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The Roman Epistle.

(Rex Banks

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Explanatory Note:

These notes were first used for our local Bible class and were assembled over a period of time using a variety of different helps. They represent a sincere attempt to deal adequately with this epistle but of course infallibility is beyond us all and I am very conscious of my own frailty as a teacher. Great care needs to be exercised when using all such materials.

As non-denominational Christians we are firmly committed to what is often called the doctrine of Plenary, Verbal Inspiration, which holds that the writers of scripture were directed in their choice of subject matter and words, and that this is true of every part of scripture. Of course we are speaking here of the original documents and not translations. In these notes I use the N.A.S.V. but refer often to other translations.

If you live near or in the city of Hamilton and find these notes helpful we would be delighted to share other materials with you by way of one-on-one home Bible studies or by way of our weekly classes at our building. If you live elsewhere we can direct you to the nearest church of Christ. God bless you in your study.

Forever, O Lord

Thy word is settled in heaven

(Ps. 119:89)

Lesson 1

Introduction

Acknowledged to be one of the most profound and challenging portions of scripture.

"Romans is the longest and most theologically significant of the letters of Paul." (D.A. Carson, Douglas J. Moo, Leon Morris, *An Introduction To The New Testament*)

Great intellects, like those of Augustine and Luther and Calvin, have discussed it only to discover depths beyond their depths." (R.D. Shaw, *The Pauline Epistles*)

By common consent Romans is the greatest of Paul's letters...Romans satisfies the craving of the human spirit for a comprehensive exposition of the great truths of salvation set out in logical fashion, supported by Old Testament Scripture." (Everett F. Harrison)

"The greatness of the epistle is seen in the importance of its subject matter, the comprehensiveness of its grasp, the acuteness of its reasoning, the breadth of its outlook and the vigour of its style." (Thiessen, *Introduction to the New Testament*)

"And of all Paul's letters the one to Rome is the fullest and most carefully constructed statement of the Christian gospel and of the faith it called for during the foundation period of Christianity." (James D.G. Dunn)

"Wherefore it appeareth evidently, that Paul's mind was to comprehend briefly in this epistle all the whole learning of Christ's gospel, and to prepare an introduction unto all the Old Testament. For without doubt whosoever hath this epistle perfectly in his heart, the same hath the light and the effect of the Old Testament with him." (William Tyndale)

"The epistle then was written when Paul was in the prime and vigour of his manhood, and when his activities in the ministry were most fully exercised, and when the new religion of Christ was assuming its supremacy over all known forms of worship. No wonder, therefore that Paul produced on this occasion a letter which Coleridge has rightly described as 'the most profound work in existence'." (J.W. McGarvey)

"I greatly longed to understand Paul's Epistle to the Romans, and nothing stood in the way but that expression, 'the righteousness of God,' because I took it to mean that righteousness whereby God is righteous and deals righteously in punishing the unrighteous...Night and day I pondered until...I grasped the truth that the righteousness of God is that righteousness whereby, through grace and sheer mercy, he justifies us by faith. Thereupon I felt myself to be reborn and to have gone through open doors into paradise. The whole of Scripture took on a new meaning, and whereas before 'the righteousness of God' had filled me with hate, now it became to me inexpressibly sweet in greater love. This passage of Paul became to me a gateway to heaven." (Martin Luther)

Background

Our understanding of the New Testament epistles is greatly enhanced by knowledge of relevant background circumstances. In our New Testament Survey we have given some attention to such matters as Authorship, Date, Circumstances etc. Simply click [Here](#) It is worthwhile taking the time to familiarize ourselves with this material before proceeding.

Lesson 2

Part A: Chapter 1:1 - 8:39

All men stand in need of Salvation. The Gospel, God's means of Justification, meets that need

Salutation: 1:1-7

- Verse 1. Paul is "a bond-servant of Christ." He writes, not from himself but as Christ's bond-servant.

properly the word means *one completely owned and controlled by another*. It is used of Christ in relation to the Father. (Phil. 2:7)

Christ instructed his disciples to use this term. (Matt. 10:25)

in the East the king's couriers were so-called and thus the word may express the idea of dignity and honour.

used of Israel (e.g. Isa. 43:10) and such men of God as David and Elijah (Ps. 89:3; 2 Kings 10:10) in their relationship with God.

still, Paul's point is his total commitment to Christ. He is a servant of Christ. (using an Old Testament expression which shows Paul's recognition of who Jesus is.)

bond-slaves of Christ are not degraded. (Gal. 1:10; Phil. 1:1)

- Specifically "...a called apostle" (lit.) "called" as the other apostles had been "called" (i.e. chosen, appointed) to the work. (John 15:16, 19; Matt 10:1)

in addition to being Christ's bond-servant Paul has the *authority* of Christ behind him. The word "apostle" is a general term for one who is *sent* (e.g. Phil 2:25 [lit]; 2 Cor 8:23 [lit]v), but it is also used of one specially qualified and gifted to speak for God. (1 Cor. 12:28; Eph. 2:20) This is how Paul uses it here affirming that he has real authority.

Paul's apostleship had sometimes been called into question and he has been forced to defend it. (1 Cor. 9:1, 2; 2 Cor. 12:11-13; Gal. 1:1, 15-17)

- Paul is "...*set apart* for the gospel." The verb means to mark off from others by a boundary. Likely this setting apart took place at his conversion. (Acts 9 esp. v. 15) Paul's great work was to preach the gospel.

perhaps we are to find here the idea of consecration as per Lev. 20:26.

the "gospel" for which Paul is set aside, is *the good news of God concerning salvation in Christ*. The equivalent word had a more general meaning in the Old Testament (e.g. 1 Sam 31:9 [where victory is announced]) and this word had a more general meaning among the Greek-speaking people, but here it is God's good tidings of salvation in Christ.

Verse 2. The gospel which Paul preached had been promised in the Old Testament. Note: not merely prophesied about but *promised*, involving God's binding Himself.

this idea of the gospel in the Old Testament permeates the letter (e.g. 4:13-25; 9:4; 1 5:8)

the prophets, though not grasping the full significance of their own prophecies (1 Peter 1:10-12; Eph. 3:3-7; Acts 2:22-35) nevertheless spoke of the gospel age and of salvation in Christ Jesus.

Paul preached what the Old Testament said would come to pass (Acts 26:22, 23) and he wanted to demonstrate to his brethren that Christianity was based upon the *foundation of the Jewish prophets and sacred writings*. *There was continuity*.

- Verse 3. This gospel ("...good news from God" - Vincent) concerns His (God's) Son. Paul preached that the death, burial and resurrection of Christ is the heart of the gospel. (1 Cor. 15:1-4; Acts 13:32, 33) Paul preached Christ. (2 Cor. 4:5)
- Christ is described as a *descendant of David according to the flesh*. Now "the interesting point is that David is His father *according to the flesh*, i.e. as regards His human nature. This remark implies the divine nature of Jesus." (Jim McGuiggan)

in the whole of scripture the expression "according to the flesh" is used only of the Lord. The Jews understood that the Messiah, when He came would be of the seed of David (Jn 7:42; 2 Sam.7:12), a necessary qualification. (Isa. 11:1)

- Verse 4. Christ was "*declared* the Son of God with power..."

like N.A.S.V., the K.J.V. and A.S.V and N.I.V. have *declared* here, the idea being that Christ's resurrection from the dead was a *declaration with power* of that Sonship.

Some (e.g. Murray) argue that the word here means not *declare* but "determine", "ordain", "appoint" as in example in Lk 22:22; Acts 2:23; 10:42; 11:29. This does not necessarily mean that Jesus was appointed the Son of God. For example Murray, (who argues for Christ's *eternal* sonship) places emphasis upon the *with power*. Christ was not appointed Son but was appointed Son *with power*.

The "...Spirit of Holiness..." probably refers to the divine nature of Christ rather than to the Holy Spirit. Likely we are to see *according to the flesh* (v. 3 [kata sarka]) and *according to the Spirit of holiness* (v. 4 [kata pneuma]) as contrasting statements about Christ. (However some see this as a reference to the Holy Spirit who is said to have raised Jesus from the dead. [8:11])

- Verse 5. Paul was appointed an apostle by Jesus Christ not by man (Gal. 1:2; 1 Cor. 15:1-8). The "we" may have reference to the apostles in general or it may be an example of the use of the categorical plural, referring to Paul alone as the apostle to the Gentiles.

if we read "all the *Gentiles*" in v. 5, then, since the Gentiles made up Paul's special field of labour likely "we" is the categorical plural. (In my view this is likely if we read "all the nations/ peoples" in v. 5 [including Israel] then "we" is likely a reference to all the apostles.)

- The *purpose* for which Paul was appointed an apostle was "to bring about (eis marks the object the appointment) the obedience of faith among all the gentiles." (N.A.S.V.) By *obedience of faith* is likely meant "the obedience that belongs to the very essence of faith." (Lenski.) N.I.V. has "the obedience that comes from faith." (However K.J.V. and N.K.J.V. have "obedience to the faith".)

"...among the Gentiles." In my view *Gentiles* is better here than *peoples* or *nations*. Paul's special field of labour was the Gentiles. (Acts 9:15; Gal 2:7)

- Verse 6 says: "among whom" i.e. *the gentiles* "you also" i.e. the recipients of the letter (indicating that

there were many gentiles in the church at Rome) "are the called of Jesus Christ." They were *called* by the gospel (2 Thess 2:14) "to belong to Jesus Christ". (N.I.V.)

Verse 7. It is to all these who have obeyed the gospel and who are therefore "beloved of God" that Paul gives his salutation. ("Grace...peace") They are "called as saints." (or "to be saints" [N.I.V.]) *Saints* means *holy ones*. (see 1 Pet. 2:9) The word "holy" is applied to whatever is separated from common use and devoted to God; that which belongs to God; that which must be used in accordance with God's will.

the Christian is a peculiar possession of God and his body and soul must be used in accord with God's will.

- "Grace and peace..." Probably a uniting of the Greek ("chaire" - "rejoice") and Jewish ("shalom") modes of greeting. However Paul changes 'chaire' to the similarly-sounding and more distinctively christian word 'charis', 'grace'. The grace of God is His free love and unmerited favour to men imparted through Jesus Christ; the peace of God is the well-being which they enjoy through His grace". (F.F. Bruce)

- Note that grace and peace are from "God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." Both are the source of grace and peace; both are linked; Christ is part of the Godhead. (9:5; Col. 2:9)

- Notice the length of Paul's greeting. This is due to the fact that he actually summarizes the main points of the gospel. (e.g. Christ's identity, resurrection, the continuity of the message with the Old Testament and such like.) Keep in mind that he had never visited Rome or written to the Christians there, and perhaps Paul is intent upon showing from the outset that his gospel is the same as that which they had obeyed, grounded upon Christ's resurrection and growing out of the Old Testament.

Why Paul Writes: vs 8 - 15

- a. Verse 8. "First" (i.e. before proceeding to the main point of the letter) he offers thanksgiving to God. (His custom, omitted only in the Galatian letter.) He does so "through Jesus Christ" since He is Mediator between God and man. (1 Tim. 2:5; Jn 14:13, 14)

"In penitence and in thanksgiving alike, Jesus Christ is the one Mediator through whom we have access to God." (Vincent)

- b. Paul offers thanks because the faith of these brethren "...is being proclaimed throughout the whole world" (1 Thess 1:8) This faith is the *obedience of faith* just spoken of by Paul. (v. 5) Thus in 16:19 he writes: "For the report of your obedience has reached to all..."

Rome was the centre of an empire which embraced Western Asia, Northern Africa, and most of Europe, and Paul thanks God for the reputation of the brethren in that very influential city. Burton Coffman says: "implicit in the fact of their extensive reputation is their *evangelical* behaviour."

- c. Verses 9, 10. The churches, including the church at Rome which he did not found, were always in Paul's prayers. (1 Thess 1:2) Likely God is called to witness to this "unceasing" mention of them in prayer, in order to assure them that his failure to visit them was not due to lack of interest. This God Paul serves in his "spirit," (here meaning heart [cf. Jn 4:24]) in the preaching of the gospel of His Son."

- d. Verse 10 implies Paul's long-term plans and desire to visit Rome. The "...if perhaps now by the will of God" suggests that Paul was not sure of God's plan in this area but note carefully that this does not stop him praying that it will happen. In 1:13 (cf. 15:26-29) we will read of Paul's having been "prevented" from coming to them.

it is God's intention for Paul to visit Rome (Acts 23:11) but he arrives there a prisoner - God has his own plan and timescale which will not be thwarted.

- e. Verses 11, 12. Paul earnestly desired to visit these brethren to impart "...some spiritual gift". (charisma) Paul uses this word in the ordinary sense (5:15, 16) and also in the special sense denoting the miraculous gifts of healing, prophecy etc. bestowed upon individuals by the Holy Spirit through the laying on of the apostles hands. (Rom. 12:6; 1 Cor. 1:7; 12:4)

probably Paul had both in mind, since it is possible that the gift of prophecy was the only miraculous gift possessed by the church at Rome. (12:6-8)

the purpose of the gift was "...that you may be *established*" which is from a word which means *to fix, establish; to make fast, to support; to fix something so that it stands upright and immovable.*

the "that is" is "an explanatory correction" (Denny) "...he wishes to add that they also have one for him". (Robertson) (Paul defends his apostleship when necessary but never presents himself as a "superior" Christian in no need of encouragement.) Christian fellowship is a great source of comfort, and faith is the instrument. (This seems to favour the idea that Paul is not speaking here of spiritual gifts.)

- f. Verses 13-15. (15:26-29) What had "prevented" Paul from coming to Rome thus far? McGarvey comments upon the word *prevented*: "...the word here and at Acts 16:6 is 'kooluoo', which primarily means 'to forbid,' and implies the exercise of a superior will."

it may well be then that the Lord restrained Paul. (Nothing is said about Satan being involved. [cf. 1 Thess 2:18]) Again it is probable that the reason for this had to do with the needs of other locales where Christ had not yet been preached. (15:15-22)

- g. The "fruit" which Paul sought among them (v. 13) was of course the conversion of men to Christ. (vs 14, 15) Paul's eagerness to preach the gospel to the brethren at Rome arose from his feeling of *indebtedness* to all men. (v. 14) "Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel". (1 Cor. 9:16) His own salvation and his commission to preach the gospel made him feel a great *responsibility* to all men (1 Cor. 15:9,10) the wise (cf. 1 Cor. 1:18-21) and the foolish.
- h. The "even as among the rest of the gentiles" (v.13) may suggest that he primarily refers to a harvest *in the community* rather than in the church (Everett F. Harrison) or it may indicate the "preponderantly gentile complexion of the church at Rome." (Murray)

Justification by Means of the Gospel: vs 16, 17

(This is the great theme of the Roman epistle. From this point all that is written up to the end of chapter 11 is an amplification of verses 16, 17. Paul has just spoken of his eagerness to preach the gospel and he now explains why he is so eager.)

- a. Verse 16. Gospel is euangelion. W.E. Vine has:

"In the New Testament, it denotes the good tidings of the kingdom of God and of salvation through Christ, to be received by faith, on the basis of His expiatory death, His burial, resurrection and ascension, e.g. Acts 15:7; 20:24; 1 Peter 4:17. The apostle uses it of two associated yet distinct things:

(a) of the basic facts of the death, burial and resurrection of Christ, e.g. 1 Cor. 15:1-3; (b) of the interpretation of these facts, e.g. Rom. 2:16; Gal. 1:7,11; 2:2;

in (a) the gospel is viewed historically, in (b) doctrinally, with reference to the interpretation of the facts, as is sometimes indicated by the context." (W.E. Vine)

Paul here is speaking of God's power to bring men into a right relationship with Himself on the basis of Christ's atoning work.

b. Righteousness is *dikaiosune*. Where the *verb* form of this word is used it is translated "justify". The noun form can convey the meaning of our word "justification". The word is used to describe:

i. the personal righteousness of God (e.g. Rom. 3:25, 26; 2 Tim. 4:8) Who is perfectly good, just, truthful.

ii. the righteousness of men who habitually live according to God's standard. (Rom. 5:7; Matt. 1:19) Such righteousness is of course not absolute. (Rom. 3:23; Eccl. 7:20)

iii. in addition, the word is used to convey the meaning of our word "justification" and describes:

the justification which is based on the Law. (Rom. 10:5)

the justification which is by faith in Christ. (Rom. 1:16; Rom. 3:21:22) Our immediate concern is with Rom. 1:16, 17 and thus with the Biblical concept of *justification*.

c. Justification. Thayer has:

"to declare, pronounce, one to be just, righteous or such as he ought to be... (a) With the negative idea predominant, *to declare guiltless* one accused or who may be accused, acquit of a charge or reproach...(b) With the positive idea predominant, to judge, declare *pronounce righteous and therefore acceptable*...esp. is it so used in the technical phraseology of Paul, respecting God who judges and declares such men as put faith in Christ to be righteous and acceptable to Him."

Paul here is concerned with the forensic (i.e. of the court) idea - the legal declaration that one has no charge to answer. The gospel is God's means of declaring man justified on the basis of Christ's atoning sacrifice.

d. Paul is "not ashamed of the gospel." The Jews found belief in the risen Christ to be a stumbling block and the Gentiles considered it foolishness (1 Cor. 1:23) but Paul recognised it as God's power for salvation, i.e. God's powerful means of saving mankind.

e. It is God's power to save "...everyone who believes." Biblical faith (Rom. 1:5) is the condition to be met by those who would be saved by the gospel. Salvation is conditional upon obedient faith.

f. Why "to the Jew first..." Likely this has to do with *order of time* although some find more here and speak of the priority of the Jew based upon the fact that God's promises of salvation were first made to them. The Jews were a prepared people. (Rom. 3:1, 2)

notice how the gospel was to spread throughout the world- Jerusalem, Judea and then Samaria and the remotest part of the earth. (Acts 1:5)

Paul tells the Jews of Pisidian Antioch: "It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first; since you repudiate it and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold we are turning to the Gentiles." (Acts 13:46)

"...and also to the Greek." God is no respecter of persons and the power of the gospel is not limited to any particular group of people. Romans will make clear that the great Promise of salvation in the Old Testament included the Gentiles.

- g. Verse 17. The "for" introduces the reason why the gospel is God's power to save man. It is because "in it" - i.e. in the gospel "the righteousness of God" (i.e. the justification supplied by God, His way of pronouncing man *not guilty, acceptable*) is revealed.

there is no definite article ("the") in the text. "The absence of the article denotes that a peculiar kind of righteousness is meant... righteousness is by faith." (Vincent) It is God's righteousness (justification) i.e. it is God's plan for declaring man justified.

- h. This justification is "from (ek) faith to (eis) faith. There are many and varied suggestions (at least six that I know of) as to its meaning.

McGarvey has: "The righteousness revealed in the gospel is based upon faith, and is revealed 'unto faith' i.e. to produce faith."

Moses Lard has: "In the gospel is revealed the fact that God will justify the believer, and this is done in order to induce men to believe."

perhaps we are to understand it in the same way as "from death to death" in 2 Cor. 2:16 where the expression seems to have the idea of *death, utter and complete*. The idea would be then that it is utterly and completely by (living active obedient) faith that man is justified.

- i. Paul quotes Habbakuk 2:4, "but the righteous man shall live by faith." In the context the Old Testament prophet is speaking of the woes of *Babylonian* captivity and declares that those who place their trust in God will be restored to their own land. Habbakuk does not primarily speak of justification by faith, but does set forth the general principle that it is by faith in God that man is preserved. Paul here employs this quotation in connection with the doctrine of justification by faith. (In Romans 3 :21 ff we will learn that even in the pre-Christian era men were justified by placing their trust in the promises of God.)

Concluding Comments

On one occasion when a group of men went to great lengths to bring a sick man to Jesus for healing, we are told that Jesus "seeing their faith said to the paralytic 'My son your sins are forgiven'." (Mk 2:5) Now, the men came looking for a physical cure but Jesus saw the man's deepest need - a cure for sin. So often we get it wrong. So often we hear talk of the need for "a healthy self-image" or of the salutary effects of "learning to love ourselves" as if an epidemic of low self esteem has invaded the planet causing all of its misery and heartache. Often we hear *education* spoken of in reverential tones as if therein lies the path to peace and joy. Paul is telling us here that man's greatest need is to deal with his sin problem and that the only answer to this problem is the gospel of Jesus Christ. Good health is precious; a proper self-image is important; education is a marvellous thing - *but only forgiveness of sin opens the door to life itself*.

How did good-hearted people of the first century respond to the gospel message? See our Accepting God's Gift. Have you responded in the same way? Can we help?

Lesson 3

1:18-32: Non-Jews (Gentiles) Are Sinners

All Men Jew and Gentile Are Lost and Stand in need of the Gospel

(We have just been told that the gospel is the means of man's justification. [vs 17-18] In 1:18 to 3:20 we are told that *all* men are sinners in need of the gospel. *Gentiles* are sinners [1:18-32] and *Jews* are sinners [2:1-29] and despite the uniqueness of the Jew, he is not more righteous than the Gentile. [3:1-20])

1. What the Gentiles Did (vs 18-23)

- a. Verse 18 begins "For" showing a connection with vs 16 and 17. In these verses Paul had stated that the gospel *reveals* God's plan for justifying man. Why was such a plan necessary? Simply because God cannot ignore sin and all men have sinned. God's wrath is also revealed against sin. (two revelations)
- b. God's wrath is *revealed* in the judgments upon the gentiles which are about to be enumerated. It is revealed *from heaven* the very dwelling place of God.
- c. God's wrath " ...is the temper of God towards sin, not rage, but the wrath of reason and law." (Robertson) Righteous indignation which is directed against that which is against His very nature. "Wrath is the holy revulsion of God's being against that which is the contradiction of his holiness." (Murray) "God's wrath relates to the attribute of God called Justice." (Roy Deaver)
- d. (God's wrath is revealed)

"against all *ungodliness*" (*asebeia*) which is "a failure in our duties to God" (Lard), "impiety towards God." (Fritz Rienecker/Cleon Rogers [henceforth R/R]) A failure to properly recognize the greatness of God." "(against) *unrighteous* (*adikia*) men" which speaks of "injustice *toward men*" (R/R) "a failure in our duties *to men*". (Lard)

- e. These ungodly and unrighteous men are gentiles who "suppress the truth in unrighteousness." They "hold down; i.e. hinder or repress (Vincent) "the truth". Here truth means the truth about God's power and divinity (v. 25) which God had revealed to the Gentiles. Lenski has:

"Whenever the truth starts to exert itself and makes them feel uneasy in their moral nature, they hold it down, suppress it. Some drown its voice by rushing into their immoralities; others by argument and denial."

- f. Verse 19 begins with the explanatory "because". (N.A.S.V.) Paul tells us why he says that men hinder the truth in unrighteousness:

he speaks of "that which is known about God" here meaning His eternal power and divine nature." (v. 20)

these are evident "in" man (K.J.V.) and also "to" man. The creation bears witness to the creator, and likely it is *in* man because the witness is perceived by means of man's mind.

Paul says that those who do not accept this witness of creation "suppress" the truth.

- g. Verse 20. Since "the creation of the world" (Acts 14:16-17) that which "has been made" (i.e. the material universe) has functioned as a witness to man. (v. 20) Creation testifies to the "invisible attributes" of God, meaning that while God cannot be seen by man directly, He can be seen in His handiwork. This natural revelation is enough to make man responsible, so that those who fail to worship and glorify God are without excuse.

the idea may be that *as a consequence* of this testimony men are without excuse, but I think that it is stronger than this.

the idea seems to be that the purpose of God's providing this clear testimony "is that they may be without excuse" and therefore completely responsible for their rejection. "The revelation of God's power and divinity is given, so that if after being enlightened they fall into sin they may be without defence. (Vincent)

h. The *invisible attributes* of God are:

His "eternal power"

His "divine nature"- "theiotes" meaning "divinity, divine nature, a summary term for the attributes which constitute deity." (R/R) "Theotes is divine personality, theiotes is divine nature and properties." (Robertson) "Deityship." (Lard)

i. Verse 21. (They are without excuse because) (lit) "knowing God" (by means of His created universe) they:

"did not honour Him as God/ glorified Him not as God." They did not ascribe to God the glory due him because of his character.

"or give thanks." They failed to thank Him for blessings bestowed.

"became futile in their speculations/vain in their reasonings." The word rendered "futile/vain" in its noun form is used of idols. (Acts 14:15) Having rejected God, their empty speculations lead to idolatry. (cf. Dan. 5:23; Isa. 41:21-24; 44:9-20)

"their foolish (without understanding) heart was darkened," having turned from the only source of light.

j. Verses 22, 23. They "became fools" by professing themselves to be wise." They actually claimed they were being wise in thus turning their back on God, that it was an act of sophistication and sign of high intelligence to declare their independence from God, as though the refusal to acknowledge God as God in their daily living made them something more than a creature." (Dunn)

k. Here this folly showed itself in the fact that they exchanged the "glory of the incorruptible God" for:

"an image in the form of corruptible man." Here is the first substitution. (e.g. Caesar worship, humanism)

"and of birds and four footed animals and crawling creatures." (cf. Ps. 106:20) This is a further step in degeneracy.

God's glory is exchanged for corruptible things.

2. The Consequences - God Gave Them Over... (vs 24-25)

a. They had given up God. "Therefore God *gave them over* (vs 26, 28) in the lusts of their heart to impurity." (v. 24) He let them alone as he does those who want to believe a lie. (2 Thess 2:10) God let rejection of him produce its ugly results as men were controlled by their own passions.

b. The "in the lusts of their hearts" describes their condition when God ceased to restrain them. Among other things the *heart* is that with which a person thinks. (Prov. 4:23; Matt. 9:4) Their minds were filled with lust when God

gave them over. (God does not give people up until they have given him up.)

- c. He gave them over to "impurity/uncleanness." This was the result of having hearts filled with lust. "God's displeasure expressed itself in His abandonment of the persons concerned to more intensified and aggravated cultivation of the lust of their own heart with the result that they reap for themselves a correspondingly greater toll of retributive vengeance." (Murray)

- d. (God gave them over) "that their bodies might be dishonoured among them." Either:

God gave them over *with the result that* they dishonoured their bodies, or

God gave them over *in order to* dishonour their bodies.

According to the second position, God intended for the Gentiles, having turned their back on Him, to dishonour their bodies as punishment for dishonouring and abandoning Him. (See Rom. 12:1 ff; 1 Cor. 6:19, 20)

- e. Verse 25 repeats the thoughts of v. 23 for emphasis and to explain again the reason for God's judgment. The word "exchanged" here involves the idea of *trading*. What a bargain! The "truth of God" (the truth which God has made known) for (lit.) "the lie." The lie is the great lie that someone or something can be worshipped in His place.
- f. The *exchange* took the form of serving and worshipping the creature rather than the Creator. Mention of God as Creator, and confronted by the horror of this situation, Paul praises God who (regardless of betrayal) is blessed forever. (v. 25)

3. More Consequences - God Gave Them Over (vs 26, 27)

- a. Verse 26 "For this reason (i.e. the religious apostasy just described) God gave them over." (see comments above) He gave them over to "degrading passions." (lit. "passions of dishonour") Specifically:
- b. Lesbianism. (v. 26) Their women "exchanged the *natural* function for that which is *unnatural*." Such behaviour is contrary to *phusis*, the way things are in the realm of nature. (Earlier they "exchanged the truth of God for a lie, now there is an exchange of the *natural* for the *unnatural*.)
- c. Male homosexuality. (v. 27) This is described as involving:

abandoning the "natural function of the woman." (cf. 1 Cor. 7:1-7)

burning "in their desire toward one another."

"man with men committing indecent (shameless, disgraceful, obscene) acts."

- d. They received "in their own person the due penalty of their error." (v. 27) This may refer to the fact that society degenerated in general or may have reference to the fact that disease ran rife throughout these societies. Paul speaks of the "due penalty of their error" which may suggest that "Sexual deviation contains *in itself* a *recompense*, as a punishment for the abandonment of God and his way." (Harrison) Again "The implication is that unnatural sexual practices *is its own penalty*, the inevitable outcome of wandering from God." (Dunn) God gave them over to the power of that sin.

4. The Broader Consequences (vs 28-32)

- a. Verse 28. Again we read that "God gave them over..." (v. 28 [see above]) This time to a "depraved (lit. *not standing the test*) mind." The depraved mind is one which does those things which are not "proper" inappropriate for beings created in the image of God.
- b. God *gave them over* because they did not "see fit to acknowledge God any longer." God was not considered fit to be cherished in their minds. The language used here suggests that they *tested* God as one tests a coin and found Him not to measure up. God did not stand *their* test and their depraved mind did not stand *His* test.
- c. In Verses 29-31 Paul lists some things that are "not proper" and the weight of this list of sins emphasizes the completeness of the depravity under consideration.

speaking of those eternally lost C.S. Lewis says, "they enjoy forever the horrible freedom they have demanded and are therefore self-enslaved." (*The Problem of Pain*)

this is a good description of these Gentiles enslaved by their own lusts, having turned their back on God.

- d. Verse 32 says that the practitioners of these crimes know God's decree as to the penalty for such crimes - (spiritual) death! The word "know" is *epignontes*, from *epignosko* - "to become *thoroughly acquainted with*, to know *thoroughly*, to know *accurately*, to know *well*." (Thayer [emphasis mine]) The tragedy is that they act with *full knowledge*, and this is the ultimate indictment.
- e. Moreover they gave hearty approval to others who practised these vices. "Their rejection of God is not merely a spur of the moment, heat of the instant flouting of his authority, but a considered and measured act of defiance." (Dunn)

Concluding comments

Many of our leading figures now firmly endorse the right of near-naked sodomites and rubber-clad sado-masochists to parade through the main street of our largest city each year cheered on by tens of thousands of people determined to have a gay old time at the so-called Heroes Parade.

Homosexuality may once have been spoken of as "the love that dare not speak its name" but today according to the popular press it is only the narrow minded bigots and irrational homophobes who deny that same-sex relationships are as natural and normal as heterosexual unions.

The Bible of course is on the side of the "bigots" and the "homophobes". " Social commentators may assure us that acceptance of homosexuality is the mark of a mature society, but scripture is adamant that the nation which tolerates this perversion is defiled by it and in danger of being vomited out of the land. (Lev. 18:22, 28) Today gay men and women are being told to "celebrate" their sexuality but Paul describes their sin as (lit.) "the shameless deed." (Rom. 1:27) "Who has the right to decide what is 'natural' and 'unnatural' when it comes to sexuality?" we are frequently asked, and the best possible answer to that question of course is "God does!" Man's creator warns him that the practising homosexual has abandoned that which is "natural" (Rom. 1:26, 27) and given himself over to "a depraved mind." (Rom. 1:28) Psychiatrists may offer soothing words of absolution to those caught up in the gay lifestyle but Jude reminds us that the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah "are exhibited as an example, in undergoing the punishment of eternal fire." (Jude 3)

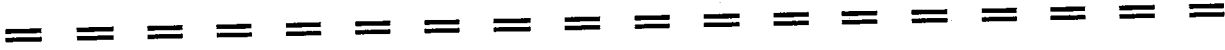
Now if all this seems harsh, unloving or judgmental let's keep in mind that the God who delights in forgiveness (Mic. 7:19) will wash and sanctify and justify those who turn from the gay lifestyle, just as He washed and sanctified and justified those Corinthians who abandoned this same lifestyle in Paul's day. (1 Cor. 6:11) Jesus died for the homo-sexual just as he died for the drunk the liar and the adulterer. But forgiveness must be preceded by repentance and of course repentance implies acknowledgement of sin.

Herein lies our problem because, quite simply we have, as a nation, forgotten how to blush at sin. Harry Emerson Forrdsick said that: "Unless we can learn the supremacy of spiritual forces, the pallbearers that have carried out other dead civilizations wait at our door." If sin really is a disgrace to any nation (Prov. 14:34) don't you agree that we are in very bad shape indeed? Does it worry you when leaders of our nation, instead of setting an example, smile benignly from our T.V. screens as a procession of men in fish-net stockings and high heel shoes mince down Queen Street in the annual Heros parade? Does it worry you that many people take their own children to see these parades? What about current affairs programmes hosted by interviewers who seem genuinely perplexed that anyone could possibly object to public exhibitions featuring "works of art" depicting (among other things) bestiality and sodomy? We simply must not let the world convince us that this is normal, while at the same time we must be careful to remind those who will listen that God will run to greet the returning prodigal son. The key of course is learning to blush again.

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The Roman Epistle cont



Lesson 4

Chapter 2:1-29 - The Jews Are Sinners

No Partiality with God

(Although there is no express mention of the Jew until v. 17, there is it good reason to believe that Paul has the Jew in mind from v.1. The tendency to judge the gentile for his perverted practices characterized the Jew above others . [v. 1] It is particularly appropriate to find a reference to God's special people in verse 4. ["riches of his kindness"] The main point of the argument here is that special privilege and advantage does not mean freedom from divine judgment - especially relevant to the Jewish situation. Finally it is difficult to see why Paul would suddenly address the Jew in verse 17 unless he had them in view.

It is possible that Paul keeps his argument general initially in order to get Jewish approval of his argument before actually addressing the Jew in person.)

- a. Verse 1. "Therefore" - this connects with the previous discussion of the Gentiles. They had acted against knowledge in turning against God and therefore had no excuse for their actions. The Jews admitted that to ignore the light of truth was sinful. Paul now addresses a different class of people - "O man" (K.J.V.) "Every man of you". (N.A.S.V.)
- b. These people whom Paul addresses (v. 1):

"judge" (here meaning "condemn") those who practice the sins just enumerated 1:18-32) (Contrast with v. 32 "give hearty approval to...")

practice sin themselves

by implication therefore condemn themselves.

(Later on it will become apparent that Paul has particularly in mind his Jewish audience although here this principle is stated in general terms.)

- c. Verse 2. - "we know" (oida meaning fullness of knowledge) that God's condemnatory sentence "rightly falls" (N.A.S.V.) upon practitioners of these evils. (K.J.V. "the judgment of God is according to truth....") Probably the meaning is that God's judgment is impartial, fair, without favour in condemning sin.
- d. Verse 3. The "you" is emphatic. Since God's judgment is completely impartial, the Jews must not suppose that their special status as the sons of Abraham and recipients of the covenant of circumcision, will save them from a judgment when they too sin. The Jew expected God to overlook in him those sins which he practised but which he condemned in the Gentiles. Paul will destroy this false notion. (Matt. 3:7-9)
- e. Verse 4. The Jew is still in mind. In v. 3 Paul corrected the notion that the Jew being special to God would escape the judgment. Now in v. 4 he deals with another matter. Does the Jew simply misinterpret God's patience and kindness towards him, concluding that God is "soft" on sin, and therefore will not punish it? Likely by "riches of his kindness" is meant his covenant blessings. (3:2; 9:4, 5)
- f. In fact God delays acting against sin immediately, in order to afford an opportunity for *repentance*. (Compare Matt. 12:41 and Jonah 3:10 on repentance.) His kindness and patience are not to be misunderstood as an expression of approval of the sinner. Likely the Jewish rejection of Christ is particularly in mind here - God was giving the Jew time.
- g. Verse 5. The kindness of God did not effect the desired change, because of :

"stubbornness" "hardness" (R/R) "moral and spiritual insensibility." (Lard)

"unrepentant heart"

On the Day of Judgement, ("the day of wrath") God's wrath will be poured out upon sin. (2 Thess 1:7-9) Those who continue in sin are constantly adding to the wrath to be endured and they are doing it *themselves*. ("you are storing up wrath for yourself") God's judgement will be perfectly just. ("the righteous judgment of God")

- h. Verse 6. Judgement will be on an individual basis. The Jew and the Gentile ("every man") will be on equal footing - Abrahamic descent is irrelevant. (Acts 10:28, 34) Every man will be judged "...according to his deeds (works)." This does not speak of salvation by works but of walking in the light, meeting the conditions of salvation, having an obedient faith. (2 Cor. 5:10; Jn 5:28, 29)
- i. Verses 7, 8 explain verse 6. There will be two groups at the judgment:
- those granted "eternal life" - it is a gift to those who persevere in (practise) good. This is their habitual manner of life. These are said to "seek" (meaning earnest and intense desire to obtain) glory and honour and immortality, and they do this by their good conduct. These are part of "eternal life."
- the recipients of God's "wrath and indignation". (i.e just condemnation) They are "selfishly ambitious," here meaning "...contending against God" (Thayer) rebellious. This contending against God, consists in the fact that they "do not the truth but obey unrighteousness." (Psalm 119:172 [All God's commandments are righteousness])
- j. Verses 9-11. The Jew is now specifically named. There is "no partiality with God" (v. 11 [Acts 10:34]) meaning that all men, Jew and gentile will be judged solely on the basis of whether they do "evil" or "good". (vs 9,10) No person will have an advantage based on race or descent. By "the Jew first" (cf. 1:16) is simply meant "in an eminent degree" because of his extra light and knowledge.

for the one who does evil there will be "tribulation" and "distress" (anguish, torturing confinement [R/R])

for the one who does good "glory and honour and peace."

Jew, Gentile and Law (vs 12-16)

- a. Verse 12 begins with the explanatory "for". The impartiality of God (v. 11) is shown in the fact that He judges man according to the law which he possesses. We note that Paul is dealing here with the judgment of *condemnation* only.
- b. The Gentiles are those who have "sinned without the law". (K.J.V. has no "the") Undoubtedly this is a reference to the revealed law possessed by the Jews, the Mosaic law. The Gentiles were not completely without law, since sin involves transgression of law (1 Jn 3:4), and they *had* sinned. Where law does not exist, sin cannot exist. (Rom. 4:15) So the Gentiles were "without law" in that they did not possess the Mosaic law (Deut. 4:1-8; 5:1-21) but they did possess some law. (see 1:18 ff) They sinned in their violation of this law.
- c. The Gentiles will "perish" (not annihilation but ruin [Matt. 9:17]) without law, "a reference to the punishment of vs 8, 9. "The heathen who sin are lost, because they do not keep *the law which they have*." (A.T. Robertson) They are not judged by the Mosaic law to which they were not amenable. Murray observes:

"In the context of this chapter and of Scripture in general there is undoubted allusion to the degree of its severity. (cf. Lk 12:47, 48; Matt. 11:22, 24; Lk 10:14)

- d. On the other hand the Jews "...who have sinned under the law, will be judged by the (Mosaic) law". (judged here meaning condemned) This is because "not the hearers of the law are justified before God, but the doers of the law will be justified." (v. 13 [cf. Jas 1:22-24] Jews who had the law of Moses and boasted in it, and trusted in their special relationship with God for salvation, but who were not doers of that law will perish.

(An Important point: when Paul says that the *doers of the law* will be justified, he is not suggesting that justification can be based upon law. [3:20; Gal. 2:16; Acts 13:39] In fact the Roman epistle destroys this idea as we will see.)

- e. Verse 13. Paul says that the doers of the law will be justified (at the final judgment.) This is the first time that this very important expression occurs in Romans. Recall our discussion of justification in 1:17 and keep in mind the forensic idea here.
- f. Verse 14. Paul speaks of gentiles who do not have the law (i.e. the Mosaic law) yet to do the "things of the law." Murray has:

By the things of the law he "must mean certain things which the law prescribes and refer to those things practice by pagans which are stipulated by the law, such as the pursuit of lawful vocations, the procreation of offspring, filial and natural affection, the care of the poor and sick, and numerous other natural virtues which are required by the law."

- g. They do these things "instinctively/by nature" (phusis), meaning native instinct as opposed to revelation. When the Gentiles so act they are "a law to themselves" meaning that to the extent and only to the extent that the Gentiles understanding of good and bad agrees with God's eternal law, they are a law to themselves. Paul "is insisting that the basic requirements of the law are stamped on human hearts. Presumably, he can say this because man is made in the image of God." (Harrison)
- h. Verse 15 explains. They are a law to themselves "...in that they show...(the reason for what precedes' [Robertson]) the work of the law..." (i.e. conduct corresponding to the law) "written in their hearts..."

meaning that "they know certain things to be right, and they were urged by their own consciences to obey or meet these obligations. (Warren) They are "a law to themselves" in the sense that their *natural impulses* confront them with the law of God.

- i. "Paul regarded conscience as performing in the Gentile world roughly the same function as was performed by the law among the Jews." (R/R) Too "Paul does not say the conscience is the standard, only that the conscience accuses or excuses in keeping with our performance relative to the standard we have already adopted." (McGuigan) Conscience is an adequate guide only in so far as it is moulded by God's principles of conduct.
- j. Verse 16. Verses 13-15 are in parenthesis and v. 16 follows on from v. 12 which speaks of judgement. In v. 16, "the day when...God will judge the secrets of men ..." is the day of judgment, when "all who have sinned without the law will also perish" and "all who have sinned under the law will be judged by the law". (v. 13)

Note:

God will judge *through* Jesus (Acts 17:21; Jn 5:22)

He will judge "the secrets of men" (Eccles 12:14; 1 Cor. 4:5)

this is "according to my gospel" says Paul. The Gospel tells of judgment.

More on the Jew (vs 17-24)

(The Jew does indeed enjoy very real privileges [vs 25; 3:1; 9:3-5; Gal. 2:15] but if he is not a doer of the law, his prerogatives only make his condition worse.)

- a. Verse 17 begins to describe the conceited, self-deceived Jews. They:

"bear the name 'Jew'." They were proud of the name "Jew". "The name 'Jew' thus came to denote all the peculiarities and special favours of their religion.

"..rely upon the Law.." The fact that God had given them the Law was evidence to the Jew of his favour with God. Yet they did not keep the Law.

"boast in (glories in) God."

- b. Verse 18 - "...and know His will" because of revelation.

"approve the things that are essential, being instructed out of the law" - because he had the law, the Jew prided himself on his ability to distinguish between good and bad; to approve the better things.

"are confident that (they)...are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness." The Jew because of his privileged position felt confident that he was a guiding light, an instructor, a shining example to the surrounding Gentile world.

"*corrector* of the foolish." The word emphasises the "element of discipline or training".

"a *teacher* of the immature" - "the term used by the Jews to designate proselytes or novices." (Vincent)

"having in the law the *embodiment* of knowledge and of truth." The word speaks of "not only appearance, but the scheme the correct embodiment of the lineaments of truth and knowledge in the law". (Vincent)

Paul uses language which the Jews applied to a Gentiles (immature, foolish) showing the conceit of the Jew.

- c. Verses 21-24. A series of questions put to be Jew exposes the disparity between what he teaches and his own lifestyle. The Jews who claimed to be a light and instructor to the world, were guilty of the same kind of sins which they sought to correct in others. They "steal" (v. 21) and "commit adultery" (v. 22). They abhor idols but "rob temples." This is difficult: *perhaps* a reference to the Jews' failure to render to God what was due Him, *perhaps* a reference to sacrilege brought about by a failure to truly honour God, or *perhaps* a reference to literally taking objects of idolatrous worship. (Deut. 7:25, 26; cf. Acts 19:37)
- d. Although he boasted in the law, the Jews failed to obey the law and thus dishonoured God. The surrounding nations reasoned - "good man, good God; bad man, bad God". (Lard) (In v. 24 we find a reference to Isaiah 52:5. The nations who had captured Israel mocked the God who apparently was helpless to save His people.)

About Circumcision (vs 25-29)

- a. Verse 25. Circumcision was the a sign of the Abrahamic covenant. By this rite, one's right to the Covenant blessings was acknowledged. It was certainly advantageous to be part of that Commonwealth which had a special relationship with God. The point is however, that circumcision by itself, and without an obedient life (keeping the covenant) is of no benefit whatever. The Jew who fails to practice righteousness, voids his circumcision. In God's sight he is no better than the heathen.
- b. In verse 25 the Jews are not being indicted because they were not sinlessly perfect. Rather they themselves knew and the heathen about them how very little "heart religion" was involved in their commitment to God.
- c. Verse 26. "If an uncircumcised Gentile obeyed the law, then the law naturalised and received him into the spiritual theocracy, notwithstanding his lack of circumcision." (McGarvey) The gentile whose behaviour conformed to the universal principles discernible to him which were part of, but not limited to, the Mosaic law, would be regarded by God as sustaining a covenant relationship with Him.
- d. Verse 27. The Gentile ("he who is physically uncircumcised", "the "uncircumcision which is by nature." [K.J. V.]) is still under discussion. If he "keeps the law" (not perfectly but habitually lives up to the knowledge available to him) he will "judge" the Jew (who is an habitual transgressor of the law) meaning that he will condemn the unfaithful Jew by way of comparison and contrast. (cf. Matt. 12:41, 42)
- e. The Jew had:

"the letter of the law". (lit. "the law") Properly this word "letter" means the written character. The word is used of writing in general in the New Testament (e.g. Lk 16:6, 7; Gal. 6:11) and especially it is used of the Mosaic writings (7:6; 2 Cor. 3:6, 7; 2 Tim. 3:15) Thus it refers to the Mosaic law possessed by the Jews but not the Gentiles.

"circumcision" - (see above)

- f. Verses 28, 29. The word "Jew" is from "Judah" meaning "Praise" ("Now will I praise the Lord: therefore she called his name Judah. [Gen. 29:25]) Being a Jew "outwardly" means by descent from Abraham, and

"circumcision...which is outward in the flesh" means the external rite. The *physical Jew* whose heart remains untouched by God's covenant provisions "is not a Jew," meaning that he fails to bring praise to God.

g. What did make one a Jew:

he is a Jew who is one "inwardly," meaning his attitude of heart.

he possesses circumcision which is "of the heart" (Deut. 30:6; Jer. 4:4; 9:25, 26) meaning that were his inner being is renewed, impurities are cut away.

his circumcision is "by the Spirit" (N.A.S.V.) or "in the spirit. (K.J.V.) If K.J.V. is correct Paul is again emphasizing the *internal* nature of true Jewishness. If on the other hand we have a reference to the Holy Spirit, (as per N.A.S.V.) then Paul is contrasting the power of the Holy Spirit with the impotence of "the letter" (the law) as mere law.

h. The "praise" for the true Jew is from God rather than from men. We recall that "Jew" means "praise." Such a one "would be praiseworthy in the eyes of God, fulfilling what the law requires but cannot produce. (cf. 8:3, 4)" (Harrison)

Concluding Comments

In 1:26, 27 and 2:14 Paul has used forms of the word *phusis*, (usually translated "nature") which was a very significant term in Greek thought many centuries prior to, and also during the first century. In fact the term *phusis* was central to discussions of philosophy, ethics, social obligation and the like, and the word *phusikoi* was used to speak of a whole school of thinkers known as the *nature philosophers*. The importance of this word is seen in the fact that the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* devotes twenty-seven pages to a discussion of the term.

Under subheading 4. *Nature and Ethics*, we have: "(I)n Plato we find a condemnation of pederasty...(which is) based on a ref. to animals, among which a male never touches another male for this purpose."

Elsewhere in a discussion of *phusis* in 1 Cor. 11, Craig S. Keener has the following:

"Paul's appeal to nature was a *standard Greco-Roman* argument, used especially by Stoics, but also by Epicureans, other philosophers, and for that matter, *just about everyone else...*(I)t was a very common sort of argument in Paul's day..."

Sometimes writers meant by 'nature' pretty much what we mean by the term today: the created order. They could speak of nature as the force or order controlling and arranging natural existence in the cosmos. Nature is said to teach us the way things really are, *often through our natural endowments or through the nature of the world around us.*

Usually writers used these examples from nature *to advocate a specific kind of moral behaviour, or simply exhorted living in general in accordance with nature...*

Many gender distinctions were also considered part of nature, rather than a matter of mere social convention."

This is certainly correct. By way of example consider the following use of "phusis" by the stoic philosopher Epictetus who lived 50-130 A.D:

"Come let us leave the chief works of nature and consider merely what she does in passing. Can anything be more useless than *hairs on a chin*? Well, what then? Has not *nature* used even these in the most suitable way possible? Has she not by these means *distinguished between the male and the female*?...Again in the case of women, just as nature has mingled in their voice a certain softer note, so likewise she has taken the hair from their chins... Wherefore we ought to preserve the signs which God has given; we ought not so far as in us lies, to confuse the sexes which have been distinguished in this fashion."

We must always keep in mind however that while there is certainly a regularity in the "book of nature," and while it is possible to conclude from the "way things are" that certain behaviour is contrary to established order, it is only through obedience to the gospel that man can enjoy salvation - and the gospel is made known through special revelation. Paul will say in 10:14-17:

Rom. 10:14-17

Verse 14. "How then shall they call upon Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?"

Verse 15. "And how shall they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, 'How beautiful are the feet of those who bring glad tidings of good things!'"

Verse 16. "However, they did not all heed the glad tidings; for Isaiah says, 'Lord, who has believed our report?'"

Verse 17. "So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ."

What's involved in obeying the gospel? See our Accepting God's Gift.

Lesson 5

Chapter 3:1-20 - Though Possessing Advantages the Jew is Under Condemnation Like the Gentile

God's Fidelity and Justice (vs 1-8)

- a. Verse 1. In view of what has just been said the Jew may ask: "What advantage is there in being a Jew?" (The answer is "No advantage if it is just outward. But potentially many benefits.") In 9:4 Paul speaks of Jewish blessings, but here simply says: "Great in every respect" (v. 2) and then speaks of just one of blessing.
- b. To the Jew was "entrusted" "committed" the oracles of God. The word translated "entrusted" "implied confidence in them on the part of God. (Barnes) (cf. 1 Thess 2:4) By "oracles of God" he means the Old Testament Scripture, "not especially Messianic passages, but the Old Testament scriptures with the law and the promises." (Vincent) In Acts 7:38 the term is used of the Old Testament and in 1 Pet. 4:11 it is used of the gospel.

what a privilege to have the very words of God. What an advantage to have the light of His precepts to walk in. What a blessing to have prophecies concerning the coming Messiah.

responsibility goes along with privilege - but the Jews fell short (Acts 7:53 says that they received the Law and did not keep it.)

- c. Verses 3, 4. Paul anticipates another objection from the Jew. "Some of the Jews to whom the oracles were trusted were faithless; if God's people proved faithless will not God be faithless to His promises?" God had made many promises to Israel in these "oracles" yet many Jews were not blessed. Is God then faithless? The answer is: "God is never faithless."

if some promises were not fulfilled it was because they were conditional upon obedience. (see Deut. 30:19) Unconditional promises would not fail. When God punishes evil He is acting faithfully too since He promises to do so. In fact "men's faithlessness never alters God's faithfulness." (Bruce)

Likely the "faithlessness" is that of the Jew who rejected the gospel. This faithlessness does not negate the privilege of possessing the oracles of God or the advantage of the Jew. But the main point in verse 4 is that God is *always* to be considered truthful and faithful and any doctrine of man (such as at v. 3) which implies that God is faithless is to be considered false even if every man embraces it.

- d. In v. 4 Paul appeals to David's words in Ps. 51:4 to confirm his own statement that God can never be less than perfectly righteous. David, although overwhelmed with remorse following his sin with Bathsheba never doubted that God was perfectly just in condemning his sin with another man's wife.
- e. Paul quotes David's words in Ps. 51. The point is to show that God was justified in His dealing with David. David had sinned. By the same token God is justified in dealing judiciously with rebellious Jews.

the words "That Thou mightest be justified by Thy words" are addressed to God by David, the point being that God is demonstrated to have kept His word in dealing with David.

"And mightest prevail when Thou art judged..." God is "judged" by men when they accuse him of acting unrighteously. (here with respect to His promises) "God forbid" (K.J.V.) "May it never be" (N.A.S.V.) - "God" is not in the text.

- f. Verse 5. This verse appears to contain another objection of the Jew: "You argue that the faithlessness of us Jews concerning the revealed will of God only emphasized just how faithful God is. Thus our belief has in fact glorified God's name. This being true would not God be unjust in punishing us for lack of belief since it serves to exhibit more clearly the righteousness of God?" Paul's "I am speaking in human terms" tells us that this is the argument of others, an argument which Paul emphatically denies, an impertinent argument.
- g. Verse 6. The response to the argument of the previous verse: "If you Jews argue that God cannot condemn the Jew for his unrighteousness because Jewish infidelity serves to emphasize God's righteousness, then by the same reasoning God cannot condemn the world at large since the sins of the world also emphasized the goodness of God." (The Jews could not accept such reasoning of course, since they certainly believed that the Gentiles would be judged.)
- h. Verse 7. Another response to the argument of verse 5: "The Jews hold that I am false to the religion of our fathers, and that I am a liar. According to the above reasoning (v. 5) my falsehood should also bring glory to God. Why then do you condemn me for that which you claim will not be condemned in you?"
- i. Verse 8. It is evident that Paul has not been dealing with a hypothetical situation, but that his teaching had

indeed been misinterpreted as encouraging sin. ("we are slanderously reported ... some affirm that we say") Just who these opponents were, we are not told. Paul has more to say about this perversion in Chapter 6. Concerning the inference "Let us do evil that good may come" Paul says of those who would draw this inference, "Their condemnation is just."

The Jews-Better than the Gentiles? (vs 9-20)

(Paul has just argued that the Jews had failed to live up to the revelation given to them. Like the Gentiles they are guilty before God.)

- a. Verse 9. "What then (are we to conclude)?" The question "Are we better than they" could also mean something like "Do we excel?" but the important point is that as far as moral and spiritual fitness goes (as opposed to covenant advantages) the answer is "Not at all." This is because, as Paul has "already charged" (1:18-2:24) both Jews and Greeks are "all under sin." (i.e. its power and condemnation)
- b. In Verses 10-18, Paul uses six quotations from the Old Testament to show that according to the Jews' *own sacred writings* they are under condemnation. ("as it is written") Nine times he uses "all" or "none" to make his point that all are under condemnation.
- c. Verses 10-12 are from Ps. 14:1-3; 53:1-3. (but not verbatim) The "none righteous" means in the *absolute* sense. In *understanding* and *seeking* (v. 11) (the God-ward inclination of the heart) all without exception, are defective. Lack of understanding and unwillingness to seek God (despite having the oracles of God) lead to their turning aside (v. 12), becoming *useless* in terms of the divine purpose. ("The idea of the Hebrew word is 'to go bad or sour' like milk." [R/R]) As far as perfect goodness goes, not one is sinless.
- d. Verses 13-18, contain verbatim quotations from, and also more general references to, Ps. 5:10; 139: 4; 14: 4; 10:7; Isa. 59:7, 8. *Deceiving tongues and poisonous lips* are putrid, offensive, and disease producing, like an open grave. (Prov. 14:23) *Cursing, bitterness, bloodshed, destruction, misery* all add to the picture of corruption. They are without *peace or fear of God*.

this absence of the fear of God is the heart of the problem.

note that the *feet, eyes, throat, lips, tongue and mouth* are indicted. The condemnation is complete; all their members are involved in the rebellion.

- e. Verse 19. "Now we know...(i.e. "You Jews admit the fact ") that whatever the (definite article) law (here the entire Old Testament) says it speaks to those who are under the law..." It is the Jew then who was under consideration in vs 10-18. The Jews' *own law* then declared them to be guilty so that "every mouth may be closed, and all the world may become accountable to God." Every Jewish objection is silenced. no one has a defence to offer. The Jew cannot protest because *his own law pronounces him guilty*.
- f. Verse 20 begins "because" and Paul now gives us the *reason* for what has just been said about every mouth being stopped and every person becoming accountable before God. The fact is that "by the works of (the) law (i.e. "the deeds prescribed by the law") no flesh will be justified in His sight..."

There it is no "the" before "law" in verse 20. All and any law is meant (Gal. 3:21) Law can be the source of justification only for those who know it perfectly and obey it perfectly (Gal. 3:10). This is impossible. (The Mosaic law was good being from God [1 Tim. 1:8] but the fact is that law, if regarded as the ground of justification is in fact a curse to man [Gal. 3:10-13] since all men sin. However salvation grounded upon law requires perfection.) Thus "no flesh will be justified (declared not guilty in the forensic sense) in His sight."

Law does not *justify* but rather "through (the) law comes the *knowledge* of sin." (5:20; 7:7-11) Law makes sin clear but provides no remedy! N.I.V. has "through the law we become conscious of sin." Law brought guilt to man's attention, but did nothing to *remove* that guilt.

Concluding Comments

Romans 3:10-18 is sometimes cited as proof that man is born in depravity, having inherited the sin of Adam through his parents. Clearly however Paul's words cannot apply to newborn babies. He is describing those who *do not seek God*, who have *turned aside*, who *do not do good*, who *deceive with their tongues*, *curse*, *shed blood* and such like. Like other passages which are invoked to support this doctrine, Rom. 3:10-18 simply does not contain this teaching.

The doctrine of *inherited sin* is widely taught. Having been brought up a Catholic, I was taught from an early age that "Adam's first sin has been transmitted to all his descendants." (*Council of Trent 1545-1563*) I remember vividly the day of my *Confirmation* as a twelve year old and I remember also the good sincere sisters who taught me about the *Immaculate Conception*. This is the doctrine that Jesus mother alone was born without original sin, and therefore did not pass Adam's sin on to Jesus. Teachings such as these evolved out of attempts to deal with the implications of the doctrine of original sin.

The following quotations help us to see just how widespread this doctrine is today:

1. The canons of Dort (*Statement issued at Synod of Dordrecht [1618-1619]*, establishing the fundamental tenets of Calvinist Christianity):

THIRD AND FOURTH HEAD: ARTICLE 1. Man was originally formed after the image of God. His understanding was adorned with a true and saving knowledge of his Creator, and of spiritual things; his heart and will were upright, all his affections pure, and the whole man was holy. But, revolting from God by the instigation of the devil and by his own free will, he forfeited these excellent gifts; and in the place thereof became involved in blindness of mind, horrible darkness, vanity, and perverseness of judgment; became wicked, rebellious, and obdurate in heart and will, and impure in his affections.

THIRD AND FOURTH HEAD: ARTICLE 2. Man after the fall begat children in his own likeness. A corrupt stock produced a corrupt offspring. Hence all the posterity of Adam, Christ only excepted, have derived corruption from their original parent, not by limitation, as the Pelagians of old asserted, but by the propagation of a vicious nature, in consequence of the just judgment of God.

2. *The Westminster Confession of Faith*: Of the Fall of Man, of Sin, and of the Punishment thereof.

Our first parents, being seduced by the subtilty and temptation of Satan, sinned, in eating the forbidden fruit. (a) This their sin God was pleased, according to His wise and holy counsel, to permit, having purposed to order it to His own glory....

By this sin they fell from their original righteousness and communion, with God, (c) and so became dead in sin, (d) and wholly defiled in all the parts and faculties of soul and body....

They being the root of all mankind, the guilt of this sin was imputed, (f) and the same death in sin and corrupted nature conveyed, to all their posterity descending from them by ordinary generation.

3. *Anglican Common Book of Prayer*: IX. Of Original or Birth Sin.

ORIGINAL sin standeth not in the following of Adam (as the Pelagians do vainly talk), but it is the fault and corruption of the nature of every man that naturally is engendered of the offspring of Adam, whereby man is very far gone from original righteousness, and is of his own nature inclined to evil, so that the flesh lusteth always contrary to the spirit; and therefore in every person born into this world, it deserveth God's wrath and damnation. And this infection of nature doth remain, yea, in them that are regenerated, whereby the lust of the flesh, called in Greek phronema sarkos (which some do expound the wisdom, some sensuality, some the affection, some the desire of the flesh), is not subject to the law of God. And although there is no condemnation for them that believe and are baptized, yet the Apostle doth confess that concupiscence and lust hath itself the nature of sin.

We could provide much more evidence of the pervasiveness of this teaching within the community of believers, but of course the truth of a doctrine is not determined by popularity, and there are good reasons for rejecting it as unscriptural. consider just few points:

there is a time before which a child knows enough to "refuse evil and choose good," (Isa. 7:15) have "no knowledge of good or evil," (Deut. 1:39) or as the Lord expresses it to Jonah "do not know the difference between their right and left hand..." (Jonah 4:11)

sin is defined as "transgression of the law" (1 Jn 3:4; cf. Jer. 44:23; Jas 4:17) and a man sins when he is "carried away and enticed by his own lust." (Jas 1:14) Given this Biblical definition there is no possibility of a baby's sinning against God.

it is the "person who sins (who) will die" and "the father will not bear the punishment for the son's iniquity" and "the son will not bear the punishment for the father's iniquity." (Ezek 18:20 cf. Deut. 24:16) True the *consequences* of sins often affect the next generation (Ex. 34:7), but consequences are not the same as culpability.

Jesus tells us that the "angels" of "little ones" continually behold God's face, and that "the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these (Matt. 19:14) - how could this be said of the *totally depraved*?

candidates for baptism must hear the word, believe, repent and confess Jesus as Lord - see our *Accepting God's Gift*. Clearly babies can do none of these things.

verses used to prove the doctrine of inherited sin fall short of doing so. For example David's statement that "in sin my mother conceived me" (Ps. 51:3) may refer to the fact that David's mother was involved in sin which led to his being conceived out of wedlock or it may simply mean that David was born into a sin-filled world. Other suggestions are possible.

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The Roman Epistle cont.

Lesson 6

Chapter 3:21 3:31 - Another Basis of Justification Has Been Made Available By God, namely the Gospel.

(Paul has just argued that justification based upon law [requiring perfect obedience] is not possible. Law brings not justification but condemnation. Therefore God has provided another ground of justification - the *gospel*. In 1:16 Paul explained that in the gospel is revealed the "righteousness" [justification] of [provided by] God.)

About Justification (vs 21-26)

a. Verse 21 "But now" in contrast with the past, "the righteousness (i.e. justification) of (N.I.V. from) God has been manifested." Formerly God's plan to justify man had been concealed or hidden. Now it has been *manifested*. It has been manifested "apart from (the) law" (there is no the in the text) because law makes man conscious of sin, but it does not operate to remove it. Therefore God's plan for man's justification is *apart from a law system*.

b. God's plan of justification is witnessed by:

the law. (of Moses) The Mosaic law *pictured the gospel*. It had a "shadow" of the good things to come (Heb. 9:9; 10:1; cf. 8:5) (In the next chapter Paul speaks of the situation of Abraham and David.)

the prophets (see at 1:2) - e.g. Acts 2:16; 3:24; 15:15; 1 Pet. 1:10-12.

Together the *law and the prophets* speak of the entire Old Testament. Again Paul is making it clear that what he preaches is an outgrowth of the Old Testament, not something new.

c. Verse 22. God's plan to justify man apart from perfect law- keeping is described as "the righteousness (justification) of God (provided by God) *through faith in Christ Jesus*." "Faith is focussed upon him in the specific character that is His as Saviour, Redeemer and Lord." (Murray) Law made man aware of sin but could not remove it; the blood of Christ however is able to *remove* guilt and condemnation - when it is appropriated "through faith in Jesus Christ."

d. God's plan to justify through faith in Christ is "for *all* who believe" without distinction (Jew, gentile) because "all have sinned" (as Paul has shown) Men "fall short (continued action, *still fall short* [Robertson]) of the glory of God." Perhaps "All have sinned and thereby failed to honour God"; (Lard) or "through sin man falls short of the ideal which God had in view when he brought him into being"; (Bruce) or man falls short of "the praise or approbation of God." (Barnes)

- e. Verse 24. Those believers who are the recipients of God's "righteousness" (v. 22) are in the situation of "being justified as a *gift* by his *grace* through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus."

gift and grace emphasize that justification is not merited, deserved or earned. Nor was God in any way constrained to offer it. (Eph. 2:8) He was motivated by His loving-kindness.

the medium through which the gift is given is "redemption" which basically means *to ransom by the payment of a price*. Robertson has: " 'ransoming from', a price paid for the deliverance of that which is delivered. 'Lutron' - is common in the papyri as the purchase-money in freeing slaves." Note too that the redemption is "in Christ Jesus" or "came by Christ Jesus." (N.I.V.)

- f. Verses 25, 26. God "displayed"/"hath set forth" Christ, the word meaning "to place before, mid. to purposes, to design or to set forth publicly." (R/R) The idea here appears to be *to make a public declaration so that everyone can know*. What God did in this public way, was to display Jesus "as a *propitiation*." This is an important word setting forth an important idea. The meaning of *propitiation* is:

that which expiates or propitiates, the means of expiation or the place of propitiation (for example the mercy seat). (R/R) (The word *expiate* means "Pay the penalty or make amends for wrong" and the word *propitiation* means "appease". [Oxford])

"The only other New Testament example of this word is Heb. 9:5 where we have the 'cherubim overshadowing the *mercy seat*' ...In Hebrews the adjective is used as a substantive as 'the propitiatory place.' But this idea does not suit here...(Here the word)...is an adjective...from... (the word which means) 'to make propitiation' (Heb. 2 :17) and is akin in meaning to...(the word which means) propitiation. (1 Jn 2:2; 4:10) (Robertson)

Christ is it therefore said to have been a propitiatory sacrifice. (Murray) Propitiation is "in His blood" (Heb. 9:22) and is appropriated "through faith". (v. 25)

- g. God set forth Jesus as a propitiatory sacrifice "to demonstrate His righteousness" meaning that God did this to publicly demonstrate that He is perfectly just. This was necessary because "...in the forbearance of God he passed over sins previously committed" meaning that in the pre-Christian era God forgave sin. (e.g. Num. 14:19, 20) God demonstrated in Christ's death that He was perfectly just in having passed over sin in the pre-Christian era since Jesus now became the perfect sin offering.

- h. In verse 26 "at the present time" is a reference to the Christian age. The cross enabled God to be:

"just" - A perfectly just God could not simply ignore sin. At calvary the demands of perfect justice were met.

"justifier..." - Because of the cross God is able to offer salvation to man on some basis other than perfect law keeping. God is our justifier in that it was His plan to send Jesus to the cross (Acts 2:23) and provide justification.

Justification by Faith (vs 27-31)

- a. Verse 27. Since salvation is an unearned gift no man can boast that he merits it. (Probably the Jew especially is in view. [2:17])
- b. What "kind of law" excludes boasting? (Here "law" has the meaning "system", "principle", "method", "order", "rule". [Morris])

boasting in one's salvation is *not* excluded by a law (system) of salvation based upon works, i.e. a system

whereby man renders perfect obedience and *earns* that salvation. (Phil. 3:9)

boasting in one's salvation is excluded by a law (system) of faith, a system whereby one is justified by acceptance of Christ's atoning sacrifice.

- c. Verse 28. The nature of justification *by faith* is such that "works of (the [no definite article in the text]) law are excluded. Why? Murray has a good comment:

"Justification by works always finds its ground in that which the person is and does; it is always oriented to that consideration of virtue attaching to the person justified. The specific quality of faith is trust and commitment to another;...Faith is self renouncing; works are self congratulatory. Faith looks to what God does; works have respect to what we are."

- d. Verses 29, 30. God is One (Deut. 6:4) and He has but one method of bringing humanity to Himself - salvation based upon a system of faith.

- e. Verse 31. Does Paul here refer to the Mosaic law in particular or to moral law in general?

"if reference is to the Mosaic Law then this is established in that Paul explains the real purpose of the Law. The Law was designed to show that no man could obtain salvation by self-righteousness, and Paul's doctrine explains this." (McGarvey) Justification by faith was grounded in the Old Testament.

if (perhaps more likely) moral law *in general* is in view, then Paul's teaching shows God's respect for moral law, since He required atonement in order to offer forgiveness. God could not simply overlook the demands of justice which is why Jesus had to die if sin was to be forgiven. It showed Christ's respect for that law in His life and death; the evil of sin is seen in Christ's suffering. (other suggestions could be offered)

Concluding Comments

The word of God does *not* contain contradictions, but many times we do face the challenge of having to harmonize various teachings of scripture and of reconciling different passages. For example, on the one hand we are told that *flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God* (1 Cor. 15:50) while on the other hand we are told that Christians are those who have been *transferred into the kingdom of His beloved Son*. (Col. 1:13) We are told that there is *none righteous , not even one* (Rom. 3:10) while at the same time we read of individuals like Zacharias and Elizabeth who are described as *righteous in the sight of God*. (Lk 1:6) Clearly all of these statements are true and as we continue to prayerfully study scripture the answer to such questions become clear.

Clearly the question of the relationship between *law and faith* is central to Paul's discussion in Romans chapter 3. Paul has affirmed in unambiguous language that what he calls "works of law" have no place in a system of justification *based upon faith*. Later he will assert with equal clarity that Christians are "not under law but under grace". (6:14) But this is not all that scripture has to say about *law, grace faith and works*. For example elsewhere Paul describes himself as being "under the *law* of Christ," (1 Cor. 9:21) while James tells us that Abraham's faith "was working with his works" and that as a result of this process "faith was perfected". (Jas 2:22) James adds that "a man is justified by works and not by faith alone" and that "faith without *works* is dead." (Jas 2:24, 26)

Earlier Jesus had spoken of those who call Him Lord and who claim to cast out demons in His name but who are told at the judgment "I never knew you, depart from me you who practice *lawlessness*." (Matt. 7:23) How then are we to harmonize these and similar passages which deal with the ground or basis of salvation? Consider the following:

- a. God is perfect in holiness (1 Pet. 1:16) and consequently He "cannot look upon iniquity." (Hab. 1:14) One sin (just *one*!) is enough to separate man from God because a God who is perfect in holiness cannot tolerate that which less than perfect in holiness.
- b. A man who never committed sin would be acceptable to God. Such a man would *earn, merit and deserve* his salvation by way of his perfect obedience. Salvation earned by 100% obedience 100% of the time would be owed to the earner just as a wage is owed (Rom. 4:2-4) and the earner could boast that this was his just reward for his own efforts. (Rom. 3:27)
- c. Galatians 3:21 says: "For if a law had been given which was able to impart life then righteousness would indeed have been *based on law*." Paul's point here is that if a law consistent with God's holy nature had been given which was able to impart (spiritual) life, then certainly righteousness (justification) would have been imparted *upon the basis of law keeping*. The problem is that all men sin (Eccles 7:20; Rom. 3:23) and a system based on law has no provision for taking away sin once committed.
- d. This means that any system of justification requiring perfection places man under a curse. (Gal. 3:13) The problem is not that God cannot provide a law which is "holy and righteous and good" (Rom. 7:12) but rather that mankind's fleshly weakness make salvation under such a system impossible. (Rom. 8:3)
- e. The good news is that Christ's blood does what law cannot do - it makes provision for forgiveness of sin. Man cannot be perfect but he can be forgiven.

when Paul says that Christians are not "under law" (Rom. 6:14) he is saying that Christians are not under a system of justification *requiring sinless perfection and offering no forgiveness*.

when Paul says that "works of law" (Rom. 3:28) have no place in a system of justification based upon forgiveness (a "faith" system) he is telling us that since salvation based upon forgiveness is a gift (Eph. 2:8) it follows as night follows day that *works of merit* are completely excluded. An "earned gift" is a contradiction in terms.

- f. We must be careful at this point that we do not misunderstand Paul's argument and place him in conflict with himself and other inspired writers.

Paul is not saying that Christians are individuals who are amenable to no divine law.

Paul is not saying that Christians need not engage in works of any kind.

- g. Christians are not lawless people. For example Jesus commanded His disciples to forgive one another, adding that those who refused to do so would not be forgiven by the Father, (Matt. 6:15) and as we have seen Jesus condemned lawlessness among His followers. (Matt. 7:21) Paul condemned the "immoral person" the "covetous" the "drunkard" and such like "within" the church. (1 Cor. 5:11) Peter speaks of those who have "escaped the defilement of the world by the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" only to return to them, and tells us that such men will be condemned. (2 Pet. 2)
- h. Christians are "under the law of Christ" (1 Cor. 9:21) and are to have that law (God's law) written upon their hearts. (Heb. 8:10) Paul tells us that we are to "fulfill the law of Christ" (Gal. 6:2) by bearing one another's burdens. In Romans Christ's law is also called "the law of the Spirit of life" (8:2) According to Paul "It was for freedom that Christ set... (us) free," (Gal. 5:1) but the apostle is speaking of freedom from a system of justification requiring perfection (a "curse" [Gal. 3:13]) not "freedom" to live in disregard of God's commandments.

- i. This helps us to understand the difference between "works of *law*" (above) and "works of *faith*". (1 Thess 1:3; 2 Thess 1:11) The first expression, as we have seen speaks of works of merit wherein one may boast of having earned salvation - but the latter speaks of works which are inseparable from saving faith. Paul is scathing of the former but "gives thanks" for those who engage in the latter. (1 Thess 1:2) He tells us that faith *works* through love (Gal. 5:6), and Jesus enumerates some of these works in Matt. 25:31 ff. ("I was hungry and you gave me food...") When James tells us that "faith" without "works" is "death" (lacking the ability to save) he is referring to works of faith. In fact faith is itself a "work". (Jn 6:29)

Many good sincere believers (correctly) conclude that man cannot earn salvation, but fail to recognise that there is a great difference between being "under law" as a system of justification and being "under law" in the sense of being amenable to divine commands. Because they confuse *works of law* and *works of faith* they do not acknowledge that saving faith involves meeting conditions of salvation (e.g. baptism). Let's strive for harmony as we consider all that God teaches in His word.

Lesson 7

Chapter 4:1-25 - Both Jew and Gentile Can Be Justified By Faith, Which is How the Gospel Saves. This Method of Justification Exemplified in the Cases of Abraham and David

(Rom. 3:27, 28 says: "No man can boast about this salvation since no man merits salvation as a result of works performed." To the Jewish mind if any person could have reason to boast it would be Abraham. The main point of this chapter is to show that the Old Testament itself contains the doctrine of justification by faith which Paul now proclaims. The case of Abraham demonstrates this.)

The Case of Abraham (vs 1-5)

- a. Verse 1. " 'What shall we say...?' " the phrase anticipates an objection or proposes an inference." (4:1; 6:1; 7:7; 8:31; 9:14, 30) (Vincent) Paul speaks of Abraham "our forefather". (N.I.V.) His point is "How does the case of Abraham fit in with the notion of justification by faith.
- b. Verse 2. If Abraham had been justified by sinless perfection he could have boasted that he had earned salvation. However such boasting would not have been (lit.) "towards God," likely meaning that it would not have been to God's glory. (but rather to his own) (The Old Testament revealed that Abraham was not perfect, a fact accepted by the Jews.)
- c. Verse 3. Paul quotes Gen. 15:6 to show that the foundation of Abraham's justification was his *faith* not his works: "And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness."

Note:

Abraham's own faith was *counted* or *reckoned*,

the word reckoned (elogisthe) is a bookkeeping term which means "To set down on the credit side of the ledger". (Robertson)

"as" or "for" (eis). Speaking of this word in connection with "righteousness" in Romans 4 Vincent says; " ' for'

in these places is 'eis' which does not mean 'instead of' but 'with a view to' "

"righteousness" means "Justification".

This passage teaches that Abraham believed God and that his own faith was set down to his credit in order to his justification or acquittal from sin.

- d. Verses 4, 5. An illustration from everyday life. The labourer's wage is earned by his work. It is not a gift. So the man who achieves his own justification (an impossibility) on the basis of works (perfect obedience) has received, not a favour, but what is rightfully his.
- e. Paul refers to the "one who works," which, in the context means one who keeps the law perfectly. He refers to "the one who does not work but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly" meaning those who "fail to keep the law perfectly, who commit sin, who recognize their inability to live perfectly" (Deaver), but who place their trust in God. The latter's faith is "reckoned as righteousness." (see above)

by "the one who does not work" Paul does not mean "the one who does not obey God." Abraham falls into the category of the "one who does not work but believes..." and Abraham was submissive.

The Case of David (vs 6-8)

(Another example, that of David shows that the doctrine of justification based upon faith is grounded in the Old Testament. The case of David is introduced with the words "just as David also" [v. 6] and we see that Paul immediately returns to the case of Abraham [v. 9 ff] to develop his argument. David's case then simply supports the main argument which grows out of Abraham's example.)

- a. Verse 6. Again an appeal to Jewish writings. Justification by faith is a theme consistent with the Old Testament. David speaks (Ps. 32) of the man "to whom God reckons (see above) righteousness (justification) apart from works (of merit)."
- b. Verses 7, 8. The quote from Ps. 32 tells us what justification involves:

v. 7 - sin is forgiven. ("covered" in view of Christ's death)

v. 8 - sin is not taken into account, not imputed. (Clearly "impute" then does not here mean *vicariously* attribute since it is man's own sin which is under discussion.)

Keep in mind that David was repentant when he wrote this Psalm. God does not "cover" the rebel.

The Blessing of Justification and the Role of Circumcision (vs 9-12)

(The case of Abraham shows that justification is not derived from circumcision, since Abraham's faith was reckoned to him as righteousness while he was uncircumcised. This has important implications for the Gentile.)

- a. Verses 9, 10. Will the blessings of justification encompass the family of Abraham and the kin of David only? If Abraham was justified *after* circumcision the Jew might still argue that it was by complying with works of law. Paul asks "how" it was reckoned. In the state of uncircumcision or in the state of circumcision?

- b. In fact Abraham's faith was reckoned as righteousness before he was circumcised, while he was still in the uncircumcised state. (At least 14 years elapsed between Gen. 15:6 and Gen. 17:10-13.) This proves Paul's point (from the Old Testament) that the blessing of justification is not limited to the circumcised. Circumcision had nothing to do with Abraham's justification.
- c. Circumcision and faith. (vs 11, 12) Circumcision was a "sign," and it was a "seal of the righteousness of the faith which ...(Abraham) had while uncircumcised.
- a "seal" is "that by which anything is confirmed." (Robertson) A seal "authenticates, confirms, and guarantees the genuineness of that which is signified". (Murray) Circumcision in Abraham's case confirmed that he was already justified by faith.
- as a "sign" circumcision pointed to that which it signified
- d. There is a reason why Abraham was justified before he was circumcised. The reason was:
- that Abraham "might be the father of all who believe without being circumcised that righteousness might be reckoned to them..." The justification imputed to Abraham will also be imputed to the uncircumcised believer. He is the spiritual father of the Gentiles who are justified as he was. (Gal. 3:7, 29)
- that he might also be the "father of the circumcision to those who not only are of the circumcision, but who also follow in the steps of the faith of our father Abraham." Thus Abraham is spiritual father to the Jews who are not just physically circumcised but also have Abraham's faith. Circumcision is no hindrance to justification but the key is faith.
- e. Verses 11, 12. Verse 11 says that Abraham is the spiritual father to the faithful Gentiles while verse 12 says that Abraham is the spiritual father to the faithful Jews. "We cannot doubt that circumcision was delayed in order to teach the believing Gentiles of future ages that they may claim Abraham as their father, and the righteousness of faith as their inheritance." (J.A. Beet)

The Promise to Abraham and Law (vs 13-17)

(Paul has just said that Abraham is spiritual father of all believers, circumcised or uncircumcised. Now he will explain that this is so because God never intended that His promise to Abraham about his descendants [believers] would be fulfilled through law.)

- a. Verse 13. God made a promise to Abraham and to his "descendants" (meaning "those who are of the faith of Abraham". [v.16]) The promise was that "he" (Abraham) would be "an heir of the world" and it is made to Abraham and the faithful. The "heir of the world" speaks of Abraham's fatherhood of all believers. These specific words are not found in scripture but the idea is found in Gen. 12:3. (cf. 13:14-17; 15:4, 5, 18-21; 22; 15-18)
- b. The contrast is between "promise" and "law." Abraham's inheritance was not secured for him by *law* (meritorious works of law) but by *promise*. (a free gift, a gracious bestowment) Paul has in mind any law at all, but the situation is exemplified by the Mosaic law. In Gal. 3:17-22 Paul shows that the Mosaic law which came "430 years" after did not suspend or abrogate the promise.
- c. Verse 14. If the inheritance had been based upon law (earned by flawless obedience) then - faith is worthless and Abraham himself is excluded. (Faith has no part in a system based on law keeping.)

the promise made by God is nullified. This is because perfection is impossible.

d. Verse 15 tells us the particular reason why law makes void both faith and promise. It is because law brings about "wrath," meaning that law brings about punishment from God. This is the case because no-one keeps it perfectly and God must punish sin. Imperfect man inherits, not the world, but God's wrath under a system of justification based upon perfect law keeping.

e. Why does *law* (i.e. a legal arrangement involving law keeping as the basis of salvation) bring (God's) wrath? Because "where there is no law neither is there violation" meaning that without law there would be no sin, because sin consists in the violation of law.

f. Verse 16. "For this reason" (i.e. because law brings wrath [v. 15]) justification is based upon faith. (rather than upon perfect law keeping) Since it is not earned, justification is a matter of *grace*. (unmerited favour) Also since it depends not upon perfect law keeping but upon God's grace, it is *certain* to a particular group. ("sure, stable, fast, firm" [Robertson])

g. Certain to whom? What group? To "...to *all* the descendants (of Abraham)"

"to those who are of the law" - Jews.

"to those who are of the faith of Abraham" - Gentiles.

Abraham is therefore "...the father of us all" meaning all believers. It is certain to all who want it not just "to those who are of the law."

h. Verse 17. Paul again appeals to the Jew's own writings to confirm the accuracy of his doctrine. ("as it is written") In Gen. 17:5 God had said to Abraham "a father of many nations have I made you." "The apostle evidently understands this promise as referring not to his natural descendants only but to the great multitude who should believe as he did." (Barnes)

i. In this passage we have the promise of God stated in the past tense by Him who "gives life to the dead." This "life to the dead" may be an allusion to Sarah's womb and Isaac at Moriah or it may simply be a way of illustrating the great power of the God who is promising. (e.g. Eph. 1:19, 20) God also speaks of things that are *not yet* as though they were *already accomplished*. It should have been of great assurance to Abraham to hear God speak as if it already had been done.

Abraham's Faith (vs 18-22)

a. Verse 18 Abraham believed "against hope." He believed God's promise despite the fact that there was no natural basis for the hope of an heir. His hope was based entirely upon God's promise. He believed "in hope against hope" either:

in order *that he might become* a father of many nations or

because of his faith he became a father of many nations.

God's promise was "so shall your descendants be" meaning as numerous as the stars. (Gen. 15:5)

b. Verse 19 contains some textual variation but the thought in vs 19, 20 is clear. Abraham's body was "as good as dead since he was about one hundred years old" and Sarah had always been barren. He did not however "become

weak in faith" or "waver (speaking of a divided mind) in unbelief." Rather he "grew strong in faith." Paul speaks of him as "giving glory to God" likely meaning that he glorified Him by his trust.

- c. Verse 21. It was because he was strengthened in faith that Abraham was "fully assured that what...(God) had promised (concerning an heir) He was able to perform." Because of the nature of this faith ("Therefore") "it (his faith) was reckoned to him as righteousness." (see comments above)

The Relevance for Us (vs 22-25)

(See 1 Cor. 10:11)

- a. Verses 23, 24. The record of Abraham's justification was written, not merely for his sake but also for our sake who are justified in the same way. The record of Abraham's justification teaches us that justification is by faith; it teaches us that faith is an obedient faith, and it teaches that God will offer justification to men on the same basis today.
- b. However the faith of the Christian is different from that of Abraham with respect to content. Faith is imputed as righteousness to "...those who believe in Him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead..." (v. 24) both Jew and Gentile. Our belief must be in:

God as the One who raised Jesus; and

Jesus as our risen Lord.

- c. Verse 25. There is some ambiguity in this verse because the two clauses can mean "because of" or "with a view to." McGarvey has:

"He offered Himself and was delivered up for our sins as a sacrifice, and He was raised from the dead and ascended to heaven that He might, as High Priest, present His blood before the face of God in a heavenly sanctuary for our justification, thus completing His high-priestly duties or offices. (Heb. 9:11-28)

- d. Note too that while it is true that evil men delivered up Christ, the emphasis here is upon the fact that the action was that of the Father. (Acts 2:23)

Concluding Comment

We have seen that *justification* "....is a forensic term which presents the change of God's attitude toward the sinner in a pictorial way derived from the procedure of earthly tribunals." (Augustus H. Strong, *Systematic Theology*) It is worth noting that when the terms justify and justification "have reference to the sinner's relation to God, (they) signify a declarative and judicial act of God external to the sinner, and not an efficient and sovereign act of God changing the sinner's nature and making him subjectively righteous." (ibid)

In Romans 4 and elsewhere the New Testament writers cite the example of Abraham, father of the faithful as a means of illustrating some important points about justification, and their use of Gen. 15:6 in this context has given rise to much discussion among students of scripture. According to the Genesis account, the word of the Lord came to Abraham when the latter was about 100 years old, (Rom. 4:19) and the aged Patriarch was again promised an heir. Against all the evidence, Abraham believed the promise "and He (God) reckoned it (i.e. Abraham's faith) to him as righteousness." (Gen. 15:6) It is Paul's citation of this verse in the Roman letter (4:3, 9, 22) and James' use of it in his epistle (James 2:23) which has occasioned some debate.

futurity." (Lard) So it is possible for Christians to practice sin but *not* be *called* and it will lead to spiritual death. (1 Jn 5:16) The fundamental principle is that he no longer inhabits the sphere of sin. (Christians do sin, all of them, but they do not *practice* sin. [1 Jn 3:9])

- d. Verse 3. explains v. 2. "Or do you not know.." means that they knew. They died to sin (v. 2) in that "all of us who were baptised into Christ". Note that:

baptism is "into Christ Jesus" (K.J.V; N.A.S.V; K.J.V; American Standard Version). eis. Lipscomb/Shepherd have:

"Faith, repentance and baptism are all connected with entering into Christ. all these acts are joined together, stand on the same side of the line, and are similarly related to these."

baptism into Christ means baptism into union with Christ and participation in His death. Baptism into Christ is baptism "into His death" meaning that "we are brought by baptism into His death...as He died to sin so we die to sin just as if we were literally members of His body." (Vincent) Christians Have "died to sin". (v. 2) Jesus came in the likeness of sinful flesh (8:3) and although tempted (Matt. 4:1-11) was sinless. (2 Cor. 5:21) In fellowship with Him we too have died to the practice of sin.

- e. Verse 4. "Therefore (i.e. because we have been united with Christ in His death) we have been buried with Him." Death and burial are inseparable. *Burial* with Christ is mentioned because:

it emphasises the "completeness of identification with Christ in His death." (Murray)

it connects to the argument that the Christian is united with Christ in His resurrection.

- f. The word "baptism" here is preceded by the article; "the baptism" i.e. the baptism of v. 3 which is "into death" (i.e. death to the practice of sin.) It is in this baptism that one is "buried" with Christ "into death."

- g. Christ "was raised from the dead through the *glory* of the Father" (likely here meaning the Father's power [2 Cor. 13:4; Eph. 1:19] cf. 4:24, 25.) Union with Christ (through burial in water baptism) has as its purpose that as Christ was raised "so we too might walk in newness of life." (Later Paul will speak of *Christ's* new life). Newness of life:

"kainotes" is "new as to form or quality, of a different nature from what is contrasted as old." (Vine) We walk in this new life "implying habitual conduct." (Vincent) This "newness of life" involves the repudiation of the practice of sin.

- h. Verse 5. begins with "For" and confirms v. 4. Paul describes Christians as those who "have been *planted/united* with Him in the *likeness* of His death."

The word used to describe our union with Christ in death and resurrection properly means "grown together" and speaks of intimate union.

The "*likeness* of His *death*" reminds us that He died *physically* whereas our death is *spiritual* (death to sin).

The point of v. 5 is that our intimate union with Christ means that just as we identify with Him in death so also we identify with Him in resurrection. He was raised to a new life and in the *likeness of His resurrection* we are

raised to a new life (where the practice of sin has no place.)

- i. Verse 6 begins "knowing this" and likely means that Paul is now dealing with another portion of this truth that they *should know*.

what they should know is that "our old self," (meaning the former self with its relationship to sin) was "crucified with Him," the verb suggesting a once for all completed act. (cf. Gal. 2:20) This happened when the Christian became united with Christ in the likeness of His death. (baptism)

Another way of saying this is "that our body of sin might be done away." The "old self" is "the "body of sin" meaning "the body that belongs to sin." (Moffitt) "the body over which sin ruled." (McGuigan)

The "done away" is more literally "rendered inactive"; it is not that it ceased to exist but that it ceased to be in slavery to sin. Thus the point of the crucifixion is the destruction of the body of sin. (The old self was a slave to sin because outside of Christ sin dominates and kills the man who is not justified.)

- j. Verse 7 explains v. 6. He who has died (i.e. died to sin in baptism) is "freed" (lit. "is justified") from sin. How freed? Freed from sin's power to kill him. He does not have to die if he stumbles into sin because the basis of his salvation is not sinless perfection but rather the blood of Christ. (Paul's point is clear. Who, having been freed from sin's power to kill, would now give that power back to sin by returning to the practice of sin?)

- k. Verse 8. repeats the main idea of vs 3, 5. Having "died with Christ" (by being united with Him in His death through baptism) "we believe" a firm unshakable article of faith) "that we shall also live with Him."

some believe that the words "we shall also live with Him" speak of "future bodily resurrection." (Harrison) This may be the case, and certainly this will be the final outcome.

better (I think, because of context) is to see this, as in v. 5, as a reference to participation in the here and now resurrection life of Christ in which sin's power has been broken.

- l. Verse 9. tells us why we are confident of living with Christ. It is because we know ("knowing") that Christ "having been raised from the dead" (v. 4) "is never to die again." This being the case "death no longer is master over Him." Death did, for a brief time have mastery over Him when He was in the tomb (Acts 2:24) but never again will it have this mastery. Having been raised He will never die again. (Rev. 1:18) This assures us that our union with Christ guarantees our *living with Him*. (v.8)

- m. Verse 10 confirms this. Christ "died to sin...once for all." Christ submitted to the power of sin and accepted the "wages of sin" (v. 23), death. How did sin have power over the sinless Christ?

likely the idea is that sin did not have power over Christ as it does over man, because of personal sin, but rather sin had power over Christ because He identified Himself with sin (2 Cor. 5:21) and accepted its dominion.

perhaps the idea is that while in the flesh Jesus was subject to temptation. (Heb. 4:15; Matt. 4:1 ff)

- n. Christ:

"died to sin, once for all" meaning that by His death He died to its power.

"the life that He lives (i.e. His resurrection life) He lives to God" i.e. to His glory, honour and praise "without being any more subject to the usurped tyranny of sin and death..." (Lipscomb/Shepherd)

An Appeal Based Upon Union with Christ vs 11-14

(Based on what has been said about the Christian's union with Christ, Paul makes an appeal to his brethren to live in a manner befitting those who have "died" been "buried" and been "raised" with Christ.)

- a. Verse 11. "Even so" or "In the same way" (that Christ died to the power of sin and "lives to God" [v. 10]) they are to "consider" or "reckon" or "count" themselves to be:

"dead to sin," meaning the *practice* of sin, and therefore the power of sin.

"alive to God in (union with) Christ Jesus," involving the pursuit of holiness.

The word "reckon" is pres. imp. and "could mean 'do this continually' or 'continue doing this'." (R/R)

- b. Verse 12. "Therefore" (i.e. because they were united to Christ to break the power of sin) they are instructed "do not let sin *reign* in your *mortal* body..."

basileuo has the idea of *ruling as king* and the pres. with the negative has the idea of "do not always" or "do not continue." Robertson has: "let not sin continue to reign as it once did." It is possible for the Christian to let sin reign and hence the warning. Sin reigns when it is practiced.

the "*mortal* body" is probably a reminder of how weak we are in the face of temptation. (although some see this as a reference to the fact that the body is subject to death.) They are not to "obey ...(the) lusts...(of the) mortal body" meaning the desires associated with the body through which temptation to sin comes.

- c. Verse 13. Having spoken of the "lusts" of the body, Paul now speaks of the "members" (N.A.S.V.) or "parts" (N.I.V.) of the body. More literally K.J.V. simply has "members." Almost certainly a reference to the members of the body, human faculties and powers. The Christian is told:

"do not go on *presenting* ('to place beside, to put at one's disposal, to present' [R/R] suggesting willingness) the members of your body (the vessel through which we act) to sin (i.e. to the service of sin) as instruments (a word which originally denoted *military weapons* but can speak of any kind of tool) of unrighteousness. Since military terms are used in v. 23 and 7:23 likely the idea is "do not use your members and faculties as weapons in service of sin." (The members of the body are not evil but evil in the heart leads to evil actions in the flesh. [Mk 7:20 ff])

"but *present* (the verb suggesting "immediate decisive new action" [R/R]) yourselves to God as those alive from the *dead*. (gen. pl.) Lard has "the dead includes all the dead of the human family. The disciples in Rome had been among these dead and had come out from them." (Lard) By presenting themselves to God they are presenting the "members" (of their bodies, their faculties) as "instruments of righteousness (in service to righteousness) to God.

- d. Verse 14 begins "For" and tells us why the commands of vs 12 and 13 are valid and reasonable. Because:

"sin will not be master over you" meaning that sin will not enslave us and cause our eternal damnation. Why?

"for you are not under law (as the ground of salvation) but under grace. (Under law - i.e. a system of justification based on law-keeping, perfect obedience is demanded. [Gal. 3:10] But no person can render this. [Rom. 3:23] One single sin under such a system is enough to kill eternally. Under such a system sin would indeed be master.) The Christian is not under sin's mastery because he is under grace (salvation is a gift extended to imperfect people who trust in Christ and whose sins are covered by Christ's blood.)

- e. (The "not under law" does not mean that Christians are not amenable to divine law or that they can enjoy salvation while rejecting "the law of Christ" [1 Cor. 9:21 cf. Jas 1:25; 2:12]. The "not under law" means "not under a system of justification based upon perfect law keeping which makes no provision for failure." But Christians who do not strive to pursue holiness will not see God.)

People saved by Grace Must Not Continue in Sin (vs 15-23)

(In v. 1 Paul dealt with the anticipated response to his teaching on salvation by grace and the fact that grace abounded where sin increased. [5:20] To the anticipated suggestion "Let us continue in sin that grace may abound" he responds "May it never be!" [6:2] and goes on to explain that union with Christ commits one to holy living. Now in v. 15 he returns to the question in a different form: "Shall we sin [aorist]..." This time his consideration of the question is based upon the fact that the Christian is not "under law".)

- a. Verse 15. What then? What conclusion shall we draw from the fact that we are "not under law but under grace." (see above) The verb is aorist and Robertson says that this speaks of "occasional acts of sin as opposed to the life of sin... 'Surely' the objector says 'we may take a night off now and then and sin a little bit since we are under grace'." Again Paul's emphatic denial "May it never be!"
- b. Verse 16. The principle: "no man can serve two masters" (Matt. 6:24) Note that Christians (those under grace) are addressed. The habitual sinner is the slave of sin (Jn 8:34) because sin practiced is "unto death". (spiritual death [2 Thess 1:9]) For the one who habitually obeys God, his obedience is unto/results in righteousness.
- c. Verses 17, 18. Paul expresses thanks for the believers at Rome. They had been (outside Christ) "slaves of sin." Outside of Christ sin kills and hence enslaves. They had been "freed from sin" (at a definite point in the past [aorist pass. part.]) when they obeyed the gospel (1:16) and "became slaves of righteousness", "voluntarily bound to do everything that is right and so to abstain from every thing that is wrong." (Lard)
- d. This transition, says Paul came as a result of the fact that "you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching *to which you were committed*." (N.A.S.V.) American Std Version has "whereunto ye were delivered." K.J.V. however has "that form of doctrine *that was delivered to you*."

the "form (tupe, model, form, type, mould) of teaching" is the pattern of teaching set forth in the gospel. Some see this as a reference to baptism (e.g. Deaver) but (in my view) Lard is correct that "this is too special...(it).. includes baptism, but does not stand for it exclusively." It is the *apostolic pattern of teaching*. (2 Tim. 1:3; cf. 1 Tim. 1:10; 2 Tim. 4:3; Tit. 1:9:2:1)

"to which you were delivered" is better here than "that was delivered to you" and it is best understood as the slave image being carried on. Their total devotion is expressed as their being totally given over to the gospel.

"from the heart" emphasises sincerity. The heart *thinks* (Matt. 9:4) *understands* (Matt. 13:15) *reasons* (Mk 2:8) *obeys* (Rom. 16:17) *believes*. (Rom. 10:10)

- e. Verse 19. "I am speaking in human terms..." i.e. a common example of slavery is used to make a spiritual point because you are familiar with slavery. Human understanding is clouded by sin's influence. His point:

before obeying the gospel you were completely given to sin ("impurity" is moral and sexual sin and "lawlessness". is sin in general) Slavery to sin resulted in yet more sin.

"so now" (i.e. in the same way that you once gave yourselves wholly to sin), as Christians now present your members (see above) as slaves to righteousness which results in sanctification.

- f. Verse 20. The point here is not that the sinner has no obligation to live righteously. That is not the sense in which he is "free in regard to righteousness." Rather the point is that one cannot serve two masters.
- g. Verse 21. Paul's question: "What (good) fruit did slavery to sin produce then (i.e. when you were captive to sin?)" None! Christians are "now ashamed" of their former sins. Spiritual "death" (eternal separation from God) is the end of these things.
- h. Verse 22. "But now" (in contrast to the former situation of slavery to sin) they are in the state of "having been freed from sin and *enslaved* to God" (a strong way of speaking of the Christian's new life) and they do indeed "have/derive" (lit.) "fruit." It is "fruit unto holiness" (K.J.V.) and the outcome is "eternal life." (How different from what slavery to sin produced [v. 21]-shame and death!)
- i. Verse 23 concludes the "sin" - "grace" contrast. The bottom line is that:

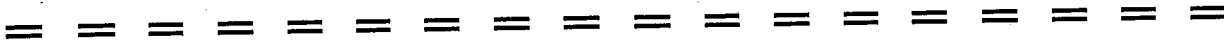
"the wages (a word originally used of rations paid to soldiers) of sin (that which we *earn/merit/deserve* by our sin) is (spiritual) death." Just as a soldier earns his wage the sinner earns his. He gets exactly what he is due.

as opposed to what is *earned* by the sinner, God gives a "free gift" (not something earned or merited or deserved) It is "eternal life" and it is given to those "in Christ Jesus our lord." (i.e. those united with Christ in His death burial and resurrection.)

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The Roman Epistle cont.



Lesson 10

Chapter 7:1-6 - Freedom From the Law

(Chapter 7:1-6 connects with 6:14, where Paul said "you are not under law but under grace." Between 6:15-23, Paul has argued that this teaching does not lead to license. Now he returns to the thought of 6:14 and explains how the release from the law.)

- a. Verse 1. By "those who know the law" Paul likely means "those who understand how law works" (not specifically the Mosaic law although this is the particular manifestation of law in view. Paul is talking about what is true of all law.) People understand the principle that "law has jurisdiction over a person as long as he lives." The limits and duration of law are under discussion.
- b. Verses 2, 3. An application of this principle of v. 1 to the marriage situation. The wife is (lit.) "under or subject to" (Vincent) a husband. (Eph. 5:22, 23) He dies, she is released. On v. 3 see Matt. 5:32; 19:9; 1 Cor. 7:10, 11. (Paul's point is clear. This is not some sort of allegory where every point must find some corresponding point. We need not spend time discussing the fact that in the illustration the *husband* dies but the *wife* is released whereas in fact we die and we are released.)

"called an adulteress." R/R have: "The basic meaning is to do business, to negotiate. Then to be called, to bear the name or title of. *Then in a special sense of giving answers or communications as an oracle.*"

the word is used nine times in the New Testament including Acts 11:26 and may carry the idea of "divinely called."

- c. Verse 4. Now Paul applies his illustration to the subject under discussion. (but the parallels which he draws are not exact) It is also "death" which sets free from law. In this case it is the *Christian's* dying "through the body of Christ." (see above - Christ died and we are baptised into that death.) In union with Christ the Christian dies to the (bondage, power, slavery of) the law. (a system of justification requiring perfection)
- d. The Christian was made to die to the law for a *purpose* - namely, so that he might be "joined to another" (in marriage) namely Christ "who was raised from the dead." This is so that Christians might "bear fruit (as marriage bears fruit) for God." This is *spiritual* fruit (e.g. Jn 15:4; Gal. 5:22, 23), *holy living*. (Again this is an emphatic denial that the doctrine of salvation by grace results in *sinful* living.)
- e. Verse 5. There was a time when (instead of bearing fruit for God) we bore "fruit for death." *Death* is pictured as

a master whom we served. This was when we were "in the flesh," an expression which here means under the control of sin (e.g. 8:4, 5, 6, 7 etc; 1 Cor. 5:5; 2 Cor. 10:2) although *of course flesh* does not always carry this negative idea. (e.g. Jn 1:14; 6:51, 53; Acts 2:26; Rom. 1:3)

- f. In this state "the *sinful passions*...were at work (lit) in our members," meaning the sinful desires which fallen man experiences and which use the body to express themselves. (Jas 1:13, 14) These sinful passions were "aroused by the law." The law did not *create* these desires but simply showed them to be sinful. (v. 7) (Law also failed to provide any answer to man's sin problem.)
- g. Verse 6. "But now" introduces a contrast; now in contrast with when we were "in the flesh." In union with Christ we are in the situation of "having died to that by which we were bound," meaning that we no longer depend upon the law for justification or sanctification. The result of this release is that...
- h. "we serve in newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter."

K.J.V. has "newness of *spirit*." If this is the correct then the idea is that Christians serve from the *heart*, God's law being inward, dynamic, grounded upon personal knowledge of God. (Heb. 8:8-12) If "newness of Spirit" is correct then this is a reference to the Holy Spirit. (Perhaps this is better in light of the contrast in 2 Cor. 3 between gospel and letter [2 Cor. 3:6] where the reference is clearly to the Holy Spirit [v. 17]) In this case the idea would be either:

- the newness *consists* in the Holy Spirit or
- the newness *effected* by the Holy Spirit.

this is opposed to the "oldness of the letter." *Letter* is "gramma" a reference to the Mosaic law (see 2 Tim. 3:15; Jn 5:47) called "the letter" because it is written. See to 2 Cor. 3:6 and the same contrast between *law* and *gospel*.

- i. Note that in v. 6 the contrast is between the Mosaic law and the gospel, not (as many think) a contrast between a *literal* interpretation of scripture as opposed to a "free" "spiritual" "unfettered" method of interpretation.

Chapter 7:7-13 - Law and it's Relationship to Sin

(In the preceding verses, Paul has argued that we must be freed from law in order to be joined to Christ. In v. 5 he has spoken of the sinful passions working through law to bear fruit for death. The inability of law to set one free and the superiority of grace has been discussed. He told us that to be under law is to be under sin's dominion. [6:14] Is Paul then depreciating Law? Is law in and of itself bad? He answers in the next verses, "No!")

- a. Verse 7. Likely the Jewish questioner is in mind. Paul uses himself as an example of one who had been under the Law of Moses. "Is the holy law of God the cause of increased sin, making men worse than before?" Is the law sin(ful)? The word for sin (hamartia) has the idea of "falling short" suggesting man's failure to be right with God.
- b. Emphatic denial. Far from being sinful, *knowledge* of sin comes through the law (3:20) By way of example Paul selects the last of the Ten Commandments "You shall not covet" to show that if the law had not contained this command he would not have known that coveting was sinful. (Perhaps he chooses this example because all sin begins with wrong desires) Law did not *create* sinful desire but the idea appears to be that fallen men tend to

desire what is forbidden. Sin is "dead" apart from law in the sense that "without law to bring it out sin lies dead - inert and passive". (Lipscomb and Shepherd)

- c. Sabbatarians need to note that the law from which one was "released" is the law containing the Ten Commandments.
- d. Verse 8. (Sin here is personified as the Satanic enemy.) Sin, not law is the culprit. Sin takes advantage of the law's prohibition, by causing men to desire what has been forbidden. This being the case Paul says that "apart from the law sin is *dead*" meaning that it is inert, dormant or inactive in contrast to its being active. (v. 9) (This is not the same point as that being made in 4:15, namely that sin does not exist if law does not exist.)
- e. Verse 9. Paul says: "And I was once alive apart from the law..." When was Paul spiritually alive apart from the law?

"as a self-righteous Pharisee who thought that he was obeying law well enough to be safe?" (Barnes) Is he speaking of a time when "he was careless and self-deceived as to his own righteousness...(Phil. 3:6)" (Harrison)

when he was a child? (McGuiggan)

perhaps it is best to see Paul as speaking of himself as a representative of the human race" the idea being: "Before the commandment came to Adam, he was alive. When the commandment was given he sinned, and the death sentence passed against him." (Roy Lanier Snr) The point is that as soon as one comes under law, one sins. "When the precept came, Satan had his opportunity, he now stirred desire in the human breast, whether fallen or unfallen, and the result was sin." (Lard)

- f. Verse 10 is a summary of the law's purpose. It was not to kill, but was to "result in life." Lev. 18:5 says "You shall therefore keep my statutes and My ordinances, by doing which a man shall live..." (cf. Ezek. 20:11) The purpose of the commandment was to guide man to righteous living resulting in blessedness. (Ps. 19:7 ff) (This does not contradict passages such as Gal. 3:21. Law failed to produce "life" not because the law *itself* was flawed but because it is "weak through the flesh" [8:3], a reference to *fallen man's* weakness.)
- g. Verse 11. (Because of human weakness, not because God gave a bad law) that which was to result in "life" resulted in "death". (v. 10) Why?

because "sin" (personified [Satan]) took "opportunity through the commandment." The existence of the law provided sin/Satan with the *vehicle*, just as in the case of Eve the prohibition against eating the fruit gave the tempter the vehicle.

using this vehicle sin/Satan "deceived" - the word here being the same as the one used of Eve's being deceived (2 Cor. 11:3; 1 Tim. 2:14; Ex. 8:25 [Sept.]) Sin/Satan deceives by promising benefits as a result of breaking the law. (e.g. you will be as God...) The sinner is deluded.

sin "killed me" (v. 9) spiritually.

- h. Verse 12. contains the answer to the question of v. 7 ("is the law sin?") The law and its individual commandments are "holy". "*Holy*, as God's Revelation of Himself; *just* in it's requirements...which correspond to God's holiness; good, *salutary* because of it's end." (Vincent) (Despite sin's misuse of law, the latter is, in its essential character holy, righteous and good.)
- i. Verse 13. God's law then, does not produce death. ("May it never be!") Sin (Satan) does this by inducing men to break the law. Now if Satan uses the good law to produce death, it shows just how malignant and virulent sin is. When that which is itself good and holy can be used to produce death, the true nature and horror of sin becomes

apparent. "How evil must that thing be which works the greatest evil through that which is the perfection of righteousness." (Haldane) Law thus achieves the goal of showing just how evil sin is.

Chapter 7:14-25 - The Great Struggle

(In the following verses Paul speaks of a great struggle between the will to good on the one hand and the propensity to evil on the other. Paul uses "I" and "myself" and "my" in picturing this struggle within a man.)

Some commentators believe that these verses speak of the man who has not yet obeyed the gospel and is still under law, and that the message of these verses is that law cannot deliver from sin. Various arguments are used to support this position, such as the following:

the subject under discussion leading up to this is the Mosaic law

the expressions used by Paul such as "I am of flesh", "sold into bondage to sin" (v. 14) "wretched man that I am" (v. 24), "sin...dwells in me" (v. 20) tell us that the person in question is not living under grace.

there is no mention of Christ until the end and no mention of the Holy Spirit which suggests that the discussion is not about the Christian. (as opposed to 8:1 ff)

this was the view of the early "church fathers" for the most part.

This may be the correct position. Roy Deaver does a good job of defending this view. (pp. 237-248)

Others argue that Paul is discussing the situation of the person who has obeyed the gospel but who is deeply conscious of the struggle between, on the one hand, "the inner man" who desires to obey God completely and the tendency to evil which continues to plague fallen man even when he is a Christian. Among the arguments used in defence of this position are the following:

the change from *past* to *present* verbs

the consciousness of the struggle between good and evil does not suggest an impenitent sinner but a converted man conscious of weakness.

this man *wants* to do good and joyfully concurs with God's law (vs 5,18, 19, 21, 22)

he hates his failures (vs 16, 19, 20) unlike the unregenerate man of 8:5-8.

v. 25 contains a note of victory which shows that he is conscious of salvation.

In my view it is easiest to explain these verses in terms of the law of Moses, but let's keep in mind that there are excellent students of scripture on both side of the argument.

a. Verse 14. Here verse 13 is in mind. Enlightened men understand that the law is not the cause of death because it is "spiritual" meaning that God is it's source. (as He is the source of "*spiritual* words" [1 Cor. 2:13] "*spiritual* understanding" [1 Cor. 1:9] etc.) This is why it is "holy" "righteous", "good" (v. 13)

b. In sharp contrast "I (representing mankind) am of flesh, sold into bondage." Likely the expression "of flesh"

does not mean *unregenerate* "ere", but rather subject to carnal impulses (1 Cor. 3:1, 3) prone to fall. (1 Jn 1:8)

- c. By "sold into bondage" he likely means "subjected to a power that is alien to his own will." (Murray) Note that he does not sell *himself* as did Ahab (1 Kings 21:20-25; 2 Kings 17:17) but is passive ("sold into") suggesting that it is contrary to his will. Likely the idea is that he still subject to the influence of sin as a slave is subject to his master. Struggle though he may, he cannot *ultimately* master the sinful impulses of the fleshly man. (1 Jn 1:8)
- d. Verse 15. Here is the proof of what has been said in v. 14. The word translated "allow" (K.J.V.), "do not understand" (N.A.S.V.) usually means "know" but here likely means "approve" (Rev. 2:24) "What I do, I approve not..." (Lard) meaning that when I obey my fleshly impulses in sin I do not *approve* of what I do or love or delight in what I do. (the opposite of "hate" in this verse) (Of course this does not mean that he is not responsible for having given into weakness as if he had no choice.)
- e. Verse 16. Why then do I do it? (not continually but sometimes) Because the flesh (whose influence is never finally nullified while I am living in the body) is weak. The fact that I wish to obey the law, is an acknowledgement of the fact that I regard it as being good.
- f. Verse 17 draws the inference ("So then") It is "not I" but "sin which indwells me."

compare this manner of speaking with John 12:44 where Jesus says that "he who believes in Me does not believe in Me but in Him who sent Me." Jesus' meaning is that the believer in Him does not believe in Him only but also in the Father.

similarly in this verse Paul does not mean that the sinner is not involved in his sin and that sin indwelling him is solely responsible. There is a war being waged in man (Gal. 5:16, 17) and sin, the invader works in man to influence him for evil even when he hates his failure. (v. 15)

- g. Verse 18 confirms verse 17. Paul says that "nothing good dwells in ...my *flesh*" meaning here the fallen nature of man with all its propensities and passions. Sadly "...sin excites and moves my fleshly nature, and prompts me to break the law." (McGuiggan) The "wishing (to do good) is present" (which, according to Lanier "is proof of his regenerate state," [?]) but "the doing of the good is not." Why? Because the flesh exerts its influence.
- h. Verses 19, 20 see comments at vs 15, 17.
- i. Verse 21. The "I find then" indicates that Paul is here summarising what he has just said. Likely here the rendering of the N.A.S.V ("principle") is better than K.J.V and N.I.V. "law". (as in 3:27) "I find then the principle (or rule) that evil is present in me (because of the propensities and passions of the flesh) the one who wishes to do good."
- j. Verse 22. By the "inner man" Paul means the *mind* (vs 23, 25), the "I" of vs 17, 20, the spiritual nature. In the "inner man" he joyfully concurs ("to rejoice with someone to joyfully agree" [R/R]) with the law of God. "These requirements strike me in the inner man as lovely and good." (Lard)
- k. Verse 23. Opposed to the *mind* we have "the members of my body" through which sin works. (6:13, 19) (It is not that our bodily members are evil, but that it is through them that sin operates) Opposed to "the law of my mind" (the inclination to do good) is the "different law" in the members of my body, meaning the inclination to evil. These two laws are continually "waging war" within me. (Gal. 5:16,17)
- l. The war between these two makes me a prisoner of the "law of sin which is in my members." The law of sin is "the law which proceeds from sin and which sin propounds." (Murray) The "prisoner" is in keeping with the picture of warfare, and the idea is that of being captured by the enemy.

- m. Verse 24 This conflict produces misery. "Wretched man that I am!" Lard has "toil worn man I" and Vincent has 'wretched' originally meant 'wretched through the exhaustion of hard labour'. The struggle is wearying, debilitating, exhausting and the question asked "Who will set me free ("drag out of danger, to rescue, to deliver" [Harper]) from the *body of this death*?" Likely the physical body is meant here and is called "the body of this death" because sin works through the physical body to produce spiritual *death*. (A difficult expression to nail down and a number of suggestions are possible.)
- n. Verse 25. The answer to the question of verse 24: "Thanks be to God (who sets free) through Jesus Christ our Lord!" God does so through the gospel His power to save (Rom. 1:16) which is the central theme of the epistle. (see notes at 1:16)
- o. The final statement: "So then...the law of sin" is another summary of the argument just set forth - see comments at vs 14, 16, 22, 23 above. Note that Paul says "I myself" am serving the law of God with "my" mind and the law of sin with "my" flesh. The "I myself" and the "my" make it clear that Paul is not denying responsibility for his actions (cf. v. 14: "I am of flesh.")

Lesson 11

Chapter 8:1-39 - Life in the Spirit

("If holy scripture was a ring, and a the epistle to the Romans, a precious stone, chapter 8 would be the sparkling point of the jewel." [Spencer] "It is undoubtedly the chapter of chapters for the life of the believer..." [Griffith Thomas])

Chapter 7 ends with a description of man in a wretched state because of sin's power in his life. Chapter 8 begins with the joyful pronouncement that for the justified man there is "no condemnation" [there being provision for failure in union with Christ]. This is the *immediate* connection between chapters 7 and 8. In chapter 8 Paul shows that Christians have been freed from sin, their former master, and now belong to God, due to the "law of the Spirit." Since this is so, service to God is not only possible, but logically expected.

However chapter 8 is more than simply a continuation of chapter 7. Harrison has:

"Actually the chapter gathers up various strands of thought from the entire discussion of both justification and sanctification and ties them together with the crowning knot of glorification. Like chapter 5, it presents the blessings of the justified life, grounded in the removal of condemnation. Like chapter 6, it stresses freedom from the bondage of sin and ultimately from the bondage of death. Like chapter 7, it deals with the problem of the flesh, finding the solution in the liberating and productive ministry of the Spirit."

Chapter 8:1-4 - Freedom by means of the Spirit of Christ

- a. Verse 1. The "therefore" likely speaks of the conclusion to be drawn from all that has been said thus far about

justification. The conclusion is that "in (union with) Christ" (see notes 6:3 ff [we are baptised into Christ]) there is "no (emphatic here) condemnation." This is "justification," the great theme of the epistle. By "no condemnation" Paul does not mean that Christians are free to sin, but rather that, because in Christ there is provision to take away sin, sin (confessed and repented of) does not result in final condemnation.

b. Verse 2. This is so because of something called "the law of the Spirit of life."

the "Spirit of life" is the Holy Spirit, (called the Spirit of Christ in v. 9) so called because He is the source of spiritual life. The life-giving message of salvation is contained in the word of God which is the Spirit's sword. (Eph. 6:17; cf. Jn 14:26; 16:13)

the "law" of the Holy Spirit is the gospel, the doctrine of Christ elsewhere called "law". (1 Cor. 9:21; Gal. 6:2; Jas 1:25) The gospel is not a legal system of justification, but still it is called "law" and it does indeed express God's will and demand faithful obedience.

c. The law (gospel) brought by the Spirit "has set you free (at the point of gospel obedience) from the *law of sin and of death*." The law of sin and of death is "law (whether given by Moses or otherwise) which produces sin and death. Laws which cannot be obeyed result in sin and sin ends in death." (McGarvey) (*Any system demanding perfect obedience results in death when sin occurs, but the classic example is the Mosaic law.*)

d. Verse 3 begins "For" and explains how this freedom is obtained. Paul speaks of what the law (any law at all, but here likely the Mosaic law especially is in view) "could not do." What the law could not do was to free from "condemnation" (v. 1) The law could not do this "weak as it was through the flesh." Of course the law was God given and not itself weak; it was perfect (Ps. 19:7; cf. 7:12) But man, because of his weak fleshly nature was unable to keep it perfectly, and the law made no provision for imperfection. It was weak then through the flesh of those who were under it.

e. God did what the law could not do. He "condemned sin..." meaning that He "pronounced the doom of sin and brought it's claims and it's authority over man to an end." (*Expositors Greek New Testament*) How? By "sending His own Son".

"in the *likeness* of sinful flesh." Paul's point is not that Jesus was like man but not really human (Jn 1:14; 1 Cor. 15:21) He was in the likeness of sinful flesh, fully human but not participating in human sin. (This verse does not teach that the physical body is inherently sinful - Adam and Eve had bodies of flesh - it teaches that fallen man is prone to sin.)

"as an offering for sin". (N.A.S.V.) On Christ as sin offering see Rom. 3:25; 2 Cor. 5:21. K.J.V. has "for sin" (K. J.V.) and the more literal rendering is "concerning (peri) sin." Likely the idea of "sin offering" is involved but it is probably wider than this and contains the thought that Christ came to deal with sin in such a way as to make possible the walk described in v. 4.

In sending Christ, God "condemned sin *in the flesh*" i.e. in the flesh of Christ. (1 Pet. 3:18) In us the flesh is the seat of sin; in Christ the flesh was the means whereby sin was dealt to.

f. Verse 4. states the *purpose* for which God sent His Son. It was that the "righteousness of the law" (K.J.V.) "requirement of the law" (N.A.S.V.) "righteous requirements of the law" (N.I.V.) might be fulfilled in us. The "in us" is to be understood as "in our case". (or similar)

Lard translates "that the *justification* of the law might be accomplished in us" and comments: "The justification of the law 'is the justification which the law proposed and sought; but which it never realized, namely complete acquittal from every sin." Impossible because "righteousness by the law 'required' perfect obedience." (Deaver) In my view this is correct.

some understand the expression to mean "the just requirement of the law" (i.e. a righteous life) (*Expositors Greek New Testament*) Barnes has: "That we might be conformed to the law...and no longer under the influence of the flesh and its corrupt desires." In my view the "justification" position is better.

g. The "us" are those who -

"do not walk according to the flesh..." In vs 5-7 we will see that this is the walk or way of life which involves being controlled and dominated by the tendency of the flesh to sin. (Some suggest that those "according to the flesh" are those under the Mosaic law who are preoccupied with its provisions and its failure to provide forgiveness.)

"but according to the Spirit." Some (e.g. Lard, Deaver) believe that "Spirit" should be "spirit" a reference to the human spirit, the "inner man." Context favours "Spirit", the Holy Spirit whose law (v. 1) we are to "walk" after. Taylor has:

"Blessings of salvation are not poured out indiscriminately. It is for those who walk not after the flesh, worldly living, but for those who walk after the Spirit." (spiritual living)

Chapter 8:5-8 - The "Flesh" and the "Spirit"

(Having spoken of "the flesh" and the "Spirit" in v. 4 Paul now draws a contrast between the two. The word "flesh" is used here, not of ordinary physical life, [cf. 2 Cor. 10:3] but rather of the sinful tendency of man's fallen nature.)

a. Verse 5 begins "For" telling us that it connects with and amplifies v. 4. Paul draws a contrast between two groups:

"those who are according to the flesh." He means those whose lives are regulated by the dictates of the fleshly nature and all its tendencies to sin. Such people "set their minds on (give attention to, put the mind on) the *things of the flesh*" meaning that they are absorbed by worldly, carnal, fleshly things. (cf. 1 Cor. 2:14)

"those who are according to the Spirit" meaning whose lives are regulated by a concern for spiritual, godly concerns, the things of the Holy Spirit. Such people "set their minds on) the things of the Spirit" (cf. Col. 3:1), Matters which the Spirit Reveals to be God's will, the "Law of the Spirit. (v. 2)

b. Verse 6. The result of the mind's being "set on the flesh" is "death", spiritual death, separation from God. (Eph. 2:1; 1 Tim. 5:6) The result of the mind's being "set on the Spirit" is "life and peace," *spiritual* life of those justified by the gospel (6:23) and peace with God, which the justified man has through Christ (5:1)

c. Verse 7 tells us why setting the mind on flesh ends in (spiritual) death. It is because such a mind "is *hostile* towards God." ("hatred, hostility, enmity" [R/R]) This is its very character or nature. The reason that the mind set on the flesh is hostile towards God is this: it does not (continual action) subject itself to the law of God, (the Spirit's law [8:1] the gospel [1:16]) and what's more "it is not even able to do so."

d. (Paul is not arguing that in the unregenerate state man is in need of the direct operation of the Holy Spirit in order to be capable of any act pleasing to God as some teach. He is arguing that it is just not possible for man to serve two masters, God and the flesh. He can and must change his own mind/will in order to submit to God.)

- e. Verse 8. It is for this reason that Paul says that "those who are in the flesh" (i.e. whose minds are set on the flesh) cannot please God. God is pleased with an obedient submissive spirit.

Chapter 8:9-11 - The Blessings of the Abiding Christ

(Having spoken of the mind set on the flesh, Paul turns to the mind set on the Spirit.)

- a. Verse 9. The "you (saints at Rome) are not in the flesh" means "you who have obeyed the gospel are not living lives controlled and dominated by the propensity of the flesh to evil."
- b. Rather than being "in the flesh" these saints at Rome are "in the Spirit," and Paul adds "if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you."

they are "in the Spirit" i.e. under the influence of His will, His Law (v. 2) the Law of God. (v. 7)

in turn, and as a result of being in the Spirit, "the Spirit of God (the Holy Spirit) dwells in them." So the saint is "in the Spirit" and the Spirit "dwells in" the saint. Paul has explained that when sin dwells in me (7:17, 20) I am under its influence and so too when the Spirit of God dwells in me, I am under His influence, under His law (v. 2) the law of God. (v. 7) (On the indwelling Spirit see Acts 2:38; 5:32; 1 Cor. 6:19, 20; Gal. 4:6; Rom. 5:5; 1 Jn 3:24.)

The "if" has the idea here of "since."

- c. Paul then speaks of "anyone (who) does not have the Spirit of Christ..." i.e. the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ, showing that He sustains to both the same relationship (2 Cor. 3:17, 18; Gal. 4:6; Phil. 1:19; 1 Pet. 1:11) He who does not have the Spirit of Christ "does not belong to Him." "The possession of the Holy Spirit is declared to be absolutely necessary to our being acceptable to God." (Lipscomb/Shepherd)
- d. Verse 10. "And if Christ is in you..." *Christ in them* is the same as having the "Spirit of God" dwelling in them and having the "Spirit of Christ." (v. 9) If Christ is in them then "though the body is dead because of sin yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness."

in my view it is best to see the "body" is a reference to the physical body and to view "dead" is a reference to the fact that in Adam all die physically because of sin. (5:12 cf. 6:23)

N.A.S.V. has "yet the spirit is alive..." N.I.V. has "yet your spirit is alive..." However K.J.V. has "but the Spirit is life..." Now "life" rather than "alive" is the literal meaning. In verse 2 Paul has just spoken of the Holy Spirit as the "Spirit of life" and in these verses *pneuma* consistently refers to the Holy Spirit. In my view the K.J.V. is preferable and Paul is saying that "the (Holy) Spirit is life" because of "righteousness" meaning justification. In what sense is the Holy Spirit "life" because of justification?

- e. Verse 11 answers this question. The Holy Spirit is "life" in that He is the agent through whom God gives resurrection life at the second coming. God will "give (resurrection life to you mortal [subject to death]) bodies through His Spirit (the Holy Spirit) who dwells in you (vs 9, 10)" There will be a bodily resurrection of saints (1 Thess 4:14; 1 Cor. 15:42 ff) and The Holy Spirit is God's agent in this. (Some see this, not as a reference to the future resurrection, but rather to the fact that those baptised into Christ have been raised up to a new life Rom. 6:3 ff.)

- f. The Holy Spirit is described as the "Spirit of Him who raised Christ Jesus from the dead" i.e. God. (4:24, 25, 26; 6:4; Gal. 1:1; Eph. 1:17, 20) This is mentioned here to show that if God could raise Jesus He can raise us. (Jn 14:19)

Chapter 8:12-17 - Serving In Newness Of Spirit

- a. Verses 12, 13. "So then" (i.e. in view of all that has been said about living according to the flesh and living according to the Spirit), we are under obligation not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh" which is enmity towards God and results in death. (v. 13 cf. v. 6) How foolish if we, having been delivered by the Spirit who indwells us, render service to what we have been delivered from. (Note that the believer still has sinful inclinations; they have not been completely eradicated but they must be denied.)
- b. Since we are not "under obligation to the flesh" we can draw the inference that we are under obligation to the Spirit. Thus "you will live" (spiritually) "if by the Spirit (by the aid of the Spirit whose word equips us) you are putting to death the *deeds of the body*." The expression deeds of the body refers to those sins which are executed through the body. Note that believers are to be active in this. (unlike 7:4)
- c. Verse 14 begins "For" and is explanatory. Those who "put to death the deeds of the body"(v. 13) are those who are "led by the Spirit." The Spirit leads by the Gospel, His law, (8:2) His Sword. (Eph. 6:17) Spirit led people are those who put to death the deeds of the body. Those "being led by the Spirit of God" are "sons of God" ("outai has the emphasis and has the force of 'these and no other'." [Murray])

The following from John Waddey is helpful:

"The apostles spoke and wrote the commandments of the Lord. (1 Cor. 14:37) They were motivated by the Holy Spirit. (2 Pet. 1:21) Paul explains that he had received the Spirit which is from God so that he could know the things of God. The Spirit then guided him in combining spiritual things (concepts) with spiritual words. The result of which was inspired, inerrant scripture. (1 Cor. 2:12-13) The word of God then is "the sword of the Spirit" which He uses to operate upon the hearts of men. (Eph. 6:17)

To be led by the Spirit is to be led by His word.

- d. Verse 15 confirms and expands upon what has just been said.

some translations have "spirit" in both places, meaning disposition, frame of mind. (11:8; 1 Cor. 4:21; Gal. 6:1; 1 Pet. 3:4) Accordingly the meaning would be: "You (Christians) have not received a spirit (*disposition, frame of mind*) leading to fear again because of the consequences of sin and apprehension about death. Heb. 2:15) Instead you have received a spirit (disposition, frame of mind) of adoption as sons, feelings of love and confidence that a son has for his father, so that you can come to Him in confidence. "(S)uch a position is most reasonable and arguable." (McGuiggan)

however it may be better to understand this verse as referring to the Holy Spirit in both cases since this fits context better and also because Gal. 4:6, which is similar to this verse, undoubtable refers to the Holy Spirit (K.J. V.) has "spirit of bondage" and Spirit of adoption. In this case the meaning would be: "Ye did not receive the Holy Spirit as a Spirit of bondage but as the Spirit of adoption." (Murray) The Holy Spirit is called the "Spirit of adoption" because He belongs to those who are sons.

The adopted person under Roman law was entitled to an inheritance and enjoyed the same civil status as the

adopter.

- e. By the Spirit believers cry out "Abba Father " in prayer. *Abba* is the Aramaic equivalent of *Father*, and is the word which Jesus used in prayer. (Mk 14:36) "In this word filial tenderness, trust and love find their combined expression." (Hendriksen)
- f. Verse 16. In verse 15 we saw that *believers* approach God conscious of sonship, and now in v. 16 we are told that "the Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God." Consider the following:

his can be translated "*with* our spirit" or "*to* our spirit." Grammatically both have been defended by Greek scholars. If "*with* our spirit" is the meaning then the idea is that the Christian's own spirit joins the Holy Spirit in witnessing that we are children of God. Then the question must be asked "to whom" is the witness made - to God or to us?" Again both positions have defenders. If "*to* our spirits" is the idea then Paul is saying that the Holy Spirit witnesses to the Christian that he is a child of God.

"with our spirit" is the reading of the A.V., A.S.V., N.A.S.B., R.S.V., N.R.S.V., J.B., N.J.B. Many favour this view. Lard for example has:

"We know within ourselves what is our spiritual state, what our wish intent and effort. Are these in strict accordance with the Father's will as we read in His Word? Are we living closely up to His will and holding the evil inclinations of the flesh in check?...all this we know within ourselves, and to it can testify."

however the view that *our spirit testifies to us* seems quite subjective. Members of cults claim some inner witness. Also what does it mean for our spirit to witness to us? This seems to make a separation between the spirit and the person. Nor do I think that Paul is teaching that our spirit bears witness with the Holy Spirit to God that we are His children.

in my view Paul's meaning is that the Spirit witnesses "*to* our spirit." (Luther, Calvin, Godet, Hodge, Morris, Murray) Paul does not explain how this occurs but in Heb. 10:15 the Holy Spirit is said to bear witness to us through the words of scripture. He testifies as to our sonship through scripture. (not by means of visions, voices etc.)

- g. Verse 17. If believers are children of God then they are *heirs*. Believers inherit heaven (1 Pet. 1:3, 4) and also His favour here on earth. All that God has laid up for them. (Eph. 1:13, 14; Gal. 4:6, 7; Jn 14:2, 3; Rev. 21:1 ff) They are joint-heirs with Christ and enter into the inheritance of glory (Jn 17:5) which He received. He is heir of all things. (Heb. 1:1-4) (This does not mean that we have His degree of glory.)
- h. Note that believers will be glorified as He was glorified *if* they are ready to suffer as He suffered. The Christian life means bearing a cross (Lk 9:23) accepting persecutions (Matt. 5:10) and doing good as we can. (Matt. 25:14 - 30) In Christ's case suffering preceded glory and so too in our case. Discipleship costs.

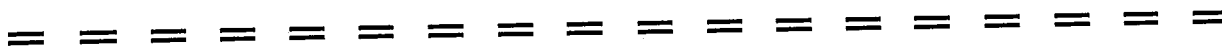
Concluding comment

Romans 8 is a very encouraging chapter and the emphasis upon living by the Spirit very appropriate. Let's keep in mind that being led by the Spirit involves submitting to his will and that will is expressed in the Word.

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The Roman Epistle cont.



Lesson 12

Chapter 8:18-30 - Three Grounds for Encouragement in the Midst of Suffering

Overview

1. vs 18-25. The First Ground of Encouragement: The Glory Reserved for God's Children.
2. vs 26, 27. The Second Ground of Encouragement: The Intercession of the Holy Spirit.
3. vs 28-30. The Third Ground of Encouragement: All Things Work Together for Good to those Who Love God.

Chapter 8:18-25 - The First Ground of Encouragement - The Glory Reserved for God's Children

- a. Verse 18. The sufferings spoken of (v. 17 cf. 2 Cor. 11:23-28) are as nothing compared to future resurrection glory (v. 23) in the age to come. (2 Cor. 4:17; 1 Cor. 15:4; Phil. 3:20, 21)
- b. Verse 19. This future glory is spoken of as the "revealing of the sons of God" meaning that time when the sons will be acknowledged and received into the full privileges of sons, their suffering and trials having ceased. (1 Cor. 1:7; 2 Thess 3:5)
- c. Verses 19-21. For this *revealing* the "anxious longing of creation waits eagerly..." *Expositors Greek New Testament* says that the word "denotes absorbed, persistent expectation - waiting as it were, with uplifted head" as if straining to see perhaps. What is this "creation-creature" under discussion? A great number of different interpretations (at least 11) have been suggested. The word occurs 19 times in scripture and is used of:

the act of creating (Rom. 1:20)

the object created, the universe (Mk 10:6)

rational creation, man (Mk 16:15)

the church perhaps (Col. 1:15)

the Christian (2 Cor. 5:17)

d. Suggestions:

one view is that the creation is *every new creature in Christ*. According to this view the Christian suffers, dies, but can eagerly await glorification. Some who take this view take the view that in v. 23 those with the "first fruits of the Spirit" are the apostles with the miraculous gifts. (see the *Book of Romans*, Elkins/Warren) In my view this is not likely in view of v. 23 and the words "also we ourselves."

another view is that the creation is the *material creation which God cursed at the fall*. (Gen. 3:17, 18) This makes the language of v. 19 "personification" meaning that inanimate objects are invested with human attributes. Recall the second law of thermodynamics. This created realm will be set free from its degenerate state (v. 21) into the freedom of the glory (glorious freedom) which awaits the children of God at the Resurrection. The children of God are freed from the consequences of sin at that time and so too will creation be free. The worn out will be replaced by "new (kainos [fresh as opposed to worn out and old]) heavens and new earth." (2 Pet. 3:10, 13) Roy Lanier has in *Difficult Texts of the New Testament*:

"As there will be a continuity of identity between the dust to which our body returns, and the spiritual body we gain in the Resurrection, so there may be a continuity of identity between the ashes of this earth, and the new earth which will be our dwelling with the Lord. Just as the children of God received spiritual bodies so too the worn-out physical realm will give way to the spiritual order."

Does this mean that the earth will be renovated, put back into its pristine condition for our dwelling place in eternity? No, this earth will be burned up. (2 Pet. 3:10)

In my view this is the likely meaning.

- e. The most natural meaning of v. 20 is that God subjected creation to futility at the fall. *Futility* here is from a word which means "vanity, aimlessness, the inability to reach a goal or achieve results. (R/R) The "not of its own will..."

may be a reminder that it was not *nature* which sinned but man

or it may be a reminder that man was *driven* from the garden. (Gen. 3:24)

McGarvey has "And this it did not do of its own accord, but because the will of God ordered that it should be thus altered." (Gen. 3:17-18)

God did so "in hope that the creation will be set free from its slavery to corruption ("shackles of mortality" [N.E. B.]) into the freedom of the glory of the children of God." (v. 23) Likely the idea is that creation "shared the corruption and mortality of man's sin and will share his deliverance from it." (Lipscomb/Shepherd) "God never intended the creation to be permanently in a 'cursed' state." (McGuigan)

premillennialists see this as the restoration of the earth at the Lord's return, but we know that at the Lord's return the earth will be destroyed.

keep in mind that Paul has *personified* creation. He now speaks of it as looking forward to the time when its purpose will be fulfilled. Note that in Ps. 114 deliverance from Egyptian bondage is pictured in terms of creation's rejoicing in that freedom (sea fled, mountains skipped, hills frolicked, earth trembled cf. Ps. 96:12;

98:8; Isa. 35:1; 55:12.) So too Paul pictures creation as anticipating man's redemption.

- f. Verse 22. At present "the whole of creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth." The word suggests "to groan together" (R/R) and the idea is that "All is united in a condition of sorrow...mutual and universal grief." (Barnes) Creation groans under the curse, but yet the figure of childbirth speaks of deliverance and anticipated joy.
- g. Verse 23. This verse tells us that even the saints who have the "first fruits of the Spirit" are subject to the same pain, suffering and decay to which the rest of the universe is subject. By *first fruits of the Spirit* Paul means "the Spirit Himself as the first fruits." (Lard)

some believe that "we ourselves" refers to the *apostles*, and that this is a reference to the miraculous measure of the Spirit.

it is my view that Paul refers to the gift of the Holy Spirit, promised to all Christians. (Acts 2:38) Harrison has

"(W)e are to understand that the gift of the Spirit to the believer at the inception of Christian life is God's pledge of the completion of the process of salvation, which is here stated as the "adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies." Recall that previously Paul has described the finished product as the spiritual body. (1 Cor. 15:44) The future bodily resurrection of believers will be the full harvest of the redemption. Our bodies will be like that of the glorified Lord." (Phil. 3:20, 21)

- h. Keep in mind in this context that Christ's Sonship did not begin with His resurrection from the grave, but was declared at that time (Rom. 1:4) We become sons at the point of conversion (v. 15) but the full acknowledgement of that sonship and complete possession of the privileges of sonship await Judgement Day. By adoption here Paul means "the redemption of our body" at the resurrection when the groanings of distress caused by living in a cursed world are no more.
- i. Verse 24. N.I.V. has "For in *this* hope..." which captures the idea, because Paul has in view the hope of adoption and redemption just mentioned. Paul says that in this hope "we have been saved" the verb (aorist) pointing to the time of salvation. (*baptism* [Chapter 6]) Hope consists of expectation and desire and so by its very nature is related to the future. We do not hope for what we already have, and thus full and complete salvation is yet future. (cf. Heb. 6:19)
- j. Verse 25. With "perseverance" (steadfastness) in the midst of sufferings and groanings we "wait eagerly for" the complete realisation of God's promises. "As our perfect blessedness is future, we cannot expect to enjoy it now" (Erdman) and so the Christian must exercise "patience, patient endurance." (R/R)

Chapter 8:26, 27 - The Second Ground of Encouragement - The Intercession of the Holy Spirit

(Although the overall thought of these verses is clear, the details are very difficult. The following comments are tentative.)

- a. Verse 26. "And in the same way (as the hope and expectation of future glory encourage the children of God [vs 18-25]) the Spirit also helps our weakness..." This weakness is demonstrated in the fact that "we do not know how to pray as we should..." The idea is that often we do know what we should pray. (e.g. 2 Cor. 12:7-10) Harrison has:

"The word 'how' could suggest that we do not know the art of prayer - how to phrase our petitions properly. But this is not the Greek word commonly used for 'how.' Even the wording 'what we should pray for' is questionable, since 'for' has no equivalent in the original text. So we come by elimination to the more literal wording 'what we should pray,' that is the content of our prayers rather than simply the topics. Do we know the real needs as God sees them, and do we know the needs of others? Going deeper do we know the will of God respecting these things? In the final analysis, it is that will that will determine how our prayers will be answered."

b. The word "helps" translates a word which occurs only here and Lk 10:40 where Martha asks for Mary's help. It means "to lend a hand together with, at the same time with one." (Robertson) It suggests the idea that the Holy Spirit joins the Christian and assists him in his frailty.

c. The Spirit helps in that He "intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words."

Intercession is not mediation. (1 Tim. 2:5) Christ alone is mediator. Christ is intercessor in heaven (Rom. 8:34; Heb. 7:25) the Holy Spirit on earth. Hendriksen has:

"Christ's intercession may be compared with that of a father, the head of the family, for all the family members. The Holy Spirit's intercession reminds us rather of a mother kneeling at the bedside of her ailing child, and in her prayer presenting that child's needs to the heavenly Father."

Some understand the "groanings too deep for words to be those of the Holy Spirit" (e.g. Hendriksen), but most see here a reference to the Christian's own deeply-felt emotions which cannot be expressed. The likely meaning is that the Holy Spirit conveys these inexpressible longings to the Father in a meaningful way when we pray. (A difficult verse and various interpretations have been offered.)

d. Verse 27 tells us how the Holy Spirit is able to take these inarticulate groanings to the Father. The Father is spoken of as "He who searches the hearts" (1 Chron. 28:9; Jer. 17:10; Acts 1:24; 1 Thess 2:4) and the Father "knows what the mind of the Spirit is..." Guy N. Woods has:

"The Father, knowing the mind of the Spirit, sees there this need and provides for it on the basis of the Spirit's intercession."

Lard has:

"*Phronema* primarily means what one has in mind, as thought, intelligence, sense, will. God knows what the Spirit's *phronema* is, what it has in mind, what it knows and therefore what it means in these groanings. The Spirit dwells in the heart and knows it perfectly..."

e. Importantly the Spirit's intercession is always in perfect harmony with "the will of God." Lanier has:

"The one making the intercession knows the will of God and can intercede in harmony with it. The one being interceded for does not know the will of God and does not know how to pray in harmony with it."

Chapter 8:28-30 - The Third Ground of Encouragement - All Things Work Together for Good to those Who Love God

(These verses have been described as the Creed of Calvinism, and have given rise to much controversy.)

- a. Verse 28. Paul has just spoken of the work of the Spirit as intercessor and how this benefits the child of God. Now he broadens the discussion adding that "God causes *all things* to work together for good" in the case of the child of God. K.J.V. does not have "God causes" and reads "all things work together for good," but regardless God's providential oversight is assumed.
- b. Likely in context "all things" primarily refers to the sufferings but should not be restricted to them. (cf. 5:3-5) The idea is that by means of God's sovereignty all things (including sufferings trials and disappointments) converge upon and contribute to one goal, namely the good of His children. The "good" is *spiritual* good, *real* good.
- c. Children of God are described here as "those who love God." These are those Spirit-led people of Chapter 8. They are those who "are *called* according to His *purpose*."

children of God are those who are called by the gospel. (2 Thess 2:13, 14) It is important to note that the word "called" can be used of the *invitation alone* (e.g. Matt. 22:14) or it can be used of both extending and accepting the invitation. It is used in the latter sense here since he is speaking of those who love God. (Jude 1; 1 Cor. 1:2; Rom. 1:6, 7)

they are called "according to His *purpose*" (from a word which means "to place before; to predetermine, to purpose".) God's eternal purpose was that men would be called by the gospel. His eternal purpose was to redeem fallen man in Christ. (1 Pet. 1:20; Eph. 1:4, 9, 11; 3:10,11; 2 Tim. 1:8-10)

- d. In Verses 28, 29, 30 Paul explains his statement that all things work together for good. Consider the following terms used by Paul:

"whom He foreknew..." Here "know" is used as in Matt. 7:23 with the idea of *approving* and *accepting* (cf. 1 Cor. 8:3; Gal. 4:9) God in eternity *foreknew* certain ones, meaning that before time began, God approved and accepted them. Who are these people? *Those who would freely respond to the gospel.*

these people God "predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son..." The word translated "predestined" means to "to limit or mark out beforehand to design definitely beforehand, ordain beforehand." (Harper)

What God determined in eternity was that these obedient ones would be glorified as Jesus was glorified. (at the second coming [1 Cor. 15:49; Phil. 3:21; 1 Jn 3:2]) (Some think that Paul is speaking of being conformed in this life to Christ's character, but context does not favour this.) See too 1 Cor. 2:7; Eph. 1:4, 5. God's purpose in doing this was that Christ "might be the first born (from the dead) among many brethren." (Heb. 2:11)

"whom He predestined these also He *called*..." Again as in v. 28 *called* is used of *extending* and *accepting* the gospel invitation. This does not mean that God did not call all through the gospel. He did. (Matt. 28:19) But Paul is here discussing those who respond. These God "justified". (a key word, see comments at 1:16)

"whom He justified these He also *glorified*." This speaks of the glorification with Christ at the second coming. (see above) This is the ultimate "good" of v. 28.

- e. Note that all the verbs above refer to completed actions in the past, in the purpose of God. This purpose is however being worked out now. Note too that the fact that God foreknew etc. does not mean that God predetermined that certain ones would be saved and *lost eternally as individuals*. *What God determined in eternity was that all who would be saved would be saved in Christ as a result of obeying the gospel!* The following from the Calvinistic creed is grave error:

"By the decree of God for the manifestation of his glory, some men and angels are predestined unto everlasting life and others are foreordained to everlasting death. These angels and men thus predestined and foreordained are particularly and unchangeably designed and their number is so certain and definite that it cannot be either increased or diminished. Those of mankind that are predestined unto life, God before the foundation of the world was laid, according to His eternal and immutable purpose and secret counsel and good pleasure of His will, hath chosen in Christ unto everlasting glory; out of His mere free grace and love, without any foresight of faith or good works or perseverance in either of them, or any other thing in the creature as conditions or causes moving him thereunto." (*Confession of Faith, Chapter 3, secs 3, 4, 5*)

Chapter 8:31-39 - The Triumphant Conclusion

(Chapter 8, especially verse 18 ff has given encouragement and consolation to God's children. In these verses Paul sets forth the triumphant conclusion beginning with the question "What then shall we say to *these things* [i. e. all things working together for good, the believer's justification, glorification etc.]

- a. Verse 31. "What then shall we say to these things." Some think that by "these things" Paul is speaking of all that he has said since 5:1. Likely however Paul is referring here to what he has just been discussing, namely all things working together for good, justification, glorification etc. What is to be our conclusion and response?
- b. A second (rhetorical) question: "If God is for us, who is against us?" If God ordains the glorification of the believer no force can defeat that plan and opposition is of no significance.
- c. Verse 32 argues that if God gave to us the very best He had, His Son, then He will certainly not deprive us of whatever else is necessary. (The "His *own* [idios] Son speaks of Christ's unique relationship to the Father.) Here is proof that God is indeed "for us." The "all things" here are the "all things" of v. 28, namely all things necessary for our glorification. Note that "us" here refers to the "called" but scripture teaches (against Calvinism) that Christ died for all. (Heb. 2:9)
- d. Verse 33. In connection with the idea that nothing can prevent God's causing all things to work together to bring Christians to glory, Paul asks "Who will bring a charge against God's elect?" The word charge is a legal term, an accusation before a court and the point is that no charge against God's people (the *elect*, called by the gospel) can be sustained because "God is the one who *justifies*" them. (declares not guilty, free of condemnation) The devil is the great accuser. (Zech 3:1; Rev. 12:9, 10)
- e. Verse 34. (Since God is the one who justifies [v. 33]) "who is the one who condemns?" Who is in a position to condemn God's chosen? Jesus Christ is the One who has power to condemn (Jn 5:27; 2 Cor. 5:10) and He will not condemn the elect.

He *died* for them precisely so that they would not be condemned.

He was *raised* for their justification. (4:25)

He intercedes for them Heb. 7:25.

Clearly no charge against God's elect will be sustained.

- f. Verse 35. In connection with the idea that God causes all things to work together for good Paul asks "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" The answer is that *nothing* does. Is the "love of Christ" *our* love for Him (e.

g. Barnes, Taylor) or *His* love for us? (e.g. Linear, McGuiggan, Lard, McGarvey, Deaver, Harrison, Robertson, Hendriksen, Murray, Lipscomb/Shepherd, Denney, Dunn)

If *our* love for Christ is meant then the idea is "Outward tribulations, distresses and persecutions should increase, never *decrease*, our love for Christ." (Taylor)

More likely *Christ's* love for us is meant. Verse 37 speaks of "Him who loved us" and v. 39 of "the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord". In this case the idea is that afflictions are not evidence that God does not love us, but "...are in His hand of chastening, separating the dross from the gold, and so fitting the latter for the heavenly use." (Lard)

- g. The seven items listed in v. 35 (tribulation....sword) are experienced by God's people and they are all things that are *external* not from within, things which may lead some to doubt God's love for them.
- h. Verse 36. The quotation is from Psalm 44:22, supposedly written during the Babylonian Captivity, when the people were suffering on account of their God-ordained religion. Thus we read "For Thy sake," the idea being that the slaughter resulted from their devotion to God. A reminder that godly people have always suffered.
- i. Verse 37. But "in all these things" (the difficulties just mentioned) we "overwhelmingly conquer" (N.A.S.V.) or "we are than conquerors" (K.J.V.) The language suggests being "abundantly victorious." (Harper) Not only are we not separated from God by these things, but struggles actually make us stronger (5:3 ff; Jas 1:2) and fit us for glory. Note that we are conquerors "through Him who loved us ..." the aorist tense here indicating that this refers to a particular manifestation of that love, namely Christ's death.
- j. Verse 38, 39 re-emphasise that nothing can separate us from the love of Christ. Paul says "I am convinced," the perfect suggesting "I stand convinced." (Robertson) No "created thing" can do this. Paul lists the following things (in pairs) which cannot bring about separation:

"death" and "life." In both the child of God enjoys oneness with God (2 Cor. 5:8; Phil. 1:21; Col. 3:1-3)

"angels" and "principalities." Both terms are used of different orders and ranks of angels. (Col. 1:16; 2:10; 1 Cor. 15:24; Eph. 6:12)

"things present" and "things to come." Present difficulties and forebodings about the future.

"height" and "depth." Dimensions of space.

"powers" May refer to persecuting rulers (other suggestions include "mighty works" and "miracles" [Matt. 11:21; Acts 2:22])

- k. Paul concludes with a very eloquent denial that any "created thing" can effect a separation between God and His chosen. By "the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" is meant God's love as demonstrated in the gift of Jesus Christ. "It is not only the love of Christ but the love of the Father." (Murray)

Lesson 13

Part B: Chapter 9:1-11:36 - Concerning Israel and God's Righteousness

- a. In (1:16-8:39) Paul has set forth the great doctrine of justification. He began by saying that the gospel is God's means of justification for all men and he has emphasised the priority of the Jew. ("to the Jew first and also to the Greek") Paul has spoken of the advantages enjoyed by the Jew. (3:1 ff) The question is: "If the promises of God were really made to physical Jews by a faithful God why didn't they all have them?" (McGuiggan)
- b. But Paul has also spoken of Jewish *failure* and *guilt*. On the whole the Jews did not accept Christ as the promised Messiah. On the whole they rejected the gospel. Does the fact that God's chosen, prepared people failed to take hold of the blessings offered by God mean that the divine plan has failed and that the Old Testament promises remain unfulfilled?
- c. Paul explains that the promises of God to Abraham and his seed must be understood, not as promises to Abraham's *physical* descendants, but as promises to true Israel, namely those who obey the gospel. Paul quotes a number of Old Testament passages by way of arguing his case.

Chapter 9:1-5 - Paul's Concern for his Own People

- a. Verses 1, 2. Paul has left Judaism, but emphatically affirms his concern for the Jewish people. (cf. 2 Cor. 11:31; 12:6; Gal. 1:20) He affirms "in Christ," or as a faithful Christian who would not lie. The "my conscience bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit" likely means that his conscience is illuminated by the Spirit and his conscience is clear.
- b. Verse 2. For his Jewish brethren he has "great sorrow" and "unceasing grief." He *has* said and *will say* some strong things about them (2:5, 17-24; 9:31, 32; 10:2, 3, 16, 21) but he is not motivated by hate but rather by deep concern for those whom he loves and who have rejected Christ. He wants them to know this, hence the emphasis.
- c. Verse 3 reveals the depth of Paul's concern. Compare Exodus 32:32. Vincent has:

"If it would do any good to wish myself as a substitute for them, I would: but that is without point.' This is such a startling statement that it also helps understand why Paul is so emphatic. (v. 1) Paul loves his people, and what he must say to them causes him pain. The word "anathema" is used of a person or thing which is cursed." (1 Cor. 12:3; 16:22).

"The Christian Church would never lack converts if all its members or even its ministers felt for their friends and fellow countrymen the deep concern expressed by the apostle Paul for his kinsmen the Jews." (Erdman)

- d. Verses 4, 5. Paul's concern is not merely due to the fact that he is also a Jew. Additionally the Jews hold a unique place in God's plan. They are:

Israelites. "Israel" was a name won by Jacob after wrestling with the angel. He prevailed with God to be called "Israel" a prince of God. (Gen. 32:28) This honourable name was also given to his seed. (Gen. 48:16; Isa. 48:1)

"(those) to whom belongs adoption as sons..." (cf. Ex. 4:22, 23; Deut. 14:1, 2; Isa. 63:16; 64:8; Hos. 11:1) One of the chief distinctions of the Jew. They were adopted sons, with all the rights and privileges of sons. (It is vital to realise when discussing the nation of Israel that sonship was on a national basis, not on an individual basis, and was not a guarantee of individual salvation.)

possessors of "the glory" i.e. the Schechinah, the visible manifestation of God's presence. (Ex. 13:21, 22; 24:16, 17; 40:34-38) (Some would say that Paul has in mind the general glory Israel enjoyed as God's special people.)

possessors of "the covenants" i.e. the covenants made with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, (Ps. 105:8-12) the Mosaic Covenant, (Ex. 20) the Aaronic covenant, (Ex. 29:9), the Davidic covenant, (Ps. 89:3) the seed covenant, (Acts 3:25, 26; Gal. 3:16)

"the giving of the law" at Sinai (Ex. 20), regarded by Paul's Jewish contemporaries as the nation's most prized possession.

"the *temple* service." The word *temple* (N.A.S.V.) is added, and although it includes this. (Heb. 9:1, 6) "Paul was probably thinking of the true worship or service of the one and only God wherever and in whatever manner such homage is rendered." (Hendriksen)

"the promises" - i.e. the land promise and the seed promise which found their ultimate realization in Christ. (Gal. 3:16)

"whose are the fathers" which would include Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and, (as is clear from the next clause) David and likely other devout men.

"from whom (i.e. the Israelites [v. 4]) is the Christ according to the flesh." (1:3) The "according to the flesh" points beyond Christ's human nature to His divine nature. (see 'e' below) This is the greatest of all Israel's privileges.

- e. Verse 5. Of Christ Paul says He is "over all, God blessed forever." Some translations render this in a way which avoids ascription of deity to Christ here. (e.g. "May God, supreme above all be blessed forever." [N.E.B.]) However Robertson has:

"A clear statement of the deity of Christ following the remark about His humanity. This is the natural and the obvious way of punctuating the sentence. To make a full stop after *sarka* (or Colon) and start a new sentence for the doxology is very abrupt and awkward. See Acts 20:28 and Titus for Paul's use of *theos* applied to Jesus Christ.

- f. The point of all this is that despite all of the blessings enjoyed by Israel, the nation has failed to respond to God's invitation in Christ, and this is of great sorrow to Paul, a fellow Israelite.

Chapter 9:6-13 - Israel's Present Situation is not Proof that God's Promise Has Failed

(Paul anticipates a Jewish objection: "If Israel is condemned before God, this means that God's promises to Abraham and his descendants have failed." Paul now explains that this reasoning is based upon a misunderstanding of God's purpose and design.)

- a. Verse 6. The "word of God" in context refers to the promises (v. 4) and Paul affirms that these have not failed. (God's purpose has not been frustrated.) What must be understood is that "they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel." The meaning is that physical descent from Israel (Jacob) and the fathers, does not make one a member of *Israel as contemplated in the promise*.
- b. The Israel contemplated in the promise is not *fleshly* Israel but *spiritual* Israel. This is Israel "according to the

Spirit". (Gal. 4:29) Paul has already said (2:28, 29) that the *true* Jew is not the one who has been physically circumcised, but one whose inward, faithful, heartfelt devotion to God secures His blessing. God's promise was never intended for the entire nation, but only for the true Israel of God. (the faithful) Note Gal. 3:7, 9, 26, 27, 29.

- c. Verse 7. Paul's argument proceeds on the basis of facts which would readily be accepted by the Jew. If mere physical descent from Abraham was enough, what of the Ishmaelites? Paul quotes Genesis 21:12, where Isaac is destined to be the recipient of the covenant, rather than Ishmael. His point is that the very outset God made a choice between Abraham's descendants and therefore God can make a similar choice between faithful and unfaithful descendants of Abraham without breaking His promise. (A very important point to notice, is that God's choice between Isaac and Ishmael had to do, *not with eternal salvation, but rather with the Messianic line.*)
- d. Verse 8 explains v. 7. Fleshly descent from Abraham did not make Ishmael a "child of God." Rather, it was Isaac who was the "child of promise," meaning the promise which Paul will quote in v. 9. (In the Old Testament the children of God, the Israelites, were not children in the sense of being regenerate but rather they were children of God in the sense of being chosen to accomplish God's purpose in history.)
- e. Paul's point is that God makes a choice today also. Today, the children of the promise, those chosen for eternal life are those who believe in Christ. "As God had the right to choose Isaac to carry out His purposes, so He has the right to choose those who accept Christ as His chosen people." (Lanier)
- f. Verse 9. Isaac was the child of promise, deriving His very origin from the promise of God. (Gen. 18:10, 14) Ishmael on the other hand was begotten and born according to the usual processes of nature. This connects back with v. 6 and the assurance that God's promise has not failed, because it is clear that the recipients of the promise are only the children of the promise.
- g. Verses 10-13. Another historical example familiar to the Jews. God rejected Esau, the first-born and legitimate son, and the promise went to Jacob. (Note again, that the choice had to do with God's purpose in history, not with eternal salvation or damnation). The Jews of Paul's day could perhaps have argued that:

Isaac was chosen above Ishmael, because the latter was the son of a bond-woman. However, in the case of Esau and Jacob both were from the same mother, and therefore Paul pulls the teeth of that argument.

All of Isaac's descendants were the children of promise. However since Esau was Isaac's son this argument also fails.

- h. Moreover God made His choice before the twins were born and before they had made any moral choices. (v.11) Thus it was God's sovereign will, His determination to carry out His plan in history which determined who would be in the line of the Messiah. What also emphasises God's sovereignty in this matter is that Esau was the firstborn and thus God's choice was counter to normal practice.
- i. Paul's argument is: "You Jews recognise that God's choosing Jacob did not mean that He was acting in a manner inconsistent with His promise. Similarly God's choice of those who come to Him through Jesus Christ is not inconsistent with His promise."
- j. Verse 12. In order to show God's sovereignty in this matter Paul cites Gen. 25:23 where God said before the birth of the twins "The older will serve the younger." (Gen. 25:23) Esau himself did not serve Jacob, but his descendants did. (2 Sam. 8:14)
- k. Verse 13 continues the emphasis upon Jacob's priority. Here is a quote from Mal. 1:2, 3 written hundreds of years after the death of Jacob and Esau: "Jacob I loved but Esau I hated." Likely we are to understand God's hatred in this sense: "His hatred for Esau is shown only in His rejection of him to be in line of the Messiah; nothing more is intended." (Lanier) The word hate in some contexts can mean "love less". (Gen. 29:30, 31; Deut.

21:15)

Chapter 9:14-18 - God Is Just

(Perhaps some will argue that God has dealt with Esau in an arbitrary and unjust manner and/or perhaps some will argue that God's condemnation of Israel is unjust. Paul will answer this objection.)

- a. Verses 14, 15. Paul emphatically denies that God was unjust in these cases. In support of his emphatic denial Paul cites God's words to Moses in Ex. 33:19: "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion." This is God's response to Moses' request that God show him His glory.
- b. God grants Moses' request but reminds him that it is completely a matter of His sovereign choice. It was not because of any merit on Moses' part, but solely a matter of God's mercy. The Jews would certainly accept this example of the principle without reservation. Verse 16 emphasises that in showing mercy God is not constrained by human *will* ("the man who wills") or *effort* ("the man who runs") as if man merited it by his exertions.
- c. Verses 16, 17. Another example from scripture of the fact that God is not unjust. (v. 14) God had a purpose in raising up Pharaoh. It was to display His great power (in the plagues upon Egypt) and that His name might be proclaimed. (because of His delivering Israel) Keep in mind that:

God did not force this man to be evil, but simply used an evil man! (See Isa. 10 and the use of Assyria.) God is free to use evil, yet this is not the same as causing the evil.

God did not harden Pharaoh's heart by depriving him of his free will. (Ex. 7:13, 14, 22; 8:15, 32; 9:7) Just as the same sun hardens clay while melting butter, so too God's word will both harden and soften the human heart (2 Thess 2:11,12 and see whom God sends a deluding influence upon.)

- d. Verse 18. The conclusion. God "has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom he desires." Barnes has:

"The word *hardeneth* means only to harden in the manner specified in the case of Pharaoh. It does not mean to exert a positive influence, but to leave a sinner to his own course, and to place him in circumstances where the character will be more and more developed."
- e. God has mercy on those who accept the gospel. (Prov. 28:13) Those whom He "hardens" are those who harden their own hearts and reject the gospel, God's power to save. The Jews would have accepted that God was righteous in rejecting Pharaoh because he rejected God, and Paul's point is that God is righteous in rejecting those who reject God's invitation in Christ.

Chapter 9:19-29 - Man Cannot Question Divine Sovereignty

- a. Verse 19. The question is one which the Jewish objector would likely ask: "If God makes people what they are and since men cannot resist God's influence why does He find fault with men for being what He made them?" (Actually such a question ignores the fact of human choice. Pharaoh for example chose to harden his own heart. [see above])
- b. Verses 20, 21. Isa. 29:16; 45:9; 64:8. What folly and arrogance for "man" the creature to call God his creator to account! The Jews would have agreed that Ismael and Esau had no right to argue with God ("the potter") because of His choice. They are in view when Paul speaks of the "vessel...for common use" and Isaac and Jacob

are in view when he speaks of "vessels ...for honourable use." (Again keep in mind that *salvation* is not the issue here but rather God's choice in achieving His purpose.) Elsewhere in a different context Paul speaks of "a vessel of honour" as one who "cleanses himself" which shows that free will is not lost. (2 Tim. 2:20, 21)

- c. Verse 22. The principle applied. Paul speaks of "vessels of wrath prepared for destruction." Likely Paul has in mind all who reject God, but (from context) with special emphasis upon fleshly Israel. The nation is subject to God's wrath (His justice in punishing the wicked [cf. 1:18]) prepared *by their own sins* (10:3) for destruction. Note that God is said to be "willing" (determined? disposed? inclined?) to demonstrate His wrath yet He "endured with much patience" those deserving it. (2:4; 2 Pet. 3:9)

- d. Verses 23, 24. God endured these vessels of wrath (v. 22) "...in order that He might make known the richness of His glory upon vessels of mercy..." These "vessels of mercy" are the objects of God's mercy. Note that:

the "vessels of mercy" God "prepared beforehand for glory." (Eph. 2:10) He prepared them by means of the gospel. Before time began God intended to save man in Christ. (Eph. 1:4).

the "vessels of mercy" are those whom He "called" by the gospel. (2 Thess 2:13, 14)

God's called are "not from the Jews only but also from among the Gentiles." (see notes 1:16) The gospel is for all. The fact that Jews are among the called shows that God had not rejected individual Jews and that He had indeed fulfilled His promise.

- e. Verses 25, 26. Paul now proceeds to show that:

God always intended to call Gentiles as well as those of Israel

God was not obliged to save all physical Israel

God was not unjust in rejecting certain of the Jews.

- f. Paul accomplishes his purpose by quoting certain Old Testament prophecies. In vs 25, 26 he quotes Hosea 2:23 and 1:10. Originally these words were addressed to the nation of Israel assuring the nation that although she would be rejected because of her infidelity and taken into captivity God would recall her, and once again regard her as His chosen. (This happened following the return from Babylonian captivity.) In quoting these passages Paul establishes the principle that God can bestow favour upon those whom He had formerly rejected. Paul now applies this principle to the Gentiles in the Gospel age who are "fellow-heirs... fellow-members of the body... fellow-partakers of the promise in Christ-Jesus through the gospel." (Eph. 3:6; cf. 1 Pet. 2:10)
- g. Verses 27, 28. Paul cites Isaiah 10:22, 23 to show that the *total* restoration of Israel is not contemplated. Again Isaiah had primary reference to the Jews of the captivity. Only a remnant (small part) would be restored following the captivity. God was not unjust or guilty of covenant breaking because He rejected the majority of the faithless Jews in the past. Paul's point is that nor is He unjust or faithless in rejecting the majority of the Jews in Paul's time who had rejected Christ.
- h. Verse 28 is rendered by Lard: "Now the Lord will execute this saying upon the land fulfilling it and ending it quickly." The "this saying" is that of Isaiah and the "fulfilling it and ending it quickly" speaks of certainly and speed in accomplishing what He promised.
- i. Verse 29. Elsewhere (Isa. 1:9) the prophet had said the same thing about only a remnant of Israel being restored. "Lord of Sabaoth" is Lord of Hosts (of Heaven). The "posterity/seed" here is a reference to the remnant through which the nation survived. Paul applies these prophecies to the Jews who responded to the gospel and shows that in His mercy and grace God preserved a remnant.

Chapter 9:30-33 - Jewish Failure Explained

(Paul has just demonstrated to the Jews from their own scriptures that God was not unjust in rejecting the bulk of the Jews in the Old Testament Period and that God was perfectly free to recall those whom He had previously rejected. Paul has applied these principles to the bringing in of the Gentiles in the Gospel age and the rejecting of the bulk of the Jews. He now deals with the question of just why Israel failed.)

- a. Verses 30, 31. "What shall we say then..?" i.e. about the fact that Israel in the main had been rejected, while many Gentiles were now the favoured of God. How are we to account for this fact? The Gentiles had not striven as the Jews had done to attain righteousness. (justification) Barnes has:

"They had not made it their main object to justify themselves; they were not filled with prejudice and pride as the Jews were, who supposed that they had complied with the Law and who felt in no need of any other justification; they were sinners and they felt it and had no such mighty obstacle in a system of self righteousness to overcome as the Jew had."

- b. (Paul is not speaking of all Gentiles but of those who responded to the gospel, not being hindered by the self sufficiency which characterised many Jews.) These Gentiles attained righteousness (justification) "...even the righteousness which is by (out of) faith." They obeyed the gospel (1:16) rather than trusting in perfect law keeping as the basis of justification.
- c. However, on the whole, Israel pursued "a law of righteousness..." likely meaning *justification which is based upon law*. As we have seen this is not possible because of human weakness. (3:20) Israel "did not arrive at that law" i.e. justification gained by means of law.
- d. Verses 32, 33. Israel (in the main) failed to achieve justification because the nation did not pursue it by faith, but rather on the basis of works (works of merit; works about which one may boast [4:2] works of law.) See our notes esp. on Chapter 4.
- e. By seeking justification by works and by rejecting Jesus as Messiah (because He did not conform to their expectations) the Jews "stumbled over the stumbling block" meaning that they rejected Christ, who was sent to be their Saviour, and He thus became for them "a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence." (Isa. 28:16; cf. Ps. 118:22; Matt. 21:42; Acts 4:11; 1 Cor. 1:23) Christ is Saviour to believers and ruin to rejectors.
- f. Verse 33 speaks of the assurance of those who place their trust in Christ.

Lesson 14

Chapter 10:1-21- Israel's Reliance Upon Works Rather than Faith

Chapter 10:1-4 - Paul's Sorrow

- a. Verse 1. (9:2) Paul addresses the Christians at Rome as "Brethren." His earnest desire and his "prayer/supplication" (from a word which means "to want to beg to pray" [Robertson]) for his Jewish brethren is for their salvation. See how he goes to the Jews first. (Acts 13:46; 18:5, 6) Clearly then it was not impossible for them to return to God.
- b. Verse 2. Paul is able to testify to the fact that the Jews have zeal for God but it is "zeal without knowledge." This is the very zeal that Paul himself had once had (Acts 22:3; Gal. 1:14; 1 Tim. 1:13) when he persecuted Christians. They were without knowledge of what revelation teaches about the *basis of justification* (v. 3) and they were without this knowledge because they had been blinded by Jewish tradition and prejudice. Jewish zeal is seen in their reverence for the Temple (Acts 21:28 ff) traditions. (Mk 7:2ff) etc.
- c. Verse 3. The Jews' lack of knowledge consisted in the fact that they did not know about "God's righteousness" meaning God's provision of justification through faith in Christ (see notes 1:16, 17). Because of this they were "seeking to establish their own" (justification) by works. (9:31, 32) The great failure of the Jew was his failure to see his own inadequacy and need for God's provision. (as with many moral people today)
- d. Verse 4 confirms v. 3. Likely the point of this verse is that the "end" or purpose or goal of the Mosaic law is justification by faith in Christ. Lipscomb and Shepherd have:

"Since Christ is the end to which the law brings everyone that believeth for righteousness, if one is not brought by the law to accept Christ, it shows that he has mistaken the end and purpose of the law...(Gal. 3:24, 25) Those who claim to follow the law, yet reject Christ, are ignorant of the end and teaching of the law."

(A number of other suggestions have been made.)

Chapter 10:5-13 - Justification Based Upon Faith is Open to All

(Paul will explain to the Jew that God bestows justification without the need for impossibilities on their part [vs 5-11] and that the Jew too can obtain what the Gentiles obtained through faith. [11-13])

- a. Verse 5. Paul has just spoken of justification based upon belief. (v. 4) Now he speaks of a quite different kind of justification, namely that based on law. Paul cites Moses (Lev. 18:5) to the effect that the one who practices the righteousness *based upon law* will live by this. (an impossibility since this demands perfection) (In Lev. 18:5 Moses is not discussing the subject of legal righteousness but it is suited to Paul's argument here).
- b. Verses 6-8. Opposed to righteousness (justification) based upon law is "righteousness (justification) based on faith." (v. 6) Paul makes use of Moses' words in Deut. 30:12-14, where the prophet argues that the Israelites have no excuse for refusing to live faithful (not perfect!) lives.

perhaps the unbelieving Jews of Paul's day were justifying themselves by stating that they would believe in Christ if He could be brought down from heaven as evidence (v.6) or brought up from the Hadean realm. (v. 7) They did not believe that Christ had descended from heaven and they disbelieved the resurrection account. (See Lk 16:30, 31)

perhaps the idea is that doing God's will does not involve the pursuit of the impossible. Since Christ by becoming man came within humanity's reach, ascent into heaven or descent into hades for spiritual knowledge and acceptance is not necessary. (This seems to fit better with the natural meaning of v. 8.)

- c. What does it (i.e. the doctrine of justification based upon faith) say (as opposed to the doctrine of justification

based upon law? [v. 5]) Paul again quotes Deut. 30:14 in answer. Far from demanding the impossible "the word of faith" (the gospel) is "near you, in your mouth and in your heart." The gospel does not demand such impossibilities as ascent into heaven for special instruction.

- d. Verse 9. Perhaps we are to understand the word rendered "that" as "because" and understand Paul to be "giving a proof that the word is nigh." (Vincent) What the "word of faith" (the gospel) says is that "you shall be saved" if :

"you confess with the mouth Jesus as Lord." *Confess* is from the word which means "to declare openly." The verb here does not speak of ongoing action (as opposed to Matt. 10:32) but speaks of what is to be done at the point of embracing Christ Jesus as Lord. On Rom. 6 F.F. Bruce has:

"Moreover, when Paul gives Christ the title "Lord," he does so because God the Father Himself has given Him that title as the "name which is above every name." (Phil. 2:9) This title "Lord" is given to Jesus by Paul as the equivalent of the Hebrew Jahweh; (Jehovah) the way in which he applies Isa. 45:23 to Jesus in Philippians 2:10 ff, indicates that, to him, the confession "Jesus Christ is Lord" means "Jesus Christ is Jehovah." Besides, Paul would have been as alive as the writer of Hebrews was to the significance of Psalm 45, where the king to whom it is said in verse 2, "God hath blessed thee forever" is in verse 6 himself addressed as God: "Thy throne O God, is forever and ever; (cf. Heb. 1:8 ff) the wording of the Psalm may well be echoed by Paul here."

"you believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead." In addition to confessing Christ as Lord with the mouth, one must believe "from the heart" (i.e. with intellect and emotion and will) a particular fact - namely that the Father raised Jesus from the dead. (1 Cor. 15:13) The Lordship of Christ was made very clear by the resurrection. (6:9; 1 Cor. 15:20; Eph. 1:20-23; Col. 3:1-4)

- e. Verse 10 gives proof that confession and faith are required for salvation.

"with the heart man believes resulting in (eis) righteousness." (justification) Note that belief is "eis" righteousness, confession is "eis" salvation, baptism is "eis" the remission of sins (Acts 2:38) and repentance is "eis" eternal life. (Acts 11:18)

"with the mouth he confesses resulting in (eis) salvation." Note that here "righteousness" and "salvation" are synonyms.

- f. Verse 11 provides proof of this from scripture: (Isa. 28:16) "Whoever believes in Him will not be disappointed." Clearly the faith here spoken of is a working faith (Gal. 5:6) since it involves confession with the mouth. (v. 10) "Whoever" means just that, all of every race etc. who have faith.
- g. Verse 12 confirms that "whoever" believes on Him will be saved. There is no distinction between Jew and non-Jew. We recall that 1:18-32 teaches that Gentiles need the gospel and Chapter 2 teaches that Jews need the gospel because "all have sinned..." (3:22 cf. Acts 10:34-35; Gal. 5:6; 3:28) The same Lord is Lord of all "abounding in riches" to all who "call upon Him."
- h. Verse 13. Here Paul confirms the truth that God is rich towards those who call upon Him by quoting from Joel 2:32: "Whoever will call upon the name of the Lord will be saved." Clearly since v. 13 grows out of what has just been said, calling upon the name of the Lord involves (among other things) belief and confession. In Acts 2:21 Peter also quotes Joel 2:32 and then explains what this involves. Acts 22:16 helps us to understand that "after belief every act of obedience e.g. repentance, baptism, confession, is to be performed calling upon the name of Christ." (Lard)

Chapter 10:14-21 - The Universal Gospel and Israel's Response

- a. Verse 14. In verse 13 the necessity of calling upon the Lord's name was stated. Now (v. 14) Paul poses the question: "How then shall they call upon Him in whom they have not believed?" Perhaps (as some suggest) this is just a lead-in to a general discussion about God's provision for salvation. Likely, in light of vs 16 and 2, Paul still has Israel primarily in mind. The nation is responsible because it has rejected God's provisions for the gospel to do its work.
- b. The answer to the question above is that they cannot call upon Him without belief. A chain of linked questions in v. 14 is used to inform us that God sends preachers that people may hear the gospel and believe and be saved. Belief without hearing is not possible (v. 17) and hearing is not possible without a preacher. N.I.V. has "someone preaching" which is good since Paul is not simply discussing preachers.
- c. Verse 15. Again the answer to the question "how shall they preach unless they are sent" is obvious. Paul does not simply have apostles and prophets in mind. It is God who sends, but not by some mysterious communication. All Christians are to regard themselves as having been sent out with the gospel.
- d. In verse 15 Paul quotes Isaiah 52:7. Isaiah was speaking of those who brought the message about the return of Israel from bondage. The word translated "beautiful" can mean "timely" and suggests the appropriate timing of the message. It is God who sends. The "feet" are "beautiful" because they carry the messenger swiftly with his message.
- e. Verse 16. Paul quotes Isa. 53:1 ("Lord who has believed our report") to reinforce his statement that "they did not all heed the glad tidings" of the gospel of Christ. In Isa. 53 the reasons why Messiah is rejected are set forth. ("a root out of dry ground" "a man of sorrows") Paul likely has especially in mind the Jewish rejection of their Messiah and it is true that He did not fulfill their expectations. Those who rejected the gospel are responsible for their choice.
- f. Verse 17 begins "So" (Hendriksen has "Consequently") and points to a summarising conclusion. The conclusion is that "faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ". (N.I.V.) The "hearing" here is hearing with receptive and understanding hearts. *Faith* is produced by *hearing*, not by direct infusion. Sadly the unbelieving Jews craved for signs (1 Cor. 1:22), but the ones with good hearts would respond and believe upon hearing.
- g. Verse 18. A question is asked which demands a negative answer: "But I say surely they have never heard, have they?" Paul quotes Ps. 19:4 which speaks of the "voice" and "words" of the heavenly bodies having gone out into all the earth. Paul makes use of Ps. 19:4, not as a fulfilment of prophecy, but because these verses correspond to his need here. The rapid spread of the gospel in the first century is clear from such passages as 15:22-24; Phil. 1:12, 13; Col. 1:6.
- h. Verse 19. Here Paul specifically mentions Israel by name: "But I say, surely Israel did not know did they? For "know" read "understand". Could it be said in mitigation that Israel did not *understand*? Understand what? The quotations from Moses and Isaiah show that what is under discussion is the Jews' understanding of how God intended to deal with the Jews and Gentiles.
- i. The Jews should have understood, since their own prophets had warned them e.g. Moses in Deut. 32:21. (v. 18) The quote from Deut. has reference to God's blessing the Gentiles ("that which is not a nation... a nation without understanding") to make Israel jealous. This is to be seen in terms of the Gentile response to the gospel as opposed to the Jewish response in the days of Paul. (Lk 20:15, 16) In light of what their prophets said Israel should have understood this but their prejudice blinded them.
- j. Verse 20. In support of this Paul now quotes Isa. 65:1 to show that Israel should have known that the gospel was for all. (Many passages would have shown this.) The condition of the Gentiles has been set forth in 1:18-32 but when the Gospel was preached many responded in keeping with Isaiah's word. Jewish blindness to the message

of their own scriptures not lack of revelation from. God explained their problem.

- k. Verse 21. Paul now cites Isa. 65:2 with reference to the Jewish situation. The Lord had been very patient with Israel. For centuries He had sent them prophets, etc. He is portrayed as stretching out His hands to a people who were "disobedient" (the present participle speaking of continuing action) and "obstinate". (the word is from "to speak against, contradict, to oppose," and again the present participle speaks of ongoing action.)
- l. The bottom line is that Israel's spiritual condition is due, not to lack of opportunity or understanding, but to a settled attitude of rebellion and obstinacy. This explains their blindness to the message of their own prophets.

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The Roman Epistle cont.

Lesson 15

Chapter 11:1-10 - A Remnant Remains

(In chapter 9 Paul has shown that Israel's rejection was consistent with God's promises and in chapter 10 he has shown that Israel's failure to obey God was due, not to lack of opportunity but to obstinacy. Now Paul will explain that although God has rejected fleshly Israel, He has not rejected those Jews who have accepted Christ.)

- a. Verse 1. The question of this verse, is *has God rejected Israel*. (cf. Ps. 94:14) "An indignant negative answer is called for..." (Robertson) We must keep in mind what Paul has said in 9:6: "For they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel." As we will see, God's true Israel the remnant were never cast off. Paul himself is living proof that God had not cast off His people. Paul himself is "an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin." (cf. Phil. 3:5)
- b. Verse 2. "God has not rejected His people whom He *foreknew*." In 8:29, 30 we saw that "foreknew" was used in the sense of *approval* and *acceptance*. Here we read that those whom God foreknew. (approved and accepted) He *predestined, called (by means of the gospel) justified and glorified*. God has never rejected such ones.
- c. Verse 2b-4. Paul cites a case from the past to illustrate Israel's present condition. Those who would argue that God has rejected His people are wrong just like Elijah was wrong when he complained "I alone am left." God's response (v. 4) informs Elijah that a minority of 7,000 faithful remain.
- d. Verse 5. The application. Similarly today, Paul argues, there is a "remnant according to *God's gracious choice*" amongst the physical Jews. K.J.V. has "a remnant according to the election of grace." The *choice or election* speaks of those whom God selected for salvation because they themselves chose Christ. (Eph. 1:4 "He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world".) *Grace or gracious* (charitos from chairo) speaks of divine favour unearned by the recipients.
- e. Paul speaks of them as the "remnant" from a word which means "to leave" (Robertson) a remainder, what is left. God rejected fleshly Israel but graciously chose those who chose to obey the gospel.
- f. Verse 6. If it (election/choice) is earned by works of law, then "grace is no longer grace" meaning that election is not based upon unmerited favour. (4:2, 4, 5) (Keep in mind that salvation is conditional upon faith, which is a work [Jn 6:29], and works of faith [1 Thess 1:3; 2 Thess 2:11; Jas 2:14-26] but these are not works wherein one may boast. They are works which are part of mature faith. [Jas 2:22])
- g. Verse 7. The nation of Israel then, had failed, as a whole to obtain what she sought, which in context is divine acceptance/election. (cf. 9:31) On the other hand "the chosen" (those Jews who accepted the gospel) did obtain it. (acceptance/election) The Jews who were not part of the remnant "were hardened". (2 Cor. 3:14; Mk 3:5) In

the next verse Paul quotes the Old Testament to argue that God did it. (see our notes on the case of Pharaoh above [9;17, 18] and keep in mind that God hardens those who chose to reject His invitation.)

- h. Verse 8. Verse 8 is from Deut. 29: 4. The "hardening" involved God's giving "a spirit of stupor," akin to "a deep sleep in which a person is insensitive to the impressions that come to him from the outside, hence no seeing and hearing." (Hendriksen) The "down to this very day" means that Paul could say that this condition continues to his own time.
- i. Verses 9, 10 are David's words in Ps. 69:22, 23 where David pronounces a curse upon those who hate him because of his closeness to God. Likely we are to understand "table" as standing for temporal pleasures and essentials such as food, and that David is praying that even those things from which the wicked expected pleasure, would be the means of God's righteous retribution.
- j. verse 10. The request is that spiritual blindness and troublesome burdens would afflict the Christ-rejecting Jews.

Chapter 11:11-15 - Jewish Rejection of the Gospel, Acceptance of the Gospel and Impact Upon the Gentiles

(A difficult section in some ways. Many combine verses from this section and those following with other passages of scripture to argue that the nation of Israel will be restored to the promised land and that Christ will return to earth and reign as king for a thousand years from Jerusalem. Neither this section nor any other part of scripture lends support to such a scenario.

Many who do not take the premillennialist position, do nevertheless take the view that Paul speaks of a future restoration of Israel - but not as a nation, not to Israel and not under an earthly Davidic king. They believe that Paul speaks of a mass conversion of Jews sometime in the future at a time when they become obedient to the gospel. In particular they see the "fulfilment/fullness" of the Jews in v. 12 as a reference to a future large-scale conversion of Jews, and the "fullness of the Gentiles" as a reference to a future large-scale conversion of the Gentiles. This is a widely-held view but I have not taken it.

There are many different views on several of the verses in this section, even among those who do not take either of the above positions but it is not possible to discuss them all).

- a. Verse 11. Paul has just spoken of Israel's *hardening* (v. 7) in terms of *stumbling*. (v. 9) His question in 11a is so framed as to expect a negative response. ("May it never be!") He does not deny that Israel did "stumble" but he does deny that she stumbled "so as to fall."

the word "stumble" in v. 11 is a different word from the one in v. 9. Thayer has: "1. trans....to stumble or fall. 2. intrans. to stumble. a. to err to make a mistake...; to sin: absol. Rom. 11:11." (p.556)

on the word translated "fall". Thayer has: "a falling, downfall." It is from this that we get the word used in Matt. 7:27 to describe the "fall" of the house built upon the sand, and from this that we get the word used in Lk 2:34 to speak of "loss of salvation, utter misery." (Thayer p.557)

the words "so as to," translate a word which can (among other things) speak of *result*, (Robertson) and this is likely its meaning here.

"A man who stumbles may recover himself or he may fall completely. Hence, the word (fall) is used here of complete irrevocable fall (SH)." (R/R) "The contrast here between stumbling and falling shows that the latter is

meant of an irredeemable fall from which there is no rising." (Denney)

Paul denies that Israel cannot be reclaimed.

- b. God can providentially bring good out of evil and use evil actions to bring about good results. (e.g. Gen. 50:20; Isa. 10; God's use of Assyria) In the providence of God "by their (Israel's) transgression (rejection of the gospel), salvation has come to the Gentiles, to make them (the Jews) jealous." In Acts 13:45 ff, 18:6, 28:28 we see God's messengers rejected by the Jews, turning to the Gentiles, and evidently some Jews, were provoked to jealousy by this (10:19) as they saw the transforming power of the gospel in Gentile lives. This resulted in their embracing the gospel too.
- c. Verse 12. Paul speaks of Israel's rejection of the gospel in terms of "their transgression" (or "false step") and "their failure" (N.A.S.V.) "diminishing" (K.J.V.)/ "loss". (N.I.V.) By way of contrast he speaks of "their fulfilment" (N.A.S.V.) "fullness". (K.J.V.; N.I.V.)

some translations deal with "fulfilment"/"fullness" in such a way as to make it refer to a *future* situation as regards Israel. For example N.A.S.V. has "how much more *will their fulfilment be!*" Similarly N.I.V. has "how much greater riches *will their fullness bring.*"

in fact words like "will...be" or "will bring" and the like which place the "fullness" of Israel in the *future* do not occur in the text. K.J.V. has "how much more their fullness" and Hendriksen renders it "how much more (does) their fullness (mean)?"

also from vs 14, 30, 31 it is evident that Paul is speaking of something that could take place with respect to Israel *at that time*, during his ministry. In my view then it is best to understand Paul's meaning as: "how much more is their fulfilment/fulfilment" not "how much more will their fulfilment be."

- d. Paul speaks of the Jewish rejection of Christ as failure/ diminishing/loss", (*hettema*) and contrasts this with what he calls the Jews' "fulfilment/fullness" (*pleroma*) Clearly if the word *hettema* is used in connection with Jewish rejection of Christ then *pleroma* is used in connection with the opposite, namely their acceptance of Christ. However commentators and translators are divided over the question of which English words best capture the sense of *hettema* and *pleroma* in this verse, and also over the precise meaning of these words in this verse.

hettema can carry ideas of defeat, defect, minority, overthrow, loss, discomfort. (cf. 1 Cor. 6:7; 2 Pet. 2:19, 20; Isa. 31:8; 51:7)

pleroma "in itself can be used to denote a range of meaning from 'that which fills or makes full', 'that which is full', 'that which is brought to fullness, completion, sum total,' fulfilling, fulfilment, to 'the state of being full' (BGD)." (Dunn)

in my view *pleroma* here means what it means in v. 25 where we read of the "*fullness of the Gentiles.*" Clearly in v. 25 "fullness of the Gentiles" does not refer to the salvation of *all* the Gentiles, and in v. 12 the expression does not mean salvation of *all* the Jews.

- e. In my view *pleroma* is likely used in v. 12 (and v. 25) to speak of "the state of being full" *spiritually* as a result of accepting the gospel, in contrast with the state of *spiritual loss or spiritual defectiveness* experienced by those who disobey the gospel. Likely Paul is arguing that:

(in the providence of God) Israel's failure to appropriate the blessings of the gospel is a blessing to the Gentiles. (see 'b')

"much more" does Jewish obedience to the gospel bless the Gentiles. Clearly when groups of godly Jews scattered throughout the world obeyed the gospel they brought with them a deep knowledge of the Old Testament, and characters shaped by the "oracles of God." Potentially they provided a strong nucleus for the local churches once they understood God's plan for the Gentiles. (Acts 8:1, 4; 11:19, 20)

- f. Verses 13, 14. The church at Rome had Gentile members. Paul had a special commission to them (Acts 18:6; 22:21; Rom. 1:5; 15:15; Gal. 2:2, 8; Eph. 3:1; 1 Tim. 2:7; 2 Tim. 4:17) and he honoured this ministry and worked hard at it. Verse 14 tells us that the greater Paul's success among the Gentiles the greater his chance of causing the Jews to become "jealous" and to turn to Christ. Of course Paul is not solely concerned with the Jews. (1 Cor. 9:22)
- g. Verse 15. Since the Jewish nation as a whole rejected Christ, the Jews were in turn rejected by God. In v. 11 we learned that their *stumbling* meant spiritual "riches for the world," and here Paul says the same thing: their *rejection* is reconciliation of the world to God (see 'b' above) - not all the world but those who obey the gospel. Echoing v. 12 he now asks "what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?" Note:

again there is no "will...be" in the text. Hendriksen translates: "what (is) their acceptance but life from the dead?" In my view this is not a reference to some future event. The "reception" "acceptance" or "receiving" is the *fullness* of v. 12.

Jewish acceptance is described as spiritual "life from the dead." For whom? Many see here a reference to conversion of *Jews*, their spiritual rebirth. Others argue that v. 15 parallels v. 12, and that "life from the dead" means the same as "riches for the Gentiles," the blessings of the gospel.

Chapter 11:17-24 - The Allegory of the Olive Tree

(In v. 13 Paul said "I am speaking to you who are Gentiles." He has explained that Gentile reception of the gospel is a means of reaching the Jews. In this section there is the suggestion that the *Gentile* Christians must be careful not to boast that their acceptance by God shows them to be specially favoured by Him. Also there is the reminder that if God could accept *Gentile* believers, He could certainly restore to favour those Jews who returned in faith.)

- a. Verse 16. Read Numbers 15:18-21. The point is that the offer of the part consecrates the whole. The figure of the dough/lump and the figure of the root/branches, make the same point based upon the Numbers passage.

perhaps the idea is that if the first converts among the Jews were acceptable to God because of gospel obedience, then all of the Jews would be acceptable to God provided they obeyed the gospel. The use of the word "holy" here does not mean that Israel (represented by "the lump" and "the branches") stands justified. (cf. 1 Cor. 7:14) The idea is that the nation is acceptable on the same basis as the "first piece of dough." (namely gospel obedience)

perhaps (especially in light of v. 28 ["they are beloved for the sake of the fathers"]) the idea is that the nation of Israel is "holy," (not justified, but acceptable on the basis of faith) because of the Jewish patriarchs. (Abraham Isaac Jacob) In my view this best fits the context.

- b. Verse 17. Paul addresses Gentile Christians especially reminding them that:

"some of the branches were broken off". (continuing the figure of v. 16b) The olive dresser breaks off and

discards useless branches, and similarly the Christ - rejecting Jews were cut off by God. (cut off from God's favour)

"you (Gentiles who obeyed the gospel) were grafted in among them. (Jews who obeyed the gospel)

"These ingrafted Gentile Christians are described as "a wild olive" meaning that they had been foreigners to the covenants of God, without special revelation, without prophets etc.

Having been ingrafted they "became partaker with them (Jewish Christians) of the rich root of the olive branch" meaning that they shared the gospel blessings first enjoyed by the obedient Jews. (1:16; Acts 3:25, 26) and emanating from the Jewish system. Thus "he has his part in the consecration of the patriarchs, the one historical root of the people of God, and in the blessings God attached to it." (Denney cf. 4:11, 12)

- c. Verse 18. This being the case Gentile Christians are warned "do not be arrogant toward the branches, "meaning the broken off branches (vs 17, 19) the unbelieving Jews. (Is there a hint that some Christians at Rome may have been guilty of arrogance? [12:3; 14:1, 3, 4, 10, 13; 15:1, 2, 3, 5, 7, 15, 16]) They are to keep in mind that they do not support the "root" (the Jewish stock from which the blessing of salvation grew), but rather are themselves supported and nourished by the "root," that Jewish heritage from which the gospel emerged.
- d. Verse 19, 20. Lest the Gentile Christians are tempted to boast that branches were broken off to accommodate them and that this proves their superiority to the discarded branches, they are reminded that God's rejection of the Jews was solely because of their *unbelief*. Rejection of the Jew was not essential to inclusion of the Gentiles. Similarly Gentile Christians have a standing before God, not because of superiority but solely because of their *belief*. They are not to be "conceited" and forget their reliance upon God's favour. (as did the Jews)
- e. Verse 21. The warning: The "natural" branches, (the Jews, God's covenant people) were not spared when they failed to exercise faith, and nor will God spare the ingrafted branches (Gentile Christians) if they cease to exercise faith.
- f. Verse 22a. All this shows the "kindness" of God (in accepting those who place trust in Him) and the "severity" of God (in rejecting those who do not believe.)

those who "fell" (unfaithful Jews) were recipients of His "severity", from a word which means " 'to cut right off, to cut short' and emphasises a rigour which does not bend. (Godet)" (R/R) Grounded upon God's holiness and settled anger towards sin. (1:18 cf. Hab. 1:13)

"you" (Gentile Christians) are the object of God's "kindness."

- g. Verse 22b, 23. In the case of both Jew and Gentile, *belief and unbelief* are the keys. The *cutting off and grafting in* are determined by unbelief and belief and the situations of the *cut off* branches and the *ingrafted* branches continue or are reversed depending upon faith. A warning to Gentile Christians against arrogance (cf. v. 17 ff) and dismissal of Jewish unbelievers as beyond redemption.
- h. Verse 24. The case of the Gentiles is used to show that the ingrafting again of (repentant) Jews is no difficulty for God.

"you" (Gentile Christians) were originally part of "what is by nature a wild olive tree" meaning that the Gentile world had grown up without the "cultivation" enjoyed by the Jewish nation. (3:1, 2; 9:3-5) By *nature* is meant "that which has grown 'naturally' and with no artificial intervention." (T.D.N.T) From this the Gentile Christians were "cut off" at conversion.

the "cultivated olive tree" into which they were ingrafted was the "rich root of the (Jewish) olive tree" (see v.

17) from which the gospel proceeded.

this ingrafting was "contrary to nature." Lard equates "nature" here with "custom" but others like Bruce and Koster cite evidence to show that it was customary to revitalise a cultivated tree by ingrafting branches from a wild olive tree. Paul "need mean no more than that the process of grafting is itself 'contrary to nature' - a view which was commonly taken by the ancients." (Bruce)

since God is able to accomplish this in the case of Gentiles "how much more shall those who are the natural branches (unbelieving Jews) be grafted (back) into their own olive tree (if they do not continue in their unbelief? [v. 23])"

- i. All this is a warning to the Gentile Christians, "Do not become arrogant over any imagined superiority!"

Chapter 11:25-32 - Israel and The Mystery

- a. Verse 25. Lest the Gentile Christians "be wise in ...(their) own estimation," Paul explains "this mystery," *mystery* in scripture meaning *that which is undiscoverable except by revelation from God*, (not something mysterious or reserved only for the initiated.)
- b. This mystery is "that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in; and thus all Israel will be saved." It is *this* mystery because it has reference to what has been under discussion in vs 1-24. In vs 25, 26 Paul will now explain what he has said in vs 1-24.
- c. The "mystery":

"a partial hardening has happened to Israel." This is what Paul spoke of earlier, the fact that a "remnant" of Israel accepted Christ (v. 5) while "the rest were hardened." (v.7)

"until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in." I argued that in v. 12 the word translated "fulfilment" is used to speak of the *fullness of blessing* bestowed upon those who obey the gospel. This same word is here translated "fullness" ("fullness of the Gentiles") and in my view it also means *fullness of blessing*, this time with reference to Gentile believers. It is the state of blessing enjoyed by Gentiles who obey the gospel.

Our understanding of the word "until" here is important. Foy Wallace has:

"Premillennialists assert that 'until the fullness of the Gentiles' means that after the fullness of the Gentiles the nation of Israel will then be converted. But this is very far from what the passage says."

Wallace points out that the use of the word "until" need not suggest that anything will happen afterward, and to prove this he cites Gen. 46:34; 2 Sam. 6:20-23; 1 Sam. 15:35; Acts 23:1; Gal. 3:19; Heb. 9:10. Thus "until" need not mean that something will happen up to a point of time then cease to happen.

- d. In my view Paul is saying: "That part of Israel not included in the remnant has been hardened. (by rejecting God's provision in the gospel) God has providentially used this to facilitate the spread of the gospel among the Gentiles. (the *fullness of the Gentiles* meaning the fullness of the gospel blessings enjoyed by the Gentiles)"

the partial hardening of Israel "until" the fullness of the Gentiles has come in does not imply that after this event

God will save Israel.

it *could* mean that *partial* hardening would become *complete* hardening. It does seem from history that as more Gentiles obeyed the gospel "the greater became the hatred and the hardness of the Jews." (Deaver)

e. Verse 26. "and thus all Israel will be saved."

the word "thus" here functions as an adverb of manner, and Paul is saying "in this manner" or "in this way" all Israel will be saved. In what manner/way? In the manner just described in vs 15-24, namely by *faith*. (Just as Gentiles were saved.) By "thus" Paul means "In such a marvellous manner." (Hendriksen)

the "all Israel" does not mean that all the Jews will finally be saved. (Why would Paul feel such sorrow and anxiety if this was the case? [9:2, 3; 10:1]) By "all Israel," Paul means *all in Israel who are saved by faith*.

f. Verses 26b, 27. Isa. 59:20, 21; 27:9 are quoted as relating to Christ's removing sin from the believing Jew. Jesus is "the Deliverer." He is "out of Zion," of Davidic descent, and the gospel was first preached from Jerusalem. (Isa. 2:2-4; Lk 25:47; Acts 2) The covenant is the covenant in Christ's blood whereby sin is removed. (Matt. 26:26ff)

g. Verse 28. The Christ-rejecting Jews are:

"enemies (objects of God's hostility) for your sake." (i.e. the sake of Gentile believers) See comment at vs 11b, 12a and how God providentially uses Jewish unbelief to reach Gentiles.

"from the standpoint of God's choice (of Israel to be His chosen people) they are beloved for the sake of the fathers" (Abraham, Isaac and Jacob) with whom He made His covenant. It is God's faithfulness to His promises to these patriarchs that secures salvation for the believing Jew.

h. Verse 29 explains why they are "beloved." It is because God's "gifts" (to the nation of Israel) and "calling" (of the Jewish fathers and people) are "irrevocable." The word translated "irrevocable" means "not to be sorry afterwards, not to be regretted, without regret, irrevocable of something one does and does not take back." (R/R) God does not regret His covenants etc. with the nation, and will accept the Jews who come to Christ. (v.24)

i. Verses 30, 31. On Gentile disobedience see comments at 1:18 ff. On God's providential use of Jewish disobedience to benefit Gentiles see comments at 11:11 ff. Note that the Gentiles "now" have been shown mercy. It is not an event for the future but a present reality.

j. The situation is now reversed (v. 31) and now the unbelieving Jews have been disobedient in rejecting the gospel. In God's providence this is "in order that because of the mercy shown to you (Gentiles)" in the gospel, "they also may now be shown mercy" as they are provoked to jealousy by the blessings bestowed upon the Gentiles, and are moved by this to obey the gospel themselves. (vs 11, 14)

k. Verse 32. The conclusion: "God has shut up all (Gentile [1:18-32] and Jew [2:1-3:20]) in disobedience." All have sinned. The words "shut up" translate a word which means "to shut together, to shut together in a net" (R/R) and is used of prisoners and those under siege. (Josh. 6:1; Isa. 45:1) All are in the same prison because of their *own sins*. God's purpose was "that He might show mercy to all," His unmerited favour to both Jew and Gentile. *This is where Paul began in 1:18: the gospel is God's power to save Jew and Gentile because in it is revealed God's plan to justify sinners by grace through faith.*

Chapter 11:33-36 - The Doxology

(Likely Paul's praise for God is immediately connected to what has just been said [from 9:1 to 11:32] about God's wisdom and knowledge in bringing Jews and Gentile to salvation, although some would view it as a climax to all that has been discussed in the letter thus far.)

- a. Verse 33. God is praised for the richness of His "wisdom" and "knowledge" because these are at the forefront in His providential ordering of events to achieve man's salvation. God even uses disobedience to the gospel to achieve His goal. His "judgments" (decisions) and "ways" are beyond comprehension.
- b. Verses 34, 35, 36. No one has known the mind of God (except the Son and the Spirit [Matt. 11:27; 1 Cor. 2:10, 11]) or become His counsellor. (Isa. 40:13) This is true as regards things like the creation, but Paul especially has in mind here God's work in redemption. Verse 35 emphasises that no one has placed God under obligation to Him. Verse 36 provides proof of this because "all things" are:

"from (ek) Him." He is source of all.

"through (di) Him." He is agent through whom all things come.

"to (eis) Him." He is the goal of all for whose glory they exist.

(Although it is true that all things in the universe are "from" "through" and "to" God [cf. 1 Cor. 8:6; Col. 1:16; Heb. 2:10] it is likely that Paul is here speaking of *all things* relating to salvation, the subject which he has just been discussing.)

With the close of chapter 11, Part A and B come to an end. Thus ends the deep discussion of justification and the argumentative part of the Roman epistle. We have headed Part C (12:1-15:13) "The Christian way of Life" since it deals with practical lessons which grow out of the teaching of Chapters 1-11.

Lesson 16

Part C: The Christian Way of Life - 12:1 - 15:13

(The doctrine of Justification is the basis upon which Paul now grounds his instructions concerning practical Christian living. Union with Christ has practical and ethical implications. In light of all that God has done for the Christian he is to devote himself entirely to the pursuit of sanctified living. Paul often places instructions about how to live after doctrinal discussions. [e.g. Ephesians 4:1ff; Colossians 3:1ff; 1 Thess 4:1 ff] Christians are to live what they learn.

Chapter 12:1, 2 - The Christian - A Living Sacrifice

- a. Verse 1. The "therefore" tells us that the exhortations which follow grow out of all that Paul has said about God's gracious work of justification. Such a gift demands a response.

Paul *urges or beseeches* (K.J.V.) the brethren, the word meaning "to admonish, to encourage, to exhort...used in classical Greek of exhorting troops who were about to go into battle. Here it is a request based on the apostolic authority of Paul..." (R/R) (Exhorting and encouraging characterise this whole section.)

he urges them "by the mercies of God," these mercies having been demonstrated in the gospel plan of salvation just described. (11:32) Here is the great motivation, all that God has done for us.

- b. The "present" is the same word as at 6:13, 19, "a technical term for offering a sacrifice...though not in the Old Testament. Used of presenting the child Jesus in the temple, (Lk 2:22) of the Christian presenting himself (Rom. 6:13) of God presenting the saved (Eph. 5:23) of Christ presenting the church (Col. 1:28)" (Robertson) Christians are to present a "sacrifice" to God. ("thusia, offering, sacrifice [R/R])

the sacrifice is "your bodies." Some understand this to mean "your complete self" but while this is certainly required, we recall that elsewhere Paul uses it to refer specifically to the *body*. (cf. 6:6, 12; 8:10, 11, 23) The body is important. It is the "temple" of God (1 Cor. 6:19) and will be glorified. (8:23; 1 Cor. 15:54-56; Phil. 3:21) Also the body is the means whereby sin is committed. Sanctification must then include the body. Vincent speaks of the body as "the outward organ of the will." (2 Cor. 5:10; 1 Cor. 6:20)

it must be presented as a "*living* sacrifice." It is "alive from the dead" because of justification. (6:13) Unlike dead animal sacrifices as once the body served sin now it is to glorify God. McGarvey has:

"Moreover, the designs of many to wait till sickness or old age overtakes them before presenting their sacrifice are misplaced, for such conduct is analogous to presenting the maimed and halt and blind to God."

it must be a "holy" sacrifice, devoted to, set aside for the service of God.

as such it will be "acceptable ("well-pleasing" [R/R]) to God."

- c. Such is "your spiritual (reasonable [K.J.V.]) service of worship."

"spiritual" or "reasonable"? The word (*logikos* from *logos*) can mean either. Perhaps Paul means that a life of obedience is the only *reasonable* response to God's gift. Vine has: "...Pertaining to the reasoning facilities; the sacrifice is to be intelligent in contrast to those offered by ritual and compulsion." Vincent has: "Reasonable, not in the popular sense of the term, as a thing befitting or proper, but rational, as distinguished from merely external or material. Hence nearly equivalent to spiritual. It is in harmony with the highest reason." If "spiritual" is the idea then perhaps Paul is contrasting Christian service with "the externalities of Israel's temple service." (Bruce)

- d. Verse 2 tells us how to carry out the directive of verse 1, namely:

"do not be conformed to this world." The present tense here suggest the idea that the action is to be stopped or continually done. *World* here can mean "age" ("this present evil age" [Gal. 14] of which Satan is god. [2 Cor. 4:4]) Conformity to the ideas, morals, attitudes etc. of this world is not possible for those who take v. 1 seriously. (1 Jn 2:15) The world must not squeeze us into its own mould.

"be *transformed* by the renewing of your mind" (see Matt. 17:2; 2 Cor. 3:18 on *transformed*) Vine has on "transform: "to change into another form; (as used in Rom. 12:2) to undergo a complete change, which under the power of God, will find expression in character and conduct." McGarvey speaks of "complete and fundamental

inner change."

note that it is by the "renewing of your mind" that this transformation takes place." (2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 6:15; Eph. 4:24) The "mind" means "the thinking power, reason in its moral quality and activity..." (R/R) and involves the inner being the heart, the will, the essential self, not simply externals. The present speaks of ongoing action and the imperative mood tells us that this is a command. The Spirit renews (Tit. 3:5) and His sword is the word of God. (Eph. 6:17)

- e. The purpose or goal or result of all this is "that you may *prove* what the will of God is..." N.I.V. captures the idea: "Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is." Only by being transformed can the Christian correctly judge what God's will is as regards conduct. God's will is "that which is good (virtuous, upright) "acceptable" (well-pleasing) and "perfect". (complete) People who do not have renewed minds will not see God's will as expressed in scripture as "acceptable."

Chapter 12:3-8 - Varied Ministries

- a. Verse 3. Paul has just spoken of the need to make correct judgments as regards God's will. (v. 2) One area of judgment has to do with haughtiness. Paul speaks "through the grace " given him, meaning his gift of apostleship. (1:5;15:15) He speaks to "every man among you," meaning that no one is excluded:

he warns them against haughtiness and exaggerated self estimation. He is going to speak about their various ministries, and often there is the danger of over estimating one's own contribution and under valuing that of others. (1 Cor. 12:14-31; 13:4; 14:12, 20) "Humility is the immediate effect of self-surrender to God." (*Expositors Greek New Testament*)

instead of this they are to "have sound judgment" meaning sensible reasonable judgment which manifests itself in a correct estimate of oneself, humility, and a refusal to have contempt for others.

- b. The "as God has allotted to each a measure of faith" emphasises the *gift* aspect, since no one has any cause to boast about what they have been freely given by God. By "measure of faith" he means, not initial saving faith, but "the spiritual power given to each Christian for the discharge of his special responsibility." (Bruce) McGuiggan has: "The measure of faith is the specific expression of faith (office or work) delivered to each Christian." Paul then elaborates upon this.

- c. Verses 4, 5. "For" connects back to v. 4. Elsewhere Paul compares the church and its members to the human body. (1 Cor. 10:17; 12:27; Col. 2:19) Different members of the body with different indispensable functions show no jealousy of one another. Christians are:

"one body" (1 Cor. 12:12, 13) and must therefore exhibit that same unity

"individually members one of another" belonging to one another, unable to function in isolation of fellow members, profiting from what others contribute. (Clearly a strong incentive to appreciate one another and not be haughty.)

- d. Verses 6, 7. Paul list seven gifts (compare 1 Cor. 12:8 -10 where nine functions are listed; 1 Cor. 12:28, 29 where eight are mentioned; Eph. 4:11 where four are listed.) They have gifts "according to the grace given" them, meaning that they are recipients of what God has chosen to freely bestow (hence there is no cause for haughtiness). Paul is speaking of spiritual gifts, distributed by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:11), by the laying on of

the apostles hands. (Acts 8:14 ff; 2 Tim. 1:6)

e. How the gifts are to be exercised:

"prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith." The prophet is one who discloses God's will, His *mouth* (cf. Ex. 4:16;7:1) prophecy is a product of divine revelation. (2 Pet. 1:20, 21) An important gift. (1 Cor. 14:1, 39) The "according to the proportion of his faith" is difficult, but Harrison's comment is worth consideration:

"A prophet is not to be governed by his emotions (1 Cor. 14:32) or by his love of speaking (14:30) but by entire dependence on the Spirit of God."

Murray has:

"The idea of proportion appears to be the preponderant one. This meaning, if applied here, is relevant. The prophet when he speaks God's word is not to go beyond that which God has given him to speak."

"service, in his serving." The words are used of *service in general* but are also used in to speak of the office and work of the "deacon". (Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:10) Thayer takes it in the latter sense here, and perhaps Paul is speaking of men who possess spiritual gifts relating to the work of deacons. The "in his serving" likely means that he is to be diligent in this area and not lust after gifts which he does not possess. (e.g. prophecy)

"he who teaches in his teaching." Context suggests spiritually-gifted teachers. (On "in his teaching" see "in his serving" above)

Lanier has:

"The prophet received and imparted revelation from God, but the teacher interprets, expounds, illustrates the meaning of revelations."

"he who exhorts, in his exhortation." The relevant word means to *call, exhort, persuade implore* and again it is likely a reference to a spiritual gift.

- f. Before "prophecy," "service," "teaching," and "exhorting," the word "eite" ("or," "whether," "if") has occurred. Now the word is dropped. Some (but not all) see this as significant and argue that it is likely that the next mentioned gifts are not of the same class as before. (i.e. they are not miraculous)

the "giver" is to be *liberal*. (2 Cor. 9:6) The word "refers to open-handed and open-hearted giving out of compassion and a singleness of purpose, not from ambition." (R/R)

the leader is to lead "with diligence" (from the word "to hasten,") zeal, attentiveness.

the mercy-shower is one who does acts of kindness to the needy; he is to do so freely, and not grudgingly.

Christians then must not be haughty or arrogant because of any imagined superiority bestowed upon them by gifts which they possess. These gifts are God-given for the benefit of the body as a whole and are to be exercised with diligence for the good of all.

(Having spoken of particular classes of people and particular gifts/duties, Paul now begins to speak of general duties, the Christian's responsibilities towards others.)

- a. Verse 9. "Let love be without hypocrisy." Unless love is real (not pretense) it is hypocrisy. Agape love is one of the great words of the Bible. Barclay has:

"The great reason why Christian thought fastened on agape, is that agape demands the exercise of the whole man. Christian love must not only extend to our nearest and dearest.. (but) to the neighbour, to the enemy, to all the world. Agape has to do with the mind; it is not simply an emotion which rises unbidden in our hearts; it is a principle by which we deliberately live. Agape has supremely to do with the will. It is the conquest a victory and achievement. No-one ever naturally loved his enemies."

- b. Real love suggests purity, and thus we have:

"abhor ("to shrink back with abhorrence" [Harper]) what is evil". (sin) The Christian, having surrendered to God (vs 1, 2) will increasingly hate sin. (cf. Jn 3:20, 21) Hate "even the garment spotted by the flesh." (Jude 23) "It isn't often we come across people who shudder at evil." (McGuiggan)

"cling to ("To glue or cement together, to join firmly, to join one's self to..." [R/R]) "what is good" (and reap the reward [2:10])

- c. Verse 10. "Be devoted to one another in brotherly love" has two words which speak of brotherly affection and natural family love. Family love helps people work out difficulties. The "give preference to one another in honour" reminds us of Phil. 2:3 and the verb suggests "take the lead" in this matter. (3 Jn 9; Matt. 23:6)

- d. Verse 11. Three clauses tell us how Christians are to carry out their religious duties:

"not lagging behind in diligence." N.I.V. has "Never be lacking in zeal." (cf. Rev. 3:15, 16)

"fervent (from a word which means to *boil over*) in spirit." (like Apollos [Acts 18:25])

"serving the Lord," the tense denotes *keeping on in service* and the verb has the idea of serving as a slave, wholly subject to the will of another. Service to God demands our best.

- e. Verse 12 "rejoicing in hope" because hope makes joyful. (Reese translates: "Let your hope be a source of joy to you!") Hope of glory is in view. (1 Thess 4:13; Jn 14:1-6; Rev. 21:1-4) "Let hope keep you joyful." (N.E.B.) Such hope enables the Christian to endure difficulties. ("persevering in tribulation") Patience is one of the Christian graces. (2 Pet. 1:5, 6) "It isn't mere resignation; it's a choice to remain under and use the trouble." (McGuiggan) In tribulation, prayer is the Christian's great help and thus "devoted to prayer." Self-sufficiency does not lead to prayerful lives.

- f. Verse 13. In "contributing to the needs of the saints" the word means "to share in, to have fellowship with" (R/R) and thus the idea seems to be *share in the needs and wants of others*. (cf. 1 Tim. 6:17, 18; Phil. 4:15) Closely related is "practising (containing the idea of *pursuing*) hospitality" ("hospitality, love of strangers". [R/R]) Not grudgingly (1 Pet. 4:9; cf. Heb. 13:2)

- g. Verse 14. Paul's instructions have been mainly concerned with fellow Christians, but now he includes other relationships. "Bless those who persecute you; bless and curse not." Not merely tolerate but actually *invoke God's blessing upon them*; (Matt. 5:44; Lk 6:27, 28) pray for their conversion. The human tendency is to "curse" (in the sense of calling down calamity upon another) - in Christ we *learn* to bless.

- h. Verse 15. Avoid envy, jealousy, resentment at the good fortune of others and "rejoice with those who rejoice". Do not be glad at their misfortunes (Prov. 17:5) "weep with those who weep". (again this is not a natural tendency but is taught.)
- i. Verse 16. N.E.B. has more literally "have equal regard for one another" and likely the idea is the same as that in Jas 2:1-4, that of impartiality, (cf. Acts 10:34; Rom. 2:11; 1 Tim. 5:21) equal regard for all despite their differing circumstances. The next two clauses carry related ideas:

"do not be haughty in mind but associate with the lowly." N.I.V. has: "Don't be proud but be willing to associate with people of low position." K.J.V. has: "Mind not high things but condescend to men of low estate." (margin "be contented with mean things") It is not clear from the original language if people or things are in view but the idea is clear: "Don't think yourself too superior to others to be one with them." "Avoid such things as lead one to flatter the great, to court the rich, and be servile to the mighty." (McGarvey)

"Do not be wise in your own estimation." Love is not conceited. (1 Cor. 13:4)

- j. Verses 17-21 contain instructions about dealing with an unsympathetic world.

"Never pay back evil to evil to anyone" revenge being a fleshly action. (Matt. 5:38-42) Vindictiveness has no place in the life of forgiven people. (1 Thess 5:15; 1 Pet. 3:9)

"Respect what is right in the sight of all men." More literally "take forethought for, provide beforehand for." The idea is "have a fixed purpose to..." what is approved by all. *Right* means honourable, good noble. The *in the sight of all men* reminds us that Christians are to avoid being offensive, to be concerned about example, influence. (cf. 2 Cor. 8:21)

Verse 18. Peace is not always possible because truth can offend and because rebuking sin can anger. Also some refuse to be reconciled. However if there is no peace, let the Christian take care that he is not the cause.

Verses 19-21. When injured don't seek personal revenge. (Men are not well qualified to judge their own cases). Instead "leave room for the wrath of God." (N.A.S.V.) "His mind is clouded by no passion, biased by no prejudice, deceived by no false appearances, misled by no lying testimony, warped by no ill will." (McGarvey) God's wrath is not unreasoning anger but settled hatred of sin.

The words "of God" are not in the text and K.J.V. has "give place unto wrath." Likely Paul has in mind *God's* wrath (although other suggestions have been made e.g. the judicial penalty of the governing authorities which are the subject of 13:1 ff.) The "'vengeance is mine I will repay' (Deut. 32:25) says the Lord" reminds us that The Lord alone is qualified to judge wisely and exact vengeance. (The Lord's example 1 Pet. 2:23.)

Verse 20a. This quote from Prov. 25:21 ff enjoins a practice which fallen man finds very difficult, but which challenges man to be like God. (Rom. 5:8) The objective is not to see him suffer the "burning coals" but to shame him into repentance. "The most excruciating punishment to a man is to make him feel that he has done wrong to one who loves him, and leave it to his own conscience and to God to punish for the wrong." (Lipscomb) We are "overcome by evil" (v. 21) if we respond in kind and return evil for evil. Instead we are to defeat evil by winning an enemy with our patience, forbearance, love.

Lesson 17

Chapter 13:1-7 - The Christian and Civil Authorities

(Chapter 12 has spoken of practical Christian living which involves presenting the body a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God. This means [among other things] recognising our responsibilities as members of the body, vs 4-8, and also our responsibilities towards others in general vs 8-21. Another item under the acceptable will of God is one's responsibility in civil and business affairs and thus Paul now speaks of the Christian's relationship to government [chapter 13:1-7] and of the Christian's relationship to men, business etc under government. [chapter 13:8-10])

Keep in mind that some very important questions would arise in the minds of first century Christians: for example:

Christianity was universal, and Christ was supreme law-giver. What kind of allegiance were Christians to render to kings etc. Should the Christian refuse to obey any king except the Lord? Many of the Jews were most unhappy about giving allegiance to earthly government.

the pagan kingdoms of the day were often ruled over by oppressive kings with blood stained hands. Should Christians obey their laws?

pagan religion was interwoven with civil institutions, and scripture is clear that idol worship is an abomination to God.

Paul had just told Christians not to seek revenge. (chapter 12) Does this mean that the Christian cannot protect himself in any way against evil predators? No. In God's plan the civil authorities act as His instrument to punish evildoers.

These and other questions concerning the Christian's relationship to the governing authorities lay behind Paul's instructions in chapter 13.)

- a. Verse 1a. It is "good and acceptable" in God's sight (12:2) for "every person/soul" (meaning individual) to "be in subjection to" ("to place or rank under, to subject, to obey" [R/R]) the "governing authorities" (Tit. 3:1; 1 Pet. 2:13-17)

the words translated "governing authorities" are general terms and some have taken them to mean angelic powers rather than or in addition to civil powers. However it is clear from context that Paul is speaking of civil authorities.

no particular form of government is in view. (e.g. democracy, monarchy, dictatorship) Christians are to obey civil authority whatever form it takes, provided that civil laws do not conflict with divine. (Acts 4:19; 5:29)

- b. Verse 1b. The reason: "there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God." Thus civil authorities derive their authority to govern from God, not from a "social contract" or from the consent of those in society. Existing powers have a divine right to exist, are providentially ordained by God, and in Paul's day reference is to the Roman Empire and all its officials. (cf. Dan. 2:21; 4:17, 25, 34, 35) (This does not mean that God condones the sinful actions of civil powers.)
- c. Verse 2. "Therefore" (i.e. because of this divine sanction) to resist the civil authorities is to *oppose the ordinance of God* (unless like Daniel [chapters 1, 3, 6] one is choosing obedience to God over obedience to man.) Such

"will receive condemnation (judgment) upon themselves," likely from both God and the civil authorities.

- d. Verse 3. The reason why such judgment comes upon those who resist is that "rulers are not a cause of fear for good behaviour, but for evil." This is God's *design*, His *purpose* for civil authorities. (a design which often not realised [e.g. Roman persecution of Christians]) In God's *ideal plan* those who do "good" (and submit to civil government) will have "praise" (honour and approval and good standing rather than actual commendation is likely meant) from the civil authorities. (cf. 1 Pet. 2:14)
- e. Verse 4. The reason that such "praise" will come to those who do good is that civil government "is a minister (servant) of God (vs 1, 2) to you for good," designed to secure benefits for citizens. (1 Tim. 2:2) Contrariwise evildoers are to "be afraid" (of civil authorities) because "it does not bear the sword for nothing." Bearing the *sword* signifies the right to inflict punishment, even to the point of capital punishment. (Often is scripture the sword is associated with death. [cf. Matt. 26:52; Lk 21:24; Acts 12:2; 16:27; Heb. 11:34, 37; Rev. 13:10])
- f. Civil government bears the sword because it is "a minister (servant) of God" in the infliction of punishment upon evildoers, and "an avenger (of evil) who brings wrath (God's wrath [12:19]) upon the one who practices evil." (Civil government then is one means of God's executing judgment upon evildoers.)
- g. Verse 5. In addition to escaping wrath, the Christian is to "be in subjection" for "conscience sake" meaning conscience towards God. (cf. Acts 23:1; 24:16; 2 Cor. 1:12; 4:2) Obedience to civil authorities then is grounded upon the obligation to surrender to God's will in this matter (1 Pet. 2:13; compare with Peter's appeal in 1 Pet. 2:19.)
- h. Verse 6. The "For because of this" connects back to v 5 but what is the connection? Paul either means "you also pay taxes *for conscience sake*" or "you also pay taxes *because of wrath and because of conscience sake*." (The more clearly we see that the civil authorities are God's servants the more clearly we will see that we are under obligation to support them.) In context the "this very thing" to which rulers devote themselves is the collection of taxes, and by implication it is God's design that taxes be collected for the purpose for which rulers are appointed (not for abuses of their office.) Barnes has:

"Tribute (K.J.V.) properly denotes the tax or annual compensation, which was paid by one province or nation to a superior. The Romans made all conquered nations pay this tribute; and it would become a question whether it was right to acknowledge this claim and submit to it...In a larger sense the word tribute means any tax on land or personal estate for the support of the government."
- i. Verse 7. In connection with civil obligations the Christian is told to "Give everyone what is due them." (N.I.V.) The word translated "give" here means "to pay back" (R/R), as in Mk 12:14, 17, suggesting that it is a return for services rendered. (See Matt. 17:24-27; 22:21)

on "taxes" see comments on verse 6.

custom means indirect taxes such as toll and custom duties.

the "fear" due to rulers here means respect. (although it is the same word as at v. 3) Some think that, as in 1 Pet. 2:17, Paul speaks of the veneration due to God, but context does not favour this.

the rulers (as God's servants) are also deserving of "honour" veneration.

Chapter 13:8-10 - General Obligations of Love and Duty

(Having spoken of what the Christian owes to the "governing authorities," Paul now speaks of recognising the rights of one's fellow men in general. The Christian owes all men love.)

- a. Verse 8. N.I.V. captures the idea with "Let no debt remain outstanding." Paul is not forbidding all indebtedness. (e.g. mortgage, hire purchase) In Matt. 5:42 Jesus told His followers not to turn away from those who want to borrow. (cf. Ex. 22:25; Ps. 37:26) The idea is that we are to be diligent to honour our debts. Ps. 37:21 says "The wicked borrows and does not pay back."
- b. There is however "the continuing debt to love one another." (N.I.V.) This is a debt which can never be paid in full. This we owe to all men because "he who loves his neighbour (lit. the other) has fulfilled (perf. tense, completed action) the law." (in so far as his obligations to his fellow men are concerned) He has fulfilled the law's requirements concerning treatment of others because, (v. 9) the one who loves his neighbour will not *commit adultery* against him, *murder* him, *steal* from him or *covet* what is his.
- c. Verse 9. "(A)nd if there is any other commandment" (i.e. respecting another) it is summed up in the command "you shall love your neighbour as yourself." (Lev. 19:18; cf. Gal. 5:14; Jas 2:8) Love is the barrier to doing any kind of injury to another. Lev. 19:18 takes for granted that man loves himself. (cf. Eph. 5:28, 29) (I cannot love my neighbour *as much as* I love myself, or even with the same feeling. However, I can seek his good, as I seek my own and refuse to defraud him because I would dislike being defrauded. [Matt. 7:12])
- d. Verse 10. An example of a figure of speech known as *litotes*, where a negative is used to make a strong assertion. The idea is that love leads one to do positive good for one's neighbour. The one who loves his neighbour will respect such prohibitions as those found in v. 9, because love strives for the good of the other. Thus love is the fulfilment of the law as it respects other people.

Chapter 13:11-14 - Holy Living in View of Eternity

- a. Verse 11. The words "and this do" indicates another reason why Christians are to obey the command to love their neighbours and carry out these instructions in vs 1-10. The "knowing the time" has the idea "especially because you know how critical the time is." (Hendriksen) "this critical period." (Robertson) Our's is the final dispensation before the end of this present system. While we are in the flesh the prospect of the next life is ever near. Vine has: "In Mark 10:30 and Luke 18:30 "this time" i.e. in this lifetime, is contrasted with the coming age."
- b. Paul reminds them:

"it is already time for you to waken out of sleep" to be prepared, to take advantage of opportunities, to develop Christlikeness etc.

(this do knowing that) "salvation is nearer to us than when we believed." This is final salvation. (cf. 2 Cor. 5:1; Phil. 1:23; Tit. 1:12, 13) The incentive to holy living. (Phil. 4:7-11; 1 Thess 5:1-11; Matt. 25:31-46)
- c. Verse 12. The "night" which is "almost gone" is this era of sin and darkness and sadness, and "the day" which is "at hand" is that day of our transformation and entrance into the salvation of heaven, either at death or upon the Lord's return. In view of this Christians are to:

"lay aside (the tense suggests a once for all act) the deeds of darkness" as one would lay aside one's night

clothes upon rising. The deeds of the old unregenerate life are in view, examples of which are found in v. 13.

"put on (once for all) the armour of light (in their place) meaning "the weapons of light, that belong to the light." (to the day time) (Robertson) On *armour* see 1 Thess 5:8; 2 Cor. 6:7; Eph. 6:13 ff. Christians are at war with the darkness and need God's armour.

- d. Verse 13. There is a walk which becomes a child of God. (Eph. 4:1-3) There is no definite article before "day" and likely it is not "the day" of v. 12. The idea is *let us live as in broad daylight, able to be seen, not hiding faults, pleasing God.* (Jn 3:19-21) Such a walk is incompatible with:

"carousing." Lard has:

"The 'komos' was a sort of carousal in which a number of persons participated, and which commonly ended by the whole party parading the streets with music, songs and dancing. It was simply a noisy drunken frolic. The 'komoi' were very common among the idolatrous Gentiles, particularly among the devotees of Bacchus. The 'komos' especially in its grosser forms, was invariably attended with drunkenness."

"drunkenness" Gal. 5:21 one of the "deeds of the flesh."

"sexual promiscuity" another of the "deeds of the flesh."

"strife and jealousy."

"wantonness/sensuality."

R/R have:

"The word contains the idea of shameless greed, animal lust, sheer self-indulgence which is such a slave to its so-called pleasures, that it is lost to shame. It is one who acknowledges no restraints, who dares whatsoever his caprice and wanton petulance may suggest."

- e. Verse 14. A summary of all that Paul has said since 12:1. in contrast with the above the Christian is to:

"put on the Lord Jesus Christ." This can mean in scripture to be baptised into Christ (Gal. 3:27), but this is not its meaning here. Here the meaning is *keep on becoming more and more Christlike*. Those who accepted others as their mentors and guides were said to *put them on* in the sense that they imitated their character, attitudes etc. as a stage player assumed the name and garments of the one whom he were acting.

"make no provision for the flesh." The word "provision" means "forethought" and the idea is *make no plans to gratify the "flesh."* Here "flesh" means, not the physical body but illicit desires. (see v. 13) The Christian has died to sin and is alive to God (chapter 6) and must always be conscious of this.

Lesson 18

Chapter 14:1-23 - The Weak and the Strong

Chapter 14:1 - 15:13 constitutes a well-defined section of the epistle which continues the discussion of practical Christian living which began in 12:1. Some say that it is not clear if this discussion of the "weak" and the "strong" emerges from Paul's knowledge about *particular* difficulties at Rome or if it is simply a *general* discussion of appropriate Christian behaviour. However there are indications that the problems of judgment and condemnation were present at Rome. (e.g. vs.10, 13) Rom. 14 is similar to 1 Cor. 8:1-13; 10:23-33. There are also similarities to Galatians and Colossians. (e.g. Rom. 14:5 with Gal. 4:10; Col. 2:16, 17, 20-23)

however in Galatians and Colossians there is a sharp tone of rebuke which is not found in Rom. 14. (e.g. Gal. 4:11; Col. 2:20, 23) In Galatians Paul is opposing those who maintain that observance of days and seasons is essential to salvation, and who were thus preaching "a different gospel." (Gal. 1:8, 9) In Colossians Paul is opposing a heresy which involved the idea that asceticism and angelic worship were part of obtaining divine favour. In Rom 14. there is no indication that these problems are present.

again in 1 Cor. 8 and 10 Paul discusses the question of meat *sacrificed to idols*, but there is no evidence that in Rom. 14 the "weak" were scrupulous about *idol* meat. Conversely there is no indication in Corinthians that brethren had difficulty with meat which had *not* been sacrificed to idols.

We need to keep in mind that Paul is discussing matters of indifference. Romans 14 cannot be used to argue that egregious error can be ignored or tolerated. The matters under discussion are matters which are not wrong in themselves and Paul is telling his brethren how Christians are to deal with such situations in a spirit of love. (12:1)

Chapter 14:1-12 - Loving Respect for Others in the Body

- a. Verse 1. The word "accept" means "to take to one's self, to receive. The word is used of God receiving or helping man and of men receiving others into fellowship or companionship" (R/R) so close warm acceptance is in view. The "weak in faith" are not those weak in *faith towards Christ*, but weak with regard to the matters under discussion here. (Verse 2 identifies the strong, who is to "accept," and the weak, who is to be accepted.)
- b. Don't accept the weak brother, just simply to keep up constant debate on the matters in question or just simply to subject him to judgmental scrutiny. Don't make him feel inferior because of his scruples.
- c. Verse 2. The strong and the weak and the eating of foods.

one man (the *strong*) has no scruples about eating anything. The mention of "vegetables" in connection with the "weak" makes it clear that the strong has no scruples about eating *meats*. He has this right. (1 Tim. 4:3, 4)

the "weak" "eats vegetables only." We are not told just why. Was he a Christian Jew unable to grasp the fact that the "clean" "unclean" distinction of the Mosaic law were done away with? (Some [e.g. Lard] adopt this view.) Was he a Christian Gentile fearful of eating meat which may have been sacrificed to idols? We are not told.

- d. Verse 3. The apostle considers that the non-meat eater is "weak" (as regards the matter under discussion, not as regards faith in Christ) but he forbids the "strong" brother to regard him with "contempt" (from a word which means "to consider as nothing, to treat with contempt." [R/R]) Conversely, the weak brother must not "judge"

the meat-eater - the reason being that "God has accepted" the strong. Verse 4 confirms this.

- e. Verse 4. To confirm v. 3 Paul uses the case of a servant and master. No-one interferes in such a relationship. The strong Christian is answerable only to the Lord, his master. The strong meat eater *will stand* with respect to the Lord's approval. (some see a reference to the judgment day here) He *will stand* "because the Lord is able to make him stand" in spite of the weak brother's disapproval.
- f. Verse 5. One man (the weak) "regards one day above another." Likely we are to see here a reference to Christian Jews with respect to Sabbath and /or holy days. Another makes no such distinctions and regards every day alike. (most likely meaning that he treats every day as dedicated to God) Paul says "Let every person be fully convinced (of the rightness of his action) in his own mind." (Clearly this is a different situation from that discussed in Gal. 4:9-11. Here Paul condemns observance of days as a condition of salvation. This is not the situation under consideration here.) The Christian must never violate his own conscience. (v. 23)
- g. Verse 6. Both the *weak* (who observes the day and refuses to eat meats) and the strong (the meat eater) act with a view to honouring God, demonstrated by the fact that each "gives thanks to God." (1 Tim. 4:5)
- h. Verses 7, 8. The "no one of us" means Christians whether weak or strong. The reason why both *weak* and *strong* give honour and thanks to God (v. 6) is that neither live for self. The Christian's aim is to so live and so die that God is thereby glorified, the implication then being that our eating, non-eating and observance and non-observance of days are all to the glory of God.
- i. Verse 9 tells us how it is that we belong to the Lord. Christ died and lived (i.e. was resurrected to sit at the right hand of God [5:10]) in order that He might rule over and also save those whom He had purchased with His blood. (Acts 20:28) Here Christ's Lordship refers to His special rule over Christians only (see a similar concept Exodus 19:5) whether they be living upon the earth or dead in the Lord.
- j. Verse 10 tells us that since it is Christ who is Lord and who one day will occupy the judgement seat of Christ (Jn 5:22), the weak brother has no right to judge his strong brother, nor does the strong have the right to regard the weak with "contempt." There is one judge of both strong and weak (Acts 17:30, 31) and those who judge their brethren are taking God's place.
- k. Verses 11, 12. A quotation from Isaiah 45:23 is used to prove that all Christians, weak or strong will stand before God. (It also proves that all will one day, willingly or unwillingly acknowledge the Lord. [Phil. 2:10, 11]) In v. 12 we have Paul's conclusion: each of us will be accountable as individuals before God. The weak will not answer for the strong nor the strong for the weak.

Chapter 14:13-23 - Avoid Offending One Another in Such matters

(In the following verses the appeal is mainly to the strong brother. Paul has already introduced the subject of food and the weak and the strong and he now enlarges upon this discussion. The stronger Christian is under obligation to promote the well-being of the church as a whole.)

- a. Verse 13. In light of the fact that God is the one to whom we give an account (v. 12) "Let us (here the *weak*) not judge (krino) one another any more" with respect to the matters of indifference under discussion. (So clearly such *judging* had indeed been going on.) Instead (the *strong* are to) "determine this (krino again, hence K.K.V. has "judge") "not to put an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brothers's way."

the word translated "obstacle" means "stumbling block, the opportunity to take offence or to make a misstep." (R/R)

the word translated "stumbling block" means "snare, the stick which caused the trap to fall, cause of offense, it is that which trips us up or that which lures us into sin." (R/R)

- b. Verse 14. Paul is himself one of the *strong* with respect to the matters under discussion. He says "*I know and am convinced*" ("to be persuaded, to have confidence" [R/R]) *in the Lord Jesus*" which can be rendered "by the Lord Jesus." Paul we recall received his gospel by revelation. (Gal. 1:12) He is persuaded that "*nothing* is unclean in itself." (1 Tim. 4:4) The clean-unclean distinctions of the Mosaic law had been nailed to the cross. (Col. 2:14) (The strong are correct in their understanding.)
- c. What of the weak brother who *mistakenly* "thinks anything to be unclean"? In his case ("to him") it is unclean, not because God so decrees but because *his own conscience* would be violated by his partaking. (cf. 1 Cor. 8:4, 7) (Paul's point is not that one's conscience makes an act right or wrong, but rather that it is sinful to violate one's convictions and to fail to act in keeping with one's faith. [v. 23])
- d. Verse 15. If then the strong brother's eating meat causes the weak brother to be "hurt" or "grieved," (K.J.V.) or "distressed" the strong is no longer walking in a loving way.

although the ideas of grief and distress are found in the word, it is not likely that Paul has in mind here the fact that the strong brother's action causes the weak brother to feel distress and sorrow. (This may be true but it is likely not the point here.)

rather the weak brother is caused to stumble or is ensnared (v. 13) by his strong brother's action. Moreover he is *destroyed* (v. 15b) by this action. We will see in vs 20-23 that the weak brother is *hurt* in that he is encouraged by the other's behaviour to violate his own conscience in this matter. (1 Cor. 8:9-13) Hence Paul's words "Do not destroy with your food him for whom Christ died." If Christ loved the weak brother enough to give His very life, how small a sacrifice it is to abstain from eating for the sake of that brother's soul.

- e. Verses 16, 17. Here Paul calls Christian liberty (the ability to thankfully enjoy all that God has created) "a good thing." The strong are to take care lest this liberty "be spoken of as evil" and this would happen if this liberty caused the weak to stumble by wounding his conscience. The reason that the strong are to exercise restraint is that within the kingdom of God (under God's rule) matters of eating and drinking are not our chief concern but rather our focus is upon:

"righteousness" here meaning conduct in keeping with God's will. This would promote respect for others.

"peace" harmony among the brethren rather than discord resulting from insisting upon one's rights.

"joy" one of the fruits of the Spirit, present wherever we find righteousness and peace.

The "in the Holy Spirit" reminds us that the Holy Spirit produces these things by means of the Word, His sword. (Eph. 6:17)

- f. Verse 18. Those who serve Christ by promoting righteousness, peace and joy are:

"acceptable to God"

"approved by (right thinking, spiritually-minded) men"

g. Verse 19. Rather than insisting on rights which destroy peace, the strong are urged to pursue those things which make for peace among brethren, which build them up and encourage them. The peace of the church should be much more important than personal gratification.

h. Verse 20. The "work of God" is the salvation of the weak brother, and the strong must not "tear down" (opposite of "building up" [v. 19]) this work for the sake of food. The clean-unclean distinctions do not apply in the new covenant (Acts 10:15) and all meats may be eaten without sin, but Paul speaks of the man who "eats and gives offense." Either:

this is a reference to the *strong* brother whose example causes the weak brother to violate his conscience. (The fact that Paul is focussing mainly upon the strong in the immediately preceding verses favours this view.)

a reference to the weak brother who eats without a clear conscience. (Paul's reference to the one who is caused to stumble in v. 21 favours this view.)

i. Verse 21. A summary. In *all* matters of indifference avoid giving offense. (The word for "wine" need not refer to an intoxicant and since Paul is speaking of matters of indifference it likely does not here.

j. Verse 22a. The strong are urged: "The faith (confidence, assurance, conviction about the matter of eating) that you have, have as your own conviction before God" meaning "keep it as a matter between yourself and God rather than parading it in such a way as to disrupt peace and cause the weak to stumble."

k. Verse 22b, 23a. The strong Christian who is able to eat with a clear conscience is "happy" or "blessed" or "fortunate" because of this freedom from self-condemnation. On the other hand the weak brother who "doubts" that it is right to eat "is condemned" by God (not because his eating is *inherently* wrong), but because in the case of the doubter his eating is "not from faith" ("faith" here meaning conviction that eating is right.)

l. Verse 23b. The concluding words: "and whatever is not of faith is sin." Again Paul uses "faith" here in the sense of *conviction concerning the rightness of an act*. To act in violation of one's conscience is sinful, even if the action is not inherently sinful.

Lesson 19

Chapter 15:1-6 - The Example of Christ in this Context

(Paul continues his discussion concerning the obligation of the strong to the weak.)

a. Verse 1a. The "strong" of whom Paul is one, "ought" ("to owe someone, to be a debtor" [R/R]) to "bear (in the sense of "carry" [Gal. 5:10; 6:2, 5] not simply tolerate) the weaknesses ("weakness, met. doubt, scruple, hesitation, Rom. 15:1" [Harper]) of those without strength (and hence troubled by scruples in matters of indifference).

b. Verse 1b, 2. The strong must not simply *please themselves* and act without regard for the conscience of the weak brother. (Phil. 2:4; 1 Cor. 10:24) Each (not simply the strong) is to "please his neighbour" (whoever he happens to be) "for what is good to edification" (lit) meaning with the goal of building up, encouraging the other - an

important part of Christian life. (Eph. 4:29; 1 Cor. 10:33)

- c. Verse 3 begins "For," meaning that Paul is giving a reason for thus living. The reason is that "even Christ did not please Himself." (Jn 8:29; 2 Cor. 8:9) Psalm 69:9 is quoted to show Christ's selflessness in letting the reproaches directed against the Father fall upon Him. Immediately preceding these words, Ps. 69 has "the zeal of thy house hath eaten me up," showing clearly that Christ took upon Himself the reproaches aimed at God. (The point is that if Christ did this at such tremendous cost, should not his followers deny themselves food for the sake of others?)
- d. Verse 4. Paul explains why this appeal to Ps. 69 is proper. It is because "whatever was written in earlier time was written for our instruction." (cf. 1 Cor. 10:6, 10; 2 Tim. 3:16, 17) Thus the Old Testament instruction is for our benefit as well as for the benefit of those in earlier ages. The Old Testament record reveals much about God's dealings with men, His character etc. and thereby the scriptures produce "perseverance" and "encouragement." These in turn continue to give "hope."
- e. Verse 5. The "perseverance" and "encouragement" obtained through scripture (v. 4) are God-given. He is the source. Paul expresses the earnest desire that God, the giver of these things, will grant them "to be of the same mind," living in harmony, seeking the good of the other rather than the good of self. The "according to Christ Jesus" likely means according to His will, His example or both.
- f. Verse 6. The purpose of this oneness and harmony is "that with one accord (i.e. in harmony and peace) you may with one voice (unanimity in praise and worship) glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." When Christians are united (because they seek the good of others above their own) they offer unified praise to God and He is thereby glorified. (the ultimate goal of all we do)

Chapter 15:7-13 - The Oneness of Jew and Gentile

- a. Verse 7. "Wherefore" (i.e. in view of the fact that God will be glorified [v. 6]) "accept one another (whether weak or strong) just as Christ also accepted us to the *glory of God*." In both cases the supreme objective is God's glory. Also since Christ accepted us in all our weaknesses how can we refuse to welcome brethren in theirs? To do so is to act in a manner not fitting for those seeking to be like Christ.
 - b. Verse 8. Paul now begins to speak of Christ's "acceptance. He speaks first of His acceptance of *Jewish* Christians (v. 8) and then of His acceptance of Gentile Christians. (vs 9-12) First Christ has become a "servant" to Jews ("the circumcision") in His earthly ministry. (Matt. 10:5, 6; 15:24) He did so "on behalf of the truth of God" likely meaning "for the sake of God's truthfulness." (Lard) God's "truthfulness" in context, has to do with the promises given to the (Jewish) fathers (9:4, 5) of a Redeemer. (Gal. 3:16)
 - c. Verses 9-12. Christ also became a servant of the Jews "for the Gentiles." Paul says this because the promises (v 8) include the salvation of the Gentiles, "so that the Gentiles may glorify God for His mercy. (N.I.V.) In vs 9-12 Paul cites a series of Old Testament passages to show that God's promises included the non-Jew. Clearly since the Jew's own scriptures included the non-Jew in the promises, the Jewish Christian must welcome the Gentile Christian too.
- v. 9. (Ps. 18:49) pictures David praising God in the middle of the nations.
- v. 10. (Deut. 32:43) Moses pictures Gentiles as rejoicing among the Jews.

vs 11, 12. (Ps. 117:1; Isa. 11;10) Gentiles alone are represented as praising God (v. 11) and hoping in the "root of Jesse." (Christ [v. 12])

- d. Verse 13. Paul's prayer is that the "God of hope" (i.e. the God who gives hope to His people, its author, source) will fill them with:

"all joy" knowing that God has accepted them

"peace" with God and others (weak or strong, Jew or Gentile).

- e. In context the "in believing" means "in believing all that I have just said about acceptance and oneness." By believing what Paul has said they will be filled with "joy" and "peace" so that they may "abound in hope" of eternal life with God. This is "by the power of the Holy Spirit" who indwells the Christian and who guides, directs encourages and uplifts him by means of the Word.

Part D: Chapter 15:13-16:27 - Closing Commendations and Salutations

(Much of what follows is of a personal nature and shows us something of Paul's tact, modesty and concern for his brethren. to some extent Paul repeats and amplifies upon what he has said in his introductory comments. [esp. 1:5, 8-16])

Chapter 15:14-21 - Personal Matters

- a. Verse 14. Paul has had some quite sharp things to say about their dealings with one another. Now he wants to assure them that despite these comments he does indeed have high regard for them. In 1:8 he acknowledged their strong faith and clearly he knows something of their condition.
- b. He is "convinced" that they are:

"full of goodness" and therefore will accept one another as he has instructed.

"filled (past participle) with all knowledge." The Roman Christians already knew the things about which Paul had spoken and needed only encouragement in this matter. Knowing that they possess this knowledge Paul is certain that they are "able also to *admonish* one another" (contrast with Heb. 5:12-14) with respect to the acceptance of one another. On "admonish" R/R have:

"to admonish, to warn. It is an appeal to the mind where opposition is present. The person is lead away from a false way through warning, instruction, reminding, teaching, and encouraging and his conduct is to be corrected."

- c. Verse 15. Paul explains the boldness of his speech to them (having warned them of the danger of lawlessness [chapter 6] arrogance [11:20, 21; 12:3] opposition to governing authorities [13;2] the weak and strong [14:1 ff]) He:

wants to remind them of the things that they have learned.

is conscious of the obligation placed upon him by "grace given to him from God." This is the gift of the divine commission (Eph. 3:7-9; 1 Cor. 9:16) which he explains in the next verse.

- d. Verse 16. Paul's "grace" or gift (v. 15) is "to be a minister to the Gentiles..." (Acts 9:15; 22:21; 26:17-20; Rom. 11:13; Gal. 1:16; 2:7-8; Eph. 3:7-8) This may suggest that Gentiles were in the majority in the Roman church.

minister is leitourgon, from leitourgos "...one busied with holy things." (Thayer) It is a term often connected with the sacredness of worship. (cf. Lk 1:23; Acts 13:2; Rom. 15:27; 2 Cor. 9:12; Phil. 2:17; Heb. 1:7, 14; 8:2, 6; 9:21; 10:11)

he describes his ministry as "ministering as a priest" using a term borrowed from Temple service. This suggests the sacred nature of the gospel. Paul is here said to offer up the Christian Gentiles, sanctified by the Holy Spirit as an offering to God.

- e. The idea is that the preaching of the gospel is a sacred task. What Paul offers to God (as a sacrifice) "the Gentiles" who have accepted the gospel. He desires that this offering "become acceptable" (just as Old Testament sacrifices had to meet conditions to be acceptable.) What will make this offering "acceptable" is its being "sanctified by the Holy Spirit" whose word sanctifies. (Jn 17:17)
- f. Verses 17, 18. As a "minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles" (v. 16) Paul has "found reason for boasting." He boasts not in an egotistical way but "because of Christ has accomplished through ...(him)" (v. 18) He boasts "in things pertaining to God" (v. 17) meaning in context the things God has accomplished through him which have resulted in "the obedience of the Gentiles by word and deed." (v. 18) Likely we are to understand "by word and deed" to mean "by what I (Paul) have said and done."
- g. Verse 19a. In addition to what Paul *said* and *did* (v. 18) God performed "signs and wonders" through him. On "signs" Thayer has "miracles and wonders by which God authenticates the men sent by Him or by which men prove that the cause they are pleading is God's." On "wonders" Harper has "a signal act, wonder, miracle." Paul makes clear that it was "the power of the Holy Spirit," not his own power by which these were accomplished.
- h. Verses 19b-21. Paul now speaks of the results of God's working through him. From Jerusalem (the south-eastern limit of his missionary activity) to Illyricum (the north-west limit of his missionary journey) he had "full preached" the gospel. His aim was not to preach where Christ had already been preached and thus "build upon another man's foundation" (which is not wrong of course [1 Cor. 3:10]) but to be a pioneer with the gospel. To show that this was appropriate Paul cites Isa. 52:15 (v. 21)

Chapter 15:22-29 - Paul Wants to Visit Rome

- a. Verses 22-25. See comments at 1:13.

what had hindered Paul's coming to Rome was the need to fulfill his ministry in more adjacent regions where Christ was unknown.

now "with no further place" remaining in the regions extending from Jerusalem to Illyricum he looks further afield. His eyes are upon Spain, the frontier of the empire on the west.

for many years he has longed to come to see them in Rome and he hopes to see the brethren there on his way to

Spain, thereby blessing them and being blessed by them. (1:11-13) He hopes to be "helped" by them (prayers, financial help, helpers) on his way to Spain. (cf. Acts 13:1-4; 14:26; 15:40)

before this Paul has another mission to complete. He is "going to Jerusalem serving the saints." These saints were Jewish Christians.

- b. Verse 26. Paul's service involved a "contribution" ("fellowship, sharing, contribution" [R/R]) which the mainly Gentile brethren in Macedonia and Achaia had been "pleased to make." (voluntarily, willingly [2 Cor. 8:1-5; 9:1-5]) Also believers from Asia Minor participated (1 Cor. 16:1; Acts 20:4) In Gal. 2:10 when Peter James and John extended the right hand of fellowship to Paul they asked him to remember the poor which he was pleased to do. Moreover this gift would help break down barrier between Jew and Gentile.
- c. Verse 27. The Gentile Christians were both "pleased" to make this contribution (it is motivated by love) and they are "indebted to them." This is because the Jerusalem church had shared "spiritual things" the gospel [Acts 10; 11:19-22; 15:40, 41]) with them. Moreover the gospel from which the Gentiles benefited emanated from Jewry. (Isa. 2:3; 11:1; 42:1)
- d. Verse 28. Thus Paul will visit Rome on his way to Spain when he has finished this work having (lit) "sealed to them this fruit." The contribution is the fruit of faith and love. N.I.V. has "have made sure that they have received this fruit," conveying the idea that Paul would ensure that the collection was placed securely in their hands. Another possibility is that the contribution certifies the love of those making it.
- e. Verse 29. Paul is not expressing his certainty that he would come to them (cf. Acts 20:22-24) but certainty that if he did come he would come "in the fullness of the blessings of Christ" likely meaning that he would bring blessings of Christ to them (cf. 1:11), the joy of meeting, mutual encouragement etc. (1:12, 13, 15)

Comments

- a. Concerning Spain: We do not know if Paul made it to Rome. Clement wrote late in the first century that Paul "reached the limits of the West" which may fit Spain. Moreover it is evident that Paul was set free from his first Roman imprisonment and left Timothy at Ephesus and Titus at Crete. In view of his plans it would have been quite reasonable for him to go on the Spain.
- b. Concerning Rome: In fact it was a few years later that Paul reached Rome (Acts 24:27; 28:11) and he arrived a prisoner. He was greeted by some brethren there, for which he was thankful. (Acts 28:11-15) Paul was encouraged by *some* of what he saw among the brethren there but there were some disappointments. (Phil. 1:15a, 17)

Chapter 15:30-33 - Paul's Prayer Request

- a. Verse 30. Paul urges them "to strive together with" him in their prayers for him.

the word means "to fight or contend along with someone, to strive together. It is the picture of wrestling in prayer..." (R/R) This is typical of Paul (2 Cor. 1:11; Phil. 1:19; Col. 4:3; 1 Thess 5:25; 2 Thess 3:1)

he strengthens his request by invoking "our Lord Jesus Christ" and "the love of the Spirit." The Spirit pours out love into the hearts of believers and (5:5) and thus his request is reasonable.

b. Verse 31. The two immediate requests:

"that I may be delivered from those who are disobedient in Judea." He anticipates opposition from unbelieving Jews in Judea. Earlier they had forced him out of Jerusalem. (Acts 9:28, 29, 30) It is clear from Acts 20:22-23; 21:10, 11 that Paul anticipated difficulties at Jerusalem. In fact he was falsely accused, arrested and held prisoner. He appealed to Caesar and in this way came to Rome a prisoner, see Acts 21:17-28:16. (God brings good out of evil, and answers prayers His way.)

"that my service (the collection) for Jerusalem may prove acceptable to the saints." Would Jews graciously accept assistance from Gentile? In Acts 21:17 we read that "the brethren received us gladly."

c. Verse 32. Another design of the prayer is that he might come to them (at Rome) "in joy" as a result of a successful ministry in Jerusalem. In fact it did not turn out as Paul hoped (see above) but Paul is always submissive to God's will. ("by the will of God") He wants to find "refreshing rest" in their company, not leisure but encouragement.

d. Paul's prayer for them. "God of peace" (e.g. 1:7; 15:13; 1 Cor. 1:3; 13:11) because He is its source. Peace with God (16:20; Eph. 2:14, 15, 17; 1 Thess 5:23; Heb. 13:20) and peace of God. (Phil. 4:7; Col. 3:15)

Lesson 20

Chapter 16: 1-16 - Paul's personal Greetings

a. Verse 1. Phoebe's name means "bright." She is not elsewhere mentioned. She is a "sister" in Christ. Paul *commends* Phoebe to them. Letters of commendation were usual (2 Cor. 3:1) and it is likely that Phoebe carried this letter to Rome. There is only one mention of Cenchrea, (situated nine miles from Corinth) in Acts 18:8. She is a "servant of the church which is at Cenchrea." The word translated "servant" can also be translated "deaconess". (see margin N.A.S.V.)

the word has the general meaning "servant" and this may be its meaning here. There is a sense in which every Christian is a "servant."

in addition there is an office of "deacon" in the New Testament (1 Tim. 3) for which the word "servant" is used. Some are of the view that 1 Tim. 3:11 relates to the qualifications of a group of women called "deaconesses," and are of the view that Phoebe is one. Citing Rom. 16:1 Thayer has: "deaconess, a woman to whom the care of either poor or sick women was entrusted." Early church writers refer to such an office. (See our notes on 1 Tim. 3) Such an office would not, in and of itself, compromise the principles of authority.

b. Verse 2. They are to "receive" her (from a word which means "receive, to welcome" [R/R]) "in a manner worthy of the saints" meaning "as it is proper for saints to greet a fellow-believer." They were to "help her in whatever matter she may have need" of them. On "matter" Thayer has: "...Rom. 16:2 spec. in a forensic sense a matter at law, case, suit..." so perhaps Phoebe's trip involved a business or legal matter.

She is worthy of such because she has been "a helper of many" including Paul. On "helper" R/R/ have:

"The masc. form of the word was used by the Romans for the legal representative or wealthy patron. Here it indicates the personal help given to Paul."

(Perhaps she was, like Lydia a businesswoman.) Likely many Christians would have passed through her town of Cenchrea.

- c. Verses 3, 4. "Greet Prisca (Priscilla) and Aquila." Paul met them at Corinth (Acts 18:2) to which city they had come having left Italy because of Claudius' edict concerning Jews. He stayed with them. (Acts 18:3) They later went with Paul to Ephesus and remained there (Acts 18:18, 19), but by this time they had returned to Rome, Claudius having died. They are Paul's "fellow-workers" but the incident wherein they "risked their necks" for Paul is not recorded. Maybe during the uproar at Ephesus. (Acts 19:23-41) From v. 4a it is evident that they opened up their home for the church. (cf. 1 Cor. 16:19; Col. 4:15; Philemon 2)
- d. Verses 3-15. It is interesting that Paul knows so many people in the church at Rome, never having visited the city, but perhaps many had to leave Rome because of Claudius edict. The fact that so few Jewish names are mentioned does not eliminate this possibility because there is evidence that Jews did indeed use Greek and Roman names. Andronicus and Junias are said to be "outstanding among the apostles" or "of note among the apostles" which likely means that the apostles held them in high estate.
- e. Verse 16. The holy kiss (1 Cor. 16:20; 2 Cor. 13:12; 1 Thess 5:26; 1 Pet. 5:14) was a customary way of extending a warm greeting (Lk 7:45) "(t)he near-east mode of salutation as handshaking in the Western...Men kissed men and women kissed women." (Robertson) The emphasis is upon the holiness of the kiss. "All the churches of Christ (visited by Paul) greet you."

Chapter 16:17-20 - A Warning in Closing

(The inclusion of these warning verses between greeting the brethren at Rome [vs 1-16] and sending greetings to Rome [v. 21 ff] has raised various questions. Some have suggested that these verses are "out of context" and that they do not fit in with the general tone of the epistle. It is suggested that there is nothing in the body of the letter which accounts for this abrupt warning.

Perhaps, having just spoken of the "holy kiss" the kiss of peace Paul feels the need to warn against those who would disturb that peace. Although there have been stern warnings at various points in the letter [e.g. 2:1-5; 3:8; 6:1-3; 9:19, 20; 11:20; 14:15, 16] it may be that Paul's warning does not relate to those within the church at Rome presently, but is a forewarning to the church about errorists who may come to Rome as they have come to other churches. Some think that Paul has in mind the "strong-weak" problem [14:1 - 15:13] but the language here seems much sharper than the tone used in discussing this problem. Moreover since Paul does not identify any particular kind of problem [e.g. Judaism, incipient Gnosticism] it may be best to simply view this warning as a general alert based upon Paul's knowledge that errorists are never far away.)

- a. Verse 16. Citing Rom. 16:17 Thayer says that the word rendered "keep your eye on"/"mark"/"watch out for" (N. A.S.V./K.J.V./N.I.V.) means "to fix one's eyes upon direct one's attention to, any one." R/R have "to observe, to mark, to scrutinize (T) 'to mark and avoid.'" Robertson has "Keep an eye on so as to avoid."
- b. The ones subject to this action are "those who cause dissensions and hindrances..." The word translated "divisions" occurs only here and Gal. 5:20, "An old word for 'standings apart'." (Robertson) The word

"hindrances" is "offence, cause of stumbling." (R/R) The definite article occurs before both (*the* dissensions, *the* hindrances) perhaps suggesting divisions in other churches which the Romans know about.

- c. By "contrary to the teaching which you learned" Paul means that the *divisions* and *hindrances* are contrary to the teaching of unity love and peace found in Christ's doctrine, the gospel. (6:17 cf. 1 Tim. 6:3 ff; 2 Jn 9) Division is a sin. (Ps. 133:1; Jn 17:20, 21; 1 Cor. 1:10) Moreover they are to "turn away from them" from a word meaning "to come away from someone, to shun to avoid." (R/R) Compare this instruction with 1 Tim. 6:3, 4, 5; 2 Jn 10; Gal. 1:8, 9.
- d. Verse 18 begins "For" and explains why such action is to be taken. Such men are not slaves of Christ (as Christians are to be) but of their own (lit.) "bellies" (cf. Phil. 3:19; 1 Tim. 6:3-5) meaning here *their own interests, their own selfish ambitions*. They do not seek the good of the kingdom but feed their own appetites.
- e. The speech of *these men* is "smooth" ("smooth, plausible, fair and insinuating" [R/R]) and "flattering" ("praise, fine speaking, well-chosen [but untrue] words, false eloquence, or flattery." [R/R]) By means of this deceptive speech they "deceive the hearts of the *unsuspecting*" ("unmixed, simple, unsophisticated, innocent." [R/R]) The gullible are prey to the deceptions of the slick flatterers (cf. 2 Cor. 4:2; Eph. 4:14; Gen. 3:1-6; 2 Cor. 11:3; 1 Tim. 2:14)
- f. Verse 19 also begins "For." Paul explains why he warns them. *All* have heard of their "obedience" (1:5; 6:16; 15:18; 16:26) and it would be tragic if anything threatened their fidelity. Paul "rejoices over" them and his warning is so that they will be "wise (in the sense of *alert* and *discerning*) about what is good, and innocent about (in the sense of *immune* to) what is evil." (N.I.V.)
- g. Verse 20. Opposed to the division-makers is the "God of peace" who will help these brethren in the struggle. Behind the division-makers is Satan, who uses them as his agents. (2 Cor. 11:14, 15) If they oppose the division-makers God would "crush Satan" under their feet. (Divine power exercised through faithful men.) Clearly Gen. 3:15 is the background.
- h. Verse 20b. The benediction "The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you" closes the warning but does not close the letter which is unusual.

Chapter 16:21-24 - Greetings from Paul's Companions

Timothy had been with Paul in Macedonia and Achaia (Acts 17-18) and had helped with the Corinthian problems. (1 Cor. 4:17; 16:10) Lucius, Jason and Sosipater are Paul's (Jewish) kinsmen. (possibly those of Acts 13:1; 17:5-7; 20:4) Tertius is Paul's amanuensis and this is all we know of him. Gaius of Corinth, an early convert of Paul's (1 Cor. 1:14) is his host and the reference to his being host to "the whole church" may mean that the church met at his house. Erastus (likely the same person as the one mentioned in 2 Tim. 4:20) is "city treasurer." Of Quartus we know nothing.

Chapter 16:25-27 - Concluding Doxology

- a. A doxology is an ascription of praise to God. This doxology consists of a single sentence with several parenthetical statements. Paul ascribes "glory forever" to "the only wise God" (v. 27) "who is able to establish you". (v. 25) (The focus upon God's wisdom here is likely due to the fact that Paul is about to discuss the

mystery of God which draws attention especially to His wisdom. [1 Cor. 2:6-13]) The importance of their being so established and able to resist Satan is clear in light of the warning of vs 17-20.

- b. In the parenthetical statements Paul refers to the reasons why God is to be praised, and tells us something about the gospel:

"according to...(Paul's) gospel (the gospel of Christ ["the preaching of Jesus Christ"]) it is God who is able to "establish" them. God is praised because it is Him who strengthens and keeps them firm.

this "gospel" is "according to the mystery which has been kept secret for long ages past." *Mystery* simply means that which has been hidden but is now made known. (cf. Eph. 3:1-6) In the Old Testament period ("long ages past") the gospel had been "hidden." *Now* (i.e. in the Christian age) that mystery is "manifested." It has been "made known to all the nations "By means of " the Scriptures of the (New Testament) prophets."

This was done in obedience to "the commandment of the eternal God" for a purpose - namely "unto obedience of faith." (K.J.V.) By "obedience of faith " is likely meant "the obedience which belongs to the very essence of faith."

- c. Note that this praise is offered "through Jesus Christ."

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