Was blind but now I see.
Redemption
A Study on Romans 3:24b

by Dr. Jack L. Arnold

In our last lesson, I said that many scholars consider Romans 3:21-31 to be the most important paragraph in the whole Bible. Words such as “sin,” “righteousness,” “justification,” “redemption,” “propitiation,” “grace” and “faith” all appear in this short portion of Scripture. I went on to say that if you do not know the meaning of these words, you can never understand and appreciate salvation. One sweet little girl, who listened attentively, later asked her mother about my statement. She said, “Mommy, I don’t know the definitions of those words, but I know I have trusted in Jesus. Is it true that I’m not saved if I don’t know the meaning of those big words?” Bless her heart! She did not quite understand what I was saying, but her heart was right before the Lord. If a person has placed her faith and trust in Jesus Christ for salvation from sin, she is saved. Salvation is so simple that even a child can believe and be genuinely saved. However, if we are going to understand and appreciate our salvation, we must come to know what the Bible teaches on the subject. We must begin to plum the depths of salvation so we can rejoice in it constantly.

REVIEW — Romans 3:21-23a

Righteousness (3:21): Writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Paul has told us that God has provided a righteousness in Christ that will make a person acceptable before God. God will accept only this righteousness and no other because it is perfect, and man must have a perfect righteousness if he is to stand in the presence of a perfectly righteous God. This is a righteousness that is neither felt nor experienced, but which is accredited to one’s account the moment he believes on Christ. It is a righteous standing or position before God. This righteousness is apart from the Mosaic Law or any other works system. A person cannot be saved by works, but only by grace through faith in the perfect work of Jesus Christ for sin.

Faith (3:22): This righteousness can be the possession of any person who exercises faith and trusts Jesus Christ as personal Lord and Saviour.

Sin (3:23): This righteousness is needed because all have sinned and fallen short of the glory [perfection] of God.

Justified (3:24a): To be justified means to be declared righteous. When a sinner believes on Christ, Christ’s righteousness is imparted to him and at that moment God
declares him righteous based on the righteousness of Christ, not the righteousness of the sinner.

Grace (3:24a): A person is justified (declared righteous) freely or without a cause (as a gift) simply because of God’s grace. No one deserves salvation, and every one deserves hell. If a person is headed for eternal judgment, it is because he has wilfully chosen this destiny. If a person is saved and bound for heaven, it is purely by God’s grace. Some people feel that they have done God a favor by trusting in Christ, but grace tells us that God has done the Christian a favor by permitting him to trust the Saviour.

Today, our emphasis is often wrong even though our hearts are right. Our heart relationship may be right but our theology slanted. This misunderstanding of grace is seen in some of our names and slogans. For example, there is nothing wrong with the name “Youth for Christ,” but I think it gives the idea that it is “nice” to be for Christ. Perhaps we should say, “Christ for Youth,” indicating Christ’s grace and Lordship. “Are you on Christ’s team?” is a question that indicates, in my mind, that we are doing Christ a favor by serving him, that he is lucky to have us. Actually Christ is the coach. He chooses the team, and it is our privilege to play ball with him. He has done us a favor by putting us on his team. “Christ needs you!” is another statement often made. Christ does not need us — but we need him desperately, for he is the only way to heaven and the only one who can give us purpose for living.

REDEMPTION — Romans 3:24c

“Through the redemption.” Paul has told us that the cause of our justification is God alone. Now he says the means of this justification is redemption. The means that God uses to justify sinners is the death of Jesus Christ for sin. There are several Greek words used for “redemption.” The meanings of these words are “to purchase,” “to purchase out,” “to pay a ransom and buy,” and “to pay a ransom and set free.” When put together the meaning is “to purchase out of sin and set free by the paying of a ransom price.” The unsaved man is a slave to sin, and in bondage at the slave market of sin. Through the death of Christ, God paid the ransom for sinners and set them free forever from the guilt and penalty of sin:

“Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your father; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot” (1 Pet. 1:18-19).

The blood of Christ speaks of his sacrificial, substitutionary sacrifice for sin. Every sacrifice in the Old Testament looked forward to Christ, the lamb, who would be the sacrifice
for sin. A woman once said to me, “Christianity is a bloody religion, and it repulses me to think about it!” We cannot take the blood out of Christianity, for without it there is no forgiveness of sin. Without it there is no Christianity!

Nor silver, nor gold hath obtained my redemption,
No riches of earth could have saved my poor soul;
The blood of the cross is my only foundation,
The death of my Saviour now maketh me whole.

I am redeemed, but not with silver,
I am bought, but not with gold;
Bought with a price, the blood of Jesus,
Precious price of love untold.

One purpose of our redemption is the forgiveness of sin:

“In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace” (Eph. 1:7).

“In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins” (Col. 1:14).

Another purpose of redemption is that redeemed sinners might be a purchased possession:

“But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people [people for a possession] that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:” (1 Pet. 2:9).

The price was the highest that could ever be paid for a slave in bondage to sin: the death of God’s Son, Jesus Christ!

Still another purpose for our redemption is that we might live holy lives. The Christian is no longer his own master, for he has been bought with the death of Christ, and now Christ is to become his absolute Lord and Master:

“What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your Spirit, which are God’s” (1 Cor. 6:19-20).
There can be no true comprehension of redemption apart from the knowledge that Christ bought us to set us free from sins, in order that we might become the servants of righteousness.

Not too long ago archeologists discovered some very valuable business and personal letters written in Koine Greek. These are called the Chester-Papyri writings. One of the letters was about a slave woman who was put up for sale in the slave market. Apparently she was quite attractive, and would have made a fine slave for any master. A trader purchased this woman for a very high price. After the purchase was completed, for no reason other than the good pleasure of his will, he told the woman, “I have paid a high price for you and have bought you out of slavery, and now I set you free forever. You never have to be my slave or anyone’s slave again.” He then turned and walked away, leaving the woman standing there free.

A few minutes later the trader heard hard-running footsteps behind him, and a weeping woman’s voice crying, “Sir, Sir!”

He said, “What do you want with me, woman? I have set you free forever.”

The woman cried out, “My Lord, for your kindness and graciousness in setting me free, I will voluntarily be your slave forever. You are now my master!”

So it is for the Christian. When he comes to understand that he was a slave to sin and that Christ purchased him out of slavery, he voluntarily makes himself a slave of Christ. Oh, what grace!

CONCLUSION

Every person born into this world owes a debt to God because of sin. There is no way he can pay this debt. God must pass judgment on him because he cannot pay the debt for his sins. However, God has provided a way whereby another, Jesus Christ, has already paid the debt. This debt was paid at the cross when Jesus Christ died there for the sins of men. If a person will trust in Jesus Christ, the payment for sin will be accredited to his account, and God will consider the debt paid. Why? Because Christ has paid the debt for the sinner.

Let us suppose I was given a traffic ticket for exceeding the speed limit. I was guilty before the law and in debt to the law. When I appeared in court, the judge listened patiently to my story and was even somewhat sympathetic. But I had broken the law, and he imposed a fine of $95.00 or three days in jail. I had no money, and so would have to be locked up — the just result of breaking the law. As I was about to despair, the judge said, “Mr. Arnold,
I will pay the fine for you.” As he laid the money out he said, “Mr. Arnold, you may go now.” All I could do was thank him for his graciousness and leave as a free man. The judge passed a just sentence on me, but then paid the debt for me. I could have rejected his gracious offer, but I would have been a fool to do so. After I accepted, I would certainly want to do anything for that judge that I could.

So it is in salvation. Men are in debt to God because they have broken God’s law through sin. They cannot pay the debt themselves, and must face the consequences: eternal judgment. God has sent his Son, Jesus Christ, to pay the debt for them. If they are to be saved, they must recognize that Christ died for their sins and paid their debt — that he took their place. The death of Christ must become personal. Only then is one really saved from sin. By faith a person says, “I’m a sinner and condemned before God, but Christ bore my sin, bore my curse, bore my condemnation, died in my place, paid my penalty, bore my guilt.”

When you realize that Christ has purchased you out of the slave market of sin, Christianity becomes personal and you feel eternally indebted to Christ, so much so that you want to say, “My Lord, I can never repay you for your love and grace in redeeming me, but I will give you all that I have, and that is my life. Lord, what would you have me to do?” Then your song will become:

On Christ Almighty vengeance fell,
That would have sunk a world to hell;
   He bore it for a chosen race,
And thus became a hiding place.
Propitiation
A Study on Romans 3:24-26

by Dr. Jack L. Arnold

Most folks feel that the main purpose of the death of Christ was to bring sinful men to God. However, I would like to suggest that an even greater problem was solved in the atoning work of Jesus Christ. The Cross solved the problem of how to bring a holy and righteous God to sinful men. Through redemption (sinward), reconciliation (manward), and justification, man is brought to God, but through propitiation (godward), God is brought to man. This lesson is about propitiation.

PROPITIATION — Romans 3:24-25

“Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation.” The basic meaning of propitiation is “appease” or “satisfy.” What did the death of Christ appease or satisfy in the nature of God? In his very nature, God is holy and righteous. He can have no fellowship with anything that is sinful, including sinful men. Thus, God’s wrath burns hot against sin and sinners because he must judge all sin. If he does not do this, he is not acting according to his perfect character. But, in love, God sent his Son Jesus Christ to be the perfect sacrifice for sin. No mere human being could have atoned for the sins of men because all are sinners. But Christ, who was a perfect human as well as truly divine, became the perfect sacrifice for sin. God poured out his wrath against sin on the person of Jesus Christ. Thus, the death of Christ appeased God’s wrath and satisfied his holy, righteous demands against sin.

God took out his wrath on Christ instead of on sinners. Now anyone who will place his faith and trust in Jesus Christ as personal Saviour from sin will receive the forgiveness of sins, and the wrath of God will never again come down upon that one because Christ bore God’s wrath on that believer’s behalf. Why? Christ satisfied the holy, righteous demands of God against sin. Now, through the death of Christ, a holy God and sinful men can meet and God can have fellowship with men.

Some have translated the word “propitiation” as “mercy seat,” looking back to the Old Testament and the sprinkling of blood on the mercy seat on the Day of Atonement. The Day of Atonement was a most significant feast day for Israel because it was then that the high priest entered into the holy of holies in the tabernacle to make an atonement for the nation of Israel (Lev. 16:1-10 ff.). In the tabernacle, the dwelling place of God, was the holy of holies, and no man was allowed in this place except the high priest who could go in only once a year on the Day of Atonement.
In the holy of holies stood the Ark of the Covenant. The Ark contained several articles such as Aaron’s rod that budded and a pot of manna, but the main article was the Ten Commandments. On top of the Ark was the mercy seat, the dwelling place of God. Two cheribim (angels) were on either side of the mercy seat, and above it was the pillar of cloud and smoke (the Shekinah glory). The Ten Commandments pointed to the fact that all men had broken the law and were sinners; the Shekinah glory represented the holiness of God — men were sinners and would be judged by a holy God. The mercy seat stood between sinful men and God.

On the Day of Atonement, the high priest put on special garments of white and underwent special purification to offer sacrifice for the sins of Israel. He offered a bullock for himself and a goat for the people. Since no one else was allowed inside and since a slight mishap in his ritual could cause his death, a cord was tied around his ankle in case he died before God in the holy of holies. Then he took the blood in one hand and a censer of fire in the other, and went through the veil. He put down the censer and threw special incense on it so the room was filled with smoke — no man could see God and live. Then he entered the holy of holies to sprinkle the blood — one time towards heaven and seven times on the mercy seat.

Two goats were sacrificed, one was killed and the other kept alive. This was for the sins of Israel as a people. The congregation of Israel would watch with breathless anticipation as they saw the high priest take the blood of the slain goat into the holy of holies to sprinkle it on the mercy seat to appease God’s wrath against their sins and to cover those sins for another year. Every Israelite wondered, “Will God accept this sacrifice? Will our sins be covered for another year? Or will God bring immediate judgment on us because of our sins?” When the High Priest came out of the holy of holies the people breathed a sigh of relief because they knew that God’s wrath had been appeased for another year and they needed not fear judgment.

How could they know their sins had been forgiven? The high priest came out and placed his hands on the head of the live goat, confessing the sins of Israel. Then he let the live goat go free into the wilderness. This speaks of the fact that these sins were forgiven and put away by God.

Jesus Christ is our mercy seat. All the sacrifices of the Old Testament looked forward to the Lamb of God who would take away sin forever:

“Nor yet that he [Christ] should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; for then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And as it
is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation” (Heb. 9:25-28).

Christ’s death propitiated, appeased or satisfied, the holy, righteous demands of God against sin. God was perfectly satisfied with the death of Christ. As a propitiatory sacrifice, Christ’s death made a provision for sins to be forgiven and put away, not just for a year but forever:

“For thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back” (Isa. 38:17b).

“And thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea” (Mic. 7:19b).

“As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us” (Ps. 103:12).

God can and will make the vilest sinner clean. He can wipe out your past sins. He doesn’t want you to clean up your life to become a Christian. He wants you to receive Jesus Christ who alone can forgive your sins, and then God himself will begin to clean you up. He wants you to come as you are. No matter what you have done, Jesus Christ will forgive. He will give you a new life.

The most important thing that could ever be said about the death of Christ is that God is satisfied with it. If he, the righteous Judge, is pleased to remit all penalties against us by virtue of what the Saviour did on the cross, then there is no case against us forevermore. We can never again stand under God’s wrath if we have trusted in Jesus Christ.

“Through faith in his blood.” There is no salvation apart from the shedding of blood. “And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission” (Heb. 9:22). Christ’s blood witnesses that a life has been laid down — a substitutionary sacrifice.

Believe it or not, some denominations today are removing references to blood from their hymnals and prayer books because they consider this a first century concept not necessary for the scientific twentieth century.

“There is a fountain filled with blood, Drawn from Immanuel’s veins; And sinners plunged beneath that flood, Lose all their guilty stains.
The dying thief rejoiced to see
That fountain in his day;
And there may I, though vile as he,
Wash all my sins away.

Dear dying Lamb, Thy precious blood,
Shall never lose its power
Till all the ransomed church of God
Be saved to sin no more.

E’er since by faith I saw the stream
Thy flowing wounds supply,
Redeeming love has been my theme,
And shall be till I die.”

“To declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forebearance of God.” One might ask, “What provision did God have for sin before the death of Christ, for a righteous God must judge sin?” In the Old Testament sin was simply covered, not taken away. It was Christ’s death that made the final atonement for sin. All Old Testament sacrifices pointed forward to the Lamb of God Jesus Christ who would be the perfect sacrifice for sin, and all Old Testament sacrifices depended on Christ’s then future sacrifice for their effectiveness.

JUST AND JUSTIFIER — Romans 3:26

“To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness.” God has made a declaration to all the world of his righteousness at the cross. In the death of Christ, God has solved the sin problem!

“That he might be just.” A holy, righteous God must judge sin and the sinner or he cannot be God. He is absolutely just in judging sin and the sinner!

“And the justifier.” In love, God devised a way in which he could justify men, declaring them righteous. His solution was that in the death of Christ for sin God poured out his wrath on Christ, who did not deserve it, instead of on sinners, who most certainly did and do deserve it. Through the death of Christ, one can receive forgiveness of sins and be declared righteous so as never again to stand under the wrath of God.
“Of him which believeth in Jesus.” Christ’s death is only effective for those who believe in him, that is, to those who trust and commit (abandon) themselves to him alone as personal Saviour and Lord.
Justification in the Old Testament
A Study on Romans 4:1-8

by Dr. Jack L. Arnold

The Apostle Paul has declared that there is a righteousness that God approves and gives to men apart from the Mosaic Law (Rom. 3:21), and that this righteousness is in Christ (Rom. 3:22). He has positively concluded that by keeping the Mosaic Law no person can be justified (declared righteous). This was a blow to the spiritual pride of the Jew who placed his hope for salvation on how well he kept the Mosaic Law. The Jew was so steeped in tradition, culture and religion that he felt by keeping the Mosaic Law — being as good a Jew as possible — he would be right with God. But Paul destroys any hope for salvation in the Law or good works. He declares that salvation is by grace through faith in the person of Jesus Christ and his perfect work for sin at the cross.

There are many people who have been raised in a Christian culture and are acquainted with Christian tradition, and who may even be religious at heart, who are trusting their baptism, church membership, good works, Christian background, etc. to save them. But these things are worthless unless one has a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and knows that he has been saved from sin by grace through faith.

In Romans 4:1-8 Paul shows that salvation was by grace through faith for people in Old Testament times — that men have always been saved on that basis and no other. He uses Abraham and David as prime examples. These two men held in highest esteem in the Old Testament.

ABRAHAM — Romans 4:1-5

“What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh hath found?” What about Abraham? A Jew might reason that if the Mosaic Law is abolished as a means of justification, then the rest of the Old Testament must go with it. So Paul goes back to the time when the Law was not yet in existence to prove that all persons in the Old Testament were saved by grace through faith based on the death of Christ. (Old Testament truths on justification are relevant even for today; God’s method has not changed.) If Paul can prove that Abraham was justified by faith, then it will be clear that all Jews and all others must be saved on the same basis.

Abraham had a very high position. He was the originator of the Jewish race and was called “the friend of God.” His is one of the great religious names of all time. He is honored in three prominent religions: Judaism, Islam and Christianity. According to Scripture,
Abraham was given tremendous position and favor with God. Did he acquire this through a lifetime of good works and pleasing God? No! His life had some very bright spots, but also some extremely dark ones. All that Abraham had was by the grace of God!

“For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God.” Paul assumes the argument to tear it down. If Abraham were justified by his good works, he could boast in his own attainments, but he could not glory in God.

Men who think they are right before God because of good works always boast of their own attainments. Only those who are justified by grace through faith can glory in God who has done it all.

“For what saith the scripture?” Paul appeals to Scripture to prove his point. He does not go to reason or philosophy, but to the inspired, written revelation of God, the Bible. The Scriptures are the absolute authority for the Christian, not rationalism or empiricism.

“Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.” Paul cites Genesis 15:6. God had promised Abraham that his seed would possess the land forever and that out of his loins would come a great nation to possess the land. At this point Abraham had no children to carry on his line. But God had promised a seed, and Abraham believed this promise. God counted that faith for righteousness. There is no indication that Abraham did anything but believe the promise. On that basis God justified him or declared him righteous.

The word “counted” is a bookkeeping term which means to “credit” or “put to one’s account.” Man is operating in the debit column of the ledger because of sin. The moment he believes God’s promise of salvation through Jesus Christ, God puts to his account a perfect righteousness and declares that person righteous or justified. This credit of perfect righteousness puts the account in the black.

When Abraham believed God, he did the one thing that a man can do without doing anything. God made a promise, and he undertook fulfilling it. Abraham believed in his heart that God told the truth; that is all. Abraham’s faith was not an act but an attitude. His heart was turned completely away from himself to God and God’s promise, leaving the fulfillment to God. This faith was neither a meritorious act nor a change of Abraham’s character or nature; he simply believed that God would accomplish what he had promised.

What does it mean to believe? The word has been so twisted and misused that it has lost its meaning in the mind of modern man. To believe means “to be persuaded of, to place confidence in, to trust, to entrust.” It signifies reliance upon God. This involves:
1. **The mind**: one must have adequate knowledge of the person and work of Christ. He must have facts before he can believe. With proper knowledge he can become convinced.

2. **The emotions**: The facts about Christ must become personal. There must be an application of the facts so that one is involved with the person of Christ. When this is done it produces confidence.

3. **The will**: Volition is employed. Faith is knowledge passing into conviction, and conviction passing into confidence. It is a commitment.

We must hasten to add that it is possible to have knowledge without commitment and involvement. This is intellectual assent. It is possible to have commitment without knowledge and involvement. This is false dedication. And it is possible to have involvement without knowledge and commitment. This is religious, emotional experience.

The cause of salvation is God, but the means God uses to bring men to himself is faith — a gift of God exercised by man. God has promised to justify all who will receive Jesus Christ as personal Lord and Saviour. Will you, as Abraham, believe God’s promise?

“Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt.” A workman is paid wages by his employer for the services he renders. A man works for so much an hour or is paid so much for a job he has done. If the laborer is paid for work that he does, the employer is not exercising grace by paying him. However, if the employer gives money to the laborer gratis, he is acting in grace and the laborer can only receive it.

Abraham was not justified by his good works. The harder one works for justification, the deeper in debt to God he goes and the further he removes himself from God’s grace. He cannot meet God’s standard for righteousness (he cannot perform the work necessary for the wages). Only salvation received through faith is consistent with God’s grace.

“But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.” Those who do not work for their salvation but believe God’s promise of justification in Christ shall be saved. This verse says that “God justifies the ungodly.” He will not justify good people. He will only justify those who admit that they are ungodly sinners who have no righteousness in themselves.

God is more likely to justify a “down and outer” at the Rescue Mission who realizes his need than he is to justify a cultured “up and outer” who sees no need for righteousness. The moment a person turns to Christ, God puts to that person’s account the very righteousness of Christ.
“Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works.” Paul also uses King David as an illustration. David lived under the Mosaic Law, but he was not justified before God by keeping the Law. He was justified apart from works.

“Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered.” This is a quote from Psalm 32 which speaks of David’s conviction of sin after he was guilty of adultery with Bathsheba and was directly responsible for the death of her husband Uriah the Hittite. Even though he was a believer, David had done the horrible acts of adultery and murder. He was the most miserable person on earth. He was unhappy and under great conviction. A believer out of fellowship with God is most miserable. Yet, David rested the hope of his salvation in God who forgives sin. He knew that God had forgiven him, and he rested on this wonderful truth. We should note that although David was forgiven, God did not overlook this sin. David was under the disciplinary hand of God for the rest of his life because of it. But he never lost his salvation. When he wanted desperately to run away and hide from God, he did not do it. Instead, he came to God and flung the whole dirty mess before him and asked to be forgiven.

“Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.” David lived in the light of God’s grace. Even when he was deep in sin, he knew that he had been counted righteous before God. This is the non-imputation of sin. God would not credit the sin to David’s account because he had already credited Christ’s righteousness to David’s account, and thus David had a perfect standing before God. There would be no eternal judgment for this sin because David believed God and his belief was counted for righteousness.

CONCLUSION

David and Abraham are two of the greatest names in Israel’s history, and both testify to the fact that nobody is declared righteous before God by good works, but rather by believing what God says.

God has unconditionally promised a perfect salvation to all who will receive Jesus Christ as personal Lord and Saviour from sin. Will you believe God and be justified, or will you not believe and pay the just penalty for your sins, which is eternal separation from God? The decision is yours. Your eternal destiny hangs on what you do with Jesus Christ in this life.
Justification by Grace Through Faith
A Study on Romans 4:7-16

by Dr. Jack L. Arnold

The Apostle Paul tells us in Ephesians 2:8 that salvation is by grace through faith. It is all of God, and is received or appropriated only by believing in Jesus Christ. The patriarch Abraham is the prime example of one who was justified (declared righteous) by grace through faith. In Romans 15:4 God tells us why he gives us such examples: “For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.”

In Romans 4:1-8 Paul has told us about God sovereignly giving a promise to Abraham that he would have a seed (son), and from his loins would come a great nation that would inherit the land of Canaan forever. Abraham believed this promise and God counted his faith for righteousness, putting it to his account and giving him a perfect standing before God. In grace God gave the promise to Abraham, and Abraham responded by simply believing God.

In this lesson we will draw out from the text the declaration, “Therefore it (the promise) is of faith, that it might be of grace” (4:16). If salvation is totally of God’s grace, the only consistent response by man is to receive this gift of salvation by faith. Faith is not a work, it is an attitude of believing God. It is an act that is performed without really doing anything.

ABRAHAM WAS JUSTIFIED BY GRACE

Before God called Abraham to salvation, he was an uncircumcised heathen, an idol worshiper, deep in sin, living in Ur of the Chaldees. There was absolutely nothing in Abraham to commend him to God. Until he was 70 years old, he had no knowledge of the true God. He was devoid of works or faith that could attract God’s grace.

One day God called Abraham out of Ur of the Chaldees to bring him salvation and to give him unbelievable promises — his seed would live in the land forever, they would be a nation forever, and through his line would come the Messiah, etc. One thing stands out with unmistakable clearness: the call which Abraham received from God was pure, sovereign, amazing grace. It pleased God in his sovereign grace to appear to Abraham and call him out for his own eternal purpose. It was grace, and grace alone, that moved God to act.
Donald Grey Barnhouse said,

“The race lay in its total blindness, and God stooped from heaven to appear to Abraham. If an angel had asked the Lord why He was choosing Abraham He could well have answered, ‘Because it pleases Me to choose Abraham.’ If the angel had continued, saying, ‘But there is no good in Abraham,’ God could have well answered, ‘There is no good in any creature; but I choose to set my love upon him.’ And if the angel had then asked, ‘But will You not dirty Your Being by folding this Devil worshipper to Your breast?’ God could have well answered, ‘I will go down and give My only Son to die for Abraham, and the blood of My Son will cleanse Abraham of his filth, so that I shall not be sullied when I draw him to Myself.’ And if the angel had once more asked, ‘But does not Abraham deserve judgment as much as any other man of Ur of the Chaldees?’ God could have well replied, ‘All of them deserve the same from Me, but I propose to give My beloved Son to take the stroke of that judgment, so that I may look upon Abraham as righteous.’ And if the angel had finally said, ‘But will not Abraham have to make some steps in righteousness before it is possible to count him as righteous?’ God could have well replied, ‘Never, for it is while he is yet ungodly that I shall account him righteous and it is the power of the new life that I shall plant in him which shall cause his steps to move toward Me, slowly at first and then more firmly as time goes on.’”

ABRAHAM WAS JUSTIFIED THROUGH FAITH — Romans 4:9-16

Natural man reacts violently to the teaching that salvation is by grace through faith because it is contrary to human nature. Man naturally thinks in terms of the merit system, and feels he should somehow work for his salvation or do something to gain favor with God. This was especially true of the Jews who trusted in circumcision and the keeping of the Mosaic Law for salvation. Abraham shoots holes through the reasoning of the Jews. Salvation can only be by grace through faith in God.

Circumcision Cannot Justify — 4:7-12

“Cometh this blessedness then upon the circumcision only, or upon the uncircumcision also? for we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness.” The blessed teaching that a person can be justified by believing God’s promise is for both the Jew and the Gentile. Abraham proves this point, for God declared him righteous simply on the basis of faith.
“How was it then reckoned? when he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision?” Abraham was declared righteous before God in his uncircumcised state. It was fourteen years after his salvation that he was circumcised. This is evidence that he could not have been saved by the good work of circumcision.

“And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised.” Abraham’s circumcision was merely an outward sign or symbol of the fact that he had been declared righteous by believing in God’s promise. The symbol is important, for through it God separated a people to be the nation of Israel. But the symbol did not save. Only God saves through faith!

Abraham was not circumcised to be saved. He was saved by faith and then circumcised for a wholly different purpose, as Paul has shown: that he might be father of a race of circumcised men. Circumcision was the sign and seal of the covenant with Abraham, but it did not secure salvation. Many circumcised Jews perished eternally in the Old and New Testaments alike. Professing Christians today who trust the covenant sign of baptism for salvation fall into this same trap. The symbol cannot save, only Jesus Christ can save!

“That he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also.” Abraham, being justified in his uncircumcised state, is the representative of all who believe God for justification, the father of all true believers in Christ, whether Jews or Gentiles. He is the father of the physical seed of Israel, and he is the father of the spiritual seed of all who believe in Jesus Christ. Why? He was saved before there was a nation of Israel, circumcision, or the Mosaic Law.

“And the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had being yet uncircumcised.” Being of the physical seed of Abraham did not automatically guarantee the Jew the promises made to Abraham. Only those Jews who believed God and his promise as did Abraham were inheritors of the promise — this is the spiritual seed within the Jewish nation. Those who are circumcised in the heart shall be those who inherit the promise. Only the spiritual seed among the Gentiles can inherit the promise. “For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh” (Phil. 3:3).

*Law Cannot Justify — 4:13-16*

“For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.” The promise to Abraham included the fact that he would be heir of the whole world (kingdom) through Christ. “Now to
Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not. And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ” (Gal. 3:16).

The Jew could not appeal to the Mosaic Law for justification, for Abraham was justified 430 years before the Law ever came into existence. Justification has always been by grace through faith!

“For if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect.” If justification is by keeping the law, then there is no need for faith. This would automatically cancel God’s grace. It would destroy the whole Abrahamic Covenant.

“Because the law worketh wrath: for where no law is, there is no transgression.” A major purpose for the giving of the Mosaic Law was to show the Israelites that they were sinners, transgressors of God’s law who were in line for God’s wrath. The Law was to point the Jew to Christ, who alone could bring salvation.

“Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace.” To receive God’s promise of salvation in Jesus Christ is the only thing consistent with God’s grace.

“To the end the promise might be sure (valid) to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all.” All who receive Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour from sin, whether Jews or Gentiles, are declared righteous before God. All who receive Jesus Christ are children of Abraham (spiritual seed), and Abraham becomes the father of all who believe. Gentiles who trust Christ are spiritual seed of Abraham and inheritors of the promise made to Abraham. “And if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise” (Gal. 3:29).

CONCLUSION

Abraham is an example and pattern of how all men must be justified. The way God saved Abraham is the way he will save anyone. If you are not willing to be saved as Abraham was saved, then you cannot be saved. How was he saved? By grace through faith.

If you are clinging to anything but God’s grace as manifested in the death of Jesus Christ for salvation from sin, then you are in your sins and face eternal judgment. But if you will place your faith in Jesus Christ alone for salvation, you will become a spiritual child of Abraham, and become an inheritor of eternal life and the kingdom of God that is to come.
How Faith Operates
A Study on Romans 4:16-25

by Dr. Jack L. Arnold

Faith is one of the most misunderstood words in the world today. Everybody is talking about it; people write about it, but few really understand biblical faith. For some, faith is simply believing in oneself, an attitude of self-confidence. Others are more nebulous and say faith is just believing anything, right or wrong. The modern day liberal theologian would tell us that faith is believing in God, the father of all mankind; thus, faith is having a positive attitude towards God and men, fanning the spark of divinity within us. How very little men really understand faith. Have you ever asked yourself, “What is faith?” Romans 4:20-21 gives us an accurate description of how true biblical faith works.

In the first part of Romans 4, Paul used Abraham as the supreme illustration of how a person is justified (declared righteous) before a holy God. Abraham was justified by grace through faith. All he did was believe the promise that God made to him. The promise was that he would have a seed or son, and that from this seed would spring a great nation that would possess the land of Canaan forever (Gen. 12:7; 15:5; 15:18). Abraham had no son at the time the promise was given, and he was about seventy years old. But he believed God’s promise, and his faith was counted for righteousness (Gen. 15:6). When Abraham believed God, God justified or saved him.

Abraham became the father of the Jewish race because he was the first Jew; the Jews are the physical seed of Abraham. But because he is the chief example of one who was justified by faith, he became the father of all, whether Jews or Gentiles, who believe in God and his promise. All who trust in God alone for salvation through faith are the spiritual seed of Abraham. Thus, Abraham is the father of all who believe, as we saw in our last lesson. With the declaration of the fact that Abraham is the father of all who believe, Paul moved into a short discussion of what it means to believe, or how faith operates, again using Abraham as an example.

FAITH TAKES GOD AS ITS OBJECT — Romans 4:17

“As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations.” This is a quote from Genesis 17:5. God changed Abraham’s name from Abram (high father or father of many) to Abraham (father of multitudes).

Some fourteen years before the time his name was changed, Abraham had been justified when he believed God’s promise. At the time his name was changed, God
reaffirmed his covenant promise that Abraham would be the father of many nations. Many years had passed since God had made the original promise, and Abraham still had no heir. Paul does not tell the whole story, but we should mention that Abraham did have a son, Ishmael, by a slave, which shows us that genuine faith in God can at times become very weak and do stupid things. When his name was Abram (father of many), he had no son, which was quite an embarrassment for an Oriental. It was the desire of every great man to have an heir, and Abram and Sarai had been childless in Canaan ten years. So, they took matters into their own hands, thinking they would help God fulfill his promise. The result was Ishmael, a son born by Sarai’s Egyptian handmaid.

Abram may have been proud of this son, but Ishmael could never be Abraham’s heir. Ishmael was part Egyptian, and archeology tells us that the Egyptians are descendants of Ham who was cursed by God. He was a son of the flesh, and God’s people have paid for this sin of Abram, for the descendants of Ishmael are the present-day Arab nations. These nations are predominantly Muslim, and they have always persecuted Christianity and the true people of God. From this we see that a Christian can have a lapse of faith and fall into sin, but he and others may pay for that folly for generations. How easy it is for Christians to do things in the flesh instead of waiting on God.

The reason the promise was reaffirmed to Abram is that he had to know that this son of the flesh, Ishmael, was not the son of promise. God would send another son to be the promised heir. God changed his name to “father of multitudes” and renewed the promise, but Abraham still had no son of promise.

“Before him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were.” This was an impossible situation. Abraham was pushing 100 years old, past the age of procreation, and Sarah was about ninety, physically unable to have children. But Abraham had faith in God to do the impossible. He believed in an all-powerful, miracle-working God. Faith is nothing more than trusting in God’s faithfulness. So, after the promise was reaffirmed, Abraham’s faith was even stronger.

Abraham believed in a God who “makes alive the dead,” a direct reference to the fact that he and Sarah were dead sexually, and possibly an indirect reference to the resurrection of Jesus Christ. If Abraham had no physical seed, there could be no Messiah because Messiah had to come through the promised line and no other.

Abraham believed in a sovereign God with a sovereign plan. God knows the end from the beginning, and when he promises something, it is sure to come to pass. Abraham knew his God and realized that God would fulfill his promise in every detail, that he “calleth those things which be not as though they were.”
FAITH BELIEVES THE IMPOSSIBLE — Romans 4:18

“And who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations; according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be.” This was certainly a humanly impossible situation. He believed God when there was absolutely no hope for fulfillment. Abraham did not find in the realm of his senses, feelings, or sight any basis for hope. He looked beyond himself and his circumstances to God, and accepted God’s Word (promise) as the basis of hope. Faith is believing God to fulfill His Word when we see no outward or visible evidence:

“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Heb. 11:1).

“For we walk by faith, not by sight” (2 Cor. 5:7).

An old African-American woman had so much confidence and trust in the Lord that someone said to her, “You have so much faith that if the Lord told you to jump through a stone wall, you would start jumping.” She replied, “If the Lord told me to jump through a stone wall, it would be my business to jump, and his business to make a hole in the wall.”

FAITH LOOKS BEYOND THE CIRCUMSTANCES — Romans 4:19

“And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah’s womb.” Abraham sized up the situation and concluded that he and his wife were dead as far as producing a child was concerned. The circumstances were against them, but he was not weak in faith. He believed in a miracle-working God, a God for whom nothing was too hard to accomplish. He faced the obstacles squarely, and by faith trusted God to get him over the circumstances.

FAITH IS UNDIVIDED — Romans 4:20

“He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief.” The word “staggered” means “wavered,” and conveys the idea of being divided in mind, of doubting. Abraham had no mental struggle; he looked at the situation from a divine point of view. Until a person gets a divine point of view towards life, he will always be frustrated. He must look at life through God rather than through human circumstances.
“But was strong in faith, giving glory to God.” Abraham believed God for the
impossible, and throughout the episode he was praising and worshiping God. Until Christians
can give God the glory in impossible situations, they will never see deliverance from them.

FAITH RESTS IN GOD’S PROMISE — Romans 4:21

“And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform.”
Abraham had absolute confidence in God, and rested his case there. He relied on the fact that
if God promises something, he surely is able to perform it. If God promises, he must
produce, for he cannot lie and he cannot go back on his Word. Abraham did not “push the
panic button.” He was fortified with faith in a sovereign, omnipotent, miracle-working God.

FAITH IS TO BE EXERCISED BY ALL — Romans 4:22-25

“And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness.” When God first called
Abraham and Abraham believed God’s promise, God declared Abraham righteous before
him. But Abraham had not one shred of physical evidence that this promise would be
fulfilled; he had only God’s promise. His saving faith lapsed at one time and produced
Ishmael, the son of the flesh, but it was not extinguished. After 14 years his faith was revived
when God reaffirmed his covenant. This shows that the faith he originally exercised was
genuine faith.

“Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; but for us
also.” These things about Abraham were recorded for all men that all might know the way
to be justified before God.

“To whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from
the dead.” As an example for us, Abraham believed God and was declared righteous. To be
justified today a person must also believe the promise of God, which includes the full
revelation of the crucified and resurrected Christ who alone can forgive sins. It is not enough
just to believe in God. One must believe in the God who put Christ to death for sin and raised
him from the dead.

“Who was delivered for our offences.” God put Christ to death to be the sin bearer.
In his death, Christ made a complete and perfect sacrifice for sins, and there is none other
that can forgive sins.

“And was raised again for our justification.” Christ died to pay for the sins of his
people, and his resurrection makes their justification possible. There is no forgiveness of sin,
no justification, no eternal life, no heaven, and no hope for the one who has not exercised faith and made the death and resurrection of Christ personal in his or her life. Without Christ, there is only separation from God in time and separation and eternal punishment in eternity.

CONCLUSION

For the Christian: God has made some seven thousand promises for the child of God. Abraham had a promise from God and believed it. He shall see its fulfillment because he knew his God and did not lose faith. The Bible is God’s Word for us today, and God has given promises that we must trust by faith. When a Christian does not trust God’s Word, frustration and confusion result. In short, the Christian must learn to take God at His Word!

For the non-Christian: God has promised salvation to anyone who will trust in Jesus Christ as Saviour from sin and Lord of his life. But you must come to Christ and receive him by faith. He alone can forgive sin and fill the vacuum in the human heart. Here are some promises that should encourage the unsaved to turn to God in faith:

“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light” (Matt 11:28-30).

“Then spake Jesus again unto them saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life” (John 8:12).

“I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture” (John 10:9).
Will the “By Faith Way” Work?
A Study on Romans 5:1-5

by Dr. Jack L. Arnold

To this point Paul has been dealing with the elementary, introductory truths of Christianity. In Romans 1:18–3:20, Paul proved all men to be sinners, separated from God, in complete ruin, and devoid of any righteousness that would make them acceptable to God. In 3:21–4:25 Paul pointed out that God has provided a way whereby men can have a righteousness that makes them acceptable to God and sets them free forever from God’s wrath. This righteousness is found in the death of Jesus Christ for sin. Christ died as a substitute for men to free them from the slave market of sin, and he will give his righteousness to all who will believe that he died for their sins. Salvation is by God’s grace, and is appropriated through personal faith in Jesus Christ.

From 5:1 to the end of the book, Paul no longer deals with truths about birth but truths about growth — the way to maturity, power, and effective Christian service.

Wherever the Christian church is weak (and it is weak in many places), and wherever Christians are weak individually, it is because they have not become spiritually mature. There are many Christians who have been saved for ten, twenty, and perhaps even forty years, who are still living in Romans 1-4. They have not graduated into Romans 5-16. They keep learning over and over again the same truths about salvation, but never go into much depth or maturity in the things of the Lord. They are babes in spiritual things.

In Romans 5:1-11 Paul deals with the question, “Will the ‘by faith way’ work?” If salvation, from the human response, depends upon exercising faith in Christ, what will happen when trials and testings come? Will faith hold out? Is this method safe? Will it bring me to the certainty of completed salvation? Paul answers this from both the negative (the “faith way” will not fail in suffering, vv. 1-5) and the positive (the “faith way” will succeed because if God has done the most for his enemies in saving them, he will not fail to do the least for his friends, vv. 6-11).

FIT FOR HEAVEN — Romans 5:1-2

Paul, when writing inspired Scripture, points out three things that automatically happen to a person the moment he believes in Jesus Christ as personal Saviour. He receives: 1) peace with God; 2) access to God; and 3) the certain hope of sharing the glory of God (heaven). These three things have to do with the believer’s position or standing before God. All Christians enjoy these same blessings immediately, permanently and continuously.
“Therefore being justified by faith.” The “therefore” takes us back to all that Paul has said about justification by faith. A person can be declared righteous before God by receiving the work of Christ for his sins.

“Having been justified” is the correct translation, for justification is a standing before God, not a state. It is a once-and-for-all act that takes place the moment a person trusts Christ, and it is irrevocable.

“We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” This is not the peace of God, but peace with God. It is objective, not subjective, and deals with position, not experience. Before justification, the sinner is God’s enemy; he is at war with God because of his rebellion to God. But through Christ’s death for sin man can be brought to the place of a friend. Where once there was warfare, there is peace. A person can know that he is at peace with God and not under God’s wrath if he will but believe in Jesus Christ.

“By whom also we have access by faith unto this grace wherein we stand.” Because of the grace of justification we, as positionally forgiven and righteous sinners, have access to God. We have free admission to God. As sinners, we are accepted before God because of what Christ did for us, and we have the right and privilege of coming to him at any time and any place.

Very few people have access to the President of the United States. The majority find it impossible to have a private interview with him. Only those who have some claim upon his time have this privilege. What a contrast to the newest or weakest Christian who can have an audience with the King of Kings. The weakest sinner who trusts Christ is placed in his presence and made to stand there. What a privilege!

“And rejoice in hope of the glory of God.” Christians have an absolute and certain assurance of heaven. If we have been justified, then we know we shall be glorified:

“For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us” (Rom. 8:18).

“When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory” (Col. 3:4).

“Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself” (Phil. 3:21).
The certainty of heaven causes the Christian to rejoice and sing, “When the roll is called up yonder I’ll be there!

Justification, peace with God, access to God, and certainty of heaven are the possessions of all Christians. These things fit us for heaven, but they do not fit us to live on this earth. This is why there are so many Christians who are ready for heaven, but not at all prepared to live on earth. They have never graduated from the simple truths of salvation and pushed on to the deeper and useful truths of sanctification.

FIT FOR EARTH — Romans 5:3-5

In these verses Paul shows that the “by faith way” of salvation will stand when trials and testings come, that the trials will not only be withstood, but will actually strengthen the true Christian.

“And not only so.” Here is the key to understanding this section. The translation could be, “Not only that.” Beyond the truth of rejoicing in the absolute assurance of heaven, we rejoice in our sufferings.

“But we glory in tribulations also.” The Christian is to have exultant rejoicing in tribulations, sufferings and afflictions. Learning to accept and rejoice in the sufferings of life is one of the first steps towards progressive victory in the Christian life. Paul says that in the worst things in life the Christian is to rejoice — in heartaches, in sorrows and disappointments, in tears and sufferings. This is contrary to the thinking of the world. The world pities itself and others in suffering, but the Christian philosophy is different because suffering is part of the outworking of salvation.

It is normal Christian living to rejoice in suffering. God expects us to glory in tribulation. Anything less than this is subnormal Christianity. Have you learned to rejoice in suffering, or do you still gripe, complain, grumble and murmur about all the circumstances that come?

“Knowing that tribulation worketh patience.” The Christian knows that suffering develops patience, endurance, and perseverance. When sufferings come the Christian accepts them from the hand of the Lord, and instead of folding under the pressure, he lays hold of God more diligently by faith, trusting God to deliver in his time and way. He perseveres in faith.

Most of us realize that all men will have suffering, but we do not understand that suffering is absolutely necessary for our Christian development. Somehow we feel that
because we are Christians God should excuse us somewhat from trials and testings. Not so! Suffering is essential for fellowship with Christ. Paul said, “That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death” (Phil. 3:10). We never lay hold of God more than when we are suffering. When trouble comes we go on our knees.

A Christian cannot glory in suffering until he believes in the sovereignty of God, that God is in control of everything that happens in his life. No circumstance of the Christian’s life simply happens; it comes by the choice of God: “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose” (Rom. 8:28). One of the marks of a mature Christian is that he is beginning to thank God for adversity as well as blessing; he can rejoice in sorrow as well as happiness.

No person can change the sovereign plan and will of God for men. Things we have no control over are going to come into our lives. We cannot change God’s plan, but we can change our attitude about God’s plan. There is a big difference between acceptance of God’s will and rejoicing in God’s will. All circumstances have been brought by God to develop our Christian character.

I once went fishing on the lake with a fine fellow who was not a Christian, but who was definitely interested in the things of the Lord. We were caught in a heavy rainstorm while still on the lake. As we came near the dock, we realized that our car was parked on a clay road at the bottom of a steep hill. We jumped into the car and started up the hill, but the wheels began to spin and dig into the clay. I got out and started to push. Mud was splashing all over me. As I gave one big push I slipped and fell. Then I was covered with mud from my shoulders down. When we finally reached the top of the hill, my friend said, “I’m sorry this trip has been such a disappointment, Jack. We didn’t catch any fish, and then you fell in the mud.”

I turned to him and said, “That’s okay. The Lord had this day all planned out for me and I thank him for it.”

The fellow looked at me and said, “I’d give anything, anything, to believe like that — that God had my whole life planned.”

“You can, if you will believe that Jesus Christ died for your sins and believe what God teaches in the Bible,” I answered. How wonderful it is to know that everything is planned by God, and that we can rest in, rejoice with, and give thanks for his plan for our lives.

“And patience, experience.” “Experience” is a word that means “to test,” with the idea of approval. When testing comes, we persevere or endure by laying hold of God. When we
do this, we are approved of God, and this is a proof to ourselves that we are really Christians and that God can and does help us in the midst of tribulation and suffering. Tribulations build Christian character and confidence.

“And experience, hope.” When tribulations test us and we meet the test by responding more wholeheartedly to God, this builds confidence in God and in the reality of our salvation. Thus, we realize that God is at work in our lives, and we long for the time when we will be in the presence of God forever.

Paul begins (v. 2b) and ends (v. 5a) with hope. This indicates that sufferings are not to discourage the Christian but to encourage him, for they are used by God to stimulate his desire for full and complete fellowship with God in eternity.

“And hope maketh not ashamed.” This could be rendered, “And hope shall not disappoint us.” Tribulations are used of God to stir us to fellowship with him in time, which ultimately will cause us to long for fellowship with him in eternity. We shall not be disappointed! The “by faith way” will bring us to completed salvation.

“Because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.” Tribulations and sufferings, which are used by God to stimulate and intensify our desire for Christ’s fellowship, are all brought about because God loves us. He loves every Christian and desires every Christian to have this fellowship with Christ in time and eternity. Remember, a loving and sovereign God is taking care of his own children, and he knows what is best for us.

FITTED FOR DESTRUCTION

We have seen that every person who ever trusted in Jesus Christ as personal Saviour from sin was justified the moment he believed and was fitted for heaven before God. We have also seen that it is God’s desire to work in the lives of his own dear children to prepare them for life, thus they are fitted for earth through his love.

But the Bible tells us that those who have never trusted in Jesus Christ as personal Lord and Saviour have no forgiveness of sin, but are “vessels fitted for destruction.” Eternal punishment and separation from God is their lot unless they turn and trust in Jesus Christ as personal Saviour. If you will come to Christ, he will fit you for heaven and begin to give you the grace to fit you for earth.
Much More  
A Study on Romans 5:6-11

by Dr. Jack L. Arnold

In the first four chapters of Romans, Paul explained that men are sinners, separated from God, and going headlong into a Christless eternity. Unless a person comes by an act of faith and trusts in Jesus Christ as personal Saviour, he has no hope for eternal life.

Paul has declared that it is by faith that men are justified. God will not accept good works, good intentions or sincerity. Justification comes only by faith in Christ Jesus. He showed that justification by faith does not fail in times of extreme testing, but that testing strengthens the believer and builds Christian character in the child of God so that he longs for eternal fellowship with Jesus Christ.

This section of Romans tells us that justification by faith works because if God has done the most for a person by justifying him, then he will certainly do the least for him by taking him into heaven. God requires only faith in Jesus Christ and his death for sin. He does the saving, and he does it perfectly, for he is God.

GOD’S LOVE — Romans 5:6-8

In Romans 5:5 Paul told us that in the midst of suffering, the Christian is surrounded by the love of God. He told us that God really understands and cares about us. We have the subjective assurance that he loves us when things are very rough. Here Paul tells us why we can have this assurance of God’s love. It is because we have the objective fact that he loves us so much that he sent his Son to die for us.

“For when we were yet without strength.” “Without strength” means “powerless, helpless.” While we were unsaved we were absolutely powerless to save ourselves. In our natural state we have nothing in ourselves that can respond to God.

“Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (John 3:3).

“Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word” (John 8:43).

“And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot
receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you” (John 14:16-17).

“Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God” (Rom. 8:7-8).

“But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Cor. 2:14).

Men need supernatural enablement if they are going to respond positively to Jesus Christ.

Paul does not have a high concept of natural men who know not the Lord Jesus, for he calls them “helpless” (unable to save themselves), “ungodly” (revolting against God’s authority and holy standards), “sinners” (missing the mark of perfect righteousness), and “enemies” (hostile to God). What a fearful, devastating description of men in sin!

“In due time [appointed time] Christ died for the ungodly.” Jesus Christ did not die for good people, but for the ungodly, for those who recognize their need and their sinfulness.

“For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die.” Paul argues that some men would be martyrs for other men, but that these would have to be men of such a good moral stature that others would die for them.

“But God commendeth [proves, shows, demonstrates] his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” The “But God” shows that God intervened and, through the death of his Son, brought sinners to himself.

Christ died for men when they were unlovely, unattractive, unworthy, undeserving. This shows the utter bankruptcy of the human race — no spiritual or moral values, no capacity for God, and abject helplessness to do good. Christ died for the scum of the earth. That is real love! He was holy, and he died for the unholy.

I read of a fine young man who rescued a drunken bum from drowning and in the process lost his own life. At the scene of the tragedy the remark was made, “What a shame for such a fine young man to give his life for a worthless bum!” This is nothing compared to the sacrifice of Christ for sinners.

When he says, “Christ died for us,” who does Paul mean? He means those who have trusted in Christ. The death of Christ can only be applied to those who will believe that
Christ died for them. It is personal. If you want to know the love of God, you can only see it manifested at Calvary where God put to death his own sinless Son to be a perfect and complete sacrifice for sin.

GOD’S GRACE — Romans 5:9-11

The argument in this section hangs on the words “much more.” This is an *a fortiori* argument or an argument from the greater to the lesser. If God loved us when we were his enemies (the “greater,” more unbelievable thing), how much more will he love us when we are saved (this love is the “lesser” because it is easier to understand)? If he did the hardest thing in saving us, will he not do the lesser thing by keeping us saved?

“Much more then, being now justified by his blood.” Justification is a “declaration of righteousness.” The moment we trusted in Christ, God declared us perfectly righteous in Christ’s blood.

“We shall be saved from wrath through him.” If God justified us and gave his Son to complete this act, we shall be saved in eternity from his wrath forever.

“For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son.” The word “reconcile” means “bring from a position of being an enemy to the position of being a friend.” Before salvation, an unsaved person is an enemy of God. He is at war with the Deity. He hates God and the authority of God, and exerts his own independence from God. Through the Cross, God has provided a way in which man may be reconciled to God. He can be changed from an enemy to a friend, from a position of enmity to amity:

“And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him (2 Cor. 5:18-21).

“Much more being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.” If God reconciled us to himself through the death of Christ, will he not also take us into eternity? Yes, he will save us completely and perfectly! He will fit us for heaven. The primary thought here is future salvation where we will be saved for all eternity. This is one of the strongest arguments in all Scripture for the security of the believer.
This may also be an indirect reference to the resurrected life of Christ, which is the possession of every child of God, to enable Christians to live lives of progressive victory over sin. Christ’s life is the Christian’s life because the Christian is in spiritual union with Christ:

“When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory” (Col. 3:4).

“That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection” (Phil. 3:10).

“For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain” (Phil. 1:21).

“I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me” (Phil. 4:13).

The very resurrected life of Christ is the Christian’s life, and this life is given to God’s children to help them overcome sin in their experience.

“And not only so, but we also joy in [or through] our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement [reconciliation].” Because of Christ’s perfect work in providing salvation, we Christians rejoice exultantly in God. He has justified us and reconciled us, and he most certainly will glorify us! What a cause for rejoicing.

In vs. 2 of this section of Scripture, the Christian rejoices in his hope of future glorification. In vs. 3 he rejoices in tribulations and afflictions. And in vs. 11 he rejoices in God for the perfect work of salvation provided in Christ. The key word is “rejoice.” Paul got excited about his salvation!

CONCLUSION

Can you rejoice today that your sins are forgiven and that you have eternal life? If you will turn to Christ as personal Saviour from sin, he will justify and reconcile you, and give you the promise of future glorification. When in reality you experience this and know Christ personally, then and only then will you be able to rejoice in God, and Christ’s finished and perfect work for sin.
In Adam and in Christ
A Study on Romans 5:12-21

by Dr. Jack L. Arnold

Romans has already shown us that all men are sinners separated from God and condemned (Rom. 1:12–3:20), but that God can and will declare righteous the person who accepts his only answer to the sin problem: the death of Christ. Romans 5 discusses the “by faith way.” The first five verses show that this way will stand the most severe trials and testings, and that God uses these things to build and strengthen the Christian. Verses 6-11 show that the “by faith way” will not fail because if God loved us and saved us when we were his enemies, will he love us much more and do much more for us when we are his friends! Surely he will take his friends to complete salvation.

Now in Romans 5:12-21, Paul will prove that the “by faith way” will conquer even death. His point is that death in Adam has been conquered in Christ. The main thought of this section is the imputing (reckoning) of the sin of Adam to every member of the human race. That God would hold humanity responsible for the sin of Adam is beyond human reasoning, but we are dealing with divine revelation. Surely God’s ways are not our ways. The imputation of Adam’s sin to the human race is not popular among men, even men who profess to be Christians, but it is scriptural. Apart from understanding imputed sin, there can be little appreciation of the salvation provided in Christ. Many theologians consider Romans 5:12-21 the key to orthodoxy. A person’s soundness in the Christian faith may be determined by how he handles this section of Scripture.

THE CAUSE OF DEATH — Romans 5:12-14

In his original state, Adam had everything provided for him. God gave him a test to show whether he was in subjection to God — he was not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Would he do the will of God? Adam, by an act of his own will, chose against God. His sin not only affected him, but it affected the whole human race.

“Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world.” Paul did not think of the account of the Fall as a legend or myth, but as an actual historical event. Sin entered the world when Adam fell. The doctrine of imputed sin is that the original sin of Adam is put to the account of every member of the human race at birth.

“And death by sin.” The reference here is primarily to physical death. The Bible speaks of three kinds of death: (1) physical death: separation of the body from the soul; (2) spiritual death: separation of the soul from God in time; and (3) eternal death: separation of
soul and body from God for all eternity. This passage is primarily about physical death, but it may include spiritual death as well. Paul’s point is that physical death is a result of sin that entered the world through Adam.

“And so death passed upon all men.” Death passed through all men for all men have sinned. Death is universal because sin is universal.

“For [because] all have sinned.” The verse actually says “all sinned,” and is not a reference to personal acts of sin but to the fact that all men sinned in Adam. Had we been there in Eden, we would have done the same thing. Adam, representing all humanity, sinned, and this sin was put to the account of every person born into this world.

When the president declares war, he does so for the whole nation. Just so, Adam made a choice that was binding on the whole human race.

Paul might go one step further and think of all men as actually being in Adam, in both a spiritual and seminal sense such that when Adam chose, the human race chose because they were actually semenally present in Adam. An example of this thinking can be found in Hebrews 7:9-10 where it is said that Levi paid tithes in Abraham. Adam’s sin was then put to the account of every person born into the world.

Theological question: Is it fair for God to impute sin to all men and punish them for it? Answer: This may be difficult to understand, but if God said he did it, then that is the case. God has a sovereign right to do anything he pleases, and does not have to consult his creatures before doing it!

The principle of the act of one affecting many is taught in Scripture. Some examples are:

1. God brings “the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children’s children, unto the third and fourth generation” (Ex. 34:6-7).

2. The curse pronounced on Canaan (Gen. 9:22-25) fell on his posterity. Also, it resulted not from Canaan’s sin, but from Ham’s sin.

3. Esau’s selling of his birthright excluded his descendants from the covenant of promise.

4. Because of David’s sin it was said, “The sword shall never depart from thine house; because thou hast despised me, and has taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife” (2 Sam. 12:10).
“For until the law sin was in the world.” Before the Mosaic Law was ever given, sin was in the world.

“But sin is not imputed when there is no law.” The Mosaic Law was written revelation, and to break it was transgression. All men from Adam to Moses were in rebellion to God, but their sin was not reckoned as transgression to written law.

“Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam’s transgression.” In the period between Adam and Moses, men still died. They died because of imputed sin. Some people who had done no acts of sin, such as children, still died, showing that they must have sinned in Adam. Death is the result of sin.

“Who is the figure [type] of him that was to come.” Adam is said to be a type of Christ. A type is something that prefigures or foreshadows a future divine reality. How is Adam a type of Christ? (1) Adam is head of the human race; Christ is head of the spiritual race. (2) In both Adam and Christ, we see the unity of the many in one. We see how the act of each one affects the future of others.

THE REIGN OF LIFE OVER DEATH — Romans 5:15-17

In this section Paul contrasts the work of Christ for men and the work of Adam. Each is a representative head of a race.

“But not as the offense, so also is the free gift.” The one act of Adam brought destruction to the human race; the one act of Christ in his death brought salvation to all in the human race who will believe.

“For if [since] through the offence of one many be dead.” Adam’s sin brought physical and spiritual death to many.

“Much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many.” In his death, Jesus Christ has provided the gift of justification (declared righteous) to those who are the objects of God’s grace.

“And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification.” Adam’s act brought judgment and condemnation to all men, but Christ’s work, as the representative head of all who believe, can justify.
“For if by one man’s offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.” Adam’s offence brought physical and spiritual death to the human race. But those under the headship of Christ have received righteousness and shall reign in life (eternal life) because of God’s grace. The “by faith way” will most certainly take us to heaven, for the Christian will reign in life with Christ who is his head.

SUMMARY — Romans 5:18-19

“Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation.” Adam’s sin imputed to the human race brought judgment and condemnation to it.

“So by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.” Through the righteous act of Christ in his death for sin, the free gift of justification came upon all men. The “all” here is limited to all who believe, those who receive (v. 17), those who are the elect. If this were not the case, we would have universalism.

Justification is a free gift to all who believe in Jesus Christ. The offer is universal, but it is effective only for those who believe in Christ. Every man in Adam reaped the results of Adam’s fall, and just so every man in Christ reaps the benefits of Christ’s work in salvation.

“For as by one man’s disobedience many were made (constituted) sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made (constituted) righteous.” Adam’s act made many sinners. Christ’s act of atonement made many righteous.

DEATH AND SUPERABOUNDING GRACE — Romans 5:20-21

“Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound.” The Mosaic Law was given to stir sin, and to prove to men that they are sinners in need of Jesus Christ, who alone can forgive sins. The Law proves sin to be transgression.

A fellow passenger on a plane said that he thought to keep the Ten Commandments was enough. But when I asked if he had kept them, his answer was, “No.” The Law only proved him a sinner who needed Christ.

“But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.” The Law showed the horribleness of sin that was imputed in Adam. But grace superabounds. God can overrule sin and death with grace, and give eternal life to all who will receive Jesus Christ as personal Lord and Saviour.
“That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.” Death has reigned in Adam, but grace will reign in righteousness to all who will believe in Jesus Christ. The result will be eternal life.

This proves that the “by faith way,” justification, will work and complete our salvation, for death in Adam has been conquered in Christ.

CONCLUSION

Do you know that you have the free gift of justification? Do you have the assurance that your life is right before God? Do you desire to have eternal life? If you long for these things, you must admit that you are a condemned sinner in Adam and turn to Jesus Christ. He alone can forgive your sin and give you perfect righteousness and eternal life. If you will believe in Jesus Christ, you may have the assurance that death has been conquered for you in Christ.
Shall We Continue in Sin?
A Study on Romans 6:1-2a

Dr. Jack L. Arnold

Probably every one of us can think of people we have known who at one time professed faith in Jesus Christ for salvation, but later fell away and walked again with the unsaved world. Were these people saved and then lost? Were they saved and later became carnal (fleshy) Christians? Or were they professing Christians who never really possessed the person of Jesus Christ, those who showed initial spiritual zeal based on religious experience but then fell away, indicating that they were never truly Christians? Romans 6 has the answer to this problem.

Paul’s basic thought in this section is that it is impossible for a truly saved person to be lost, but it is just as impossible for a truly saved man to live just as he pleases, habitually in sin. The key that unlocks the marvelous truths of Romans 6, especially verses 1-11, is union with Christ. At the moment a person trusts Christ, he is placed into spiritual union with Christ (a fact and not necessarily a feeling). He is then one with Christ, so that he is a partaker of Christ’s death for sin and his resurrection unto life. Thus, the death and resurrection of Christ are not just historical events, but are shared by the Christian and so become personal. The two basic thoughts are: (1) the Christian died to sin through Christ’s death, thus the power of indwelling sin is broken in the Christian; and (2) the Christian shares Christ’s resurrected life, thus the Christian is a partaker of Christ’s life which will manifest itself in a new kind of life for him.

RELATIONSHIP OF ROMANS 6 TO THE ARGUMENT

In Romans 1:18–3:20 Paul proved all men to be sinners, separated from God, under God’s wrath, and headed for eternal condemnation. Why? Because all men are sinners, and a holy God must judge sin. Man has no righteousness in himself that can commend him to God. He needs the forgiveness of sin and a righteousness that will give him an acceptable standing before God.

In Romans 3:21–5:21 Paul showed that God in his love has made a provision for men to find forgiveness of sin and a perfect righteousness. God has provided the death of Jesus Christ, a substitutionary atonement for the sins of men. All who believe that Christ died for their sins will receive the forgiveness of sin and a righteousness from Christ that will make them acceptable before God. All who believe will never again have to fear God’s wrath unto eternal punishment, because Christ’s death was a complete and perfect sacrifice for sin. Paul showed that the moment a person believes in Christ he is justified (declared righteous) and
receives a perfect standing or position before God. He is declared righteous through Christ’s work, not through his own fallen human effort.

The basic theme of the first five chapters of Romans has been justification. In Romans 6 the subject is sanctification. This deals with the fact that God, through the death of Christ, is changing the Christian in his everyday experience to give him progressive victory over the power of sin in his life, and to conform him more and more to the person of Christ. Both justification and progressive sanctification flow from union with Christ.

CONTRASTS OF JUSTIFICATION AND SANCTIFICATION

Justification declares the sinner righteous.
Sanctification makes the sinner righteous.

Justification is a once-and-for-all act.
Sanctification is a continuous work.

Justification causes salvation.
Sanctification is the result of salvation.

Justification deals with the Christian’s standing before God.
Sanctification deals with the Christian’s experience in life.

Justification is objective.
Sanctification is subjective.

Justification removes the guilt and penalty of sin.
Sanctification removes the growth and power of sin.

Justification changes a person’s position before God.
Sanctification changes a person’s nature and character.

Justification, again, changes a person’s position before God.
Sanctification changes a person’s disposition in relation to God.

Justification deals with the imputation of righteousness.
Sanctification deals with the impartation of righteousness.

Justification is for the sinner.
Sanctification is in the saint.
Justification and sanctification are not the same, but they cannot be separated. Sanctification is a necessary step that proceeds from union with Christ. Thus, every person who is justified must experience some sanctification. Every person who has been delivered from the penalty of sin also must be delivered from the power of sin:

“Christ came to save us from our sins, not in our sins. Though men seek to pervert the gospel, the Christian must not be drawn aside to any position other than that which demands holiness and which leads to holiness.” (Barnhouse, Romans, p. 10).

IMPORTANCE OF ROMANS 6

This chapter deals with progressive sanctification — how we can be made righteous in our experience. It shows us God’s power for victorious living over our present sins. It deals with how the Christian can keep from sinning habitually in his everyday life. It shows us that the power to live righteous lives comes through union with Christ as the Christian appropriates this power through faith. God has broken the power of sin in the lives of all those who are in Christ so that they no longer have to obey sin as they did when they were unsaved.

THE QUESTION OF THE POSSIBILITY OF THE CHRISTIAN CONTINUING IN SIN — Romans 6:1

“What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?” This question is asked in light of Paul’s statement in Rom. 5:20: “But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.” He has said that a person may be declared righteous by God’s grace and have eternal life. Where sin abounds, grace superabounds. Since salvation is by grace through faith, which is contrary to all human thinking, questions might be raised.

This particular question would be asked by an antinomian — one who is opposed to the law or one who is a complete libertine, one who feels he should have no restraints now that he is a Christian. It would be natural for an antinomian to conclude that because sin abounded and grace superabounded in his initial salvation, he should go on sinning as a Christian so that God will pour out even more superabounding grace on him. An antinomian today (and there are many) might say, “I’m saved, declared righteous before God, eternally secure. Therefore, I may live as I please in order to get more grace from God.” He would want to use salvation as a license to sin more. Many were antinomians in New Testament times. Jude called them “ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ” (Jude 4). Paul answered the
antinomian, “God forbid that a Christian saved by grace through faith could ever again have the same attitude and sustain the same relationship to sin that he did before he was saved!”

We know that Paul taught salvation by grace through faith alone, because this question would have never been asked had he been teaching salvation by works. There are some who would repudiate salvation by grace through faith and give the same arguments as Paul’s critics in the first century, but by doing so they simply display their ignorance of God’s grace.

To what does the word “sin” refer in the context of this passage? Some think it refers to acts of sin, but it may refer to the sin nature, that inherent capacity within all men for evil. Every person born into this world has a sin nature. Even the Christian, although he also has a new nature, still has this sin nature after salvation. The question is not about continuing to sin, but continuing in sin. Paul takes the problem back to its root — the sin nature. He is not talking about whether a Christian can sin at all, but whether a Christian can be the slave to sin that he was in his unsaved state. Paul is arguing as to whether or not a person can deliberately and purposefully go on yielding to and feeding the sin nature after salvation. Before being saved men are slaves to the sin nature (living only for self). Sin has dominion over them, and they love this sin. After salvation the power of sin is broken in the Christian, so that he no longer has to obey the dictates of his sin nature. He may sin, but he no longer loves it as he did before.

In this passage what does the word “continue” mean? It means “to abide, to fellowship, to be dependent on, or to have cordial relations.” Can a Christian sustain the same cordial, intimate fellowship and dependence upon the sin nature that he did when he was unsaved?

THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF THE CHRISTIAN CONTINUING IN SIN — Romans 6:2a

“God forbid.” — Paul’s first answer is one of outraged indignation, and he recoils at the thought that a Christian would habitually continue to live in sin after salvation. There are no English words to capture this negative in the Greek, but others have expressed it as, “Certainly not,” “Not at all,” “By no means,” “What a ghastly thought,” “May such a thing never occur,” “Away with the thought.”

The idea that a Christian should continue to sin is untenable, unthinkable, and blasphemous. It is inconsistent with God’s grace. Union with Christ will not permit it. God’s grace that put the Christian in union with Christ will produce progressive sanctification; a Christian will not continue in sin and be a slave to it as he was before salvation.
This verse does not teach that a Christian cannot do acts of sin (for every Christian does sin). Rather, it teaches that no true Christian can continue to be dominated by the sin nature as he was before his conversion. God has broken the power of the sin nature in the Christian so that he no longer has to obey it (although he may do so at times). God has made a provision for the Christian to live a life of progressive victory over sin.

CONCLUSION

Those who are without Christ need to be justified. You need the forgiveness of sins and righteousness from Christ that will give you a perfect standing before God. Christ alone can justify you (declare you righteous). Without him you are hopelessly lost for time and eternity.

If you will receive Jesus Christ as personal Saviour, He will not only fit you for heaven but he will fit you for earth. He will begin to give you the power to live a life of progressive victory over sin. The truth of sanctification is for those who know the Lord. Before Christ can deliver you from the power of sin in your everyday life you must, he must deliver you from the guilt and penalty of sin.

Will you turn from your present life and receive God’s gracious and free offer of salvation in Christ? He alone can justify and sanctify you.
Dead to Sin
A Study on Romans 6:2

by Dr. Jack L. Arnold

Have you ever talked with a professing Christian who told you, “I am dead to sin. I no longer sin and do not have sin in my life since I trusted Jesus.” This statement would bring confusion and defeat to a new Christian, but a mature, seasoned Christian would know that the person who made such a statement was self-deceived and hypocritical.

Romans 6:2 is usually the proof text for those who claim sinless perfection. Doesn’t this verse say that Christians are dead to sin? We find that Romans 6:2 does not teach sinless perfection. The context, tense of the verb, and meaning of the word “dead” all prove sinless perfection to be a perversion of God’s Word.

REVIEW OF ROMANS 6:1-2a

Romans 6 has to do with the Christian’s progressive victory over the power of present sin in his life — evil thoughts, lusts, temper, laziness, failure to witness, envy, hate, jealousy, pride, etc.

In the first five chapters of Romans Paul definitely taught that all men are sinners and separated from God, but that hell-deserving sinners can be justified (declared righteous) before God by his grace on the condition of faith in Jesus Christ. Salvation is a pure gift from God without any human works. The fact that salvation is by grace alone could cause some to pervert the gospel and say, “If I am saved by grace, then I can live as I please, for this will enable God to give me more grace.” In order to refute this antinomian attitude, Paul asks the question, “Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?” The question is whether a Christian can continue in sin after being justified. This does not refer specifically to acts of sin, but to the sin nature. All acts of sin spring from the sin nature in both the saved and the unsaved. The question then is whether the Christian can continue to be dominated by the sin nature as he was before he came to Christ. Can the Christian habitually, repeatedly and continually feed and yield to the sin nature as he did before conversion? Can he be a slave to the sin nature as the unsaved are? The question is not about continuing to sin, but continuing in sin.

Paul’s first answer to this question is one of outraged indignation and he recoils at the thought of a truly saved person continuing in sin. He replies emotionally, “God forbid!” To think that a Christian could — let alone should — continue to be dominated by sin is
untenable, unthinkable, blasphemous and inconsistent with God’s grace in salvation. A genuine believer is going to show evidence of progressive sanctification.

Of course, a Christian will do acts of sin, but he will never again love sin as he did in his unsaved state, and he will have a desire to put sin out of his life. Why? Because God has done something to the sin nature in the Christian.

SECOND ANSWER

“How shall we that are dead [have died] to sin, live any longer therein [in it]?” Here Paul explains why a Christian cannot continue to sin: he has died to sin.

*The Tense*: Here the tense is not “are dead,” but “died” or “have died.” This is an aorist tense, and refers to an act or event that occurred in the past. So, the translation should be, “How shall we, that (are of such a nature as regenerated persons) have died to sin live any longer in it?”

The Christian has died to sin. It is a completed, perfect and past act. This death is related to the death of Christ for sin on the cross. This occurred once in the past, when Christ died for sin. The Christian actually and positionally died to the sin nature when he was crucified with Christ on the cross. When Christ died on Calvary for sin, we were there in him, and we died there with him. We were in Christ when he bore our sins. There were two bodies on the cross: Christ’s sinless human body; and his body, the Church. There were also two deaths on the cross: Christ’s death for sin; and the Christian’s death to sin. At the cross, God broke the power of indwelling sin in the Christian’s life. Christ not only died for the acts of sin that we do, but he died for our sin natures so the Christian now sustains a new relationship to the sin nature. The sin nature *remains*, but no longer *reigns* in the believer. Thus, to die to sin is to have a different relationship to it than before salvation; it is to be separated from it.

*The Reason*: The Christian has God’s promise that He has broken the reigning power of the sin nature over the Christian through Christ’s work on the cross. So, the believer does not need to yield to the sin nature any longer, but can begin progressively to conquer sin in his life. There will always be struggles with sin, but a Christian can have progressive victory to a great degree. While he *may* be defeated at times, he does not *have* to be defeated by sin in his life.

*Points to Ponder*: While the Christian died to sin, sin did not die to him. Sin is very real in the life of every Christian, but God has broken the power of the sin nature so that the believer no longer has to obey it. Notice that Paul does not make an appeal for Christians to
die to sin. Instead, he asserts the fact that they have already done so in Christ’s death. This is an actual, real and factual death to the sin nature. The Christian is not asked to put himself to death to sin by his own efforts; he is simply to believe that he died to sin in Christ and to claim God’s judgment over the sin nature at the cross. As he counts on or reckons on this, the Christian puts to death the deeds of his body and crucifies the flesh:

“Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live” (Rom. 8:12-13).

“And they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts” (Gal. 5:24).

“Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry” (Col.3:5).

The Conclusion: “Shall we continue in sin? . . . God forbid. How shall we that have died to sin live any longer therein?” The Christian cannot continue in sin because he has died to sin in Christ. It is impossible for the Christian habitually to sustain the same relationship to indwelling sin — dependence, yielding, and cordiality with it — as he did when he was an unsaved person.

PRACTICAL AND THEOLOGICAL PROBLEMS

What does it mean to go on habitually sinning? Does not experience tell us that a Christian may sin over and over again in certain areas, especially the thought processes? Although the sin nature has been judged, it is still in the Christian and very much alive. God has positionally broken the power of the sin nature, and the Christian no longer has to obey it in his experience. Before salvation he was a slave to sin, in bondage to it, obeying its dictates, and loving it. Because the true Christian has died to sin, when he does acts of sin, he will hate it, long to be delivered from it, and seek to conquer it based on Christ’s victorious death on the cross. No Christian will ever completely conquer sin in this life, but he will have a desire to conquer it.

What if a Christian does yield to the evil nature? God has made provision for this: “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). God’s desire is that the Christian not yield to the sin nature. “My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the propitiation for
our sins” (1 John 2:1-2). If a Christian does do acts of sin, God has provided the death of Christ which cleanses when confession is made.

What if you are a Christian with some very weak areas that constantly cause you to stumble? Claim Christ’s death for that sin, declare your death to it, confess it, and go on obeying God, determining not to give place to that area of the old nature again. If the sin recurs, go through the same process. Do this as often as the sin recurs.

What if a person continually and habitually keeps sinning and never shows any remorse or desire to conquer the sin? In such a case it is questionable that the person is really a Christian.

CONCLUSION

God has promised to deliver all who have believed on Jesus Christ from the guilt and penalty of sin, and also to deliver them from the power of sin in their daily lives.

All of our problems stem basically from sin. We need God to solve the sin problem for us, and he has done just that in Christ. When a person trusts in Jesus Christ as personal Lord and Saviour, at that moment he has forgiveness of sin and eternal life, and he is fitted for heaven. At that moment God begins a work of progressively delivering him from the power of sin and progressively changing him into the image of Christ, fitting him to live on this earth.

Only Jesus Christ can deliver from sin. Have you received him? Do you have a personal relationship with Christ? If you do not know him, I invite you to receive him as your own Lord and Saviour. He alone can deliver you from sin.
Baptism into Christ
A Study on Romans 6:3-4a

by Dr. Jack L. Arnold

If someone were to ask me which words in the Bible are the most difficult to define and explain, I would reply, “‘In’ and ‘into.’” Our text in this lesson says that we Christians were “baptized into Christ.” In the New Testament, especially in the epistles, the words “in Christ,” “in whom,” “into Christ,” “in him,” and “in Christ Jesus” occur over and over, expressing the fact that the Christian has been baptized into Christ or put in union with Christ. While the concept of union with Christ is difficult to define, it is the key to Christianity and progressive victory over sin in our daily lives. The prepositions, “in” and “into” must be important, for they are used over two hundred times in the New Testament and 164 times by Paul alone.

In this lesson we will focus on the words, “baptized into Jesus Christ.” Without a knowledge of this concept, it is impossible to live an effective Christian life.

REVIEW OF THE ARGUMENT

When asked whether it were possible for a truly regenerate person to go on living in sin after trusting in Jesus Christ, Paul’s first answer was an emotional, “God forbid!” Although the Bible and experience prove to us that the Christian does do acts of sin after salvation, the Christian cannot be dominated by the sin nature, nor can he be a slave to it as he was before conversion to Christ. This would be unthinkable, untenable and blasphemous. Salvation demands a life of progressive sanctification; there must be change.

Paul’s second answer was a question, “How shall we who have died to sin live any longer in it?” The Christian cannot live as a slave to the sin nature because he has died to the sin nature. The Christian was in Christ when Christ died for sin on the cross. There, God judged the sin nature of the Christian and broke its power so that the Christian no longer has to obey the sin nature as he did when unsaved. God has provided a way for the Christian progressively to defeat sin in his life. He wants the Christian to know that he has died to sin in Christ, and that although sin still remains in him, it can no longer reign over him. With this attitude and the help of the Holy Spirit, the Christian can begin to live a life of progressive victory over sin.
THE BAPTISM OF THE HOLY SPIRIT — Romans 6:3-4a

“Know ye not.” Many of the Roman Christians were ignorant of the fact that they had been baptized into Christ, being put into a living, vital and organic union with Christ, sharing both his death to sin and his resurrection to life. That people can even think of asking whether Christians are free to sin shows a complete lack of understanding of what a Christian is and of what Spirit baptism is. A Christian is not merely a justified believer. He is someone who has entered into a vital, personal union with Jesus Christ.

“That so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?” Paul wants to show how a Christian has actually died to sin — to show that a Christian has been baptized into Christ’s death, that he is a sharer of that death to sin. This baptism has nothing to do with water, but is a spiritual baptism, an actual act that places a person into Christ. Water baptism is a physical act that cannot mechanistically put a person into Christ, although some people believe that it does. Others agree that baptism here refers to Spirit baptism, while seeing water baptism as the outward sign of Spirit baptism.

The Meaning of Baptism: Most commentators agree that the meaning of the word “baptize” frequently means “dip.” While this may be a primary meaning of “baptize,” the word also has other meanings, one being “identify.” There are many places in the New Testament where “baptize” cannot mean “dip.” Some of them are:

“I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance; but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire” (Matt. 3:11).

“But I have a baptism to be baptized with; and now am I straitened till it be accomplished” (Luke 12:50).

“One, Lord, one faith, one baptism” (Eph. 4:5).

“And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea” (1 Cor. 10:2).

In Romans 6 baptism refers to Spirit baptism when a person is identified with Christ or put into union with him, sharing in his death.

The Fact of Spirit Baptism: The Christian shares the death of Christ to sin through union with him, and this comes about by the baptizing work of the Spirit:
“For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit” (1 Cor. 12:13).

“For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ” (Gal. 3:27).

Spirit baptism happened to every Christian the moment he believed. It is a fact, actual and positional, and it has results in a Christian’s experience. It is positional in that it is true of every believer, and mystical in that it results in experience in the life of every true child of God. The Christian shares in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ because of his union with Christ.

*The Purpose of Spirit Baptism:* The moment one believes on Christ, the Holy Spirit identifies that person with Christ, and puts him in union with Christ so that he becomes one with Christ. He becomes one spirit with the Lord: “But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit” (1 Cor. 6:17). Thus, the Christian shares Christ’s death to sin and his resurrected life. Union with Christ is the closest kind of relationship. It is like the blacksmith putting an iron in the fire. The iron gets in the fire and the fire gets into the iron. There is an interpenetration of the elements. We are not to think of ourselves as just united to Christ in some vague, general sense. We have been identified with him and made one with him.

*The Actuality of Spirit Baptism:* This was a conceptual fact in the mind of God in eternity: “According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world” (Eph. 1:4). It happened as a fact at the Cross: “For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him” (2 Cor 5:21). It became an actuality to the experience of the believer at conversion through the baptism of the Holy Spirit, as we see from the verses we have been dealing with in this lesson.

**CONCLUSION**

The Apostle Paul lived in light of the fact that he had died to sin in Christ:

“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me” (Gal. 2:20).

He clearly understood that the power of the sin nature had been broken at the Cross, and that it became an actuality for him at his conversion when he was put into union with Christ. While Paul knew he would do acts of sin at times, he was not ignorant of the truth that he
no longer had to be a slave to the sin nature. Sin remained in him, but would never again reign over him. Paul knew he could begin to defeat sin progressively in his life because God had broken its power in him. We too must live in light of the fact that we have positionally died to sin in Christ.

Many years ago a missionary who sailed from England for the African coast had to change at Lagos from his ship to a costal tub going to the fever-infested spot where he was to pour out his life for the Lord. A trader protested, “If you go to that place you will die!”

The man of God replied, “I died before I left London.

Every Christian is a dead man when it comes to sin, self and the world, having died positionally at the Cross and actually at conversion. We are to live our lives believing that we are dead men!

If you do not know Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Saviour, you need to trust him for salvation. When you do this, at that very moment, the Holy Spirit will put you into union with Christ, and you will share his death to sin and his resurrection power unto life. Without Christ, you are dead spiritually. With Christ, you will become spiritually alive and experience the resurrected and living Christ in your everyday life.
If I were to say to you, “Stop living!” you would probably think, “I don’t want to stop living, and even if I wanted to I couldn’t.” You realize that God has begun physical life in you, and that you have no choice in the matter. He will take this life away from you at his appointed time. God gives life and he takes it away.

Just as it is impossible to stop physical life from growing, so it is impossible to stop eternal life from manifesting itself in the Christian. At the moment of salvation, God sovereignly places eternal and resurrected life in the Christian, and this life continues for time and eternity.

REVIEW OF THE ARGUMENT

The Apostle Paul has asked the question, “Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?” In this context sin refers to the sin nature which everyone possesses from birth. The thought is whether a Christian can continue to be dominated and controlled by the sin nature as he was in his unsaved state. Paul is not asking whether a Christian will do acts of sin (for all Christians do acts of sin), but whether the truly saved person can go on yielding to, living by, and feeding his sin nature as he did as an unregenerate person.

Paul’s first answer is an emotional, “God forbid!” It is unthinkable, untenable and blasphemous to think that a Christian would want to continue in sin after having been gloriously saved by God’s grace. It is inconsistent with God’s grace for a Christian to continue to feed the sin nature after salvation.

Paul’s second response is a logical answer to the problem. He claims that the Christian has died to sin. Notice that the Christian has died to sin — sin has not died in the Christian. The Christian has died to sin in that God judged the sin nature in the Christian through the death of Christ so that its power has been broken. The sin nature has not been taken out of the Christian, but its hold on him has been broken so that he no longer has to be dominated by it. The true child of God no longer has to obey the sin nature, although he may do so at times.

Paul goes on to explain why the Christian cannot continue in sin. He says that every Christian was baptized into Christ. “Baptism” in this context means “identification with.” The Christian is identified with Christ or put into spiritual union with Christ, sharing Christ’s
death to sin and his resurrected life. Because of his union with Christ, the Christian is a partaker of Christ’s death for sin where the sin nature was judged and its power broken. Therefore, the Christian cannot continue to be dominated by the sin nature, although he does sometimes do acts of sin. There is a progressive change of life in every Christian.

SHARING CHRIST’S RESURRECTED LIFE. — Romans 6:4

Now Paul gives us another reason why a true Christian cannot continue in sin. Because of his union with Christ, the Christian not only shares in Christ’s death to sin, but he also shares in Christ’s resurrected life.

“Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death.” Through union with Christ, the Christian shares in his burial, which is simply a sign that death to sin has taken place.

“That [in order that] like as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father.” The subject is now Christ’s resurrection in which he gained life over death — eternal life. Christ not only broke the chains of sin in his death, he also rose victorious over death.

“Even so we should walk in newness of life.” Because of his identification with Christ or union with Christ, the Christian shares Christ’s resurrected life. This eternal life is now the possession of the Christian. The result is a new kind or quality of life, one that progressively breaks the power of sin in the Christian.

Believers receive a supernatural life through union with Christ for the purpose of walking in obedience to God. Since every true Christian shares Christ’s life, this gives him the power defeat sin progressively. Therefore, the Christian cannot continue in sin.

The life that the believer has because of his union with Christ must manifest itself, or there is no life at all. This is what makes the difference between professing and possessing Christians, true Christians and good churchmen, religion and regeneration, Christianity and “churchianity.” The truly born-again Christian shares the life of Christ, and this life always manifests itself in him. Truly saved people desire to do the will of God even though at times they may find it difficult.
CO-RESURRECTION ILLUSTRATED — Romans 6:5

“For if [since] we have been planted together [grown together, grafted together] in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection.” Paul explains how a Christian shares Christ’s life through an illustration of a graft. A Christian shares the life of Christ in the same way that a graft shares the life of the plant into which it has been grafted.

When I was pastoring a church in California, we lived in the San Juaquine Valley, the heart of the fruit farming area. They called it the “fruit basket” of the world. There it was not uncommon to see the farmers change a whole peach orchard into a plum orchard without removing the peach trees. They would graft a plum branch into the root of the peach tree and within two years the peach tree would be producing plums, for the life of the peach tree became the life of the plum branch through the cunning of modern-day farming.

I understand that in Santa Cruz, California, there are two trees at an angle to each other. They were two trees that grew close to each other and after hundreds of years their branches crossed and the bark touched and they grew together. Contact between them has been made a hundred feet in the air, and from that point they are one tree—a single top growing from two trunks.

Another illustration of our union with Christ is Siamese twins, two distinct persons connected at one point. The same life flows through both individuals.

CHRIST’S LIFE IN THE BELIEVER WILL BE MANIFESTED

Through union with Christ, God has given the Christian the divine nature (divine life), so that the Christian he has both the desire and the power to do God’s will:

“Whoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God” (1 John 3:9).

“Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust” (2 Pet. 1:4).

Because God has imparted divine life to him, the Christian now has a bent, slant or propensity towards righteousness. Through progressive sanctification the Christian will be able to experience this divine life and obey God. The Christian will progressively make more choices towards God as he grows to maturity.
If there is life in the Christian there will be growth. The implanted divine life must grow. A believer can hinder growth by a failure to get the proper fertilization and sunshine of the Word of God, but he cannot stop God’s life in him. It is possible for a person to be an abnormal Christian, or even a Christian freak because of failure to grow normally. But if there is no growth at all, there is no life!

CONCLUSION

For the Christian: Because the believer is in union with Christ, the Lord Jesus becomes the center of his affection and attention:

“For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain” (Phil. 1:21).

“I am Crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me” (Gal. 2:20).

For the Non-Christian: If you do not know Jesus Christ as your personal Saviour from sin, the Bible tells you that you are a slave to your sin nature, that you are living for yourself and not for Christ, that you are without the forgiveness of sin, and that you are devoid of any spiritual life because eternal resurrected life is found only in the person of Jesus Christ. If you will turn to Christ, and trust him as your personal Lord and Saviour, you will at that moment be put into spiritual union with Christ and begin to share his eternal resurrection life. He will begin to give you the power to defeat sin progressively in your life, and will assure you a place in eternity with him. Without Christ you have no hope for time or eternity! With Christ you have forgiveness of sins and the guarantee of eternal life. Will you receive him as personal Saviour and crown him as the Lord of your life?
The Crucified Old Man
A Study on Romans 6:6-10

by Dr. Jack L. Arnold

One of the most misunderstood concepts in Christian circles is salvation. Most folks think of salvation as that time when they initially believed on Christ and received forgiveness for their sin from God. Actually, this is only the beginning or starting point of one’s salvation, for salvation is not only past deliverance from the penalty for sin, it is also present deliverance from the power of sin in one’s daily experience. God has planned salvation so it has an effect upon a person in his present life and so that one can experience the power of Christ in his life now. God’s design is that the Christian be changing daily so that he serves sin less and becomes more and more conformed unto the person of Jesus Christ. God’s desire is not only to fit us for heaven, but also to fit us for earth.

REVIEW OF PAUL’S ARGUMENT IN ROMANS 6

Paul asked whether a truly saved person could continue to be dominated and controlled by the sin nature as he was when he was unsaved. His answer? “God forbid!” It is unthinkable that a Christian would want to be continually dominated by the sin nature after having experienced God’s grace in salvation. He goes on to say that the Christian has died to sin and no longer wants to live in it. The reason is that through the baptizing work of the Holy Spirit the Christian has been put into a spiritual union with Christ so that he shares Christ’s death to sin and his resurrected life unto salvation. Through this union, Christ’s work on the cross, where he judged the sin nature, has been applied to the Christian. Although the sin nature has been judged, it has not been taken out of the Christian; it remains but no longer reigns! Paul says that the believer has also shared Christ’s resurrection, and so will live a new kind of life.

SAVED TO SERVE SIN NO MORE — Romans 6:6-7

“Knowing this.” One has to know or realize that the old man has been crucified before he can operate on this truth. The only way this can be known is by understanding God’s Word on the subject.

“That our old man is [has been] crucified [put to death] with him.” The “old man” is not the sin nature, but the “old self” of a Christian before salvation. It is the unsaved man with all his habits and desires. It is what we were as unregenerate people in Adam — lost, dominated by sin and under its penalty, objects of God’s wrath, and headed for eternal
damnation. The “old man” denotes not our unregenerate nature but our unregenerate life, not our lower self but our former self. The “old man” is our pre-conversion life, our unregenerate self.

This “old man” has been crucified (put to death) with Christ. The moment we trusted in Christ as our personal Saviour and Lord, we were put into union with Christ’s death and our old unregenerate man died. Our total history in Adam was ended and we received a completely new life because we were put into Christ. God, through Christ, will wipe a sinner’s slate clean!

“That [for the purpose that] the body of sin might be destroyed [annulled or neutralized].” The “body of sin” refers to the sin nature, for the sin nature manifests itself through the body. The old man was put to death that the body of sin (sin nature) might be destroyed. “Destroyed” means “neutralized.” It does not mean to become extinct but to be defeated, not to be annihilated but to be deprived of power. God has broken the power of sin in the Christian through union with Christ. The sin nature no longer dominates the saved person as it did before salvation.

“That [for the purpose that] henceforth we should not serve sin.” To “serve” carries the idea of being a bondslave to the sin nature, or being lorded over by it. The old man was put to death and the sin nature judged so that the Christian should not serve sin. The believer does not have to serve sin because its absolute authority in him has been broken or canceled. The fact is, we do not have to serve sin any longer. It is not God’s desire for the Christian to be defeated.

“For he that is dead [has died] is freed [has been justified] from sin.” Initial salvation, when a person is justified or declared righteous before God, comes about because of union with Christ. The believer is free forever from the guilt and penalty of sin.

It is the constant laboring under the consciousness of sinfulness that keeps saints from the kind of glorious life Paul lived. He showed absolutely no sense of bondage before God, but lived in blessed triumph! Why? He knew that he was justified from all guilt by the blood of Christ. He also knew that he was justified, cleared and set free from the sin nature itself. While he was ever conscious that the sin nature was present, he lived in the reality that its power was broken. Whenever he did yield to the sin nature, he claimed the fact that he was justified, and did not live under guilt for that sin. Paul understood God’s grace!
SAVED TO LIVE UNTO GOD — Romans 6:8-10

“Now if [since] we be dead [have died] with Christ, we believe we shall also live with him.” Since we share Christ’s death to sin, we also share his resurrected life. God makes the Christian alive in Christ. This sharing of Christ’s life is not just for eternity, it is also in time. Christ’s life is our life now. This gives us the positive power to live a life of progressive victory over sin.

Notice the words “we believe.” Paul believed God’s Word and put it into practice. He had assurance and a settled conviction that he was sharing the life of Christ. Faith must learn to take God at his word. “Father, increase our faith!”

“Knowing [because we know] that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him.” The reason we believe that Christ is the constant source of life to his people, enabling them to conquer sin, is that he is an ever-living Lord who will not die again. The whole resurrection has permanent significance. Christ’s resurrection proved that he could die only once. Now he lives forever as the resurrected God-man!

There was a time when death reigned over Christ — when he was bearing our sins and judging our sin natures at the cross. But He rose victorious over sin and death!

“For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God.” Christ made a complete and perfect sacrifice for the sins of men. He died just once; that was sufficient. After death, he rose the victor over sin and death for the purpose of living unto God forever.

Lest we miss the point, the Christian has died to sin just once through union with Christ, but he has also been made alive in Christ to serve God continually in his experience.

CONCLUSION

Perhaps you have been thinking that you would give anything to get a new life, to have your past slate wiped clean. Only Jesus Christ can forgive you for sins and put to death your old, sinful life. But you must come to Christ on his terms, not your own. You must acknowledge that you are sinful before God, guilty because of the wrong things you have done, and that you cannot help yourself. You must be willing to turn from your old life to Jesus Christ, acknowledging him as your Lord and Saviour. If you will receive Christ as Lord of your life and Saviour for your sins, God will give you forgiveness of sins and eternal life. He will also give you the power to serve sin no longer, and to live a life unto him.
Experiencing Union with Christ
A Study on Romans 6:11-14

by Dr. Jack L. Arnold

The essence of Paul’s argument in Romans 6:1-10 is that the Christian, through union with Christ, actually shares the death of Christ to sin and his resurrection to life. He is both dead in Christ and alive in Christ. This is an unchangeable fact that is true of every Christian.

Because the Christian shares Christ’s death, the sin nature has been judged and its power or authority broken so that the believer no longer has to obey the sin nature as he did before being saved. Since the Christian shares Christ’s life, he is alive unto God and can live for God in his everyday experience.

Perhaps you are thinking, “Yes, I understand this in theory. But how can I make it work in my everyday life? How can I experience victory over sin and Christ’s resurrected life?” The answer is found in Romans 6:11-14.

PLACING FAITH IN CHRIST’S WORK — BELIEVE — Romans 6:11

“Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead unto sin, but alive unto God through [in] Jesus Christ our Lord.” The Christian is told to “reckon” himself dead to sin and alive to God. The word “reckon” is another word for faith. It means “consider, count or to take into account.” It is a term used in bookkeeping, and implies giving deep contemplation to facts. “Reckon” is a command from God, and is in the present tense — “be continually reckoning.” By faith, the Christian is continually and repeatedly to reckon upon his union with Christ. He is to realize the reality of his union with Christ by faith. Since the Christian has died and is alive in Christ, he is to believe this to be so. He is to have a continuous attitude of faith (a confidence that what God has said in his Word is true).

Our failure to experience progressive victory over sin is not God’s fault. It is ours because we fail to believe what God has said about our death to sin and our life in Christ. The Christian is to reckon that he has died to sin, and that the power of the sin nature has been broken in his life so that he no longer has to obey it.

The Christian is not to reckon sin dead (for it is very much alive in him), but to reckon himself dead to sin. He cannot make himself dead to sin by struggling, trying, praying or striving. He is simply to believe that he has died to sin in Christ, and then live accordingly. When temptations come, he can say, “I have died to that sin. I no longer have to yield to it!”
Whether we realize it or not, we all constantly make excuses for our sin. God has judged our sin nature and has found no good in it. He expects nothing but failure from the sin nature. Yet, we are always pampering and making excuses for what is clearly our sin:

“I’ve got a hot temper, you know, because I’m Irish. Everyone in my family is a hothead, and there really isn’t anything I can do about it!”

“I waste time and do not use my time for the Lord because I’m lazy by nature (I have tired blood, I’m too tried because my job is so demanding, The t.v. takes too much time, etc.).”

“I’m troubled with lust because I’m young-blooded (or hot-blooded, or cold-blooded, or red-blooded, or strongly sexed).”

“I’m lacking in love, but it’s my circumstances that make me this way — it’s the boss (the people I work with, my kids make me nervous, I’m getting old and cranky, etc.).”

“I’m proud because I’m a Swede (unforgiving because I’m Dutch, stubborn because I’m a Dane, greedy because I’m Scotch, etc.).”

“I can’t help myself, you know, I’m under psychiatric care!”

Excuses, excuses, excuses!

The Christian is also to reckon that he is alive unto God in Christ. Not only can he say negatively that he will not yield to temptation because he is dead to sin, but he can positively say that he will progress in Christianity because he shares the life of Christ. He is alive unto God. He is to live constantly in light of this fact, to draw upon the life of Christ that is in him.

Some years ago my automobile, a Rambler better known as “the bucket of bolts,” would not start. I got a push from a friend and took the car to the garage. There the mechanic checked the battery with proper instruments and declared that the battery was dead. No matter how much I wanted to save it, that battery had no life. Then the mechanic got a starter battery and hooked it up to the terminals of the dead battery. I turned on the ignition and there was a surge of power into the engine. The dead battery was utilizing the power of the new battery. Where once there was no power, now there was plenty. Just so, our sin nature is judged and without any power. God has provided new power, the resurrection life of Jesus Christ. We must learn to utilize this new power.
The Christian is not commanded to become dead to sin and alive to God, nor do these truths become facts because they are reckoned to be. The force of the command is that we are to believe the truth that we are dead to sin and alive in Christ. We can do this because of our position and new reality in Christ Jesus — we have union with him, sharing his death to sin and his resurrection unto life.

PUTTING DOWN SIN — NEGATIVE OBEDIENCE — Romans 6:12-13a

“Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof.” Because the Christian shares Christ’s death to sin through union with him, and is reckoning it to be so, he is now commanded to put down sin in his life. Having an attitude of faith in one’s union with Christ produces action. Faith always results in obedience. The Christian is not to let sin continually reign. Sin’s power was been broken when the sin nature was judged. Therefore, sins can be put down.

The Christian is commanded not to let sin reign as king in his life. Sin is a dethroned monarch. The Christian’s job is to keep the sin nature dethroned and the person of Christ enthroned in his life by a determined act of the will. Only the Christian has a will that can obey God.

The human body is the instrument through which the sin nature expresses itself — what the tongue says, what the eyes see, what the hands do, where the feet walk, what the mind thinks. Thus, the way to control the sin nature is to control the body.

The reason a Christian can put down sin in his life is because God has promised that “sin shall not have dominion over you” (cf. Rom 6:14a).

“Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin.” The Christian is not to present his members unto sin, but unto God. The word “instruments” means “weapons.” The Christian no longer has to be dominated by sin, having his body used as weapons for sin.

PRESENTING THE LIFE TO GOD — POSITIVE OBEDIENCE — Romans 6:13b

“But yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.” The word “yield” means “present or give over.” The Christian is to yield (present) his life once and for all to God (aorist tense).
The presentation of the life to Christ is like marriage. The moment we say “I do,” we have pledged our lives to another person. That initial decision sealed the bond, but based on that initial decision, we have made hundreds of smaller decisions. We must present our lives to God once, but hundreds of decisions will be made based on that initial presentation.

The reason a Christian can present his whole being to God is that he is alive from the dead. He cannot make himself alive by presenting himself to God, but since he is alive in Christ, he is able to make this presentation.

Suppose you had a “hopped up” automobile — 500 horsepower engine, dual carburetor, etc. It might be a beautiful hunk of a car with tremendous power, but until someone gets behind the wheel, turns the ignition and throttles the gas, the power is not utilized. Just so, the Christian has the power in Christ, but must present himself to God so he can utilize the power of Christ in his life.

God says we can become weapons for righteousness if we will present our lives unto him. The only thing that hinders us is unbelief and lack of will to accomplish the task. So often we simply don’t believe that God can use us, but he will if we will believe and obey him.

PROMISE OF GOD — Romans 6:14

“For sin shall not have dominion over you.” Because of Christ’s work on the cross in judging the sin nature, the Christian has the unconditional promise from God that sin will not Lord it over him as it did before he was saved. God has broken the power of sin in the Christian so that, by faith, the Christian can begin to live a life of progressive victory over sin because he shares Christ’s life.

“For ye are not under the law, but under grace.” The Christian is not under the Mosaic Law for sanctification, but is under the principle of grace. It is the grace principle in Christ that gives the desire and power to live a holy life.

CONCLUSION

Before a person can begin to defeat sin in his life, he has to know Jesus Christ personally. If you are without Christ, you must come to him for forgiveness of sin and eternal life. You cannot live the Christian life until you know the Christ of life. He alone can and will give you the power to defeat sin.
Jesus Christ offers salvation to anyone who will receive him by faith. To be a Christian you must believe that Christ died for your sins to deliver you from the woes of hell. After you trust in Christ as Saviour, it is your duty and privilege to follow him and his teachings. Jesus said of those who believed on Him, “I know them and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish.”
Slaves — Never to Be Emancipated
A Study on Romans 6:14b-16

by Dr. Jack L. Arnold

Slavery did not and when President Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation over a hundred years ago. There are still slaves today. While it is true in a political and social sense that there are very few slaves who are physically in bondage (and we thank God for that), yet in a spiritual sense everyone is a slave. Every human being is either a slave to God and righteousness, or a slave to sin and self. Slavery to Christ issues into eternal life; slavery to sin issues into spiritual and eternal death. There is no middle ground; no one can straddle the fence. Those who are slaves to Christ will never be emancipated, and they do not want to be. They have found that only through acknowledging Christ as Lord and being in bondservce to him can they find happiness.

In Romans 6:15-23 Paul contrasts what a person was in Adam before salvation with what he is now in Christ. In the old headship of Adam, a person was a slave to sin, serving sin with no alternative because his sin nature made him a slave to sin. At salvation, Christ freed the person from the bondage of sin so that it no longer reigns over him. He is no longer a slave to sin as he was in his unsaved state. The saved man, the Christian, has now been made a slave to God in Christ.

In Romans 6:1-14 Paul dealt with the subject of one’s union with Christ, showing that the person who trusts in Jesus Christ as personal Lord and Saviour actually shares the death and life of Jesus Christ. This is God’s divine work in every true Christian. In Romans 6:15-23 Paul deals with man’s responsibility as a Christian. He wants us to know that it is through obedience, self-surrender, and yielding ourselves to God that we are slaves to God and therefore committed to obedience.

Paul ended the argument of Romans 6:1-14 by stating that the Christian is “not under the law, but under grace.” He was saying that the Christian no longer is to live by the Mosaic Law as a means of justification and sanctification, but he is to live by grace in Christ Jesus. Law brought servitude to sin, but grace in Christ brings the desire and power to live a sanctified life. (Although the Christian is not under the Mosaic Law as a rule of life, many of the principles of the Law are applicable to him, for the Mosaic Law was a reflection of God’s character, especially the Ten Commandments.)
THE PROBLEM — Romans 6:15a

“What then? shall we sin because we are not under the law, but under grace?” This question would be asked by a legalist who did not understand the grace of God. A legalist is one who wants to put the Christian back under the Mosaic Law for salvation (justification) and Christian living (sanctification). He would say a person has to keep laws or codes to get saved and remain saved. He adds a works system to God’s grace. This question would never have come up had Paul not taught the grace principle for Christian living.

The Christian is under law, but that law is the eternal, moral law and the law of Christ. The Mosaic Law is a manifestation of the eternal law that was specific to its own time and place. This does not mean it is irrelevant or inapplicable today, but it does mean that its modern application must be based on the eternal law which the Mosaic Law depicted.

The question in 6:1, “Shall we continue in sin?” was asked by a libertine, one who reasoned that because a person was saved out of sin by God’s grace, that person could go on sinning after salvation because God is gracious and will forgive. Paul’s reaction was, “God forbid!” He went on to show that because the Christian is in union with Christ, he shares Christ’s death to sin and his resurrection to life. God has broken the power of sin in the Christian — it remains but no longer reigns — so the true Christian cannot live a life of habitual and repeated sin, although he does do acts of sin. God has done a divine work in each of his children so that sin no longer has dominion over them.

After being saved, can a person live in sin as a habitual pattern? Is there to be no change in our lives when we become Christians? Paul’s answer is that we cannot continue in sin. This is such an important thing because if there is no change in our lives after we receive Christ, there is a serious doubt that we ever received him at all. If there is no change, if our attitudes are the same, if our outlook is the same, it is questionable whether we were ever really saved. Spurgeon said, “An unchanged life is the mark of an unchanged heart, and an unchanged heart is a sign of an unregenerate life.”

The question in 6:15 deals with the subject of law and grace. This question arose because of a Christian’s state in grace, not because of his salvation by grace. It is specifically stated in 6:14 that the Christian is not under the Mosaic Law for either salvation or sanctification. This might lead the legalist to think that since a person is not under the law principle, there is nothing to restrain sin in his life. He reasons that if there is not a strict list of do’s and don’ts, such as the Mosaic Law, then a person will live as he pleases. Law brings fear of punishment and makes people “toe the line.” For a legalist, fear rather than love becomes the motivating factor for salvation and service.
This legalistic attitude is seen in our Christian culture today by the list of taboos men make up as a standard for spirituality. The idea is that people cannot be restrained unless put under church laws.

Society, government, and non-Christians know of no way to restrain sin but by law and its penalties, but the Christian is restrained by the Christ life within him through the working of the Holy Spirit. Under grace, the Holy Spirit restrains the Christian from within, and the standard God uses is the law of Christ, a perfect manifestation of the eternal law. Whereas a law can only work outwardly and generally, the Holy Spirit, indwelling the Christian, takes notice of the slightest sin and convicts him of it. The Christian is under the law of Christ, the law of love, and love is produced by the Holy Spirit:

“To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ)” (1 Cor. 9:21).

“For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another” (Gal. 5:13).

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law” (Gal. 5:22-23).

A person may put up a sign on his newly planted grass, “Do not walk on the grass!” But it is not long before a path is beaten through the grass where people walk. Law aggravates sin. Yet when one has the law of Christ, the law of love, he loves his neighbor and respects his rights, and so does not walk across the newly planted grass.

FIRST ANSWER — Romans 6:15b

“God forbid.” It is inconceivable, blasphemous, to think that a Christian would deliberately sin because he is not under law but under grace. A truly regenerate person does not want liberty to sin; he wants power for holiness. If a professing Christian habitually yields himself to sin and obeys its commands, he shows that he is still sin’s servant and the end of that service is spiritual death.

SECOND ANSWER — Romans 6:16

“Know ye not, that to whom ye yield [present] yourselves servants to obey, his servants [bondslaves] ye are to whom ye obey?” The answer for the restraint of sin in the
Christian is his slavery to God. Who or what a person obeys shows his real master. In the former unsaved state a person was disobedient and enslaved to sin which would ultimately have led to eternal death and separation from God forever. But in the saved state, Christians are obedient to God, which leads to righteousness. This whole section contrasts the old slavery to sin with the new slavery to God; it does not contrast a believer’s serving both sin and righteousness. This is a contrast of the saved and unsaved states.

The word “servant” means a “bondslave.” Every Christian is a slave to Christ. What are the characteristics of a bondslave? He is one who is ruled by another. The Christian is not to be willful, but voluntarily to obey the will of his Master. He is one who serves another, disregarding his own interests. The Christian is to keep the will of God central in his thinking, setting himself aside. A bondslave is subject to his master not just for a time, but for all his life. The Christian can never be set free from this position of slavery. A slave must render obedience, for he is not his own. A Christian must obey God for he is not his own, he has been bought with a price. A slave to God is not only bound to obey, often he is made willing to obey. Our prayer should be, “Lord, make me willing to obey!”

Paul is simply saying that a man becomes the moral subject of what he is and does. If he yields himself to sin, sin gets a grip on him. If he yields to God, God gets a grip on him. The unsaved are servants of sin because they willingly present themselves to sin. The saved voluntarily present themselves to righteousness and become the servants of righteousness. Christ taught that a man becomes a slave to what he loves.

“No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other, Ye cannot serve God and mammon [riches]” (Matt. 6:24).

“Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin” (John 8:34).

If we love money, then money will become the all-consuming goal in our lives. If we love pleasure, then the single most important thing will be to find pleasure, no matter what the cost. If we love status, then the passion of our lives will be to raise our social standing with men. If we love God, the consuming passion of our lives will be to be slaves to him. Our lives tell who or what we really love. There is no middle ground.

“Whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness.” “Death” speaks of spiritual and eternal death (damnation), which is the logical fruit of sin. Conversely, righteousness is the logical fruit of obedience. Bondservice to sin results in death; bondservice to God results in righteousness.
CONCLUSION

A Christian is a slave to God. His new Master is Christ. If he is to find happiness, peace, and joy, it can only be found as he voluntarily yields or surrenders himself more and more to God through Christ.

If you are without Christ, the Scriptures have spoken about your condition. You are voluntarily a slave to sin and self, and you need a new Master. Only Jesus Christ can free you from your slavery to sin and make you a slave of righteousness. If you will admit you are sinful, turn from your old life, and come to Christ as your personal Saviour from sin and as the Lord of your life, he will forgive your sins and give you eternal life. At that moment you will become a slave to Christ, giving allegiance to him as Lord and King. Only when Christ is Lord and King is one free from sin.
Slaves for Holiness
A Study on Romans 6:17-23

by Dr. Jack L. Arnold

Slavery is generally a despised word in our time, for men have fought and died to be free from tyranny and slavery. In one sense the concept of slavery is not outmoded or despised. Rather, it is loved by the Christian for, in a spiritual sense, every Christian is a slave to God. When a person trusts in Jesus Christ as his personal Lord and Saviour, he crowns Jesus Christ his new Master, and is made a slave to God in Christ. He does this voluntarily. A political slave is generally forced into the position of servitude, but the Christian willingly and voluntarily puts himself in the position of slavery to God. His goal is to be faithful in that position.

REVIEW OF THE ARGUMENT

Paul asked whether a Christian should sin because he is no longer under the Mosaic Law but under grace in Christ. The legalist wants to put a person back under the Mosaic Law for salvation and sanctification, but Paul says that the Christian is free from the Law. He is under grace, which is manifested in the law of Christ which finds its ultimate fulfillment in the concept of love. However there are many positive and negative commands that must be kept if one is to fulfill the law of Christ in love.

Paul's first answer to his question is an emotional, “God forbid!” It is unthinkable that a Christian would want to sin because he is no longer under the Mosaic Law. He continues by setting forth the natural law of slavery: as a person yields himself to someone or something, he becomes its moral subject. If he chooses to yield to sin, then sin grips him and the end is spiritual death. If he chooses to obey God, the end is righteousness. What or whom we obey shows what or whom we really love.

The Mosaic Law itself cannot restrain sin, though fear of its penalties may. True heartfelt restraint is found in the truth of slavery to God. At salvation, the Christian voluntarily places himself under God through Christ and becomes his slave.

THIRD ANSWER

Disobedience to God leads to slavery to sin; obedience to God leads to slavery to righteousness.
“But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin.” Paul thanks God for the sovereign grace that was showed these Roman Christians in bringing them out of deep sin into the salvation which is found in Christ Jesus. He makes a contrast between what these people were before they trusted in Christ and what they are after trusting in the Lord. Before, they were slaves to sin. The history of ancient Rome, where these people lived, is marred with immorality and vice, but God delivered some out of this condition of sin.

“Don’t you know that those doing such things have no share in the kingdom of God? Don’t fool yourselves. Those who live immoral lives — who are idol worshippers, adulterers or homosexuals — will have no share in His kingdom. Neither will thieves and cheaters, drunkards, slander-mongers, and robbers.

“There was a time when some of you were just like that, but now your sins are washed away, and you are set apart for God, and He has accepted you because of what the Lord Jesus Christ and the Spirit of our God have done for you” (1 Cor. 6:9-11, Taylor, Living Letters).

America is rapidly becoming a replica of ancient Rome. False religion, immorality, and vice are the rule of our day. Americans are going deeper into sin daily because they have chosen to obey the gods of sex, pleasure and materialism rather than the true God Jesus Christ.

Remember our unsaved state when we lived for ourselves, loved ourselves, struggled to advance ourselves, fought to protect ourselves, hated all rivals to ourselves, loved only those who catered to ourselves. We loved our sin, but it brought only misery, heartache, defeat, boredom, frustration, emptiness and unhappiness!

“But ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you [into which you were delivered].” Here is a beautiful picture of God’s sovereignty and man’s human response in salvation. The words “which was delivered you” should be translated “into which you were delivered.” In his grace God drew the person into the gospel and the person obeyed it by responding to Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. Man obeyed from the heart. It is not intellectualism, but a commitment of life from the heart as one is prompted by the grace of God. In this verse Paul is thanking God that by grace He delivered these people from slavery to sin to be his slaves in Christ. Something dynamic and real happened to these heathen in Rome — they met Jesus Christ and were saved!

“Being then made free from sin, ye became [were made, constituted] servants of righteousness.” Christ set the Christian free from his old master sin, and the Christian became a voluntary slave to his new master Jesus Christ, obeying God and righteousness.
In what sense are we set free from sin? We are free in a positional sense in that sin is no longer the Christian’s master. The new Master is Christ and Christ alone. He is Lord and King. At salvation a person is constituted or made a slave of God positionally. Since all Christians are slaves to God in Christ positionally, then they cannot be happy and joyful until they begin to yield and submit to God for the purpose of righteousness. Christians are created slaves and can only be happy when yielded to their new Master.

“I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh.” Paul will make a human or secular illustration to make his point.

“For as ye have yielded [presented] your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity.” Before they were saved these Romans had given themselves over to sin with great intensity. They loved their sin and pursued it because it brought momentary pleasure. There is pleasure in sin and this is why men pursue it, but this pleasure is not lasting and has no depth. The lust for sin is never satisfied. But sin does not go unnoticed by God, and it soon catches up with the individual. It is like a net whose drawstring is being pulled ever tighter so that the sinner becomes a captive of his own sin. No person ever gets away with sin. When he breaks God’s moral laws, sin will soon take its toll. Man may think that he can play loose and free with God, but his sin will catch up with him — if not here on earth, surely in eternity. Man becomes the moral victim of the one he chooses to obey.

“Even so now yield [present] your members servants to righteousness unto holiness [sanctification].” With the same intensity that the Romans presented themselves to sin in their unsaved state, they were to present themselves to God as slaves to righteousness. The presentation of our lives to God will produce holiness or sanctification, and the Christian will begin to experience the power of God in his life. The Christian is commanded to make this presentation of his members, and his response to the command is to be voluntary obedience.

True freedom is found only in slavery to Christ. This is the highest, and really the only, freedom. It is those who know the truth and walk in it that are free:

“Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free. They answered him, We be Abraham’s seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free? Jesus answered them, Verily verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin. And the servant abideth not in the house for ever; but the Son abideth ever. If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed” (John 8:31-36.)
There is no freedom outside Jesus Christ. Apart from him whatever is called “freedom” is really bondage to sin. Today men boast of their freedom and independence from God. They glory in free thought, free government, free love, and free will. But in all his human freedoms, man only finds slavery to sin, and this sin will catch up with him.

The Christian seeks only to be a bondslave of Jesus Christ. He does not follow his own will independently, but delights to do the will of his Master Jesus Christ. He is free to be a slave of God and righteousness, and that is true freedom.

A Christian once said, “I have never yet served the Lord with the same intensity I once served sin, but my heart’s desire is to do so.”

“For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness.” Before they were saved these people had no desire or concern for righteousness. They were given over to sin.

“What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed?” After we are saved, we look back over the past and are ashamed of our wretched lives and our independence from our Creator. Then we loved our sin:

“You have had enough in the past of the evil the godless enjoy — sex sin, lust, getting drunk, wild parties, drinking bouts and the worship of idols — which leads to other terrible sins.

“Of course your old friends will be very surprised when you don’t eagerly join them any more in the wicked things they do and they will laugh at you in contempt and scorn.

“But just remember that they must face the Judge of all, living and dead; they will be judged for the way they have lived” (1 Pet. 4:3-5, Taylor, Living Letters).

It is only after salvation that we become sensitive to sin and blush when we think about our unsaved behavior. “Free” and “fruitless,” what a pair of words to describe the life of one who is going on daily towards a Christless eternity.

“For the end of those things is death.” Men outside Christ suffer the just desserts of their sin: spiritual death in time and ultimately eternal death (separation from God forever).

“But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God.” These Christians have been made the slaves of God. Christ is their Master now, not sin!
“Ye have your fruit unto holiness [sanctification] and the end everlasting life.” The result of slavery to God is a holy life which brings us into a progressive realization of the eternal life that is ours in Christ Jesus. Notice the order: bondservitude, holiness [sanctification], and eternal life. Here is a paradox: The end of sin is death that never dies, and the end of sanctification [holiness] is life that never ends.

“For the wages of sin is death.” The payment that a person will receive for being a slave to sin is spiritual and eternal death.

“But the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” The reward for being a slave to Jesus Christ is the free gift of eternal life. The Christian’s award for slavery is life eternal, and this is a gift from God. Where is eternal life found? Only in the person of Jesus Christ!

CONCLUSION

If you are without Christ, the Bible declares that you are a slave to sin. Each step into sin pushes you further into slavery until you are trapped. It is like being in a net or web where there is no hope and no human way out, but only more slavery, spiritual death and ultimately hell. But there is a divine way out of this slavery to sin. God can and will help you if you will turn to Jesus Christ, his only answer to the sin problem. If you will receive Jesus Christ as your personal Saviour from sin and Lord of your life, you will be made a slave to God in Christ, and you will no longer be a slave to sin and self. Our Lord said, “If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed” (John 8:36).
Controversy has raged among Christians for centuries as to the relationship of the believer in Christ to the Mosaic Law. This is no easy subject, but the key to the solution is found primarily in the writings of Paul.

In Christian circles today there are three general viewpoints concerning the Mosaic Law:

1. Seventh Day Adventists believe that the Christian is under every aspect of the Mosaic Law with the exception of the ceremonial part. Thus, Christians are to meet on the Sabbath Day, the seventh day of the week.

2. A great portion of Christendom believes that the spiritual aspects of the Mosaic Law are binding on all Christians because Christians are “spiritual Israel.” Thus they believe that the Sabbath has been changed from the seventh day of the week to the first day of the week.

3. Other Christians (and I am among these) believe that the Christian is under no aspect of the Mosaic Law whatsoever, but meets with other Christians on the Lord’s Day (first day of the week) for instruction in the Word, fellowship, prayer, and the Lord’s Table. Christians are under the New Covenant, and our law is the Law of Christ which is a higher law than the Law of Moses, and is a more perfect reflection of God’s eternal moral law.

I will not attempt to refute the above positions, but will set forth what I believe concerning the Christian’s relationship to the Mosaic Law. But before we can give an exposition of Romans 7:1-6, we must have some background concerning the Law.

THE GIVING OF THE MOSAIC LAW

The Mosaic Law was given to the nation of Israel (Ex. 19:1-8), and was a gracious provision of God to keep the Israeliite nation separate from the Gentile world. It was composed of 613 individual laws that may be divided into three general categories: (1) moral (hundreds of commands and the Decalogue); (2) ceremonial (the tabernacle, feasts, priesthood, circumcision, offerings, etc.); and (3) civil (having to do with community, such
as sanitation, rotation of crops, quarantine, diet, etc.). It is obvious that the Law was designed particularly for the nation of Israel.

The Law is a unit, and if one aspect is to be kept, then every aspect is to be kept:

“For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law” (Gal. 5:3).

“For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all” (James 2:10).

The Law was given as a rule of life for Israel, and it was never intended to be a way of salvation. Salvation in every age has always been by grace through faith. A Jew gave evidence of his saving faith by his desire to conform to the teachings of the Mosaic Law.

The Law had strict penalties and punishments for those who failed to keep it. In some cases, like picking up sticks on the Sabbath, it imposed the punishment of physical death.

THE END OF THE MOSAIC LAW AS A RULE OF LIFE

Christians are not under Law but under grace: “For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law but under grace. What then? shall we sin because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid” (Rom. 6:14-15).

Those led by the Spirit (all Christians) are not under the Law but under the new law of the Holy Spirit: “But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law” (Gal. 5:18).

Christ is the end of the Mosaic Law for all who believe in Christ: “For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth” (Rom. 10:4).

It is evident that all are not under the Law: “And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; to them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law” (1 Cor. 9:20-21).

Christ, in his death, ended the authority of the Mosaic Law for the Christian: “Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross” (Col. 2:14).
These are just a few verses to show that the Christian is no longer bound to the Mosaic Law as a way of life. The Christian is now under the Law of Christ; he is free from every aspect of the Mosaic Law as a way of life.

THREE REACTIONS TO THE END OF THE LAW

One reaction to the end of the Law for Christians is legalism. The legalist believes that sin cannot be curbed unless man is put back under the Law, either totally or partially.

The libertine or antinomian reacts by thinking that if he is not under the Mosaic Law, then he is free from all restraints and can do as he pleases.

The law-abiding Christian understands the grace of God and realizes that he is not under the Mosaic Law as a rule of life. He also realizes there are many moral and spiritual principles in the Mosaic Law which are reflections of the will of God for believers in any age. Those aspects of the Law which deal with moral, ethical and spiritual principles he delights to obey through the indwelling Holy Spirit. “Thou shalt not steal, commit adultery, lie, kill, or covet,” etc., are binding principles throughout the ages, for these laws are a reflection of the holiness of God.

All the Ten Commandments are repeated in the New Testament except one — the fourth: Remember the Sabbath Day, to keep it holy. But even this commandment may be carried over to New Testament Christians. It is a creation ordinance; one day in seven rightly belongs to the Lord. However, the “rest” of the Sabbath and the “rest” of the Lord’s Day are different because we live in a different age.

THE ARGUMENT OF ROMANS 7:1-6

In the sixth chapter of Romans Paul said that the Christian is not under Law but under grace. A Jew who heard Paul make this statement would have accused him of blasphemy because a Jew’s whole religion was bound up in keeping the Law for salvation and sanctification. So, in chapter Seven Paul explained why and how the Christian is free from the Mosaic Law.
EXPOSITION OF ROMANS 7:1-6

“Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth?” The Mosaic Law is binding on a person only as long as he is alive. When he dies, the Law has no authority over him.

“For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband.” Paul uses the illustration of marriage to show how the Christian is no longer under the Mosaic Law. A woman is bound in marriage to her husband until he dies. When he dies, she is no longer bound, but is free to marry another.

“So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress; but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man.” A woman is an adulteress if she lives with another man while her husband is living (if she does not have a biblical reason for divorce). If he dies, she is free to remarry and live with another man without being an adulteress. She is not bound by the law of her first husband.

“Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ.” The Law is still in force, but not for the Christian. Christ’s death brought an end to the Mosaic Law as a way of life. The Christian shares Christ’s death through union with him. Thus, the Christian has died to the Mosaic Law. He sustains a new relationship to the Law, for it no longer has authority over him nor is it a rule of life for him.

Frank and Jessie James were two notorious outlaws. The law said that if they were ever caught alive they would either spend 100 years in jail or hang until dead. One day Frank and Jessie were holding up a bank, and just as they were getting the money from the tellers the sheriff and his posse caught them red-handed. The sheriff said, “Up with your hands you dirty, low-down, bank-robbing varmints!” Jessie and Frank fired at the sheriff and made a break for the back door of the bank, but their luck ran out. The sheriff and his men shot both of them dead. Then the sheriff said, “I’m glad I shot them, but I wish they were living so I could see them hanging by their necks. But there is no hope of that, for they are dead. Now the law of the land can’t touch them and has no authority over them.” Why? They were dead to the law.

“That ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead.” The Christian is dead to the Mosaic Law and is united to another, Jesus Christ. When we are Christians, the Law no longer has dominion (lords it) over us, but Christ becomes our new Lord.
“That we should bring forth fruit unto God.” Through faith in Christ and by the power of the Holy Spirit, the Christian can now bring forth spiritual fruit (good works) for God. What he produces is not because of the Mosaic Law, but through Jesus Christ. It is not through an impersonal law but through a person, Jesus Christ, that he can live unto God.

“For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death.” In our unsaved state, the Mosaic Law simply aroused our sinfulness, and this brought spiritual death. The Law condemned us and proved us sinners.

“But now we are [have been] delivered [discharged] from the law, that being dead wherein we were held.” Here is a clear statement that the Christian has been completely discharged from the Mosaic Law as a rule of life.

“That we should serve in newness of spirit and not in the oldness of the letter.” God has written his law upon our hearts through the person of Christ. We have been set free from the Mosaic Law to live by means of the Holy Spirit, not by a legal system which has been superceded by a new covenant (Heb. 8:6-13).

CONCLUSION

The Christian is free forever from the Mosaic Law for salvation or sanctification, for his rule of life is the Law of Christ, not the Mosaic Law. Yet many people today believe that if they do their best to keep the Ten Commandments, God will accept them. Actually, the Ten Commandments only prove that we are sinners because no one has ever kept the Mosaic Law perfectly. The Law points to the fact that we are sinners, and the gospel points us to the truth that Christ died for sinners. If you will believe in Christ as your personal Saviour, he will give you forgiveness of sins and eternal life. He will also come into your life and give you the power to produce the righteousness of the Law in your life.
Law and Sanctification
A Study on Romans 7:7-14

by Dr. Jack L. Arnold

In preaching and teaching the Bible, there is no substitute for verse-by-verse exposition, but this sometimes presents problems for it is difficult to determine the true meaning of some passages of Scripture. This is the case with Romans 7:7-25.

This section has been a source of controversy for centuries, and good Bible scholars are divided as to its interpretation. Various interpretations suggest that the passage is describing: (1) a person before his conversion, struggling with Law and sin; (2) a personal experience of Paul that is not applicable today; (3) a Christian out of fellowship with Christ; (4) a normal Christian experience of conflict with sin and Law; (5) a Christian living a subnormal and defeated life, who should be living in Romans 8 instead of Romans 7; (6) a Christian trying to live a spiritual life apart from the power of the Holy Spirit. My particular interpretation is that the person being described is a Christian trying to live by the Mosaic Law after he has been delivered from Law to serve Christ. It seems Paul was trying to bring his flesh under control by keeping the Mosaic Law through his own efforts apart from the power of the Holy Spirit.

In Romans 7, “I” is used 16 times, “law” is used 20 times, and the Holy Spirit is not mentioned once. However, the Holy Spirit is mentioned 20 times in Romans 8.

BACKGROUND OF PAUL

Paul was a Jew and had been taught the Mosaic Law from childhood (Acts 22:3; 26:5). He was a strict Pharisee, and was trained for 18 years in the best Jewish seminaries. He was probably the most promising religious leader in the Jewish nation (Gal. 1:14). Paul’s father was a Pharisee, so Paul most likely began a concentrated study of the Mosaic Law at the age of five. He was steeped in the Law and Jewish tradition.

As a Pharisee, Paul kept the outward form of the Law to the letter:

“Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews: as touching the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ” (Phil. 3:4-7).
We know that he was a self-satisfied, self-righteous, self-sufficient, proud Jew because he felt that he kept the Mosaic Law as well as anyone could. He kept the outward forms of the Law but, was blind to the spiritual requirements of the Law. Thus, his religion was ritualistic — he was steeped in legalism, tradition, works and outward religion. It was cold — he thought the Jews alone had the truth and became critical, hard, calculating and cruel. He even persecuted Christians in the name of God. It was powerless — he had no inward power to defeat sin, but had only outward conformity to the Law. His religion was also legalistic — he had a works system for salvation and sanctification.

Paul’s whole life was wrapped up in the Mosaic Law. For over 30 years he had been brain-washed in Judaism. Then one day on the road to Damascus, where he was going to persecute Christians, he met Jesus Christ. That day Christ supernaturally saved Paul and he became a new creature in Christ. But at that time his salvation did not change many of his concepts about the Mosaic Law. He had to learn that the Christian walk is not keeping the Mosaic Law, but is walking in dependence on the law of the Holy Spirit in Christ Jesus. Paul had to undo and unlearn much that he had been taught for over 30 years. He had to learn to walk by the Holy Spirit, not trusting in self effort or law.

The time from Paul’s conversion to his first big assignment from God (to minister at Antioch with Barnabas) was approximately 12 years. For all those years God was teaching Paul to walk by the Spirit and not by human effort or Law. Paul had to learn this truth before he could be effectively used.

Therefore, I would like to suggest that this struggle Paul writes about in Romans 7 is his experience after his conversion before he went to Antioch for his first major ministry. During this time he was learning that sanctification or Christian living was not by the Mosaic Law, but by dependence upon the Holy Spirit. Sin was to be defeated by the Holy Spirit, not by obedience to the Mosaic Law.

This is an experience that every Christian has as he struggles with sin. Every day Christians have conflicts with God’s will (law), and we cannot defeat sin by self effort and law keeping, but only as we are dependent on Christ.

PAUL’S DISILLUSIONMENT WITH LAW — Romans 7:7-14

We must remember that in 7:7-13 Paul was a saved man. He had become aware of the spiritual aspects of the Mosaic Law, but was unable to keep these precepts because of indwelling sin (his sin nature).
“What shall we say then? Is the law sin?” In Romans 6 Paul stated that the Christian died to sin in Christ, and in 7:1-6 he stated that the Christian had died to the Mosaic Law in Christ. Thus, someone might think that Law and sin are placed on the same plane, that the Mosaic Law is sinful.

“God forbid.” That the Mosaic Law was sinful was unthinkable. The Law was a reflection of God’s holy character; it could not be sinful.

“Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law.” Paul could never have become aware of his own sinfulness except through the Mosaic Law. He knew that he had shortcomings and weaknesses, but it took the spiritual aspects of the Mosaic Law to show him that these things were sin and that he was basically sinful: “For by the law is the knowledge of sin” (Rom. 3:20). It took the Law to show Paul his bondage and helplessness because of indwelling sin.

“For I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.” The Law taught Paul about lust for he found himself coveting, which is forbidden in the tenth commandment. Paul does not say that he would not have been a sinner without the Law, but that he would not have known sin and recognized himself to be a sinner. After Paul was saved, he became aware of the spiritual aspects of the Law and realized that in his own efforts he could not keep them.

Paul seemed confident that he could keep the other nine commandments (thou shalt not steal, lie, bear false witness, commit adultery, murder, etc), but the one that said, “Thou shalt not have evil desires [covet],” slew him. Everywhere Paul turned he found himself coveting. He finally realized that the harder he tried to suppress this, the worse it got, until finally he saw that the trouble was himself. It was his own selfish heart, his own sinful nature.

“But sin [the sin nature], taking occasion by the commandment [Law], wrought [worked] in me all manner of concupiscence [evil desire].” The Law actually stirred up sin in Paul instead of restraining it. There was nothing wrong with the Law; the problem was with Paul who was sinful and selfish. The Law stirred the sin that was in Paul’s life.

Suppose a man were determined to drive his car to the very limit of its speed. If signs along the road said, “No Speed Limit,” the man’s only thought would be to press his machine forward. But suppose he suddenly encountered frequent road signs limiting the speed to thirty miles an hour. His will might rebel, and his rebellion might be further aroused by such signs as, “Speed Limit Strictly Enforced.” He could drive on fiercely, conscious of both his desire to speed and his rebellion against restraint. It was not the speed limit signs that created his wild desire to rush forward; that was there before he saw them. But the signs brought him into conscious conflict with authority.
“For without the law sin was dead.” Apart from the Law sin was dormant and inactive. Sin was present in Paul, but it was not aroused to activity as it was when he became conscious of the Law. Law simply stirred the sin nature to rebel.

“For I was alive without the law once.” As an unsaved man, Paul did not recognize any of the spiritual aspects of the Law, and fancied himself to be alive to God because he kept the outward letter of the Law.

“But when the commandment came [Law], sin revived; and I died.” When, as a saved man, he became aware of the spiritual requirements of the Law, he became conscious of his own sinfulness and inability to keep the righteousness of the Law. So the Law, no matter how much he loved it, only stirred up sin in him. God used the Law, the thing Paul loved the most, to show him his utter inability to keep it. Through the Law, God brought death to all Paul’s hopes in himself and his flesh to keep the Law.

“And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death.” This is not speaking of eternal life, for the Law never produced that. It was originally given by God as a rule of life for Israel, and it was to guard and promote life. But because of man’s sinfulness and the holy character of the Law, it brought death in the sense that all hopes in one’s flesh or human effort were shown to be ineffectual. This reflects Paul’s own tragic experience with the Law. How disappointed and disillusioned he must have been when he realized that even as a saved man he could not, by his own efforts, keep the righteous requirements of the Law.

“For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me.” The Law stirred sin, and all Paul’s complacency and self-righteousness were brought to naught. God permitted sin to beguile (deceive) Paul so that he might find the utter powerlessness and finally the despair of delivering himself from sin by keeping the Law.

“Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.” Paul realized that the problem was not with the Law, but with his own sinful condition. He upheld the Law because it was from God and reflected God’s holy character.

“Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid.” Did the Law bring death? No. It was Paul’s own flesh (sin nature) that put him to death. The Law simply stirred his basic sinfulness.

“But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful.” The Law made the sin nature show its true colors, and Paul learned that he was sinful and needed outside deliverance from his state of wrestling with his flesh to obey the Law.
“For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal [fleshy], sold under sin.” Paul acknowledged the spiritual character of the Law, and stated the problem of his weakness to sin, because of his sin nature which was sold out to sin and did nothing but sin. He knew that only the law of the Spirit in Christ Jesus could give him deliverance from this sin nature.

CONCLUSION

Law stirs sin for the unsaved as well as for the saved. Have you kept the Ten Commandments perfectly? Only a liar would say, “Yes.” Any honest person would say, “No.” This simply shows that you are a sinner and need a Saviour. Only Jesus Christ can forgive your sin and give you eternal life. To be a Christian you must receive Christ as personal Saviour from sin and as Lord. Only Jesus Christ can change your life!
Discovering Our Sinfulness  
A Study on Romans 7:14-20

by Dr. Jack L. Arnold

Every Christian who has sought to be honest with himself and God has found, through experience, the sinfulness of his own being. When we were first saved, we were all excited about Christ and our new walk with him (and we certainly should have been). But as we began to grow in grace and knowledge of the Word, we began to see God’s standards for Christian living and our inability to meet these standards. The harder we tried to keep God’s law, the more impossible it seemed. Then one day we realized that in our basic person, even after we were saved, we were utterly unable to live the Christian life in our own strength, that we were sinful in our very natures. We became discouraged and sometimes defeated, even to the place of despair.

At this point, feeling we will be ostracized by other Christians, most of us do not tell anyone of this conflict. We put up a good front, pretending we are satisfied when we are inwardly unhappy. We do not realize that this is a normal experience to bring us to the end of self, and that God has provided the Holy Spirit to help us live the Christian life. He never intended for Christians to be constantly defeated, and never expected us to live the Christian life in our own strength and effort. God has provided a supernatural power for us to live a supernatural life: the law of the Spirit in Christ Jesus.

Romans 7:14-25 tells us of Paul who experienced something of this disillusionment, defeat and discouragement as he realized his own sinfulness and inability to keep the spiritual requirements of the Mosaic Law by his own efforts.

From childhood Paul was raised to love and respect the Mosaic Law. When he was saved he felt as though he could keep the Law in his own strength and by his own effort simply by virtue of being a regenerated man. He desired and longed to keep the spiritual requirements of the Law, but he lacked the power to defeat sin in his own life. The Law simply stirred his sin nature to activity. This struggle took place between the time Paul was first saved and when he went to Antioch for his first ministry. He was learning to walk by the Holy Spirit. God used the Law to bring Paul to the end of himself, and self effort in order to teach him to trust the Holy Spirit to accomplish the impossible in him.
BACKGROUND

In Romans 7:7-13 Paul spoke of this struggle in the past tense, but in 7:14-25 he used the present tense. This appears to be an autobiographical account of his struggle with sin and law as a saved man. One can feel the drama and intensity of this personal struggle.

If Paul had this struggle, surely every Christian can expect to have a similar one.

The ‘I’ in this passage refers to Paul’s inward personality (inward man, vs. 22), but it consists of two parts: mind and flesh (vs. 23). More simply, the mind is the renewed mind or new nature, and the flesh is the unrenewed flesh or sin nature. There is one person with two capacities constantly working within him, each seeking dominance over him in his experience.

The mind (new nature) delights in God’s Law and longs to do it, but the flesh (sin nature) is hostile and refuses to submit to the Law.

Let me stress once again that the conflict we are discussing is that of a Christian man who loves the spiritual requirements of the Mosaic Law, a reflection of God’s holiness and will for ethical purity. (The Mosaic Law, especially the Ten Commandments, is also a reflection of the eternal moral law of God.) He wants God’s will, he yearns for it, but finds that even as a saved man he cannot do it in himself. He discovers that the principle of sin is a real factor in his life.

INDWELLING SIN — Romans 7:14

“For we know that the law is spiritual.” The Mosaic Law is spiritual because it originated with God and was given by the Holy Spirit. It is a reflection of God’s holy character.

“But I am carnal [fleshy], sold under sin.” “Carnal” refers to a weakness toward sin because of the sin nature. It is what I am, even as a Christian, in myself. The flesh dwells in me and assaults me, and I am no match for it. Rather, in myself and if left to myself, I am its slave, its reluctant, resistant slave. This is normal Christian experience because every Christian finds himself in conflict with God’s holy requirements in the Law. This is a conflict that we cannot avoid because we are still sinful. This is also subnormal Christian experience because it is trying to produce the righteousness of the Law by self effort. Sin is not just doing something wrong, it is also trying to do something right in our own efforts.
When Paul viewed God’s holy Law and tried to keep it, he acknowledged that he was sinful by nature and did not have the power in himself to keep the Law. He knew that he had been forgiven his sins, but he had to learn that even as a saved man he could not put down the flesh in himself. He had to make the discovery of indwelling sin and his need for divine help to keep it down!

Paul was trying to live the Christian life by keeping the Law in his own strength. This subnormal Christian life was not because of acts of sin, but because of self-effort apart from dependence on the Holy Spirit. Paul was living below the possibilities that God had provided in the Christian life.

This struggle may be seen in a Christian’s experience in the following ways:

*False Consecration:* After he has trusted in Christ, every Christian soon learns that his life is below par. There may be initial excitement of salvation, but after a time the Christian grows cold, finds a lack of power in his life, and discovers that he has no real effectiveness and no real spiritual fruit. He may try a number of things — going forward at a revival meeting, throwing a fagot on the fire at a consecration service, determining before God that he will give him his time, talents, abilities, his life. But after a time he finds himself back in the same old grind and he may cry out, “Lord, I am trying to serve you. Why is there no power?” The problem is that he is trying to serve and live a Christian life apart from the Holy Spirit who is the Christian’s power.

*False Teaching:* People may have been told that they are to keep the Law of Moses, a creed, a moral code, or some man-made religious standard. And they may be told nothing about the work of the Holy Spirit. Legalism blinds people to the truth of the Holy Spirit and puts them in bondage to false laws.

*False Service:* A Christian, whether a preacher, Sunday school teacher, missionary, Christian worker, or layman, who attempts to do anything by self-effort, apart from dependence on the Holy Spirit, is falling back into a works system and depending on self rather than the Holy Spirit for results.

**INABILITY TO OVERCOME EVIL IN THE FLESH BY THE LAW — Romans 7:15-17**

“For that which I do [am working out] I allow not [do not understand].” Paul is sincerely attempting to keep the Law in his own strength but even as a saved man he does not understand his own actions.
Paul’s earnest desire as a saved man to keep the righteous demands of the Law, but he found that he could not put into practice what he desired.

Paul loved the spiritual requirements of the Mosaic Law and hated every evil way that was contrary to the Law, but he found that the sin he hated was what he was doing. At this point, he didn’t understand about the Holy Spirit and how the Spirit could produce in the Christian the righteous requirements of the Law.

Paul agrees once again that the Law is good, that there is nothing wrong with it. It is from God and is holy, just and good, and its requirements are abiding.

Paul does not voluntarily give himself over to the sin nature, but finds that it is a subtle force constantly working in him to make him sin and not do the things of God. The problem is indwelling sin and how to control it. Here Paul discovers the principle of indwelling sin, which makes it impossible to fulfill the Law in his present experience. The answer is not law or self-effort, but the Holy Spirit.

Paul discovers that he is not only sinful, but also helpless because of indwelling sin. It is a terrible awakening to make this discovery, to become again convicted, this time not of sins, but of indwelling sin, of a hateful power that seems to be one’s very self but in reality is the sin nature.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon said,

“There are some professing Christians who can speak of themselves in terms of admiration; but, from my inmost heart, I loathe such speeches more and more every day that I live. Those who talk in such a boastful fashion must be constituted very differently from me. While they are congratulating themselves, I have to lie humbly at the feet of Christ’s cross, and marvel that I am saved at all, for I know that I am saved. I have to wonder that I do not believe Christ more, and equally wonder that I am privileged to believe in Him at all — to wonder that I do not love Him more, and equally to wonder that I love Him at all — to wonder that I am not holier, and equally to wonder that I have any desire to be holy at all considering what a polluted, debased, depraved nature I find still within my soul, not withstanding all that Divine grace has done in me. If God were ever to allow the fountains of the great deeps of depravity to break up in the best man that lives, he would make as
bad a devil as the Devil himself is. I care nothing for what these boasters say concerning their own perfections; I feel sure that they do not know themselves or they could not talk as they do. There is tinder enough in the saint who is nearest to heaven to kindle another hell if God should but permit a spark to fall upon it. In the very best of men, there is an infernal and well nigh infinite depth of depravity. Some Christians never seem to find this out. I almost wish that they might not do so, for it is a painful discovery for any one to make; but it has the beneficial effect of making us cease from trusting in ourselves, and causing us to glory only in the Lord.

INABILITY TO DO THE DESIRED GOOD OF THE LAW — Romans 7:18-20

“For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing.” Paul, regenerated new creation, found that he needed more than justification to deliver him from the power of present sin. He needed divine intervention. He had to learn that in himself he was powerless to produce righteousness. Before he could appropriate a Saviour for indwelling sin, he had to be shown that he was indeed sinful.

The honest and humble acknowledgment of the hopeless evil of our flesh is the first step to holiness. Some of us are not leading holy lives for the simple reason that we have too high an opinion of ourselves. No man ever cries aloud for deliverance until he has seen his own wretchedness. The only way to arrive at faith in the power of the Holy Spirit is along the road of self-despair.

We can only see our sinfulness when we see the holiness of God. The lives of God’s saints prove this point:

*Abraham*: When Abraham walked with the Lord he exclaimed, “Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes” (Gen. 18:27).

*Job*: When Job came face to face with God, he said, “Behold, I am vile” (Job 40:4), and again, “I abhor myself” (Job 42:6).

*Daniel*: When he had that wondrous vision of Christ, Daniel declared, there remained no strength in me; for my comliness was turned in me into corruption, and I retained no strength” (Dan. 10:8).

*Isaiah*: When Isaiah entered the divine presence, he cried, “Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips” (Isa. 6:5).
“For to will [the desiring] is present with me; but how to perform [work out] that which is good I find not.” Paul’s desiring good did not enable him to meet the requirements of the Law.

“For the good that I would [am desiring] I do not; but the evil which I would not [am not desiring], that I do [am practicing].” Paul finds a complete conflict in desires. As a saved man he desires to keep the Law, but in reality can find no power to carry out those desires.

“Now if [since] I do that I would not [am not desiring], it is no more I that do it [am working it out] but sin that dwelleth in me.” Once again Paul acknowledges that because he is not able to produce the good required by the Law, it is not the Law’s fault. It is his fault because the sin nature is still in him.

Sin cannot be put down by the Mosaic Law or by self effort. Only the Holy Spirit can enable a person to put down sin and the activity of the flesh.

CONCLUSION

If you are without Christ you really have no understanding of the holiness of God, the sinfulness of sin, or the work of Jesus Christ to take away sin. The Bible says that for the person outside of Christ there is only sin, spiritual death, and ultimately eternal judgment. If you will turn to Christ, he will forgive your sins and deliver you from the guilt and penalty of sin. Christ is your only hope for salvation in this world.
Who Shall Deliver Me?  
A Study on Romans 7:20-25

Dr. Jack L. Arnold

One of the most shocking moments in a Christian’s life is when he discovers how sinful he really is. There comes a time when a believer realizes that he has a force for evil in him that is so powerful that even as a saved man he cannot overcome it in his own strength.

A Christian must come to this place where he sees no good in himself, and where he realizes that all self-effort cannot deliver him from sin or enable him to live the Christian life. He must be brought to an end of himself and then cast himself wholly on God for deliverance from sin in his daily experience.

This is the lesson that the Apostle Paul had to learn in Romans 7:7-25. He loved the Mosaic Law and longed to keep the spiritual requirements of the Law. But God used the Law to show him how sinful he really was. Paul had been absolutely convinced that he could keep the righteousness of the Law in his own strength and self-effort. But God brought him to the end of himself by showing him his utter inability and helplessness to keep the Law in his own strength, and by convincing him that he needed outside help.

The discovery that Paul made was that of indwelling sin (Rom. 7:18: “In my flesh dwelleth no good thing!”). He longed to keep the Law, but could not do it because of this indwelling sin. There was nothing wrong with the Law; the problem was with Paul and his own wretchedness.

PAUL ACKNOWLEDGES THE LAW AND SIN — Romans 7:21-23

“I find [am finding] then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is [constantly] present with me.” Paul found in himself this principle for evil, the sin nature, even though he was a saved man. When he desired to do the good of the Law, he found in himself this sin principle which opposed him.

A failure to acknowledge that evil is still present in the child of God can make shipwreck of a person’s life. This is one of the reasons that many Christians crack up mentally. They try to live the Christian life but find only conflict. They do not realize that this is a normal experience to teach dependence upon the Holy Spirit.
“For I delight [sympathetic rejoicing] in the law of God after the inward man.” “The law of God” refers to the Mosaic Law (Lk. 2:23,24). The “inward man” means one’s inmost personality which is influenced by the new nature. As a saved man, with his new nature, Paul loved the Mosaic Law because it was a reflection of God’s holy character.

“But I see another law in my members.” While Paul loved the Mosaic Law, he became aware of another strong force within him — the law or principle of indwelling sin.

“Warring against the law of my mind.” The law of sin was constantly and habitually warring against the principle (law) of Paul’s mind. His mind was a part of his personality that was influenced by the new nature. His new nature desired to keep the Law but the old sin nature prevented him from accomplishing this.

“And bringing me into captivity to the law [principle] of sin which is in my members.” There was a constant struggle between the new nature and the sin nature when Paul tried to keep the commands of the Law in his flesh. The result was defeat, discouragement, and an inability in his flesh to keep the righteous requirements of the Law. He was made a captive or prisoner of the sin nature. The harder he tried, the more discouraged and defeated he became. He was sincere and earnest, but he was trying to produce the righteousness of the Law in his own strength and the sin nature overtook him. At this point he had not learned that God had provided the Holy Spirit to live the Christian life in him.

Andrew Murray said,

“God works to will and he is ready to work to do but, alas, many Christians misunderstand this. They think that because they have the will, it is enough, and that now they are able to do. This is not so. The new will is a permanent gift and attribute of the new nature but the power to do is not a permanent gift but must be received each moment from the Holy Spirit. It is the man who is conscious of his own impotence as a believer who will learn that by the Holy Spirit he can lead a holy life.”

PAUL’S CRY OF DESPAIR — Romans 7:24

“O wretched man that I am!” The word “wretched” has the idea of exhaustion because of hard labor. This is a beautiful picture of Paul struggling with his flesh, to the point of exhaustion, to make it obey the Law.
What honest Christian has not made this cry many times as he finds himself in the struggle of sin and self-effort? I have been so fed up with my life as a Christian that I have thrown myself over my bed and cried out, “I’m so horribly sinful!” God brings his children to such a point to teach us dependence on him.

Paul came to the end of himself. He saw himself in relation to the requirements of God’s Law and was displeased with his own inability to deliver himself from the situation. Only when he came to the end of self-effort and discovered his own sinfulness did he cry out for deliverance!

Paul came to realize that the flesh (sin nature) could not please God and that his best efforts could not do so either. The flesh is not only sinful but it is also helpless. Paul learned that sin is not only doing something wrong, it is also trying to do something right in our own strength. This struggle with fleshly effort is taught in the lives of Old Testament saints:

**Jacob:** Jacob had to learn this lesson. Remember how he struggled at the brook of Peniel to get God (Angel of Jehovah) to bless him (Gen. 32:24-32). He had his own plans and expected God to bless them. God touched his thigh and put it out of joint to show Jacob the folly of his self-effort and his need to cling to God. For the rest of his life he had a limp to remind him that he was to trust in God and not in his own efforts.

This is a picture of how we make our plans and programs, and work everything out saying, “Now, Lord, bless this!” Frequently there is no blessing because it was self-effort, and we experience defeat.

**Abraham:** God had promised Abraham that he would give him a son, through Sarah, to fulfill the covenant that he had made with him. Years went by and Abraham had no son. So, in complete sincerity, with the best of motives, and with the deepest desire to do God’s will, he tried to help God fulfill his promise. Abraham took an Egyptian girl named Hagar and had a child by her — Ishmael. This self-effort brought much unhappiness to the home of Abraham. Ishmael and his descendants have been a plague upon the Jews until this very hour. Thirteen years later God brought Issac to Abraham and Sarah. This is a lesson on how Christians sometimes run ahead of the Lord.

**Moses:** Moses learned the futility of self-effort and his own sinfulness when he tried to deliver Israel after he “graduated from the University of Egypt.” He stood there on the steps, with his diploma in his hand, trained in all the knowledge of the Egyptians, feeling qualified to be used of God to be the deliverer of Israel. He knew that he had been called to that from his birth, because his mother had told him the stories of his birth, and he set out to do the work God had called him to do — in his own effort. Within forty-eight hours he became a murderer instead of a missionary and had to flee from the face of Pharaoh. Then
God took him away and placed him in the desert for forty years to teach him dependence on God and not on the flesh. This is a picture of how men trust in their education, culture, wisdom, background, etc., and find only defeat.

“Who shall deliver me from [out from] the body of this death?” Paul acknowledged his hopeless and helpless condition, and called for help outside himself. He wanted deliverance from the power of sin in his life. He did not ask how he might deliver himself or how he might be delivered — he asked for a deliverer!

The term “body of death” depicts a murderer. It was a Roman custom to chain the murdered person to the murderer. He had to carry around the putrefying corpse as a penalty until the death of the dead became the death of the living. This is a horrible picture of the sin nature which brings death, and which the Christian cannot lose in this lifetime, though he may control it.

In this context, Paul was asking specifically about deliverance from the power of sin in his daily life, but he also looked to the future when he would be delivered from the presence of sin at the coming of Jesus Christ, for he said, “Who shall deliver me out from the body of this death?”

PAUL’S CRY OF VICTORY — Romans 7:25

“I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.” In all his defeat and discouragement, Paul saw a way out: he could be progressively delivered from the power of sin in his experience. Deliverance comes not through keeping the Law but through the person of Jesus Christ. Paul looked outside his own sin and self-effort for deliverance. He realized that Victory over sin comes by acknowledging the person and work of Christ for sanctification as well as for justification!

Occupation with Christ, allowing Christ to live his life through us by the Holy Spirit is the key to the Christian walk. Christianity is not just trying to live a life like Christ, nor is it just trying to be Christlike, nor is it simply Christ giving us the power to live a life like his. Christianity is Christ dwelling in the Christian, living his own life through the Christian:

“When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory” (Col. 3:4).

“So then with the mind [new nature] I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh [sin nature] the law of sin.” Paul drew a conclusion about his life as he tried to make the flesh obedient by keeping the Mosaic Law. As long as the Christian is in this human body,
his actions will be a mixture of good and evil. With all his heart Paul wanted to keep the Law in his new nature, but the flesh [sin nature], until and unless subdued by the Spirit, would keep him from producing the righteous requirements of the Law. Paul was a realist and knew that this conflict would occur as long as he was in the flesh.

The apostle Paul understood that there was a conflict with sin in him and in every Christian. It is a fact of life, a normal Christian experience to have conflict with sin, but it is abnormal Christian experience to try to solve the problem in our own strength. It must be dealt with in a supernatural manner as we trust the Holy Spirit to work in us. Other Christians have experienced this conflict with sin:

**George Whitefield**: “My heart is half devil and half beast.”


**Bishop Berkley**: “I cannot pray, but I sin; I cannot preach, but I sin; I cannot administer, nor receive the holy sacrament, but I sin. My very repentance needs to be repented of: and the tears I shed need washing in the blood of Christ.”

**Augustus Toplady** (author of *Rock of Ages*): “Upon a review of the past year, I desire to confess that my sinfulness has been exceeding great; my sins still greater; God’s mercies greater than both. My shortcomings and my misdoings, my unbelief and want of love, would sink me into the lowest hell, was not Jesus my righteousness and my Redeemer.”

CONCLUSION

No person can know the delivering power of Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit until he has first come to Christ and received him as personal Lord and Savior. Without Christ, a person is separated from God, has no forgiveness from the guilt and the penalty of sin, has no hope, and is under God’s wrath — and if this condition continues, he will spend eternity in the Lake of Fire. Jesus Christ alone can save you from this horrible fate and give you the power to live a Christian life.
Deliverance through the Spirit  
A Study on Romans 8:1-4

by Dr. Jack L. Arnold

As a pastor, I have many Christians come to me and say, “I just can’t live this Christian life. I’m trying to live it, but I can’t make my life conform to what I know the Bible teaches about Christian living.” Always my answer is, “Of course you can’t live the Christian life by yourself, but did you know that God has given the Holy Spirit to help you live a life of progressive victory over sin?” The problem is that these Christians have not yet learned the secret of walking in dependence upon the Holy Spirit in their everyday walk as followers of Jesus Christ.

Paul had something like the same experience as a Christian who tries to live the Christian life in his own strength apart from the power of the Holy Spirit. After he was saved, Paul still loved the Mosaic Law, for the Law had been his whole life for over thirty years when he was a self-righteous Pharisee. When he became a Christian, he soon learned that he had died to the Law as a way of life (Rom. 7:16), but he still respected and loved the Law because it was a reflection of God’s holiness. Therefore, he desired to keep the righteous requirements or the spiritual principles of the Law. He was convinced that as a saved man he could make his flesh obey the Law. As he sought to do this, he found that he simply could not. He had a new nature from God which gave him a desire to keep the spiritual principles of the Law, but in himself he did not have the power. Thus, Paul was brought to an end of himself as he discovered within him the principle of indwelling sin and the helplessness of his flesh to keep the Law in his own strength. This caused him to cry out, “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” Having become disgusted with his own life — with his sinfulness, his hypocrisy, his futile attempts at holiness — he cried out for a deliverer!

Paul was then able to give a cry of victory, “I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.” He had learned that sanctification as well as justification is found in the person of Jesus Christ. The answer to indwelling sin is the indwelling Christ, and the answer to self-effort in Christian living is dependence upon Christ, through the Spirit, instead of self.

How many of us have felt this struggle and frustration as Christians! It is not always that we do outwardly sinful things, but we do not do the things we should, and even if we do them it is often out of fear and habit rather than love. We discover our inability to serve God by much zeal and much prayer and much study, and we are baffled and frustrated. At this point we may be tempted to quit being a Christian. We may say, “Oh, Lord, what is the use? I have tried and tried, and I have gotten nowhere.” Here we are at the end of self and will cry for help. Without a word of reproach or rebuke for our failure, God will do through
us what we have struggled to do in our own flesh. He will teach us to live Christ’s life through us!

In Romans 8:1-4 Paul tells us about the secret he learned, that God had sent the Holy Spirit to make real in his experience the death and life of Jesus Christ. He learned that God had provided supernatural power to live a supernatural life. He came to realize his own insufficiency and turned to Christ, through the Spirit, for his sufficiency. Paul never was perfect in this life (far from it), but he began to enter into the life of liberty and freedom of the Spirit.

The argument of this section is that the Holy Spirit, by working on the inside of a Christian, can produce the righteous requirements of the Law in him. The responsibility of the Christian is to be rightly related to the Holy Spirit in his experience, to submit to his guidance and will.

RELEASE FROM CONDEMNATION — Romans 8:1

“There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.” “Therefore” refers back to chapter seven where Paul, trying to keep the Law, was struggling with self-effort and warring with sin.

Paul had his theology straight. He believed in the security of the believer, that once he was saved he could never be lost. As a struggling saint brought to the point of defeat and despair, he never doubted his salvation. He had great confidence, even when struggling with sin and self-effort, that he would not be judged by God in eternity for his sins. He knew that he had genuinely trusted Christ and was in a living and vital union with the Lord.

All those who are in Christ Jesus need never fear the wrath of God or eternal punishment. Christ has taken away their sins forever. If God condemns the Christian, he must condemn the Lord Jesus too, for every Christian is in union with Christ. God would never condemn his own Son! What a comfort it is to know that amidst all our sins, struggles, fleshy efforts, shortcomings, despair, discouragements, and defeats, that God loves us and sees us in his Son, so that he will never cast us out. Our standing before God is perfect, although our state or experience is imperfect!

“Who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” This is probably an interpolation that was either copied by mistake by a transcriber from 8:4, or placed there purposely by an editor. Almost all scholars agree that this part of the sentence is not in the better manuscripts. Even if this text were original, it would not indicate that a Christian might fall under condemnation by failing to walk after the Spirit, but rather it identifies a quality that belongs
to those who are in Christ Jesus: they walk according to the Spirit. Elsewhere Scripture attests that a person who is in Christ Jesus can never lose his salvation because God preserves him in a saved state.

RECOGNIZING THE NEW POWER OF THE SPIRIT — Romans 8:2

Paul realized and recognized the power of the Holy Spirit in his life. The law of the Spirit is an inward principle of action which operates with the rigidity and fixity of a law. It is a completely new kind of principle that takes over to produce the life of Christ in the Christian. The law of sin and death refers to the sin nature which acts as a principle of action operating with the rigidity and fixity of a law (cf. 7:23,25).

“For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus.” This could be translated, “For the law of the Spirit, namely, the life which is in Christ Jesus.” This may mean either “the law of the Spirit which produces life in the Christian who is in union with Christ,” or “the Law of the Spirit is the life the Christian has in Christ.” The Christian need not fear condemnation because he has the law of the Spirit or the life of Christ in him, giving him progressive victory over the flesh.

The Holy Spirit has taken up residence in the Christian to reproduce the life of Christ in him. It is through the work of the Holy Spirit that the Christian is being freed from the power of the sin nature in his experience. The purpose of the Holy Spirit is to produce the life of Christ in the Christian.

“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me” (Gal. 2:20).

This is the law of the Spirit. It is not the Mosaic Law or a man-made law. It is the law of the indwelling Spirit producing the life of Christ which gives a power to regulate and control the sin nature. The Christian operates on this new principle or law which is a new regulator and authority for him, and which provides the power to keep down the outbreaks of the flesh which the Mosaic Law could not do.

The law of the Spirit supersedes the law of the sin nature. Something that might help us understand this is an airplane. Two principles operate when a plane flies: the law of gravity and the law of aerodynamics. A plane can get off the ground because the law of aerodynamics is stronger than the law of gravity. When the plane is in the air, gravity is still there, and if the engine stops the law of aerodynamics will not keep the plane from crashing.
Peter’s walking on the water is another example. Natural law says he should have sunk when he stepped out of the boat, but natural law was superseded by the spiritual law of faith. However, Peter did sink when he stopped operating on the law of faith and natural law took over. We must walk in dependence on the Spirit if the law of the Spirit is to dominate over the sin nature.

“Hath set me free from the law of sin and death [the sin nature].” This freedom is positionally accomplished, for the sin nature has been judged and its power or reign broken in the Christian by union with Christ in death and resurrection (Rom. 6:1-14). Christians experience this freedom as they appropriate or lay hold of the work of the Holy Spirit in their lives. It is for those who walk after the Spirit (8:4).

The Christian trusts, depends on, and leans on the Holy Spirit to produce the life of Christ in him so as to keep the sin nature under control. It was a fact that Paul had been set free positionally, but through time and knowledge he came to learn it in his experience.

REMEMBERING CHRIST’S DEATH — Romans 8:3

“For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh.” It was impossible for the Law to produce righteousness in a person because of man’s basic sin nature. But God sent Christ to die on the cross to judge the sin nature, and while it remains in the child of God, it does not reign over him or have any rights over him. Christ’s death broke the power of the sin nature, and this positional truth becomes a progressive reality to those who are walking by the law of the Spirit.

REALIZING OUR RESPONSIBILITY — Romans 8:4

“That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us.” Christ’s death made it possible for the righteous principles of the Mosaic Law to be fulfilled in the Christian.

“Who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” This fulfilling is possible only if the Christian is walking after the Holy Spirit in his daily experience, and not walking according to the sin nature. To walk by the Spirit means to have a life of resting-activity, depending on the Holy Spirit to produce the life of Christ in oneself. To walk by the flesh is to feed the base desires of the sin nature and to yield continually to its temptations.
CONCLUSION

God has told us that eye has not seen nor ear heard the things that God has prepared for them that love him. Those who walk in dependence on the Spirit will progressively enter into the abounding, satisfying, comforting life of Christ.

For those without Christ as personal Lord and Saviour, there is no abounding life, only spiritual death; no satisfaction, only restlessness; no comfort, only fear of eternity. But Christ promised abundant life to all who would receive him as personal Saviour from sin. If you feel the prompting of the Spirit, will you receive Christ as your personal sin bearer?
A number of years ago I preached through Romans 8, and at that time I felt I had the right interpretation of Romans 8:5-13, but I must confess I was somewhat shaky on this section. I understood this section to teach that a Christian could walk according to the Holy Spirit or according to the flesh (sin nature). I still believe that the Christian can stop relying on the Holy Spirit and yield to the flesh in him, but I do not believe that Romans 8:5-13 teaches this truth. I can still remember that at that time I struggled with this passage, and was not satisfied with my own interpretation.

I have now come to accept the traditional interpretation of this passage, specifically, that it contrasts the walk of the saved and the walk of the unsaved, and that it adds a special exhortation for Christians to persevere in the faith. This section speaks categorically of the state and practice of the non-Christian over against the state and practice of the true Christian.

BACKGROUND

As we have learned in Romans 7, as a saved man the Apostle Paul found himself in a mighty spiritual struggle. He loved the spiritual requirements of the Mosaic Law and he had a genuine desire to keep the Law, but because of indwelling sin still in him, he found himself in a spiritual struggle. He wanted to do right, but found himself sometimes doing wrong.

In Romans 8:1-4, we saw how Paul had to learn about the Holy Spirit whom Christ sent to empower believers to live the Christian life. We discovered that a Christian lives by a higher law than the Mosaic Law, and that is “the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 8:2). The Holy Spirit gives the Christian the power to live the Christian life, and enables him to keep the spiritual requirements of God’s law.

An unsaved man cannot fulfill the righteous requirements of the Law but a saved man, indwelt by the Holy Spirit, can and does fulfill the spiritual requirements of the Mosaic Law (Rom. 8:3,4). A person who walks according to the flesh is one who is unsaved and dominated by the sin nature. A person who walks according to the Spirit is one who is saved and dominated by the Spirit. This does not mean that a saved person always yields and submits to the Holy Spirit, but he does have a leaning or propensity towards spiritual things. The bent of his life is towards Christ and walking in the Spirit.
THE PRACTICE OF THE UNSAVED — Romans 8:5-8

“For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh.” The unsaved man is dominated by the sin nature and walks according to the flesh in all things. The predominating influence in his life is how to feed the flesh or sin nature. He lives for himself. All his actions are somehow directed toward building his human ego. The non-Christian is a worldling and shuts God out of his thinking because he is interested in fleshly pursuits. He is always trying to get something he desires or do something he wants.

Think back to the time before you were saved. Every decision you made and every course of action you took centered around fulfilling your own needs, pleasures and lusts. God was never a major factor in any of your thinking.

“But those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.” On the other hand, the saved man is dominated in his thinking by the things of the Spirit. God’s will is given consideration in all of his decisions, and he longs to have Christ as master of his life. The saved man’s practice and disposition are towards spiritual realities.

Of course, we know that as Christians we do not always depend upon the Holy Spirit in our Christian walk, and we sometimes fall into carnal acts, which are displeasing to God. But the main thrust of a Christian is towards Christ and the things of the Spirit.

Think about your relationship to Christ now that you are saved. You now consider God in every decision, even though you do not always obey perfectly. You must admit that the bent of your thoughts, affections and pursuits is towards God.

“For the mind set on the flesh is death.” The unsaved man has a different practice because he has a different state or condition. He is dead in sin, and this produces a different lifestyle which results in spiritual death:

“And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest” (Eph. 2:1-3).

The fleshy, unsaved mind pursues carnal objects as a way of life. The unsaved man cannot act differently because he is operating totally on the flesh. The unsaved man’s lifestyle should not surprise us or shock us — he can only sin!

“But the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace.” The saved man pursues the things of the Holy Spirit, and experiences God’s life and peace. The unsaved man can know nothing of life and
peace until he is born of God’s Spirit through faith in Christ Jesus. Life and peace belong to God’s children alone.

In the whole world, there are just two mind sets — that of those who are saved and spiritually minded; and that of those who are lost and fleshy minded. The world is divided; all men belong to one or the other. Men are either in the flesh and walk according to the flesh, or they are in the Spirit and walk according to the Spirit.

When a Christian stops submitting to the Spirit, he will experience yielding to the sin nature and lose a sense of God’s life and peace in life. Still, he will never pursue the flesh as he did in his unsaved state.

“Because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God.” The unsaved man is an enemy of God and is alienated from him. The carnal mind seeks to shut God out from his thinking and does not want the true God of Scripture. The unsaved man rebels at God’s justice, his sovereignty, and even his love and mercy because of the way he dispenses them. The non-Christian in reality hates God because he will not submit to the one, true God as he is revealed in the Holy Scripture.

Unsaved men are very deceived, for many will tell you that they believe in God (and in their own way they are sincere). They are offended when you tell them that they hate God because in their sin-riddled minds they imagine that they love God. But what god do they love? They love only the god of their own imaginations, not the God of Scripture. There is only one God — the God of the Bible — and those who do not bow to him are his enemies.

“For it does not subject itself to the Law of God, for it is not even able to do so.” The unsaved, fleshy mind does not want to subject itself to God’s Law because it hates the whole idea of submission to God. The unsaved man does not want to be ruled over by anyone but himself, but a saved man desires to keep the spiritual requirements of the Mosaic Law as they are revealed in the Ten Commandments.

The unsaved, unregenerate person can never fulfill the spiritual requirements of the Law because his mind refuses to submit to God. An unsaved person may outwardly seem to keep the external letter of the Law while all the time hating the God who gave the Law. He cannot keep the spirit of the Law without loving God, for the Law is a reflection God’s character.

“And those who are in the flesh cannot please God.” The natural, unsaved man has no ability to please God. The unsaved man may be good, kind, nice, and even religious, and he most certainly will please men, but the unregenerate man cannot please God in any way. Man has no ability in himself to please God; he must be given that ability by God who gives the Holy Spirit to empower the Christian to do things that do please God. The only person who can please God is the born-again Christian who has Christ as his Saviour and the Holy Spirit in his life, enabling him to produce the spiritual requirements of the Law.
THE POSITION OF THE SAVED — Romans 8:9-11

“However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed (since) the Spirit of God dwells in you.” Paul states clearly that the Roman Christians were not unsaved; they were not “in the flesh” but “in the Spirit.” They were in the sphere of and dominated by the Holy Spirit. Why? They were permanently indwelt by the Holy Spirit. They had the capacity and the power to please God.

The distinguishing characteristic of the true Christian which sets him apart from all unbelievers is that the Holy Spirit indwells him. How do we see the indwelling of the Spirit? We don’t, but we see the evidences of the indwelling through the life of the Christian. A person cannot be indwelt by the Holy Spirit and fail to manifest this in some way. If God dwells in a person, there will be ample evidence of the fact!

Those who are saved can never be the same again, for God the Holy Spirit has taken up residence in them:

“Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body” (1 Cor. 6:19,20).

They are responsible to walk in dependence upon the Spirit in their lives:

“If [since] we live by [in] the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit” (Gal. 5:25).

“But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to him.” Any person who does not have the Holy Spirit does not belong to the Lord and is unsaved. Once again, how can we know if the Holy Spirit indwells a person? Only as we see the fruits of the Spirit appear in a Christian’s life.

I have been in both large and small groups of rank unbelievers and professing Christians. With unbelievers I know I have no spiritual fellowship and so I spend time with them to reach them for Christ Jesus. But I have been around groups of professing Christians or church-goers and felt very out of place because Christ was not present there. There was no kindred-spirit, and the spirit that was missing was the Holy Spirit. People who do not have the Holy Spirit indwelling them are on different wavelengths from the true Christian.

“And if [since] Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive [Spirit is life] because of righteousness.” A Christian’s body is still sinful, but the Holy Spirit is working spiritual life and righteousness on the inside of a Christian. The Holy Spirit is producing progressive sanctification in the Christian so as to produce the life of Christ in him.

“But if [since] the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodiethrough His Spirit who indwells you.” The
indwelling Spirit is not only a guarantee of progressive victory over sin now, but a guarantee of complete and final victory over sin when the Christian receives his new, resurrected body in the future.
THE PRACTICAL EXHORTATION TO PERSEVERANCE — Romans 8:12,13

“So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh.” The true Christian is not a debtor to the sin nature and is not under obligation to obey it. Why? God has positionally judged the sin nature, has indwelt the believer with the Holy Spirit, and has guaranteed progressive as well as ultimate sanctification from sin.

Obviously Paul did not finish his sentence, for he should have said, “But are under obligation to the Spirit.” Christians are under obligation to walk in the Spirit and to be dominated by the Spirit.

“For if [maybe you are and maybe you are not] you are living according to the flesh, you must die.” This is a warning to professing Christians who may not be regenerated, indwelt by the Holy Spirit, and producing the fruit of the Spirit. This is merely saying that if a person professes Christ, but does not have works to back up that profession and is constantly living for the flesh (sin nature), he will die spiritually. The true Christian will not live continually according to the flesh, but one who is only a professing Christian will.

“But if [maybe we will and maybe we won’t] by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you shall live.” It is absolutely necessary and possible for the Christian to fight sin. The true Christian has the responsibility to put to death the evil passions and desires of his sin nature. Why? Because his sin nature has been judged and he is indwelt by the Holy Spirit, who empowers him to do it. The Christian must put to death the cravings of the sin nature:

“You must put to death [Put to death], then, the earthly desires at work in you, such as immorality, indecency, lust, evil passions and greed [for greediness is a form of idol worship]” (Col. 3:5, N.T. in Today’s English Version).

*If he does not kill sin, sin may well kill him.* As the Christian puts to death sin in his life, this is evidence that he really does have the life of Christ in him.

We cannot put down the sin nature in our own strength, we must yield to and be controlled by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit gives the Christian the power to put acts of sin to death in his experience.

Matthew Henry says, “We cannot do it without the Spirit working it in us, and the Spirit will not do it without us doing our endeavour.”

CONCLUSION

There may be someone reading this who has never made a decision for Christ. We read in the Bible that those who are in the flesh or unsaved cannot please God in any way. God is not pleased with a man’s good works, his meager attempts at morality, his pride of life or his rebellion to Jesus
Christ. God is only pleased with those who have Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour and who are living the Christian life by means of the Holy Spirit. If you have never made this decision for Christ, I urge you to do so. Your present spiritual condition and your eternal destiny hangs on what decision you make for Christ in this lifetime.
HEIRS WITH CHRIST
A Study on Romans 8:14-17

by Dr. Jack L. Arnold

Suppose someone came to you and said you had been made an heir of a one-million-dollar estate, but for some silly reason you refused to accept this estate. You have a fortune but refuse to possess it. To refuse a million dollars when one could have pure luxury, splendor and the comforts of life is plainly ridiculous. In fact, for one to refuse to inherit this estate, he would have to be a little mentally unbalanced. Why would any poor man want to stay poor when Providence wants to make him rich?

The Bible tells us that all Christians have been made heirs of God through Christ and yet many Christians refuse to lay hold of this reality by faith. They choose to stay spiritually poor when God wants to make them spiritually rich in their experience.

CONTEXTUAL ARGUMENT

The Apostle Paul has been arguing in Romans 8 that only saved people who walk in dependence upon the Holy Spirit can fulfill the righteous requirements of the Mosaic Law in their daily experience. Because the unsaved man is in the flesh and walks according to the flesh, he cannot fulfill the Law and please God. However, the saved man is in the Spirit and walks according to the Spirit and he can please God.

The saved man has the Holy Spirit indwelling him and his sin nature judged; therefore he can and will walk according to the Spirit. He will not always walk perfectly according to the Spirit, but there will be a bent, leaning or propensity towards the Spirit-filled life.

The Apostle Paul concludes by giving an exhortation and warning to these Roman Christians:

“Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live” (Rom. 8:12,13).

True Christians are not debtors to the flesh but to the Spirit, and if one professes to be a Christian but lives constantly by the flesh, he is not saved at all. True Christians are seeking to put to death the evil deeds of the body. They never do this perfectly, but they do fight sin in their experience.
THE LEADING OF THE SPIRIT PROVES ONE IS A SON OF GOD — Romans 8:14

“For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons (huios) of God.” The “for” looks back to the previous verses (Rom. 8:12,13) about putting to death the deeds of the body by means of the Holy Spirit.

Every true child of God is being led by the Holy Spirit, and the evidence and proof of this leading is that he is fighting sin and the sin nature so as to please God. This is a great comfort to the Christian because we have the confidence that we are being led by the Spirit of God, and we know this by our desire to fight sin and to please Christ.

Sonship is not based on our obedience or this verse would have said, “As many as follow the Spirit are the sons of God.” Sonship is by God’s grace and rests on his faithfulness to lead his own children.

The Holy Spirit does lead God’s sons and daughters, but the other side of the coin is that as the Spirit leads, the Christian must submit and yield to the Spirit. The Holy Spirit does not drive the Christian but patiently leads him, expecting the believer to submit voluntarily.

The word “son” means “a son in legal standing” or “a son in full standing.” It is related to the terms “adoption” and “heir” in the following verses.

THE JOY OF BEING RELATED TO GOD AS A SON — Romans 8:15

“For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear.” Before a person is a Christian, he is a slave to sin and judged by the Mosaic Law. This bondage brings fear, despondency and a sense of helplessness.

How many there are that have such fears in life — and the greatest fear is the unknown of death. Why do men fear? Because they have sin and no Saviour.

“But ye have received the Spirit of adoption.” When a person receives Christ as personal Lord and Saviour, at that moment the Spirit does a work of adoption.

The word “adoption” had great meaning to Paul’s Roman audience. The Romans had a special way of adopting their own sons. This word “adoption” actually means “a son-placing,” and has nothing to do with taking an orphan child and making him a member of a family. The Romans acknowledged all children as part of the family, but only those who went through the ritual of son-placing were recognized as sons. A Roman father, if he had male children, never referred to them as his sons until they were of age — they were his children, but they were not his sons. But when the child became of age (when he was about 14 years old in the Roman system), the father took him down to the public forum where the child was publicly adopted by his own father, and thereafter...
regarded as an adult son in the family, being heir of the father and sharing the privileges as well as the responsibilities as a son.

At the moment we initially received Christ, we were made adult sons in God’s family with all the rights, privileges and responsibilities of a son. Not fear, but blessing!

“Whereby we cry, Abba, Father.” This is probably an early liturgical formula. The word “Abba” means “papa” in the Aramaic, and the word translated “Father” is the Greek *pater*. Our Lord used the term “Abba, Father” when addressing the Father in prayer (Mark 14:36). Through this formula we find that a most vital and intimate relationship exists between the adult son and his Heavenly Father. As sons of God we can know and have confidence in our Father God.

I remember reading a story about a Christian girl who had received word that her fiance had been suddenly killed in an accident. She was a relatively new Christian, and when she got this word she was tremendously disturbed. She went into her bedroom and locked the door. Her mother heard her sobbing, and after a bit her mother said to her father, “I think you had better go up and see her. She needs a father right now.” So the father went upstairs and was about to open the door when he heard his daughter sobbing, quietly he opened the door a crack and saw that she was kneeling beside the bed with her head buried in her hands crying out, “Oh, Father, oh, Father, Father.” The man just quietly shut the door again, came back downstairs and said to his wife, “She is in better hands than mine, for she is with her Heavenly Father.” This young lady knew God as her Father — this is one of the first marks of new life in Christ Jesus.

ASSURANCE OF SONSHIP — Romans 8:16

“The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit.” The Holy Spirit that lives inside of every true Christian bears witness (gives confidence) to the human spirit in the Christian that he is a child of God.

“That we are the children of God.” The Holy Spirit gives an inward and subjective assurance that we have a spiritual relationship to God through Christ.

“But as many as received Him [Christ] to them gave he the power [authority] to become the sons of God” (John 1:12).

We are the “little born ones.” To all who have truly trusted Christ, the Holy Spirit gives an assurance that they are truly saved.

There are many Christians who believe that once a person is saved he can be lost if he breaks his covenant with God. Even so, I have never met anyone who held this view and showed evidence of true salvation who also felt that he himself could lose his salvation. They just doubt everybody else’s! I had a good friend who was a pastor in the Church of God. He believed that a person could
lose his salvation. When I asked him if he thought he could lose his, he answered that he did not believe he could. I then asked him why he felt this way. He answered that God had given him a conviction that he was saved, and he was going to do spiritual works to prove it. Even though his theology was incorrect, in practice the Spirit of God was bearing witness with his spirit that he was a child of God.

This illustration raises a question: “How does one know he is saved?” There are some easy check points:

1. The Bible says all who trust in Christ will receive the forgiveness of sins and be saved.
2. How can I be sure this Word is true? Because the Holy Spirit gives inner conviction that it is true and that I am a child of God.
3. How do I know the Spirit is bearing witness that I am a child of God? Because, as a Christian, I desire to persevere or push on in the things of Christ.
4. How can I be sure I will persevere? Because when a Christian sins, he has conviction from the Spirit that it is wrong, and that Christian persists in sin God will most certainly discipline him. Discipline is a sure proof of sonship.

“If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons” (Heb. 12:7,8).

PRIVILEGES OF A SON — Romans 8:17a

“And if children, then heirs; heirs of God.” Since we are God’s children, we have become the heirs of God. God has chosen to bestow infinite spiritual blessing on each one of his children.

“And joint-heirs with Christ.” The Christian is a joint heir of the Father with the person of Jesus Christ. Christ is the Father’s Son, and to Christ God has bequeathed everything because Christ is the only rightful heir to the Father’s estate. But the Christian is in spiritual union with Christ because of the new birth and is therefore a joint-heir to the inheritance.

If two brothers inherited an estate as equal heirs, then the estate would be divided into two equal parts and each would be given the same amount. But if the two are made joint-heirs, then both of them have equal rights to the total inheritance. They both look at the total inheritance as theirs. As joint-heirs with Christ, the total inheritance of Christ is the inheritance of every believer.

As sons of God, we are joint-heirs of all that Christ possesses, and his possessions are infinite. Therefore, our possessions are infinite as believers. It is also possible to have an inheritance but not really possess it experientially.
There used to be a television show hosted by Art Linkletter. Occasionally Mr. Linkletter and his sponsors would hire a private investigator to find estates that had not been claimed because the people who had inherited them were unaware of their inheritances. Great sums of money lay in unclaimed estates because the heirs could be found. The investigator traced down the estates, and the heirs' names were announced over the air. Some folks became quite wealthy through this method. I remember that one elderly woman who was quite poor inherited an estate worth approximately $10,000 (which was a relatively substantial sum in those days). She was the rightful heir of this money, but did not possess it. She was relatively rich and did not know it. Many Christians live like spiritual paupers, even though they are joint-heirs with Christ. They are spiritual millionaires by inheritance, but are ignorant of their inheritance and do not possess it by faith. They are spiritual paupers in experience.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF A SON — Romans 8:17b

“If so be that [since] we suffer with him.” Our responsibilities as sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus include suffering with Christ. Suffering is part and parcel of Christian living. This is not providential suffering, for all men suffer to some degree. This is suffering that comes through sharing Christ’s life as we seek to lead holy lives and speak to the world of its need of Christ. Suffering with Christ is evidence of one’s sonship.

“That we may be also glorified together.” Since we share Christ’s sonship, we shall share his inheritance in glory; but if we are to share His glory, we must share his suffering first. All who share Christ’s suffering now will share his glory hereafter.

CONCLUSION

Jesus Christ has promised to make any person a son of God if that person will but trust him as personal Lord and Saviour. Every person is a creature of God, but not every person is a son of God. God’s sons are those who are united to his only begotten Son Jesus Christ.

You may become a son of God right now if you will both acknowledge that sin has separated you from God and turn to Christ believing that he died as your substitute and for your sin. At that very moment of belief, you will become a child of God, and God will become your Father. Then for the first time you will be able to cry out, “Abba, Father.”
Wherever one goes in this world, he will find suffering, heartache and tragedy among men. These sufferings bring deep groanings from the sufferers.

There are the groanings of men who suffer tragedy. There are the groanings of those who are afflicted with disease. There are the groanings of those who suffer in war and there are the groanings of those who are about to die and pass on into another world. Men are born into this world with the groanings of a mother in childbirth, live a life of groaning because of suffering, and utter their last sounds in the groanings of death.

All men must suffer and groan, but there are some sufferings that the unsaved, non-Christian world will never know — there are spiritual sufferings for the child of God, and these sufferings bring deep, inward groanings as the Christian seeks to be delivered from sin.

This portion of Scripture deals with spiritual groanings because of sin:

1. The creation groaning because of sin (Rom. 8:22);
2. The groanings of the child of God because of sin (Rom. 8:23); and
3. The groanings of the Holy Spirit on behalf of the child of God who is still sinful (Rom. 8:26).

SPIRITUAL SUFFERINGS — Romans 8:17b-18

In Romans 8:17 Paul has told us that every Christian has been made a son of God and a full heir of God through Christ. The Father has bequeathed all to his Son, Jesus Christ, his heir. Because the Christian is in union with Christ, he is a joint heir with Christ. The Christian is a spiritual millionaire, and God wants us to lay hold of this reality through faith. The one condition set on this heirship is that we suffer with Christ in this life. This verse states that it is necessary for the Christian suffer in this life, and suffering is evidence that we are heirs of God. Suffering is an expression of our union with Christ.

In context, this is not providential suffering for all men suffer to some degree. This is suffering with Christ. It is spiritual suffering. It is the suffering that comes because of
indwelling sin as one seeks to live a holy life, and suffering as the Christian seeks to tell the world about Jesus Christ.

These spiritual sufferings are not in vain — there is a divine purpose behind them. These sufferings will give us an appreciation of our salvation now, and will ultimately bring us to complete and final salvation when we will receive our resurrected and glorified bodies.

“For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time.” The context indicates that this refers to spiritual suffering with sin. It is the inward battle and conflict that goes on inside the Christian as God is working a great salvation in him. As long as the Christian is in this human body, he will suffer spiritually.

The Christian has an assurance that Christ at the Cross won the battle over sin. He knows that ultimate victory is certain, but he realizes that sin is still very real in his life and there is a daily battle that must be fought with it.

In World War II the Allied Forces were victorious over Japan. Japan was brought to a place of unconditional surrender in 1945. The Japanese had been defeated, surrender was official, and victory was declared — but this did not end the war. Many Japanese soldiers were still fighting the war years after the nation surrendered. There were still the mopping-up operations on the Japanese army who refused to surrender, or who did not know the war was over.

So it is with the Christian. Christ defeated sin at the Cross. Victory was proclaimed for the Christian, but there is still fighting going on with sin in the Christian. In spiritual suffering the Christian is alive unto God, victorious in warfare, assured of victory, but finds himself still in the front lines of battle in the mopping-up operations on the enemy sin.

It has been ordained that the Christian suffer. God has declared it in his Word, and this spiritual suffering is for a divine purpose. God wants us to get the right attitude about this suffering. There are just three ways we can face sufferings: we can break out, break down, or break through!

Break out: If you break out, you rebel at the suffering and grow bitter, hateful and hard.

Break down: Some folks break down under spiritual suffering, not realizing that suffering is part of the Christian life. Thus, they become neurotic, filled with self-pity, run away from life, withdraw from society, and some may even end up in the hospital.
Break through: But God wants us by his grace to break through and touch the hidden springs of the life of Christ within us, accepting the suffering with joy, counting not our life dear unto ourselves but gladly counting it a privilege to bear suffering for Christ. God wants us to rejoice in suffering, to accept it as his design, and to learn from it.

“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose” (Rom. 8:28).

“In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you” (1 Thess. 5:18).

“Are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.” The glory that will be revealed in us looks forward to the time of glorification in which the Christian will receive his new body. A Christian is “one who lives his life in light of heavenly realities”; he sets his affections on things above. The believer’s suffering now with sin is but a “drop in the bucket” compared to a future time when he will be free of all sin forever.

THE GROANINGS OF CREATION — Romans 8:19-22

Paul’s point in this section is that the creation is cursed today because of Adam’s fall. Paul personifies creation, speaking of its groaning under its bondage to sin and its waiting for the final resurrection of all believers when the curse from the earth will be lifted.

“For the earnest expectation of the creature [creation] waiteth for the manifestation of the Sons of God.” The creation is anxiously awaiting the time when the children of God are all revealed as perfect and the presence of sin is removed from the body of every believer.

“For the creation was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope.” The Fall of man in the Garden of Eden not only affected mankind, but also physical creation. Man was given dominion over the earth, and when he sinned, the earth was cursed since it was under his dominion. The earth had no choice and was subjected to the curse because of the sin of Adam and Eve.

“Because the creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage [slavery] of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.” The universe is in a constant state of deterioration. Corruption and decay characterize the earth.
When man fell, creation fell. When God’s children will be ultimately redeemed, creation will be redeemed. Thus, creation is standing on its tip toes, anxiously awaiting the revelation of God’s children. This process will find its completion in the new heavens and new earth.

“For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.” The creation groans as a woman with birth pangs, and it longs for the day when it will escape the curse of sin. This day will come only when the Christian receives his new body. God is going to redeem the earth and it too will have a new birth, but this will only happen when God completes salvation for his own children. Creation will be made fit for the redeemed community.

THE GROANINGS OF THE BELIEVER — Romans 8:23-25

“And not only they [so], but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.” Because the Christian is still in this sinful body, he groans spiritually for deliverance. He longs for the day when he will be free from sin forever. In that future day his adoption as an adult son will be complete and final, and he will be free from sin forever.

Those who groan are those who have the firstfruits of the Holy Spirit. The firstfruits were a sample of the harvest to come. The Holy Spirit working in the believer now is a sample or foretaste of the glory which shall be revealed in us.

In our home, when we have a big, festive dinner, we usually don’t eat until around four in the afternoon. About one o’clock, I begin to get hungry and hang around the kitchen. My wife puts me off as I beg for food. Around three-thirty she takes the turkey out of the oven and gives me just a sample of the meat and it tastes so good! But this is just a sample or foretaste, and I know that there is more to come, much more. The sample or foretaste makes me long for more, and makes me even more anxious for the big dinner to roll around. The presence of the Holy Spirit now in our lives is simply a sample or foretaste of what it will be like to have a glorified body.

Indwelling sin is taking its toll on believers — the body is becoming more frail, older, and progressively wearing out. As we grow older we realize this more than ever. We get aches and pains. The print of the written page becomes smaller and smaller. Stairsteps grow steeper and hills grow higher. The lines in our brows become deeper and the hair becomes grey. 2 Corinthians 4:16 says, “The outward man is perishing, but the inward man is being renewed day by day.” As we move toward the end of life, the outward man is perishing, but what is happening to the inward man? What is happening on the inside? The Christian is
learning how to walk in the Spirit. He is learning how to be obedient to the Christ life within him, and how to maintain fellowship with Christ moment by moment. It is this that prepares us for those glorious bodies which will someday be ours, which will be responsive to every demand the Spirit makes upon us, and through which God intends to reach the whole of his created universe to establish his kingdom wherever there is matter in the universe.

This verse is devastating to those who promote the theory that the mark of a Christian is a perennial smiling face. They contend that a Christian should be a cross between a Cheshire cat and a house-to-house salesnan. They say that a Christian should grin at all times. Smile your troubles away is good for Rotary, but is not the Christian method. There are times when we simply groan within for deliverance from this body.

“For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?” We were saved in hope. Salvation is by faith in Christ, but salvation brought a hope (confident assurance) that someday we would receive a resurrected body. There would be no confident hoping if we already had our new, resurrected and glorified bodies.

“But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.” We do not have completed salvation now, but we have a confident hope or assurance that we shall have it sometime in the future. This then produces within the Christian an attitude of patient endurance as he lives everyday in light of the fact that one day in God’s plan he will have a glorified body.

God, through our attitude of patient endurance, is preparing the inner man now for his yet future body. That is one of the reasons our salvation is not yet complete.

THE GROANINGS OF THE SPIRIT — Romans 8:26-27

“Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities [infirmity].” This should be translated “infirmity,” not “infirmities.” Paul refers to our weakness of failing to have patient endurance because of indwelling sin.

“For we know not what we should pray for as we ought.” Because of indwelling sin in the Christian’s unredeemed body, the believer does not even know how to pray rightly. The Christian prays, but his prayers are feeble at best.

“But the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.” The Holy Spirit who indwells us knows our deepest needs, and he makes intercession in us and for us. The Holy Spirit groans because of sin in the believer’s life, and
he prays that the Christian will continue in patient endurance and ultimately be delivered from the presence of sin forever.

How many times I have been so conscious of my own sinfulness that when I tried to pray I could only groan a few sounds in disgust of my own condition. But the Holy Spirit can take these feeble groanings and turn them into the most eloquent prayers to the Father. The Spirit is here to intercede in us and for us. Praise God for this truth when we are heavy in the battle with sin!

“And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.” The Spirit of God intercedes for us to the Father to bring the believer the very best, even God’s perfect will. God’s will is the progressive sanctification of the Christian in time and finally perfect conformity to Christ in eternity.

CONCLUSION

Only those who know Christ groan within themselves, waiting patiently for their redeemed bodies. But the man who is not a Christian has no redeemed soul and no hope of a redeemed body. He has no forgiveness of sins; he has no hope of resurrection unto life; he has no assurance of a future redeemed body.

If you will believe in Christ, God will forgive you of your sins, give you eternal life, and guarantee you a place in heaven. If you will trust in Christ, God will redeem your inner man now and will ultimately redeem your body in the yet future resurrection.

The man who knows Christ will groan because of sin until he receives his new body, but the man who does not know Christ will groan for all eternity in the Lake of Fire because he has no Saviour to take away his sins.
SUFFERING AND GOD’S PLAN
A Study on Romans 8:28
by Dr. Jack L. Arnold

Why do the righteous suffer? Why do Christians suffer? Why does a God of love and power permit His loved ones to go through anguish here on the earth? These are some of the thorniest questions ever asked of Christians.

Any of us who have been in the place of pain and suffering, or who have watched others go through these times of heartache and anguish, have felt the force of these question come home.

In history, if ever there were a person who suffered, it was the Apostle Paul. He was shipwrecked and left afloat on the sea. He was beaten with rods many times. He was hounded and hungry. He was in prison often. He was beset with an incurable physical infirmity. And he struggled with indwelling sin to the point that he cried out, “Oh, wretched man that I am!” He graduated magna cum laude from the school of hard knocks, but he still had a positive outlook towards life.

Paul’s secret to enduring and rejoicing in tribulation was that he felt that all his sufferings were part of the plan of God for him. He lived life with a conscious attitude that everything was happening according to God’s purpose and everything had a divine design behind it.

GOD’S PROVIDENCE IN SUFFERING — Romans 8:28

“And.” The “and” takes the reader back to the previous context. Paul has been talking about the sufferings of a Christian. These sufferings are not just providential sufferings. Rather, they are suffering because of indwelling sin in the Christian, and the Christian’s suffering with Christ as he seeks to reach the world with the good news of the salvation in Christ Jesus. Paul has given two encouragements to those who are struggling with the world, the flesh and the devil, which are: (1) the Christian has the assurance that he will receive a glorified body; and (2) the Christian has the help of the Spirit who is making intercession for him. At this point Paul turns the struggling saint to God’s unchangeable, irresistible and invincible purpose to encourage him in the midst of suffering.
This section of Scripture, which has long been a battlefield between Arminian and Calvinistic theologians, was designed by God to be a great comfort for the saints. This section is not for theologians to wrangle over but for saints to rejoice in!

“We know.” This is common experiential knowledge of a situation. The Christian can actually enter into an understanding through faith whereby he realizes that God has a wonderful plan for his life. Paul did not say “we hope” or “we think,” but “we know.” He had absolute assurance that behind all of his sufferings there was a God who was in control of everything.

“That all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.” The “all things” in context must refer to spiritual sufferings specifically, but may certainly be widened to refer to all providential suffering and adversity that the Christian experiences. All things in heaven and earth, failures and successes, cheers and heartbreaks, sickness and health, calm and storm, life and death, all work for good to God’s elect and for the glory of the elect’s God. All things work for good to God’s people, not for the world. The unsaved world can never have this confidence and assurance because all things are not working for good for the non-Christian world.

The emphasis in this verse is upon the phrase “those who love God.” It is when Christians are loving God that they are conscious in their daily experience that all things are working for good.

Loving God emphasizes the Christian’s faith and obedience so as to have the subjective experience that he is part of the infinite plan of Almighty God.

Gen. Stonewall Jackson had as his lifetime verse Romans 8:28. He lived in the conscious reality that God was providentially working out all things for good in his life. General Jackson, after serving for several years as the commander of the Army of Virginia in the Confederate Army, was wounded in action by his own troops. In this wound he lost his left arm and a few days later lost his life. In his waning days, he was rejoicing in God’s providence. In a conversation with another officer, he said,

“You see me severely wounded, but not depressed; not unhappy. I believe it has been done according to God’s holy will, and I acquiesce entirely in it. You may think it strange; but you never saw me more perfectly contented than I am today; for I am sure that my Heavenly Father designs this affliction for my good. I am perfectly satisfied that, either in this life, or in that which is to come, I shall discover that what is now regarded as a calamity is a blessing. And if it appears a great calamity, as it will surely be a great inconvenience, to be deprived of my arm, it will result in great blessing. I can wait until God,
in His own time, shall make known to me the object He has in thus afflicting me. But why should I not rather rejoice in it as a blessing, and not look on it as a calamity at all? If it were in my power to replace my arm, I would not dare to do it, unless I could know it was the will of my Heavenly Father.”

A few days after losing his arm, General Jackson had a conversation with a Lt. Smith in which Jackson said, “Many would regard them [his wounds] as a great misfortune, but I regard them as one of the blessings of my life.” Lt. Smith, who was also a Christian, replied, “All things work together for the good of them that love God.” “Yes,” said Jackson, “that’s it, that’s it!”

No one can really rest in God’s purposes until he is convinced that God, in his sovereignty, has a plan for his life.

Those that love God are now further characterized or described as those that are called according to God’s sovereign purpose. This is God’s effectual call to salvation.

“But we preach Christ crucified, unto Jews a stumblingbock, and unto Gentiles foolishness; but unto them that are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God” (1 Cor. 1:23-24).

It is according to God’s purpose.

“Who saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before times eternal” (2 Tim. 1:9).

Now we are taken behind man’s subjective experience to God’s objective dealings with his children — not looking at man’s attitude but at God’s action. The reason why all things work together for good is because God has a purpose for every child of God. God called the Christian to salvation, and will one day glorify him. Therefore, he surely must be dealing with the child of God now in his experience. Nothing happens by chance. Everything that happens has a divine design behind it!

“Death and plagues around me fly,
Till He bid, I cannot die;
Not a single shaft can hit,
Till the God of love sees fit.”

Mr. Roland Binoham, who founded the Sudan Interior Mission, went through great suffering when he first went to Africa. His three companions died there. Mr. Bingham came
home for a short while and he was in an accident in Canada. They carried him unconscious to the hospital. When he came to, the nurse was standing by him and he said, “Where am I?” The nurse said to him, “Mr. Bingham, you have been in a terrible accident. He quickly replied, “There are no accidents with God.”

THEOLOGICAL PROBLEM — Does the Christian’s sin work for good?

When a Christian sins, it is always his fault and God always holds him responsible for every act of sin. The wayward Christian always stands in line for God’s discipline when he does sin. Therefore, for the Christian to sin willfully is pure folly and, as far as his present experience is concerned, this sin will never work for good. In his subjective experience, a Christian’s sin cannot work for good but can only bring conviction, heartache and in some cases tragedy.

However, in an objective, providential sense God can bring good out from our waywardness according to his purpose. If we did not have this confidence, then we would lose our minds when we did sin because there would be no assurance that God could ever bring us out from a backslidden condition.

Joseph’s brothers were exceedingly jealous of Joseph. They conspired against him, and after first plotting his death, sold him into the hands of the Midianites, who took him into Egypt. Not long after he was in Egypt he was thrown into prison for something that was not his fault.

Because God was with Joseph, he was delivered from prison, exalted to be governor of Egypt, and put in charge of all the economy of that land. Joseph, through the interpretation of Pharaoh’s dream, said a great famine would come on the land and surrounding nations. Egypt stored her grain and, when the famine came, Egypt prospered. This brought Jacob and his sons to Egypt for food where they were protected by Egypt through the kindness of the governor Joseph. Joseph saw that all these happenings were brought by the hand of God:

“And Joseph said unto his brethren, Come near to me, I pray you. And they came near. And he said, I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt. And now be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life. For these two years hath the famine been in the land: and there are yet five years, in which there shall be neither plowing nor harvest. And God sent me before you to preserve you a remnant in the earth, and to save you alive by a great deliverance. So now it was not you that sent me hither but God: and he hath made me a father to
Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and ruler over all the land of Egypt” (Gen. 45:4-8).

God used the evil of the brothers to bring about good for Joseph through Providence. God actually turned evil for good:

“And Joseph said unto them, Fear not: for am I in the place of God? And as for you, ye meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive” (Gem. 50:19-20).

Joseph recognized this to be so. This is a case where the evil of the brothers worked for the good of innocent Joseph and we can conceive how this might be possible.

We must also see that even the evil these brothers did ultimately saved their lives, preserved the posterity of the whole nation, and brought the full historical plan of God into its course of accomplishment.

These brothers were punished by the famine for their evil deeds, but God graciously brought this act around for good. Someone may say, “Well, then, let’s sin that good may come!” I am not teaching that men should sin, nor that sin will go unpunished, nor that sin will work for good in a Christian’s present experience. I am saying that in God’s providence He can bring good out of evil if he desires to do so. Paul was often accused of teaching “Let us do evil that good may come” (Rom. 3:8). Paul never taught this, but he did teach that God is sovereign so that nothing happens outside his permissive will, and that God can bring good out of evil.

CONCLUSION

If this verse teaches anything, it teaches that while we may not comprehend why we must suffer in this life, we can rest back in the sovereign purpose of God and know that all things are working together for good.

As Stonewall Jackson said, “If we do not understand in this lifetime, we will certainly understand in eternity.” Our confidence is in our almighty, sovereign God who does all things well, and according to his purposes.

With our finite, limited and logical minds, we want everything to fall into a pattern now. But life isn’t like that. Often things happen to us for which we have no explanation, and we trust only in God and his plan for our lives.
We often get confused and puzzled about life, and are like a spectator watching a weaver weave a rug, seeing only the back of the rug and not the pattern. As we look at the back side of the rug we see nothing but a tangle of threads that seem to make no sense at all. But when the rug is finished, we step on the other side and there is a beautiful pattern worked out.

Suffering in life often is a maze or labrinth with apparently no pattern at all. But when we step into God’s other world for us, we will look back and see God’s perfect pattern for our lives. And weaved on God’s rug will be the words, “God loved me and cared for me according to his purpose!”

CHALLENGE TO UNBELIEVERS

For those outside of Christ, there is nothing that will work together for good. There may be times of prosperity in material things now, but ultimately there is only eternal judgment for those who know not the Lord Jesus Christ as personal Saviour.

But if you will believe in Christ as your personal Saviour, it will be true that God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life. You can begin to rest upon the fact that “all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to God’s sovereign purpose.”
From Eternity to Eternity  
A Study on Romans 8:29-30  

by Dr. Jack L. Arnold  

Any good military man knows that an army fights best is when it is on the offensive and has the enemy on the run. Usually an army fighting a defensive war or, worse yet, retreating, has tremendous morale problems because there is nothing to look forward to but defeat. However, when an army hears that the enemy has been penetrated, that they are on the run and that their morale is low, this causes the troops to steel their nerve, make great sacrifices and give one hundred percent effort to completely defeat the enemy. When victory is certain an army fights best.

In Romans 7 and 8 the Apostle Paul has been talking about the Christian’s spiritual suffering as he struggles with sin in his life and as he seeks to take the good news of Christ to the world. Spiritual sufferings are a reality for every child of God through faith in Christ Jesus.

In Romans 8:28-30, Paul wants to assure the Christian that these sufferings are according to the plan of God and have a divine design behind them. In order to encourage the Christian, he turns him to the purpose of God for his life. God’s purpose for the Christian began in eternity past where he was foreknown, elected and predestined, and stretches into the future and eternity where he will be glorified.

God’s plan is perfect and cannot fail, and he has a planned purpose for every child of God. Therefore, in the midst of this spiritual conflict, we can quietly rest back upon God’s sovereign purposes and push on in the Christian life because we know the final outcome of our salvation is settled. Victory is certain; therefore we can fight the battle better in time.

In Romans 8:28, Paul has assured us that “all things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are called according to His purpose.” The ultimate reason that all things work for good is that initially the Christian was called to salvation according to the sovereign purpose of God. God in his eternal plan, based on his sovereign will, purposed to save some as they responded to Jesus Christ as personal Lord and Saviour. The word “purpose” indicates that the entire program of man’s salvation is a planned program.

Now in Romans 8:29-30 Paul is going to elaborate on the purpose of God as it relates to the salvation of individuals.
GOD’S PURPOSE BEGAN IN ETERNITY PAST — Romans 8:29

In order to assure the Christian of victory in the midst of suffering, Paul takes the Christian’s salvation back into the eternal counsels of God, when the Christian, before he ever existed, was foreknown, elected and predestined. Do not let these terms scare you. They are wonderful, biblical words that have great meaning for the Christian. Remember, they are put there for our comfort, not for our discouragement and frustration.

The teachings of election and predestination are deep truths and difficult to understand by human reasoning. We accept these truths because God’s Word teaches them, not because we understand everything about them. You will never be able to reconcile God’s sovereign election with man’s absolute responsibility to believe.

“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord, For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts” (Isa. 55:8-9).

We are victims of time and space and we cannot reason or think like God.

“Every system of theology undertakes to subject the words of God to categories and catalogs of the human intellect. Now, if you undertake to “reconcile” God’s sovereign election with his offer of salvation to all, you must sacrifice one truth or the other. Our poor minds may not “reconcile” them both, but our faith knows them both, and holds both to be true! And Scripture is addressed to faith, not to reason” (Newall, Romans, p. 331).

Martin Luther once said that those folks who have lived long and suffered much are more ready to accept the teachings of election and predestination, for they desire answers to their sufferings and can find these answers only in the sovereign purposes of God.

“For [because] whom he did foreknow.” The word “foreknow” means “know experientially before.” It speaks of a relationship God sustained to some in eternity past. It is a loving relationship which God sustains to certain individuals because of his eternal purpose.

One of the saddest mistakes ever made by students of the Bible concerns the definition of the foreknowledge of God. Men insist on dragging God down out of eternity and making him like his creatures of time, with a past and a future. Thus they define foreknowledge as being no more than knowledge in advance. They define foreknowledge as prescience or foresight, and say that God looked down the corridors of time and saw who
would believe on Christ, and elected them on that basis. This verse refutes this position because it says “whom” not “what” he foreknew. It is a relationship to individuals.

   Furthermore, foreknowledge is preceded by God’s purpose in Romans 8:28. God knows all because he planned all! If God foresaw how everything would happen and then planned it, it makes the whole plan dependent on man. Thus you have a God who is less than a man.

   “God is not a crystal ball gazer in that He looks down the corridors of time to see how men will believe and act and then sets His plan based on their actions. No! God is God, the Creator, the First Cause, the Author of salvation. He does all according to His own will and for His own glory” (Kenneth Wuest, *Word Studies in the Greek New Testament*).

   God’s foreknowledge is related to God’s election of individuals to salvation: “Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father” (1 Pet. 1:2).

   Notice that in Romans 8:31 the word “elect” is used. Election means “to choose one out of the masses.” God in eternity past set his affections on us in love and chose us as objects of his grace to salvation:

   “But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth” (2 Thess. 2:13).

   God loved us before he chose us. This is not impossible, for I loved my wife before I chose her to be my mate.

   The country boy from way back in the hills said that when he was saved, “God did his part and I did my part. God did the saving; I did the sinning. I done run from him as fast as my sinful heart and rebellious legs would take me. He done took after me till he run me down.”

   Why did God elect some to salvation? We don’t know and will never know in this lifetime, but we know he did it according to the counsel of his own will.

   “According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will” (Eph. 1:4-5).
Have you ever asked yourself why you should be saved while others are not? The only answer is God’s grace has made your salvation possible. I remember one time I was walking down the streets of Dallas and meditating on my salvation in Christ. Thousands of people were passing by me on the street and I said, “Why am I saved and not these? Why should I have the wonderful privilege of knowing Christ? I’m no better than these.” Then I leaned on a lamp post and bowed my head and thanked him for choosing me to salvation and making me a recipient of his grace and love. I remember saying to myself as I walked on down the street, “Why me, Lord, why me?”

The big question is not why did God choose some and not others, but why does God choose anyone, for no sinner deserves salvation.

As the godly poet said:

Why was I made to hear His voice,
And enter while there’s room,
When thousands made a wretched choice,
And rather starve than come?

Twas the same love that spread the feast,
That sweetly drew us in;
Else we had still refused to taste,
And perished in our sin.

“He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son.” The word “predestinate” or “predestine” means “put boundaries around,” and it looks to the end or the ultimate purpose of God’s choice. God set the destiny of those who were foreknown and elected for a certain end or goal. That end is that the Christian might be conformed to Jesus Christ. God’s ultimate purpose is that the Christian might share the spiritual image of Christ.

God did not just predestine his people to a place called heaven, but to a likeness and relation — to be conformed to Christ. Heaven is not just where his people shall be but what they shall be!

Why did God choose the Christian to salvation? So that the Christian would be: conformed to Christ (Rom. 8:29); holy (Eph. 1:4); and a fruit bearer (John 15:16).

Conformity to Christ was initiated in eternity past and will become a complete reality in eternity future when the Christian receives his glorified body. But conformity to Christ is also taking place now in the Christian to some degree as the Holy Spirit is changing the Christian from glory to glory and the Christian is walking obediently by faith.
“But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord” (2 Cor. 3:18).

God’s predestinating purpose can be compared to an artist who wants to sculpt from marble the bust of a person. The artist first conceives in his mind the exact image he wishes to make, and he never deviates from that original plan. He then chooses a block of marble and begins to chip away on the slab. At first it doesn’t look like much, but the finished product is exactly what he predestined the image of the person to be. There was a great deal of chipping and smoothing off of the rough edges in order to get the final image. So it is with the Christian. We have been chosen by God and predestined to be conformed to his Son Jesus Christ. God never gives up on this plan and there is a lot of chipping and smoothing out of the rough edges in our lives through suffering, but all this is for the purpose of bringing the final product which is complete and perfect conformity to Christ in eternity.

“That he might be the firstborn among many brethren.” Christ was the first to receive a glorified body, but all who have trusted in Christ will receive glorified bodies also.

GOD’S PURPOSE IN TIME — Romans 8:30a

God’s purpose must be relevant for time as well as eternity if it is going to have meaning for the Christian and comfort in the midst of spiritual suffering.

“Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called.” This is the effectual call of God to salvation of those individuals that are part of his purpose. This call is of such a nature that God works on the heart of the sinner so that the sinner, without any feeling of being compelled against his will, believes on Christ. But behind this decision is the ultimate purpose and calling of God.

“Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began” (2 Tim. 1:9).

“Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Thess. 2:14).

“But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God” (1 Cor. 1:24).
God makes the offer of salvation free and gracious to millions of people, speaking to them of their need of Christ, and more often than not it is spurned by men. This is the general call of Matthew 22:14: “Many are called, but few are chosen.” But God, in grace, gives the effectual call to some and as a result they necessarily believe in Christ as their personal Lord and Saviour.

“And whom he called, them he also justified.” Those who are called by God to salvation believe on Jesus Christ, and Christ’s death is applied to their lives. They receive the forgiveness of sin and Christ’s righteousness, and God declares these individuals righteous in his sight.

GOD’S PURPOSE FOR ETERNITY FUTURE — Romans 8:30b

The struggling saint, hot in the conflict with sin, has been pointed backwards to God’s plan initiated in eternity past, a reality in time and now an absolute guarantee for the future.

“And whom he justified, them he also glorified.” Here is an absolute promise that every person who has been foreknown, elected, predestined, called and justified will be glorified.

No Christian has received his glorified body yet, but it is so certain that Paul speaks about it as already accomplished. In that day, there will be no more struggling with sin, no more tears, no more heartache, no more suffering. We shall be conformed completely and totally to Jesus Christ according to God’s purpose.

All those who were foreknown, elected and predestined, called, and justified were also glorified. Not one was lost. What an argument for the security of the believer. In fact, there is no basis for the security of the believer apart from sovereign election.

CONCLUSION

Saved: Oh, struggling saint, take heart, be encouraged. God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life. He who has initiated your salvation will surely perform it. There is no one in hell or on earth that can shake you from your salvation and there is surely no one in heaven who wants to! Victory is certain, therefore let us push on even harder to defeat the enemy sin.

Unsaved: If you are still without Christ, possibly you are wondering whether you are numbered among God’s elect. Perhaps you are not, but God has commanded all men
everywhere to repent and trust Christ as personal Lord and Saviour. If you will trust Christ, you will come to understand that you are numbered among God’s elect. If you really want to be saved you can be, for only God can place that desire to be saved in a human’s heart. Will you ask God to save you from your sin and make you a child of God by faith in Christ Jesus?

H. A. Ironside said about the gate to heaven, “As one enters it says, ‘Whosoever will,’ but as he passes through and looks back it says, ‘You have not chosen me but I have chosen you.’”
God’s Love for His Own
Romans 8:31-39

by Dr. Jack L. Arnold

Psychology tells us that a person cannot be a well-rounded individual until he is loved by someone. They say that many of the world’s problems stem from the fact that people are starved for love. Every person needs someone else to care for and be concerned for him, for this gives people a sense of belonging, having purpose and being wanted.

But the Bible goes one step further (and it is a giant step) by saying that no individual can be a complete person until he understands and lives in the reality of God’s love and wonderful plan for his life.

The Christian who is suffering spiritually finds great comfort in God’s love for him. The struggling saint, through faith, rests back upon the unchanging love of God in Christ Jesus for him. This is the message that Paul wants to get across to us in the following message from Romans 8:31-39.

THE PLAN

“What shall we then say to these things?” “These things” are those Paul mentioned in Romans 8:29-30. There Paul made five great assertions about the purpose of God in the salvation of the Christian: Christians have been foreknown, predestinated, called, justified, and most certainly will be glorified by God.

God’s plan for the Christian stretches from eternity to eternity, and his plan cannot fail. Thus the struggling saint can rest back upon God’s sovereign purpose and know, with a confident assurance, that all things are going to work for good.

Now, based on God’s purpose, Paul asks five questions without providing the answers:

1. *Verse 31*: If God is for us, who is against us?
2. *Verse 32*: He who did not spare His own Son but gave Him up for us all, will He not also give us all things with him?
3. *Verse 33*: Who shall bring any charge against God’s elect?
4. Verse 34: Who is to condemn?
5. Verse 35: Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?

The apostle hurls these questions out into space, as it were, definitely, triumphantly, challenging any creature in heaven or earth or hell to answer them or to deny the truth that is contained in them. The answer is that nobody and nothing can harm the redeemed people of God.

THE CHRISTIAN HAS GOD ON HIS SIDE

“If [since] God is for us, who can be against us?” Paul asks “who” not “what,” for he is looking at the conflicts and trials from people — the world, the flesh and the devil.

God is for the Christian! God is not for the non-Christian or the unsaved. His wrath burns hot against their sin. But God is for the Christian. The Christian’s whole salvation is from God. What power or person or circumstance on earth or in hell or in heaven can interfere with the salvation process, stop it, or delay it? Nothing can come between the believer and his God because God is omnipotent!

THE CHRISTIAN HAS THE DEATH OF CHRIST APPLIED TO HIM

“He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him freely give us all things?” Paul here argues from the greater to the lesser. If God did so wonderful a thing as to send Jesus to die in our place, it follows unquestionably that he will give us the lesser thing, namely, all the blessings that flow from salvation, particularly continuance in the faith till death and after death.

If God loved us so much that he sent this unspeakable and indescribable gift, his only Son, surely he will also meet all of our lesser spiritual needs.

Moody expressed it in a rather quaint way when he said that if Mr. Tiffany offered him the most valuable diamond he had as a gift, then surely he would not hesitate to ask him for a piece of brown wrapping paper in which to wrap it.

THE CHRISTIAN CANNOT BE CHARGED

“Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth.” Now Paul asks a question centered on a courtroom scene. If God, the judge, has declared each one
of his elect righteous based on the death of Jesus Christ for sin, who can bring one charge against them? If one brings charges against the elect of God, it is a charge against God himself, for God has completely and totally cleared the elect one from the guilt of sin by declaring him righteous. This shows the absolute and ultimate safety of believers in Christ. In this world sometimes our enemies charge or accuse us, sometimes our own conscience accuses us and the devil accuses us. But these accusations fall to the ground; they do not hurt us; they glance off like arrows from a shield. Why? Because we are God’s elect whom he has justified, declaring us righteous in his sight!

THE CHRISTIAN CANNOT BE CONDEMNED

“Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.” Since the elect are justified (declared righteous) they cannot be condemned. No one can bring a word of condemnation against God’s people because they stand perfect in Christ.

The reasons the Christian cannot be condemned are:

1. Christ died for him.
2. Christ was resurrected and the Christian shares this resurrection life.
3. Christ is at the Father’s right hand and in a place of power to protect the saints.
4. Christ is praying for us that we shall not falter as Christians in our walk with him.

THE CHRISTIAN CANNOT BE SEPARATED FROM THE LOVE OF CHRIST

“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?” Paul again speaks of persons in the word “who.” He is primarily looking at all the outward circumstances that wicked men who are enemies of the gospel can bring upon Christians to get them to deny their Lord. But nothing can separate the Christian from the love of Jesus Christ. Nothing in heaven, hell or earth can bring about this separation!

In the word “who” Paul is probably also looking behind the wicked deeds of men to the devil who is the persecutor of the elect. How he would like us to doubt God’s love!

“Shall tribulation?” This means direct external troubles. The world will always persecute the Christian.
“If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you” (John 15:18-19).

“Or distress?” This speakes of internal anguish of the soul because of the external persecutions of the world.

“Or persecution?” This is legal persecution brought by the state against the Christian. Christians in history have suffered terribly at the hands of the state. Only in America has the Christian been free from this kind of persecution because American government separates church and state. This may be rapidly vanishing however.

“Or famine?” This is lack of food.

“Or nakedness?” This means lack of proper clothing.

“Or peril?” This is living in constant danger because of a faithful testimony.

“Or sword?” This refers to martyrdom, the ultimate test of one’s faith in Christ.

Paul mentions all sorts of possible physical and mental forces that might snatch us out of Christ’s protecting hands, and then exclaims that none of these things can separate us from the love of God in Christ.

“As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.” This is a quote from Psalm 44:22 which shows us that suffering, persecution and death are not new for God’s people. The early church and the Reformation eras give evidence of this fact too. Today there are many Christians who are giving their lives for Christ because they have taken their stand for the Lord. A missionary from Mexico told me that approximately six Christians per week give their lives for Christ in that country.

“Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.” We are conquerors in not out of these things. God gives us grace to stand in the time of persecution, whether mental, social or physical.

During my early days as a Christian, I received a great deal of social persecution from my parents, my college friends, and the enemies of the gospel on the college campus. There was such a tendency to yield and, if not yield to the pressure, to compromise the truth. So, I memorized Romans 8:38-39, and would repeat these verses hundreds of times a month, for
I knew that in the midst of these social persecutions that I was more than a conqueror! Looking back today, I know that God sustained me in all these persecutions.

The words “more than conquerors” translate one Greek word which means “hyper-conquerors.” We are super-conquerors because of God’s love in Christ for the Christian. The Christian is unconquerable! It is altogether through Christ who loved us, and not through human energy of any kind, that we are more than conquerors.

“For I am persuaded.” Paul had a fixed, unalterable and unshakable conviction that nothing could move him from the love of Christ. It is only when we become persuaded in our mind that God has a plan for us and loves us that we will begin to experience the reality of this truth.

“That neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth.” Now Paul mentions four spheres of existence, and nothing in these four spheres can separate us from the love of Christ:

1. The sphere of existence: life and death.
2. The sphere of created things: angels, principalities, powers.
3. The sphere of time: things present and things to come.
4. The sphere of space: height and depth.

“Nor any other creature [created thing].” No created being or thing can shake a Christian from his salvation or separate him from the love of God in Christ.

“Shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Romans chapter eight begins by proclaiming that there is “no condemnation to those in Christ Jesus,” and ends with the words there is no “separation from the love of God.” What a salvation! Salvation is a love story. “He loved us,” and “we love him because he first loved us!”

CONCLUSION

If there is anyone reading this who does not know Christ as personal Lord and Saviour, the Bible declares that you are lost in your sins, headed for eternal judgment. It also declares that you will never be a complete person until you know of the love of God in Christ Jesus in a personal way.

God spared not his own Son, but gave him as a sacrifice for sin. Will you receive Christ as Lord and Saviour, and become a recipient of his special love?
Who Chose Whom?
Romans 9:1-13

by Dr. Jack L. Arnold

The ninth chapter of Romans centers around the thorniest subject on which a preacher can preach: election (or, as some call it, predestination). This is a subject that is guaranteed to raise blood pressures whenever it is mentioned, so I want to begin by reminding you that the duty of Christians is to love one another even though we may disagree about matters of interpretation. This subject has brought about a major division in Protestantism between the Arminians (freewillers) and the Calvinists (sovereign election). Romans 9 deals with this subject of election, and in a sense is the test of one’s theology.

It is my personal conviction that a man’s salvation is caused by the grace of God and is grounded in the eternal plan of God. God elected some to salvation, according to the pleasure of his will. This is not a popular teaching in the twentieth century (an age of weak theology), but it has been the teaching of the historic church, and of a great many of its theological giants — Augustine, Luther, Calvin, Zwingli, Jonathan Edwards, Charles Spurgeon, George Mueller, William Carey, David Livingstone, David Brainard, Donald Grey Barnhouse, J.I. Packer and Martin Lloyd Jones to name a few. I feel my convictions stand in line with great men of the faith. I am not ashamed to be numbered among these men!

INTRODUCTION TO ROMANS 9

Romans 9,10 and 11 deal specifically with the nation of Israel. Paul has shown in Romans 1-8 that sinners are saved by grace through faith in the person of Jesus Christ, and this section was directed primarily to Gentiles who had trusted Christ as personal Saviour.

Now the question arises, “What about Israel?” God chose Israel in the Old Testament and made them many wonderful promises. Is God through with Israel? What about the covenants God made with this great nation? A Jewish objection to Romans would be that either God’s promises to Israel are true and Paul’s gospel false, or Paul’s gospel is true and God has abandoned the nation Israel. Thus, if God is not faithful in carrying out his promises to Israel, how can we be sure he will carry out the promise of salvation as set forth by Paul?

This is why Paul writes Romans 9-11, to show that God has a right to deal as he pleases with Israel. His conclusion will be that God in his sovereignty has set Israel aside because of their unbelief, but will again deal with the nation at his second coming. God is not through with Israel, but will fulfill his covenants to them.
THE SORROW OF PAUL — Romans 9:1-3

“I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsman according to the flesh.” The Apostle had such a passion to see his Jewish brethren converted that he wished (though it could not be done) that he were damned so that they would be saved. Paul had great concern for the lost condition of people who were unsaved. Paul was not anti-Semitic — he longed to see the Jews saved! And so should we.

THE PRIVILEGED POSITION OF ISRAEL — Romans 9:4-5

“Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen.” The Jews had all these privileges given to them, and through this great race came the Messiah, Jesus Christ.

The Jews felt that these privileges and this great heritage made them automatically acceptable to God. They thought that their heritage constituted them saved individuals. Poor Israel, they actually thought that because they descended from Abraham, they were his children. But this favor of God on Israel made them bitter, proud, self-deceived, self-righteous and braggarts.

What was Israel’s problem? They did not understand the basis of salvation. The true basis or method of salvation is “by grace through faith.” If by grace, then salvation ultimately must be traced back to the elective purpose of God. Paul teaches about election to break through the Jews’ self-pride. Nothing stirs religious and self-righteous people more than the doctrine of election.

One famous expositor said there were three reasons why he preached on the doctrine of election: pride, presumption and despair. The doctrine of sovereign election cut right through the cultural pride of the Jews and laid them out as nothing before God. Nothing humiliates a person like sovereign election!

GOD’S ELECTIVE PURPOSES ARE NOT RELATED TO PHYSICAL DESCENT — Romans 9:6-9

Some feel that this section of Scripture (9:6-24) is dealing with the nation of Israel only and has nothing to do with individual salvation. There are at least three reasons that this argument falls short of the truth:
1. God’s election of nations presents the same issues and problems as election of individuals, for you cannot have an elect nation without elect individuals in the nation. Also behind these nations, was the choice of God of individuals who were progenitors of these nations.

2. One might say that 9:1-13 is dealing with nations, but after 9:13 there are things that can only apply to individuals, such as the question regarding “us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles” (Rom. 9:24).

3. This is consistent with Paul’s teaching on election in other places.

   “Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect.” God’s Word had not failed, but Israel had failed. God’s promises to Israel are certain. Paul is going to go back behind the rejection of Christ by Israel to the sovereign purpose of God.

   “For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel.” In context, Paul is not talking about Gentiles but about Israel as a race and a nation. He is making a distinction between true, spiritual Israel on the one hand, and natural, physical Israel on the other hand. The difference is in the new birth! Being a son of Abraham by natural birth, a recipient of the privileges of a physical Jew, does not guarantee that one will be a spiritual son of Abraham. A distinction must be made between the spiritual and physical seed of Abraham. One becomes a spiritual seed by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, the Messiah.

   “Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children, but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called.” Paul uses a biblical illustration of Isaac and Ishmael. In Genesis 15 and 17, God made a covenant with Abraham that through him the world would be blessed through the sending of Messiah, which in turn would bring salvation blessings to individuals and kingdom blessings to the world. The covenanted line would be through the line of promise. The promises of the Old Testament are to those who are Jews but also spiritual seed!

   “And God said unto Abraham, Let it not be grievous in thy sight because of the lad, and because of thy bondwoman; in all that Sarah hath said unto thee, hearken unto her voice; for in Isaac shall thy seed be called. And also of the son of the bondwoman will I make a nation, because he is thy seed” (Gen. 21:12-13).

   Ishmael was a physical seed of Abraham, but not a spiritual seed. Abraham had Ishmael through Hagar. Ishmael was outside this covenant of God. Ishmael proves that one can be a physical seed of Abraham and still not be a spiritual seed or saved.

   “That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed.” Not natural descent from Abraham, Jewish heritage, or culture makes one a child of God, but only the children of the promise are counted for spiritual seed. Only promised children who are in the covenant are spiritual seed because of the
new birth. And the new birth is a result of the activity of God. It is quite obvious that God chose Isaac and rejected Ishmael because Isaac was the promised seed according to God’s purpose.

“For this is the word of promise, At this time will I come, and Sarah shall have a son.” God’s covenant could only be through Isaac and not Ishmael. Ishmael was never a promised child, nor was he the heir of God’s covenant with Abraham. As far as we know, Ishmael was lost, even though God blessed him at times.

This section teaches that salvation is not by physical descent, but according to God’s elective purposes.

**GOD’S ELECTIVE PURPOSES ARE NOT BASED UPON HUMAN MERIT — Romans 9:10-13**

Some critics might say that Isaac and Ishmael had different mothers, and this affected spiritual election. After all, Ishmael was an illegitimate child of Hagar, who had no rights as did Isaac. Now, Paul uses another biblical illustration of the twins Esau and Jacob — both were in the line of promise. Esau was the first born and should have received the blessing. But before they were born, God estranged the blessing and gave it to Jacob.

“And not only this; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac.” They were twins, each in line for the promise of the covenant.

“For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil.” Before the children knew right or wrong, God made a choice that Jacob would be in the line of promise and in the covenant, but that Esau would not, even though humanly Esau had a right to the place of blessing. Note that God in his sovereignty changed the destinies of the boys.

“That the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works but of him that calleth.” God made this choice before they were born, before they could do good or evil. Why? That the purpose of God in election might stand! The spiritual seed of Abraham are God’s elect according to his purpose, and no flesh can glory in his presence:

1. Neither Jacob nor Esau deserved anything from God. If one was chosen, it was the pure grace of God. God would have been just to damn both, but in his grace he chose to save one.

2. Someone might say that God saw how Jacob would believe and chose him on that basis, but this verse explicitly says God chose before they were born, and not with respect to anything good or bad in the twins!
3. Someone may say that God saw how they would turn out, and made the choice on that basis. Not so. Jacob was anything but a reputable character for most of his life. In many respects Esau was better than Jacob. Jacob was saved by the pure grace of God alone!

An illustration from Spurgeon:

One weeknight, when I was sitting in the house of God, I was not thinking much about the preacher’s sermon, for I did not believe it. The thought struck me, “How did you come to be a Christian?” I sought the Lord. “But how did you come to seek the Lord?” The truth flashed across my mind in a moment — I should not have sought him unless there had been some previous influence in my mind to make me seek him. I prayed, thought I; but then I asked myself, “How came I to pray?” I was induced to pray by reading the Scriptures. “How came I to read the Scriptures?” I did read them; but what led me to do so? Then, in a moment, I saw that God was at the bottom of it all, and that he was the Author of my faith; and so the whole doctrine of grace opened up to me, and from that doctrine I have not departed to this day, and I desire to make this my constant confession, “I ascribe my change wholly to God.”

John Newton used to tell the story of the little old lady who used to say, “Ah, sir, the Lord must have loved me before I was born, or else he would not have seen anything in me to love afterwards.”

“It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger.” This was spoken before the two boys were born (cf. Gen. 25:23).

“As it is written Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.” This quote is taken from Malachi 1:1-2, and in that context he used it in terms of nations. Apparently, Paul takes this and relates it to God’s plan. This statement was made 1,000 years after God’s choice of Jacob to salvation.

In the plan of God, he chose Jacob to salvation but his love or hate was not manifested until the individuals existed. God’s love followed Jacob’s seed, showing the reality of election, and his hate followed Esau’s seed, showing the reality of rejection. Nowhere in the Bible is it hinted that Esau was saved, and there is some evidence for the fact he was never saved (Heb. 12:15-16).

If you find yourself “bucking” at this truth, you are following right along with Paul’s argument. If you are crying, “God is not fair!” or “This makes us only puppets!” you have understood what Paul is saying and you are ready for the rest of his argument, to be taken up in the next lesson.
A student once said to Dr. Griffith Thomas that he was having trouble with Romans 9, for he could not understand why God hated Esau. After all, this doesn’t seem fair. Dr. Thomas answered that he too was having trouble with this passage, but his problem was different. He did not understand why God loved Jacob, for no man deserves God’s love.

CONCLUSION

All of us believe in the sovereignty of God, but most of us haven’t thought much about it. Why were you born in America instead of Russia? Why were you born white, or yellow or black? Why are some rich and some poor? Why are some born healthy and some crippled? Why are some raised in a Christian home and others not? Why do some come under the hearing of the gospel and others never hear it? And lastly, why are you a Christian and others not? These problems can ultimately be solved only in the sovereignty of God!

Perhaps there is someone reading this that is saying, “It isn’t fair for God to choose some and not others.” Now I will ask you a question, “Is there anyone that wants to be a Christian, who wishes to leave sin and walk with Christ?” If you do, then God is working in you and you shall believe on Christ. But others may say, “I don’t want Christ; I don’t want to leave my sin and follow him.” Why should you grumble then if God has not elected you to salvation? For by your own confession you have admitted you would not like it. If you really want salvation in Christ, God will give it to you!
LET GOD BE GOD!
Romans 9:14-24

by Dr. Jack L. Arnold

Over the years people have come to me and said, “Pastor, I just can’t understand this thing of sovereign election. I have to go back to John 3:16 because at least I can understand it.” I can readily appreciate their confusion. When I first heard about sovereign election I was stunned and frustrated. This teaching was contrary to all that I had conceived God to be. Yet, I know now that there is more to the gospel than John 3:16. I believe in John 3:16 with all my heart, but I believe the gospel is deeper than this. I tell my “freewill” friends, “I believe all that you do and more.”

It is difficult to grasp sovereign election, but it is not beyond our human understanding if we will reason from the Word of God. If we try simply to think through election, we may never see it. We must take the Bible at face value and use all our reasoning powers to grapple with what the Bible says. We must not reject the Bible’s teaching even if it does not say what we think it should say.

The only reason any person believes in sovereign election is because the Bible seems to teach it. Yet, there is no subject which is more contrary to our human nature or which causes so much rebellion as does election. As Charles Spurgeon said,

“There seems to be an inveterate prejudice in the human mind against this doctrine, and although most other doctrines will be received by professing Christians, some with caution, others with pleasure, yet this one seems to be most frequently disregarded and discarded.”

There is a mystery between divine sovereignty and human responsibility (“free will” as some call it). To deny God’s sovereignty is to deny God. To deny human responsibility is to embrace fatalism. These are two parallel truths, irreconcilable to the human mind, but both taught in Scripture.

SUMMARY OF ROMANS 9:6-13

The Jews thought that they had a right to salvation because of their physical relationship to Abraham and because of the many privileges they had been given as Jews, such as the Mosaic Law and the covenants. They felt that being Jewish automatically saved them. They had forgotten that salvation had always been by grace through faith. So, Paul set out to show that not all those who belong to national are spiritual Israel. The promises of the Abrahamic covenant are only for those who are spiritual Israel or the spiritual seed of Abraham. Physical descent is not enough.
We have seen in an earlier lesson that there was no salvation outside the Abrahamic covenant. Sometimes this is referred to in theological circles as the covenant of grace. Only the Jew who had been saved by grace through faith was part of this covenant. If salvation is by grace, then it must be traced back to God as the original cause, for no person deserves salvation.

Paul showed how God chose Isaac and rejected Ishmael because Isaac was God’s son of promise. Then he used the illustration of Esau and Jacob, who were twins, to show how God chose Jacob and rejected Esau according to his own sovereign will. God chose one and passed by the other before they had done good or evil in order that “the purpose of election might stand.” And then he concluded with the quote, “Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.”

**GOD’S ELECTIVE PURPOSES ARE RELATED TO HIS MERCY — Romans 9:14-18**

“What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God?” In the Greek, this question expects a negative answer and could be translated, “Is there unrighteousness with God? Of course not!”

Paul anticipated that we would have questions and problems with sovereign election. The first objection that all men raise when they hear that God chooses some and passes by others is that God is unfair or unrighteous. Men cry out, “That is not fair! Everyone should have an equal chance to be saved.” If God is left to make the choice, man immediately concludes that there is injustice. Men forget that no man deserves salvation, for all are sinners!

We know that Paul was teaching sovereign election, or this question would not have been raised. If election were on the basis of merit, foreknowledge (foresight) or faith, this question would not have been asked.

“God forbid.” It is unthinkable that God should be unrighteous. He is holy, just and good. God always does what is right:

Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right” (Gen. 18:25)?

I the Lord speak righteousness, I declare things that are right” (Isa. 45:19).

God can do nothing wrong, and the fact that election seems wrong to us as humans does not mean that it is wrong for God. Our best sense of justice is corrupted by a sinful mind.

Men actually feel that God thinks like a man, but his thoughts are not our thoughts (Isa. 55:8). How proud men would like to drag God to the bar of human justice, but he will have none of this. He is God and has the right to do as he pleases with his creatures, and whatever he does is right! Until a man sees himself as a creature and God as the Creator, he will never understand God or sovereign election!
“For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.” Paul quoted Exodus 33:19 to show that Moses was an object of God’s mercy because of election. If salvation could be attained by merit, descent or office, Moses would have qualified — but even Moses was an object of God’s mercy, which flows from God’s sovereign will. God has the right to show mercy on whom he pleases and does not have to consult his creatures before doing so.

“So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.” This is probably the most humbling verse in all of the Bible. It states that salvation rests neither on man’s will nor on man’s human efforts, but on God’s mercy.

The real mystery is not why God chooses some and passes by others, but why God chooses anyone — for no one deserves salvation from God. If we are saved, it is by pure grace and mercy. If God did not show his mercy, no one would ever be saved, for the only thing men deserve from God is hell.

The fact that a man wills to believe or that he tries to please God is simply an indication that God is at work in him. There comes to my mind the story of a man who was giving a testimony at a meeting. He told how God had sought him and finally found him. When he sat down, the leader of the meeting, a man with rather a legal turn of mind, said, “Now, brother, you have told us about God’s part in the way you became a Christian, but you never mentioned anything about your part. When I became a Christian, I had to read the Bible, and I had to seek, and I had to pray, and I had to do all these other things, and you have not mentioned anything about them.” The first man quickly rose to his feet and said, “Yes, you are right. I didn’t mention anything about my part. Well, my part, sir, was running away from God for thirty years, and his part was running after me until he found me.”

“For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth.” Paul quoted Exodus 9:16 to show that Pharaoh was an object of God’s wrath because of rejection. God sovereignly raised up Pharaoh for the hardening of Pharaoh.

“Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth.” It is impossible to escape Paul’s argument that God hardened Pharaoh’s heart. Moses says over ten times that Pharaoh hardened his heart, but long before this God had explained that he himself would harden Pharaoh’s heart:

“And the Lord said unto Moses, When thou goest to return into Egypt, see that thou do all those wonders before Pharaoh, which I have put in thine hand: but I will harden his heart, that he shall not let the people go” (Exod. 4:21).

Paul knew the Old Testament Scriptures, but he purposely picked out this Scripture to show that God hardened Pharaoh’s heart.
Men are not lost because they are hardened by God; they are hardened because they are lost. They are lost because they are sinners, and they are sinners because of rejection. Nevertheless, Pharaoh was hardened so that he could not believe.

Moses is an object of God’s election and mercy; Pharaoh is an object of God’s rejection and wrath. God is not directly responsible for man’s rejection of Christ, but God is directly responsible for choosing some for salvation. He leaves the rejectors to suffer their just desert of rejection. Why God chooses some and not others is an inscrutable mystery. Moses and Pharaoh both belonged to the same guilty lump of humanity, neither deserved salvation, and God would have been just to condemn both, but in his mercy God chose to save Moses.

GOD’S ELECTIVE PURPOSES ARE RELATED TO HIS POWER — Romans 9:19-24

“Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will [decree]?” Paul again anticipated the question we now want to ask if we have followed his argument. Why does God still find fault with Pharaoh if he cannot resist God’s will? Why does God hold Pharaoh responsible if Pharaoh is simply doing what God wills him to do? Doesn’t this make man a puppet or robot? When we ask these questions it shows that we really do not understand who God is, and that we have too low a concept of our Creator. It also shows that we have correctly understood Paul to have said something contrary to our human understanding of fairness and justice.

“Nay but, O Man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?” Paul is repelled by this objection. He does not even bother to answer. The one who asks this question really doesn’t understand who God is. In fact, he does not understand the first verse of the Bible: “In the beginning God...” (Gen. 1:1).

Does the creature have a right to tell the Creator what he should do with his own creatures? Man wants to question God’s right to be God. God is free to do as he wills; he is sovereign. Sovereignty means he has the right to do as he wills without giving an answer or reason to anybody. If God has to give a reason to his creatures for his actions, he is no longer sovereign. Yet, man wants to be equal with God, or even to make God less than a man!

“Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?” Paul uses an illustration from life and from Scripture (Jer. 18:1-10) — the potter and the clay. His point is that within the limits of man’s finiteness, man exercises the same kind of sovereignty that he tries to deny to God. The potter has the right to take one lump of clay, divide it in half, make one beautiful vessel to display in the living room, and with the other half to make a slop jar for the kitchen. The potter does what he wants with the clay, and does not consult the clay before doing so — and he is not unjust for doing so. Are we willing to give God as much freedom as a human potter?
Someone may say, “But this is clay, not human beings!” All right, let’s look at this in the realm of plants and animals. Does not the gardener have the right to tend one bush and pull up another? Does anyone challenge his right? Does not the rancher have the right to send one cow to the slaughter house and to keep another for two or three years? Does he have to consult the cow before doing so? This is sovereignty. A housewife has the right to shoo flies out the door or swat them with a flyswatter. We exercise sovereignty all the time, and we are only creatures — but man in his pride and arrogance refuses to grant this same sovereignty to the only being who has the right to exercise it whenever he chooses. He fails to let God be God!

“What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted for destruction.” God is longsuffering towards those vessels which are fitted for destruction. “Fitted” may mean “prepared” or “equipped.”

This may indicate that men fitted themselves for destruction or that Satan fitted them. But it may also mean that God fitted them. Paul does not say directly that God fitted them, but the context would seem to indicate this. The word “fitted” does not seem to indicate foreordination. Paul seems to go out of his way here to avoid the concept of double predestination. The Bible never explicitly states that God has elected people to be damned. Some are fitted by God for destruction in that he allows them to go on in rejection and sin. But the Bible does state that he has elected men to be saved, and this necessitates a passing by of others.

This verse suggests that in order for some men to be saved, there must be some who are lost. I do not understand this — I do not think anyone does — but I leave this with the sovereign choice of God who is willing to put up with all that man throws at him, century after century, in patient endurance, in order that he might bring to fulfillment the desire of his heart in the salvation of some.

The passive participle “fitted” may be taken as a verbal adjective, indicating merely that the vessels of wrath are fit destruction, without indicating how they became so fit. But God actively “prepared” the vessels of mercy for glory. Some have noted that this change suggests that Paul intended to intimate that God’s action or agency in the case of those prepared for glory is very different from his action or agency in the case of those fit for destruction. God does not create men in order to destroy them. He takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but takes great pleasure in saving sinners. We must stay close to what the Bible teaches and not carry doctrines further than the Word does.

“And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory.” This verse teaches that God has chosen vessels, prepared in eternity past to be vehicles of his glory.

“All we, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?” Those who are called to salvation by God are those who were elected to salvation and who are being prepared for glory.
CONCLUSION

We all agree that sovereign election is difficult to understand. No objective student of Scripture can deny that it is a biblical concept.

A black preacher, noted for both his piety and biblical knowledge, was approached by a lady who had recently been converted. She said, “Pastor, I am confused about this business of election. Can you help me?”

The pastor answered, “Well, Lizah, are you sure you are saved?”

“Yes, Pastor, I am, and glad of it too.”

“Well, did you save yourself, or did the Lord save you?”

“Oh, Pastor, you know it was the Lord.”

“Well, now did the Lord do it all by himself, or did you help him?”

“Oh my, we both know it was all his work from beginning to end.”

“And now Lizah, if you are saved, and the Lord did it all by himself, let me ask you one more question. Did he do it on purpose, or was it an accident?”

Salvation was no accident; it was purpose by a holy, just and loving God.

I have heard some non-Christian people mocking Christianity by saying, “Well, if I’m among the elect I will believe!” My answer to them is that God has commanded all men everywhere to repent or face a judgment. In eternity, no man will accuse God of being unjust for not being among the elect. The sinner in eternity will be very conscious of his own rejection of Christ.

Just as firmly as the Bible teaches election, it also teaches man’s absolute need of receiving Christ as Lord and Saviour. If you will trust Christ as your Lord and Saviour, you will then come to realize your election of God!
Someone has said that half the world’s problems are a result of semantics, and nowhere is this more true than in the area of biblical and theological problems. Christians often get “hung up” on technical terminology, and never really evaluate the terminology in light of their own experience. We hear certain terms and react to them emotionally rather than objectively, and we never really hear what is being said. I am thoroughly convinced that this is true in the areas of sovereign election and human responsibility, or “free will” as it is sometimes called.

Accordingly, it is my conviction that most Christians have better practice than theology, for I believe all Christians practice the sovereignty of God whether they realize it or not. For instance, I have never met a Christian who believed in freewill theology who also felt that he saved himself. Rather, they have all thanked God for the salvation bestowed on them. A Christian could never rightly thank God for salvation if he thought himself to be the cause of it. While the freewill thinker may not hold theologically to the sovereignty of God in salvation, he practices it daily. When he has to spell out logically and theologically what he practices, however, he often rejects it because it does not make sense to him or because it offends his sensibilities.

I am reminded of the conversation between Charles Simeon, a strong sovereign-election man, and John Wesley, an equally strong freewiller:

“Sir,” said Simeon to Wesley, “I understand that you are called an Arminian [freewill]; and I have been sometimes called a Calvinist [sovereign election]; and therefore I suppose we are to draw daggers. But before I consent to begin the combat, with your permission I will ask you a few questions . . . Pray, sir, do you feel yourself a depraved creature, so depraved that you would never have thought of turning to God, if God had not first put it into your heart?”

“Yes,” said the veteran Wesley, “I do indeed.”

“And do you utterly despair of recommending yourself to God by anything you can do; and look for salvation solely through the blood and righteousness of Christ?”

“Yes, solely through Christ.”

“But Sir, supposing you were at first saved by Christ, are you not somehow or other to save yourself afterwards by your own works?”
“No, I must be saved by Christ from first to last.”

“Allowing, then, that you were first turned by the grace of God, are you not in some way or other to keep yourself by your own power?”

“No.”

“What, then, are you to be upheld every hour and every moment by God, as much as an infant in its mother’s arms?”

“Yes, altogether.”

“And is all your hope in the grace and mercy of God to preserve you unto his heavenly kingdom?”

“Yes, I have no hope but in him.”

“Then, Sir, with your leave, I will put up my dagger again; for this is all my Calvinism; this is my election, my justification by faith, my final perseverance: it is in substance all that I hold, and as I hold it; and therefore, if you please, instead of searching out terms and phrases to be a ground of contention between us, we will cordially unite in those things wherein we agree.

SUMMARY OF ROMANS 9:6-24

In Romans 9, Paul shows that God will be faithful to the nation of Israel and fulfill all the covenants to her as stated in the Old Testament. But anyone who reads his Bible knows that God is now dealing with the Gentiles as well as with the Jews, and that both groups are included in the Church of Jesus Christ. Has God abandoned Israel? No! In his sovereignty, God is now dealing with Israel primarily in the context of the church, but one day in the future God will deal with the nation of Israel again according to his covenant with them.

Paul goes back into Jewish history to show how God has dealt sovereignly in the lives of individuals, proving that he has a right to set aside Israel as a nation if he pleases to do so. Paul also shows how God sovereignly chose Israel over Ishmael to be in his covenant of salvation. Then he shows how God sovereignly chose Jacob over Esau (twins) before they had done any good or evil, that the purpose of election might stand (9:11). He then uses the illustration of Pharaoh and Moses to show how Moses was an object of God’s mercy and grace, and how Pharaoh was an object of God’s wrath, “for God will have mercy on whom he will have mercy and whom he will he hardeneth.” God has a right to make one vessel unto honor and another unto dishonor, and the moment we say that he does not have this right, we are saying that God is not sovereign, that he must give an account to his creatures for what he does.
While the Bible teaches that God sovereignly intervenes to save some men, it does not teach that he sovereignly intervenes to damn others. Men are lost because they are sinners, but they are saved because of God’s mercy and grace. Had not God chosen to save some, all men would have been lost, for no man deserves salvation.

Let us suppose a wealthy Texas oilman decides he wants to adopt a child and to make him the heir of all that he possesses. Does he not have the right to do this? Now suppose he desires to adopt a son from Viet Nam, does he not have the right to choose one orphan and to leave thousands of others unadopted? Would anyone say that this man was unjust or unfair? No, we would praise him for his generosity and kindness in choosing even one. Does not God have the same right to choose some to salvation who absolutely deserve nothing from him? he most certainly does, and we praise him for choosing anyone!

Paul’s point is that if God has sovereignly dealt with Israel in its past history, then he can sovereignly set the nation of Israel aside to bring salvation to the Gentiles and to the faithful remnant within national Israel. God has a right to do this no matter how the nation of Israel might protest.

GOD’S SOVEREIGNTY IN HIS DEALINGS WITH ISRAEL — Romans 9:25-29

Paul points out that God is now calling both Jews and Gentiles to salvation, not Jews only (9:24). What a blow to Jewish pride, for they looked upon Gentiles as dogs and vessels of dishonor. God is saving both Jews and Gentiles not on the basis of their works, but purely on the basis of his grace through the means of faith. If either a Jew or Gentile has salvation, it is the grace of God that has caused it!

“As he saith also in Osee, I will call them my people, which were not my people; and her beloved, which was not beloved. And it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people; there shall they be called the children of God.” Paul quotes from Hosea 2:23 and 1:10 to show how the Gentiles, who were excluded from God’s covenant of salvation in the Old Testament, have now become special objects of salvation, and that those who are saved by grace through faith become part of the people of God. Whenever a Gentile turns to Jesus Christ, he is saved.

These verses tell us that there are many vessels of mercy or honor among the Gentiles. In the age in which we live, the vast majority of Christians are converted Gentiles, not Jews.

“Esaias also crieth concerning Israel, Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved: For he will finish the work and cut it short in righteousness: because a short work will the Lord make upon the earth.” Paul also quotes from Isaiah 10:22-23 to show that only the small elect remnant within national Israel has ever been saved. The remnant has been saved by grace through faith. Sadly, God has judged Israel as a
nation because of their rejection of their Messiah, and because of this rejection, the vast majority of Jews are vessels of wrath fit for destruction.

“And as Esaia said before, Except the Lord of Sabaoth had left us a seed, we had been as Sodoma, and been made like unto Gomorrha.” Now Paul quotes from Isaiah 1:9 to show that all Israel deserved to be damned, but God in his grace and mercy has saved a few, and this elect remnant is in the church today. There must be an elect remnant today if God is to be faithful to his promises to Israel in the Old Testament.

Practical Problems Related to Election: It is never right to teach on the sovereignty of God without relating it to some of the practical situations we face in life. Each of us has questions as to how God’s sovereignty works in our experience. Again I would like to emphasize that all Christians practice the sovereignty of God whether or not they hold to it theologically.

Does sovereign election take away man’s responsibility to believe? Absolutely not! The Bible teaches both God’s sovereignty and man’s responsibility. These are two irreconcilable truths to the human mind, but they are no problem to God. There is a mystery between the two. If we fail to acknowledge man’s responsibility, we have fatalism. If we fail to acknowledge God’s sovereignty, we have, for all practical purposes, atheism.

The paradox of man’s responsibility and God’s sovereignty has been compared to two nearly parallel lines which never converge in time, but which, if stretched far enough on into eternity, eventually meet. The lines of sovereignty and human responsibility do meet in eternity, and their converging point is God alone.

The Bible teaches both man’s responsibility and God’s sovereignty and we should accept both:

“And truly the Son of man goeth, as it was determined: but woe unto that man by whom he is betrayed” (Luke 22:22).

“Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain” (Acts 2:23).

“All that the Father giveth me shall come to me: and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out” (John 6:37).

“All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him. Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matt.11:27, 28).
“Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure” (Phil. 2:12:13).

In eternity future all who are saved will be praising God for choosing them and for giving them saving grace, while the unsaved will have no one to blame but themselves for their own rejection of Christ. Further, in eternity only the saved man will have a right to complain, for he was saved when he willed not to be saved. At a time when he hated God, he was saved by God’s sovereign intervention in his life which altered his will. But the unsaved man has no right to complain about his eternal judgment because he is there by his own free will and choice. Henry Ward Beecher said, “The elect are the whosoever will and the non-elect are the whosoever won’t.”

**Does not sovereign election make prayer ineffectual if all things have been planned out?** Absolutely not. God, who has a plan, has included in his plan prayer as a means to bring about the ultimate end of the plan. Men ought always to pray, for without prayer no man will be saved. God has ordained prayer as a means of bringing about the salvation of a soul.

All Christians practice God’s sovereignty whether they realize it or not. On our knees we are all sovereignty folks. If we really believed in man’s total free will, then we would stop praying for the salvation of others, or for God to change circumstances in life which depend to some degree on the actions of others. If we really believed in man’s total free will, we would know that God could and/or would do nothing to save a person before that person believed by the power of his own free will. We would stop praying for people to make this decision. God’s hands would be tied, and the creature would be more powerful the Creator.

Have you ever asked God to save a person? Of course you have. You pray this because you believe that God is able to overrule in the lives of men and save them, for if he did not, none would be saved.

**Does sovereign election kill one’s zeal for the evangelization of the lost?** Absolutely not. Sovereign election, when properly understood, will make a Christian more faithful and diligent in his witness. He will come to understand that he is simply a witness to the unsaved, and that it is God’s job to do the saving. He will put more emphasis on faithfulness than on fruit. Soul winning fruit belongs to God, not man.

A man once came to Charles Spurgeon and said, “If I believed like you, Mr. Spurgeon, that God saved some and passed by others, I would give up preaching.” To this Spurgeon replied, “God has called me to preach his word and if I knew that all the elect had a yellow stripe painted down their backs, then I would give up preaching the gospel and go lift up shirt tails!”

Election assures the Christian that some will come to the Saviour. Without a concept of God’s sovereignty in election, there would be no assurance that anyone would ever come to Christ, and discouragement would be rampant.
When I witness to men, I am conscious of the fact that I am but an instrument in God’s hands, but I know that if I will faithfully proclaim the gospel that some will come to Christ. It is my job to be faithful; it is God’s job to save!

Once I was teaching a group of Campus Crusaders on the sovereignty of God in election, and one young lady came to me and said, “I could never accept that God does a complete work of salvation because he has elected some to salvation. It just isn’t fair!” Yet this young lady admitted to me that she was defeated and discouraged in her witness for Christ. About a month later she came to me and said, “Mr. Arnold, guess what?” And I couldn’t guess. She said, “I have discovered that God has given the Holy Spirit and he has come to do the work of reaching men for Christ through me.” How thrilled she was that she learned that the Holy Spirit had to do the work of winning men. This had given her boldness in her witness and taught her to rest in God’s faithfulness to save. She still didn’t believe in election, but she was practicing the sovereignty of God because she recognized and relied upon the fact that the Spirit had to convert the lost. I never asked her why the Spirit moved on some and not on others because it only would have disturbed her. Yet, the reason ultimately is traced back to the sovereign purposes of God. Her practice was better than her theology.

Sovereign election will make one bold in his Christian witness, for he will realize that it is part of God’s plan to use Christians to bring about the accomplishment of the rest of the plan, and that no human being can stop him because he is a person of destiny:

“And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed. And the word of the Lord was published throughout all the region” (Acts 13:48-49).

“Therefore I endure all things for the elect’s sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory” (2 Tim. 2:10).

Does sovereign election destroy hope for the salvation of loved ones? Absolutely not. How do we know any loved one will turn to Christ, either by free will or by sovereignty? We do not give up hope until they take their last gasp of air! We have no assurance either way. But those who believe in God’s sovereignty know that God can save if he wills to do so.

When I first learned that my mother had incurable cancer and would probably die within a year, I was saddened because my mother was not saved. I remember that after I received the long distance phone call from California that I ran into my bedroom, tears streaming down my face, and threw myself prostrate over my bed and cried out to God, “Father. I know you don’t have to save anyone and you are not obligated in any way to save my mother, but oh Father, I know that you are able to save Mom and I plead with you to do so.” It was a shock to me when I received a phone call from my mother a few days later when she told me that she and Dad had professed Christ as their personal Saviour. He would have been just to condemn my mother, but in his grace God saw fit to save her, and I’m grateful!
If a loved one does die without Christ, where do men find their comfort? They find it not in the fact that the loved one is a rejector, for did not we pray for the salvation of that soul? Could not God answer our prayers? Had he no power? We would conclude that God either cared for the loved one but did not have the power to save him, or that God had the power to save but did not care. Yet, there is a third possibility, and this is where all Christians ultimately flee in a time of bereavement in the loss of a loved one. We know that God cared and has the power, but for reasons unknown to us it was not his will. We find comfort in the fact that God knows and understands the situation, and someday in eternity we will understand, for all things ultimately will bring glory to God.

ISRAEL’S RESPONSIBILITY IN REJECTION OF SALVATION — Romans 9:30-33

“What shall we say then? That the Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith. But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness.” Israel felt that because of its great heritage from Abraham and the possession of the Mosaic Law, they had righteousness. They were trying to work their way to God. Consequently, they failed to see God’s righteousness, which is only in Christ. The Gentiles, however, who had no great heritage, simply trusted in Christ and received a righteousness that made them acceptable to God.

“Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumblingstone: As it is written, Behold, I lay in Sion a stumblingstone and rock of offence: and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.” The Jews who wanted to work for their salvation became confused and stumbled over the salvation that is by grace through faith in the person of Christ.

Here Paul tells us that Israel’s rejection is its own fault, not God’s. Paul has been talking about God’s sovereignty, but now talks about man’s responsibility — both are true!

How many folks there are today who get hung up on a works salvation, never understanding that salvation is by grace through faith in Christ. The harder a person works for salvation, the further he is removed from real salvation in Christ.

CONCLUSION

We have once again established the principle of God’s sovereign choice in salvation. God declares that men are saved entirely by God himself, and that the only thing a man can do in order to be saved is believe that he cannot be saved by himself, and therefore turn to accept Christ who alone can save him.
Have you ever completely entrusted yourself to Christ for salvation, not trusting anything within yourself, not even your faith? If you have not, then you are like the Jews — you are hung up on a works system that cannot bring salvation. You do not understand that the forgiveness of sins and eternal life comes only by God’s grace and is appropriated through one’s faith in Jesus Christ.
ROMANS
Man’s Responsibility? Faith!
Romans 10:1-11

by Dr. Jack L. Arnold

Perhaps you are saying, “I’m glad we are finished with Romans 9. All that teaching on
sovereign election is tough to understand. Besides, I don’t know if I’m ready to believe it.” If you
have responded this way, I can understand your feelings because I was once there myself. Even
today, I must confess that God’s sovereign purposes are hard for me to understand. I believe in
sovereign election, but I do not understand it all. I accept the Word of God by faith.

This lesson deals with Romans 10, which is one of the strongest chapters in all the Bible
on man’s responsibility to believe in Jesus Christ. If you are confused on this point, you are in
trouble, for it is very easy to understand that our salvation in Christ directly depends upon our
faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. We may not all agree on sovereign election, but we can
agree that faith in Christ is absolutely necessary if one is to be saved.

REVIEW OF ROMANS 9

The vast majority of the nation of Israel never came to understand that salvation is by
grace through faith in Jesus Christ. They were trusting their heritage, lineage to Abraham, and
good works based on the Mosaic Law for their salvation. Christ had become a stumbling stone to
them because they did not see the simplicity of the salvation process.

The basic theme of Romans 9 is the sovereignty of God and his electing grace. We saw
how God set aside the nation of Israel to bring the gospel to the Gentiles, and that only a small
number of Jews today are among the elect remnant of God. By application, we understand from
this chapter that not one of us would ever have become a Christian by himself; not one of us
would have remotely dreamed of seeking God if it were not for the electing grace of God which
sought after us first. The call of God awoke us out of the sleep of death, brought us to our
awareness of our need, created a hunger in our heart, and set us to looking for God.

By contrast, when we come to chapter ten we have the matter of the responsibility and the
moral freedom of man set forth. Arguments have gone on for centuries over this question, with a
great deal of heat but very little light on the subject. Here, in the ninth and tenth chapters of
Romans, Paul puts these two truths side by side.

I do not think we will ever begin to understand the workings of God in our world today
until we acknowledge both God’s sovereignty and man’s responsibility. God must call us before
we can possibly move toward him. Yet, if we do not respond in a responsible decision, we are to blame for not knowing him and for continuing in our lost condition.

Lest I be misunderstood, I believe that a man is a free, responsible, moral agent under the sovereignty of God, and that man must make a decision for Christ or he will never be saved. However, if he makes this decision, it is God’s grace that enables him to do so. God’s sovereign grace and man’s free will may appear to be two irreconcilable truths to the human mind, but they are not so in God’s mind.

If I were to ask you today, “Who is the greatest evangelist of our generation?” almost everyone would answer, “Billy Graham.” Well, I would like to demonstrate that what I have been teaching in these messages on God’s sovereignty in salvation is exactly what Billy Graham believes. Years ago, I clipped this out of the *Dallas Morning News* in Billy Graham’s question and answer section:

**Question:** When I read the Bible, I find it difficult to reconcile the doctrine of “election” and “free will.” Can you explain this please?

**Answer:** You have to make up your mind that there are some things in the Bible you cannot “reconcile,” or “explain.” Just because the Bible is concerned with the deep truths of God, we, with our limited, finite, understanding cannot fully penetrate them. All that we can do is humbly to accept what the Bible says and not try to be wise beyond what is revealed.

This is also true, for example, with regard to the mystery of God’s being. It is quite impossible fully to explain the fact that God is both one and three — yet that is what the Bible says. All we can do is humbly to acknowledge the glory of God both in eternal Trinity and Unity.

So it is with free will and election. Both are truths revealed in the Bible, and we must accept them both. There can be no doubt that the gift of eternal life is offered in Christ to whomever believes in him (John 3:16), and so the Gospel must be preached to all.

But it is equally clear from the Bible that those who accept God’s gift of salvation are numbered among his elect people. Of them the Lord says, “Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you” (John 15:16). The comfort of it all is this: in the end our salvation does not depend upon our works, but upon God’s everlasting love and mercy in Christ at the Cross.

If you are confused about God’s sovereignty and man’s responsibility, you are not alone. But confusion is the first step in learning. Just use the pigeonhole technique — what you do not
understand, put in a pigeonhole, and keep studying and praying over the matter. In time God will
give you light.1 For now, practice the things you do understand.

Abraham Lincoln said, “It is not the things I don’t understand in the Bible that bother me,
but the things I do understand and fail to apply to my life.”

MAN’S RESPONSIBILITY TO PRAY — Romans 10:1

“Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved.” The passion of the apostle’s heart was that his Jewish brethren would turn to Jesus Christ. His concept of the sovereignty of God in salvation made Paul a man of intense prayer because he realized that if Israel were to be saved, God had to do it. A proper understanding of God’s sovereignty makes us more dependent upon him for results.

Paul prayed for the Jewish nation to be saved because he knew it was possible. Yet, he never saw the answer to this prayer in his lifetime.

George Mueller prayed all his life for the salvation of two loved ones, but never saw the answers to these prayers. The day Mueller died these two loved ones were still rejectors. It was at Mueller’s funeral that these two received Christ as personal Lord and Saviour. God’s ways are not our ways!

MAN’S RESPONSIBILITY TO KNOW — Romans 10:2-8

“For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge.” Israel was and is the most religious nation that ever existed. They have never been exceeded in religious zeal. Yet this nation was then and is now very far from God. It was not that the Jews did not know about Christ, for the whole Old Testament spoke of him, but rather that they lacked spiritual discernment. They were trying to work their way to heaven. They felt that by doing good works they would automatically be saved. They could not grasp that salvation is by grace through faith in Jesus Christ.

Many people today belong to a church, have been baptized, confirmed, attend regularly, give of their monies, and do so to gain God’s favor. Yet, they know nothing of a real and dynamic relationship with Jesus Christ. Many professing Christians are hung up on a works salvation and know nothing of the simplicity of real Christianity. They have zeal without knowledge of the grace way of salvation.

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1 For reading on this difficult subject, I suggest *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God* (InterVarsity Press, 1961) by J. I. Packer.
“For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth. For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, That the man which doeth those things shall live by them.” Because they were trying to work their way to God, these Jews were ignorant of God’s righteousness. They failed to see that the only righteousness that God accepts is the righteousness of Jesus Christ which can only be realized by grace through faith.

The Jews had religion but not regeneration. They knew nothing of a heart relationship to God through Christ. This is the weakness of religion — man puts up a religious façade, a false front where there is no reality.

There are many professing Christians today who are ignorant of Christ’s righteousness. They have a superficial religion and seem to be content with making the outside appear right, even though inside things are completely wrong.

Roger Hull, president of the Mutual of New York Insurance Company, said to a large crowd of businessmen, “I am convinced the greatest problem that America faces today is that of the casual Christian.”

A popular solution to the casual or professing Christian set forth by many today is getting more involved in church work. Activity is tried as a remedy to turn a casual Christian into a concerned Christian. The idea is a full program — they are on this or that committee; they belong to one group or another; they are continually busy in a constant round of religious activity. But activity does not solve the problem. The answer is not a program but a person! The answer for making Christians Christian is Jesus Christ. It is not activity but receptivity, not effort but faith!

“But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above:) Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach.” Paul’s point is that Christ cannot die and be resurrected again. He has already done that and provided a perfect and complete salvation for all those who will trust in him.

Paul had preached to the Jews that salvation was through faith in Christ alone. They knew it, but were blinded by a works system. In America today men hear daily that salvation is by grace through faith in Christ and are urged to trust him, but they refuse. Why? They are blinded, just like the Jews, because they are trusting in their good works rather than Christ for salvation.
That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” This verse does not state two conditions for salvation: confession and faith. The thought seems to be that if we believe on Christ, the potential result will be our confession of him before men. To be a Christian one must see Christ as Lord (God) and Jesus (deliverer). He must accept the bodily resurrection of Christ from the dead. He must believe these things and confess them before men. This means speaking out to others our faith in Christ, not coming down an isle to stand before a group.

Faith is a matter of the heart as well as of the mind. It is possible to know all about Christ and not to know him personally. True salvation is a love relationship between the sinner and Christ.

This verse tells us that there are no secret believers in Christ. True Christians confess their faith in Jesus Christ to the world by their words. All may not do it the same way because we all have different backgrounds and personalities, but every true child of God desires to tell others of God’s love in Christ Jesus.

Confession without belief is self-deception or hypocrisy, while trust without confession is cowardice.

“Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God” (John 12:42-43).

While I was a pastor in California, I dealt with a young man of 36 about his personal need of Christ, but he loved the world and sin too much to come to Christ. He would avoid me whenever I got around him because I represented all that he did not outwardly want. One day I heard that he had been taken to the hospital with cirrhosis of the liver and was not expected to live — his excessive drinking had finally caught up with him. I immediately went to the hospital to visit him and talked once again about his need of Christ, but he still refused. The atmosphere in that room could have been cut with a knife, and he was glad to see me go. I came back the next day and the day after, and each day he seemed to be softening to the gospel as death was rapidly approaching. On the fifth day, I came into the room and asked him if he was ready to accept Christ, and he said that he was. He bowed his head and received the Lord Jesus. When his prayer was over, the first thing he did was call his wife into the room and tell her. Then he called his daughter in to tell her. He then called in all the family. In the next two days he witnessed to the doctors and the nurses and everybody that would listen to the good news about Christ. Finally he began to slip away into a coma. Just when we thought that he would never regain consciousness, he awoke from the coma and called out, “Aunt Helen!” Aunt helen was a dear aunt he loved but
who had not yet heard his blessed testimony. Aunt Helen stepped to the bedside at his request, and he said to her, “Aunt Helen, I have trusted Jesus. Isn’t that all right!” Then he slipped away, never again to regain consciousness. A few hours later, he went home to be with Christ. This man who was such a rejector of Christ became a giant of a witness for several days after he found the Saviour. Why? Because every child of God through faith in Christ Jesus desires to speak out for Christ when he has found the answer to life.

“For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.” Salvation in Christ is open to all anywhere who will believe on Jesus Christ.

CONCLUSION

Possibly you have never received Jesus Christ as personal Lord and Saviour. May I urge you to receive him now?
One of the few things in this life that really lifts a man’s spirit is hearing good news. Men pay attention to good news in business, pleasure, social preferment, ambition, and physical health. Go to any stock exchange and see men watch the ticker tape, or view the political candidates sitting up all night for election returns favorable to them.

Men will harken to Good news along every line except the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ. More often than not they reject the greatest and most exciting news ever to hit the planet earth — they refuse the offer of a free and gracious salvation in Christ. It is astonishing that men would reject the good news of Christ and the salvation he has for them, but they do.

This was the exact problem of the Jews. The prophets, Christ, and the apostles all pointed out God’s offer of salvation by grace through faith in Christ, but the Jews refused it. Why? Because they wanted to work their way to heaven and did not see the simplicity of salvation. Sadly but truly, salvation is so simple that men stumble over the “by grace through faith” process.

THE UNIVERSAL OFFER OF SALVATION — Romans 10:12-13

“For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him.” Now that Christ has come, there are no spiritual privileges because of racial distinctions such as the Jews enjoyed in the Old Testament. There is no difference in Jew and Gentile — all must accept Jesus Christ by faith if they are to be saved and belong to the redeemed people of God.

In the spiritual realm there are no racial distinctions — no white, black, yellow or brown. All must trust Christ as personal Saviour. Further, only in Christ will racial prejudice be solved, for Christ changes a man’s heart so that he can love all Christian brethren in Christ. Paul Johnson, a black student at Shenandoah Bible College said, “At this school I find no racial prejudice because we are all one in Christ.”

Since all are sinners and separated from God, salvation is open to all who will receive Christ as personal Lord and Saviour. It is open to those who call upon Christ to deliver them from their sins and to give them eternal life.
“For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” Salvation is offered universally to all men, and it becomes the possession of all who will receive Christ by faith. When a person calls, he shall be saved. This verse is a quote from Joel 2:32 to show that salvation has always been by faith, even in the Old Testament. It states a universal offer of salvation, not a universal salvation. The death of Christ is applied only to those who trust in Jesus Christ.

THE UNIVERSAL PREACHING OF SALVATION — Romans 10:14-15

“How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?” Paul’s point is that a universal offer of the gospel demands a universal preaching of the gospel. Men cannot call on a Saviour in whom they have never believed, and to be sure, they cannot believe in a Christ of whom they have never heard. Someone must take the gospel to another person if that one is ever to be saved.

The Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:26-40), earnest man though he was, did not understand even the luminous fifty-third chapter of Isaiah until the preacher sent to him opened the Scripture for him. In Acts 11:14, Cornelius, a Jewish proselyte, was commanded by the angel to send for Peter who was to “speak to thee words by which thou shalt be saved.”

“For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe” (1 Cor. 1:21).

This passage is not just speaking about ordained pastors and missionaries but about all Christians. The word “preacher” means “one who heralds a message,” thus putting out the message of Christ is everyone’s responsibility. The Overseas Missionary Fellowship has a motto that says, “You are either a missionary or a mission field.”

In this country men boast today of the Peace Corps, and this is a good secular organization, but Christians have had missions for two thousand years which have done more good for mankind than all the secular humanitarian organizations put together. True Christians are committed to world evangelism. We are to preach to all men, whether they want to hear the message of Christ or not, for all men need him.

When he was the head of an organization called International Christian Leadership, Dr. Richard Halverson addressed a group of men in Germany. After the session, he had a question time and one of the men asked, “You have been talking to men who are members of a church, encouraging them to work, but what do you say to a man who is a communist, who doesn’t believe in God, who has no interest in the church, who thinks Christ is all tommy-rot?”
Dr. Halverson quickly replied, “There is no place on earth where man doesn’t have an empty heart if he doesn’t know God, so begin with the empty heart; the life that is unfulfilled and unsatisfied is longing and yearning to find rest.”

There are millions of people in the United States, not to mention the rest of the world, who have never really heard the gospel.

Gertrude Bahanna, a woman who was wrapped up in every kind of immorality and who longed to have the inner yearnings of her heart satisfied, filled the emptiness of her life with sex, alcohol, dope and vice, but found no satisfaction. She lived for 50 years in the U.S.A. and never once heard the gospel. At age 50 she heard and God saved her. Today her life is transformed by the power of Christ.

“And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!” The Christian will never be an effective witness for Christ until he is convinced that he has been sent into this world by God to be a testimony to it. A man sent of God has all the credentials he needs to bring the good news of Christ to the world, while a man with a fine education, good personality, and exceptional ability to speak, but without the assurance that he has been sent of God, will never be an effective witness for Christ.

John Knox, the great Scottish Reformer, was a man sent by God to Scotland to free that great nation from the death grip of the Roman Catholic Church. His one passion in life was to see the nation won for Christ. He prayed to God, “Give me Scotland for Christ or I die!” And God, through one man, brought Scotland to its knees before Christ.

Our message is one of good news, and we must somehow get this across to all men. It is estimated that there are 81 million evangelical Christians in the world today. Of course, they are in various states of knowledge and belief, but just suppose that 81 million Christians got on the ball and began to do what God has in mind for them, namely the evangelization of the world. In the first century the world was turned upside down by just a few Christians. Today the potential is great to see the evangelization of the world again. What is the problem? Men are not obedient. They are not making themselves available to God to be used as he sees fit in their lives. We must mobilize and train laymen to be effective witnesses for Christ.

THE UNIVERSAL OFFER OF SALVATION REJECTED — Romans 10:16-21

“But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report [message of faith]?” Paul quotes from Isaiah 53:1 to show that it was prophesied that the Jews would reject the good news of Christ.
The universal offer of the gospel is rejected by many because they do not want to be saved; they love darkness rather than light. This does not relieve our responsibility to preach the gospel to every creature. The Christian must be faithful to proclaim the good news whether anyone wants it or not. Someday we will have to give an account of our faithfulness.

“So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God [Christ].” Genuine faith comes from hearing a message about Christ, and that message comes only from the Word of God. Saving faith comes from heeding saving doctrine, so we must stress teaching right doctrine. This verse also tells us that the way to get a strengthened faith is to know and apply the Word of God to life.

Again, it should be pointed out that God does not save anyone until that person hears the good news of Christ. God has ordained that it is the Christian’s responsibility to get the gospel to every creature.

D. L. Moody tells the story of how he pleaded with God for more faith. He pleaded and pleaded until he was at the point of despair, for his faith was not increasing. Then one day he read Romans 10:17, and from that day he began to read his Bible with seriousness of purpose in order to master it. He said that his faith continued to grow as he permitted the Word of God to grow in him.

“But I say, Have they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world.” The Jew is responsible for his rejection of Christ. Paul quotes Psalm 19:4, which speaks of the physical creation, and applies it to the opportunity God gave the Jews to hear the gospel. The Jews cannot say that they never heard the good news, for probably every Jew in the first century heard about Jesus Christ and the salvation that could be found in him. But they rejected the good news.

“But I say, Did not Israel know? First Moses saith, I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are no people, and by a foolish nation I will anger you. But Esaias is very bold, and saith, I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me.” Israel had a full knowledge of the good news of Christ, but they willfully rejected it. Actually, all rejection of Jesus Christ is willful, and God holds a person responsible for his unbelief.

It was predicted in the Old Testament that Gentiles would respond to the good news of Christ, and this would provoke the nation of Israel to jealousy and make their rejection of Christ even more bitter.

“But to Israel he saith, All day long have I stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people.” God, in his patience and longsuffering, is waiting for Israel to repent and turn to Christ. The gracious offer of salvation is still open to them. This makes their rejection even more hideous in light of God’s mercy.
How many folks today are just like the Jews! They know the good news of Christ and cannot plead ignorance, but refuse to accept Christ because of pride and love for sin and self.

CONCLUSION

Suppose that the whole world came down with some kind of terminal cancer, and it was just a matter of time before all would die. There was no hope for anyone, but through some great scientific discovery you uncovered a vaccine that could cure this disease. You hold in your hand the only hope for the world. Would you withhold it? Of course not. As a humanitarian, you would immediately begin to administer the vaccine to all so they could live. The good news of Christ is the only hope for the world and only we Christians possess it. If we do not take the gospel to men, they will die spiritually and we will be doing a great injustice to humanity. God can save no one until he first hears the gospel, and the spreading of the good news is our responsibility alone.

What is the greatest thing that ever happened to you? Your salvation in Christ. Then what is the greatest thing you can do for another human being? Help him to find Christ too!

God expects the Christian to go back into the world, back into the place where he lives, into the shop where he works, back into his local neighborhood, and take the good news to the world. God is waiting for Christians to respond in obedience to the spreading of the gospel, and when they do, he will begin to save some folks.

If we really believe that the gospel is to be universally offered to all, then we will begin to speak the gospel to all with whom we come in contact. Are you willing to say, “Here I am, Lord, use me to reach the world”? 
HAS GOD CAST AWAY ISRAEL?
Romans 11:1-12

by Dr. Jack L. Arnold

A unique phenomenon of our day is the existence and preservation of the nation of Israel. The eleventh chapter of Romans throws a great deal of light on the “miracle of Israel.” Today we view Israel against the background of over forty centuries of anti-Semitism, that dark, unexplainable, yet consistently recurring pattern of hatred against the Jews. They have been unmercifully persecuted throughout their history, climaxing in the atrocities committed against them in Hitler’s Nazi Germany in this century. At least six million Jews were murdered in this holocaust, and yet today the nation of Israel exists and is prospering. The existence of the nation of Israel today is best explained in light of the fact that the Jews are still in covenant with God, and that God still has a spiritual purpose for them in the future.

God chose Israel to be his people thousands of years ago, and made hundreds of promises to them in the Old Testament which have not yet been fulfilled. These promises must be fulfilled if God is to be faithful to his own promises. Some scholars believe that these will be fulfilled through the church, but my own belief is that they will be fulfilled specifically through the nation of Israel. I believe that Paul’s point in Romans 11 is that God will convert the nation of Israel when Christ returns.

I recall a story of the King of Prussia who was having a discussion with his chaplain on the veracity of the Bible. The king said to the chaplain, “Give me a word proof that the Bible is the inspired Word of God.”

The chaplain replied, “Your Majesty, it is possible for me to answer your request with great literality. I can give you proof in one single word that the Bible is the Word of God.”

The king looked at him in amazement and said, “What is this magic word which carries such a weight of proof with it?”

The chaplain replied, “Your Majesty, that word is Israel.”

BACKGROUND

About 4,000 years ago God called a man named Abram out of Ur of the Chaldees and said that from him would come the nation of Israel. He made an unbreakable covenant with Abram (calling his name Abraham) in which his physical seed would possess the land of Canaan forever and would be a great nation. God dealt in covenant relationship with Israel, and outside the
covenant there was no salvation. A Jew was under the covenant by birth and entered the covenant through faith in God’s promise of Messiah to come who would reign over Israel on the throne of David.

Israel looked for the Messiah, but when he came in the person of Jesus Christ they rejected Him. The message of Messiah, his salvation, and the establishing of his kingdom was taken to Israel first.

“These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not; but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Matt 10:5-6).

Israel rejected the message.

“And it was the preparation of the passover, and about the sixth hour: and he saith unto the Jews, Behold your King! But they cried out, Away with him, away with him, crucify him. Pilate saith unto them, Shall I crucify your King? The chief priests answered, We have no king but Caesar” (John 19:14-15).

Therefore, God took the promise of salvation and the kingdom from the Jews and gave it to another nation, the church.

“Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord’s doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes? Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof” (Matt. 21:42-43).

Thus, the gospel went to the Gentiles. This was God’s discipline upon Israel for rejecting Messiah. Romans 11 tells us that God yet has a future for Israel as a nation. Israel has been temporarily set aside in God’s plan, but he will again deal with her and fulfill all his promises to her.

Romans 9 shows that in his sovereignty God has set Israel aside to bring the good news of Christ to the world. In Romans 10 we see that Israel’s rejection of Messiah was her own fault, for they knew and understood plainly the claims of Christ. We discover in Romans 11 that God still has a future for national, political Israel because he has chosen them and has entered into covenant relationship with them, and he must fulfill his promises to them.
“I say then, Hath God cast away his people?” This section is written to explain to the Gentiles God’s dealings with Israel. In light of the fact that the gospel is now going to Gentiles and in this age there is no difference between Jew and Gentile for all must receive Christ by faith, is God finished with the nation of Israel? Will He not fulfill His promises to them and maintain His covenant relationship to them?

“God forbid.” Me genoito is the strongest negative in the Greek language. It is unthinkable that God has cast away Israel. In light of this verse, I cannot see how there are many theologians who give no place in their system for a future revival of national Israel!

“For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin.” Paul relates this to himself, for he was a Jew with all the blood lines back to Abraham. He was saved so it indicates that God still is dealing with Jews. Even in the church age, God has converted Jews who are heirs of His promises to Israel. There is always an elect remnant!

“God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew.” Here is an emphatic statement that God is not finished with national Israel. The word “foreknowledge” is related to God’s eternal plan, and in this context has to do with his loving relationship to Israel because of his election of them. “You only have I known of all the families of the earth” (Amos 3:2). God chose Israel and will fulfill his covenant with them.

“For thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God: the Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth. The Lord did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people: but because the Lord loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, hath the Lord brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. Know therefore that the Lord thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations” (Deut. 7:6-9).

A king may be rejected by his subjects, but the king never rejects his subjects. God will never cast away Israel even though now they are in rebellion to him as a nation. Some time ago it was my privilege to become acquainted with Alford Beardsley who was chaplain at Hollins College. Dr. Beardsley spoke at the ministers conference in Roanoke on the subject of the Jew. He turned to this verse to show that God has not cast away Israel because they are his chosen people. He concluded that the Jew today is saved because the Jew has never been lost; Jews being corporately chosen of God do not have to believe in Messiah to be saved. While I respect Dr. Beardsley as a man and a scholar, I cannot agree with his interpretation of this verse. I asked him why Paul said in Romans 10:1, “Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that
they might be saved.” He never gave me an answer, but said that this is a difficult verse and open to interpretation. When I turned to other verses he gave me the same answer. Here is a case of what I believe to be a failure to read the context of a passage. Paul’s whole point is that Israel is a chosen people and God does have a national future for them, but now they are set aside by God’s sovereignty based on their rejection, yet God will deal with them again in the future.

“[Know] ye not what the scripture saith of Elias? how he maketh intercession to God against Israel, saying, Lord they have killed thy prophets, and digged down thine altars; and I am left alone, and they seek my life. But what saith the answer of God unto him? I have reserved to myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal.” Here Paul shows that there has always been an elect remnant in Israel, even in the day of Elijah when the nation was in rank apostasy. Elijah thought he was the only believer left but he did not know everything, for God had preserved 7,000 for himself.

The promises to Israel are valid only to the elect remnant who believe in Messiah. In this day of apostasy in Christendom, we sometimes think that we are the only believers around. But God still has many who have not bowed their knee to the devil. The true church will exist until Jesus comes again.

“Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace.” At the time of Paul’s writing there was an elect remnant of Jews who had trusted in Christ. The same is true today. Based on nothing but his sovereign grace, God has preserved for himself an elect remnant of Jews. If God had not saved an elect remnant from Israel, no Jew would be saved in this present age.

During my college days, I was invited to give my testimony of faith in Christ at various fraternity and sorority houses. We entered these societies under the direction of Campus Crusade for Christ. One night a group of us went to the ZBT house, which is a Jewish fraternity. They were typical fraternity fellows, and were cutting up before the meeting. I remember how strange I felt when I heard them using the Lord’s name in vain and calling one another Jesus Christ. They mockingly made fun of Christ. It was obvious that they thought of Jesus Christ only as an imposter and a man. Well, we gave our testimonies and they were polite, but as far as I know that night there were no conversions to Christ.

About eight years later, my good friend Hal Lindsey, who was the director of Campus Crusade at UCLA, was invited to speak at the ZBT house. He chose as his subject “God’s Future for Israel.” He explained to these men how they were chosen of God, but because of their rejection of Messiah they were being disciplined by God. God required them to come to faith in Jesus Christ, and had a future for the nation of Israel. That night the whole ZBT house gave Hal Lindsey a standing ovation. And that night there were four or five positive decisions for Jesus Christ among these Jews. They had never heard this message before. Out of this meeting came a Jewish convert that became one of the leading evangelists among Jewish students on the campuses of America. It is true that God is saving an elect remnant of Jews today.
“And if by grace, then it is no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work.” Election according to God’s grace brings Paul’s thoughts to the grace of God in salvation. For any person, salvation is totally by God’s grace. None deserve it; all should have been condemned for all are sinners. Works and grace are antagonistic systems, and no person can be saved by works. God’s grace moves upon an individual and that person responds through faith in Jesus Christ apart from any works.

“What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for [righteousness]; but the election [elect remnant of Jews] hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded [hardened].” When the nation rejected their Messiah, in grace God chose a remnant among them for himself and he hardened the rest so that they could not believe. God did not just arbitrarily and maliciously harden hearts, but he did it as just retribution for their unbelief and rejection of Messiah. God has the right to select and elect a remnant for himself based purely on his grace, but he hardens men on the basis of their unbelief.

“(According as it is written, God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see and ears that they should not hear;) unto this day.” Paul quotes from Isaiah 29:10 and Deut. 29:3-4 to show that the Old Testament predicted the hardening of Israel’s heart during this time of rejection.

Israel has double blindness on them but God in his electing grace can still save some. We should never give up on our witness to the Jew.

“And David saith, Let their table be made a snare, and a trap, and a stumbling-block, and a recompence unto them.” The “table” is a place of blessing. Paul quotes from Psalm 69:22 to show that God’s blessing on Israel has become her own stumbling block, a judgment because of rejection of Messiah.

“Let their eyes be darkened, that they may not see, and bow down their back alway.” This is a restatement of Israel’s blindness.

ISRAEL’S REJECTION IS NOT FINAL — Romans 11:11-12

“I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall?” Has Israel stumbled in such a way that they will not rise again? Has Israel’s rejection finished them in God’s program? Is God no longer in covenant relationship with them? A great many Bible scholars feel that God is finished with national Israel and that he will continue to judge the nation for her rejection of Messiah. This interpretation has led many sincere Christians to perpetrate anti-Semitism and stir hatred against the Jews. This is particularly true of the Roman Catholic Church, which for years taught that the Jews alone put Christ to death. Chrysostom, an early church father, said in essence, “Christians should burn down all Jewish synagogues, and if Jews are in the synagogue, so much the better!”
During the Crusades when the Roman Catholic Church attempted to free the Holy Land from the Moslems, the saying among Christians was, “If you can’t kill a Moslem, kill a Jew!” No person who reads his Bible with understanding, however, can be anti-Semitic, for God still has a purpose for Israel.

“God forbid.” Israel is under divine discipline now for her rejection of Messiah and has been temporarily set aside in God’s program, but God will again deal with the nation at the second coming of Christ.

“But rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy.” God has worked it out that through the rejection of Messiah by Israel, the gospel of Jesus Christ has come to the Gentiles. This will someday provoke the Jews to turn to Christ, for they will see the blessings they have missed in their rejection.

“Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fulness?” If Israel’s rejection meant that the Gentiles were to become rich through the gospel, how much more will the world be blessed when God converts the nation at the second coming of Christ! That final generation of Jews will become a blessing to the world because by God’s grace they will turn to Messiah, their God and King.

CONCLUSION

The Jew’s rejection is the Gentile’s opportunity to hear of Christ. If you are a Gentile, God is offering you the forgiveness of sin, eternal life and assurance of heaven in Christ if you will but trust the Saviour.

If you are of Jewish blood, God is still saving an elect remnant for himself in this present day. But the Jew must also receive Jesus Christ as Messiah in order to be saved.

I ask both Jew and Gentile, “Is Christ, the Messiah, your personal Saviour?”
The Scripture we deal with in this lesson is one of the more difficult sections of the Epistle to the Romans. It deals with the relationship of Israel as a nation and Gentiles collectively to the Abrahamic covenant. This covenant is among the most important transactions God has made with men, for it contains all the blessings of salvation to all men of all time who believe in Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord.

Some 4,000 years ago God called Abram out of Ur of the Chaldees and made an unbreakable covenant with him that would continue forever. It is called the Abrahamic covenant. The offer originally made to Abram appears in Genesis 12:1-3, and nicely summarizes the covenant that God made and confirmed with Abram (Abraham) in Genesis 15, 17 and 22:

“Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred and from thy father’s house, unto a land that I will shew thee; And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse them that curseth thee: and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed” (Gen. 12:1-3).

This covenant has personal, national and universal blessings connected with it. The personal promise was that Abraham would have a great name and be a blessing to others. The national blessing was that Abraham’s physical seed, the Jews, would be a great nation forever and have a land forever (Gen. 12:1; 13:14-16), and that from this seed would come kings. Abraham probably understood these promises to refer to his own physical seed. The universal promise was that all the families of the earth would be blessed, referring to Messiah who came through the line of Abraham. Apart from Messiah there is no salvation; this part of the covenant relates to Gentiles. Another promise of a universal nature is that those who bless Abraham and his descendants (i.e. the Jews) shall be blessed, while those who curse them shall be cursed of God.

From the Abrahamic covenant we see that God has a purpose for Israel that he must fulfill. When Messiah came to Israel, the nation as a whole rejected him, although a few individuals trusted in Christ, constituting the elect remnant. These elect were the recipients of the covenant blessings.

It is obvious that after Israel rejected Messiah, Jesus Christ sent his apostles to the Gentiles and began to offer them salvation through himself if they would but trust in him. It has been 2,000 years since the apostles spread the gospel to the Gentiles of all nations.
Does this mean that God is finished with Israel as a nation? Will he not fulfill the covenant he made with them at the time of Abraham? Does God still have a purpose for physical, national Israel? In Romans 11:13-24 Paul uses the illustration of the olive tree to show that God does have a future for Israel in his plan for the world, even though now they are being disciplined as a nation for their rejection of Christ.

ISRAEL’S PRESENT AND YET FUTURE POSITION — Romans 11:13-16

“For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office [ministry].” Here Paul speaks to Gentile Christians corporately, not to Israel, and not even to the church at large which is composed of both Jews and Gentiles. His argument focuses on the Gentiles’ opportunity to hear the gospel, which has resulted from Israel’s rejection of Messiah. The two basic thoughts related here are the gospel opportunity for Gentiles and Jews, and the relationship of believing Jews and believing Gentiles to the Abrahamic covenant in the church age.

“If by any means I may provoke to emulation them which are my flesh, and might save some of them.” Paul exalts his ministry to the Gentiles in order to provoke some Israelites to jealousy, hoping that this will cause individual Jews to turn to Jesus Christ. Paul never gave up on the Jew for salvation, and neither should we.

“For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?” Israel’s rejection meant the potential reconciling of the world to God through Christ. This is not universalism. Israel’s rejection of Messiah gave Gentiles the opportunity to hear about Christ, so that all who believe could be reconciled to God. Paul indicated that the future conversion of Israel would be like life from the dead and that the world would be blessed through national Israel.

“For if the firstfruit be holy, the lump is also holy.” Here “holy” means separation to God, not ethical and moral holiness. The firstfruit of dough would be easily recognized by a student of the Old Testament. “Of the first of your dough ye shall give unto the Lord an heaveoffering in your generations” (Num. 15:21). A hand-full of dough offered to the Lord by the priest was evidence of the worthiness of the whole mass from which it was taken. The whole nation of Israel was originally set apart for God by the call of Abraham and the giving of the covenant promises to him. Therefore, the individuals of the race of Abraham also have a special relationship to God. They are set apart, but not necessarily saved.

“And if the root be holy, so are the branches.” The root refers to the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, through whom the covenant was made and reaffirmed. The branches refer to physical, national Israel. If the fathers of Israel were set apart to God, so were their physical seed.
We must understand the symbolism Paul uses. The root is Abraham and the Abrahamic covenant. The natural branches are Abraham’s physical seed or national Israel. The wild branches are Gentiles. The olive tree is Israel:

“The Lord called thy name, A green olive tree, fair, and of goodly fruit” (Jer. 11:16).

“His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive tree, and his smell as Lebanon” (Hos. 14:6).

The place of blessing is to be rightly related to the covenant given to Israel.

“And if some of the branches be broken off.” Many of the physical seed of Abraham have rejected Messiah and have been broken off from the position of blessing under the covenant. “For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel” (Rom. 9:6). Yet, not all physical seed have been cut off. A few individual Jews have trusted in Jesus Christ, forming the elect remnant. Every Jew is born physically under the Abrahamic covenant, but the blessing of the covenant comes only to those who have been “born again” within the covenant.

“And thou, being a wild olive tree [branch], were graffed in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree.” The Gentile, a wild branch, having no natural relationship to the root, can still be grafted into the tree, placed under the covenant — all Gentiles have this opportunity to have a relationship with God through the gospel. Covenant opportunity has now been opened to all Gentiles because of Israel’s rejection.

“Boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee.” This is a warning to Gentiles not be proud because of their opportunity for salvation while Israel is being disciplined. Why? All salvation comes through the Abrahamic covenant, and the Jews are Abraham’s descendants. If Gentiles have the opportunity to hear, it is only through the Jew and his background. The place of blessing is Israel and her covenant.

“Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be graffed in.” A Gentile might boast that God got rid of Israel in order to bring blessing to Gentiles. But Israel is the apple of God’s eye. If Gentiles have anything, it is by pure mercy. God in no way prefers Gentiles to Jews.

“Well; because of unbelief they were broken off.” It was because of Israel’s rejection that any Gentile has the opportunity to hear the gospel of Jesus Christ.
“And thou standest by faith.” Paul goes beyond just speaking about Gentile opportunity to hear about Christ, and says that any Gentile who is saved is saved purely by God’s grace through faith. A Gentile has had no covenant, no promises and no blessing apart from Israel.

“Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenant of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ... Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God” (Eph. 2:11-13,19).

“Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen [Gentiles] through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham... Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed which is Christ... And if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise” (Gal. 3:7-9,16,29).

When a Gentile trusts Christ, he becomes Abraham’s spiritual seed by faith, and he is related to the Abrahamic covenant.

“Be not highminded, but fear: For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee. Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.” This is not teaching that one can lose his salvation. Paul is warning Gentiles collectively that they have gospel opportunity now, but that God could cut them out, just like he did national Israel, if they do not take advantage of the opportunity and believe on Jesus Christ.

It is pure grace that any Gentile hears the gospel. Do you realize that millions of Gentiles today have never heard about Jesus Christ; therefore they cannot be saved?

I cannot escape the conclusion that Gentile Christians have been admitted to the ancient commonwealth of Israel, as replacements, as it were, for unbelieving Jews, and they now share with the remaining believing Jews the benefits of the promises of God to Israel. Believing Jews, represented by the good natural branches, did not move from the spiritual blessings of the covenant to Israel. Some were cut off, but not the believing seed in Israel. True, believing Israelites did not move; they were not transferred to a new tree. It was Gentile Christians who became part of the already existing good olive tree (Israel) and who share with the already present natural branches.
Neither can I escape the fact that converted Jews and converted Gentiles in this present age form the church, and these together are spiritual Israel because they believe. The Christian church is a recipient of the covenant blessings to Israel. This does not mean, however, that God does not have a future for national Israel — he does. At the second advent of Jesus Christ, physical Jews alive at that time will be converted and turn to Christ. There is a time coming when Gentiles will no longer dominate the church as they do now, but Jews will believe in substantial numbers and be restored to their position in the ancient commonwealth of Israel. Believing Gentiles will be there also.

PREDICTION OF ISRAEL’S FUTURE — Romans 11:23-24

“And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in: for God is able to graff them in again.” If Israel will again trust God as a nation, they will be grafted back into the Abrahamic covenant and be in the place of blessing. Paul hints here that Israel has a future, and we know from other parts of the Bible that through the power of God, based on Israel’s faith, Israel as a nation will again trust Christ at the second advent of our Lord Jesus Christ.

“For if thou wert cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and were graffed contrary to nature into a good olive tree: how much more shall these, which be the natural branches, be graffed into their own olive tree?” If God did the hardest thing by grafting Gentiles into the covenant when this was contrary to nature, how much easier will it be for him to put Israel, the natural branches, back into the tree, the covenant? God can and will do this. He has a future for Israel.

CONCLUSION

To how many Gentiles has God shown mercy by giving them gospel opportunity? Multiplied millions have heard about Christ, and have been given the opportunity to become part of the Abrahamic covenant and to receive the blessing God has made available to the world. But they reject!

Gentiles, you may not always have the opportunity to trust Christ that you have now, for one day God will cut off Gentile opportunity and give the blessing back to Israel. The “fulness of the Gentiles” will one day end.

A Gentile without Christ is an alien from Israel, a stranger from the Abrahamic covenant, and without hope and God in this world. You are lost for time and eternity without Jesus Christ, the Messiah, God, and King!
GOD’S PLAN FOR ISRAEL
Romans 11:25-36

by Dr. Jack L. Arnold

Every student of Scripture must reckon with the biblical teachings on Israel, for around this nation God centers his whole plan for the world. Israel is the apple of God’s eye, and at this point in history he still loves her and has a purpose for her in the future.

The Israelites are God’s chosen people (Deut. 7:6-7a). It all began when God chose one man, Abram (a.k.a. Abraham), out of Ur of the Chaldees, and promised to make of him a great nation. He made a covenant with Abraham, called the Abrahamic Covenant, and promised that his physical seed would be a nation forever and have a land forever. He also promised that Abraham would be a blessing to the world, that it would be through his seed that the Messiah would come. This universal aspect of the covenant applies also to believing Gentiles (Gen. 15; 17; 22:16-18; Gal 3:8).

The people of Israel looked forward to the coming of their Messiah, thinking that when he came they would have a thriving nation, ruling over their land and the world forever. But when Messiah (the Lord Jesus Christ) did come to Israel, he did not come as the great political leader they had conceived him to be, one who would overthrow the tyranny of Rome in Palestine, but he came as a lowly one, and the nation refused to believe he was the Messiah. He had all the credentials: he claimed to be God; he did miracles; he claimed to be the long awaited Messiah; he was even resurrected from the dead to substantiate his claims. But Israel rejected him because of their hard and unbelieving hearts.

When Israel rejected him, Christ sent his apostles to the Gentiles and offered them salvation if they would believe that he was the Christ, the Son of God. Within a few years more Gentiles had responded to Christ than had Jews, to whom the Messiah had first been promised. This brought up several questions: Is God finished with the nation of Israel? Has God forgotten all about his promise to Abraham now that the Gentiles are responding in such great numbers? Does God yet have a future for the nation of Israel?

GOD’S PURPOSE FOR ISRAEL NOW — Romans 11:25

“For I would not, brethren.” Paul now addresses those Gentiles who have trusted in Christ, and explains about Israel’s purpose in God’s prophetic program.

“That ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own conceits.” A “mystery” in Scripture is a divinely revealed truth not previously known. The
mystery that was revealed to Paul was that Israel had been blinded by God because of her rejection of Messiah, and that the gospel was going out to the Gentiles. It was never a mystery during Old Testament times that Gentiles would be saved, but they were to be saved through Israel, with Israel in the predominant place:

“And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising. Lift up thine eyes round about, and see: all they gather themselves together, they come to thee: thy sons shall come from far, and thy daughters shall be nursed at thy side. Then thou shalt see, and flow together, and thine heart shall fear, and be enlarged; because the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee, the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee” (Isa. 60:3-5).

The mystery now is that Jew and Gentile are placed on the same basis for salvation, namely faith in Christ, and Jews and Gentiles together form the church, the body of Christ. Gentiles are now in the place of gospel opportunity and the (national) Jews are rejected. Paul did not want them to be ignorant of these truths, but there are many Christians who see no place for Israel in God’s prophetic program. Paul says that these Gentiles were not to be conceited over their new position, for God was yet going to restore the Jews and fulfill his covenants with them.

“That blindness [hardening] in part is happened to Israel.” Most of the nation of Israel rejected Messiah, and because of this God hardened their hearts as judicial punishment for the rejection of truth. There was an elect remnant among the Jews who did believe, but this was, and is today, only a few in relation to the whole nation.

“Until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.” Israel’s judicial blindness will continue until the fulness of the Gentiles, but what does this mean? The “fulness of the Gentiles” refers to God’s present program for Gentiles who believe and become part of the Church. All who trust in Christ in this present age, whether Jew or Gentile, form the church, the body of Christ. The church is also spoken of as a mystery. When the full number of Gentiles that God intends to save in this present age is saved, then Christ will return and God will again begin to work with the nation of Israel. God’s plan for the Gentiles now is a calling out from the nations of the world a people for himself through faith in Christ Jesus:

“Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name. And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down: and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things” (Acts 15:14-17).
“And so all Israel shall be saved.” Here is a clear statement that God’s purpose for Israel as a nation will only come to pass after the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. The “all” here does not refer to every physical Jew who ever lived, but to that last generation of physical Jews. At that time God will supernaturally and sovereignly convert that generation of physical Jews and fulfill his promise to them. At the second advent of our Lord Jesus Christ, millions of Jews will be converted by the sovereign grace of God, and they will worship their Messiah.

“As it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob.” This quote from Isaiah 59:20-21 and 27:9 shows that Israel’s salvation was predicted in the Old Testament. The terms “Israel” and “Jacob” are sometimes used interchangeably:

“Behold, the day of the Lord cometh, and thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee. For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city. Then the Lord shall go forth and fight against those nations as when he fought in the day of battle. And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof towards the east” (Zech. 14:1-4).

“And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn” (Zech. 12:10).

God will spare that last generation of Jews and miraculously convert them.

“For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins.” This is another quote from the Old Testament to show that God will fulfill his covenant with Israel. This is called the new covenant and is simply an enlargement of the Abrahamic covenant:

“Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the Lord: But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his
brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord, for I will forgive their iniquity and I will remember their sin no more” (Jer. 31:31-34).

“As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers’ sakes.” Because Israel is now blinded by unbelief, they are now enemies of the true message of Christ. However, Israel is still the elect people of God, and he still has a future for the nation. This means there can be no place for anti-Semitism for the biblical Christian. This does not mean that we should not try to win Jews to Christ, or that we should not oppose their principles. We should oppose Spinoza for his rationalism, and Marx and Engles for their communism even though they were Jews, but there is no place for hatred of Jews as a people.

“For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.” God cannot go back on his word. His gifts of the covenants and his effectual calling of the Jews as a nation for himself will be fulfilled. God is sovereign and unchangeable and never goes back on his word!

**GOD’S PURPOSE INCLUDES SHOWING MERCY — Romans 11:30-32**

“For as ye [Gentiles] in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief.” The unsaved Gentiles were dead in sin, living for self, and without hope and without God in this world:

“This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind. Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness” (Eph. 4:17-19).

“Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the lusts of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved)... For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast” (Eph. 2:1-5,8-9).

Unless God had shown his grace and mercy to us Gentiles, we would have never been saved. The originating cause of every man’s salvation is God’s mercy and grace. God’s plan was not
thwarted by Israel’s rejection; he turned it for good in that now Gentiles have great gospel opportunity and multiplied millions have been the objects of his saving mercy.

“Even so have these [Israel] also now not believed, that through your [Gentile believers’] mercy they also may obtain mercy.” Someday Israel will be provoked to jealousy when they see how God has lavishly shed his mercy on millions of Gentiles and blessed them. This will cause Israel to seek God’s mercy and they will be saved at the second advent.

“For God hath concluded them all [Israel] in unbelief, that he might have mercy on all [all Israel at the second advent].” Do not let this verse throw you, but read it in context. This does not mean that God shows saving mercy on all men (universalism), nor does it mean that God gives mercy to all men in that he gives them an opportunity to accept or reject light. God has sovereignly shut national Israel up to unbelief that someday in the future he might save the nation of Israel by his sovereign mercy. Then all Israel shall be saved.

GOD’S PURPOSES AROUSE PRAISE FOR HIS PERSON — Romans 11:33-36

Paul gives a majestic doxology or benediction as he concludes this argument on Israel. He is brought to a place of awe and wonderment as he considers the plans and purposes of God for this world. An understanding of God brings Paul to the place of worship.

“O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!” In Romans 9-11 Paul told us many wonderful things about God and his program for the world: his absolute sovereignty and man’s absolute responsibility to believe in God through Christ; how Israel has been cut out of the place of blessing and gospel opportunity has come to the Gentiles; and that God will again deal with the nation of Israel, and that his plans and covenants for her will be fulfilled. If we do not understand the reasons behind God’s dealings with Israel, Gentiles and ourselves, it is not because there is not good and sufficient reason. The difficulty is with our inability to comprehend the wisdom and ways of God:

“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts” (Isaiah 55:8-9).

“For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again?” No human being or created creature knows the mind of God, nor can any give him advice. He does as he pleases in heaven and earth!

“Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing. And Lebanon is not
sufficient to burn, nor the beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt-offering. All nations before him are as nothing; and they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity” (Isaiah 40:15-17).

“And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?” (Dan. 4:35).

“For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen.” God is the creator and sustainer of all things, and everything that happens is working according to his plan and for his glory!

CONCLUSION

God has a plan and future for Israel. What we are seeing today is a fleshy or carnal return to the land by Israel; it is not what was predicted in the Old Testament. However, the existence of Israel as a thriving nation shows that God could start his program with them at any time. But before he begins his program for Israel, there must be the coming in of the fulness of the Gentiles.

Are you, Jew or Gentile, prepared to meet God? No man on this earth is prepared until he has received Jesus Christ as personal Lord and Saviour. Then, and only then, is he prepared to meet God. Only then can he look forward to the coming of the Lord for his Church.

What must you do to be saved? Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved!
A LIVING SACRIFICE
Romans 12:1

by Dr. Jack L. Arnold

This lesson begins the practical section of the Book of Romans which deals with “shoeleather” Christianity, the transferring of doctrine into action. In future lessons some may accuse me of leaving teaching and going to meddling, for these Scriptures become quite convicting. If the shoe fits, wear it!

Paul has shown us that all men are sinners, separated from God and under his wrath (Rom. 1-3), that salvation is by faith in Christ who made a perfect sacrifice for sins (Rom. 4-5), that all who trust Christ will begin to live for him in their experience (Rom. 6-7), and that the true Christian has God working in and for him and never need fear losing his salvation once he has come to Christ (Rom. 8). Paul also showed how God sovereignly hardened Israel so that in grace he might bring gospel opportunity to the Gentiles, shedding his mercy on some for salvation. Sometime in the future God will again deal with Israel and show mercy on them for salvation and the whole nation will be converted (Rom. 9-11).

No matter what theological positions we might hold on salvation (sovereign election or freewill), each of us must agree on these practical exhortations to holy, Christ-centered living found in Romans 12-16.

EXHORTATION ACCORDING TO GOD’S MERCIES — Romans 12:1a

“I beseech you therefore, brethren.” It should be noted that this is speaking to Christians, not unbelievers. God is asking for a decision by those who have already trusted Christ for salvation. He is asking for a presentation of the life to him.

Paul is asking, not commanding, that the Christian make a presentation of his life to God. It is not as though he were pleading, but rather urging or exhorting believers to make this decision. Moreover, presenting themselves to God is not some unimportant, optional thing. Having received God’s free and gracious salvation, it is the believer’s responsibility to live a righteous life, a voluntary obligation. (This would be like a patriot who is drafted into the military service by his government. He must go, but he wants to go because he loves his country.)

“But the mercies of God.” This points back to Romans 11 where Paul made it clear that both Jews and Gentiles are saved by God’s mercy alone, for no human being deserves salvation (Rom. 11:30-32). God’s mercy is related to his plan, and he does have a perfect plan for this world. Furthermore, we cannot present our bodies to God unless he grants us mercy to do so. No
creature can comprehend God’s working (11:34) or give him advice (11:35), for he does as he pleases in heaven and earth. God is the Creator and Sustainer of all things and everything that happens is working according to his plan and for his glory (11:36). If we have not presented our bodies to him, perhaps we do not comprehend God’s mercy.

The marvelous hymn of praise and worship in Romans 11 about the greatness of God is more than an expression of the awe and wonder of the Apostle’s heart at the majesty of God. It is primarily an expression of the utter madness of trying to live apart from complete divine control. Paul is stating the fact that God stands at the beginning and end of every path of man, and that there is no escaping him anywhere.

For better or worse, the Christian is in God’s hands; God is never in the Christians’ hands. In view of this Paul is saying that the most logical, the most sensible, the most natural thing in the world is to present your body to him as a living sacrifice. How foolish it is to try to live a life apart from the God of heaven and earth!

EXPLANATION OF HOW TO LIVE UNDER GOD’S CONTROL — Romans 12:1b

Whenever I teach on Christian commitment to God, I do so with fear and trepidation, for everybody is hammering at Christians to commit themselves to God, but there is little teaching on how to commit to God. Consequently, many Christians are worked up to an emotional frenzy over commitment, but really do not know how. To begin, we should state the two basic philosophies of life. The world says, “My life is my own to live as I please.” The philosophy of the Christian is, “My life is God’s to do with as he wills.” These philosophies are diametrically opposed. They can never be compatible.

“That ye present your bodies.” Paul draws an analogy between Old Testament ritual sacrifices of animals and New Testament spiritual sacrifices, which includes the presentation of the life to God. Christians are told in Hebrews 13 that they are to offer up the spiritual sacrifices of praise, money, and good works. We Christians are to offer praise, purse, performance, our whole person, to God. These are the sacrifices with which God is well pleased.

The word “present” is an active word and involves the human will. It is not a passive yielding, but an active presentation of the life to God. It is voluntarily placing one’s life into God’s hands, totally and unreservedly. It is not sitting around in a mystical trance waiting for God to move. It is an act of obedience that springs from the human will.

The word “present” could also be translated “once and for all present.” Thus, the Christian must come to a place in his life (a crisis) where he sees the folly of living only for himself and places himself in God’s hands to let God’s life be lived in him. “Present” here could also look at one’s whole life as a presentation, beginning with an initial commitment to do God’s will.
Have you ever made such a commitment to God? “Father, I am yours. You have redeemed me from sin by your grace through Christ. I now commit my life to you unreservedly, for I want your will more than anything else. Here is my whole body; do with it as you see fit.”

Presenting the life, once for all, is like the marriage vows. To my wife I gave a once-and-for-all initial consent by saying, “I do.” But upon that initial “I do,” many decisions have been based. In fact, very few decisions are made without considering my responsibility to my wife and family. One initial commitment to Christ involves literally thousands of decisions based on the initial commitment.

Notice Paul says present your “bodies.” Why did he say “bodies” instead of “life,” or “spirit” or “soul”? When a person finally gets around to making his body available to something, he has given his whole person to that cause.

I frequently hear, as all pastors do, somebody say to me, “Well, I am sorry I can’t make it to the meeting tonight, but I will be with you in spirit.” I understand what they mean, but I find it rather disconcerting to speak to a hall full of spirits. I would so much rather they bring their bodies. If you move your body into action, you have really given yourself, and you can come short of it in a thousand different ways and sound very pious in doing so, but when you finally put your body on the line, that is really when you have given yourself.

When the body is committed, we guard what our eyes see, our ears hear, what our tongues say, where our hands roam, and where our feet walk. We are conscious that our bodies belong to God.

I remember the story of a young Christian man who was going with a girl in high school who was anything but respectable. He breathed a sigh of relief when he went away into the army for a few years. The girl drifted around with other fellows, but the boy met a fine Christian girl and married her. During this time the boy was growing in grace and had presented his body to God for a living sacrifice. When he got out of the army, he and his wife came back to live in his home town. One evening when his wife was away, his old flame came over to his house. She made no attempt to hide her affection for him and moved in such a voluptuous way that he realized he had but to reach out his hand and she was his. Of course, he had the feelings that go with natural male desire, but he kept repeating to himself that his body was a living sacrifice for God’s use only. In order to avoid the girl’s obvious advances, he talked about his wife and showed the girl pictures of his real love. When the old flame saw he was not interested, she said to him on her way out, “She must be quite a girl if she can keep you from reaching.” Little did she know it was not just his wife but also God who kept him from reaching, for he had presented himself a living sacrifice.

“A living sacrifice.” Our English connotation for a “sacrifice” is voluntarily giving up something we have a right to keep. This concept is foreign to Old Testament sacrifices, for when a Jew brought a sacrifice to God, he was voluntarily giving back to God that which was rightfully
God’s all along. The Jew knew he had no right to the sacrifice; it was God’s property. When a Christian presents his life to God, it is not as though he were making a big sacrifice as we think of the word. He is simply presenting to God what is actually already God’s:

“What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s” (1 Cor. 6:19-20).

There is no room for boasting or pride. I cringe when I hear testimonies as to how someone gave up riches or fame or love for Christ’s sake, and they assume an attitude of “how lucky God must be to know I’m on his side.” The Christian’s life belongs to God already, and God has a right to use it as he sees fit.

Notice that we are to be a living sacrifice, not a dead one. God calls very few of his saints to martyrdom. He calls the average Christian to live for him. It may be easier for a man to work himself up under the stimulus of emotion and circumstances to make the supreme sacrifice of a martyr than to live a daily routine, and perhaps humdrum, existence for God. It is much harder to live for Christ than to die for him.

The commitment of the life to God is like getting into a swimming pool for the first time. Not everyone gets in with the same enthusiasm. There is always the brave soul who without a moment’s hesitation jumps right in, leaving the great majority standing on the side watching. There are some Christians who commit themselves to Christ almost immediately after conversion, and they often have a hard time understanding others who are hesitant about making that commitment. There are others who, after some hesitation and with some coaching and persuasion, jump in. Some Christians need persuasion and instruction in God’s Word before they will make this commitment. Then there is the shy swimmer who just hates the idea of getting into the water all at once. He puts his toe in the water, then sits on the side of the pool dangling his feet in. Finally he is brave enough to jump into the shallow part up to his hips and splash water on his shoulders and face. Then he dips in up to his neck and after a long period puts his head and whole body under the water. This third person can drive others wild because it seems as if he will never get wet all over and swim. Some Christians are in this last category. They make their commitment very slowly, a little bit at a time. They bring great frustration to those who are already committed, but ultimately they do commit.

“What, holy, acceptable unto God.” The Christian’s sacrifice unto God is to set himself apart to God and to have a life of ethical and moral holiness. All Old Testament sacrifices were set apart to God and were to be free of blemishes and defects.

This simply means that true commitment rests on an awareness that the only life pleasing to God is that of Jesus Christ living in the Christian. We set aside our plans, our programs, our
ideals, our desires, for his plans, his programs, and his ideals and desires. This is all done through the consciousness of the human will. God will not be satisfied until he has all the Christian.

“Which is your reasonable service.” This should be translated, “Which is your spiritual worship.” True worship is related to the presentation and commitment of the life to God. It is a satisfying thing. Man was made to worship God, and when he does he has a sense of fulfillment and joy beyond anything the world knows.

Christian worship is not confined to those moments on Sunday morning when one gathers with others at church — that is just our corporate worship. We worship God all day long and any and everything we do to glorify him is true worship. When a housewife does the dishes and cleans the house, or a mother changes the baby’s diapers, or a father finds time to spend with his children, or a businessman does his work for the glory of God, true worship has taken place. Worship is being occupied with Christ in everything and doing all things for the glory of God.

Dr. Donald Grey Barnhouse tells the story of how he and his wife were in the car hurrying to a particular meeting. He pushed down the accelerator and the car whizzed down the highway far faster than the speed limit. In a quiet way Mrs. Barnhouse asked him, “Are you worshiping God by speeding?”

Dr. Barnhouse didn’t quite understand. “What do you mean?” he said.

“The Bible says we are to obey our government, which includes the speed laws of the state, and it says your body is to be presented to God which is your spiritual worship, but your foot apparently isn’t, for it isn’t keeping the speed laws.”

Immediately Dr. Barnhouse saw the point. He could not worship God and break the speed laws too. If his body were a living sacrifice, his foot would have kept the laws of the state.

CONCLUSION

In this lesson we have learned that the only life that is really worth living is a life that is utterly abandoned to God, a life in which God is in control, and a life in which God rules and reigns. You may think that you can’t make this presentation. It is too hard; it would involve too many changes. Yet God said that this commitment must be made if the Christian is to enjoy God forever.

Actually, the one reason many Christians never make this commitment is because of fear. They fear, almost like a superstition, that if they surrender themselves fully to God something tragic will happen or God will make impossible demands on them.
I have a son David whom I love dearly. (I love all my sons, but must choose one for the illustration!) Suppose some night when I came home he were to put his arm around me and say, “Dad, I love you and I have been thinking about how I can demonstrate my love for you. I have decided that I will do anything you want me to do.”

What do you think would be my response? “David, I have been waiting for this moment. Now that you have relinquished your will to mine, I am going to lock you in your room, take away your privileges and make you do all the things you dislike doing. In addition to this, you will have to eat spinach three times a day. You will regret the day you were born. You will be sorry that you told me you loved me and want to please me by doing what I want you to do. I will make you the most miserable kid in town!” Would I say this? How ridiculous! I would try to demonstrate my love for him in an even greater way than before. Among other things I would probably buy him a basketball and a baseball glove! So it is with our heavenly Father. He is ready to bless and enrich us the moment we yield our will, our life, our body, to him. We should only fear if we are not committed Christians!

If you do not know Christ, your first responsibility before God is to receive him as Lord and Saviour of your life. You cannot even begin to know God until Christ has come into your life, Jesus promised that anyone who comes to him would receive forgiveness of sins, eternal life and that he would never be cast out. Do you know Christ?
WHAT IS WORLDLINESS?
Romans 12:2

by Dr. Jack L. Arnold

Everyone in this world has a philosophy of life, and while there are thousands of variant philosophies, they can be boiled down to just two: the world’s and the Christian’s.

The philosophy of the world is: “My life is my own to live as I please.” This is a man-centered and self-centered view of existence. The philosophy of the Christian is: “My life is God’s to do as he wills.” This is a God-centered view of existence. These two philosophies are diametrically opposed and can never be compatible. One is revelation, the other reason; one supernaturalism, the other naturalism; one theism, the other atheism. No person will ever understand the Christian philosophy of life until he accepts Christ as his personal Saviour and the Bible as his only standard of authority.

In Romans 12:1, the Apostle Paul addressed Christians, asking them to make the decision to lay their lives on the line for God. They were to present their bodies to God as a living sacrifice. They were to lay their bodies on the line for him and live God-centered lives. This means they were actively, through the human will, to hand over their lives for God’s use and service. It does not mean that they would be perfect or that they would never again sin. The point is that every decision a person makes and everything he does will be related to the fact that he has made an initial dedication of himself to God. The presentation of the body is an official announcement to God, self, and others that the Christian believes in God’s philosophy of life over against the world’s philosophy.

NONCONFORMITY TO THE WORLD — Romans 12:2a

Having already made a positive request to present the body to God, Paul now gives a negative command to stop conforming to the world. The Christian life involves keeping negative commands as well as living a positive life of obedience.

A better translation of the word “world” in Romans 12:2 is “age.” “This age” is the time from Christ’s birth to his second advent and it is evil in nature: “Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father” (Gal. 1:4). It is closely related to the world system which is under the control of Satan:

“All is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out” (John 12:31).
“In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them” (2 Cor. 4:4).

“And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness (the lap of the wicked one)” (1 John 5:19).

This world system has its own philosophy and standard of conduct:

“Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience” (Eph. 2:2).

The world system, headed up by Satan, is opposed to the world of the elect, headed by Jesus Christ. The two systems are antagonistic.

“And be not conformed to this world.” Phillips translates this, “Don’t let the world around you squeeze you into its own mold.” The philosophy of the world is dog-eat-dog; it is self-centered, self-pleasing, indulgent, and indifferent to others. This world system puts constant pressure on the Christian to conform to it. This view looks at people as those who help or those who oppose, and resents or blesses them accordingly.

The world wants everything and everyone to conform to it, but for the Christian to be poured into its mold is sin and quenches the working of God in his life. When most Christians think of worldliness, they think in terms of man-made taboos (i.e. “I don’t smoke, drink, dance, or chew, And I don’t go with the girls who do”). While these things could be a manifestation of worldliness, real worldliness is much more subtle and devastating. The tragedy is that there are many Christians who do not practice the taboos but who still are extremely worldly.

How does the Christian conform to the world? The world has the philosophy that “money talks,” that “every man has his price,” and that “there is nothing that money can’t buy.” In those who live for pursuit of fortune alone, there is a ruthlessness that stops short of nothing. To try to get, merely in order to possess, is nothing short of idolatry: “covetousness ... is idolatry” (Col. 3:5). An obsession for money characterizes America today and it shows itself in our materialistic society. People strive to “keep up with the Joneses,” and go up to their ears in debt to make the world think they are high in the world’s standing.

Money is not evil, but the love of money brings evil to men. If the Lord in his grace brings fortune to a Christian, he should rejoice and remember that he is to be a good steward of that money. There is nothing sinful about Christians having money! But the Bible constantly exhorts the rich to give to the poor and to support the Lord’s work. With much wealth comes much responsibility.
Some time ago I was invited over to a Christian man’s home to discuss a personal problem. His home was lovely and would have been the envy of any couple. One subject led to another until we got around to the problem of giving faithfully to the Lord’s work. The man and his wife went on and on about how they wanted to give more but couldn’t because they had too many debts with the house and all. I then asked the man a simple question, “Have you ever considered moving out of this house and living on a lower standard so you can pay your bills and give faithfully to the Lord?” There was a dead silence and the subject was soon changed. It was obvious that they loved their home more than they loved the Lord’s work.

**Fame:** There is an inherent drive within men for public recognition. The world will bootlick, polish apples, politic, and stop at nothing to become famous. Christians should thank the Lord if fame comes their way in God’s providence, but their fame is to be used as a testimony for the grace of God and for reaching others for Christ.

**Power:** Every person in the world wants to be “top man on the totem pole.” Men have a great lust for power and desire to dominate others. This is why we have Nazis, the Ku Klux Clan, communists, black power, racial hatred, wars, husbands who dominate their wives, and parents who dominate their children. Man loves power! Authority may be given to the Christian, but it is from God and is to be administered in the fear of God. Christians become worldly as they lust for power in the local church. There are always some who try to dominate a local church by their prestige or money.

**Pleasure:** The world lives for pleasure and thrives on the evils that some pleasures bring. The Bible says that there is pleasure in sin, but the consequences of this sin are devastating to the human soul. God has richly given the Christian “all things to enjoy” (1 Tim. 6:17). There are thousands of legitimate pleasures that God has given us. But pleasure must never be put ahead of Jesus Christ. God wants us to enjoy nature, sports, music, the arts, reading, friendships, and social contacts. But these pleasures should only be used when they can glorify God. Anything that does not glorify God is not of God and is not for the Christian.

Everything must be done with moderation. God wants us to read widely and be intelligent Christians, but we must be selective in our reading and need not fill our minds with smut. If it is our conviction that movies may be attended, then we must be selective in the movies we see so as not to fill our mind with trash. If we have a cabin on the lake or a boat, this is fine as long as it does not take the place of Christ. If a woman wants to dress in style, she should wear her clothes to glorify God and not to woo men. Most of us are probably more worldly than we realize as we sit in front of the TV hour after hour but then complain because we do not have time to study the Word and pray. TV is to be used in moderation. A person who judges other Christians because God has blessed them with material substance is also worldly and the world thrives on jealousy.

The Christian is to use the world but not abuse it: “And they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away” (1 Cor. 7:31). Conformity to the world (i.e.
worldliness) is really a mental attitude that excludes Christ, for then the world system is swaying us to its side and way of thinking.

If one of our Christian friends were to show up at a girlie show some night to enjoy the dancing girls and live it up, we would say that this was worldliness, and it would be. But he could sit at home in a perfectly dark room and be thinking about being at a girlie show or something comparable and be just as worldly. Why? Because his mind is not occupied with Jesus Christ. The person who has his mind on Christ will not be at a girlie show or thinking constantly on similar subjects.

CONFORMITY TO CHRIST — Romans 12:2b

“But be ye transformed.” The verb “transformed” is in the passive voice in the Greek and indicates that the subject is being acted upon. The Christian is to allow himself to be transformed by the power of Christ through the Holy Spirit. This is an inward action that brings outward change of character. Transformation comes when one is dependent upon the Holy Spirit and surrendered to God’s will. When this takes place, we begin to look on people as persons with real needs, not just as instruments we can use. We begin to see that money and material things are no longer as important as they once seemed to be. The big thing in life is no longer whether you can close this deal and make so much money, but whether you will do it in a way that honors and glorifies the Lord, whether you make money or not. A sign of transformation is a person becoming less self-centered and more objective with his own life, not taking everything so personally but being willing to evaluate it.

I remember the story of a preacher who said from the pulpit (quite unwisely) that it was characteristic of women to take everything personally, even those things that were said in a general way. At the end of the message, a supposedly mature Christian woman came to him and said, “What do you mean? I don’t take these things personally at all!”

“By the renewing of your mind.” Transformation comes as one has a radical renovation of the mind. The mind is the key to conformity to Jesus Christ. What we put into our mind is what we will be! If we think about money, pleasure, fame, sex, or power all the time, we will certainly reap these things in life. If we think about Christ and relate these things to him, then we will have a Christ-oriented mind, “casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ” (2 Cor. 10:5).

Our minds must be active for Christ. Evangelicals are often afraid to use their minds, and sometimes have actually closed their minds to divine revelation. Mental atrophy is a mark of worldliness because we have stopped using our minds for God.
The late Dr. Barnhouse found that at night he would often have dreams that were not
glorifying to God. The sensual thoughts of his subconscious mind were finding release. So he
began to memorize Scripture before he went to bed at night in order to put his mind on Christ just
before falling asleep. He found that this did not completely cure his thought life at night, but it
certainly made a big improvement. Oh, that we could all have this same consciousness of sin!

The world is struggling for our minds. It tells us that it is all right to cheat on income tax
returns if no one finds out. It tells us that premarital and extramarital sex are not wrong, and
morality is what we make it. It tells us that the way to change government is through revolution,
not legislation. It tells us that all religions are good for we are all going to the same place, just
traveling different roads. If we listen to the lures of the world long enough without relating things
to Christ, we soon fall into the devil’s trap.

PROVING GOD’S WILL — Romans 12:2c

“That ye may prove.” The word “prove” means to “test with the idea of approval.” Thus,
the believer is to test God’s will for approval. This is not so much a proof to others but a proof to
the Christian himself. In doing God’s will we approve it as good. We come to understand that
doing his will is not burdensome but a blessing.

The philosophy of the world is: “Show me, and I will believe.” But Christian philosophy
is: “Believe, and I will show you.” There is a leap of faith and obedience for the Christian, after
which he will come to understand and love God’s will.

“What is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.” By presenting the body to
God and having a Christlike mental attitude, the Christian approves God’s will as good, well-
pleasing and perfect. It is wholesome, satisfying and complete. Only when the Christian puts God
to the test will he find a deep, satisfying experience of being in the center of God’s will.

CONCLUSION

Christian, do you want God’s will? Then you must present your body to God for a living
sacrifice. And you must not be conformed to this world, but have a mental attitude that is
occupied with Christ.

A young Christian woman said to a dear old saint who had walked with the Lord for many
years, “I would give the world to have your experience.”

The devoted Christian lady said to her, “My dear, that’s exactly what it cost me. I gave
away the world for it!”
You can never experience the satisfaction of obeying God’s will until you receive him as your personal Saviour from sin and Lord of your life. You can never know God’s will intimately until you say, “I will,” for Christ.
WHAT ARE YOUR SPIRITUAL GIFTS?
Romans 12:3-8

by Dr. Jack L. Arnold

Of all the subjects that deal with practical Christianity, spiritual gifts are the least understood. Most Christians do not have the foggiest idea what spiritual gifts are, how they function, or for what purpose they are given.

A spiritual gift is a God-given ability or capacity for the purpose of service. Every Christian has at least one spiritual gift, “As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God” (1 Pet. 4:10). Many Christians have more than one, “Whereunto I am appointed a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles” (2 Tim. 1:11).

Spiritual gifts are sovereignly given by God as he wills: “But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will” (1 Cor. 12:11). Probably, God gives these gifts at the moment of salvation. He gives us the exact gifts he wants us to have, so we should be content with them, not always trying to be something God never intended us to be. This does not mean that we should not desire other gifts so that we might do even greater Christian service (1 Cor. 12:31), but only that we should not be discontent if God is not so pleased to call and gift us.

Spiritual gifts then are given to the universal church, the Body of Christ, and are to be used as each Christian is dependent upon the Head of the Church, Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus gives gifts as he wills, and it is his prerogative to direct the gifts of the Body as he sees fit. The various parts of the human body never take orders from the hand or the foot; they take orders from the head. It is the head that sends down messages. As members of the body, Christians must take their direction from Jesus Christ.

ACCEPTING GOD’S SOVEREIGN WILL IN THE BESTOWAL OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS
— Romans 12:3

It is interesting to note that after Paul’s exhortation for the Christian to dedicate his life to God and lay his body on the line, he speaks about spiritual gifts. This is because the best way to get moving for God is to discover and use the spiritual gift that God has given you. He has supernaturally endowed each Christian with the capacity for service. Thus, the Christian is to stir up the gift that God has given him:
“Neglect not the gift that is in thee” (1 Tim. 4:14).

“Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands” (2 Tim. 1:6).

“For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think.” Apparently, some in the local church in Rome felt they were superior to other Christians because they had special, outstanding gifts from God; they had spiritual pride. Their estimate of their place in the Body of Christ was too high, and this brought pride and vanity to the local church:

“For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?” (1 Cor. 4:7).

These believers had not learned that all that a Christian has comes by God’s grace and is to be used for His glory.

“But to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.” The Christian is to have a serious mind and an objective evaluation of his gifts, and to realize that all he has is from God. He must realize that “without me ye can do nothing” (John 15:5), and try to think others better than himself:

“Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others” (Phil. 2:3-4).

To learn to take second place takes much grace from God and is a mark of real Christian maturity. As Spurgeon said, “It takes more grace than one can tell to play the second fiddle well.”

God has created us, saved us, and given us gifts according to his sovereign will. We are to learn to be content and humble in his will for us. While there is a tendency to overestimate our gifts, there is also a tendency in some to underestimate gifts. We are to use what gifts God has given us to the maximum.

THE UNITY AND DIVERSITY OF GIFTS WITHIN THE BODY — Romans 12:4-5

Gifts are given to individual members of the universal church, but these gifts find their expression through the local church. Why has God placed you in a local church? What is your gift? How can you use this gift in that particular local assembly?
“For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office [function].” Paul uses the illustration of the human body to make a point concerning the Body of Christ, the church. The human body is made up of many parts, and each part has its specific function. Each part also needs the other parts if the body is to function properly. Some are out front where they can easily be seen (e.g. eyes, nose, hands, feet), while others are in the background (e.g. heart, liver, spinal column). Yet, all are important and each needs the other. Contract hepatitis or break your back and you soon realize how important these parts are to the rest of the body.

Consider the example of the armed forces. For every man who carries a rifle on the front lines, there are thousands that support him. The infantry is supported by naval bombardment and field artillery. Then there must be those who supply food, ammunition, and fuel. Some have more glorious positions, but all are necessary — and those who perform the glorious tasks could never do so without the support of the others. The same thing is true in the church. Those on the front lines of Christian service are supported by thousands of other faithful saints who are doing what God called and gifted them to do.

“So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.” The Body of Christ needs each member if it is to function properly. There is no member of the universal or local church who is unimportant, for each has a gift to use in building up the church:

“For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body; so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him. And if they were all one member, where were the body? But now are they many members, yet but one body. And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee; nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary: And those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness. For our comely parts have no need: but God hath tempered [blended] the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked” (1 Cor. 12:12-24).
Does a person’s hand constantly slap his own face? Does his mind constantly think evil of his own person? Does his tongue constantly talk against his own body? No! If it did, the body would be schizophrenic. Each member of the Body is important, so we must learn to work together in unity, harmony, and love.

**USING SPIRITUAL GIFTS IN HARMONY — Romans 12:6-8**

Paul gives a list of spiritual gifts he would like to see better exercised in the local church at Rome. This is not an exhaustive list; others are mentioned in other books of the Bible. There are at least eighteen different gifts mentioned in Scripture (some question whether seven of them are in existence today). There may also be gifts that are not mentioned in Scripture. Here are some very important gifts not mentioned in this passage:

*Evangelists* (Eph. 4:11): While it is the responsibility of all Christians to be witnesses by life and lip, some are specially gifted in evangelism. Men such as George Whitefield, John Wesley, and D.L. Moody, Billy Graham and Bill Bright were or are gifted men in evangelism, and we couldn’t be like them if we wanted to be. These men have consistently been effective in leading others to Christ.

*Pastor-teacher* (Eph. 4:11): This is the special gift of tending and instructing a flock of believers in a local church. A pastor-teacher must give himself to the study of the Word and to prayer so that he may feed the flock. He is not called to be an administrator, counselor, psychiatrist, youth leader, Christian education director and janitor. One reason so many pastors cannot teach the Word to people is that they are so bogged down with administration. One pastor I know was so busy with administration and hospital visitation that he didn’t have proper time to study the Word and to pray. He was under so much pressure because of this that he developed ulcers. “I know it isn’t scriptural,” he said, “but the people demand it.” People must understand spiritual gifts. Most of the duties laid on a pastor-teacher in the average local church can and should be done by the congregation, for God has given them the gifts to get the job done. Most of the visitation should be done by the elders and the people.

*Faith* (1 Cor. 12:9): This is an exceptional ability to believe God, and it includes a ministry of prayer. I knew an elderly woman named May Walker, who is now at home with the Lord Jesus Christ. She learned to read at age 55 because, having just been saved, she wanted to be able to read God’s Word. When I first met May, she was in her late 70's and she
was crippled. But she didn’t let this stop her from exercising her gift of faith and prayer. Every day she would spend six to ten hours in prayer. She got hundreds of positive answers from the Lord. She would sit in her rocking chair day after day bringing before the Lord all kinds of requests. This woman had a gift and used it until her dying day.

“Having then gifts according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith.” Prophecy was a first-century gift of receiving revelation directly from God and giving it to the assembly. At that time there was no New Testament canon. Prophecy, in a general sense, may also refer to proclaiming the Word with power. One does not have to be a member of the clergy to have this gift.

“Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering.” This refers to the gift of service and helps. It is the ability to see things that need to be done, and then to get out and do them. This blessed gift is so needed in the average local church. A person with the gift of helps preaches a sermon with the action of his life — and actions speak louder than words.

“Or he that teacheth on teaching.” Teaching is the ability to instruct by analysis and application. Teaching takes the gift of studying, and this gift can be found in those who teach in seminary, college or Bible school. It should also be found in the local church: those who teach Sunday school should have this gift to some degree.

Every teacher of the Word of God will someday give account to God for his ministry. The serious Bible teacher constantly asks himself these questions: Have I listened to God’s voice? Have I laid my own reason in the dust before God in order to take it again, enlightened by him, for use in my work? Have I been spiritually alert and dependent upon the Holy Spirit? Have I gone again and again to the Word to refresh my own soul before speaking to others? Have I tried to live what I preach? have I acknowledged my sins when the Lord showed them to me, and have I repented of them? Have I been lazy? Have I insulted the Lord by feeding his sheep with ill-prepared food?

“Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation.” Exhortation is the ability to encourage and comfort, to move the will, to warm the heart, and to impel to action.

It is such a silly thing to blame someone for not exercising a gift that he does not possess. Frequently someone will speak who has the gift of teaching, and as he instructs the mind is illuminated and we understand much better than we did before. All the intellectuals go away saying, “My, what a wonderful speaker! I learned so much under that man!” But all the emotionally oriented people go away saying that he was terrible and dry. This is blaming the man for not exercising a gift of exhortation which he
doesn’t possess. On the other hand, when an exhorter without the gift of teaching speaks, all the intellectuals go away saying the message was terrible and dry, with nothing edifying in it at all. But the emotional people say, “How wonderful! We could listen to him all day.” All men do not have the same gifts, and all people do not have the same personality make-up. No one man is ever going to meet the needs of all the people!

“He that giveth, let him do it with simplicity [liberality].” This is the ability to give of one’s substance with sacrifice. All true Christians will give of their monies, but some have a special capacity. This does not have to be a gift among the rich only, for there are many poor folk who sacrifice out of their poverty.

When I was pastor of a church in California, a very dear Christian widow was a member of the congregation. She had very little money, and lived off a small rental and her social security check. Yet she gave liberally to the Lord’s work. She gave four times as much as some people who had much, much more. I later discovered how she sacrificed. She bought her grain in 100-pound sacks and ground it into flour herself. She limited her driving to save gas. She ate nothing but what she needed. And she made her own clothes. Why? She did these things because she wanted to give to the Lord’s work. She had the gift of giving.

Some among the wealthy also have the gift of giving. With this gift often comes the ability to make money. If God has given you this gift, it is not so that you can have a higher standard of living (although this may be true), but so that you can give and help support the Lord’s work.

“He that ruleth, with diligence [zeal].” This gift would most certainly be found in the office of elder. A man might be a good guy, a sharp businessman, etc., but without this gift of ability to rule in the assembly, he is not qualified to be an elder. Only those who have this ability should be put into this office. The gift of leadership may also be found in other positions in the local church.

“He that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness.” This is the ability to care for the sick and feeble. There are some Christians who can cheer up a hospital room and some who cast a gloom on it. It is a matter of giftedness.

CONCLUSION

These gifts are spiritual capacities and can only be effectively used when one is under the control of the Spirit. It is possible to use a spiritual gift in the energy of the flesh, and when this is done the gift often dies when it is not given public recognition. To be effective, a spiritual gift must be connected with the power of the Holy Spirit.
A modern kitchen has a number of electrical appliances: a refrigerator, a microwave oven, a toaster oven, perhaps an electrical oven and stove. Each is designed to do a different thing, but all use the same power. And unless they are connected to that power, they are useless. This is the way with spiritual gifts. They are divinely given capacities, and they require the power of the Holy Spirit if they are to function.

Each believer has been given spiritual capacities. Some are thousand-gallon tanks, some are hundred-gallon tanks, some fifty, and some ten. A ten-gallon tank cannot be a thousand-gallon tank no matter how hard it tries. But a ten-gallon tank is more fruitful if it is overflowing than is a thousand-gallon tank that is only half full. God holds us responsible to use our God-given capacities (spiritual gifts) to the maximum. Use the gifts he has given you to the fullest, and do not try to be something God never intended you to be.

This message has been directed to Christians, but there is a gift that God will give the non-Christian. It is the gift of salvation in Christ Jesus. What must you do to receive this gift? Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.
PRACTICAL CHRISTIANITY
Romans 12:9-13

by Dr. Jack L. Arnold

We have now come to the most practical section in the Book of Romans, a section that is so practical it hurts. If the individual believer or the local church corporately would only apply these things to everyday life, the Christian, the church, and the world would be revolutionized. This section is easily understood, but difficult to apply.

These exhortations cannot be accomplished in the Christian’s own natural strength. They can only be accomplished by the Father’s grace working upon us, the Son’s life being manifested in us, and the Holy Spirit’s power working for us. It takes supernatural power to accomplish these things because they are contrary to our human flesh.

LOVE EXTENDED — Romans 12:9-13

This section of Scripture is all about love. Love is the key to practical Christianity. After speaking about spiritual gifts, Paul begins to speak about love. Why? Not all have the same gifts, but all can exercise love and produce practical holiness in life.

This Scripture has been practically worn out by modern day liberals who neglect or reject most of Romans. They wax eloquent on love but still manage to take this section out of context. These exhortations are to individual Christians and are not a treatise on social action.

“Let love be without dissimulation [hypocrisy].” The Christian is to exercise love without hypocrisy. The word “hypocrisy” was used for play acting, as when a Greek actor played a number of different characters by changing masks. The Christian’s love is to be genuine, sincere, and tender. It is not sentimentality, gushiness, overlooking faults, or compromising with evil. It is an open, honest devotion even when someone is unlovable. It is action that is guided by the commands and principles of the Bible: “My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth” (1 John 3:18).

“Abhor [hate] that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.” A part of loving as we should is hating evil and cleaving to good. Love begins with ourselves, for the Law of God says, “Love your neighbor as yourself.” We must love ourselves before we can
love others. How? By hating the evil that is in us and holding fast to the good that God produces in us. Evil is not determined by what we think is evil, or by what our upbringing called evil, but by the Word of God. It is only as we walk, think, and look at life in the light of the revelation of the Word of God that we can hate what is evil and hold fast what is good:

“Abstain from all appearance of evil” (1 Thess. 5:22)

“Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things” (Phil. 4:8).

It is impossible to have love without having hate, for these are opposites. If we are to love good, then we must also hate evil. Every Christian is to imitate his God, who hates sin and loves the sinner who receives Christ. Our God is a God of hate and wrath as well as a God of love and mercy. Christians must learn to hate evil in themselves and in others: “Ye that love the Lord hate evil” (Ps. 97:10). There is a real tendency to rationalize sin in our lives, but we must face it objectively and ask God to begin to deliver us from it.

In a short article, “Love and Hate,” the Rev. R. J. Rushdoony wrote:

“In these days, when men are making a cure-all out of love and demand total love of all things, the words of Scripture are a refreshing and healthy antidote. Jesus Christ, in speaking to the church of Ephesus, commended them because they hated what He hated: ‘But this thou hast, that thou hastest the deeds of the Nicolaitanes which I also hate.’ (Revelation 2:6). There are many such declarations in Scripture: all assume the necessity for hating as a part of the privilege of love. If we love that which is good, we will hate that which is evil. If we love and honor the joys and sanctity of marriage and family life, we will hate everything which works to destroy it. If we love our Christian faith and heritage, we will hate the anti-Christian forces which wage war against us. And if we love our country, we will hate those who subvert it, wage war against it or seek to destroy it.”

Love and hate are different sides of the same coin. Those who claim to be above hate are also beyond love. They do not feel strongly enough about anything to love it and hate its opposite. Such people are emotionally and intellectually sterile.

The love mongers, who preach endlessly about loving everything, and “love” as a way of salvation, are really not talking about love. They are asking for the toleration
of evil. They are asking us to tolerate evil, to give it freedom to destroy us, and to destroy our Christian law and order. Anyone who asks us to tolerate evil is actually asking us to love evil and to hate good, but they are not honest enough to say so. For example, one writer who recently wrote a book pleading for love and toleration for homosexuals, child molesters and every other kind of pervert, spoke of the Bible and Christianity with savage hatred, and said, of Christian morality, “To be chaste is no longer praiseworthy; rather, it is something unnatural, and therefore almost intolerable.”

Such people pretend to be against hate, but they are simply preaching the love of evil, and the hatred of all that which is holy and good. Their purpose is to convert you from the love of God to the love of evil.

“Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another.” Among Christians there is to be a familial love and affection. This is kindness, graciousness, and mutual respect for another’s person and property.

“Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any; even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye” (Col. 3:13).

This also involves honoring other Christians more than ourselves: giving another the preferred seat, the preferred honor, and the preferred place.

“Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others” (Phil. 2:3-4).

This is having an attitude that every other Christian is somehow better than I and has something to teach me.

“Not slothful in business.” This is a poor translation in the King James Version. This verse has nothing to do with good business ethics or practices, although a Christian should be above reproach in all his business dealings. It should be translated, “Never flag in zeal,” or “Be not lazy as to what you ought to do” (Luther). A Christian is not to be lazy in anything, but especially not in his spiritual life. Spiritual laziness is the cause of spiritual defeat. The average Christian probably spends more time grooming his or her body than he does grooming his soul for spiritual beauty. How much time do we give daily for study of the Word and prayer? Do we have time set aside for Christian service?

There is much talk about the importance of tithing our money, but little mention of the greater importance of tithing our time. How different our life would be if we gave the Lord a tenth of our time every day. This would amount to two hours and twenty-four
minutes. If this were the standard, most of us would merely be playing at being Christians. No wonder God says, “Be not lazy in your spiritual life.”

“Fervent in spirit.” The Christian is to be burning or glowing in his human spirit as he is controlled by the Holy Spirit. He is to radiate the person of Jesus Christ in his life.

“Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus” (Acts 4:13).

Every Christian should have a zeal and enthusiasm for Christ that is obvious to the world. If the Christian is not excited about Jesus Christ, how can he ever expect the world to get excited?

“Serving the Lord.” A Christian is never to falter in his service for Jesus Christ; he is always to be available. Genuine love is available and ready to minister. We must all learn to serve the Lord in faithfulness, not for the glory and praise of man, but for the glory and praise of God: “Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful” (1 Cor. 4:2).

Have you ever noticed how moody we often are in our service for the Lord? We want to serve only when we feel like it. A call comes for some kind of Christian service and we say, “Well, I’d like to, but I’m not in the mood right now.” After we have undertaken a task for a while we may say, “I’m tired of doing this. Let somebody else take it for a change.”

“Rejoicing in hope.” The Christian rejoices inwardly because of the assured fact that he will someday be in heaven with Jesus Christ. Hope is the anticipation of future delight, with some expectation of obtaining it. Hope is the onward look that sees something in the present that is expected to bring delight in the future. We are commanded to be rejoicing Christians: “Rejoice evermore” (1 Thess. 5:16).

Ray Stedman, pastor of Peninsula Bible Church in Palo Alto, California, described two kinds of Christians: Those who get up in the morning and say, “Good morning, Lord!” and those who get up in the morning and say, “Good lord, it’s morning!”

“Patient in tribulation.” The Christian is to have an attitude of patient endurance in the midst of tribulation and trials. He is to exhibit confidence that this will all work together for good and that God is on the throne. This produces patience.

“For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us” (Rom. 8:18).
“For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory” (2 Cor. 4:17).

Even though the present circumstances might be dark and unpleasant, the Christian is aware that God is at work in these circumstances and that they have been brought into his life to mature him spiritually and prepare him for heaven. Therefore, the Christian is not to murmur or complain or blame others in the midst of trials and tribulations.

“Continuing instant in prayer.” The Christian is to persevere in prayer. He is to pray all the time: “Pray without ceasing” (1 Thes. 5:17). His attitude should be one of prayer, and he should also find time daily to pray in a concentrated way to his Heavenly Father. Prayer is hard work, but it pays great dividends. It is our primary way of communicating with God. He has spoken to us through his Word; we speak to him through prayer. Without prayer, we die spiritually, for no good relationship between two persons can exist on one-way communication. The devil would get us to stop praying, for prayer combats the forces of hell and makes the plan of God a reality in the Christian’s life.

“Distributing to the necessity of the saints.” The Christian who has been blessed materially by God is to give liberally, gladly, and freely to Christians who have needs. Why? Because love is generous:

“Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life” (1 Tim. 6:17-19).

“Given to hospitality.” The Christian is to open his home to other Christians, not just being willing, but making a positive effort to entertain fellow believers.

CONCLUSION

The love that one Christian can show to another is simply a reflection of the fact that God is love. God manifested his love at the Cross where Christ died for sinners.

If you will trust Christ as your personal Lord and Saviour, you will come to experience God’s love in your life. Will you ask God to draw you to Jesus Christ and grant you the grace to believe in him who alone can give you eternal life and the forgiveness of sin?
In Romans 12:9-13 we saw how genuine love reaches out to others. It is faithful, courteous, available, and generous towards others. Now we will discuss what should be done when love is offended. This supreme test comes when love is extended to another but is rebuffed. What are you to do when you extend genuine love to someone who believes that your motives are twisted and perverted, who doubts your sincerity, and who meets your goodness with malice and hate? Will you still exercise the love of Christ towards that person?

The biblical principle is that Christians are to love their enemies. This was first set down by the Lord Jesus Christ, and later put into practice by the apostles, especially the Apostle Paul.

“For if ye love them which love you, what thank have ye? for sinners also love those that love them. And if ye do good to them which do good to you, what thank have ye? for sinners also do even the same. And if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? for sinners also lend to sinners, to receive as much again. But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil” (Luke 6:32-35).

Anyone can love that which is lovely, but it is extremely difficult to love those who are unlovely.

Again it should be emphasized that these exhortations cannot be carried out in one’s own strength. They find fulfillment only as one allows the life of Christ to flow through him to others. This is a supernatural way of life.

LOVE OFFENDED BY A CHRISTIAN — Romans 12:14-16

While these verses apply directly to the relationship of one Christian to another, they may also be applied to all men in general.

“Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not.” This verse says that Christians are to speak well of (bless) those who persecute them; they are not to curse those who do them wrong. This begins with an attitude. How do you feel inside when
somebody does evil to you after you have done them a favor? Do you say to yourself, “Well, that’s the last time I’ll ever help him. I’ll get even with that guy!”? Is there a tendency to run down, degrade, or curse the person who offended you? Do you not speak well to his face and evil behind his back? If you cannot say something good, say nothing at all!

Sometimes we are guilty of double talk. Have you ever been talking with someone about another person when the conversation became very derogatory, and then had the person being discussed walk up? You turn and say to him, “Oh, I’m so glad to see you. We’ve just been talking about you and what a wonderful guy you are.” That is not love.

“Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.” When our love is offended, do we withdraw and shut ourselves out from the one who refuses our love, or do we learn to weep and rejoice with him instead? Love does not withdraw, but attempts to enter into the world of the offender. If we say, “I’m not going to waste my time on that rebellious bird,” we have lost the true meaning of love. When the person who has offended you has something in his life to rejoice about, rejoice with him. If he is in sorrow, weep with him. Send a note or speak a word of rejoicing or of consolation. If there is a tragedy, do not say, “It served him right; he had this coming!”

Notice that rejoicing with those who have joy is put first. It is a real mark of Christian maturity when one can rejoice with those God has blessed, for pride and jealousy are natural responses. When God has given someone wealth or talent or some other blessing, it is difficult to rejoice with him because of petty jealousy.

“Be of the same mind one toward another.” Christians are to live in harmony with one another and esteem others better than themselves. The attitude of every Christian should be, “How can I be a blessing to other believers? What can I do to advance the interest of other Christians?” He should have an attitude of Christ first, others second, and self last.

“Mind not high things, but condescend to [associate with] men of low estate.” The Christian is not only to associate with the well-to-do in the church, but with all brothers and sisters in Christ, no matter what their social standing.

“Be not wise in your own conceits.” Conceit or snobbery of any kind is an abomination to the Lord: “Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit? there is more hope of a fool than of him” (Prov. 26:12).

In context, this has to do with showing love to a person who is unlovely. After patting yourself on the back, you say, “Am I not wonderful? I have really shown this person what a Christian is!” This is conceit and of the flesh.
Paul seems to widen his thinking to include the unsaved world, for we are also to love all people. However, these same principles can be applied to the love of one Christian to another.

"Recompense to no man evil for evil." Paul seems to assume that somebody will at some time do the Christian evil. When this happens, the Christian is not to have a spirit of retaliation. He should never say, "I'll get even!" He must learn to forgive and forget, and must not hold grudges.

I know from experience that this principle works! When I was a pastor in California, two of the young elders literally gave me fits, and at times I became very disgusted with their petty actions. When I felt it was time to leave that flock and go back to school, I gave the church a six-month notice. I am sure the two elders were glad God was leading me away. During this six months period, I determined before God that I would not say any evil thing, and that I would do my job faithfully and attempt to love these two men. In a few short weeks, the atmosphere changed and I began to see God do a great work in my heart and in the hearts of these two men. Love was conquering ill feelings. Time passed quickly and I went back to school. What a joy it was a year later to have one of these elders fly from California to Texas to ask me to come back and take the pulpit again. Love had melted all our hearts. But I could not go back because I felt the Lord was leading me to Roanoke.

"Provide things honest in the sight of all men." This could be translated, "Give advanced thought to things that are noble in the sight of all men." A believer should plan his conduct before unbelievers in order that it might be honest, not just honest according to the standard of the world, but honest according to the biblical standard. Honesty is a quickly vanishing virtue in our day.

"If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men." It is the solemn duty of the Christian, if at all possible, to live in peace with all men: "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith" (Gal. 6:10). Paul indicates that there may be times when it is not possible to live peaceably with all men. There are some people who simply do not want to get along with others in spite of every attempt to be at peace with them. The Christian is never to be the initiator of a war-like attitude, although he may have to participate in war. It is not always possible for a Christian to be at peace with all men, but he can be a lover of peace, a giver of peace, and often a maker of peace.

"Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves." When someone does evil to a Christian, he is not to fight back or to try to vindicate himself in any way.
The foremost trait of human nature is self-defense. If someone thrusts an object toward your face, your eyes close immediately by instinct. If an object falls toward you, your arm rises to ward off the blow. By nature, when we are offended, we automatically put up a defense mechanism and want to fight back. God asks us to do something contrary to our natures: not to fight back when offended. A person may ask, “Don’t I have the right to stick up for my rights?” The answer is no. God says the Christian is not to avenge himself; he is to act supernaturally.

“But rather give place to wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.” The reason the Christian is not to avenge himself is that God will take care of the offender. Vengeance is God’s job, so that when the Christian avenges himself, he takes authority that does not belong to him. God has subtle ways of taking care of those who oppose his children, and he promises to take care of those who offend us. When we avenge ourselves, it only makes things worse.

How many of us have heard through the grapevine a rumor about ourselves that has no validity? What is our natural reaction? To fight back! To straighten out the story! And often to straighten out the person who started it, too! The best thing to do is nothing. God will take care of those with an evil tongue, and he will bless the one who lets him take the vengeance.

“Therefore, if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink; for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.” The Christian is to do good when his enemy offends him. Jesus taught this same principle: “But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you” (Matt. 5:44). The only vengeance Christians can inflict on others is the red-hot coals of love. Love is the only antidote for hate! When the Christian loves his enemies, they are either melted into repentance or hardened even more.

“Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.” The Christian can be overcome by evil, giving way to his sin nature, or he can overcome evil with good by allowing the life of Christ to flow through him. If genuine love is not showing up in your life, it may be for one of the following reasons:

1. You are trying to cling to your own life rather than abandoning yourself to the life of Christ.
2. You are insisting on being unloving and refusing to give up that attitude.
3. You are not facing what you really are in the flesh, for you are covering up or justifying that which God calls sin.
So long as the Christian clings to his old Adamic life, he will never have the love of Christ flowing through him. Only the life of Christ in us can teach us to love!

CONCLUSION

Only those who have experienced the love of God in Christ Jesus can give out the love of Christ in their lives. Do you know that God loves you? Have you experienced the love of God in Christ? If your answer is no, then you are not a Christian. How can you become a Christian and experience God’s love? The answer is that you must receive Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior. Then, and only then, will you know the God of love.
SUBJECTION TO GOVERNMENTAL AUTHORITY
Romans 13:1

by Dr. Jack L. Arnold

This section of Scripture deals with the Christian’s relationship to his government. Some of the teaching may be new to you, and it may appear controversial. I ask that you study what the Word of God has to say on this matter.

For two thousand years there has been a tendency on the part of some to make the Bible support a certain political system. But God’s written Word is not a book of political philosophy, economics or science. It does not deal with the physical and material realms of society but with the spiritual realm. There is no such thing as a Christian government or a Christian nation. There are governments and nations with Christians in them, but the Bible teaches no set political system.

In America there is a tendency to equate the teachings of Christianity with the democratic way of life, but this cannot honestly be done. God is not pro-American. God is not a democrat, or a republican, or a socialist, or a fascist, and he doesn't prescribe free enterprise. As wonderful as the American system of representation and free enterprise might be, it must be remembered that the Bible does not speak for or against any political system. God is for his people, the elect, and his wrath burns hot against all evil, whether in China, Russia, England, France, America, or any other nation. However, it cannot be denied that the teachings of Christ have influenced certain political systems, especially the governments of England and America.

While the Bible is silent as to political systems in different countries, it does set forth some principles concerning the Christian’s relationship to government: 1) government is a divine institution; 2) church and state are to be separate; and 3) Christians are to submit to government.

DIVINE INSTITUTIONS

God has established divine institutions for all men so that there will be order for the human race. We are not talking about Christian institutions such as the local church, baptism, and the Lord’s table that were given specifically for Christians. Rather, we are talking about institutions that were established in the beginning, long before there was a Christian church. These institutions are: 1) marriage; 2) the family unit; and 3) government for the protection of man. In marriage, the husband rules over the wife.
While God is not for any particular form of government, he does oppose some systems of government more than others, and certain aspects of all government. For example, communism seeks to abolish all three of the divine institutions mentioned here, and therefore incurs God’s condemnation in these respects.¹

**SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE**

_The universal church is a spiritual nation within the political nations of the world; the church is supernatural:_ The true, universal church of Jesus Christ is made up of all who have experienced the new birth through faith in Jesus Christ as personal Saviour. By his grace, God is supernaturally calling out a people for himself: “Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name” (Acts 15:14). The church is a supernatural and spiritual entity that is in the world but not of it.

_The church is supernatural:_ The universal church is supernatural because it is a spiritual nation within the political nations of the world.

“But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light” (1 Pet. 2:9).

God is no respector of nations or races, and the church transcends all political and national organizations. Those making up the church are a spiritual nation, and all give allegiance to the same king, Jesus Christ; all observe the same laws, the Bible; and all sing the same national anthem, “God saved the sinner by grace through faith in Christ.”

_The Church Is Separate from the State:_ Jesus Christ first set forth the principle of separation of church and state:

“But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light” (1 Pet. 2:9).

The Christian is to obey both God and the state. Both the state and the church have God as their head. God has given the state authority to operate in its realm and the church authority to operate in its realm. Each has its own sphere of operation under God. I strongly uphold the principle of separation of church and state, but I do not endorse the separation of God and the state. God is Lord of the state as much as he is

¹ While God is not for any particular form of government, he does oppose some systems of government more than others, and certain aspects of all government. For example, communism seeks to abolish all three of the divine institutions mentioned here, and therefore incurs God’s condemnation in these respects.
Lord of the church, but his sovereignty over the state is not exercised through religious leaders.

The church exists to preach the gospel to society in order that individuals in society might be changed by the new birth and brought into the church. The church does a spiritual work for society. The state exists to protect society from itself and to do a moral work for society. The church, which is part of society, prays for and renders obedience to the state, and the state in turn gives protection to the church from society in general. The purpose of the church is to preach the gospel to the world so that some will be saved, and so that these individuals will then affect society and be good citizens of the state.

Communism says, “Change man’s environment and you will change the individual.” The Christian principle is: “Change the individual by the new birth, and this will change society.” These two philosophies are diametrically opposed.

Liberal churches in America, which include many of the major denominations, teach that the church’s gospel is social reform — the redemption of society, not the redemption of the individual. This is opposite to what the Bible actually teaches. The true function of the church is the redemption of individuals.

At a conference on Church and Society, sponsored by the National Council of Churches, one group of delegates argued that Christians should accept violence as a valid means of attacking the problems of racism and poverty. These liberals are not teaching real Christianity, and have perverted the true purpose of the church.

SUBMISSION TO EXISTING GOVERNMENT - Romans 13:1

In Romans 13:1, Paul stated the third principle: A Christian is to be in submission to the government that is over him.

“Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers.” This is speaking about a Christian’s responsibility to government. It is not applicable to the unsaved man. Whatever government a Christian finds himself under, he is to be in submission and obedience to it. This was spoken by Paul who lived under one of the most tyrannical dictatorships of all time, Nero’s rule of Rome. It was the Roman government that put Christ to death, and Nero later executed the Apostle Paul:

“As we come to the study of this thirteenth chapter, it is well for us to remember that he who sat upon the throne of the empire when Paul gave this instruction concerning obedience to the powers that be, was one of the vilest beasts in human form who ever occupied a throne — a
sensuous, sensual brute ... an evil, blatant egoist of most despicable character, whose cruelties and injustices beggar all description. And yet God in His providence permitted this demon-controlled wretch to wear the diadem of the greatest empire the world has yet known” (Ironside, Romans, p. 156).

Being subject to government in America includes such things as paying income taxes, accepting jury duty, obeying the law, etc. This same truth is taught by the Apostle Peter:

“Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well” (1 Pet. 2:13-14).

“For there is no power but of [from] God: the powers that be are ordained of God.” This verse says that the authority behind all government on this earth is God. This is much easier to preach in America today in China or Russia, but the fact remains: all governments that exist have authority from God — the bad as well as the good. Men may abuse this authority, but God is still in control. One thing worse than being under a bad government is being where there is no government at all, where anarchy reigns.

God appoints all rulers to their positions:

“And he [God] changeth the times and the seasons: he removeth kings, and setteth up kings” (Dan. 2:21).

“To the intent that the living may know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men” (Dan. 4:17).

“I have made the earth, the man and the beast that are upon the ground, by my great power and by my outstretched arm, and have given it unto whom it seemed meet unto me. And now have I given all these lands unto the hand of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, my servant; and the beasts of the field have I given him also to serve him. And all nations shall serve him, and his son, and his son’s son, until the very time of his land come: and then many nations and great kings shall serve themselves of him. And it shall come to pass, that the nation and kingdom which will not serve the same Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, and that will not put their neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon, that nation will I punish,
saith the Lord, with the sword, and with the famine, and with the pestilence, until I have consumed them by his hand” (Jer. 27:5-8).

As one reads through the Old Testament he becomes aware that wicked kings were placed in authority by God as well as good ones. God raised up Pharaoh to sit on the throne of Egypt:

“For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth” (Rom. 9:17).

The Book of Daniel tells us that God placed cold-blooded Nebuchadnezzar on his throne. We are told that Cyrus, that cruel Chaldean king, was God's servant, raised up by God to scourge Israel. When Pontius Pilate said to Christ, “Do you not know that I have power to crucify you?” (John 19:10), the Lord Jesus looked at him and said, “Thou couldst have no power except it be given thee from above” (John 19:11).

Elections and revolutions do not really put governments in power; God does. These are only instruments used by God to work his will. Scripture tells us that God puts in power the men of his choosing, whether they be benevolent rulers or tyrants. Every government that exists is held in the palm of God's hand; it can only go as far as he wills; it is under his control because he ordained it.

The reason a Christian is to submit to the government over him, whether it be good or bad, is that it is ordained from God. When a Christian is obeying the government he is obeying God. By his obedience, he is a testimony to the government that salvation in Christ makes one a better citizen of the state.

This is a hard concept to grasp, for we would like to think that God is behind governments like America and England, but that he has nothing to do with oppressive and evil governments like that of China. But all governments exist by God's authority, by his permissive will.

THE EXCEPTION TO SUBMISSION

Under certain conditions a Christian may have to disobey his government. Christians are first heavenly citizens and servants of God; then they are citizens of the state. When the purposes the state conflict with the purposes of Christ, then men must obey God rather than men. A Christian may have to be disobedient for religious purposes but never for political purposes.
When the state takes away the Christian’s right for spiritual service — to propagate the gospel, to read God’s Word, or to meet with other Christians — then the Christian must disregard the warnings of the state:

“And they called them, and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard” (Acts 4:18-20).

“And when they had brought them, they set them before the council: and the high priest asked them, Saying, Did not we straitly command you that ye should not teach in this name? and, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man’s blood upon us. Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him” (Acts 5:27-32).

The state may take away our church buildings, but as long as it allows the church to meet in homes, there is no reason to disobey.

When the state demands that a Christian do an unchristian act, he is to resist. For instance, no Christian had to support Hitler in his mass murder of six million Jews. Neither should the Christian lie or steal for the state. He must stand uncompromisingly for righteousness under whatever government he resides.

A believer in atheistic Russia will not fail to proclaim, “The fool has said in his heart: There is no God.” If his faithfulness to God should be noticed by the authorities and he should be arrested, then he must stand faithfully, even to prison, exile, or martyrdom.

As Christians we are to be law-abiding citizens, but if governments forbid our preaching the gospel, we will disobey and preach anyway. If governments order us to do evil, we must disobey.

CONCLUSION

These verses are written for Christian men and women, and they cannot be applied until a person has come to know Jesus Christ as personal Lord and Saviour.
You cannot be a Christian until you have been born from above. This new birth becomes a reality when one believes that Christ died for his sins and commits his life to Christ for salvation. Until you come to Christ, you will never understand the Christian’s relationship to his government.
DARE YOU RESIST YOUR GOVERNMENT?  
Romans 13:2-4

by Dr. Jack L. Arnold

The relationship of the church to the state has long been a controversial subject among professing Christians. The Roman Catholics do not believe in separation of church and state, but feel that the church is to dictate policy to the state. The Reformed Churches (Lutheran, Presbyterian, Dutch Reformed) believe in separation of church and state, but think the state should listen to the church on matters of morals and ethics. The Baptists have traditionally held to strict separation of church and state, and some extreme groups have gone so far as to say a Christian cannot even participate in any political activity. The government of America was set up by Protestants who believed in separation of church and state, and our representative government is patterned after the Presbyterian form of government which had its beginnings in the Reformation.

The general principles of the Christian's relationship to government are clearly set forth in Romans 13:1: All government, good or bad, is ordained of God, so all Christians are to be in submission to the government which God in his sovereignty has put over them. Submission is necessary because Christians are not to be known as political reactionaries; they are sent into this world to be witnesses to it. The Christian is not to revolt against government for political purposes, although he most certainly is expected to hold political convictions and may be deeply involved in the politics of his country. It is quite possible for two Christians to hold different political convictions and still worship in the same church.

A Christian may disobey his government only for religious purposes when the demands of the state conflict with the commands of God. The Christian must then obey God rather than men. When may the Christian disobey the state? When it takes away his right to propagate the gospel or forces him to do an unchristian act.

DO NOT REVOLT AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT — Romans 13:2

"Whoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God" The word “resisteth” means “arranges in battle” or “resists by force.” The point is that a Christian is to have no part in rebellion or revolution against his government, whether it be good or bad. Generally government establishes law and order, and the one thing worse than being under a bad government is being under no government at all (anarchy).
The Christian who is not in submission to civil authority is in rebellion against God himself. The Bible does not forbid legally teaching and agitating for better government if these legal steps do not lead to force and violence. Where law is hard and unreasonable, legitimate protest, not disobedience, is the duty of the Christian. Submission to government does not mean that the Christian cannot protest against evil and corruption, only that such protest must be done by legal means.

The teaching of Romans 13:2 is clear: Christians are not to be a party to revolution. There have been instances in history where Christians have revolted against established government. Oliver Cromwell, a deep Christian, overthrew the Royalists in England in 1647 with his parliamentary armies. George Washington led the Colonial armies against the British in the American revolution. At great moments of crisis in history, believers have had to make difficult decisions. They stand or fall before God.

In our own American Revolution, Christians were divided over how to understand their responsibilities to the state and over the right to revolt. Some, especially those of the Church of England, fought on the side of the British in an attempt to be faithful to Romans 13:1. Others fled to Canada. John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, was a Tory and sided with England rather than with the Colonies because of his biblical conviction. Yet the Reformed Churches, especially the Presbyterians, felt the revolution justifiable. This revolution was somewhat different from others as it did not result in a breakdown of law and order. Political, social, and economic order was maintained. In fact, the Congress of 1774 had no thoughts of revolution and tried for two years to gain equal representation by lawful means. History shows that Britain, not the Colonies, forced the issue. It was in 1776, after much prayer, that the Continental Congress decided to declare its independence. This ultimately led to the formation of our Declaration of Independence, which acknowledges God as the Creator of all men. Our Constitution and form of government were set forth to a nation that was God-fearing, Christ-living, and biblically oriented. However, this does not prove it was biblically correct to revolt.

1Rev. William E. Hill, Jr. in an article, “Democracy’s Doom” (The Presbyterian Journal, March 21, 1962), wrote: “The American system of constitutional government grew directly out of the Reformation convictions brought to this land from Scotland and England. Indeed, our Constitution, itself, is patterned after the Presbyterian system of government. Democracy must grow in the soil of an intelligent, God-fearing people who know, believe in, and practice the precepts of the Bible... Democracy depends upon a profound belief in a Holy and Sovereign God, the dignity and moral responsibility of man; the recognition of moral law, an abhorrence of violence, a love of law and order, a sense of brotherhood, which only Bible-believing Christianity can give. In any other soil, democracy will ultimately denigrate into rivalry, factionalism and violence, ending as Aristotle predicted — in ‘chaos or dictatorship.’
“And they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation [judgment or judicial discipline].” Government exists to preserve law and order, and any Christian who opposes his government by force will receive just retribution from the state. To resist government is to resist God because government is merely an instrument of God. A Christian must be punished by the state if he opposes the state for political reasons. This ought to caution Christians against identifying themselves with political causes to oppose or subvert the government of their country. When they do, they are likely to suffer for it — even more likely to suffer than the wicked themselves. God may pass over the sin of the unsaved to give them opportunity to repent, but he brings divine discipline upon Christians for their rebellion. Ignorance is never an excuse for rebellion against God’s laws.

In the past Christians have verbally sided against the existing government, and sometimes they have been guilty of violence and treason. When the government brought just retribution against them, the dissenting Christians claimed they were being persecuted for their Christian beliefs. This is not true; they were suffering as deluded Christians who were political reactionaries. This was a common thing in the Reformation. The Mennonite brethren in Russia were a wealthy and prospering people. When the government of the Czar put some restraints on them that affected their pocketbooks, they opposed him on a political basis. The Czar brought terrible persecution on the Mennonites and they fled to other countries. Did they suffer as Christians or as political reactionaries?

GOVERNMENT IS GOD’S INSTRUMENT TO RESTRAIN EVIL — Romans 13:3

“For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power?” Men cannot be left without restraint, for then there would be chaos. Government is ordained by God to keep down the sinful acts of depraved men. The state exists to preserve moral order.

State rulers, with few exceptions, have primarily punished evil-doers. Even in the early church, the Roman emperors generally persecuted Christians not because of raw malice, but because they mistakenly thought that the peace and safety of the state were imperilled by the Christians’ refusal to honor the pagan gods.

“Do that which is good, and thou shalt have the praise of the same.” If the Christian does good and obeys the state, he ought to be free from fear of the state. The state judges what is wrong and approves what is right. If we keep the law of the state, the government generally appreciates and respects it. Of course, throughout history there have been evil governments in which this principle has not held true, but the general trend has been that God has restrained civil evil through civil government.
GOVERNMENT EXISTS FOR THE CHRISTIAN’S GOOD — Romans 13:4

“For he is the minister of God to thee for good.” A “minister” is one who serves as an agent for a power, force, etc. All governments are carrying on a service for God by curbing the sin of men. Governments help Christians by protecting them from much persecution from the world. If there were no government, Christians would suffer unmercifully at the hands of satanically inspired men.

“But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.” In both ancient and modern times, the sword has been carried before sovereigns as a symbol of justice and of the right of capital punishment. Those who do evil are to be punished by the state in justice.

The authority of the government to use capital punishment is a biblical truth and should be supported by all Christians. “Whoso sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man” (Gen. 9:6). Those who oppose capital punishment are themselves opposing the Word of God and undermining the very foundation of human government. The government’s right to take life is not “legal murder” as some call it, nor is it simply a relic of a more barbarous age. (It is hard to understand how any age could be more barbarous than our own when the atomic bomb and other destructive weapons are considered.) Capital punishment is the avenging hand of God himself operating through human instruments. When a criminal is executed for a crime, the executioner is not the one who has taken the life, nor is it even the state; it is God carrying out his judgment. The state and executioner are simply agents. Capital punishment is the act of God in human society.

CONCLUSION

This section of Scripture has shown us that God is sovereign over all governments, and that he does as he pleases among kings, dictators, parliaments, and congresses. He is also sovereign over individuals, and has decreed that he will save men only on the basis of the person and death of Jesus Christ. There is no other way to know God except through Christ. God will sovereignly take men to heaven or cast them into hell. He will save only those who have received his Son as Lord and Saviour from his sin. Are you prepared to meet Almighty God?
RENDER UNTO CAESAR
Romans 13:5-7

by Dr. Jack L. Arnold

One of the hottest issues any Christian in any generation faces is his relationship to his government. This subject is relevant to us today. As Christians, we want to reach the world for Jesus Christ, and in order to make an impact on the world, we must know our responsibility to our government. A Christian who is in constant conflict with his government will not have much time to be an effective witness to the world for Christ.

In our study of Romans 13, we have already laid down some basic principles to follow in our relationship to government. Outside these guidelines, Christians may disagree on particulars of the Christian's responsibility to the state.

**Principle one:** All government is ordained of God. Even bad government is somehow under the control of God and is being used to bring about his hidden plans and purposes for this world.

**Principle two:** All Christians are to be in submission to the government which God has sovereignly put over them, even though they may not like that government.

**Principle three:** Christians are not to be known as political reactionaries, but as ambassadors for Christ. If a Christian feels bound by conscience to react politically, then he must be willing to suffer the consequences of that action from the state.

**Principle four:** The state is God's minister to maintain social order, and to resist this power is to resist God.

**Principle five:** Christians can rebel against their government if the government takes away their right to propagate the gospel or forces them to do some immoral act for the state. Christians most likely would go underground rather than use violence, but there may be a few exceptions where violence would be necessary.
Principle six: A Christian should have political convictions and use all lawful means to change the government for greater justice. The Bible does not forbid the teaching and agitating for better government in legal ways if the steps taken do not lead to force and violence.

Principle seven: A Christian may have a very difficult time discerning between religious and political issues because religious freedom is so very closely tied up with political freedom. It is possible for two Christians to take different sides on some political issue, but this should never strain their oneness in Christ.

GOVERNMENT IS TO BE OBEYED — Titus 3:1; 1 Peter 2:13-17

Submission to existing government was taught by the Apostle Peter and is also mentioned in other places in Scripture. “Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work” (Titus 3:1). Paul had to remind Titus, a preacher, to have the Christians remember they were to be in subjection to their government. When things are rough or not going our way, we have a natural tendency to want to rebel against the existing government or environment. The Bible says we are to obey.

Christians are not to be known as political reactionaries. During the election between President Johnson and Senator Goldwater, there was a young man in my church who was a zealot for conservative politics and sold out to Barry Goldwater. During the campaign he passed out Goldwater literature, talked with everyone about voting for Goldwater, and he even had four Goldwater stickers on his auto. This young man was also a zealous Christian. A number of people who lived in his neighborhood felt as strongly for President Johnson as he did for Mr. Goldwater. During this time I preached that Christians may have political convictions but cannot be known as political reactionaries, for they are left on earth to tell the good news of Jesus Christ. Soon afterward the young man drove up to the church and the Goldwater stickers were gone from his car. He came booming into my office and said, “Pastor, I have not changed any of my convictions, but I want all the people in my neighborhood to know me as a spiritual reactionary for Christ and not as a political reactionary for Goldwater. My first allegiance is to Christ.” He had learned the lesson well.

“Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well. For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put
to silence the ignorance of foolish men: As free, and not using liberty for a
cloke of maliciousness, but as the servants of God. Honour all men. Love
the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king” (1 Pet. 2:13-17).

Notice that Peter calls these Christians “free.” All were under the political yoke of
Rome; some were slaves, and many were of the poorer class. In what sense were they
free? They were free from the bondage of sin through faith in Christ Jesus. This verse
indicates that Christianity was never designed to be a movement to improve
government or to clean up society. Christianity is the preaching of the gospel which is
the power of God unto salvation for the individual soul. However, when the individual is
transformed by the gospel, this will have its effect upon society.

GOVERNMENT IS TO BE PRAYED FOR — 1 Timothy 2:1-2

“I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions,
and giving of thanks be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in
authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and
honesty” (1 Tim. 2:1-2).

Christians are to pray for all who are in places of authority in the government —
for their conversion to Christ, and also that God would grant them wisdom in running
the affairs of the state. Why? So that Christians may lead quiet and peaceable lives
without constant fear of political agitation so they can give themselves unreservedly to
preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ.

One of the reasons the early church was not persecuted more by the Roman
government was that they assured the government that they were constantly praying
for it, not rebelling against it. Thus, the Christians slowly gained the confidence of the
government rulers.

Senator Mark Hatfield, when he was governor of Oregon, said,

“How long has it been since you as a Christian have had an opportunity to
pray with a fellow Christian, just two or three of you, praying for the needs
of your lives, and certainly praying for the needs of our country, as the
Scriptures exhort us to do? Pray for those in positions of political
authority. I often have said that it means much more to me personally to
have someone come up and tell me, “I pray for you,” than to have one say
to me, “I voted for you.” The prayers of many people sustain us in public
office. I urge that you pray for the Governor of this commonwealth, for the
President, and for those in other important places. So to do is scriptural.
The prayers of many Christians for the welfare of this nation will avail us much, and will likewise strengthen our spiritual defenses.”

GOVERNMENT IS TO BE OBEYED FOR CONSCIENCE SAKE — Romans 13:5

“Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake.” It is necessary for the Christian to submit to government, not only for fear of punishment but also for the sake of his conscience. Subjection is not only a civil duty, but also a religious duty; it is a part of the Christian’s worship and obedience to God.

When we keep the traffic laws of our city, county, state or nation, we are worshiping God. Our conscience is doing it for God, not just for fear of being caught. If we exceed the speed limit, we should expect to be given a ticket and thank the polite officer for his faithful duty.

GOVERNMENT HAS THE RIGHT TO COLLECT TAXES — Romans 13:6

“For this cause pay ye tribute [tax] also.“ Because of the service of protection and social help the state gives to the Christian, he is to pay taxes. The power of the government to collect taxes is a God-given authority, and when a Christian pays his taxes he is actually worshiping God. This does not mean that all taxes are just, but that the principle of taxation by the state is biblical. If taxation is unjust, as Christians we should use all the legal means at our disposal to change the situation, but we must remember that the collection of taxes is the right of the government.

If a Christian cheats on his income tax, he has failed in his worship of God and has grieved the Holy Spirit. Chief Justice William Howard Taft said that it was the duty of every citizen to avoid payment of all taxes and to evade payment of none. A Christian may avoid paying unnecessary taxes by taking every lawful deduction, but he may not evade paying anything that is due.

“For they are God’s ministers, attending continually upon this very thing.” The state is God’s minister, performing the function of collecting taxes. I think this makes it clear that ultimately Christians pay taxes to God, not to the government.

GOVERNMENT IS TO BE RESPECTED — Romans 13:7

“Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom.“ A government may be filled with scoundrels, but it is to be obeyed because it is carrying out its function. We are to pay the taxes that are levied.
“Fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour.” All men, especially government officials, are to be respected because men have been given their secular positions by God’s common grace. Difference of rank in society is by God’s appointment and all Christians should respect people of other ranks. This is not to say that we should respect ungodly systems of social class, such as the Indian caste system which fails miserably at the command to love our neighbors as ourselves. Every Christian should realize that God has sovereignly given him his station in life and that he has been put where he is to be a witness to those about him. Whether educated or uneducated, rich or poor, black or white, if born again we are where we are to reach those about us for Jesus Christ. This does not mean that God cannot also choose to elevate us to a higher position, or even to lower our position. It simply means that we are to live appropriately to our present calling.

This exhortation to Christians to respect all who are due respect includes not only government officials, but also those men to whom God has committed wealth or outstanding ability, and those who have risen honorably among their fellows. We may disagree with such people, but we should not make disparaging remarks about them.

Children of Christian families must be taught respect for the policeman, the fireman, and certainly for the school teacher. The Bible tells parents to discipline their children and it seems to me that disrespect for a teacher should receive punishment equal to that inflicted for lying or obscenity. The school systems of our cities would have no blackboard jungles if proper respect for authority and law were inculcated.

CONCLUSION

Many great men in history have given their lives for political and social causes, some good and some bad, and their goal has been to make their lives count for something worthwhile. Yet, most of these men never had any assurance that when they died they would go to heaven. All the good or bad they did on earth never prepared them for heaven, for only Jesus Christ can do that. He is the only way to the Father, the only one who can forgive sin and give eternal life. Our Lord said, “What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?”
SHOULD A CHRISTIAN GO TO WAR?
Romans 13:5

by Dr. Jack L. Arnold

In the last sixty years or so, America faced three wars in which its young men died by the tens of thousands. One was a declared war; two were undeclared. World War II, the Korean War, and Vietnam have sapped America of much of its physical and moral strength.

Needless to say, Vietnam was the most unpopular war in America’s history. It divided our Congress into hawks and doves, and it splintered our nation. There were those who burned their draft cards, those who marched in protests, and even some who fled to Canada. Possibly as never before, America was faced with the right or wrong of war. Many Christians were pricked in their consciences to evaluate the biblical position on war.

The Bible says that until Christ returns in his second advent, there will be wars and rumors of war. We can expect that America’s sons, and perhaps her daughters, will face the war issue again.

Romans 13:1-7 teaches that the Christian is to be subject to the government that God has sovereignly put over him. The Christian is to be subject, not only for fear of punishment, but for conscience sake. That is, subjection to government is part of a Christian’s true worship of God. The question arises, “Does this include military service?” Is there such a thing as conscientious objection, pacifism, or non-resistance taught in the Bible? Throughout history Christians have been divided on this issue, but the vast majority of them have not been pacifists.

CHRISTIAN VIEWPOINT OF WAR

There are four basic viewpoints on war that have been held by the historic Christian church. Of course, there are also many modifications of these views.

Crusade War: This view says one should wage war in the name of religion. In the Middle Ages, the Crusaders, inspired by the Roman Catholic Church, felt it was right to spread Christianity by the sword. They made war in the name of the man who gave his life for others, believing it was commanded to take life. This period is a dark spot in the history of the church, and Christians often hang their heads in shame when reading about the Crusades. Jesus Christ made it clear that Christianity is never to be spread by the sword, but in love and by the power of God.
Non-resistance: The other extreme says that Christians are not to participate in any type of war whatsoever. Those who hold this view believe that all killing in war is wrong. Some would not oppose killing in self-defense or fighting a defensive war. Others would enter military service as non-combatants. There is a great deal of latitude in this position. The Mennonite, Brethren, and Quaker groups have traditionally been pacifists. Many Methodists are also of this persuasion.

Blank-check War: This viewpoint says Christians should go to war whenever their government tells them to do so. It makes the state an idol and would cast Christian morality and ethics to the wind. There may be times when Christians cannot fight for their country, such as when the country is an aggressor or when the Christian is required to do unchristian acts.

Just War: Those holding this view evaluate a war and the activities involved in it to see if violence is justifiable. This group feels that Christians, like all other men, have social responsibilities and that war may be justifiable on a political basis in some cases. Their criterion is: Is the war less harmful than the evil it hopes to prevent? This theory has been held by the Reformed groups, Presbyterians, Lutherans, and most Baptists.

MAJOR ARGUMENTS USED FOR PACIFISM

The Sixth Commandment Forbids Killing (Exod. 20:13): The Lord said, “Thou shalt not kill.” The Hebrew word is ratzach, which refers to murder with premeditation. When Jesus repeated this command in the New Testament, he used the Greek word phoneuo, which means “murder” (Matt. 5:21). The Bible student realizes immediately that this cannot refer to all killing because: 1) God ordained capital punishment (Exod. 21:12); and 2) God told Israel to carry out war against her enemies. Surely God would not contradict his own command. The sixth commandment refers to premeditated murder, not to the killing done in military service in defense of one’s country.

Turning the Other Cheek (Matt. 5:39): “But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.” In context, this refers to personal insults to a Christian and is put on an individual basis. These words have no political implication and are not to be applied to national situations. When evil is done to an individual Christian, he is not to fight back but to turn the cheek, but this verse says nothing about military service on a political basis. This is very similar to Paul’s teaching in Romans 12:19 which forbids Christians to take their own revenge, and his teaching in Romans 13:4 that God has ordained the state to take revenge in some cases. God’s commandments to nations are different from his commandments to individuals.
MAJOR ARGUMENTS FOR CHRISTIANS PARTICIPATING IN WAR

_No Scripture:_ There is no Scripture to prove pacifism for the Christian. All wars are terrible, but they are under God’s sovereign control, and the Bible nowhere teaches neutrality by Christians.

_Obedience to Government:_ Romans 13 teaches obedience to government, and part of this obedience is military service. For example, a Christian in America does not go to war because he believes that America is a Christian nation, but because as a citizen he has a duty to be obedient to government and he has a social responsibility to his state.

_Teaching of John the Baptist_ (Luke 3:14): “And the soldiers likewise demanded of him, saying, And what shall we do? And he said unto them, Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages.” This should be translated, “Extort by violence from no man”; it means that soldiers are not to intimidate others because of their authority. Notice, however, that John did not instruct the soldiers not to fight or not to serve in the military. Rather, he told them to serve honorably.

_Teaching of Jesus:_ Jesus spoke to many Roman military men and he never told them to resign their commissions or to get out of the army to follow him.

_Cornelius_ (Acts 10): Cornelius was an officer in the Roman army who was a godly man and knew Christ as his personal Lord and Saviour. Apparently, pacifism was not a teaching of the very early church.

_Men of History:_ Great men such as General Stonewall Jackson of the Civil War were good soldiers and maintained a positive Christian witness to men.

_For Testimony:_ A Christian may have a poor testimony with men if he refuses to go to war. The unsaved may conclude him to be a coward and may mock Christ. The Christian should be a “rock” in battle, for he is not afraid of death. This in itself can be a great testimony to unsaved men.

_Sinfulness of Men:_ Non-resistance is idealistic; it is held often by those who do not believe strongly in the sinfulness of all men. Greedy men and nations will always attempt to conquer others. If attacked, we must be willing to protect our country, home and family.

Most pacifists, who decry all war as sinful, would not hesitate to pick up the phone and call the police if their homes were being robbed. Police protect towns and cities. Why not carry this further? State militia and police, under the hand of the
governor, protect life, liberty, and order in the state. A national army does likewise for the nation.

_God’s Plan:_ All wars today are simply steps in God’s plan for the return of Jesus Christ to this earth. There will always be wars and rumors of wars.

“And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world? And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many. And ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars; see that ye be not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet” (Matt. 24:3-6).

The rising and falling of nations is part of God’s sovereign plan. This evil world and wars will go on and Christians living on the earth may have to participate in war. However, Christians can never be warlike or enjoy war. They must remember that they are left on this earth to be a witness for Jesus Christ in this present evil world.

Now the questions will be asked, “What is a justifiable war? What happens if our nation becomes the aggressor?” Only the conscience can decide, and when making such decisions, the Christian must keep in mind that he is to be in subjection to his government.

**CAN A CHRISTIAN BE A CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTOR?**

The first question a person must ask himself when considering the issue of conscientious objection is, “Do I choose not to kill because I am afraid to be killed or because I abhor killing another man?” Some so-called conscientious objectors are simply cowards.

I have a friend who was from a strict Mennonite family who were pacifists. During World War II this friend left his Mennonite home under terrible pressure and became a medical non-combatant in the Canadian Army. He did not want to kill nor did he want to stay neutral. I respect him for this. When he was shipped overseas he went to France. Being a Mennonite and from a German home, he spoke the German language fluently. He was stationed behind the lines in a hospital for the recovery of wounded German prisoners of war. He found the Hitler youth hardened to spiritual things, but many of the older soldiers were Christians. My friend found sweet fellowship with these German Christians, and they would read the Bible and pray together. He also had the privilege of leading several of the younger Germans to Christ. But he had a high price to pay for his convictions: the American soldiers turned him in as a collaborator with the enemy.
because he had so much in common with some of these German Christians. My friend later told me that he had more in common with his German Christian brothers in Christ than with his godless American comrades in uniform. Why? Christ transcends all political boundaries.

What if a Christian’s conscience really does tell him not to kill in war? Should he disobey his conscience? Absolutely not? He should not kill, but this does not always keep him from military service. For example, the United States and Canada allow a conscientious objector to go into the military as a non-combatant. In such instances, there is no need for a true Christian to avoid military service.

I had another Mennonite friend who refused to go to war, but who was really not doing much for Jesus Christ. He was a poor soldier of Jesus Christ and a disgrace to the Lord.

CONCLUSION

All Christians should hate war and we must never be warlike, but if our government calls us to go to war, most of us will go. We will become part of the military not only to protect our country, but to be a witness to those in the military service of the saving grace that is in Christ Jesus. Christians are first citizens of heaven and then citizens of the state. A Christian’s religious convictions, as a soldier of Jesus Christ, transcend his political convictions. Wherever God, in his sovereignty, places the follower of Christ, the Christian must tell all that Jesus Christ is the only way of salvation, that everyone without Christ will pass on into a godless eternity and be judged forever.

If you have never trusted Christ as your Saviour, he will save you when you commit your life to him. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.
THE CHRISTIAN’S RESPONSIBILITY TO HIS NEIGHBOR
Romans 13:8-14

by Dr. Jack L. Arnold

A Christian faith that doesn’t change one’s life isn’t worth a snap of the fingers. But when Christ changes a heart and life, the change is going to affect everyone with whom the Christian comes into contact. A truly Christlike life lived out in the world convicts and upsets those who are not Christians. Someone has well said, “The ministry of a Christian is to comfort the afflicted and to afflict the comfortable.”

In Romans 13:1-7, we have been told that as Christians we have a social responsibility to obey our government. Now Paul talks about the Christian’s social responsibility to his unsaved neighbors.

RESPONSIBILITY TO LOVE ONE’S NEIGHBOR — Romans 13:8-10

“Owe no man any thing.” Paul has just told the Christian that he is to pay taxes to the government, for this is part of his worship of God. Now he says that the Christian is not to be in debt financially to any man, especially those in the non-Christian world. We are not only to pay taxes, we are to pay bills! This verse does not mean that a Christian is not to have debts, but that he is to pay the debts that he incurs. People often ask, “Is it wrong for a Christian to contract a debt, or to buy on the installment plan, or mortgage his house? The answer is no. Financing is simply a mutually agreed upon contract by which money is to be paid. It is not the kind of debt that the Bible prohibits unless the borrower or charger fails to make a payment. If a person contracts for more than he can pay, he is guilty of stealing for he is living off another person’s money. Christians who do not pay bills are a poor testimony for Christ.

The exhortation to owe no man anything ought to be a warning to Christians not to go so deeply into debt that they cannot pay their bills. Most ministers are contacted by people who are so deep in debt that they cannot pay the rent or the interest on a loan. These people somehow feel God has let them down. Not so — they have let God down by failing to heed his command.

There are also those who have gone so deeply into debt that they cannot or will not give regularly to the Lord’s work, and these folks will not be greatly blessed of the Lord.

“But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matt. 6:33).
“But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus” (Phil. 4:19).

Trying to keep up with the Joneses can present many complex spiritual problems.

“But to love one another.” The Christian’s responsibility is to love. Paul says every Christian owes the debt of love to his neighbor. This is a continually valid debt, and one that can never fully be paid. Because the Christian has experienced God’s love, he is a debtor to God and a debtor to mankind. If he loves his neighbors, possibly some will respond to Christ and experience God’s love as a reality.

When stating the greatest commandment in God’s law, the Lord put loving one’s neighbor next to loving God.

“Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself” (Matt. 22:37-39). "For he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” Love alone fulfills the Mosaic Law; it makes a good citizen out of a Christian without any need for police or other enforcement agencies, because no man who loves his neighbor is going to injure him. If you love a person, you won’t commit adultery with his wife, or kill or steal or covet something that he has. You won’t envy his new car or her mink stole or anything he possesses because true love is concerned about the other person’s welfare.

The Mosaic Law, and all law for that matter, is external to us. As such, it is insufficient to keep order over men. Order requires that we desire to keep the law. Fulfilling the law requires a love, a change of heart, an inward work, that desires to do good to others. We are living in one of the most lawless ages in history, and the reason is that men are losing their ability to love and their capacity to love; law alone is relied upon to keep order.

“Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.” The great need for our society is for love and the capacity to love. Our society is coming unglued because it does not know how to love. Genuine love comes when a person has received the new birth from God through faith in Christ, and when the child of God is yielded to the Holy Spirit. The capacity to love comes only from God: “But the fruit of the Spirit is love” (Gal. 5:22).
RESPONSIBILITY TO WITNESS TO OUR NEIGHBOR — Romans 13:11-14

“And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep.” Paul challenges his readers to know the time. The time from the birth of Christ to the second coming of Christ is known as the “last age” in human history. Do you know where the events of today are taking us? Do you know what lies ahead? Are you aware of God’s program? Apparently this last age is drawing to a close.

Men of science are now aware that we are living in a unique age of history, for the world cannot exist much longer under its present conditions. With the population explosion, the world is running short on fuel, food, and even water, as well as other natural resources. There seems to be a feeling among many, saved and unsaved alike, that the world is heading for a big climax. As Christians we believe it is the coming of Jesus Christ to this earth!

We Christians are to awake from the sleep of indifference and get on with the work of spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ. We are to wake up and live in light of the fact that Christ is coming again: “And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come” (1 Thess. 1:10). We are to watch and wait without panicking, acting with intelligent purpose, doing the Lord’s will.

“For now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.” Each day we Christians live brings us one step closer to receiving our completed salvation: the redemption of our bodies at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ for his church.

“The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.” In these closing days when the night is swiftly advancing toward the dawn, the Lord’s return for his own cannot be too far distant. As children of light, we should put off evil works and shine as lights in the world. Never has the world needed to hear the truth of Jesus Christ more than it does now. Only those filled with the love of Christ will be able to reach others in this world for him. To be effective, a light must shine so others might see.

“Let us walk honestly, as in the day.” We are to have lives that will be attractive to non-Christians and cause them to want the same Christ we love.

“Not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying.” Rioting speaks of feasts and drinking parties that are orgies. Drunkenness is also sin. In our day there are many professing Christians whose hands are so shaky from Saturday night drinks that they have difficulty holding the communion cup on Sunday morning. “Chambering” refers to premarital and extra-marital sexual relationships, and “wantonness” is sexual debauchery. This not only deals with acts but
with the thought life. God commands us to abstain from all physical excesses and from thoughts that lead to those excesses. “Strife” refers to troublemakers and to those who cause divisions. “Jealousy” speaks of envy. Strife and envy are placed next to the gross sins which are so freely manifested in the non-Christian world.

“But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ.” We are to put on, or be clothed with, Christ in our daily lives. We are to permit his life to flow through us and show through us. We are to be occupied with him in all that we do and relate him to every area of our lives. We have Christ now, and it is to appropriate to use him in our daily living. The person of Christ is to permeate our very being. This will result in the character of Christ being manifested in our lives.

“And make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.” We are not to provide for the feeding of the sin nature in us which thrives on evil. I have just walked away from groups when men started to tell an off color story or dirty joke. Once they asked me, “What’s the matter, preacher? Can’t you take a joke? You know you like to hear it.” I replied, “You bet I do, for my flesh thrives on these things, but I am not going to feed my flesh!”

In his “Confessions,” St. Augustine tells how in his unconverted days he had allowed himself to become the willing victim of vile and fleshly lusts. He lived his careless life as the pagans of that day, and associated with the corrupt and wicked members of society. When he got converted, the great question on his mind was, “Will I ever be able to live according to the Christian standard of holiness. Will I ever be able to keep myself from the vile, sensuous life in which I have lived so long?” When he first yielded himself to Christ, he took as his life text Romans 13:13-14 where the Apostle exhorts the believer to put on the Lord Jesus Christ and to make no provision for the flesh to fulfill its lusts. For long after his conversion, he did not dare even go near that part of the city where his godless companions of former days lived. But one day a matter of business called him there, and as he was walking along the street he suddenly saw one of the beautiful yet wicked companions of his folly. The moment her eyes lit upon him, her face was illuminated with delight, and she came running with outstretched arms and said, “Austin, where have you been for so long? We have missed you so.” He turned, gathered up his long philosopher’s gown, and started to run — not a very dignified procedure for a professor of rhetoric. The girl ran after him calling, “Austin, Austin, why do you run? It is only I!” He looked back and exclaimed. “I run because it is not I, for I am a new creature in Christ.” Augustine did not want to feed his flesh.
CONCLUSION

We are told that man’s two greatest needs are to know that he is loved and to have his guilt feelings removed. Jesus Christ can do both for all who believe in him. To come to Christ is to have him take away the guilt and penalty of sin, and to have the everlasting love of God become a reality.

Men without Christ have no hope for time or eternity, but Christians have the assurance of eternal life and the confidence that Jesus Christ lives in them to help them through the burdens and blessings of life. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.
CHRISTIAN UNDERSTANDING IN DOUBTFUL THINGS
Romans 14:1-3

by Dr. Jack L. Arnold

In Romans 14 we begin the study of doubtful things or questionable practices. This message should be studied along with the next three or four in this series to avoid confusion on this subject. A doubtful thing is an act that is not sinful in itself or specifically prohibited in Scripture, but that may become sinful for an individual if practiced. A doubtful thing deals with religious scruples, things the Bible does not speak for or against.

The most frequent question Christians ask me is, “What is wrong with such and such an activity?” More young people are driven from Christ because of an improper grasp of doubtful things than for any other reason.

It is interesting to note that in the New Testament, which covered the time of the first century church, there were only three areas of questionable practices: 1) observing religious days; 2) drinking wine; and 3) eating meat that had been sacrificed to idols. You can readily see that in the last two thousand years the church has added many more taboos to the list. These man-made rules cover many things, all the way from smoking to wearing buttons.

Often doubtful things are a cultural problem. Different cultures have different taboos. One of the taboos of fundamentalists in the deep South is mixed bathing. My wife and I, being from California, make no issue over members of the opposite sex swimming in the same pool or at the same beach. But when we went to Texas, we heard that “mixed bathing” was not permitted in some circles. My wife blushed and said to me, “Honey, I’m opposed to mixed bathing too. Tell me, why would two people of the opposite sex want to take a bath together? I think that is indecent.” When we found out that “mixed bathing” meant “mixed swimming,” we had a good laugh. It never occurred to us that someone might believe mixed swimming to be wrong.

The Bible does not speak out against any of the so-called taboos. It may be possible to prove that some of the doubtful things may not be good for a Christian to practice, but it cannot be proven from any positive statement in the Bible. The area of doubtful things must ultimately be solved on the basis of biblical principles, for it is obvious that the Scripture is deliberately silent on these things. Had God wanted to command against these doubtful things, he would have done so. But obviously the writers of the Bible, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, were led to be deliberately silent about them. It is very important that we observe the silence of the Bible in these
matters and follow the same rule. We must not be presumptuous in judging someone else in these areas. These issues are for each Christian to settle for himself.

Where the Bible speaks we are to speak, and where the Bible is silent we are to be silent. The Bible does speak out loudly and clearly against some things, and these things are always wrong no matter when or where they occur (e.g. stealing, bearing false witness, drunkenness, gossip, jealousy, unrighteous anger, slander, bitterness, envy, hate, prejudice, premarital and extra-marital sex, failure to read God's Word, failure to pray, etc.). If we do these things, we are wrong, and the Bible as well as our conscience tells us that we are sinning.

Perhaps you are wondering, “When does a doubtful thing become sin?” It happens when a person is convicted by the Holy Spirit that it is sin for him, or when the act causes a weaker Christian brother to stumble in his Christian walk: “It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak” (Rom. 14:21). For example, men of the National Convention of Rescue Missions are convinced that all forms of alcohol are wrong for them because their culture demands it.

BACKGROUND TO ROMANS 14

In the local church at Rome, there was a small group, probably Gentiles, who had come to the conclusion that there was something religiously wrong with eating meat and drinking wine. Perhaps they had moved into the area of asceticism, believing that the Christian life was a series of negatives such as “do not touch, do not taste, do not handle,” etc. Or perhaps they were former pagans who could not dissociate eating meat that had been sacrificed to idols from idolatry itself (compare 1 Cor. 8-10). In any case, this group had become legalistic and was judging everyone who did not conform to its standards.

There were also in the assembly some who understood Christian liberty, but who were misusing this liberty and causing young believers to stumble in their Christian walks. The major appeal in Romans 14 is to the mature man to exercise his Christian liberty in love and to demonstrate restraint.

These two extremes in the church at Rome were threatening the peace and harmony of the assembly. So, Paul wrote this portion of Scripture to correct the situation.
AN APPEAL FOR UNDERSTANDING ON DOUBTFUL THINGS — Romans 14:1-3

“Him that is weak in [the] faith receive [welcome] ye, but not to doubtful disputations [disputes over opinions].” The appeal is to mature Christians at Rome, who were in the majority, to accept these weak Christians. Apparently Paul thought the weak Christians had taken an extreme position, but he also felt they should be loved and accepted because they were true believers. This really says these Christians were weak in faith, not in the Faith. It is not a question of weakness in fundamental doctrines, but of weak practice. They believed the gospel, but did not have practical faith in facing taboos or doubtful things; they were Christian legalists because they did not understand Christian liberty.

Those who are more mature in the Christian life are to welcome those who are of a more legalistic persuasion on doubtful things because the weaker Christians are still Christians, having received Christ as Lord and Savior. One’s viewpoints on doubtful things are never a basis for fellowship with a local church, although they may become an issue for leadership in the church. If men have been “born again” through faith in Christ, this entitles them to fellowship in a local church.

Christians have been known to say, “We don’t want these people in our church because they are poor, or too legalistic, or a little worldly. They just aren’t our kind of people. We know they are Christians, but they are not like us.” Christians have no right to talk this way. It is the Lord who determines the makeup of his church, not the people of the church. All those who have trusted Christ as Lord and Savior are to be extended the right hand of fellowship. We must welcome them because they love Jesus Christ.

The strong or mature in the assembly are to accept the weak brothers who do not understand Christian liberty and the fullness of salvation in Christ, and they are to accept them without doubtful disputes or disputes over opinion. In other words, the mature are not to try to argue the weak brothers out of their position, but rather to accept them as they are. Of course, this is not to say that the mature ought not to teach and instruct the weak in doctrine, faith and practice, but rather that they ought not to fight over matters of opinion or refuse fellowship over matters of opinion.

“For one believeth that he may eat all things.” This is the mature believer who understands the grace of God in Christian living, who has a grasp of true Christian living and liberty in questionable practices:

“The earth is the Lord’s, and the fulness thereof” (1 Cor. 10:26).

“I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself” (Rom 14:14).
“All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not” (1 Cor. 10:23).

Therefore, the mature believer eats meat and it does not bother his conscience. The mature believer has the right to participate in questionable practices, but this does not mean that he exercises this freedom.

“Another, who is weak, eateth herbs.” The weak brother, though a true Christian, could not eat meat or drink wine because his own conscience would not permit it. He had not come to the realization and appreciation of Christian liberty or of the grace of God in sanctification. This did not necessarily make the weak brother wrong; it simply showed that his own conscience forbade him to participate in what he considered to be a questionable practice.

Christians may have opposite views on points of Christian conduct not commanded against in Scripture, yet still fellowship together in love and harmony. For example, two women may feel differently about the use of cosmetics. If one wears lipstick and the other does not, that is their business. They are not answerable to the pastor or to the church in such matters. They are answerable only to God.

“Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not.” There is a tendency on the part of those who are mature in the area of questionable practices to look down their noses at the weak, legalistic brothers and to call them narrow-minded. But mature believers are not to despise those who are weak in the practice of faith. To despise is a matter of pride. When the mature feel superior because of their greater understanding, it is sin!

“And let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth.” Those who are weak are not to judge or condemn those who have liberty to practice doubtful things. Those who are of a legalistic persuasion have a tendency to be critical of everything and anyone who does not match up to their man-made standards. This causes great division among true believers. These who are weak brothers feel themselves superior because they have given up something for the Lord. This is simply another form of pride. The weak brothers are not to judge strong believers.

It is right for Christians to judge one another in areas where the Bible speaks. When a Christian is engaged in an activity that is clearly wrong according to the Bible, it is the solemn responsibility of other Christians to go to that one and point out the fault; but in doubtful areas we are not to judge one another. Should a doubtful practice lead to outright evil, those who are guilty must be judged; but unless this happens, no Christian is to judge in the area of doubtful things.
“For God hath received him.” God has received the weak brother as well as the strong, so both should be able to get along as brothers in Christ in the area of doubtful things. If they cannot, then there is sin and a failure to exercise the principles in Romans 14. If evangelicals are ever to be united, we must apply these principles. Oh, that we would learn to exercise love!

I remember hearing a story of an evangelist, Billy Graham I believe, who went to England for an evangelistic campaign. When he got off the plane in London with his wife, the clergymen who were waiting for him were incensed because his wife used cosmetics and dressed attractively. The evangelist just could not understand their thinking. When he asked where they were going to have their first strategy session for the campaign, they said they were going down to the pub. Then it was the evangelist who was shocked. The different cultures had different taboos.

Some Christians believe in total abstinence from any form of alcoholic beverage. Others use such beverages as a matter of course. For example, it is not extraordinary for German evangelicals to drink beer. On the other hand, others who are equally conservative in doctrine, of which I am one, recoil in horror at the idea of tasting a drop of beer. Which group is wrong? Neither; this falls into the area of doubtful things. I am a teetotaler and my conscience will not permit me to drink any form of alcohol, but because I cannot find it in the Bible, I could never make this a hard and fast rule for all Christians. However, I think I can make a good case for total abstinence in my culture in light of the tremendous social problem alcohol has caused in America.

CONCLUSION

I have brought out these various examples of modern-day doubtful things to make a point. True Christians hold different opinions on these things, and we must apply what Paul has said and not despise or judge. We must love and understand one another, and have open hearts before our Lord Jesus Christ.

Perhaps you do not have Christ in your heart and have always thought of Christianity as a list of do’s and don’ts, and have used this as an excuse not to receive Christ. The Bible never says one must give up something to become a Christian. It only says that you must trust Christ as your Lord and Saviour. If you do, you will receive eternal life and the forgiveness of sins. If you do not come to Christ, you will perish in your sins. It is not the taboos that are keeping you from Christ and heaven, it is your own sinful condition. Unless you turn and trust Christ, you shall perish in your sins, for he is the only way of salvation.
AN EXHORTATION TO THE WEAK BROTHER
ON DOUBTFUL THINGS
Romans 14:4-12

by Dr. Jack L. Arnold

When I was pastor of a church in California, there was an elderly man in the congregation who had been raised in a strict, legalistic home, and he had a list of do’s and don’ts that would make your head swim. One day he came to me and in a critical and hard tone said, “Pastor, your wife wears her dresses too tight, too short and too loud!” This dear saint was implying that my wife and I were too worldly, that we were not spiritual Christians. What would you have done in this situation? Get mad? Try to argue with him about his misunderstanding of the Bible? Or would you realize this man’s background and love him in spite of his weird ideas? This dear brother was to be loved because he was a true believer in Christ, but he was a very weak brother in practicing faith for he did not understand Christian liberty.

In our last lesson we began the study on doubtful things or questionable practices. A doubtful thing is an act, not sinful in itself nor specifically prohibited in Scripture, but one that may become sinful if practiced. Doubtful practices today might include things like movies, television, drinking alcoholic beverages, cosmetics, dancing, recreational activities, and a host of other things. These questionable practices, sometimes called Christian taboos, deal in the area of manmade rules and result in Christian legalism.

Sadly, Christian legalism has driven more people from Christ than it has ever brought to him. What the Bible calls sin, we must call sin, but the Bible nowhere says that any of the doubtful things are sin in and of themselves.

We have already concluded that doubtful things must be settled on the basis of biblical principles and Christian conscience. It is not for others to settle these matters for the Christian, but for the Christian to settle for himself before his God.

Every society has its taboos. Steve Hunter related to me this story: In Ecuador, a woman is really not well dressed without earrings. One time he and his wife went a few hundred miles into another country, and his wife dressed in style for the occasion, earrings and all. When they came into the church they were visiting, the people began to look at them and talk. The pastor came over and asked them if Mrs. Hunter would take off the earrings because this was a mark of a worldly woman in this particular culture. She did and the problem was solved.
The area of questionable practices as acute in American Christianity as anywhere else in the world. Many Christians are miserable in their Christianity because they misunderstand doubtful things. Christ came to give us an abundant life, not to bog us down with taboos.

Many a young person raised in a so-called Christian home has rebelled at the manmade rules forced upon him by his parents, and when old enough to leave home has cast over the taboos and also cast over Christ, thinking that Christ and Christian legalism were the same.

BACKGROUND OF ROMANS 14

In the church of Rome there were some Christians who felt they could not eat meat, drink wine, or miss any Jewish religious holidays. They were weak brothers in the practice of the Christian faith. These folks were judging all the other Christians in the assembly because they were not conforming to the set of rules they had laid down for themselves. They were not weak because they did not practice these doubtful things, but because they judged others who did. So, Paul told them not to judge or condemn others who did not feel the same way they did about doubtful practices.

There were also many in the church at Rome who understood Christian liberty and had no scruples in doubtful things. They had a grasp of God’s grace in Christian living, and felt they could participate in some of these questionable practices of their day. These mature or strong brothers were not to despise or show contempt for the weaker brothers. The two groups were to accept one another, and to live together in love and harmony.

Now, in Romans 14:4-12, Paul gives an exhortation to the weak brothers in the assembly, and it all centers on the words “Do not judge!” (Strong brothers, be patient, your exhortation is coming in the next lesson.)

WEAK BROTHERS ARE NOT TO JUDGE — Romans 14:4

“Who art thou that judgest another man’s servant? To his own master he standeth or falleth.” The weak brother is not to judge, because every Christian is Christ's servant and Christ alone is to judge him. It is presumption as well as spiritual pride for one believer to sit in judgment upon the conduct of another in the area of doubtful things. The Christian is not answerable to the church in these areas but to the Lord. The church does not have authority to set up any rules or regulations in these areas.
Notice that the command is not to judge. Legalistic Christians are usually tyrannical, critical, and hard. They have an air of “holier than thou,” and make everyone around them uncomfortable. In their pride and judgment of others they are actually guilty of sin. Judging is prohibited, but doubtful things are not.

This same legalistic spirit is often carried over into a Christian’s relationship to the unsaved. He looks down on those who are not Christians, because they smoke or drink or whatever. One Christian told me, “I really witnessed for the Lord last night. A man came into my house and lighted a cigar, and I told him that he should not smoke in the house because we are Christians.” That wasn’t witnessing, it was stupidity.

Our Lord Jesus had the most difficult time with the religious folks of his day: the Pharisees. They were hyper-separationists who lived by the letter of their manmade laws. Christ never opposed any teaching of the Old Testament, but he viciously attacked the Pharisees for their hyper-piousness and critical attitudes. They could not get over the fact that Jesus ate with publicans and sinners. You see, Christ met the spiritual needs of men, and he went where the sinners were. He didn’t commit the sins they committed, but he moved among them in love. For this the Pharisees called him worldly. In some ways, this Pharisaism may be equated to some of the taboos found in modern-day fundamentalism.

Christians, we have the answer for the world’s great spiritual needs: Jesus Christ. Many are looking for this One that we possess. He is the bread of life that always satisfies; he is the water of life that quenches the spiritual thirst of men. We will never reach the non-Christians around us if we respond to their actions with legalistic, cold and critical spirits. We need to tell them about Jesus Christ. When they see him in all his beauty, holiness and grandeur, then and only then will he begin to work in their hearts to make them more Christlike in their experience.

“Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand.” The Lord Jesus Christ is able to “shape up” his own servants in the area of doubtful things. Phillips renders this, “God is well able to transform men into servants who are satisfactory.”

It seems that Christians who have become convicted of a doubtful thing cannot understand why others are not also convicted about the same thing. It may have taken months or even years for them to see the folly of something, but they want somebody else to learn it in thirty minutes. They want everybody to conform to their standard. Paul says one Christian cannot help another in this area; only the Lord can, and He is able to do it. If you feel a Christian has sin in his life because of some doubtful thing, pray for him, but don’t complain to others about it or critically judge him.

Legalistic Christians seem to feel that if rules are not made for people to follow regarding doubtful things, then they will go astray spiritually. Not so! The grace way is
the best way. Actually, rules and regulations in doubtful things drive most people from the Lord instead of to him. A proper understanding of grace will make mature Christians.

Sometimes when a Christian learns about his freedom in doubtful things, he goes hog wild and does something that is rank sin. Then conviction comes from God, which is a far greater deterrent to sin than all the rules in the world. There is nothing worse than conviction from God, and soon the believer learns the grace principle and really begins to grow in the Lord.

When I was first in seminary, I knew two women who were from opposite backgrounds. Mildred was from a Christian home which apparently was somewhat legalistic, and she looked drab and almost ghostly, but she refused to wear makeup. Another wife was Cynthia who was from a very worldly home, and she looked like a paper doll with cosmetics so thick she might have passed for a woman of the street. After these girls learned something about doubtful things, Mildred put on a little lipstick and Cynthia took a great deal off, and both honored the Lord. In this case a proper understanding of doubtful things brought a balance to each one’s life.

WEAK BROTHERS ARE TO RESPECT ONE’S CONSCIENCE — Romans 14:5,6

“One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike.” Some felt that they had to observe Jewish religious days, but others felt that they did not since they were no longer under the Mosaic Law as a rule of life.

Religious days are still a problem today. Some Christians feel it is wrong to celebrate Christmas because of its pagan associations. Others, who are in the majority, think it is a good day to observe because of its religious significance. Let each be convinced in his own mind. Neither should judge or look down on the other.

“Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.” Paul does not set forth a command to solve the problem, but uses the principle of an enlightened understanding on the matter of personal conscience. If God has convicted you that something is wrong, then you must not do it, but this does not mean that this same act is wrong for another Christian in the area of doubtful things. The believer should do only those things to which he can give himself fully and without reserve. He must operate on the basis of conviction.

Over the years that I have been a pastor, I have watched God deal with Christians in the area of doubtful things. When one comes to Christ as his Lord and Saviour, his value system begins to change as the Holy Spirit starts to work in his life. Many of these questionable practices just leave one’s life in the same way leaves fall
off the trees in autumn. A person may have loved the party life before his conversion, but afterward attending a party may feel very uncomfortable in the midst of all the drinking and dancing. He begins to feel convicted about this lifestyle. No one has said this was right or wrong, but the Holy Spirit has brought the conviction that this kind of life is not consistent with a walk of holiness. Another might be convicted about smoking because it is bad for his health and because the body is God’s temple. He may realize that smoking hinders his testimony for Christ. God quietly and silently works in his life to bring more and more conformity to Christ. This was the case with Charles H. Spurgeon.

“He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks.” Whether a person observes Jewish religious days, eats meat, or drinks wine, he is to thank the Lord and live by his conscience. Either course of conduct in these doubtful things can please the Lord, but each person is to decide which course of conduct would best glorify the Lord in his own experience. God is not so concerned with the act itself as with the motive behind it. If a person’s motives are wrong, then what he is doing is no longer a doubtful thing but a sin. Only God knows the motives of the heart.

WEAK BROTHERS ARE TO HAVE CONFIDENCE IN THE LORDSHIP OF CHRIST — Romans 14:7-9

“For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord: and whether we die, we die unto the Lord; whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord’s.” No Christian is an island; each is directly accountable to God for his actions. We do not live to ourselves and for our own desires as Christians, but everything is related to Christ. Christ alone has the right to rule in our lives, and we must give him that right. He will show each believer his particular path in this area of doubtful things. Live, therefore, unto the Lord.

“For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living.” The Lordship of Jesus Christ doesn’t start when we die; it begins now. If the Lord, through conscience or a sense of conviction, tells you to stop a thing, then you had better stop. If he says you should eliminate some practice, or begin some practice, or change your attitude, it is his prerogative to do so. He can handle his own in the area of doubtful things far more efficiently than we might think. If the Christian desires to magnify Christ, then he will have the right attitude towards doubtful things.
ALL CHRISTIANS WILL GIVE AN ACCOUNT TO CHRIST — Romans 14:10-12

“But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.” There is no need for the weak Christian to judge or for the strong Christian to despise, for each will have to appear before the judgment seat of Christ and give an account. Each will be judged according to motives. Men who did things on this earth, even doubtful things, to please the Lord shall be rewarded because their motives were right. If their motives were wrong, they shall receive no reward.

“For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.” Each Christian will give his own account. Thus, we see that Christianity is individual and personal. My friend, you will give an account to Christ about your attitude and motives concerning doubtful things.

CONCLUSION

Do you want the forgiveness of sins, to have your deepest spiritual needs met? Then you must receive Jesus Christ as Lord of your life and Saviour for your personal sins. The Lord did not say you have to give up something or clean yourself up before you come to him. He invites you to come in faith just as you are, and he will begin to clean you. He promises to give all who come to him the forgiveness of sins, eternal life and an assurance of heaven. Today is the day for you to acknowledge your sinfulness and cast yourself totally upon Christ to save you. He is your only hope!
EXHORTATION TO THE STRONG BROTHER ON DOUBTFUL THINGS
Romans 14:13-21
by Dr. Jack L. Arnold

Christians, especially young people or new Christians, often ask my advice on amusements and other practices. I note that they are torn by the desire to do something which they think might give them great enjoyment but about which their consciences are not clear. They think they must give up something that they want very much to do. I always point out what the Bible says is sin: lying, cheating, envy, jealousy, hatred, pride, selfishness, drunkenness, lust, premarital and extra-marital sex, divorce, etc. Then in the area of doubtful things or questionable practices, I tell them that they must not follow my standards but must set up their own in light of their accountability to Christ, although I do give my opinions on the things under discussion. I have found that one way to bring these people to a mature decision is to point out that their conduct is not to be based on what pleases them or on what may be best for them or others, but rather upon what will please the Lord Jesus Christ.

Maturity comes in the area of doubtful things when people make their own decisions before the Lord. Doubtful practices such as movies, dancing, smoking, television, drinking alcoholic beverages, amusements, etc. are solved on the basis of biblical principles, not by a direct command of Scripture. A doubtful thing is not inherently sinful, but it may become sinful for a person if the Lord has convicted one’s conscience that it is wrong or if it becomes a stumbling block to another Christian.

Doubtful things are primarily issues between strong Christians and weak Christians, and have very little relationship to our testimony to the world. Most people in the unsaved world couldn’t care less whether a believer in Christ goes to a movie or a dance, but these things may become issues with other Christians who have been saved out of the world system.

In Romans 14:4-12, the Apostle Paul tells the weak brother not to judge the strong brother who exercises Christian liberty in some areas, for every man someday must give an account to God for all his actions. We are definitely commanded to keep our noses out of other Christian’s lives in doubtful areas, and are ordered not to criticize them.

Now in Romans 14:13-21, Paul tells the strong brother not to misuse his Christian liberty. He is to operate on the principle of love towards the weaker brother. The strong brother who understands Christian liberty is under great responsibility to use his liberty wisely and, if necessary, to forsake it for the cause of Christ.
THE STRONG ARE NOT TO BE A STUMBLING BLOCK TO THE WEAK — Romans 14:13-14

“Let us not therefore judge one another any more.” All Christians are to put away judging one another in these areas of doubtful things. If one feels another is misusing his Christian liberty, he must pray for him but never judge. In addition, he may advise, cite his own experiences, point to the Word of God, and seek to enlighten, but he may never command the conscience of another believer.

“But judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling block or an occasion to fall in his brother’s way.” The strong brother who understands the grace of God and Christian liberty, and whose conscience is free in these questionable practices, is to exercise his liberty in the bounds of love. He should never use his liberty in any way that would shock a weak brother or lead him to fall into sin. The Christian who insists on exercising his liberty at the expense of somebody else is turning liberty into license. Love limits the exercise of Christian liberty deliberately and willingly.

You may have freedom to do some doubtful things but you won’t do them because they might become a stumbling block to a weak Christian. A mature believer may have liberty, but he is not always free to exercise it. Because we love the brethren, the greatest right we have is the right to give up our rights.

I remember Rev. Austin, who pastored the Christian and Missionary Alliance Church in Roanoke, Virginia, so faithfully for years. Some brethren in that group felt it was wrong to go to movies, and they tended to judge others who felt they had the freedom to go. Rev. Austin had perfect liberty to go to a respectable movie, but he never went while in Roanoke because he did not want to offend others. When out of town, he and his wife would attend movies, but they never made an issue of this. Why? Because they loved the brethren, and their personal wants and desires were made second to the unity of the body of Christ.

“I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself: but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean.” Though nothing is unclean of itself, some doubtful things become moral issues for weak brothers, and strong Christians are held responsible for the weaker brothers’ consciences. Because of this, strong brothers may not always exercise their liberty. Most weak brothers and Christians, such as legalists, are very set in their ways and cannot be convinced of the grace of God by strong Christians flaunting their liberty. They need a great deal of love and patience to enter into the fullness of the Christian life. One good way to reach these brethren is temporarily to conform to their standards for the sake of gaining their ear, and then to instruct them in the Word.
There was a young man in my church in California whose conscience would not permit him to go to any movie. My personal conscience is not offended at movies, although I will not attend most movies today because they are filled with sex, hate, and violence, and I do not want to fill my mind with these things. While I was his pastor, I did not attend any movie for two years because I honored my weaker brother’s conscience. During that time I taught scriptural principles about doubtful things and had many private discussions with this young man. Then one day he saw the true issues in this area. Before we left the church, he and his wife attended a movie (Mary Poppins) with my wife Carol and me. He had come to some degree of maturity in this area.

THE STRONG ARE NOT TO DESTROY THE WEAK BROTHER — Romans 14:15-19

“But if thy brother be grieved [injured] with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably [lovingly].” One of the big doubtful things in the first century church was eating meat that had been sacrificed to idols. Paul says that if the strong brother’s eating of such meat causes his weaker brother to stumble, then the strong Christian is misusing his liberty and not walking in love.

“Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died.” The word “destroy” here does not mean “eternal perishing,” but “ruin” in the sense of “wasting a life.” A strong Christian can actually misuse his liberty in a way that will ruin a weak brother’s life.

It is quite possible for more mature Christians to feel free to do things that would lead less mature believers into an area beyond their control. Suppose a strong brother who has liberty to drink a glass of wine is seen doing so by a young Christian or one who has been saved out of a bad experience with alcohol. This young Christian or believer with a former alcohol problem may think this is all right for him as well, only to discover too late that he cannot handle it. Much of his life may be wasted because the stronger brother did not exercise restraint in his Christian liberty. Don’t let it be said of you that someone else wasted years of his life because of something he saw you do or heard you say. This would not be love.

“Let not then your good be evil spoken of.” A misuse of liberty could bring a loss of testimony. The Christian’s life is the thing that speaks loudest to those about him. If a strong brother loses rapport with the weaker brother, he may never get him to grow and understand the grace of God in the Christian life.

Often brethren who are strong in the faith tend to overreact to any form of Christian legalism. Instead of being gracious, they tend to flaunt their freedom so as to make the weaker brother furious. Some of my good Christian minister friends are in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, a denomination that is quite free on Christian liberty. With some of them it is a campaign to straighten out true believers on questionable
practices. A few years ago many of these dear brothers seemed stereotyped. They grew beards, smoked pipes and imbibed good brews. These Christian brothers have taught me much theology and graciousness in Christian liberty, but I do not feel free to participate in many of their practices. The issue with me is not the thing but the motivation for doing it. We should always ask ourselves four basic questions about doubtful things:

1. Will it please Christ?
2. Will it affect my testimony before the lost, or be a stumbling block to the saved?
3. Will it be harmful to my own body?
4. Will this act solidify or divide the body of Christ?

“For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.” The Christian life is not material things and external acts, not eating or drinking or any such thing. God simply does not care what, when, or how we eat and drink, so long as it does no damage to ourselves or to someone else. These things are unimportant to him — but are they the great issues of our own lives? Are they so important that we cannot do without them? Are these the things for which Christ indwells our lives? The important things are righteousness, peace, and joy produced by the Spirit of God in our lives. Righteousness and inward peace and joy are to be the goals of all men who believe in Jesus Christ as personal Lord and Saviour. The real Christian life is spiritual and is related to being occupied with Christ and controlled by the Spirit of God. Be honest — are doubtful things conducive to a walk of holiness? Can we best produce joy, peace, and righteousness with or without them? Are most doubtful things compatible with Christlikeness?

“For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God and approved of men.” The mature brother who sets aside his liberty for the weak brother because he is motivated by love will be approved by God and men.

“Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify [build up] another.” The burning desire of every Christian should be to have a spiritual life that builds up his Christian brethren, not tears them down.

THE STRONG ARE NOT TO DESTROY GOD’S WORK — Romans 14:20-21

“For meat destroy not the work of God.” If the mature believer insists upon his liberty, this could destroy the work of God — that which is normally carried on
through a local assembly that is working harmoniously. This work is primarily the task of reaching the unsaved for Christ. When the peace of the assembly is disrupted because the strong brother insists upon using his liberty, the assembly is divided so that the work of evangelization is not carried on.

“All things indeed are pure; but it is evil for that man who eateth with offence.” Paul reiterates: a doubtful thing is not inherently sinful, but it becomes sinful for the weaker brother when his conscience is offended by it.

“It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak.” Although something might not be inherently wrong, it is wrong if it becomes a hindrance, a drawback, or a stumbling block to somebody else. Because the strong brother loves the weaker brother, he will not exercise his liberty if his action will cause the weaker brother to stumble. Love foregoes one’s own liberty for another’s good. The Christian is bound by love, not by legalism, when he gives up something for another’s good. He willingly gives up something that is good for something better: the building of the weaker brother, the unity of the body, the furtherance of the work of Christ.

Paul expressed his feeling on doubtful things in 1 Corinthians 8:12-13:

“But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ. Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend.”

With much light comes much responsibility. The strong brother has been given special light on the subject of questionable practices, but he must use this light in a responsible way, even restricting his freedom if necessary. It is like light that comes into the eye. The more light that is admitted, the more the pupil restricts. So it is with Christian maturity. The more light we have, the more we willingly restrict our lives for the cause of Christ and love of the brethren.

CONCLUSION

Doubtful things are not an issue in becoming a Christian. A person is not necessarily a Christian because he abstains from certain things. I am often asked if a person can drink or smoke and be a Christian; the answer is yes. (It has been my observation that when one does trust Christ, the excesses in doubtful things pass immediately and some things drop off completely.)
The issue in salvation is Jesus Christ. The Bible states that all men are separated from God because of sin in their lives, and that only Christ can forgive that sin. Moral people are just as sinful as immoral people. All need Christ. In heaven, there will be people who practiced doubtful things and also those who didn’t. In hell, there will be those who practiced doubtful things and also those who didn’t. They will be in hell because they refused to receive Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Saviour, and they will perish in their sins.

Where you spend eternity will depend on what you have done with Jesus Christ in this life. Will you accept him now? The decision is yours!
DO ALL THINGS TO PLEASE CHRIST
Romans 14:22-23

by Dr. Jack L. Arnold

This is our last message on “doubtful things,” things neither inherently sinful nor specifically commanded against in Scripture that may become sinful if the Lord convicts the individual conscience or if the practices become stumbling blocks for a weak brother in Christ.

A list of doubtful things would include different things in different cultures, but in America it frequently includes such things as television, movies, dancing, drinking alcoholic beverages, smoking, gambling, and participating in certain kinds of amusements. The Bible specifically tells us that many things are sin — such as lying, cheating, gossip, sexual perversion, judging, bitterness, worry, hatred, prejudice, envy, murder, laziness, drunkenness, etc. — and God’s moral law will never change. However, we must deal with doubtful things on the basis of biblical principles because there is no right or wrong in these matters. They are a matter of conscience.

It has been interesting to note the reactions of people over the years as we have studied and taught this subject. A person once said to me, “You never tell us what is right or wrong in these doubtful things. One minute you say we have liberty, and the next you say we should restrain our liberty.” He was coming to understand doubtful things, and my answer was that his conscience would have to guide him in these things. Another person said, “Pastor, I think I understand this teaching on doubtful things — it is all right here,” and he pointed to his heart. This man had learned his lesson well, for he understood that the Christian is to do everything to please his Lord and to love his brethren in Christ. It is not the act but the attitude!

REVIEW OF THE ARGUMENT IN ROMANS 14

In Romans 14:4-12 Paul has exhorted the weaker brother, whose conscience will not permit him to do certain practices, not to judge the stronger brother who exercises liberty in the area of doubtful things. He assures the weaker brother that every Christian will someday give an account of his life to Christ.

In Romans 14:13-21, the stronger brother is not to look down in contempt at the weaker brother. Rather, he must exercise his Christian liberty within the bounds of love. It is love that motivates the stronger brother to set aside his liberty in doubtful things because he is concerned for the welfare of his weaker brother. He will put no stumbling
block in the way of the weak; he avoids wasting a life or destroying the work of evangelism in the local church.

FAITH PLEASRES GOD — Romans 14:22-23

To this point Paul has given us two laws to govern our attitudes about doubtful things: the law of conscience and the law of love. Now he sets forth a higher law: faith. Whatever is not of faith is sin. In other words, we should do all things to please the Lord Jesus Christ:

“That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God” (Col. 1:10).

“And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight” (1 John 3:22).

If we are not pleasing the Lord in the area of some doubtful thing, then we should not practice it.

“Hast thou faith? have it to thyself before God.” The strong believer may have definite convictions about freedom, and rightly so. However, he is to refrain from using his freedom if it will be a detriment to other weaker Christian brothers. The mature believer’s happiness is in knowing he has freedom, not necessarily in exercising it. One does not have to exhibit his liberty to prove he has it.

“Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth.” The stronger brother has freedom of conscience in doubtful things, and a knowledge of this brings inner happiness as he revels in the grace of God. He is not bound by legalism but bound by love.

“And he that doubteth is damned [judged] if he eat, because he eateth not of faith.” The weaker brother should not practice any doubtful thing if his conscience is convicted that it is wrong for him. A good rule of thumb is “When in doubt, don’t.”

“For whatsoever is not of faith is sin.” An attitude of faith will solve the problem of doubtful things. Whatever we do in these things must be done to please the Lord. If we can’t do a thing to please him, then we ought not to do it. We will all give an account before our God.

The area of doubtful things must be solved on the basis of biblical principles. Here are seven basic ones:
The Principle of Liberty

“All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any (1 Cor. 6:12).

“All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not” (I Cor. 10:23).

All doubtful things are lawful for a Christian to practice. In themselves, these things will not disturb one’s relationship to the Lord. Grace gives a person much Christian liberty.

The Principle of Love

“Judge ... that no man put a stumbling block or an occasion to fall in his brother’s way ... But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably [lovingly] ... It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor anything whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak” (Rom 14:13,15,21).

“But take heed lest by any means this liberty of your’s become a stumbling block to them that are weak” (1 Cor. 8:9).

Because the brother who understands Christian liberty loves his brother who does not understand, he willingly sets aside his freedom to help the weaker brother understand grace and to keep him from stumbling.

The Principle of Expediency

While the Christian has liberty, sometimes it is not expedient or practical to exercise that liberty. For example, although a Christian may be free to drink wine in America, in my estimation it is frequently not expedient for him to do so. Alcoholism is a plague in this country. Statistics indicate there are millions of alcoholics in the United States. More money is spent on booze than on education.

The Principle of Edification

Whatever the Christian does should be done to build up, not tear up, our Christian brethren. Any act that hinders the growth of another Christian is wrong.
**The Principle of Self-control**

A Christian should not allow himself to become a slave to any fleshy appetite or habit. Christian liberty does not mean that one becomes a slave to habits; it means that one is a slave to Christ and is free to serve him. When a doubtful practice becomes a slavish habit, it must be forsaken. It is possible for a Christian to be a slave to tobacco or television or any questionable practice, but the Bible teaches that Christians are to be slaves to Jesus Christ and that one cannot be a slave to Christ and a slave to some habit at the same time.

To recall the earlier example of drinking wine, a glass of wine is not forbidden in the New Testament. In fact, Paul even mentions that a little wine is good for the stomach, like medicine (1 Tim. 5:23). Biblical prohibitions are against “much wine” (1 Tim. 3:8; Tit. 2:3). However, when alcohol becomes a compelling or controlling habit, he has been brought under its power or influence, and this is sin. In the same way, if one cannot make it through the day without coffee, he has been brought under the power of the mild drug caffeine. These things are not bad in themselves, and the proper use of substances like alcohol and caffeine is not wrong. When these things become controlling influences in one’s life, however, they cross the line into sin.

**The Principle of God’s Glory**

“Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Cor. 10:31).

Whatever a believer does must be to the glory of God. If God cannot be glorified by an act, it is best not to do that thing.

For instance, if we want to go to a movie, we are free to do so, but we should ask ourselves if our viewing it will glorify God. Will it corrupt our minds or stir our inner passions to lust? We must learn to be selective in movie going.

Dancing is another such issue. It is not sinful in itself, but dance clubs and parties frequently include much drinking and immorality, and the question is whether one can glorify Christ there. When I was first saved, I knew that I had the freedom to attend my fraternity parties, but I didn’t want to go because of the drinking, immorality, and loose talk. My flesh wanted to go, but my mind and heart told me that I couldn’t and glorify Christ. I had been bought with a price, Christ’s death, and I was to glorify Christ in my body.
The Principle of Supreme Sacrifice

“Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend” (1 Cor. 8:13).

“For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more. And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; to them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law of Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. And this I do for the gospel’s sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you” (1 Cor. 9:19-23).

“Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved” (1 Cor. 10:33).

Because of his love for Jesus, his brethren, and the unsaved world, the Christian will go to any length, involve himself in any hardship, and impose upon himself the strictest discipline in order to reach men for Christ and to build men in Christ.

CONCLUSION

Personally, I believe that more people have been driven from salvation in Christ because of Christian legalism than for any other single reason. People have confused giving up some external act with becoming a Christian.

The Bible teaches that salvation is attained by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. You cannot work for salvation. You cannot give up something and thereby become a Christian. You must acknowledge that you are a sinner, separated from God and headed for eternal judgment, and then entrust yourself to Jesus Christ who alone can forgive your sins and give you eternal life. God wants you to come to Christ just as you are. Then he will make you to be the man or woman he wants you to be.

Jesus Christ never said that you are to give up sin to become a Christian. He said you are to receive him as your Lord and Saviour, and then he will make you a Christian. Is Christ your personal Lord and Saviour?
POWER TO PLEASE
A Sermon on Romans 15:1-13

by Dr. Jack L. Arnold

Perhaps you have heard about the prayer a little girl once prayed, “Lord, please make the bad people good and the good people nice.” How to make good people nice is the subject of Romans 15:1-13. Christians may have right doctrine and meticulous practice but be very irritating about it. The question is, “How do we live with other Christians who persist in looking at things differently from the way we do?” In other words, “How do we get along with other Christians?”

There are two major causes of divisions among Christians, those that arise from differences of conviction and those from differences of background. These two factors are working today, dividing Christians all over the world.

HARMONY DESPITE DIFFERENCES OF CONVICTION — Romans 15:1-6

“We then that are strong (able) ought to bear the infirmities of the weak (unable). In Romans 14, Paul has been speaking about doubtful things. The Holy Spirit convicted some Christians there that certain practices were wrong for them. They were weak in conscience and unable to participate in those things. Other Christians have freedom of conscience to participate and are able to exercise Christian liberty. These are not differences about doctrine but about practice.

The strong brothers are to bear or assist the weak brothers. While the weak may be irritating and have a judging spirit, the strong are to acknowledge these weaknesses and love them in spite of their faults. Christ died for both the weak and the strong and they are to get along in a spirit of love and harmony.

“And not to please ourselves.” Sometimes strong brothers in Christ exercise their liberty because of selfishness — they aren’t going to curb their lifestyle for any narrow-minded Christian legalists. But God’s Word says the strong brother must set aside self out of love for the weaker brother.

“Let every one of us please his neighbor for his good to edification (building up).” The strong are to make every reasonable attempt to please the weak for the weak do not need criticism but instruction; they don’t need neglect but attention. The strong should not get angry at the weak, defy them, cut them off from love and concern, but try to please them, patiently instruct them, and build them up in the faith. The weak should be loved, not treated as second-class citizens.
Paul never compromised when preaching the gospel. “For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ” (Gal. 1:10). Only in the area of doubtful things did he seek to please his brethren in Christ.

“Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God; Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved. Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ” (I Cor. 10:32-11:1).

It is natural for us to want to please ourselves but through the strength of the indwelling Christ we can supernaturally learn to love and please our brethren unto edification. If we live for self, we are adopting the philosophy of the world, If we live for Christ, his love is soon formed in us for others.

“For even Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written, “The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me.” Paul appeals to Christ as the supreme example. He never pleased Himself but always sought to do the will of the Father. He left heaven’s glory, suffered the reproaches of men, and died an ignominious death because He loved sinners. He took no thought for Himself and always put others first. Christ was not selfish. Since Christ loved and died for all who would trust him, then we should love and please all our brothers in Christ, for we are one.

“For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.” The Old Testament stories are designed to teach us by graphic and lucid illustrations how God taught men to live, not to please themselves, but to please God.

“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (I Tim. 3:16—17).

The Bible brings comfort, patience, and hope to the Christian and we should study it. Do you remember the Old Testament story of Jacob, that scheming, shrewd operator?

He was a Big Time Operator, always looking for his percentage and always taking care of his self interest first. God dealt with him through the years of his life until he was at last brought to wrestle with the angel alone beside the Brook of Jabbok. There God touched him and rendered him helpless so all he could do was cling to God. It was then that his name was changed from Jacob, the usurper or imposter, to Israel, prince with God. Jacob learned that pleasing God and pleasing others were the most important things in life.
“Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus: that ye may with one mind, and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” This prayer is for the unity of believers, for their love for one another when there are differences of conviction on questionable practices. Christian brethren are to be of one accord, one mind, and this can only be done in accord with Jesus Christ. A Christian must be in constant fellowship with his Lord. Biting your lip and trying to keep your temper is not the secret of living with difficult people. The secret is a thankful heart that continually looks up to the Lord Jesus saying, “Thank you, Lord, for the quietness and the calmness. The purity and the love which is available to me through you.” A thankful heart and an obedient will that seeks to please another for his own good is the secret of living with difficult people.

Despite the fact that Christians hold different points of view, they can be so interested in one another and so concerned about one another that they can live in harmony. The result will be that they will glorify God.

HARMONY DESPITE DIFFERENCES OF BACKGROUND — Romans 15:7-13

There were two groups in the local church at Rome — Jews and Gentiles. Both were Christians but they came from varying backgrounds, and the problem of divisions in the church arose over these different backgrounds. It is difficult for us today to understand just how great this cultural gap was. To the Jew of Paul’s day, a Gentile did nothing right: He ate the wrong food, read the wrong books, followed the wrong leaders, observed the wrong customs, and even spoke the wrong language. Friction between these two groups who really loved the Lord Jesus Christ arose from the cultural and racial gap that separated these true believers and Paul tells how to solve the problem.

“Wherefore receive (welcome) ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God.” — True Christians are to welcome (receive) each other because Christ died for and received each sinner that has come to him through faith. Racial and class distinctions are to make no difference among Christians. These things are merely superficial, surface points of view. The important thing is that God has received a man; therefore, we must receive him because he is a brother in Christ.

A local church is not just for the rich or the poor. There can be no class distinctions among true brothers in Christ. It is true that there will always be upper, middle and lower class people in the world, but in Christ all men are equal before God. How easy it is to think of a church as being restricted to a certain income group. You may have heard Christians say (and I have been guilty of it myself), “These are our kind of people,” implying that one Christian may be better than another.
The racial strain between Jews and Gentiles could be compared to what we have today in our churches between blacks and whites. It is my firm conviction, after studying the Bible, reading Church history and the history of the American Negro, that segregated local churches are not biblical. No matter what their color, men for whom Christ died should be able to sit in the same church and worship God together. Segregated churches present a false image to the world about us, and the younger generation is laughing at the church for its narrow-mindedness. Please do not call me a liberal. This conviction has come to me through years of studying the Bible. I do not believe that the Bible teaches segregation nor does it teach forced integration. No intellectually honest Christian can hold to the position of intentionally segregated local churches.

The thing that saddens my heart is that almost every major social movement until 1912 (at the height of the liberal/fundamental controversy) was carried on by evangelicals in this country. Today the civil rights movement has been turned over to the liberals. Evangelicals should be leading the movement, setting forth a biblical emphasis.

When I speak of integrated churches I am not speaking about interracial marriage, for this is another problem in itself. I am speaking about the fact that men of all races should be able to worship the same Christ together. The Bible certainly supports this point. Perhaps we would not have so many problems with race today if Christians in the past had obeyed the clear teaching of Scripture, “Wherefore receive ye one another.”

“Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers: And that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy; as it is written, For this cause I will confess to thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto thy name. And again he saith, ‘Rejoice, ye Gentiles with his people.’ And again, ‘Praise the Lord, all ye Gentiles; and laud him, all ye people.’ And again, ‘Esaias saith, “There shall be a root of Jesse, and he that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles; in him shall the Gentiles trust.”’ Christ died for Jews and Gentiles; therefore all must be accepted into fellowship who have believed that Christ died for them.

“Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.” Paul closes the main argument of this epistle with prayer. When we begin to let God work in our lives about the differences of convictions or backgrounds with other believers, then joy and peace begin to flood our hearts giving us an assurance that we are the children of God. The secret is that we must believe. Without faith, we cannot please God. We must believe God’s Word and bring our lives into conformity to what it teaches. When we set aside our backgrounds, cultures, and prejudices and follow Christ, then comes joy and peace from God.
It is not natural for people to live together in harmony when they have different backgrounds. It is not natural for us to expect to see blessing come out of differences, but when we believe, Christ does a supernatural work in us so that we can overcome these social problems.

CONCLUSION

Jesus Christ came into this world to save sinners and any person who really wants to be saved from his sins may do so by placing his faith and trust in Jesus Christ as personal Lord and Saviour. It is not enough to acknowledge that you are a sinner and separated from God; you must personally flee to Christ who promises to keep all who trust him from the wrath to come and give them eternal life.
You may not have realized it, but we finished the book of Romans with our last lesson as far as doctrine is concerned. The Apostle Paul adds a postscript to his letter beginning with verse 14 of chapter 15. From the beginning verses of the book until Romans 15:13, Paul has been dealing primarily with doctrine — this is the greatest doctrinal book ever written. Although Paul was a man of doctrine, he was also a man of emotion. He had a heart as well as a head.

The section we deal with in this lesson is autobiographical, and in it Paul reveals the inner workings of a faithful minister of Jesus Christ. While it deals primarily with those who are called into full-time Christian service, it is applicable to every Christian because, in one sense, all Christians are ministers of Jesus Christ. The ministry is not for some class called “clergy” who wear their collars backwards or don long robes; the ministry is something every Christian should participate in.

PAUL’S CONCERN FOR THE FEELINGS OF THE SAINTS — Romans 15:14-16

Looking at these verses phrase by phrase:

“And I myself also am persuaded (satisfied) of you, my brethren” — Paul realized that most of the Roman Christians were spiritually healthy. He did not know any of them personally but he had heard of them and they passed his examination, (To have the Apostle Paul say, “I am satisfied with your spiritual condition,” was quite an honor, both at that time and in retrospect.)

“That ye also are full of goodness“ — Their hearts were right. It was not that they were basically good or perfect, but Paul could sense that the motives of their hearts were true. They went to church because they loved Christ, not to impress people. They witnessed for Christ, not out of fear, but out of love.

“Filled with all knowledge” — Their heads were right. This does not mean that they knew all things but that they acted intelligently — they acted from knowledge. They were not tossed about by every wind of doctrine. They had an intelligent comprehension of God’s will and Word and acted with purpose and power. Never say doctrine is not important. It is difficult to live by truth we do not know!
“Able also to admonish (instruct) one another” — They were beginning to show signs of real maturity. They were not only growing themselves, but were also able to help others grow in the Lord. A lack of maturity is one of the problems of the church in America. Most of us suffer from what someone has described as “prolonged adolescence merging into premature senility.” We never grow up spiritually.

“Nevertheless, brethren, I have written the more boldly unto you in some sort, as putting you in mind, because of the grace that is given to me of God” — No matter how great their spiritual maturity, these Romans needed to be reminded about God and his will.

“That I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God“ — These Romans had to be reminded that Paul was the Apostle to the Gentiles and his job was to teach and preach the gospel.

“That the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost.” — Paul looked upon his apostleship as a high priest who offers up saved Gentiles to God as an offering. his one goal was to see Gentiles saved and built up in the faith. his work was set apart (sanctified) by the Holy Spirit. Apparently there may be Christian work in the flesh that is not satisfying to God.

PAUL’S CONCERN OVER PRIDE IN THE MINISTRY — Romans 15:17-19

“I have therefore whereof I may glory (boast) through Jesus Christ in those things which pertain to God” — Paul had many attainments in the power of Christ in which he could boast. God had used him in a wonderful way.

“For I will not dare to speak of any of those things wrought by me, to make the Gentiles obedient, by word and deed“ — Apparently Paul had done things that were not in the power of Christ to reach the Gentiles, but he is not going to talk about them for only Christ’s attainments through him, as an instrument, were worth talking about. True humility is realizing what we are in Christ and giving God all the glory for it.

“For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain: but I labored more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me” (I Cor. 15:9, 10).

Speaking of pride and ministry, in my time, I’ve seen that there are four basic reasons that people leave vocational work in the church:

(1) Pride
(2) Materialism
(3) Sexually promiscuity
(4) A nagging or unspiritual spouse.

Paul’s own pride is a concern to him because he knows it can destroy his ministry more quickly than the more obvious sins of the flesh.

Continuing with the passage: “Through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have preached the gospel of Christ” — By Christ, through the power of the Spirit, Paul preached the gospel. He had a burden for evangelism and knew that the gospel alone could save men from sin and hell. Throbbing in his heart was a passion and yearning to reach all men everywhere with the truth of Jesus Christ.

Paul wrote earlier, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth: . . .” (Rom. 1:16) and “Woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!” (I Cor. 9:16).

Where are the men who will stand true to the gospel now? Today our churches are corrupted with back-slappers, men pleasers and compromisers.

**PAUL’S CONCERN FOR OTHER MINISTERS — Romans 15:20, 21**

“Yea, so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man’s foundation: But as it is written, To whom he was not spoken of, they shall see: and they that have not heard shall understand” — Paul was a pioneer missionary and a church starter. He laid foundations and let others do the building of the saints. He did not have the spiritual gift of pastor-teacher, but was an evangelist and a teacher. He would never build on another man’s foundation.

There is no place for petty jealousies among true ministers of God. Each has his gift and each is important to the Church. Paul made that clear in his letter to Corinth: “I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase. Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labor” (I Cor. 3:6-8, KJV).

**PAUL’S CONCERN FOR THE SAINTS’ SOULS — Romans 15:22-24**

“For which cause also I have been much hindered from coming to you” — The apostle longed to come to see these Christians in Rome; apparently, he had never met them. He was hindered, not by the devil, but by the burden of the ministry. This was a hindrance that was a blessing. Paul had many personal wants and desires, but God’s plan for his life overruled them.
“But now having no more place in these parts, and having a great desire these many years to come to you” — Paul had preached in Asia Minor, Macedonia, and Greece, and people had been won to Christ and churches established, but there was a desire to go on and on with the gospel to places where it had not been preached. He was faithful to the Lord's command, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15).

Christ’s command is, “Go and preach.” How we should weep over our departure from the spirit of Christ and the Apostles in this matter of taking the message to the lost. We set up beautiful church buildings and say, “Why don’t the unsaved come to church?” A better question is, “Why should the unsaved come to church?” God never told the unsaved masses to come to church (although the church door is open to them) but he told the Christian to take the gospel to the unsaved masses. (Let us cease chiding men for failing to come to hear the gospel instead of our obeying the Lord and going with it to them where they are!)

“Whensoever I take my journey into Spain, I will come to you: for I trust to see you in my journey, and to be brought on my way thitherward by you, if first I be somewhat filled with your company” — Paul seemed certain that he would get to Spain and would stop by Rome to see the Christians there. He did get to Rome, by the will of God, but it was not as he thought it would be at all. He went to Rome in chains as a prisoner of the state. Someone has said, “Man proposes, but God disposes!” God’s ways are not our ways.

**PAUL’S CONCERN FOR THE SAINTS’ BODIES — Romans 15:25-29**

“But now I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints” — The saints in Jerusalem were in such terrible straits because of famine and persecution that Paul felt obligated to take up a collection for them from the Gentile churches. He had been warned by the Holy Spirit not to go to Jerusalem, but he loved the Jewish saints and was concerned for their physical welfare.

“For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem.” — The Gentile Christians felt a burden for their Jewish brethren in Christ and set out to meet their needs. What better way to heal the rift between Jew and Gentile Christians than for converted Gentiles to help hungry Jewish Christians?

The Bible teaches that Christians are to take care of the needy among them before they help the world about them. Notice in the Old Testament — a complex web of social support was required to exist to help poor Jews (though it was rarely practiced.) But no commands exist to go into other nations and aid their impoverished. The New Testament clarifies this silence by saying in Galatians 6:10, “So then, while we
have opportunity, let us do good to all men, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith” (NASB).

“It hath pleased them verily; and their debtors they are. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things.” — The Gentiles owed a debt to the Jews for the gospel came to them through the Jews. Without the Jews, the world would never have had the Bible or the gospel.

The Gentile churches that were aided soon became self-supporting. This is a good general principle for foreign missions: churches are generally not to ask for support, but they are to give it.

“When therefore I have performed this, and have sealed to them this fruit, I will come by you into Spain.” — Paul planned to take the money, an obvious fruit of his Gentile work, and personally deliver it to Jerusalem and have it receipted (sealed). Paul was businesslike in financial matters and he was clearly concerned with ethics.

“And I am sure that when I come unto you, I shall come in the fullness of the blessings of the gospel.” — Paul is confident that he will be fully accepted when he arrives in Rome.

PAUL’S CONCERN FOR HIS OWN LIFE — Romans 15:30, 31

“Now I beseech (beg) you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ’s sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me” — Paul requested prayer for himself personally, for he had great needs. He needed to walk close to Christ and he feared for his life as he went to Jerusalem. The word “strive” is a military word and means “to agonize.” It takes time and hard work to pray. Effort must be put into it. Prayer is a mystery. God has a plan that will come to pass, but prayer actually changes things. Jesus said, “Men ought always to pray and not to faint.” Someone else said, “Prayer works, prayer is work, and prayer leads to work.”

“That I may be delivered from them that do not believe in Judea” — Paul, being a normal human being, had some fears about going to Jerusalem. He believed that prayers would play a part in God’s protection of him. With this example, we can find encouragement to pray for missions and missionaries even though we do not know all the details of their various situations.

There is a story about Dr. H. A. Ironside’s going once or twice a year to preach the gospel to a little French colony somewhere in Idaho. These people lived in the backwoods on an island and the only way to get to them was by rowboat. He would ride
his horse to the river and then yell across in French, “Please bring the boat.” Then he would stay with them several days preaching and teaching.

Before he left the colony one day, he asked the French people to pray for him in his travels. They replied, “We don’t believe that prayer is necessary, for we believe God is sovereign and He has promised to meet our needs. We just believe his Word.”

Dr. Ironside asked them, “Haven’t you noticed that the Apostle Paul asked people to pray for him?” “Yes,” they said, “We know this, but perhaps Paul didn’t understand all the truth on this matter.” (There are many who think they know more theology than the Apostle Paul.)

Dr. Ironside went on his way to Minneapolis and there he contracted a terrible sickness, almost to the point of death, but he recovered. After a few months he went back to the French colony in Idaho. The people who met him with the boat said, “When we heard you were sick, do you know what we did? We remembered you had asked us to pray for you, so we gathered our people together and had prayer for you.”

Dr. Ironside answered, “Well, thank you, but do you know, if you had prayed for me first, I might never have been sick!” It’s hard to know the precise hand of God in matters like this, but Dr. Ironside made his point with those who thought they knew more than Paul about prayer and God’s sovereignty.

“And that my service which I have for Jerusalem may be accepted of the saints“ — Paul was also concerned that the saints in Jerusalem might not accept the gift from the saved Gentiles. Why? Because of pride and prejudice. You have surely learned that it takes more grace to be a good receiver than it does to be a good giver.

PAUL’S CONCERN FOR HIS FAITHFULNESS — Romans 15:32, 33

“That I may come unto you with joy by the will of God, and may with you be refreshed” — Paul’s plan was to stop at Rome and be refreshed on his way to Spain to preach the gospel. While we cannot be sure, all evidence indicated that Paul did get to Spain.

Paul’s joy could only be filled as he was faithful in his ministry — not fruitful, but faithful! “Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful” (I Cor. 4:2). At the end of Paul’s life he could say that he had finished his course. “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing” (2 Tim. 4:7, 8).

“Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen” — Paul prayed a short prayer, assuring them that only the God of peace could quiet their hearts over his welfare.
same God of peace comforted Paul in tragedy, prison, beatings, mocking, shipwrecks, as he faithfully took the gospel to the then known world.

CONCLUSION

Paul gave his life to the preaching of the gospel. Why would anyone do such a thing? Because the “gospel is the power of God unto salvation.”

What is the gospel? The bad (negative) news of the gospel is that all men are sinners, separated from God spiritually because of their sin and rebellion, and that all are headed for eternal judgment because they are under God's wrath. The good news (positive) of the gospel is that Christ died for sinners and rose from the grave on the third day to declare the elect righteous before God. For a person to become a Christian, he must respond to the call of God by acknowledging Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior from sin. When a person is converted, he receives the forgiveness of sins, eternal life, and Christ takes the throne of his life, not only to assure him of his eternal destiny, but also to enable him to live in obedience.

What must you do to be saved? Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved!
THE FORMER DAY SAINTS
Romans 16:1-16

by Dr. Jack L. Arnold

All sports fans have heard of the various “Halls of Fame.” Fans know about Jim Thorp, Ty Cobb, Lou Gerrig, Babe Ruth, and others of equal fame. These men became famous because they excelled in their sport and became great in the eyes of many because of it. But those who aren’t sports fans really don’t care.

In Romans 16:1-16, we have another Hall of Fame. The names mentioned here are those of people who meant little to the world, but a great deal to God. Who ever heard of Phebe, Urbane or Rufus? God knows of them and their faithful labors and decided to record their names in Holy Scripture that will last for time and for eternity.

Man’s glory is so fleeting; when a man dies all he can leave behind is his reputation. These dear saints have a greater reputation than any athlete in the world and many, many people have read their names with admiration.

The Coliseum and the Parthenon are world-known edifices built by two great emperors, but who knows the emperors names? If I tell you that one of them was built by Hadrian and the other by Vespasian, probably only a few history teachers would know which built which. Yet, every one of the dear saints mentioned in Romans has been recorded because of his or her faithful labors in the gospel and love for the saints. What an epitaph, “Died in the Service of the Lord”!

This section of Scripture also tells us something about the heartbeat of the Apostle Paul for the ministry. Paul loved people and never forgot any favor done for him. He never used people for his own selfish purposes but genuinely loved them. He remembered their participation with him in the gospel and that his own ministry was bound up with theirs.

Paul never looked upon his ministry as a profession. He was uninterested in the spiritual clichés of his day and indifferent to ecclesiastical pomp or position. To him, things were not important — people were!
THE COMMENDATION — Romans 16:1, 2

“I commend unto you Phebe our sister“ — The first person mentioned was not a man. Phebe was a businesswoman who dealt with legal matters, for the Greek text uses many legal terms in these verses. She was traveling to Rome on business and Paul seized the opportunity to send his letter by her. (There were no post offices and individuals carried mail in those days.) Phebe was probably not married and may have been wealthy because she could travel.

Never was there a more priceless document carried through the mail. The Reformation was in Phebe’s baggage, but she did not know it. She had no idea about the multitudes who would be blessed by those parchments.

“A servant of the church which is at Cenchrea:“ — Phebe was connected with a local church and not just doing her own thing as an independent Christian. The word “servant” should be translated “deaconess”. She was a deaconess at the local church in Cenchrea. This may or may not have been an office in the local church yet. If it were, it likely carried no ruling capacity, as deacons and deaconesses in the Bible are godly servants who took up the necessary physical tasks of the ministry so the elders and apostles could get on with the work of spreading the gospel.

“That ye receive her in the Lord, as becometh saints, and that ye assist her in whatsoever business she hath need of you: for she hath been a succourer of many, and of myself also” — Phebe had the gift of helps and had assisted many Christians, including the Apostle Paul. He told the Christians in Rome to help her as much as possible in her legal business. Christians should always be ready to offer a helping hand to other saints because all Christians are one in Christ.

THE GREETINGS — Romans 16:3-16

“Greet Priscilla and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus“ — Paul had met Priscilla and Aquila in Corinth because they had a common trade — tent-making. He led them to Christ and instructed them in the Word. Later these two faithful servants helped Apollos understand Christ and Apollos became a great preacher.

Notice that Paul put Priscilla’s name first. These two are mentioned six times in the New Testament and in four of them Priscilla’s name is first. She may have been of a higher social class, highly educated, or spiritually mature. My personal opinion is this may have been because she was a sharp, outstanding, dynamic woman and when people thought of this couple they thought of her first. However, in the home Aquila was the head of the house. “And found a certain
Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, lately come from Italy, with his wife Priscilla;” (Acts 18:2).

“Who have for my life laid down their own necks: unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles” — This couple had such a great love for Paul and were so involved in the ministry that apparently their lives had been endangered at times. “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13).

“Likewise greet the church that is in their house” — Wherever Priscilla and Aquila went they started a local church by opening up their home.

The churches, or “called-out ones”, never had buildings until the third century. After that the custom grew like wildfire. It was when believers no longer had their church meetings in their homes that organized religion began to take over. Leaving the informal setting of the home and meeting in another building changes the whole atmosphere and it becomes stuffy and formal.

Meeting in homes is what helped spread the gospel throughout the whole of the early world. Christians were not interested in trying to get people to come out to church but instead invited them into their homes. There they talked to them about Christ, and there they won their friends and neighbors to the Lord. There were probably a dozen churches meeting in the city of Rome. No doubt they all got together on occasion in meetings such as we have today, but the rest of the time the church was carried on in the home.

“Salute my well-beloved Epaenetus, who is the first fruits of Achaia unto Christ” — Epaenetus was the first convert to Christ in Asia, and Paul’s heart was tied very closely to his spiritual child. Of course, this man was really the Lord’s convert and Paul was simply the instrument used by God.

There is a story about a man who came to D. L. Moody under heavy influence of alcohol and said, “Why, Mr. Moody, you know me. You converted me!”

Moody replied, “You look like an example of what I could do in converting someone. It is evident that Christ has had nothing to do with it.” There is a difference between being a convert of Christ and a convert of some evangelist. When converted by Christ, one’s life is forever changed.

“Greet Mary, who bestowed much labor on us.” — Mary may have been “just plain Mary” but she exhaustingly labored in the Lord’s work and she, no doubt, will have much reward in heaven.

There are at least eight women named in this list of twenty-seven. Women were essential to the ministry and labored for the Lord. Women can and must be
active in the ministry. The Bible only states that women should not rule over or teach men in the local church (I Tim. 2:9-15). They are not to be preachers, elders or deacons and are not to be put into positions of authority. Their labor in the church is not just getting chicken dinners or making flower arrangements or planning parties; they are to have spiritual activity — praying, witnessing, Bible studies, missionary groups, etc.

Consider that for every one man who offers himself to the mission field, approximately twenty women have offered themselves! What a remarkable place women have in the spreading of the Christian faith.

“Salute Andronicus and Junia (Junias) my kinsmen, and my fellow prisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me” — Andronicus and Junias were two relatives of Paul’s who came to Christ before he did. The prayers and testimonies of these two men may have had a big impact on Paul for conversion and for this Paul was thankful. Before he became a believer Paul may have hated these two for their love for Christ.

“Greet Amplias my beloved in the Lord. Salute Urbane, our helper in Christ, and Stachys my beloved” — Paul, the theologian, the student, the disciplinarian, had a heart. He spoke of his genuine and sincere love for his friends.

“Salute Apelles approved in Christ” — Apelles must have suffered terribly but came through the testing, proving his faithfulness to Jesus Christ. How many have suffered for Christ who are not recorded in Scripture! God will reward each one for his or her faithfulness.

“Salute them which are of Aristobulus’ household” — Some scholars think that Aristobulus was the grandson of Herod the Great. The gospel reached both the important folk and the unimportant, but all were important in God’s plan. Paul made little distinction between slaves and aristocrats, at least when they were believers.

“Salute Herodion my kinsman” — Herodion may have been an unsaved relative of Paul’s. Even some of Paul’s loved ones may have been outside Christ, but I am sure he never gave up praying or witnessing to them, for He did not know the hour that God might choose to save them.

“Greet them that be of the household of Narcissus, which are in the Lord’ — Here was a whole family that was committed to Jesus Christ. A family committed to Christ is a powerful testimony to the world.

“Salute Tryphena and Tryphosa, who labour in the Lord” — The translation of their names indicates that these were likely twin sisters, “luxurious and “voluptuous.” They must have been beautiful women who could have had
husbands, fine homes and children, but instead they gave themselves to the Lord’s work.

I recall the testimony of Kathleen Morris who was on her way to Mexico to get her jungle training in preparation for missionary work with Wycliffe Bible Translators. She was young, attractive, intelligent, sweet and obviously Spirit-filled. Yet she left all to follow Christ. She could have had a man but she chose Christ. He attitude was that if the Lord brought her a man, fine, but she had dedicated herself to his work. How many young ladies there are today who put the Lord second and getting married first! This will only lead to frustration!

“Salute the beloved Persis, which laboured much in the Lord” — This was another faithful woman in the service of the Lord (cf. Luke 8:2, 3).

“Salute Rufus chosen in the Lord” — Most scholars feel that Rufus was the son of Simon of Cyrene (Mark 15:21), who carried the cross for Jesus on the way to Golgotha to be crucified. That was a day of transformation for Simon because he met the Saviour and his life was changed. Simon never forgot that day and raised a family that honored the Lord Jesus Christ.

“And his mother and mine” — Rufus’ mother was also a godly woman who cared for the Apostle Paul as one of her own children. It seems she had the gift of hospitality and used it faithfully for the Lord Jesus.

“Salute Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermas, Patrobas, Hermes, and the brethren which are with them” — This sounds like a list of Greek businessmen or perhaps these people were from another house church in Rome. At any rate, they were faithful to Christ.

“Salute Philologus, and Julia, Nerius, and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints which are with them” — This may have been another small church in a home and could have been headed by Philologus. I wonder if this was his true name; perhaps it was a nickname because it means “lover of the word.” Here is a man who loved the Word of God.

“Salute one another with an holy kiss. The churches of Christ salute you” — The holy kiss was a cultural thing and it was a way of greeting people. In the U.S. we shake hands and hug. In Latin America people give an “embracio.” Men also kissed men and women kissed women on a turned cheek.

CONCLUSION

Paul saluted his friends in Rome as Christians. If he were alive today, could he greet you as a true Christian, a saint, one chosen in the Lord? If your answer is yes, then do as those in Rome did — labor for the Lord.
If your answer is no, then do you need to be converted, saved, born again? If you are to be a Christian, you must trust and commit yourself to Jesus Christ as your King and Savior.

What must you do to become a Christian? Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved!
FALSE TEACHERS
Romans 16:17-18

by Dr. Jack L. Arnold

The task of the faithful minister of Jesus Christ is not only to preach the truths of God, but also to expose error. “For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ” (II Cor. 2:17). “But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God” (II Cor. 4:2).

As today, there were many false teachers among God’s people during Paul’s ministry. Paul warned the spiritual leaders of his day to beware of them.

“Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears” (Acts 20:28-31).

He also warned Timothy, the pastor of the local church at Ephesus, that in the last days professing Christians would turn from the true faith.

“I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables” (II Tim. 4:1-4).

The Bible tells us that the faithful minister must uncover and reveal any and all teaching that would be contrary to the faith once and for all delivered to the saints.

I do not mean that ministers are to be “heresy headhunters,” but where there is obvious, proven heresy, it must be exposed as such for the good of the true Church of Jesus Christ.
As a personal aside, some may accuse me of being just such a headhunter, showing little or no love for men or organizations that call themselves Christian. If this is your reaction to this teaching, please reevaluate it in prayer. Before the Lord, I believe it is love that has motivated me. I love God, Christ, the Holy Scriptures and the true Church more than I love the praise of men, and I know full well that one day I will give an account of my ministry to God.

Faithful ministers of the past were misunderstood by the masses. Elijah, Jeremiah, the Apostle Paul and Jesus Christ all spoke out against the spiritual evils of their day. They were all accused of being loveless, and while they had their weaknesses, they were faithful to God’s call. Jeremiah was put in a dungeon, Elijah had to flee for his life, Paul was imprisoned, and Jesus Christ was crucified.

Please understand that this is not written out of hatred, retaliation or malice. It comes from a broken heart — I’ve seen the pain and loss connected with false teaching. I’m concerned for the glory of God and the revival of the true Christian faith in the hearts of men.

FALSE TEACHERS CAUSE DIVISIONS — Romans 16:17

“Now I beseech (plead with) you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences “ — Paul exhorted true Christians to keep an eye out for false teachers in their midst who were counterfeits, unbelievers, and heretics. There are always both wheat and tares in the professing church. This is not a reference to Christian believers who have differences of opinion on secondary theological issues or over matters of questionable practices.

“Contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned“ — Paul had instructed these Romans in the fundamentals of the Christian faith. There are certain basic truths that unite all Christians and each of these is essential to the Christian faith. One cannot be a Christian and deny any of them: (1) The Trinity; (2) The deity and humanity of Christ; (3) The bodily resurrection of Christ; (4) Christ’s death for sin; (5) Christ, the only way of salvation; (6) A literal heaven and a literal hell; (7) An acceptance of miracles (8) The bodily return of Jesus Christ to this earth in his second advent; (9) The authority of Scripture for one’s life; and (10) The sinfulness of men.

Most Christians are united on the fundamentals of the faith (some might quibble with me about the matter of literal hell), but there are differences of opinion among Christians on secondary theological issues: (1) Modes of baptism — immersion, sprinkling or pouring; (2) Types of government — episcopal, pres-
byterian or congregational; (3) Calvinism or Arminianism; (4) Amillennialism, postmillennialism and premillennialism; (5) Infant baptism or believer’s baptism.

Differences over secondary issues possibly gives legitimate reasons for various denominations, but all who hold to the fundamentals of the faith are in the true, universal and invisible Church of Jesus Christ.

The false teachers in Rome were denying the fundamentals of Christianity and Paul made it clear they were to be exposed and avoided.

“Mark them that cause divisions and offenses“ — Christians are to keep a watchful eye for false teachers. Such teachers cause divisions. They slyly come into a local church or a denomination with their evil doctrine and sow seeds of doubt among professing Christians. Historic Christianity has always held to the fundamentals of the Christian faith but at this very hour there are men standing in pulpits across our nation who are undercutting and destroying the true Christian faith.

In our day the sinfulness of man is scorned, the deity of Christ is thought unimportant, the concept of a literal hell is mocked, and universalism is running rampant in so-called Christian churches. Nobody seems to get excited and there are only a few “voices crying in the wilderness.” As one false teacher said when he was questioned about how he could preach against the Apostles’ Creed and his denomination’s doctrinal statement, “Well, nobody in my church or denomination has stopped me, so it must be all right.”

A candidate for ordination into the ministry in the PCUSA (the liberal branch of the Presbyterian church from which the founders of the PCA left) was asked by the committee examining him if he believed in the divinity of Christ. He answered, “I do not believe in it, excepting in the sense that we are all divine.” This man was ordained to preach.

In another ordination service a young candidate for the Presbyterian ministry (in the same denomination) was asked if he believed that Jesus Christ was coming again to reward believers and judge unbelievers. He replied, “I believe that Jesus has already come a second time into our hearts.” He was ordained.

It is the liberals who have brought awful division to the church. Fundamentalists have made some big mistakes in the area of separation and legalism, but they have been true to the Bible and the Lord Jesus Christ. False teachers cause scandal (offenses). They make a mockery of the Bible and the precious truths of Christ.

“And avoid them” — Christians are to avoid false teachers. Don’t listen to them. Don’t pay attention to them. Don’t give them an audience. Don’t let them
take your time with false ideas. Whether they be in Protestantism, the cults or Roman Catholicism, we are to avoid false teachers like the plague. This is not an isolated teaching, but throughout different situations and different authors, the wisdom of God is clear.

“A man that is an heretic after the first and second admonition reject” (Titus 3:10).

“Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds” (II John 9-11).

We are free to give false teachers and heretics the gospel, but we are not to hear or accept their teaching. We are not given authority to burn false teachers at the stake, but those who are in the church should be declared spiritually dead — excommunicated for unfaithfulness to Christ, the Bible and their ministerial vows.

FALSE TEACHERS ARE IN THE MINISTRY FOR THE MONEY — Romans 16:18a

“For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ “ — False teachers are not dedicated to Jesus Christ but are dedicated to their own self-interests. How could they be committed to Christ when they don’t even know God?

A woman once asked a young minister point-blank, “What is the purpose of life?” It was one of those questions every minister hopes will come but never seems quite ready to answer.

“To know God,” the young minister ventured.

“Do you know Him?” she asked.

“No,” he said. “That’s why I’m a minister.”

“But their own belly” — False teachers serve their own selfish ends because their motives are low and base. They have not been called to salvation by God nor called to the ministry, but are in the profession of the ministry for the money. The ministry can be a racket if there is no true dedication to Christ. There have been phonies in the professing church since its inception, but today it seems we have an overabundance of them.
“For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is their shame, who mind earthly things” (Phil. 3:18, 19).

FALSE TEACHERS SPEAK FLATTERING WORDS — Romans 16:18b

“And by good words and fair speeches“ — False teachers use smooth words and flattering speeches to win people over to their way of thinking. False teachers are often nice, educated and moral people. They refuse to speak outright, roughly or boldly so as to disturb people. Instead they speak sweetly — they seem to be such lovely people and they quite understanding. Yet they never tell men and women of sin, judgment or hell because they don’t believe them and they don’t want to offend anyone, which is a terrible thing to do.

“Deceive the hearts of the simple” — Paul says that false teachers are deceivers who take advantage of the ignorance of people, wooing them away from Christ who is their only hope of salvation. The Bible calls false teachers “ministers of Satan” whose end will be destruction.

CONCLUSION

God instructs true believers to separate themselves from apostasy and serve him in truth:

“Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? Or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? For ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty” (II Cor. 6:14-18).

If you do not know Christ, do not listen to men who tell you that Jesus is just a good man, for Jesus Christ said he was God incarnate. Do not listen when they say men are basically good, for the Bible says that all men are sinners and separated from God. Do not listen when these false teachers say there is no hell, for God declares that after death there is a judgment where the worm does not die and the fire is not quenched. Do not listen when men say that all religions will lead to God, for Christ said that He is the only way to God.
If you choose to listen to false teachers, you have willfully fallen into the hands of deceivers, become a rejecter of Christ, and this will ultimately lead to your eternal judgment. Yet, if you will trust in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, you will receive forgiveness of sin and eternal life. Which will it be — false teachers and the way of destruction or Jesus Christ and the way to God? The decision is yours!
THE CLOSING WORDS OF THE BOOK OF ROMANS
Romans 16:17-27
by Dr. Jack L. Arnold

We have come to the closing verses of the Book of Romans. This magnificent book has been used by God to start many revivals. In the fourth century God used it to bring Augustine to a saving knowledge of Christ and the church was revived. When it appeared that the gospel would pass from the face of the earth during the Middle Ages, God used this book to bring Martin Luther to Christ in the sixteenth century and the revival of the Reformation had its beginning. Several hundred years after the Reformation, in which the spirit of Christ permeated the whole of Europe and America, there was a turn to formalism and much of the spirit of the Reformation was extinguished. Then in the eighteenth century, God used the Book of Romans to save John Wesley and there was a great revival of Christianity in England and America. This book has caused a revival of true Christianity in the hearts of multiplied thousands of Christians down through the years as they have obeyed its teachings. God has used Romans to cause a revival in my own heart.

Now the question is, “Has there been a revival in your heart as you have read these messages and studied the Book of Romans?” If it has not caused your heart to burn for Christ, then there is something radically wrong with your Christian experience.

WARNING CONCERNING FALSE TEACHERS — Romans 16:17-21

“Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple” — The Apostle Paul warned these Romans to be on the alert for false teachers who deny the true Christian faith and to avoid them. False teachers destroy one’s faith and cause divisions and scandal in the professing church. How soon did this very church in Rome open its doors to just such false teachers as he warned them against, and so by the seventh century the Papacy itself was enthroned in Rome!

“For your obedience is come abroad unto all men” — These Romans were obedient and zealous Christians and had a good reputation in all Christian circles. This, no doubt, was because they had sound doctrine and did not follow false teachers. The Romans were Christians who believed God and this resulted in obedience. It is really impossible to have faith without its resulting in obedience.
A person may say he has faith that a chair will hold him up. He sees that the chair is well constructed and strong, but he does not really believe until he sits down and lets the chair hold him up. Obedience must result from faith or true faith has never been exercised.

“I am glad therefore on your behalf: but yet I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple (innocent) concerning evil” — This is a profound verse, one that is desperately needed among Christians today. In context, it is speaking about doctrinal error; that is, Christians should not be occupied with error but with truth.

This verse can also apply in the area of morals and ethics. Christians are to be wise unto good and innocent unto evil. They should desire to grow in the knowledge of God and to be naive concerning evil. Because evil destroys the mind and body, the less we know about it the better off we are.

In our modern society those who count it a mark of distinction to be “in the know” about everything think that they are not sophisticated unless they have tried everything at least once. Yet God says He wants us to be unsophisticated to that which is evil.

Some kids raised in Christian homes say they wish they had been in the world for a while before they were saved. Having had a Christian background since birth, they know very little about sin and think they have a poor understanding of salvation. Don’t believe this! The less we know experientially about sin, the better off we are. The problem of children raised in Christian homes is not needing to experience sin but getting a better concept of what sin really is, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. The frightfulness of sin experienced before conversion never leaves the mind, although the sins have been forgiven. How many times I have begged God to take out of my mind things I did as a non-Christian! Even though I have been forgiven, these things still come back to haunt me at times.

Our minds and hearts are like a garden which grown weeds naturally, but to grow flowers, it must be cultivated. Our hearts and minds produce sin naturally because we are sinners, but if we are to produce fruit for God, we must plow, harrow, plant, cultivate, nourish, and weed our minds of sin.

“And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.” — The thought here is that if these Romans were true to Christ and obedient to God, any doctrinal error that might have crept in through the wiles of Satan would be crushed by God.

Paul believed that Satan was a real person, not an impersonal force. In Scripture, Satan is called the great deceiver and he has craftily brought the mass of mankind, even many of those in professing Christendom, to believe that he does not exist. Wherever this is believed, Satan has a free hand. You who know God must believe that He will crush Satan’s plans and bless you as you obey his commands.
GREETINGS FROM THE CHRISTIANS IN CORINTH — Romans 16:22-24

Paul wrote the letter of Romans from Corinth, and the saints there were anxious to send their greeting to the saints at Rome.

“Timotheus my workfellow, . . .“ -- Paul had taken Timothy as a young man and trained him, not just theoretically but on the job. Every pastor should have four or five Timothys.

“And Lucius, and Jason, and Sosipater, my kinsmen, salute you” — These were relatives of Paul’s who he had led to the Lord. Now they were active in helping him in the ministry of reaching others for Christ.

“I Tertius, who wrote this epistle, salute you in the Lord” — Tertius, probably a slave, was an amanuensis; that is, he wrote down word for word what the Apostle dictated. But he wanted to give his own greeting. Paul did not write most of his letters personally because we believe he had eye trouble that caused him to have to write with large letters.

“Gaius mine host, and of the whole church, saluteth you.” -- Gaius was probably a prosperous businessman who lived in Corinth and he had opened his home to the Apostle Paul and his home was also used for the meeting of the local church in Corinth. He had the spiritual gift of hospitality and used it for the Lord.

“Erastus the chamberlain of the city saluteth you“ — Erastus was the city treasurer who had trusted Christ. Archeologists have found a stone marker in Corinth bearing the name of Erastus as city treasurer. While the stone was covered for centuries, those who read God’s Word have known Erastus’ name quite well. How wonderful to know that there have been, and are today, men of note, position, or honor who have followed the Lord Jesus Christ.

Queen Victoria of England said that she wished the second coming of Christ would take place while she was alive that she might have the privilege of laying the crown of the British Empire at his feet.

Another English queen, Elizabeth, was known to read I Corinthians 1:26 over and over, “For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called.” She thanked God continually for her salvation for she understood that God calls not many of nobility to salvation.

“And Quartus a brother” — This is a slave name. Naming slaves was as simple as one, two, three in those days. The first was called Primus, the second, Secundus, the third, Tertius, and the fourth Quartus. Tertius and Quartus, who were slaves on this earth, had trusted Christ. Their names will be primus in heaven, for our Lord said, “The first shall be last and the last shall be first.”
The Bible speaks of the “koinonia” or the “fellowship” of true Christians. This new kind of fellowship hit the Roman world with a wallop, for it was held together by love — the love of Christ for Christians and the love of Christians for one another. The only place brotherhood really works is in true Christianity. The idea of brotherhood apart from regeneration and new life in Christ is simply a fairy-tale.

Slaves in the Roman Empire could be treated worse than animals. They could be sold or killed at the pleasure of their owner. In the koinonia they were given an equal place at the communion table with their Christian masters. We can imagine that Gaius has been a cruel master before he came to know Christ under Paul’s ministry and was transformed. He then began to talk to his slaves about Christ and some of them responded to Christ. What a revolution! Slaves and masters could sit at the same table, eating the same bread and drinking the same wine. The social effects of Christianity on the Roman world is more than any of us can imagine.

EXHORTATION TO REMEMBER THE MYSTERY OF THE CHURCH — Romans 16:25, 26

“Now to him that is of power to establish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began” — In the Old Testament salvation was almost exclusively of Jews, but at the coming of Christ a new truth was revealed — Jew and Gentile form the Church of Jesus Christ and are on an equal footing before God. All who trust Christ as personal Savior make up this body and they are all one in Christ. “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:28).

“But now is made manifest, and by the Scripture of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of the faith” — This truth — that all who trust Christ form the Church (called out ones) — is for all nations. “And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15). The object of preaching Christ is to bring men to the place where they obey God through Christ.

God has commanded all men to believe and repent (change their minds about Christ).

“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved. (Acts 16:31).

“And the times of this ignorance God winked at: but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent: . . .“ (Acts 17:30).

Men are to obey this command and be saved from sin and the consequences of sin, A failure to obey Christ for salvation will result in judgment.
“He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him” (John 3:36).

“For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God; and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear” (I Pet. 4:17, 18)?

And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power (II Thes. 1:7—9).

“To God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen.” — Paul began this epistle with God and ended it with God, for salvation, from beginning to end, is of God and to God alone belongs the glory.

CONCLUSION

God, the author of salvation, calls men to salvation through Christ Jesus. When you respond to God’s inner and outer call of the gospel, you will be converted. You will show forth the fruit of becoming a new creature, receiving the forgiveness of sins, eternal life and the assurance of heaven after death.

If God is calling you now, obey that call and submit to Christ as your Lord and Savior. Do not delay your submission to Christ one moment; upon this decision rests your eternal destiny.