



“The righteous . . . shall grow  
like a cedar in Lebanon”

Psalm 92:12

# Reading Companion to the Book of **Romans**

*“So they read in the book in the law of God . . .  
and caused them to understand the reading”*

Nehemiah 8:8

By  
Bill Daniels

## **Preface**

The contents of this book were the essence of a course taught in the Bible College at New Germany Baptist Church in 2005. In order to present these materials in a form more readily available for further class use we have kept the class divisions used in the course. Therefore listed separately on the following Contents page you will find the starting pages for the 20 class portions as well as for the 16 chapters of the book of Romans.

My own labour in Paul's matchless book of Romans has been such a wonderful study for me, both in the initial preparation for classes and in toiling through it again in moulding these materials into the more useable form in your hands. If the Lord should see fit to bless your heart with some measure of my own benefit from these studies then "*I have no greater joy*"! How I thank our God that He is so able and willing to bless as we earnestly pursue Him in His eternal words.

Bill Daniels

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As well as; “Through the Beloved Book of Books  
A Survey of the New Testament”

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“For I am not ashamed  
of the gospel of Christ:  
for it is the power of God  
unto salvation  
to every one that believeth”

(Romans 1:16)

# **Class 1 – Introduction**

## **The New Testament Epistles**

The book of Romans is the first of the epistles or personal letters of the New Testament (N.T.). In a sense even the gospel of Luke and the book of Acts were epistles sent by Dr. Luke to his friend Theophilus, mentioned in the opening verses of these books (Lk. 1:1-4; Acts 1:1). It is so significant that the Lord would so prominently turn to personal letters as a means to communicate His truth in the N.T., the primary means in fact. How very different this approach from the Old Testament (O.T.), highlighting the change from old covenant to new. Under the O.T. dispensation of law the requirements of God were spelled out in a formal *legal document*, which we know as the Law of Moses. This was enforced with the terrible, commanding presence of the Lord in the smoke and trembling of the Mt. Sinai scene in Exodus 19. In that old era God related to His people by a conditional covenant with detailed terms laid out and the threat and promise of cursing and blessing upon obedience and rebellion spelled out in no uncertain terms. An official arrangement it was, and therefore given as a legal certificate in the formal Law of Moses. *“The law was given by Moses*

...” (Jn. 1:17).

Yet in the new day dawning with the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ it’s a very different story. This N.T. era is notable not for fearful rumbling and trembling, fire and smoke, but for the supremely gracious sacrifice of Jesus Christ on our behalf. Therefore even the approach of the writing is different. Even the way God communicates His new covenant truths is consistent with this change, largely personal letters reflecting more the loving relationship of a friend writing to a friend, as Dr. Luke to Theophilus, offering instruction, kind encouragement, and guidance. Do you see that change? Do you rejoice in it? Does your heart leap with love for our God of grace? “. . . *but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ*” (Jn. 1:17).

Yet I’m intrigued to see the similarities between the Old and New Testaments. The O.T. is set up with history first, poetry at the heart of it, and then prophecy last – 17 books of history, 5 of poetry, and then 17 of prophecy. It comes in looking back to what has gone before and goes out looking ahead to what is yet to come. Even so the N.T. reflects something of the same, with its 5 books of history first, then the 21 epistles, and then again coming out the end with the prophecy of Revelation. The



epistles at the heart of the N.T. are perhaps in some sense comparable to the O.T. middle portion of poetry, giving instruction or guidance yet through an approach more personal and expressive of emotion.

Now of the 21 N.T. epistles 13 were written by the Apostle Paul, with the author of Hebrews an uncertainty. There was clearly some purposeful ordering of these epistles in their placement in the N.T. Obviously Paul's epistles stand first, then the general epistles of Hebrews through to Jude. Perhaps Hebrews was put first among the general epistles partly due to the question of Paul's involvement in the writing of it. And then among Paul's 13, first come those letters written to churches (Romans to II Thessalonians), followed by those written to individuals (Timothy to Philemon). Within these two main groups of church and individual epistles Paul's letters stand in order from longest to shortest. Galatians is the one exception, being a few verses shorter than Ephesians yet preceding it in order. Within the first group written to churches, first come those with a basic theme of salvation (Romans to Galatians). This is likely the reason for slightly shorter Galatians standing before Ephesians, keeping together those of a like theme. And of this group with a salvation theme the

foundational book of Romans stands first.

## **The Author**

His Hebrew name was Saul and his Greek name Paul or Paulos. The turning point of his name usage from Saul to Paul is in Acts 13:9 when Paul began his ministry to the Gentile world on the island of Cyprus. From then on in Acts and in all of his epistles he is Paul, except when telling the story of his conversion. Some see in his name change a reflection of some life change, as Jacob to Israel at Peniel or Simon to Peter when meeting Jesus. Perhaps this is true in a sense. Paul set off on his life's work at this change point as the apostle to the Gentiles. More likely it merely reflects a proximity change, his focus having moved from Hebrew to Greek speaking world.

Paul was born in the city of Tarsus of the province of Cilicia in southeast Asia Minor (modern Turkey), probably at about the time of Christ's birth. He learned the trade of tent-making as a young man in Tarsus, and then was trained as a Jewish rabbi or teacher under the famous Jewish professor, Gamaliel, in Jerusalem. In this school of learning young Saul excelled (Gal. 1:13-14). After the martyrdom of faithful Stephen (Acts 7) Paul became

something of a leader in the persecution of the early church, until his conversion to Christ on the Damascus road (Acts 9). God so thoroughly turned the man around in his salvation that he went from leading in the *destruction* of the church to leading in its *construction*.

Paul's letters were written during the many years of his missionary travels throughout the Roman world, the story of it beginning in Acts 13. Some of his letters were written from prison in Rome, referred to as the "Prison Epistles" (Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, & Philemon). His 2<sup>nd</sup> epistle to Timothy as well was written from prison, Paul's last Roman imprisonment before he was martyred, though this book is usually classed with the Pastoral Epistle of I & II Timothy and Titus. After his 3<sup>rd</sup> missionary journey Paul was attacked by the Jews in Jerusalem. He was held for a couple years by Roman governors in Caesarea, eventually ending up in Rome. There he apparently wrote the four Prison Epistles. Though the record of Acts ends there it seems Paul was later released and ministered for a few more years until he was taken by Rome a second time. It was apparently then that he wrote the book of II Timothy before he was finally executed for his faith.

## The Book

Paul's epistle to the believers at Rome is an absolutely priceless treasure. How immeasurably the Lord has used this great book in my own life over the years. One writer called Romans "*the most profound book in existence*". Martin Luther referred to this book as "*the chief part of the New Testament and the very purest gospel*". Men often so describe this matchless book.

The book of Romans brings to man both great promise and great disappointment. Disappointment to all who seek to work out their own righteousness before God in all of the countless human variations on that theme. For the Lord through Paul makes very clear to all, whether Jew or Gentile, that every effort to justify self before God will most certainly fail, for all have "*come short of the glory of God*". Yet as well in this book of Romans the Lord brings most strongly to man the promise of the very righteousness of God to all who are willing to receive it as a gift from God through faith in Jesus Christ.

It appears that Paul wrote this book at the tail end of his third missionary journey around 56 A.D., at the beginning of Emperor Nero's rule. It seems he

wrote from Corinth before sailing to his first captivity beginning in Jerusalem, perhaps during the “*three months*” referred to in Acts 20:3 (compare postscript & 16:1-2). Paul wrote “*to all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints*” (1:7). The believing readers in Rome would have been a mixed group of both Jews (2:17) and Gentiles (1:13), the church having begun there perhaps through the Jewish “*strangers of Rome*” (Acts 2:10) saved on the day of Pentecost at the first, and then returning to that capitol city with Jesus Christ in their hearts and the gospel on their lips. Earnest witnesses who could not be silenced. Paul had yet to personally go as far west as Rome when he wrote to the believers there. It would take him about two or three years from the time of writing to get out there. And he would arrive there through a most unexpected means, with the Roman government paying the tab.

When you *run from* God’s word,  
as Jonah preferred,

You pay the ship’s fare,  
but get mostly nowhere.

When you *walk by* God’s word,  
as this apostle preferred,

The world buys your ticket,  
to just where you did wish it!

Paul got an all-expenses-paid whirlwind trip to just where he was wanting to go.

## **The Message**

Paul wrote the book of Romans to explain the meaning of the gospel to both Jew and Gentile (chap. 1-11) and then to apply God's so great salvation to practical Christian living (chap. 12-15). There was confusion in the minds of Jews and proselytes (Gentiles converted to the Jewish religion). They had thought the Law of Moses to be God's final word in expressing His will for man. Therefore the initial insistence of the Jewish church that Gentile Christians be circumcised and keep the Mosaic Law (Acts 15). They thought that whatever else God did or added, it must include that already done or given by God. There was need for someone to explain how the new dispensation with its gospel message of grace related to the old with its legal message of covenant conditions. There was need for someone to explain what advantage it was to be a Jew in this new dispensation, with all now seemingly united in God's blessing in Jesus Christ by faith. There was need for someone to explain how the righteousness of God received by faith related to the righteousness of God lived out in keeping the Mosaic Law. There was need for

someone to explain what had become of all the promises God had made to the nation of Israel. This apostle was that someone, appointed and sent by God to bring explanation to a waiting world.

The burden of the Lord in this great book is the message of man's salvation in Jesus Christ, and more particularly that man's justification before God does not rest on the keeping of the Law of Moses or on the keeping of any code but on the mercy of God in Jesus Christ. Man's justification is not a matter of law-keeping at all because man's sinful nature will not allow him to live up to God's holiness as expressed in His law. Man's record is one of utter failure in this! This failure of man the Lord will fully expose within the first three chapters of this book. Man's right standing before God, his justification, his cleansing, his forgiveness, is not a matter of what *man* has done or can do, but a matter of what *God* in His grace has done for mankind through the coming and sacrifice of Jesus Christ. That's the essence of the first major portion of Romans, chapters 1-11.

As a result of all the treasure trove of what we now have in Jesus Christ, He deserves our wholehearted loyalty and devotion. This is the essence of the second major portion, chapters 12-15.

Thus the book is divisible into four main parts;

- Opening statements – 1:1-17.
- Doctrinal instruction – 1:18-11:36.
- Practical instruction – 12:1-15:13.
- Closing comments – 15:14-16:27.

The key portion of the book is **1:16-17**;

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

## **Overview**

**Chapters 1-3:20** – The Need of Salvation – God’s  
Condemnation

Though the thrust of the book is the *salvation* of man, Paul begins by displaying with all clarity man’s desperate *need* of salvation. There’s a lesson here. *Bad news before good news!* You’ll lead nobody to rescue who does not first know with all assurance that he is lost. This is where God through the apostle began and thus where we must



begin.

- 1:18-32 – Pagan world condemned. Herein is the revelation of God’s wrath against sinners (vs. 18), for His sufficient revelation of Himself “*in them*” (vs. 19) and in creation (vs. 20) is such that all are “*without excuse*” (vs. 20). The unsaved world is condemned, not because of their *ignorance*, but because of their conscious choice to *reject* the ample light given to them (compare John 3:18-21).
- 2:1-16 – The self-righteous condemned. All are guilty of some aspects of the darkness of chapter 1. Not one of us is fit to condemn others.
- 2:17-3:8 – Jews condemned. While nodding in agreement of all said so far, their own outward religion was without inward righteousness as well.

*“For we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin” (3:9)*

- 3:9-20 – All mankind condemned together. Every soul is left helpless, hopeless, and speechless, without argument or excuse before a holy God (vs. 19). And without recourse to the law, which is able to save *none!* (vs. 20).

**Chapters 3:21-5:21** – “*But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested*”

- 3:21-31 – Justification explained. Though sin demands judgment, God took upon Himself the punishment of our sin in the person of Jesus Christ. It is the vital explanation of how God can “*be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus*”.

God’s righteousness is not slain,  
That we His mercy might attain.

Thus God has brought “*unto all and upon all them that believe*” among sinful men the ability to be declared righteous or justified.

- Chap. 4 – Examples of justification. Justification is not a matter of *works* (4:1-8), for Abraham (vs. 1-5) and David (vs. 6-8) were justified by faith without works. Justification is not a matter of *marks* (4:9-25), for Abraham was circumcised (Gen. 17:9ff) after he was justified by faith (Gen. 15:6).
- Chap. 5 – Experience of justification. When we were helpless (vs. 6), and sinners (vs. 8), and enemies (vs. 10) we were reconciled (vs. 10-11). What Adam, the natural head of the human race, *did* through his sin, Jesus

Christ, the spiritual Head, *undid* through His righteousness (vs. 12-21).

Here is the great provision of God and the good news of the gospel. Though man is what he is, hopelessly and helplessly rotten to the core, stained and guilty before God, yet the Lord found a way in His great love that man might be made right through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Man's only right response is to believe on Jesus. God's response to man's faith is to *account* that believing one righteous and rescued from bondage and completely pardoned.

### **Chapters 6-8** – Victorious Christian Living – God's Sanctifying Power

- 6:1-7:6 – Victory over sin's power.

New Life – We are dead with Christ to sin and alive with Christ to God (6:1-11).

New Master – We are no longer wilful slaves of sin but willing servants of righteousness (6:12-23).

- 7:7-25 – The ongoing battle with two natures now at work in the believer.
- Chap. 8 – The Spirit of God our inward source

of power and victory.

### **Chapters 9-11** – What About Israel? –

#### Sovereign God & Responsible Man

The nation of Israel had been the focus of God's special attention since Gen. 12. Here is now the explanation of how this righteousness freely received by faith relates to the Jew and to the keeping of God's law and to the eternal, unbreakable promises of God to the nation of Israel.

- Chap. 9 – God's sovereignty in salvation. God's sovereign working to exclude some Jews and include some Gentiles was His aim from the beginning.
- Chap. 10 – Man's responsibility in salvation. "*Whosoever shall . . .*" (vs. 11, 13). Chapter 9 for the Arminian. Chapter 10 for the Calvinist.
- Chap. 11 – Israel's future salvation. "*God hath not cast away His people*" (11:2). Chapter 11 for the Amillennialist.

### **Chapters 12-15** – How Shall We Then Live?

Paul's focus turns at this point to the matter of practical Christian living. Note how the practice of

the Christian life begins at the peak of devotion (“*living sacrifice*”, 12:1), following after the highest example of Christ’s sacrifice, and supported by a thorough understanding of the greatest truths and blessings *already ours!!!*

- Chap. 12 – God’s servant with *others*.
- Chap. 13 – God’s servant with *governors*.
- Chap. 14 – God’s servant with *brothers*.
- Chap. 15:1-7 – God’s servant’s *example*.

“And declared to be  
the Son of God with power,  
according to the Spirit of holiness,  
by the resurrection from the dead”

(Romans 1:4)

## **Class 2 – Romans 1:1-23**

The Apostle Paul wrote this letter to the believers in Rome many years after his conversion, decades in fact. Yet it's impossible to miss, even in his opening comments, how his marvellous love and wonder in Jesus Christ was still just as vibrant as ever.

Paul wrote this book to believers in Christ, those having found Jesus as their Saviour from sin. Perhaps for this reason he seemed to feel little need to give proofs of the trustworthiness or inspiration of his writing. The sheep recognize the voice of the shepherd. Even so I proceed on the same assumption of little need to prove this writing as from God. Indeed these few chapters before our attention hold some of the most magnificent messages ever falling upon the ears of men. My challenge to you in this course of study is that you might earnestly endeavour to let God speak to you through this book. Through His *“profitable”* Scriptures may He teach you His pure doctrine, reprove your waywardness in thought and practice, correct your path back to the right, instruct you in holding your course in His right way, and lead you to a *“thoroughly furnished”* Christian maturity, not only in right thought and belief, but outwardly *“unto all good works”*.

**1:1** *Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle,  
separated unto the gospel of God,*

---

*“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works”*  
(II Tim. 3:16-17).

**1:1-7** – Paul’s Greeting.

Vs. 1 – Three-fold description of himself;

- “*A servant of Jesus Christ*” – The image here is of the willing bond-slave of Ex. 21:1-6, one actually giving himself to his master’s ownership, having no time, possessions, or plans of his own. Yet this is no irksome thing in Christ, but a willing thing. For we, as all of Saul’s house, “*were but dead men before*” our King and Judge (II Sam. 19:28). But now in Christ we are purchased to life with the price of Christ’s own precious blood shed on our behalf. Jesus Himself is our example of full surrender to His Father (Ps. 40:6-8; Heb. 10:5ff; Isa. 50:5).
- A called apostle – “*Called*” speaks of Paul’s



divine appointment. The word “*apostle*” means one who is sent, speaking of his divine commission. All in Christ are in some sense sent as ambassadors to plead for the reconciliation of the lost in Christ’s stead (II Cor. 5:20).

- “*Separated unto the gospel of God*” – Separated is set apart, selected (Acts 13:2), or severed both from all that would diminish the impact of our message and to the Lord and the eternal well-being of others. Were we more consumed with what we’re to be separated *unto* we’d have less trouble discerning what to separate *from*. Yet most Christian debate seems strangely centred in the more negative question of things to be avoided. When once it became my desire to truly bow to Jesus Christ and glorify Him in my life, most questions dried up as to rights and wrongs of “Christian” drink, hair length, discos, carnal music, etc. I knew then of the One to whom I belonged and therefore of things inconsistent with His holy character!

Paul presents himself in these opening words as one who was utterly bound up in Jesus Christ and preoccupied with Him.

**1:2** (*Which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures,*)

**1:3** *Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh;*

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Other ways to render Pauls three self-descriptions;

- Servant – Sent – Separated.
- God’s own – Going – Gospel.
- Owned – Honoured – Occupied.
- Christ’s – Commissioned – Consumed.

Vs. 2 – *Who* was doing the promising through those O.T. prophets? *Whose* prophets were they? With Paul, what must we think of the writings of God’s prophets except that they are the words of God Himself? And notice that the essence of the gospel, eternal rescue from sin’s condemnation through faith in God’s promise, is there in the prophetic writings of the O.T. The gospel message was no new innovation, no N.T. human invention, but God’s intention from the start, rooted in the old. Paul later commented to Timothy of that old Book so “*able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus*” (II Tim. 3:15). Peter too expands on this in Acts 10, that “all the

- 1:4** *And declared to be the Son of God with power,  
according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection  
from the dead:*
- 1:5** *By whom we have received grace and apostleship, for  
obedience to the faith among all nations, for his  
name:*
- 

*prophets witness*” of Jesus, “*that through His name  
whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of  
sins*” (vs. 42-43). Both the *Person* of Jesus Christ  
and the *provision* of His salvation by faith were  
“*promised afore by His prophets*”. Compare Lk.  
24:26-27, 44.

Vs. 3 – That Jesus became “*the seed of David  
according to the flesh*” speaks both of His humanity  
and royalty, His royal right to the throne of David,  
fulfilling the Davidic Covenant (II Sam. 7).

Vs. 4 – Yet through His resurrection Jesus was  
“*declared*” or set forth distinctly to be “*the Son of  
God*” by the Spirit. Christ’s deity was openly  
established as a settled fact through that crowning  
event of all history in His victory over death. Jesus  
is manifestly man through His birth, and shown  
distinctly divine through His resurrection.

Vs. 5 – Jesus is that means “*by whom*” man

**1:6** *Among whom are ye also the called of Jesus Christ:*  
**1:7** *To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

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receives both God's *mercy* and His *mission*. Comparing the last phrase of this verse, "for His *name*", we find our everything is both through and for Christ. From the first words both this epistle and apostle are all about Jesus Christ!

The aim or purpose of Paul's mission was "*obedience to the faith among all nations*". He begins and ends this epistle on that same note (16:26). There is a very close connection between faith and obedience (10:16; 15:18, 31). To not believe on Jesus Christ is not simply to remain unconvinced. It is to refuse the obedience of faith. It is never a case of a faulty convincer, but only of a faulty hearer who stubbornly refuses to hear, perceive, and believe.

Vs. 6 – The "*called*" (vs. 1) writes to the "*called*" (also vs. 7).

Vs. 7 – The word "*saint*" is a common N.T. term, referring to *all* believers as those set apart or

**1:8** *First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.*

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separated *from* the world and *to* the Lord (compare vs. 1). That they were called as saints highlights God's part in so placing them. A man does not become a saint by human earning through saintly behaviour or human appointment. "*Ye must **be** born again*" (Jn. 3:7). God grants the placement. It's man's to but believe. And every true saint or son is "*beloved of God*", for "*He hath made us accepted in the beloved*" (Eph. 1:6).

"*Grace to you and peace*" – In that order! Only by first receiving God's grace can one come to true peace, both "*peace with God*" in reconciliation to Him (5:1), Jesus "*having made peace through the blood of His cross*" (Col. 1:20), and "*the peace of God*", which the anxious, despairing world cannot explain in the Christian's experience (Phil. 4:6-9).

### **1:8-15** – Paul's Introduction.

Vs. 8-9 – His prayer for them. Behold the vibrant faith and fervency of this church. Out of that crossroads city of the Roman Empire their

**1:9** *For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers;*

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testimony had become known throughout the land.

Note that there is no indication of the numerical size of that church at Rome or of their rate of growth, only of their far-reaching witness. Obviously church size and growth have nothing to do with impact on our world. May it be so with our church as well! Whether a large congregation or small, may our imprint for Christ on our world be great indeed!

Don't miss how the impact of this church is put side-by-side here with the unceasing prayers of this apostle for them. "*The effectual fervent prayer*" of this righteous man availed much (James 5:16). When will we learn this vital lesson, that when God's people pray for the work of God's church He hears and works and magnifies the ministry? Paul was so fervent in his love and service "*of you all*". He could honestly say before the Lord that it was his unvarying practice to pray for those believers he had never even visited. So consumed was his heart after God's own! And Paul's service for God was not

**1:10** *Making request, if by any means now at length I might have a prosperous journey by the will of God to come unto you.*

---

merely a superficial thing. He could say, “*I serve with my spirit in the gospel of His Son*”. To serve in spirit speaks of;

- The ministry of sincerest private prayer. Though as yet denied access to the believers at Rome, Paul had been ministering to them in spirit all along.
- A true work of God to the core of the man.
- His inner passion consistent with his outward practice.
- A genuinely pure thought life.

Vs. 10-13 – His desire and effort to see them.

Vs. 10 – Part of Paul’s prayer concern for them was that the Lord might make a way for him to visit them. The Lord eventually answered that prayer, but neither *when* nor in the *way* Paul likely expected or might have preferred. When I’m sincerely “*a servant of Jesus Christ*” it’s mine to accept both the means and moments of the Lord’s

**1:11** *For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you  
some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established;*

---

answer. Had the Lord sooner given Paul an open door to Rome there would likely have been no need for this blessed letter, for Paul would have had occasion to teach these great truths in person. God knew what He was doing didn't He? Our right response to heavenly silence is to simply continue to watch, wait, and work for our God.

Vs. 11-12 – Paul longed after their best as a mother for the welfare of her own child (I Thess. 2:7-8). He longed to perfect whatever might be lacking in their faith (I Thess. 3:10). The “*some spiritual gift*” Paul wished to impart likely referred to any and every spiritual comfort or knowledge or benefit he might bring; things miraculous, encouragements as those brought in this letter, the blessing of sound teaching. All toward the purpose that their souls by every means might be established and built up in the faith.

.....

## **On the Side**

N.B. how Paul understood the spiritual gifts given



**1:12** *That is, that I may be comforted together with you  
by the mutual faith both of you and me.*

---

to him to be used entirely for the benefit of others, not for his own private use or pleasure. Spiritual gifts are never for that purpose. Compare in I Pet. 4:10 & I Cor. 13 the focus on love, in I Cor. 14 the focus on edifying, and in I Cor. 12 the purpose statement for spiritual gifts being *“to profit withal”* (vs. 7).

.....

Paul’s was a genuine love for his brother, always actively seeking the very best for the other (Phil. 2:3-5) as he would for himself (Matt. 22:37). And this for people he didn’t even know personally on the whole. How very different we can be, wearing our offence so close to the surface, so self-oriented, consumed with our own things rather than with the concerns of others. How many a Christian has remained fruitless in ministry attempts until finally gripped with a genuine God-given love for others. I am refreshed and rebuked anew with this example of a true lover of souls!

Vs. 13 – Paul’s interest in them was not just empty

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

**1:14** *I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise.*

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words or wishes. He had actually made the effort to go to them on several occasions but had been hindered in one way or another, either by the Lord (Acts 16:6-7) or by Satan (I Thess. 2:18). Remember how Satan's efforts to hinder the work in Galatia through the corrupting work of the Judaizers backfired on the evil one as well, leaving us with that superb little corrective gem in Paul's Galatians epistle. God turns Satan's every stumbling block into a stepping stone for His truth!

Vs. 14-15 – His gospel enthusiasm.

*"I am debtor"* – Paul felt duty bound. His was a love obligation to the Lord as *"a brand plucked out of the fire"*. Freely he had received, freely he gave. The treasure of God's grace committed to Paul he did not consider to be for his own enjoyment but to be passed on to others. He was more river channel than reservoir.

**1:15** *So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also.*

**1:16** *For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.*

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*“Greeks . . . barbarians”* – Whether cultured or crass.  
*“Wise . . . unwise”* – Stunning or stupid. Paul refused the influence of race considerations in his service of the Lord and others, seeing all men without preference or partially.

**1:16-17** – Paul’s Theme.

Vs. 16 – *“I am not ashamed”* – There was no blush in this man to stand resolutely beside Jesus Christ, that One not ashamed to be called his God (Heb. 11:16). There was no slightest hesitation in Paul to declare his faith in Christ or the essential need of the same for all men. No tendency to shrink from defence of his faith. He knew beyond all doubting that the message of Christ transcended by far every cleverest human invention, every false belief system, every manmade philosophy, and every lofty human honour.

The gospel message is like no other communication known to man, for *“it is the power of God unto*

**1:17** *For therein is the righteousness of God revealed  
from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live  
by faith.*

---

*salvation*". It is a living, enlivening message, carrying in it, as a divine seed, the power to supply salvation to every believing soul. It is that very Word of God, so "*quick [alive], and powerful*" and penetrating (Heb. 4:12). It is that "*word of God, which liveth and abideth forever*", issuing new birth to all who believe, as incorruptible seed (I Pet. 1:23). "*This is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you*" (I Pet. 1:25).

Vs. 17 – The gospel reveals the very righteousness of God, coming to a man not through his own righteous acts but "*from faith to faith*", literally "out of faith into faith". It is a righteousness available to man through Christ's work on the cross, "out of" or stemming from a man's faith, and "into" or resulting in faithfulness or a faith-filled new life. The righteousness of God does not come to a man through faithfulness but *results* in it. It is not a salvation or righteousness through man's works at all, but "*the just shall live by faith*". This quoted from the prophet Habakkuk (Hab. 2:4), helping to confirm Paul's words in vs. 2 and expressing the

**1:18** *For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven  
against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men,  
who hold the truth in unrighteousness;*

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central theme of this epistle and of the whole of God's Book of books. Those truly made righteous before God are made so *by faith* in Christ alone apart from the works of God's law. Indeed, through Jesus "*all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses*" (Acts 13:39). Here is the very core and kernel of the Apostle Paul's message in this book. Here is the match that lit the flame of Martin Luther's heart, spreading to light the way of the Protestant Reformation. And this central core of the gospel becomes the acid test of every supposed message of deliverance. Any system of salvation that does not incorporate this message *is a lie!* Any other "gospel" skewed on this fundamental principle is anathema or "*accursed*" (Gal. 1:6-9). This is the very thrust of the book of Galatians.

### **1:18-23** – Wrath Revealed.

Paul now begins to consider man's need for God's righteousness. As Isaiah's prophecy begins with a display of the wretched condition of sinful man, so

**1:19** *Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them.*

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Paul now shows how all mankind is without his own righteousness, both in outward actions and *to the core!!* This remains Paul's direction, coming at it from many an angle, until finally he leaves man without answer or option in 3:20. His focus through the remainder of this chapter is the pagan heart and response.

Vs. 18 – The negative contrast of vs. 17. Where vs. 17 revealed the *righteousness* of God to *receivers*, vs. 18 now reveals the *wrath* of God to *rejecters*. *You have the choice of two options!* God's entire being is so utterly opposed to all that is evil that His sure wrath is the result of it. "*Ungodliness*" refers to that attitude of irreverence toward God that refuses to see His true worth. It will not love and worship God! "*Unrighteousness*" refers to actions toward men, which refuse purity or justice. It will not love and serve men! And by such vices godless men *hold back*, suppress, stifle the forward progress of God's truth on earth, thus diminishing opportunities for others to hear and believe.

Vs. 19 – Things can be known of God of which *all*

**1:20** *For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:*

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men have access, things God affirms to be quite evident to all for He Himself has done the manifesting “*in them*”, in their hearts and minds. It’s why the Lord repeatedly proclaims a fool that one who “*hath said in his heart, There is no God*” (Ps. 14:1; 53:1), for such morons deny what they themselves know in their own heart of hearts cannot be denied.

Vs. 20 – Even truths about God impossible to perceive with our eyes are self-evident, things of God not only perceived through human senses but fully understood by human minds. Things such as God’s power and divine nature (“*Godhead*”), evident from the very beginning of man’s existence on earth in God’s creation. The orderly intricacy and magnificence of creation is a ceaseless sermon to the greater magnificence of its Creator, for “*the heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth forth His handiwork*” (Ps. 19:1-4). And this communication spills over every language barrier, leaving every soul ever existing upon earth “*without*

**1:21** *Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.*

**1:22** *Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools,*

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*excuse” of ignorance and without defence before the “Judge of living and dead”.*

Vs. 21-22 – “*When they knew God*” – Literally “having known God”. All know fully well of His existence and magnificence. This God assumes. Yet their pride and self-importance will not allow them to sincerely thank and praise God for His true glory and importance. Refusing to acknowledge God’s provision in everything they deny gratitude. Refusing to acknowledge God’s worth their self-estimation soars. Refusing to acknowledge God’s will they exalt self-will. Compare that first warning of the book of Hebrews against the danger of *NEGLECT* (Heb. 2:1-3). God’s evaluation of such human response to the obvious is sharp and exact, “*They became fools*”.

“*Their foolish heart was darkened*” – Deceivers (vs. 18) now deceived. Proclaiming themselves a light, their hearts are darkened, having begun to lose the ability to even distinguish between rights and



**1:23** *And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things.*

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wrongs. Putting it poetically;

                  Their hearts darkened,  
          They proclaim themselves a light;  
                  Having lost the ability  
          To distinguish wrong from right!

Vs. 23 – Here is idolatry’s downward spiral. The glory of God is reduced first to the imperfections of mortal man, then down to birds of the heaven, then to beasts of the earth, then even to vile crawling creatures. Man’s way to paganism is *downward*, away from the one true God of heaven. Pagan man cannot tolerate a close, personal knowledge of God, or he begins to feel the heat of God’s wrath toward the sin he so loves. Rejecting man finds it necessary therefore to take a middle road, feeling the need both to satisfy his desire for worship of a higher being, yet at the same time to supply less intimidating beings as “deities” in between himself and the true Lord of glory. This is the engine of idolatry. And this trend is never by ignorance, only

by arrogance. It is never that man *could* not know, only that he *would* not know. With the result that God begins to corrupt rejecting man's faculty of knowing, darkening his foolish heart. Because he *would not* know when he could know, he now *cannot* know what he should know!

Lofty man thinks to *lift* himself by refusing to exalt the God of glory, but in fact he only *lowers* himself to the level of a fool, stupidly ascribing worth to lesser beings below himself rather than to that only One truly worthy! While proclaiming their intelligence, such men *insult* intelligence, showing themselves truly dense!

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## **Ponder Points**

Romans 1:17 is one of a trio of N.T. portions where Habakkuk 2:4 ("*the just shall by faith*") is quoted.

**Romans 1:17**, highlighting the Romans theme of "*the just*" – that glorious gospel message wherein "*the righteousness of God is revealed*" and received by every believing soul.

**Galatians 3:11**, highlighting the Galatians theme of "*the just shall live*" – that a soul both begins *and*

lives or continues in Christ by faith. *“Having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?”* (Gal. 3:3).

**Hebrews 10:38**, highlighting the Hebrews theme of *“the just shall by faith”* – that essential principle for life and life eternal is faith, the very *“substance of things hoped for”* and *“evidence of things not seen”*.

“God gave them over  
to a reprobate mind,  
to do those things  
which are not convenient”

(Rom. 1:28)

## **Class 3 – Romans 1:24-2:16**

In our last class we began to consider God's just condemnation of sinful man in the second half of Romans 1. In vs. 18 the Apostle Paul spoke of God's wrath revealed "*against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men*". *Ungodliness* refers to a man's unwillingness to worship or acknowledge God or to see His worth. *Unrighteousness* refers to a man's practice of evil. The first speaks of one's attitude toward the Lord, the second of his attitude and actions in opposition to God's right. Paul then began first to focus upon the *ungodliness* of men in vs. 19-23. In man's refusal to acknowledge the true God he replaces Him with the false. Now, beginning in vs. 24 and through the end of Romans chapter 1, Paul centres on the *unrighteousness* of men in thought and deed. The implication is clear. A wrong *attitude* toward the Lord leads down to evil *thoughts and actions*. The evil of God-denial is no idle principle. Once allowed a claw-hold in a life, as a virulent seed, it enters with a will to progress.

**1:24-32** – Ungodliness Handed Over to Unrighteousness.

Vs. 24 – "*Wherefore*" – Because of man's conscious rejection of God and refusal to acknowledge or

**1:24** *Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves:*

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honour Him (vs. 19-21), and because of foolish man's resolve to replace true God with false (vs. 23), there results a righteous repayment from God.

*"God also gave them over"* – He abandoned or handed them over to *"uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts"*. He ceased to hold them back from their own lust any longer. A man's lust after evil arises from his refusal of the Lord's presence and praise, and there comes a point when the Lord pulls back the restraints on such a one, turning from the one turning from Him. When the Lord finally gives you up to your darkest dream-come-true it marks a further downward plunge toward facing God's wrath in fullest measure. Compare Ps. 81.

Idolaters are infamous for their shameful dishonouring of *"their bodies between [among] themselves"*. The basest forms of immorality have often been found within the occult and idolatry. As they had shamefully handled God in their hearts, so they now dishonour their own bodies as well. Paul

**1:25** *Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen.*  
**1:26** *For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature:*

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indicated that the secret deeds of such as these are too shameful to even speak of (Eph. 5:12).

Vs. 25 – The inward worship and outward religious service of anything other than the Lord honours “*creature more than* [rather than] *Creator*”, for God created all. Ascribing divine worth to any such lesser being is “*a lie*”, and marks a heart making an utterly foolish exchange.

“*The Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen*” – Here is the heart of faith putting honour where it is due, and expressing true worship in spite of the claims of ignorant deniers and false religionists. The true God of creation is God alone, and ever dwells in the praises of His people. Amen!

Vs. 26 – A repeat and expansion on vs. 24, as vs. 25 is of vs. 23. Paul takes a couple turns around this downward tailspin.

Because men exchange the truth of God so clearly revealed to them for lying gods and lies about God, the Lord again hands them over to “*vile affections*”, or passions of dishonour. There then follows the most obvious description of homosexuality, both among women and men, such that none can fairly deny that homosexual sin is what God describes here as “*vile affections*”. The practice of homosexuality exchanges what is natural for “*that which is against nature*”. God Himself proclaims this evil way, not only against *Him* (“*vile*”), but “*against nature*”.

Now what can we think of a nation legitimatizing such abnormal “*vile affections*”? Can we not see in this direction God’s handing over of our nation? South Africa has joined the wicked ranks of Sodom & Gomorrah, and that world before Noah’s Flood, and the Canaanites whose iniquity had become full, and the Roman Empire. All following the same dangerous downward drift, lining ourselves up for destruction.

Vs. 27 – Men unrighteously and unnaturally enflamed in their lust for men. In counselling a homosexual young man a few years back he described exactly this enflamed lust for other men.



**1:27** *And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet.*

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*“Leaving the natural use”* – Don’t miss the great *emphasis* here in vs. 26-27. This perverted passion never expresses one’s *natural* tendency as the “gay” community would have us believe. The practice of homosexuality is as *unnatural* as it is *ungodly*. As is apparent in this context, a homosexual leaning arises directly out of a denial of God, not out of a man’s natural bent. In fact all forms of unrighteous filth are rooted in that same denial. Consider then the absolute confusion in the idea of “gay” churches and “gay” devotion to the Lord. Such terms are mutually exclusive, like speaking of a dry water droplet or square circle or hot snowflake.

As well, we’re told here that homosexuality works or practices *“that which is unseemly”*, what is shameful or indecent. Compare Gen. 19:5; Lev. 18:22; I Cor. 6:9. And those so involved ultimately receive a just pay-back for the evil of *“their error”*.

Vs. 28 – *“Reprobate mind”* – The term speaks of a head beyond help, past the point of no return. The

**1:28** *And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient;*  
**1:29** *Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers,*

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Greek word used here carries the notion of “rejected” or “worthless”. Those who consider God unworthy of their minds God soon hands over to an unworthy mind. Since God was considered by them unfit to know, they lost the capacity to truly know or discern what is fit. Those thinking themselves approved are unapproved by that One they disapproved, rejected by the One they rejected. Man in his denial brings upon himself an end consistent with his evil.

Vs. 29-32 – The unrighteous end product of God’s rejection

Vs. 29 – “*Being filled*” – Showing the depth and extent of the inner rot. All of us see our own reflection in some facets of this portrait of evil.

“*Covetousness*” – The grasping desire to have more.

“*Maliciousness*” – General vicious character.

**1:30** *Backbiters, haters of God, spiteful, proud,  
boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to  
parents,*

**1:31** *Without understanding, covenantbreakers, without  
natural affection, implacable, unmerciful:*

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*“Debate”* – Loving to be at odds in contentions.

*“Malignity”* – Fault-finding meanness that always  
tends to read in others the same destructive bent.

*“Whisperers”* – Subtle, secret slanderers.

*“Backbiters”* – Those who more openly speak bad of  
others in their absence.

*“Haters of God”* – Beyond merely the disregard of  
God characteristic of the ungodly, here are those  
who *abhor* God as we should abhor evil.

*“Spiteful”* – Insolently hurtful of others.

*“Disobedient to parents”* – Obstinate refusing  
compliance to those first, God-appointed  
authorities.

*“Covenantbreakers”* – Faithlessly refusing to abide  
by one’s word.

*“Without natural affection”* – Lacking natural  
parental or family love.

**1:32** *Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.*

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*“Implacable”* – Refusing to be persuaded away from hostilities to peace, unmoveable.

It’s a picture of souls without even the smallest crack for the light of God to shine in. Perhaps without even the ability to be convicted of wrong anymore. None comes to such a condition without opportunity after opportunity rejected.

Vs. 32 – While fully aware of God’s judgment aimed at all who practice such things, not only do they actively participate in such evil without apology, but they approve, encourage, applaud, help others in the same. These just don’t care what God thinks!

Beware of what you are led to delight in through television, films, and literature. Are we not often led by such means to enjoy and even applaud evil?

Harry Ironside relates an account of a Chinese teacher who once expressed to a missionary his insistence that the Bible could not be a very old book, because Romans 1 so closely describes

Chinese life. He felt the chapter could only have been produced after the missionary had become fully acquainted with his people. This wouldn't be the first time God's clear insight and the truth of His words was used by natural man in denying His truth rather than affirming it.

Thus the Lord through His apostle pulls back the curtain on the evil heart and life of pagan man in this chapter. He fully exposes rejecting men as wilful sinners, hating the light, delighting in unrighteousness borne out of ungodliness, and showing the desperate *need* of the lost for the righteousness that only God can give. Only God can redeem a soul from this!

The principle emphasized in this chapter is that the obscene immoralities of the unrighteous are the natural outcome of their heart turned from the only true God. Even so such filthy living is the evidence of our current God-snubbing generation. Indeed, where is the power to curb our natural passion for evil except in the only true God and His preserving, hindering work in us? And the Lord only holds those who hold to Him. Where is the will to so keep ourselves except in the fear of the Lord, the beginning of wisdom? The denial of God is the first foolish step on the road to fullest folly and shame.

**2:1** *Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things.*

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## **2:1-16** – The Self-righteous Condemned.

Vs. 1 – Paul now turns from the raw pagan, revelling in his unrighteousness, to another class of men. This is now the more sophisticated, self-righteous soul, who has perhaps worn a smug smile through Paul's chapter 1 censures, reckoning himself quite a few notches up from the disgusting brute beasts so aptly exposed there. This now is that class of people who can often be quite critical (*hypocritical*) in their handling of others. These are not folks who have found their refuge in the righteousness of Jesus Christ, but who find a security of their own making in what they consider to be their relatively greater righteousness among men. In judging themselves by their own standard they've come out looking pretty good in comparison to others. These too will now be brought under the same condemnation, "*for thou that judgest doest the same things*". They too in fact do what they are so quick to condemn in others, the secrecy of their private lives no more a sacred sanctuary for the

Lord than the first. If the same deeds are not their practice then actions of a similarly sinful nature are. Though coated with the silver dross of refinement, worldly wisdom, and culture, these too are far from anything like clean before God.

*“Thou art inexcusable . . . whosoever thou art that judgest”.* Does this mean we are always wrong to “judge” or censure others in any way? Is this what Matt. 7:1-5 (*“judge not that ye be not judged”*) means as well? A world of iniquity rejects reproof through such a misuse of the Lord’s words, insisting that any attempt at correction is “judging”, which God forbids. Does that same apply in our approach to our children? The attitude Jesus forbids here is the same as in Matt. 7. Our reproof of others must be with the sincere desire to help, not to hurt, and not without seeing to our own correction first. God wants both your own beam *and* the splinter of the other to be removed, *in that order!* (Matt. 7:5). This is what Jesus meant in Jn. 13 when He spoke of washing our brothers’ feet. Not literally in our sandal-less age, but in the sense of helping to cleanse fellow believers of their sinful ways picked up as they travel through life with the litter of worldliness all around us. Indeed, perhaps one of the greatest incentives in the Christian life toward personal holiness is the God-given desire to

**2:2** *But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things.*

**2:3** *And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God?*

**2:4** *Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?*

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help others to greater holiness.

Note the warnings concerning God's judgment throughout this portion;

**God's judgment is according to truth** (vs. 2). God looks to the heart (I Sam. 16:7), seeing and judging even according to "*the secrets of men*" (vs. 16). He makes no mistakes in judgment.

**God's judgment is inescapable** (vs. 3).

**God's judgment is not voided by grace** (vs. 4). Though God is rich in "*goodness and forbearance and longsuffering*", His kind patience will never cancel His righteous judgment. He "*will not at all acquit the wicked*" (Nahum 1:3). Men often interpret *slow* judgment as *no* judgment, finding license to continue in sin when not immediately hammered for evil (Eccl. 8:11). That the Lord in His



**2:5** *But after thy hardness and impenitent heart  
treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of  
wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of  
God;*

**2:6** *Who will render to every man according to his deeds:*

**2:7** *To them who by patient continuance in well doing  
seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal  
life:*

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grace does not act at once does not mean He condones sin, but that He “*is longsuffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance*” (II Pet. 3:9). And note here that to disregard the purpose of God’s goodness, which is meant to move a soul to repentance before Him, is in fact to *despise* His goodness. If God’s goodness fails to move one to repentance it *worsens* his condition, making him one who tramples God’s goodness as well.

**God’s judgment is treasured up or compounded** (vs. 5). As a great capacitor slowly building a charge for the final bolt. The unsaved soul constantly builds a growing pile of God’s wrath simply by stubbornly refusing repentance and God’s forgiveness of sin in Jesus.

**God’s judgment is according to works** (vs. 6-10). Note the great emphasis upon this here. Paul now

**2:8** *But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath,*  
**2:9** *Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile;*  
**2:10** *But glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile:*  
**2:11** *For there is no respect of persons with God.*

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applies the standard of *God's law*. We sin because we are sinners to the very core of us. And ultimately our judgment will be based upon the offended law of God (Rev. 20:12-13). Human works are a basis of merit before God only insofar as man keeps God's law perfectly (James 2:10). "*Which if a man do, he shall live in them*" (Lev. 18:5). Compare also Neh. 9:29; Ps. 62:12; Prov. 24:12; Jer. 17:10; Matt. 16:27; Rev. 22:12.

**God's judgment is fair** (vs. 11). The Lord is not partial based on any outward factors of nationality, status, position, etc. Again, He fully takes into account even "*the secret things of men*" (vs. 16; Rev. 2:23). Compare vs. 5, "*the righteous judgment of God*".

**God's judgment is according to revealed light** (vs. 12-16). All of the unsaved shall indeed "*perish*", yet there will be some allowance for the

**2:12** *For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law;*  
**2:13** *(For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified.*

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measure of light they had. There is no rescue, as the Jews believed, in *possessing* the light of God's Word, only in proper *response* to it (vs. 13). Having access to the written law of God only increases the condemnation for those refusing to follow its guidance, for Jesus said, "*unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required*" (Lk. 12:48). Again, there is rescue or justification through the law only to those keeping sinless perfection according to it in heart and life. The law's principle is stated again in Christ's words to the lawyer in Lk. 10:28, "*This do and thou shalt live*". Perfect law-keeping justifies a soul before God, if perfection could be found among men, but of course such cannot be found. Paul seeks here to foster the inborn impression in every earnest seeker of the *impossibility* of perfectly meeting the law's requirements. God's law is merely a guide to obvious conclusions for the honest, that "*by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in His sight*" (3:20), and then "*by Him* [Jesus] *all that believe are justified from all things, from which he*

**2:14** *For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves:*  
**2:15** *Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another;)*

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*could not be justified by the law of Moses*” (Acts 13:39). Even Gentiles without access to the written law of God have from God the inward impressions of moral rights and wrongs written in their conscience (vs. 14-15), as well as the witness of creation. Compare the response of the natives on the island of Melita (modern Malta) in Acts 28, who showed a basic natural philosophy of just rewards ultimately catching up with a bad man (vs. 4). Though the precepts of Moses’ Law never fall upon a man’s ears, yet still he carries a sense of just rewards for living in violation of the law of his conscience, which stands in judgment over his heart, either accusing or defending his every thought and action. Man’s conscience is a gift from God to hinder that perilous downward spiral described in 1:24-32. Praise God for our conscience standing in our way! A “seared” or calloused conscience (I Tim. 4:2) is a terrifying thought, for it’s part of God’s hand-over of a soul to the shameful

**2:16** *In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men  
by Jesus Christ according to my gospel.*

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practice of his “*vile affections*”, tumbling to a state of “*being filled with all unrighteousness*”. By the law of their conscience the pagan world shall be judged, who do not know God’s law. The question of whether one ever attains eternal life without the gospel is not under discussion in this portion at all. Man under law is the issue of concern here. Men shall be judged by whatever law they have from God, whether inward or written. And whether inward or written, God’s law is designed to drive a soul to the futility of keeping it perfectly, thus finally casting him upon the Lord for mercy in sincere repentance. Every soul positively responding to the light they have shall have light enough from God to lead them on to life in Jesus Christ.

Vs. 16 seems to pick up from vs. 12 (with a bit of a parenthesis in vs. 13-15). We often see parenthetical thoughts in Paul’s writings, likely demonstrating his eagerness of expression. The Spirit of God who inspired his writing sees no need to keep strict control and careful adherence to proper form in expressing the matchless truths of the gospel of

Jesus Christ.

Whether a man sins with or without the standard of the written law of God, he shall stand before the Judge of *“living and dead”*, He who sees all to judge all with perfect justice, He who sees all that is successfully kept secret before human judges. Of this judgment the Holy Spirit still gives witness in His work of convincing *“the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment”* (Jn. 16:8-11). Every soul will be held fully responsible for what he knew and for what he could have known had he been willing. That Jesus will return as the Judge of men was included in Peter’s gospel message to the house of Cornelius as well (Acts 10:42).

## **Class 4 – Romans 2:17-3:8**

Paul is displaying all men to be under the judgment of God in these early chapters of Romans, one type of soul after another. He began with those who without reservation deny God and live in their sin (1:18-32), they who know they're not right and couldn't care less. He then turned his attention in chapter 2 to those who hold themselves to some standard of right, but a standard of their own making. These are they who show some semblance of an outward rightness, but according to a standard falling far short of God's perfect benchmark. These are the self-righteous who depend upon some religious act(s) to get them to heaven. In the middle of chapter 2 Paul now turns to squarely face the Jewish reader, a special case of the self-righteous. And he brings them under the same condemnation, showing them just as much in need of the righteousness of God as anybody else.

### **2:17-24 – Jew Condemned with Gentile.**

Vs. 17-20 – Their boast.

The Jew knew that his was a chosen race in contrast to all others outside of God's promises, and in this he was correct. Their national history was a

**2:17** *Behold, thou art called a Jew, and retest in the law,  
and makest thy boast of God,*

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long record of many indications of the true God's particular care for them. But alas, out of God's special notice of them arose a general view among them that they were *above* the judgment of God, a class of men untouched by His punishments regardless of their attitude or actions toward the Lord or His words.

Vs. 17 – “*Restest in the law*” – The Jew leaned upon his possession of God's law as evidence of his special standing with the Lord, missing the point that being so entrusted with the light he was expected above all to walk by it.

“*Makest thy boast of God*” – He gloried in knowing of the true God, and rightly so. For indeed every god outside of the God of the Bible is but an empty trust of those “*vain in their imaginations*” with foolish, darkened hearts (1:21). But there is an appropriate glorying in the true God (Isa. 45:25) and there is an empty trust in a surface association with Him that neither lives in His pleasure nor rests in the righteousness that only He can give. Such is a *hollow* boasting that stands with Him in a sense but



**2:18** *And knowest his will, and approvest the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law;*  
**2:19** *And art confident that thou thyself art a guide of the blind, a light of them which are in darkness,*

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has really made no connection with Him. Like boasting of a prominent neighbour as if he were your own father. You may be privileged to live beside him, but he's not your own flesh and blood relation.

Vs. 18 – “*Approvest the things that are more excellent*” – Their knowledge of God's true words made them much more able to discern the best choices in belief and practice. They largely knew the difference between things lawful and approved by God and things not so through the Book in their possession. Knowledge of God's Word always provides the good advantage of this window into the best choices.

Vs. 19-20 – Here is reflected the Jewish persuasion of themselves that they were the sole candle in this dark world. Indeed they were meant by the Lord to be His light, even as the church in this current era. Jesus affirmed to the woman of Samaria that “*salvation is of the Jews*” (Jn. 4:22). The only true

**2:20** *An instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes,  
which hast the form of knowledge and of the truth in  
the law.*

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God has decreed that Saviour, salvation, and Scriptures should come to man through the channel of Israel. Those who deny this do so to their own confusion. But unfortunately the Lord's purpose to so use that nation as a channel of His "*true Light*" and truth was turned by His people into cause for smug superiority, bleeding them of the very heart and purpose of their God. Thus they carried a "*form*" or semblance of true knowledge, yet only an outward façade that failed to penetrate their own hearts (compare I Tim. 1:5-7).

"*Blind*", "*foolish*", and "*babes*" are all terms the Jews would use to describe ignorant Gentiles. Yet they themselves were so ignorant of the words of God in their hands and heads but not in their hearts. So much so that Jesus called their own proud teachers "*fools*" and "*blind guides*" in His Matt. 23 catalogue of woes upon them. For they made "*clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess*" (Matt. 23:25).

**2:21** *Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal?*

**2:22** *Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege?*

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Vs. 21-24 – Their indictment.

Paul now exposes the darkness of these who were meant to be reflectors of God's light. His charge is consistent with Christ's repeated accusation of hypocrisy in them (Matt. 23). If God's words are not for *us* to live by, then we're likely no appropriate channel for preaching His words to others.

Vs. 21 – “*Dost thou steal?*” – The Jewish priests were known for their subtle thieveries. “*Ye devour widows' houses*” Jesus accused the Jewish leaders (Matt. 23:14). Ironside made the comment that, “throughout the ancient world the Jew was looked upon as the arch-thief, using every cunning device known to the money-lender and usurer to part his clients from their wealth”. Yet they would hypocritically agree with God's Word as to the wrong of stealing.

Vs. 22 – “*Dost thou commit adultery?*” – James, in

**2:23** *Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonourest thou God?*

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writing to “*the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad*”, bluntly labelled them “*ye adulterers and adulteresses*” (James 4:4). If not physically then spiritually.

“*Commit sacrilege*” – To rob temples or traffic in idols. Apparently though the Jewish leaders abhorred the contaminations of idols they were not above raiding heathen temples and marketing the valuable idols and paraphernalia seized. Something like despising the liquor trade and refusing to touch alcohol yourself, and even actively attacking bottle stores, seizing their goods and shutting them down, and then turning around and selling the seized liquor for a profit.

Perhaps their committing of sacrilege widens to include the defiling of things truly sacred. Jesus accused the Jews of turning His Father’s temple into “*a den of thieves*” (Matt. 21:13; cf. Jer. 7:11), and the Lord accused them through Malachi of robbing Him directly in denying Him their “*tithes and offerings*” (Mal. 3:8).

**2:24** *For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you, as it is written.*

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Vs. 23 – Though proud possessors of the law of God, through their slack attitude toward the details of it they dishonoured the God of the law.

Vs. 24 – Quoting from the prophets Paul echoes the brave words of Nathan to David in his sin, “*By this deed thou has given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme*” (II Sam. 12:14). Never forget that by our choices for evil “*the name of God is blasphemed [reviled]*” (I Tim. 6:1). Even so on the positive side of it “*all good fidelity*” adorns “*the doctrine of God our Saviour*” (Titus 2:10). “*Let your light so shine before men,*” Jesus said, “*that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven*” (Matt. 5:16).

Now the honest hearted Jew would have heard the Apostle’s words both with his heart affirming his guilt and his head raising questions. Would it not be true that he was in some way exempt from the judgments of the law through his relation to Abraham and his physical sign of the covenant in circumcision? Wouldn’t he be in some way different from the common run of men? Somehow higher?

**2:25** *For circumcision verily profiteth, if thou keep the law: but if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision.*

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Could a circumcised man actually end up in hell? The Jews commonly believed such to be impossible. Their attitude can be seen in rabbinical writings such as, “No circumcised man shall be lost”, and an old saying among them that Abraham stands at the gates of hell ensuring that none who are circumcised should enter there.

### **2:25-29** – The Question of Circumcision’s Value.

Note how very blunt Paul is in this portion, mincing no words.

Vs. 25 – The outward rite of circumcision without law-keeping *profits nothing*, in the same way that access to the law means nothing without the keeping of it (vs. 13). A symbol, ritual, or religious act has meaning only if it reflects the inner convictions of a right heart. A wedding ring on the hand of one who sleeps around has lost all meaning. No religious ritual or mark, as no wedding ring, has the power in itself to *make* one right with God or faithful to a mate. It can only

**2:26** *Therefore if the uncircumcision keep the righteousness of the law, shall not his uncircumcision be counted for circumcision?*

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outwardly suggest inward fidelity.

Circumcision was given by God as a sign of His covenant with Abraham, and to his descendents as being of that one who believed God, with his faith accounted to him for righteousness. It was a sign that they were the people of God's promise, not that they were necessarily justified by faith as their father Abraham.

Vs. 26 – Righteousness through the perfection of law-keeping was in fact available to *all men*. Again, bold statements here by Paul expressing the *littleness* of the outward tokens in comparison to the righteousness of life in securing God's favour. Remember that the point is *perfect* righteousness, which no man is able to live out through the weakness of the flesh. This was part of the purpose of the old covenant as the “*schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ*” (Gal. 3:24) through the impossibility of a man perfectly keeping the terms of the law.

Vs. 27 – Not only would a Gentile who completely

**2:27** *And shall not uncircumcision which is by nature, if it fulfil the law, judge thee, who by the letter and circumcision dost transgress the law?*

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fulfilled the law find favour with God over a Jew sporting outward circumcision and law possession, but he would in fact *judge* or condemn the other as well.

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## **On the Side**

Please consider that if God's true covenant sign with His people meant nothing without perfect righteousness, how could *man-devised* rites accomplish anything more?

- What could christening accomplish, which finds no basis in God's Word?
  - How could self-punishments move the heart of God?
  - What manmade self-denials could win heaven, even fasting and tithing?
  - What will burning candles accomplish, or dangling crystals, or fluttering feathers, or lucky charms?
- .....



**2:28** *For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh:*

**2:29** *But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.*

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Vs. 28-29 – One is no true Jew (or child of God) who is one only outwardly, with only appropriate outward symbols in place. And a circumcision only outward in the flesh is no true circumcision. The mere mark, as all outward religious forms, does not a child of God make! The one truly having the praise of God is one with inward circumcision of heart and spirit, an “*Israelite indeed*” as Jesus called Nathanael (Jn. 1:47). This was a concept the Jews should certainly have understood (Deut. 10:16; 30:6). This was what Stephen hit the Jewish leaders with, that they in truth were “*uncircumcised in heart and ears*”. Compare Lev. 26:41; Jer. 4:4; 9:26; Ezek. 44:9.

“*Not in the letter*” – The outward observance of religious forms.

“*Whose praise is not of men*” – Striking at the core issue with the self-righteous Jew, and playing upon his name. “Jew” comes from “Judah”, meaning *praise* (Gen. 29:35). It’s ever a question of *whose*

praise a man lives for. Was theirs a quest to please and impress *men*, those of their Jewish society, or the careful quest to have *God's* praise? Compare Christ's question to the Jewish leaders in Jn. 5:44, "*How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?*" Men such as Nicodemus or Joseph of Arimathea or that discreet scribe of Mk. 12:32-33, with hearts searching and sensitive to the things of God, would have understood Paul's argument here.

Thus Paul has dealt a devastating blow to all three pillars upon which a Jew rested his hope, the three legs of the stool upon which his confidence was propped;

- Possession of the law doesn't save, because they did not keep it (vs. 17-24). Who cares how many Bibles you own, or how much of it you've committed to memory?
- Circumcision doesn't save, because they didn't keep the law (vs. 25-27). Who cares how many crosses or other Christian tokens you possess?
- Being a son of Abraham in the flesh doesn't save (vs. 28-29; Matt. 3:9). What difference does it make that your parents were Christians, or what church family you

currently belong to?

The long and short of it is that both Gentiles and Jews across the continents and through all time stand together hopelessly condemned without the righteousness of God! The external observances of the self-righteous, as well as those more biblical externals of the Jews, accomplished nothing toward bringing them any further into God's favour and salvation than the raw pagan of chapter 1. All stand equally condemned and in desperate need of the righteousness of God.

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## **Ponder Points**

Whenever one is given to boasting or to pride in his relation to God instead of simply standing in awe and thankfulness for his own salvation he shows the heart of the self-righteous.

Whenever one is given to looking down upon others rather than longing for the very best for them he displays the heart of the self-righteous.

What does the Lord require of us, *“but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God”* (Micah 6:8)?

What is the true issue and essence of religion but a

**3:1** *What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision?*

**3:2** *Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God.*

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humble walk in obedience and love for God, having received His perfect righteousness in Jesus Christ? (10:13; 1 Tim. 1:5)

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### **3:1-8** – Jewish Objections.

Paul could almost hear the rising clamour from the Jewish sector over his bold, sweeping statements. What good is it to even be a Jew then, bearing the sign of God's chosen people? What is the meaning then of God's covenant with Israel? Could their refusal to believe actually nullify God's promises, making His words a lie? And further, if the failures of His people underscore the faithfulness of God, wouldn't He be wrong to punish them for giving Him opportunity to display His glory?

Vs. 1-2 – Paul's words would offend a proud Jew, putting him even with Gentiles in condemnation before God. But the Apostle affirms "*much every way*" the advantages of the Jew over the Gentile.

Not in immunity from God's judgment as they presumed, but mainly in their holding the very utterances of God in written form. Why is this such an advantage? Because "*faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God*" (10:17). Having and hearing God's words offers greater opportunity to the hearer of a faith response in the heart. Paul implies *many* advantages but gives only one, the *chief* one (he later indicates others in 9:4-5). Why did the Lord give His words to the nation of Israel?

- That they might *shine!* That they might *obey* God's words in the world, living lives separated from the unholy pollutions around them.
- That they might shine *forth!* That they might *convey* God's words to the world, giving their lives for the winning of lost humanity.

Israel's commission is our own, to preserve, observe, and carry God's truth to the ends of the earth.

When God affirms what a glorious blessing it is for a people to have access to His written words, He verifies how vital it is to *cherish* His words, and to ensure their availability to every tongue and nation.

**3:3** *For what if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect?*

**3:4** *God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged.*

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Vs. 3-4 – What if many refused to believe those oracles or promises of God? Would their disbelief affect the faithfulness or trustworthiness of the Lord, making His words in effect useless, He seemingly unable to fulfil His promises to His people? No, not at all! The Jewish rejection of their Messiah does not make God’s words of no effect. It’s the fault of man alone if he falls short of securing the blessing of God’s promises. But doesn’t their disbelieving response indicate some weakness on God’s part? Doesn’t it show some failure in His words? He who spoke creation into existence could not make His promises happen upon His people? Having brought the baby full term He could not bring it to birth? Did that One who led the people of Israel over the centuries to expect Messiah coming into His kingdom let it all fall flat right at the verge of completion? “*God forbid!*” Perish the thought! Though every man fail in his truthfulness God remains ever true to His words. All will yet come to pass as spoken. Paul

**3:5** *But if our unrighteousness commend the righteousness of God, what shall we say? Is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance? (I speak as a man)*

**3:6** *God forbid: for then how shall God judge the world?*

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then quotes Ps. 51:4 in support, “that You may be shown to be right in Your words, O Lord, and that You might come out victorious and vindicated over any who might call You to judgment”. God’s words and conduct are beyond question, and will be shown to be so in the end.

Vs. 5-8 – This now of those subtly seeking to excuse their evil (or accuse the gospel of an easy righteousness). If the sinfulness of God’s people highlights the righteousness of God then how can He judge those doing Him such a good turn, bringing glory to His name in a back-handed sort of way? Could we not charge God with *unfairness* in bringing punishments upon such? Could we perhaps say that man’s unrighteousness is in fact a necessary dark backdrop to fully highlight God’s glistening purity? Wouldn’t that then make sin part of *God’s* purpose for man from the beginning? And would this not suggest God as the Author of evil, removing man from accountability for his sin? *May it never be!* It’s not my sin but God’s holiness that

**3:7** *For if the truth of God hath more abounded through my lie unto his glory; why yet am I also judged as a sinner?*

**3:8** *And not rather, (as we be slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say,) Let us do evil, that good may come? whose damnation is just.*

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makes Him look good. And does anybody ever really sin to the glory of God anyway? Does anybody sin with that purpose in mind, to glorify God? This is just a foolish attempt at self-justification, seeking to reason around God's fair reproof. Paul speaks after the manner of ungodly men, knowing the folly of it, but wanting to give voice to their heart that he might give answer.

Vs. 6 – How could God bring judgment upon *anybody*, since *every* soul could avoid His judgments on the same basis? If He cannot deal justly with unjust *Jews* then He is unjust and unfit as Judge of all.

Vs. 8 – The condemnation of all who would justify their evil in this way is fair and appropriate. Not only does Paul condemn those who speak in this way, but he repels the accusation that he and his fellow believers believed this way, or that a righteousness gained apart from works might lead



to the attitude that we are free to do evil that good may come. It is certainly the common way of men to find comfort in their specious reasonings. But none can escape God's judgment by that means.

“But now  
the righteousness of God  
without the law is manifested,  
being witnessed by the law  
and the prophets”

(Rom. 3:21)

## Class 5 – Romans 3:9-31

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**3:9** *What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise:  
for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles,  
that they are all under sin;*

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Having exposed the sin of the pagan (chap. 1), the self-righteous (chap. 2), and the Jew (chap. 2-3), the Lord now throws back the soiled curtains of all of man's shabby defences to fully expose the inward filth of the whole race of man, concluding "*all under sin*".

**3:9-20** – "*All under sin*".

Vs. 9 – Can the Jew then claim some notch above the rest of humanity? No, by no means! They held the advantage for a time of greater opportunity over the rest of mankind, but not of greater or more ready acceptance by God than others. All men are under the dominion of sin (Gal. 3:22). In this Jew and Gentile stand equal, and *equally condemned*.

In further confirming the evil of all Paul now turns to the O.T. for support in vs. 10-16. This section is a series of quotations, especially from the book of

**3:10** *As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one:*  
**3:11** *There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God.*

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Psalms, in a graphic display of human darkness no less true today than in that day or any day. Will you hear it? Vs. 10-12 are drawn from Ps. 14:1-3 & 53:1-3, after the opening statement in these parallel psalms that *“the fool hath said in his heart, There is no God”*. All men are in focus in these verses, showing how universal the principle of sin (2 times *“no, not one”*, 4 times *“none”*, *“all . . . together”*). Human depravity is the ugly picture here. In vs. 9-12 we see the *universality* of sin, that every last man is involved (Eccl. 7:20). In vs. 13-18 we see the *extent* of sin, that every part of the man is touched (Jer. 17:9).

Vs. 11 – The way of understanding is to truly seek God. He has revealed Himself to all (1:19-21), but man commonly refuses to look. And the extent to which one does not seek after God is the measure of his lack of wisdom. It’s a description here of those who disregard that greatest command of all, to love the Lord with absolutely everything. The one refusing to seek the Lord is filled with his own selfish interests or desires.

**3:12** *They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.*

**3:13** *Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips:*

**3:14** *Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness:*

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Vs. 12 – All men wilfully go “*out of the way*” they know to be right. “*Unprofitable*” expresses useless. Perhaps there’s more of a focus on *actions* here in vs. 12 – selfish *desires* in vs. 11 and selfish *actions* in vs. 12.

Vs. 13-14 – *Greatest emphasis* upon that most offending member of all, the human tongue or mouth (compare the mouth/tongue chapter of Prov. 10). The first two phrases of vs. 13 are from Ps. 5:9, the third phrase from Ps. 140:3, and vs. 14 quoted from Ps. 10:7.

“*Their throat is an open sepulchre [tomb]*” – As if the morbid influence of dead bodies left open to the public. Jesus said, “*out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh*” (Matt. 12:34). The throat is that passage to the public of a vile heart within.

Vs. 14 – Not just a little bit, but “*full of cursing and*

**3:15** *Their feet are swift to shed blood:*  
**3:16** *Destruction and misery are in their ways:*  
**3:17** *And the way of peace have they not known:*

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*bitterness*". "Cursing" is an expressed wish for bad upon another. "Bitterness" is hate put to words.

Vs. 15 – The willingness to wound at the least provocation (*"swift"*). If the focus of vs. 13-14 is our *words*, then that of vs. 15-17 is our *ways*, quoted from Isa. 59:7-8.

Vs. 17 – "*There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked*", for they "*are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt*" (Isa. 57:20-21). Because there is no peace inside of them they allow no peace outside of them either, ever digging up dirt in relation to others and happy when they find it. Such an attitude enjoys a little dirt or the odd contention to spice up an otherwise boringly selfish existence.

The depravity of man involves his inward purposes (vs. 11), outward actions (vs. 12), and words (vs. 13-14). None can deny the Bible's teaching that man's corruption is complete, his desperate wickedness extending to the whole, both of the race and of each

**3:18** *There is no fear of God before their eyes.*

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individual.

Vs. 18 – Here is the root and source of the folly and evil of sinful man, a quotation of Ps. 36:1. Their pride stands in the way of praise, self before Saviour, leaving no room for reverence and love for God. The fear of the Lord is “*the beginning of wisdom*” (Prov. 9:10), and the only potent preservation from evil.

Clearly what one may be outwardly before men does not cloud the *vastness of the sin* of all before God. Can any remove themselves from the charge here? We are all quite tarred by this brush.

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## **On the Side**

Don't miss how highly Paul honoured the O.T. here. He evidently esteemed that old Book as the very words of God, and thus that exalted standard by which the ways of man are to be examined.

And note that Paul speaks of “*the law*” (vs. 20) yet he quotes from the Psalms and Prophets. It seems

**3:19** *Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.*

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the term “*the law*” ranged wider than just the books of Moses to include the whole O.T.

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Vs. 19-20 – Paul now sums up the score, bringing God’s indictment against all mankind to the final verdict – *GUILTY!! “Every mouth . . . all the world”*. All are sinners. All are without excuse before God. The Lord has provided every answer to every argument, and that adequately. Some may hold on to their false defences now, but all will be forced to admit the obvious in stunned silence before the Lord’s judgment seat in the end. How much better to honestly make all necessary admissions in repentance before the Lord *now!* We are together exposed and subject to God’s just condemnation and in the most desperate need of the righteousness that only God can give. The Lord’s purpose in this portion is to remove every excuse out of the mouth of both Jew and Gentile alike. A man is most wise to ask the questions the wise have asked throughout the ages, “*Lord, what wilt thou*



**3:20** *Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.*

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*have me to do?” (Acts 9:6) and “What must I do to be saved” (Acts 16:30) and “How can a man be just with God?” (Job 9:2). What is the Lord looking for in a man but that he throw aside his masks of false, surface righteousness and bow in humility before the God of glory. “Except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish”. Every wise soul who so bows will be met there by the God of grace and mercy.*

Vs. 20 – Since man has justly been pronounced guilty, the law of God (the doing of it or any good deeds) has no power to help his condemnable condition. He is beyond help from below, being so hopelessly, irretrievably ruined in sin. “*No flesh*”, no mortal man is capable of attaining entire rightness before God through deeds of the law. “*They that are in the flesh cannot please God*” (8:8). The law of God has *only* the power to expose a man for what he is, full of sin and powerless against sin’s dominion. As Paul later testifies, “*I had not known sin except through the law*” (7:7, compare I Tim. 1:8-10, showing the law useful especially for the ungodly). The law has no power to grant

forgiveness or restore a man to favour with God. This *“it could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh”* (8:3). The law has no ability to give a man power to change. It can neither justify nor sanctify. It cannot lead a man to peace. It is able only to remove a man’s peace, displaying his conflict with God, indeed the *curse* of God upon him, for *“cursed is every one that continues not in all the things written in the book of the law to do them”* (Gal. 3:10, quoting Deut. 27:26).

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## **Comparison with James**

Paul in Romans speaks of justification before God while the book of James speaks of justification before men. Paul speaks of righteousness from God, what God supplies, while James speaks of what the Spirit works in a sanctified life. The book of James does not attack justification before God by faith. It attacks a superficial faith that is really dead, resulting in no changed life for the better before God and men.

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We come now to one of the most important portions in all the Bible, summing up all of the wonder of what Jesus has done for us and what God has

provided for man in Him. Here is all of the answer to Job's most troubling question of how a man can be just with God. Here is something like a drink of cool, clear water in the parched and barren land of man's ruined existence. Yet don't miss how one must first come to that place to which Paul's argument has brought the entire world of men. One must first recognize his own hopelessness, sensing conviction of sin and the desperation that except the Lord do for us there is no hope on earth, no merit among men to secure God's favour.

### **3:21-31** – Righteousness Through Faith.

Coming off the very worst news of man's supreme sinfulness, all standing silent and condemned before God, now at the most appropriate point our attention is turned to the greatest news of the gospel (*"But now . . ."*). God in His grace has actually provided access for sinful man to His own righteousness, by faith in Jesus Christ. Paul now returns to what he began in 1:16-17, before the dark interlude tracing God's wrath revealed *"against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men"*. Having shown the *great gulf* existing between the holy God and sinful man, the Lord now shows the one way He has provided to bridge that gulf, the great doctrine of *JUSTIFICATION!*

**3:21** *But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets;*  
**3:22** *Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference:*

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When God justifies a soul the very righteousness of Jesus Christ is credited to the believer's account, making him just as righteous or right as God's own Son. To justify, as Paul uses the term here, means to declare righteous or to put into a right standing. This God does for the believer on the basis of Christ's substitutionary death on man's behalf. If a soul should find God's favour and salvation at all, it can only be in receiving this positive righteousness from God's own hand.

Consider now the characteristics of this righteousness available to man;

- **It is God's own righteousness** (vs. 21-22, 25). To approach God or to find heaven man must come with a righteousness he can *only receive from God*.
- **This righteousness does not come to man through *works or law*** (vs. 21, 28). It is completely disconnected from law and apart

**3:23** *For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;*

**3:24** *Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:*

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from human agency (Rom. 4:4-5; Acts 13:39; Gal. 2:16; Titus 3:5). “*For by grace are ye saved . . . and that not of yourselves*” (Eph. 2:8). Why would a man insist on doing for himself what he *cannot do*, and what Jesus has already done?

.....

## **Why Souls Perish**

There’s a sense in which one is not lost because he sins. The saved would also be lost on this basis, for they sin too. A lost soul perishes because he has received *no acceptable righteousness* from God or before God. A saved soul has acquired God’s righteousness by faith, though he still sins. Therefore it may be possible for a lost man to sin less than a true child of God. But the vital difference is that the believer has something the lost does not have and cannot gain by sinning even less. He has justification from God.

There is help here as well for the one who doubts

**3:25** *Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God;*

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his salvation, and for those who don't believe in eternal security. Both tend to think wrongly of salvation, thinking it strictly a forgiveness of sins thing. But salvation is rather a positive righteousness received. Either one has this gift from God or he doesn't, regardless of his lifestyle.

.....

- **This righteousness is the answer to what was predicted throughout the O.T.** (vs. 21).
  - Abraham was justified by faith (4:9).
  - David rejoiced in sin forgiven (4:6-7).
  - The *shadow* sacrifices and cleansings and priesthood of the O.T. pointed to the *substance* or fulfilment in Jesus Christ.
  - Isaiah spoke of the Lord clothing “*us in the garments of salvation, in the robe of righteousness*” (Isa. 61:10).

**3:26** *To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.*

**3:27** *Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith.*

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- Daniel prophesied of a day when the Lord would “*make an end of sins, and . . . bring in everlasting righteousness*” (Dan. 9:24).
- Peter said that “*all the prophets witness, that through His name [Jesus] whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins*” (Acts 10:43). Peter pointed as well to the prophets prophesying of the glory of salvation through Christ’s suffering (I Pet. 1:10-11).
- **God’s righteousness is available to man “by faith of Jesus Christ”** (vs. 22, 25, 26, 28, 30). *GREAT EMPHASIS* here! Belief is the *one condition* for receiving God’s righteousness. Faith is no work. It is merely the hand of the soul reaching out to receive what the Lord freely offers. But just *knowing* is not faith. Faith involves the will and the

**3:28** *Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.*

**3:29** *Is he the God of the Jews only? is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also:*

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“act” of receiving, as faith in a chair actually sits. Faith is a confidence and commitment to spiritual realities, involving facts more than feelings. One does not get more faith through trumped up emotion or by seeking enchanting religious experiences or praying for more. *“Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God”* (10:17). Faith is increased through sincerest pursuit of the truth.

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## **How a Soul is Saved?**

Accept the truth of your sinful condition.

Believe and accept the truth that Jesus paid for your sins through His death on the cross.

Receive God’s gift of righteousness by faith.

***Do not delay!!***

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**3:30** *Seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith.*

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- **God's righteousness is evenly available to all, without partiality** (vs. 22, 29-30), even as all partake of sin evenly, "*and come short of the glory of God*" (vs. 23). To fall short is to fall short whether by wide margin or narrow. The point is that all have fallen short of God's standard of perfection.
- **God's righteousness is offered gratis**, as a free gift, without earning or payment, purely "*by His grace*" (vs. 24). The Lord is not looking for our earning of His righteousness, or for cause or merits in man. A soul can do or give nothing to deserve this. That God's righteousness comes to us "*by His grace*" means that it's a favour shown by God when in fact His wrath is deserved. We do not receive this righteousness because we have arrived at a measure of purity in heart and life. Finding this has nothing whatsoever to do with *our* graciousness. God must in fact first justify a man before he can make any truly meaningful changes in his life.

Justice is when one gets what he deserves. Mercy is to not receive the bad one justly deserves. Grace is to receive good when quite the opposite is deserved. In grace we may receive righteousness from God when an eternal hell is fully our due.

- **God's righteousness is offered through what Jesus did** (vs. 24-25).
- **God's righteousness includes for a believing soul;**
  - o ***“Redemption”*** (vs. 24) – Deliverance through the payment of a ransom. We've been rescued or bought out from among those condemned to death through the payment of Christ's own precious blood (I Pet. 1:18-19).
  - o ***“Propitiation”*** (vs. 25) – God's wrath toward the sinner is appeased or fully satisfied through Christ's sacrifice (I Jn. 2:2). The righteous wrath of God was and is fully aroused against the sinner (1:18). *“God is angry with the wicked every day”* (Ps. 7:11), not just with their wickedness. But with man's sin laid upon Jesus (Isa. 53:6), and with God's

judgment then poured out upon that blessed Scapegoat (Lev. 16), God's wrath may now be appeased toward one who has believed on the Saviour.

- **“Remission of sins”** (vs. 25). The word used here describes a *passing over* or disregarding of sins. It's a move pictured in God's passing by those over whom the blood of the lamb was applied (Ex. 12). Even so He passes over the sin of those upon whom the blood of the Lamb of God is applied.

- **The giving of this righteousness;**

- **Does not threaten or make void God's justice** (vs. 26). God will not allow what He gives and does in His grace to trample His own righteous character. He cannot simply ignore sin. Yet both His pure justice and gracious love remain intact in the gospel. The law of God allows only for His just condemnation. The cross of Christ allows for His *just grace*. In that Jesus became my propitiation, God was able to mercy me, remaining righteous while at the same time declaring this sinner

**3:31** *Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law.*

---

righteous. His grace won the day for me, while His justice was satisfied as well.

- **Does not allow for human pride**, as earning God's favour by works would (vs. 27). Thus none can point to pedigree or relative purity. Justification exalts only the Lord, while humbling human pride. *"That no flesh should glory in His presence . . . he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord"* (I Cor. 1:29, 31, expressing the essence of Jer. 9:23-24).
- **Does not "make void the law"** (vs. 31) – making it useless or defunct.

A vigorous objection of the Jewish reader would very likely be that such a justification so freely received would put an end to any keeping of the law at all, leading to lawlessness (vs. 8). But the giving of this very righteousness of God by faith in fact *establishes* the law, in that;

- God's righteous wrath upon human sin was fully and fairly vented upon Jesus at Calvary.
- The purpose and power for sanctification through obedience is more completely fulfilled in children of faith than in children of the law. The Spirit's transforming work in a saved soul leads to a much greater practical righteousness than law-keeping ever could.
- Jesus came fully honouring the law, and it is His righteous keeping of the law that is accounted to the believing soul. He came not to *destroy* the law but to *fulfil* the principles of it in His own life and in the lives of believers.

In the new covenant the principles of the law are now written on the heart through the indwelling Spirit.

*"I will make a new covenant . . . I will put My law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts"* (Jer. 31:31-33).

“But to him that worketh not,  
but believeth on Him  
that justifieth the ungodly,  
his faith is counted  
for righteousness”

(Rom. 4:5)

## Class 6 – Romans 4:1-25

This 4<sup>th</sup> chapter of Romans is aimed at the one trying to understand how the gospel relates to the things already coming down to us from God through the O.T., and particularly from Moses. There is answer here to the question of whether the gospel message is some new thing? Paul's point here is that *grace* on God's part and *faith alone* on man's part has always been the way of salvation for man, this way coming to fullest clarity in the gospel. It was not some new thing. New to the Jewish way of thinking perhaps, only because they had veered from the true guidelines. God's way through the centuries in His dealing with man has cut a straight path. Man chafes when he discovers God's path far from his own, but it's never *God* who has deviated. Man's is the wandering way. If men wilfully choose to misread or rewrite the Book, or to write another sourced below, they must understand the frustration they line themselves up for.

*"Let God be true, but every man a liar" (3:4).*

There are three key words in this chapter, appearing constantly;

- *"Faith"*, and its verb form *"believe"* (found 16 times in this chapter).

**4:1** *What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found?*

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- “*Impute*”, “*count*”, or “*reckon*” (KJV), all from the same Greek word (11 times). This term expresses something like crediting to one’s account in a bookkeeping fashion.
- “*Righteousness*”, and its verb form “*justify*” (10 times). This appeared 7 times in the last 11 verses of chap. 3 as well, thus 17 times in the 36 verses from 3:21 to 4:25. Essentially every other verse speaks of justification.

Again, justification or to be justified is when God legally accounts and declares a soul to be righteous or cleared or fully pardoned (3:25). At the moment of justification a soul is also redeemed (3:24), reconciled to God (5:10), regenerated or born again, and adopted into God’s own eternal family (8:15).

**4:1-8** – Justification is *NOT* Faith + Works.

Again Paul turns to the O.T. for support, with the examples of two of the greatest figures in the old Book, Abraham and David. Abraham represents the law, his record found in the 1<sup>st</sup> book of Moses.



**4:2** *For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God.*

**4:3** *For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.*

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David represents the poetry and prophecy of Psalms. Thus something of a cross-section of the whole O.T. is presented in these two. As well, Abraham comes from early in the first book of the Bible and David from the height of Israel's kingdom, thus taking in the nation's existence from beginning to peak of prominence.

Vs. 1-5 – The example of Abraham.

Vs. 2 – If such a cleared standing came to Abraham by his works or earning then he would have something to boast about, before people anyway (*“pertaining to the flesh”*), *“but not before God”* (3:27). Even the very finest of the fathers has no cause to boast and must not (Eph. 2:8-9). The Jewish people would have esteemed none higher than Abraham. Yet even he had no reason to boast. What Abraham had he had as a gift from God.

Vs. 3 – This quote is from Gen. 15:6. Abraham's *faith* was *“counted”* or reckoned to him for

**4:4** *Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt.*

---

righteousness (Gal. 3:6; James 2:23). He was justified by his faith in God, giving no thought or weight to any works he might have done. Here is Paul's point. As Abraham in the beginning was in fact declared righteous by God through his faith without any deeds of the law, even so the gospel now speaks of the very same righteousness received by faith without any righteous deeds included. There haven't been any changes in God's basic plan of salvation between old and new, from first book and father of the chosen nation to the present. Through every dispensation it has been salvation by grace alone through faith alone.

Abraham's faith was in more than just God's promise of his own immediate descendant it seems. His vision also took in a resulting nation and that distant promised Seed, the Lord Jesus Christ. This is perhaps something of the meaning of Christ's words, "*Abraham rejoiced to see my day*" (Jn. 8:56-58).

Vs. 4-5 – Two ways and their rewards. Either one receives a reward for his work, his works putting

**4:5** *But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.*

---

the one he works for in debt to pay him wages, or one accepts a free gift, which is given by grace, owing nothing. The two ways of believing/receiving and working are mutually exclusive, they cannot be mixed. Works do *in order* to live. Faith does *because* it lives. Faith is the very opposite principle to works, for it is in fact a *rest* in the promises of God. Faith is an entrance into God's Sabbath rest (Heb. 4:1-11). God does not reward with righteousness the one who works or seeks to live His law. God cannot be put in debt to man. He owes man nothing but judgment for his sin! God does not pay righteous *standing* for the debt of righteous *living*.

*"But to him that worketh not"* (vs. 5) – To that soul who gives up all thought or effort toward earning merits or rewards. Again, faith's receiving opposes the whole idea of work's earning. One's faith in God's promise is the only "act" that credits the very righteousness of God to the believer's previously bankrupt heavenly account.

**4:6** *Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works,*

**4:7** *Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered.*

**4:8** *Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.*

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Vs. 6-8 – The example of David. Paul quotes from Ps. 32:1-2, David’s psalm of rejoicing in sin forgiven. True “*blessedness*” or happiness can only be found in sin forgiven and right relation to God.

Vs. 8 – The only hope for a man is in finding a way that his sin might not be reckoned to him or imputed to his account. If he must bear his own sin to God’s judgment then *there is absolutely no hope for his soul!* Therefore David rejoiced in a record cleared of sin’s stain before the Lord. And this cleared standing before God was imputed to him “*without works*”.

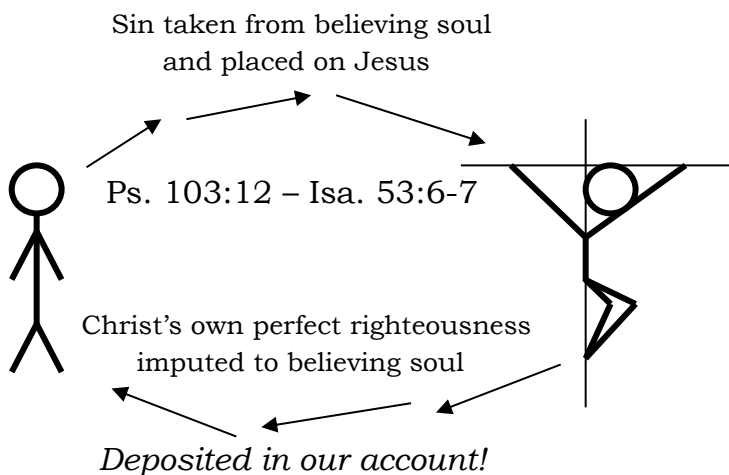
Comparing vs. 6 (righteousness imputed) with vs. 8 (unrighteousness not imputed) we see that both the addition of righteousness and the remission or removal of wickedness are the same divine move. Both necessary. The focus with Abraham is more from the *positive* perspective of a righteousness

**4:9** *Cometh this blessedness then upon the circumcision only, or upon the uncircumcision also? for we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness.*

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received from God, with David more the *negative* angle of sin not imputed. Yet both “*without works*” (vs. 5 & 6).

### **The Moment of Faith**



**4:9-12** – Justification is *NOT* Faith + Religious Tokens.

**4:10** *How was it then reckoned? when he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision.*

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Vs. 9-10 – Paul now addresses the question of whether circumcision (implying *any* outward religious token or rite) is necessary for a soul to be justified. The Jews had quickly lost sight of Abraham's inward faith for his outward sign, equating circumcision with salvation in a sense, for it was the sign (badge) of their birth into the covenant family as Abraham's descendants. But faith in God's promise was the only way into God's family from the beginning. They had put the covenant family as equal with God's family. They saw a child of Abraham as equal to a child of God. They confused the conditional covenant of Moses with the unconditional covenant of Abraham. But righteousness never came by rites or sacraments having some specific spiritual significance.

Throughout the ages men have constantly erred into the same twist of such truth, ascribing spiritual importance or hocus-pocus powers to rituals or tokens or ceremonial observances of some type or another, seeing such things as a means to grace or to the earning of merits with God. The

next step is to then see the handling or issuing of such means to God's favour as in the hands of certain elite men or a particular church. Mankind naturally falls to such in his prideful quest for power over men, playing upon human ignorance and superstition, giving to men the imagined power to give what only God can give.

Paul has of course so far used two circumcised men for illustration. Returning now to the example of Abraham, the obvious question is how Abraham's justification related to his circumcision. And of course the clear Bible record is that Abraham received "*this blessedness*" of God's righteousness long before he was circumcised. In Gen. 15:6 Abraham was justified. Some time later Ishmael was conceived when Abraham was 86 (Gen.16:16). Then in Gen. 17:9-14 circumcision was later introduced when Abraham was "*ninety years old and nine*" (vs. 1). So there was at least 13-14 years between Abraham's justification and his circumcision. He was living essentially as a Gentile in a Gentile land as a justified man for over a decade before he received the sign of circumcision. And since Abraham was justified before circumcision his example speaks of a justification available to both the circumcised and the uncircumcised, both Jew and Gentile, yea to "*all*

- 4:11** *And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also:*
- 4:12** *And the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had being yet uncircumcised.*
- 

*them that believe*". No religious tokens necessary! Circumcision becomes the example of any outward sign or sacrament folks might try to make essential for salvation, such as baptism or christening or any cuttings or candles or incantations or punishments or pilgrimages or any such thing. A soul must only believe to receive "*this blessedness*". There is no disputing the plain sense of the text here.

Vs. 11-12 – Circumcision was given to Abraham as the outward sign and seal of the inward righteousness he had already received by faith (though it would never have that same meaning for any 8-day old baby boy thereafter). Thus Abraham became both the *spiritual* father of all believers (vs. 11), and the *physical* father of the Jewish people (vs. 12), and doubly the father of those Jews who follow in his faith. "*Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of*



**4:13** *For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.*

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*Abraham*” (Gal. 3:7). This dual fatherhood is how Abraham came to fulfil his name and God’s prophesy concerning him that he would be “*the father of many nations*” (vs. 17; Gen. 17:4-10). In fact the N.T. tends to highlight Abraham’s fatherhood of the faithful *above* his physical fatherhood of Israel. John the Baptist diminished that connection (Lk. 3:8), and Jesus raised doubt over Abraham’s fatherhood of unbelieving Jews (Jn. 8:39). Abraham’s *primary* children are believers.

**4:13-25** – Justification is *NOT* Faith + Law.

Abraham in fact received righteousness through faith 430 years before the law was given (Gal. 3:17). Preceding both circumcision and the Law of Moses, justification does not come through either of these.

Vs. 13 – In that promise of the Abrahamic Covenant that “*in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed*” (Gen. 12:3) is the hint of this “*heir of the world*” promise. We who believe on Jesus enter into this same assurance, for Paul said to believers “*all*

**4:14** *For if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect:*  
**4:15** *Because the law worketh wrath: for where no law is, there is no transgression.*

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*things are yours*” (I Cor. 3:21, compare Matt. 5:5).

Again, the promise of world inheritance for Abraham and his spiritual children is through faith not law-keeping, not earned as the reward of his righteous living. And a share in this inheritance is offered to every soul who will accept God’s promise with the same faith of Father Abraham. Today’s promise – *“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ [the promised Seed], and you shall be saved”* (Acts 16:31).

Vs. 14-15 – Reasons why inheritance of God’s promise cannot be received through deeds of the law.

Vs. 14 – Because law-keeping nullifies a received-by-faith promise. If those depending upon law-keeping are made heirs then faith in God’s promise becomes useless. It’s one way or the other. It cannot be both, or some mixture of bits of both (Gal. 3:9-12).

**4:16** *Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all,*  
**4:17** *(As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were.*

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Vs. 15 – Because the law works no *rescue*, but only *wrath*. In a sense the law is not for us, but against us. It can only point out how our evil crosses over or transgresses God’s line of right, which His law has laid down. Our situation is worsened by the law, for it can only curse us. And if so, how could a soul ever see the law as a way to God’s blessing or inheritance? That which can only show our wrong can never make us right. If we should ever find help for our sin dilemma it could only come from some source outside of God’s law.

Vs. 16 – “*Therefore*” *faith* must be that avenue by which the inheritance of God’s favour comes to us, that it might come as God’s free gift rather than through man’s earning. This both to believing Jews, those “*of the law*”, and to believing Gentiles (vs. 12).

Vs. 17-22 – Abraham’s faith. Paul now considers

- 4:18** *Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be.*
- 4:19** *And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb:*
- 

the *what* and *how* of Abraham's belief. Abraham recognized that the Almighty One who created all could certainly raise the dead (vs. 17). Therefore that One with such creative power could certainly give him a child in his old age, could raise up that promised nation through him (vs. 18), and could bring the promised Seed and Redeemer through that nation.

Vs. 18 – Abraham hoped in a hopeless situation, a circumstance beyond all reasonable expectation for finding answer. He rested purely on God's word of promise that "*so shall thy seed be*", as many as the numberless stars (Gen. 15:5). Faith is just that, as we see illustrated in Abraham, that which gives substance to things hoped for, the very evidence of unseen realities (Heb. 11:1). Though Abraham's situation made it appear quite impossible that a son and nation and Seed could come through him, having no son through Sarah as yet and both being much too old, yet;

**4:20** *He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God;*  
**4:21** *And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform.*

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- Vs. 19 – “*He considered not . . .*” – He didn’t fix his mind on the problems. He refused to be consumed with the impossibilities of his own body as good as dead, already 100 years old, and Sarah too old to bear children.
- Vs. 20 – “*He staggered not . . .*” – He didn’t waver in double-minded uncertainty or distrust.

Abraham simply accepted God’s words at face value and conducted his life on that basis. He did not question or doubt God’s words or explain them away. In this response of confident trust he gave “*glory to God*”, affirming that God is indeed One to be trusted without question in the most questionable of situations. And in this he becomes that great example to us of a true man of faith. To believe God glorifies or honours God. To not believe calls God a liar. It’s why unbelievers are condemned, for their unbelief dishonours the God of truth, calling Him a sham. Oh there were certainly stress points for the faith of both Abraham

**4:22** *And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness.*

**4:23** *Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him;*

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(Gen. 15:8; 17:17-18) and Sarah (Gen. 18:12), which apparently were more times of frustration than doubt in God, more chafing with His *way* and *timing* than whether the Lord could be trusted.

Vs. 22 – Here is the faith that wins God’s righteousness, a faith that simply accepts God’s words with fullest confidence, “*fully persuaded that, what He had promised, He was able also to perform*”. Here is a faith that does not look for any merit in man but sees merit only in the Lord, in the absolute trustworthiness of His words. As always, the Lord does what He says He will do, regardless of how impossible it looks at any given point. Will you believe Him? Will you believe the Lord’s words?

Vs. 23-25 – It’s good for us also. “Not for his sake alone, but for us also”. Abraham believed *ahead* for the miracle of Isaac’s birth from parents as if dead with old age. We believe *back* to the miraculous birth and resurrection of Jesus Christ. And how much more proof we have of the truth of it than

**4:24** *But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead;*

**4:25** *Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.*

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Abraham had! Yet from both sides we are called to be fully persuaded in the trustworthiness of God's Word, that the same righteousness imputed to Abraham may also be imputed to us.

Vs. 25 – Because of “*our offences*” Jesus was “*delivered*” to death. He was offered up to death that our sin laid on Him might be carried away in death (Isa. 53:6; Heb. 9:28; I Pet. 2:24). And through His death He has provided that needed propitiation for our sins (3:25). *Pardon* we receive through Christ's cross work, *justification* through His empty tomb. Christ's resurrection displays His power and victory over sin and death. It's the proof of the Father's satisfaction in the Son's sacrifice, that His justice has been appeased or propitiated and therefore that He is free to pardon or justify believing man.

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## **Ponder Point**

Did baptism replace circumcision? Many teach that the rite of circumcision, marking a child as a descendant of Abraham under the old covenant, has now been replaced by baptism (christening more particularly), marking a child as a member of the new covenant family, and thus making him spiritually safe until old enough to decide for himself. Note the differences;

### **Circumcision**

Males only

Marks physical  
birth

Sign of faith  
only for Abraham

### **Baptism**

All the saved

Marks spiritual  
birth

Sign of faith for  
all baptised

These two are put together only because of some outward similarities, but where is the clear N.T. teaching showing their association or the one replaced by the other?



## **Class 7 – Romans 5:1-21**

The righteousness of God available to man in the gospel has been Paul's thrust thus far, a right standing with God received by man wholly through *grace* on God's part and wholly through *faith* on man's part. This glorious gift of righteousness from God is received without the least advantage gained through the keeping of any prescribed standard of right, whether God's or man's, and without the least advantage allowed through religious tokens, rites, or ceremonial observances of any kind. And this righteousness is a must for all, for every man is a sinner to the core no matter how shining the surface or self-opinion. All fall under the condemnation of God and with absolutely *no hope* without the righteousness that only God can give. This is the essence of what we've seen so far in the first 4 chapters of Romans. And this way of rescue through God's own righteousness received allows no human boasting, upholds the righteous standard of God's law, and saw the beginnings of its revelation in the O.T.

In this 5<sup>th</sup> chapter of Romans the apostle now turns to consider some *results* of justification in the life of a believer and in the human race as a whole.

**5:1** *Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:*

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**5:1-11** – Justification’s Accessories.

Vs. 1 – “*Therefore*” looks back to all of the foundation of hope upon which we now stand in Jesus Christ presented earlier.

“*Being justified*” – Now that we as believers in Jesus have been accounted righteous before God Paul begins to lay out for us what has come to us in Jesus Christ.

“*By faith*” – Again affirming the only way into justification and all that comes with it. Christ’s shed blood unlocks the door and shines light through the keyhole. Faith sees and turns the knob and enters in.

“*We have peace with God*” – This does not refer to “*the peace of God*” (Phil. 4:7), which is our experience or feeling of a contented state of mind. This is “*peace with God*”, our position in complete reconciliation to God, no longer at odds with Him in any way. To we who were once His enemies (Col. 1:21; Eph. 2:14), “*there is therefore now no*

**5:2** *By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.*

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*condemnation . . . in Christ Jesus*” (8:1). The wrath that would have been poured out upon us has been fully satisfied through Christ’s death on our behalf. This all *“through our Lord Jesus Christ”* in all that He did for us; dying for our sins, satisfying God’s righteous demands and wrath against us, and making His own righteousness available to us. We cannot know the *“peace of God”* until at last we have found *“peace with God”*. We are fully put right with God when justified, and we are made aware of that fact that we might know the joy of sin forgiven and God’s favour. Peace with God cannot be found through Hail Mary’s, pilgrimages, sacraments, five daily prayers, fastings, cleansings, or through any and all of the many other mistaken ways to peace men have devised over the centuries in their departure from the Bible. Peace with God can only be found in justification by faith in Jesus Christ.

Vs. 2 – “Access” speaks of entrance or introduction *“into this grace”*, into a standing in grace. In Jesus we have received a standing in God’s grace and favour, standing in His grace, not in our own merits.

**5:3** *And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also:  
knowing that tribulation worketh patience;*

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Ironside said of grace, “this is the golden sceptre held out by the King of Glory to all who venture to approach in faith” (Esther 4:10-11). This access or entrance to God is one major difference between the old and new covenants. The presence of God in the O.T. economy was always behind veils, always clouded by incense, always through priests, only a certain day in the year, always hidden and restricted. But with Christ’s death the temple veil was torn in two (Matt. 27:51), and the Lord now bids us to come boldly “*through the veil*” to His very “*throne of grace*” (Heb. 4:16; 10:19-22).

Rejoicing “*in hope of the glory of God*” speaks of our experience rather than our position. In Jesus Christ we have come to joy in the sure hope that we will indeed have a part in God’s glory. The promise of our eternal home with Him is our hope and joy and the tonic of our endurance. In justification we have come to restored relation to God having found entrance into His favour, with the result that we rejoice in all that’s before us with Him; fixed and sure and ours forever.

Vs. 3-4 – While vs. 1 looks back to what we’ve received and vs. 2 looks ahead to what’s before us, vs. 3-4 are aimed more at our present experience. Not only do we rejoice in all that’s before us, but we also face what we endure in this life with an entirely new outlook, for we know that this life is but the preparation or proving ground for that which is to come. It’s not necessarily that we glory *because of* tribulations, but we’re able to maintain our rejoicing and thankfulness “*in*” them. Compare Matt. 5:10-12. With our newfound awareness of God as our own heavenly Father we have a new awareness of *His* hand in the troubles we face in this life as well. He is in fact working things in us through our trials, for our good and His glory. Trouble teaches us to “*endure hardships*” with patience “*as a good soldier of Jesus Christ*” (II Tim. 2:3). Patient endurance instils in us strength of character, a forehead of flint against all earthly opposition (Ezek. 3:8-9; Isa. 50:7), a holy hardness against trials with a strength to walk with the Lord right through them. This in turn builds new hope in us, that it is in fact “*God which worketh in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure*” (Phil. 2:13). And hope in

**5:5** *And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.*

**5:6** *For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.*

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turn glories the more in things future (vs. 2) as earthly things fade to insignificance.

Vs. 5 – This hope in God is a hope that will not be put to shame, never letting us down in the end. We will never find that our life lived for the Lord was actually in vain after all. Compare Ps. 22:5. As well, it's hope that leads us on to purity of life (I Jn. 3:2-3), and it is purity of life that gives us “*confidence*” that we will “*not be ashamed before Him at His coming*” (I Jn. 2:28).

Our assurance now that our hope in the Lord will not let us down then is founded in “*the love of God*”. And this love of God is made abundantly known to us “*through the Holy Ghost which is given unto us*”. For the first time in this book mention is made of the gift of the Spirit, whose indwelling presence is given to every believer in Jesus. The Spirit is the One revealing the love of God to us through His Word. What is now offered in Jesus Christ comes in fulfilment of all the Spirit has spoken in the O.T.

**5:7** *For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die.*

**5:8** *But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*

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And the Spirit's inward witness in the heart of God's child is a real thing as well, tenderly confirming God's love to us. We cannot base our assurance on inward feelings alone, but the inner witness of the Spirit confirms what we see and believe to be true in His Word (8:16).

Vs. 6-8 – God's love can be discerned in *how* He loved us. He has loved us, not as men love, but only as God in His grace would do. He loved us when we were utterly unlovely. A man might give his life for one who is righteous enough to earn his respect or good enough to earn his love. But God holds up His love for man in that He loved us and sent Jesus to die for us "*while we were yet sinners*". While we were *against* Him, He was *for* us! Not only had we made ourselves vile in His sight and fit only for His wrath, but we didn't want His help in our rebellious rejection of Him. And it was then, in that most hideous, helpless, and hopeless condition, entirely "*without strength*" to help ourselves out of our dilemma, that God sacrificed unimaginably in

**5:9** *Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.*

**5:10** *For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.*

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sending Jesus to die in our place. In this God's love is displayed or recommended to our attention, never with such force as then.

We see in vs. 8 how closely intertwined are God and Jesus Christ. There is no loss in the idea of God's love in His sending of Jesus to die, for they are one.

Vs. 9-10 – *“Much more then”* – If God would so unbelievably do for us in our sin-stained, unredeemed condition, involving such unimaginable sacrifice on His part, how much more can we expect Him to do for us now that we have been justified, redeemed, and reconciled, having found entrance into His own family. As has been so aptly said, He who saved us from the guttermost, how shall He not save us to the uttermost? (Heb. 7:25) Having done all He has done for us, shall He leave us to His wrath at the last? *“He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?”* (8:32) Having so loved us when *enemies*, how much more



when now *friends*?

*“We shall be saved by His life”* – This is not saying that we are saved by following the good example of Christ’s life (Heb. 9:22; Rev. 5:9). The point is that if we were so completely rescued and reconciled *“by the death of His Son”*, how much more sure and secure our standing in grace through He who has *risen* from death and *“ever lives to make intercession for us”*. Our living, loving Saviour seated at the right hand of the Father, who is *“for us”* (8:31) and pleading for us as *“an Advocate with the Father”* (I Jn. 2:1), is our sole and adequate assurance of eternity. Compare all Persons of the Trinity *“for us”* in 8:26, 31-32, & 34. If He was willing to *die* for our redemption, what are the odds that Jesus will ever let us go, now that He has risen from death to *live* for us? In Christ our rescue from God’s wrath is as sound as God’s name, as sure as Christ’s love for His own. It is our greatest joy in Jesus Christ not only to find salvation but to be utterly assured of the keeping of it! These are the first of five *“much more’s”* in this chapter. As if Paul struggles to cope with the expression of all that God is for us.

Vs. 11 – Paul now returns to his point in vs. 2, that not only are we *reconciled* to God but we *rejoice* in Him too. Paul’s expression of the gifts we have in

**5:11** *And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.*

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Christ moves him to focus fully upon the Giver Himself. Not only is our position secured in Jesus but our peace and pleasures are forevermore at His right hand (Ps. 16:11).

Throughout this portion Paul continually points to that blessed fountain from which these matchless treasures have come to us;

- Vs. 1 – *“through our Lord Jesus Christ”*
- Vs. 2 – *“by whom”*
- Vs. 9 – *“by His blood”*
- Vs. 9 – *“through Him”*
- Vs. 10 – *“by the death of His Son”*
- Vs. 10 – *“by His life”*
- Vs. 11 – *“through our Lord Jesus Christ”*
- Vs. 11 – *“by whom”*

We come into this portion standing justified in God’s favour and rejoicing there (vs. 1-2), and we go out still glorying in God for what He has done in and for us *“through our Lord Jesus Christ”*. And

**5:12** *Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:*

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herein is described what is to be the Christian experience; human problems, answered by divine love, sandwiched between unending praise.

**5:12-21** – Two Adams.

Paul now turns to consider the two heads of two differing races of men, those in Adam and those in Christ. Still his focus is on the results of justification, but now its results upon the *race* of man rather than upon *individuals*. Throughout this somewhat difficult section the recurring point is that the act of *one* brings a result in *many*. Through Adam sin and death passed upon all. And through the righteousness of Jesus Christ righteousness and life becomes available to all, lifting a new race of the redeemed out of the race of the ruined. What Adam, the natural head of the human race, *did* through his sin, Jesus Christ, the spiritual Head, *undid* through His righteousness.

Vs. 12 – Because of Adam's sin, sin and death passed upon every descendant of Adam. Somehow

when Adam sinned *we all* sinned right alongside of him. Being identified with Adam we receive death. Only in our being identified with Jesus Christ now, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Adam, do we receive the free gift of eternal life. Paul only picks up the thread of this verse again in vs. 18. Verses 13-17 are a parenthesis providing explanation.

Don't ever forget how vastly devastating the effect of even just that one sin of Adam. How much more seriously we should view the horror of sin, if only *one* sin made the whole race of man the enemies of God.

.....

## **On the Side**

We're told here that through Adam, that representative head of the human race, "*sin entered into the world, and death by sin*" (Gen. 2:17). This of course is a very powerful biblical argument for the lie of evolution. Whereas the Bible clearly affirms throughout that sin and therefore death came through man, evolution insists exactly the opposite, that man came through death, through long ages of life and death from the simplest molecules to man. "*In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth*". And at the end of those

six literal days of God's creation He proclaimed all "*very good*" (Gen. 1:31). No sin or death at that point. Only later did death enter into the scope of earth experience, through the choice of Adam and Eve to sin (Gen. 3). Evolution cannot be mixed with the Bible.

.....

*"Death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned"* – All men have become partakers of death because all partake of sin. Men may deny the universal nature of sin through Adam, but the fact remains that all men stand depraved and guilty as condemned sinners and therefore are subject to death. This came to pass through Adam's choice as mankind's representative head. The act of *one* somehow plunged the *whole* into the corruption of sin. Again, this point Paul will pick up on again in vs. 18-19, showing that as the corruption of sin passed to the many through the one, even so "*the free gift*" of righteousness becomes available to all through One.

Vs. 13-14 – Adam's sin upon all. As in chapter 4, the idea of "*imputed*" is to set to one's account (Philemon 18). The argument seems to go something like this;

**5:13** *(For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law.*

**5:14** *Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come.*

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- Death is the result of sin (vs. 12).
- There was death upon all between Adam and Moses (vs. 14).
- Therefore *there was sin* that was imputed to the account of people between Adam and Moses.
- But the law of God was not given before Moses (vs. 13), and without the law “*sin is not imputed*”.
- Therefore the sin imputed before Moses was not through transgression of the specific commands of God’s law. “*Sin was in the world*” in those days, but until the law came sin did not have the character of over-stepping the line of God’s legal code, for “*sin is the transgression of the law*” (I Jn. 3:4).
- Therefore it must have been *Adam’s sin* that was in some way imputed to the account of all.

- With the only possible conclusion that all are guilty of sin in Adam.

So the fact that *“death reigned”* during those pre-Moses days as well indicates that sin was present then, and God was indeed holding men accountable for their evil even before the law was given (Gen. 6, 18). Even those too young or irresponsible to make a decision for right or wrong (*“who did not sin after the similitude of Adam”*) still died, showing sin dominant over them as well, dominant over all, and proving that the *whole race* of mankind somehow fell in Adam. Regardless of how you read this matter of our sin in Adam, there can be no disputing the truth that *“in Adam all die”* (I Cor. 15:22). In some sense every child born is fallen in Adam.

*“Who is the figure of Him that was to come”* – Adam was a type of Christ in the sense of Him being the Head of a race of men. Adam is the contrast of that One coming to make a way to mend for many what Adam messed up.

Vs. 15-16 – Contrasts between Adam and Jesus.

Vs. 15 – If by the offence of one (Adam) God judicially brought death upon many, how much

**5:15** *But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many.*  
**5:16** *And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification.*  
**5:17** *For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.)*

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more is God able and willing, through the obedience of one (Jesus), to abound the gift of life to many. If so many have suffered through the wrong of one, is it not right and reasonable that many should benefit from the right of One? And as the wrong, so also the right must come through a representative head.

Vs. 16 – The one offence of one abounds to the sin and condemnation of many, but a world of sin now finds justification in the free gift of One, regardless of how “*many offences*”. While one wrong brought universal condemnation, many wrongs brought on the offer of life through One.

Vs. 17 – Death reigns through the offence of one. How much more does righteousness reign unto eternal life in all who have received God’s gracious



**5:18** *Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.*

**5:19** *For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.*

**5:20** *Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound:*

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gift of righteousness.

Vs. 18-19 – “*Therefore*” – Paul now brings his thoughts together. As the one wrong of the one brought universal judgment, even so by the right of the One, “*justification of life*” comes available to all! Paul does not speak of a universal salvation that “*came upon all men unto justification of life*”. He rather still holds up in contrast the two races of men under their two heads.

Vs. 20 – With the entrance of God’s law at Sinai, sin took on the darker cast of actually stepping over God’s line of right. Here is one purpose of the giving of the law of God, that the evil of sin might be seen in fullest exposure for what it is. But yet the Lord super-abounded His grace to man, leading him up and out of sin’s dark depth (vs. 15).

**5:21** *That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might  
grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life  
by Jesus Christ our Lord.*

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Vs. 21 – In the first world of God’s making *sin* reigned through man’s influence, leading to death. Even so in the world to come, the new heavens and earth of Rev. 21 & 22, *grace* will be the prevailing principle through the work of Jesus Christ, translating into righteousness and life.

**“To God be the glory,  
great things He hath done”**

## Class 8 – Romans 6:1-23

From the moment a soul is justified by faith he receives an official pardon from the very highest authority of all. And from that same moment he is born into God's own family, receiving an introduction into the grace of God, where he *stands* regardless of his present condition or feelings. These are a few of the great truths found in chapters 3-5. Then in the last half of chapter 5 Paul spoke of those *two heads*, Adam & Christ, describing the problem of our *position* in sin. Chapter 6 now speaks of the *two masters*, sin & God, describing the problem of our *practice* of sin. The first, fallen man's position in sin, relates the *reason* why justification is so necessary, because of our spiritual bankruptcy in Adam (*"in Adam all die"*). The second, fallen man's practice of sin, suggests the *results* of justification in a life, because of the fundamental change in a true believer.

Having displayed man's *condemnation* in chapters 1-3, and then the believer's *justification* in chapters 3-5, chapter 6 now begins Paul's display of the believer's *sanctification* or principles of holy Christian living. Paul begins to show here the truth of his statement at the end of chapter 3, that receiving God's righteousness by faith does not

throw away the law. The law is actually fulfilled in a believer more than in one trying to earn heaven by living the law on his own steam.

As well, this is now God's response to the critics, to whom Paul gives voice;

- *"Let us do evil, that good may come"* (3:8).
- Let us *"continue in sin, that grace may abound"* (6:1).
- Let us *"sin, because we are not under the law but under grace"* (6:15).

If full pardon and right standing with God is received by faith without living the law, don't we open the door for sin? This is the age-old argument of the self-righteous against a righteousness freely received from God. How easy we make it to continue in sin when we talk of a full and forever pardon simply received from God by faith. Like the man who no longer needs to work, that which is good for the keeping of his character, because he has received the free gift of ten million bucks. Where now is the drive to work or to earn what he no longer needs? If we've freely received the Lord's favour, sure and secure, what is our motivation to live right? This is perhaps some of the same feeling in the one who believes we can lose our salvation

**6:1** *What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?*  
**6:2** *God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?*

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once received by faith. What's the Lord's response to this query? That we must *keep* through right living the pardon we've received by faith? No. Instead Paul teaches that inward justification leads to outward sanctification or right living, rather than leading to indulgence in sin as we might expect. And this because the believer died with Christ to sin and now lives with Christ in newness of life, as pictured in his baptism (vs. 1-11). And as well because the believer has been released from sin as his master through death, receiving the new master of righteousness (vs. 12-23).

### **6:1-11** – Dead, Buried, and Risen with Christ.

Vs. 1 – Again, the voice of the critic, picking up on Paul's statement in 5:20 that "*where sin abounded, grace did much more abound*", twisting this in mockery of a righteousness received by faith alone. "Well then by all means, let's sin all the more that grace might abound the more!"

Vs. 2 – Paul now begins to expose the contradiction of a true believer freely continuing in sin. How do you live in something you're dead to? He begins here to express the great spiritual truth of our identification with Jesus Christ in His death and resurrection at the moment of our salvation by faith. There is a death to self, to the world, to sin's power that takes place when a soul is saved. This is the very death to self that repentance voices, marking the point of renouncing and turning from my old existence and the beginning of new life in Jesus. We see this same moment pictured in the nation of Israel when delivered from the bondage of their slavery in Egypt. They in effect died to their old Egypt life in their Exodus. From that point Pharaoh and his taskmasters lost all influence over them. The miraculous deliverance of their passing through the parted sea pictures death to their old life that they might live a new life under God's law given through Moses. In a similar way we were delivered from or died to our old life when we were saved, that we might live a new life on the other shore under the liberty brought by Jesus Christ. The starting point in understanding our new life is to recognize that we are dead to the old. The starting point in experiencing the power to live our new life is in recognizing that the power of the old has been broken. When dead, the ruling influences

- 6:3** *Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?*
- 6:4** *Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.*
- 6:5** *For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection:*
- 

of life just don't touch us anymore.

Vs. 3-4 – Paul now reminds us that baptism performed in the biblical way (full immersion) expresses in a symbolic form what actually happened at the moment of our salvation; we died, were buried, and rose to life in Jesus. As Jesus was raised to new life, pictured in our coming up out of the waters of baptism, even so our new life in Jesus should be just that, a *new life*, in contrast to the old life in sin.

Vs. 5 – The believer is so united with Jesus that he is co-buried with Him, and co-raised with Him to new life. Paul further explains in vs. 6-7 our likeness to Jesus in His death, and in vs. 8-9 our likeness to Him in His resurrection.

Vs. 6 – “*Our old man*” seems to refer to our old

**6:6** *Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him,  
that the body of sin might be destroyed, that  
henceforth we should not serve sin.*

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unredeemed self or sinful nature. It's all that we were as a natural man in the flesh, fully carrying the stain of sin, involving all of the old corrupt leanings and habits, and without God's pardon. That old self was crucified with Christ upon our faith in Him. What does it mean to be crucified? It means to be put to death! Bridges burned, having no ability to go back (to Egypt), looking only ahead (to the Promised Land). Compare Gal. 2:20.

Though our "*old man*" has been put in some sense to death in Christ we still see his influence (Col 3:9-10; Eph. 4:22-24). Though "dead", there is still a putting off of this old nature necessary on our part. This "*old man*" seems still to be busy opposing our will to do the Spirit's will, still fighting to take back control. This struggle is described in Gal. 5:17. The back of that old power in us is broken, yet he's still thrashing about in rage. As David when he was already anointed to be king after Saul. And yet Saul still held power, lashing out in rage and fear of David. As Israel under Joshua when they had fully conquered the Canaanites and occupied their



Promised Land. And yet there remained pockets of resistance within the land, still fighting for their lives and striving for dominance. The smaller battles against these trouble spots were an ongoing thing. And when these were allowed to stay their undesirable influence only spread (see the trend in Judges 1).

So if our old nature has lost its power over us in Christ, why does it sometimes control us? Because we allow it back on the throne! Because we enjoy entertaining those old habits. Because we stop fighting its presence, as Israel in Canaan. Because we let it drive us out of God's place of promise, as David allowed his fear of Saul to force him to the land of the Philistines (I Sam. 27-30). Though the power of our old nature is broken, no longer able to *make* us do its will, we *give* it power by joining with it in loving sin, by running in fear, by giving up the fight against inward and outward evil.

Now think about how our death and resurrection in Jesus describes a *radical change* in us with our justification. In Christ we are an entirely "*new creature*" (II Cor. 5:17), the old now replaced by the new. Salvation is not just *reform*, is much more than a mere *make-over*, and is even more than just a *take-over*. Salvation is the death of that

**6:7** *For he that is dead is freed from sin.*

**6:8** *Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him:*

**6:9** *Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him.*

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unredeemed life in us, and new life where there was no redeemed life before. Our sweeping change in Christ is as complete as death and resurrection into an entirely new existence, given to entirely new interests.

*“That the body of sin might be destroyed”* – Put out of action or out of order, and doomed to ultimate destruction altogether.

*“That we should not serve sin”* – As if sin were made as a person, seeking to be master over our life, that one we once so willingly served.

Vs. 7 – Again, how were we freed from the old rule of sin and Satan? Through our own death in and with Jesus.

Vs. 8-9 – In our resurrection to our new master in Jesus Christ we join Him in new life, with effect both now and forevermore! As Christ’s resurrection

**6:10** *For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God.*

**6:11** *Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

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was the proof of death's power over Him broken, so our co-death and resurrection with Jesus proves the power of sin and death broken over *our* lives. Though the saved soul be imperfect and weak, yet sin's dominion over him is crushed!

Vs. 10 – “*He died unto sin once*”, bearing the sin of man laid upon Himself. Christ's sacrificial death was a “*once for all*” thing (Heb. 7:27; 9:12; 10:10, 12, 14). He need never die for sin again (why then does catholic doctrine propose that He die again and again in the mass?). Death has been stripped of its authority through Christ's resurrection.

Vs. 11 – Now reckon it to be so. Understand what has happened to you in Christ, and account it to be so. Realize that you are now dead to the power of sin and alive to God. Conclude in your own heart by faith in the words of God that sin's rule over you is crushed through your death and resurrection with Jesus. Live now in newness of life, renouncing and forsaking the sin that no longer has the ability

to hold you or force you. *Live what you are!* Don't go back to the dead things of the old life. Don't ever dress yourself again in the disgusting old graveclothes of lying, lust, bitterness, anger, guile, corruption, etc. The more we reckon ourselves dead to sin the less we hear temptation's siren call.

*"Through our Lord Jesus Christ"* – Only in Christ is it possible to so live in victory over sin's hold.

Do you see the Lord's whole thrust here through the apostle? The union of a believing soul with Jesus Christ in salvation turns him completely around to a life that runs exactly against the principle and practice of sin.

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## **Baptism Note**

What then is baptism?

- It is the full immersion of a child of God, picturing that believer's death, burial, and resurrection in Christ.
- It is therefore only for one who has believed on Jesus (excluding christening of infants).
- It pictures the believer's complete union or identification with Jesus (*"baptized into Jesus*

**6:12** *Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof.*

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*Christ*", vs. 3), fully immersed in all that Jesus is.

- It pictures our ultimate physical resurrection from death's power.

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### **6:12-23** – Exchanged Masters.

Our identification with Christ is now forcefully applied.

Vs. 12 – What does the command of vs. 11 mean practically speaking? Don't ever allow the old master of sin back onto the throne of your heart. Though he demands to sit there, issuing his lusty decrees to your heart, just don't let sin tell you what to do anymore. Keep the Spirit of God on that throne from now on. Before salvation we had no choice but to serve sin. Now we have a choice. When you feel the pull of desire rising within you, as strong as it is wrong, you can say "In Jesus Christ I do not have to say yes to this! He is my

**6:13** *Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.*

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Master now”. Compare Christ’s response to the devil’s temptations in Matt. 4, saying in effect, “God in His Word says thus and so, and I stand with Him! He is My Master!”

Vs. 13 – This means we give no part of our body, no aspect of our life to wrong-doing. Refuse to allow your feet, hands, eyes, mind, etc. to be used for any evil act or wish. Rather hand your members over to God, leaving them there with Him, devoted wholly to Him for His service. Replace *wrong*-doing with *right*-doing (Eph. 4:22ff, replacement principle). It is an inward war that we face. Sin is so utterly against all that the Spirit stands for. Sin in us wants access again to the instruments of our physical members. But we don’t ever have to give access again. Understand that two cannot sit on the throne of our life at the same time (Matt. 6:24). If you try to allow sin only a small part he’ll demand the *whole*, and the Spirit will be side-lined. It’s one master or the other. Either the principle of sin or the principle of right is on the throne at any one

**6:14** *For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.*

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point. And this fight is on from the moment of salvation (Gal. 5:17). Praise God for the fight. Woe to the soul in whom there is no fight anymore!

In summary; In Christ you're dead to sin. Know it to be so. Reckon it to be so. And then turn your members over wholly to the holy service of God.

Vs. 14 – “*Ye are not under the law, but under grace*” – Again, the law could only cause our sin to abound by exposing the exceeding sinfulness of sin (5:20; 7:13), for “*the strength of sin is the law*” (I Cor. 15:56). The spirit of sin is rebellion and the strength of sin is something to rebel against in the law. So in a sense the law only helped sin in its crushing dominion over our lives before we believed. Though the law points out what pleases God, only grace could restore us to God or help us obey. Therefore the believer has been removed from under the law through his death, having found righteousness by grace alone. Compare Jn. 1:17; Gal. 4:1-7; II Cor. 3.

Vs. 15 – Again, Paul echoes the voice of the critic,

**6:15** *What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid.*

**6:16** *Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?*

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who questions salvation by grace alone through faith alone, saying, “Since I’m not under law I guess it doesn’t matter what I do then”. But a changed heart in Christ is no longer looking for license to live in sin. Consider as well how such scorning doubt of Paul’s doctrine affirms our conclusion that Paul does indeed speak of justification fully apart from works.

Vs. 16 – You make yourself a servant of the one you make your master. At all times we’re the servant of either one or the other. But to be the servant of righteousness is to be “*free indeed*”, in the same way that Israel was freed in the Exodus to serve God. From cruel master to caring. From heavy yoke to light. And we’re God’s servants by choice, not by force.

“*Sin unto death*” – This death refers perhaps to the eternal death of one who never received Christ. To continue to freely live in sin shows that one is still



**6:17** *But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you.*

**6:18** *Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.*

**6:19** *I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness.*

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sin's servant, contradicting his profession of salvation. As well, sin destroys the testimony of the saved, leading others to eternal death, and sin plays havoc with our physical being as well, leading to early physical death.

*“Obedience unto righteousness”* – This does not refer to an obedience that earns righteousness, but rather to Christian obedience that leads others to righteousness of life in Jesus.

Vs. 17-18 – How thankful Paul was that they had received the truth, and the truth had set them free to serve the Lord in righteousness.

Vs. 19 – Again, the practical outworking of unrighteousness is to actually devote our body parts *“to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity”*.

**6:20** *For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness.*

**6:21** *What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death. eternity with Him! Praise God!!*

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One iniquity leads down to the next, ever deeper and darker into the filthy cesspool of depravity. Sin is never an idle principle. It always comes carrying the notion of motion, as a seed carries the principle of its own multiplication.

Vs. 20-21 – When one is the servant of sin, righteousness has no hold over him. But what is the value of such a life lived free of any commitment to right? Absolutely nothing good comes of it! Utterly worthless! The end of such existence is only shame and death. No matter how attractive from the world’s perspective, God writes over the lives of the unsaved, “Shame and Death”.

Vs. 22 – The contrast of life in Jesus. Now in Christ the dominating power of sin has been shed and the service of the Lord willingly embraced. And only there do we find our greatest freedom, where the “*yoke is easy*” and the “*burden is light*”, compared to the cruel taskmaster of sin. The fruit of such an existence is holiness in this life, and in the end an

**6:22** *But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.*

**6:23** *For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

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eternity with Him! *Praise God!!*

Vs. 23 – A general principle. Sin pays death in the end, both physical and eternal. But God gives life even now, and with everlasting effect.

Now don't miss the contrast here. While the practice of sin earns death, does the practice of righteousness earn life? No! Life eternal must be *received* by we who have already earned death by our sin. It must be received as God's free gift, and a gift only God can give. And again, all, only, and ever "*through Jesus Christ our Lord*". Everything we have of eternal worth from God is in and through our wonderful Saviour. For "Christ . . . is our life" (Col. 3:4), "*and ye are complete in Him*" (Col. 2:10).

Note how Paul ends chap. 5 on the same theme that is *always* his theme, indeed ever the grand theme of all who truly love God. Only those *in Jesus Christ* will know God's blessing throughout eternity. Are you in?

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## Crucial Commands in This Chapter

- Vs. 11 – “*reckon*” (ongoing action)
- Vs. 12 – “*let not sin reign*” (ongoing action)
- Vs. 13 – “*Neither yield*” (ongoing action)
- Vs. 13 – “*yield*” (momentary action)
- Vs. 19 – “*yield*” (momentary action, as in “*present*” of 12:10)

## Class 9 – Romans 7:1-25

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**7:1** *Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth?*

**7:2** *For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband.*

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### **7:1-6** – Dead to Law, Alive to Christ.

The point was made in 6:14 that “*sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace*”. This chapter deals further with the question of what this means. What is it that now rules or doesn’t rule in a believer’s life? This theme will be chased further into chap. 8.

Vs. 1 – God’s law is the ruling standard until the moment a man dies.

Vs. 2-3 – Paul now illustrates the point with marriage. The law of God binds a married woman to her own husband alone for as long as her husband lives (I Cor. 7:39). She only becomes “*free*

**7:3** *So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man.*

**7:4** *Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.*

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*from that law” upon his death. If she should try to live as though she’s free before his death by taking up with some other man, God’s law condemns her as an adulteress. Only the death of a partner dissolves the marriage relation, and death does indeed dissolve their legal ties. Are you hearing, through the droning hum of the permissive counsel of our day? In the divorce and remarriage riddled societies of earth we would be wise to hear what God implies here. Only death dissolves a marriage. Marriage is for life!*

Vs. 4 – The application of Paul’s illustration comes clear. As death dissolves the legal tie between a married man and woman, freeing the living to legitimate marriage to another, even so the believer’s death in Jesus Christ was a death to sin and the law (6:3-7; Jn. 12:24), dissolving his old

**7:5** *For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death.*

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relation to God's law, and releasing him to a new relation to Jesus. Being justified we are now "*under the law of Christ*" (I Cor. 9:21). We could not be a part of Christ's bride (Eph. 5:23-24; II Cor. 11:2) if we were not first dead to the law. The whole purpose of our death is "*that we should*" be married to Christ and "*bring forth fruit unto God*". Fruit for God is God's design through our abiding union with Jesus (Jn. 15:2-8).

Vs. 5-6 – The fact that we are now united with Christ indicates again that we should no longer offer ourselves to sin "*to bring forth fruit unto death*", just as one married should never offer himself/ herself to any other outside of their marriage bond.

Vs. 5 – "*When we were in the flesh*" refers to our life before we were saved.

*"The motions of sins, which were by the law"* describe the passions or affections of sin, which were stirred by the restraints of God's right. All of our efforts in hope of doing right and earning a right

**7:6** *But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter.*

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standing with God only bore “*fruit unto death*”. Those fruits or “*works of the flesh*”, which lead a soul on to death, are listed in Gal. 5:19-21.

Vs. 6 – “*But now*” we’re no longer in the flesh, but walk “*after the Spirit*”, as chap. 8 will highlight. This is an entirely new condition, not one relating to the law at all. Where under the law we served “*in the oldness of the letter*”, we now “*serve in the newness of spirit* [Spirit?]”.

In what sense are we delivered from the letter of the law? As a means of justification? But none were *ever* justified by law-keeping. This point Paul has made quite clear. The ceremonial aspects of the law only? But the moral law of God is clearly in view here. Vs.7 refers to the Ten Commandments. Are we free then from all the righteous requirements of the law? But Paul said justification by faith *establishes* the law (3:31). The point is that in Christ we are no longer oriented toward keeping the particular details of the law. We died to our life with that old spouse. That is not to be our focus



*7:7 What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.*

---

now. For as we now “*walk in the Spirit*” we “*shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh*” (Gal. 5:16). “*If ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law*” (Gal. 5:18).

### **7:7-13** – Sin Takes Advantage Through Law.

Paul now begins a discussion of how law-keeping cannot help our Christian walk.

Vs. 7 – What are we to think of our need for deliverance from the law? Is the law of God a bad thing then? An underlying theme through the rest of this chapter is that it’s not the fault of the law that it was no help to our holiness. The fault lies in the sin nature of man, the fundamental aversion of our carnal heart to all that God defines as right and good. Our sin nature uses the righteous standard of God’s law like a weapon against us.

A man doesn’t know sin except the law should reveal it. A man doesn’t know that it’s wrong, not

*7:8 But sin, taking occasion by the commandment,  
wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For  
without the law sin was dead.*

*7:9 For I was alive without the law once: but when the  
commandment came, sin revived, and I died.*

---

only to *do* wrong but also to *desire* wrong, except that the law commands us not even to covet (Ex. 20:17). It's *not* O.K. to entertain or nurture a desire to do wrong as long as you don't actually do it! And the law of God makes this known. Its influence is a good thing, exposing the true wrongness of wrong, and jacking up the magnitude of human guilt to a level where it should be. It's the effect the law was meant to have in a soul. Like lifting an old plank, exposing the long-hidden underside to the sunlight, scattering the swarm of creepy crawlies living there. The essence of God's law should be preached to this end. In fact the life of a godly person does just that without a word, exposing the sin of others as exceedingly sinful. Until this good work is done in the unsaved their need for the Saviour's help will not become apparent to them. Though unable to save a soul, the law is certainly quite capable of leading one to his need of salvation in Jesus Christ (Gal. 3:24). Without the fullest exposure of human sin in the law, there can be no proper knowledge of the true noxious nature of sin. And without

*7:10 And the commandment, which was ordained to life,  
I found to be unto death.  
7:11 For sin, taking occasion by the commandment,  
deceived me, and by it slew me.*

---

knowledge of the full extent of sin there can be no understanding of grace, that God would so commend His love toward us in sacrificing His Son for sinners (5:8). Thus God's law is the basis for fully understanding His grace.

Vs. 8-11 – Our sin nature, that depraved tendency in us, expressed now as if a person, still presses us to wrong, even with the law forbidding it. As one still driving in the same old inappropriate way even after the traffic signs are put up. And even more so because the law is now written and posted and commanding against it, stirring angry obstinacy in our old rebel nature.

*“Sin, taking occasion by the commandment”* (vs. 8, 11) – The entrance of the law fans the flames of inward rebellion, resulting in all manner of passions far too great to be suppressed, relentlessly pressing a man on to his own ruin. It was as if sin was dormant or relatively inactive before the entrance of the law into my life and understanding. But with

**7:12** *Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment  
holy, and just, and good.*

---

the law's arrival sin sprang to life within me, leading to all manner of evil and its deadly fruits. As if the law's restraints excited sin in me to a more earnest practice of things forbidden. In essence killing me, casting me down to defeat, making me see again that I am unable to live the law in myself, even though having been justified in Christ. I couldn't live it *before* my salvation and I still can't live it *since* my salvation.

Vs. 12 – It's not the law that is to be blamed, anymore than we assign blame to the murderer's knife. It's good of the law to expose sin in me, that I might find answers in Christ. Even so it's a good thing when the Lord uses us to confront evil in each other. Though in that confrontation we are likely to appear the evil one to the sinner. But only by bringing that confrontation is there hope of finding rest in Jesus. The only hope of help for the unsaved is to allow the stark difference between right and wrong to remain evident in us, and to risk the anger of the sinner for our lives that reprove their evil. They (with us) must come through the discomfort of such pangs if they are to come to new

**7:13** *Was then that which is good made death unto me?  
God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working  
death in me by that which is good; that sin by the  
commandment might become exceeding sinful.*

---

birth. We don't help the unsaved by minimizing their differences from us, adopting some bits of the filth of our old grave clothes, taking some half-way position between purity and carnality. This is the unfortunate nature of the christianised paganism of much of the modern church. We help the unsaved world only by allowing the sharp contrasts between their darkness and our light to remain evident.

Vs. 13 – It's not the law but sin that works death in me, using the good law against me. The law of God turned the light on to "*sin, working death in me*", showing sin for what it is, "*exceeding sinful*". The law of God, giving "*the knowledge of sin*" (3:20) and revealing transgression (4:15), became the opportunity for sin to abound (5:20), showing sin's wickedly cruel and death-working nature in me.

Paul seems to describe in this chapter the danger of a redeemed life lived with attention to the law of God. In discussing our new life of victory in Jesus Christ, he begins with a way that does *not* work, the

way of focus upon the *law*. As if still enamoured with that old spouse even after marriage to another. Not only is the law not able to *justify* us, it's not able to *sanctify* us either. To attempt to live the Christian life according to God's law is only to plunge us to defeat. We "*are not under the law, but under grace*" (6:15). The law of God was not the ruling principle in our *salvation*, and it still is not to be the ruling principle in our *transformation*.

### **7:14-25** – Law Cannot Deliver From Sin Nature.

There is now a struggle described in these remaining verses. With this all would agree. But great are the debates over the nature of this struggle, whether it refers to what happens in the heart of a saved or unsaved soul. I believe this whole chapter describes struggles in saved folks, who are wrongly attempting to live the Christian life with attention to the law, and finding the principle of sin still very active within and still much too strong. Chap. 8 clearly brings the answer to the grappling soul described here. There may be some aspects of this struggle that are true of the unsaved as well, but an unsaved Paul is not the point here. The unsaved could never be described as looking upon the law of God as "*holy, and just, and good*" (vs. 12) as this one does. They could not be

**7:14** *For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin.*

**7:15** *For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I.*

---

described with the two natures seen in vs. 17 and throughout. “*To will*” is not present within them (vs. 18). The unsaved do not have a will to do right (vs. 19) as in the saved. They cannot “*delight after the law of God*”, as only the new nature can. The law is rather a terror to the unsaved, coming as the avenger of blood. Rather this portion presents a saved soul finding still no deliverance in his own efforts to live according to the law of God. The description is of one who has yet to find the answer in the abiding life. Don’t miss the almost complete absence of mention of the Spirit in this chapter (though 19 times in chapter 8!). And mention of Christ comes only finally at the end. This is a believer on his own, in his own strength, without the help of God’s blessed Comforters, with his eye to the law trying to force his old sin nature to bow to its demands.

Vs. 14-15 – Still under the appetites of the flesh, as sin’s unwilling servant, showing the power of sin still within. Paul described the Corinthian believers

*7:16 If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good.*

*7:17 Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.*

*7:18 For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.*

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in a similar way in I Cor. 3:1.

Paul puts words to the very sort of thing with which we've all struggled in our Christian experience. He describes the battle between the two natures within us, the renewed nature vs. the “*old man*” (6:6) It's about our falling to practices that run against our redeemed nature, hating the doing of them, loving the good and right, but finding no strength to live the right and leave the wrong.

Vs. 16-20 – That he would do what he did not want to do, what the law states he should not do, expressed his agreement with the law that it's good. This also shows another nature within, siding with God's righteous standard and running opposed to the old sin nature still dwelling there. Those two natures become very evident in these verses. Our old sin nature is exposed as that aspect of our being that moves us to sin and stains all our good. John



*7:19 For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do.*

*7:20 Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.*

*7:21 I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me.*

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Bunyan described the interaction between these two natures within us in this way; “Desires come warm with the Spirit and grace of God in us, but as warm waters running through cold pipes, or as clear water running through dirty conveyances, so our desires are chilled and defiled by the corruptions of the flesh”. And how deep the depravity of this aspect of our being, for “*in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing*” (Jer. 17:9). This the redeemed soul knows through his personal experience with this inward grapple (“*for I know*”).

Vs. 21-23 – Paul begins his concluding thoughts here with a summary statement of the principle of the believer’s two natures and the practical effect. They are opposing principles striving for a controlling interest. And indeed while the wish to do good is present, the practice of evil remains.

Vs. 22 – This delight of our renewed nature in God’s law is the same expressed by the writer of Ps. 119

**7:22** *For I delight in the law of God after the inward man:*  
**7:23** *But I see another law in my members, warring  
against the law of my mind, and bringing me into  
captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.*  
**7:24** *O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me  
from the body of this death?*

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(vs. 16, 24, 77, 97, 113). Yet his delight in God's law does not result in the holy living he wishes for, but only seems to stir him to the greater practice of sin. Something is clearly wrong in his approach.

Vs. 24 – In the agony of this inward war, delighting in the law and longing to live its righteous principles, and yet not finding the ability to do so through sin's continued power, Paul cries out for deliverance from the bondage he hates with the question of “who shall deliver me”. As if there would be a question of where he might find help. As if to highlight the point that his eyes have been in the wrong place thus far, leading to the defeat he describes. Christ and the Spirit have been absent from this struggle until now. It has been all about a man in his own campaign against sin with an eye to the law, attempting to use the law to slay his sin nature. But alas, his old nature instead makes use of the law to slay him in this deadly inward dual he should not even be fighting. Obviously the law

coupled with our own efforts is not enough.

*“From the body of this death”* – From the dead, corrupting influence of the body of his sin nature (6:6), crucified and destined for destruction. Some have likened Paul’s statement here to a living man chained to a corpse. Apparently this was a form of punishment at one time for a murderer, either to chain him to a dead body, or to strap it to his back. As if dragging the repulsive, corrupted dead *“body of sin”* about his earthly existence. There’s nothing he can do for the corpse, and no way to get away from it. Here is the longing of the redeemed soul and of all creation, earnestly waiting for deliverance *“from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God”* (8:21). Though there are answers coming in chap. 8, something of this struggle will remain with us to the end. Here is the *“groaning and travailing”* of the spiritual mind, waiting for final redemption from the power of sin. There is a sense in which this groaning only grows as we grow in our love for God and hatred of sin. Compare Paul’s own experience;

- Before salvation he considered himself quite blameless in relation to the law (Phil. 3:6).
- In 58 A.D., some twenty years into his Christian life, Paul called himself *“the least of*

**7:25** *I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.*

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*the apostles*” (I Cor. 15:9).

- By 63 A.D. his self opinion had slid to *“less than the least of all saints”* (Eph. 3:8).
- Then in 65 A.D. Paul called himself *“the chief of sinners”* (I Tim. 1:15).

Yet don’t miss the reference to God’s grace in the context of these passages. Paul’s appreciation of the grace of God and the God of grace soared as he grew in awareness of the inward corruptions of his sin nature.

Vs. 25 – His cry for help now finds immediate answer *“through Jesus Christ our Lord”*, and through the inward work of the Spirit coming right up in chap. 8. In spite of the conflict he sees hope for deliverance, leading to joy, for at last he looks in the right place. The law is not our rule for life at all, and to look to it for guidance will only maintain a defeated Christian existence. Our way is to look in the direction to which Paul finally turns. Abiding focus upon Jesus Christ is the way to victorious

living. We just do not have the power in ourselves to make our flesh heel to the law. The only answer is to turn our attention from the law, turning fully to face Christ, to hold the Head, to abide in that Vine, keeping our focus there. Compare the same essential argument in II Cor. 3. The answer is the Spirit's work in us as our gaze remains fixed on Jesus. Note the focus in Jn. 15 upon Christ, and the abiding life resulting in "*much fruit*". The way of a fruitful branch is simply to cling to the vine, and growth comes naturally in time, as the steady, solid growth of the tree planted "*by the rivers of waters*" (Ps. 1).

Now true religion never ceases the fight against sin in all of its forms, as long as there is sin to fight. To be sure there can never be peace between the darkness of sin and the light of God's right (Gal. 5:17; II Cor. 6:14-16). And a fair measure of our true spirituality is how bitter our hatred for evil really is (Rev. 2:2, 6). Yet the battle against sin is not related to the law and seeking to subject our old nature to it. Instead it is related to *Jesus Christ*, and keeping our heart's focus upon Him. "*For to me to live is Christ*" (Phil. 1:21). "*Bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ*" (II Cor. 10:5). We are not to relate our lives to the law, in the same way that the branch does not relate its

growth and production to the textbook standard of perfect branch growth. Rather it simply maintains its attachment to the vine, and the proper fruits will come. The good wife does not live for her husband with eyes to some outside standard of what a good wife should be. She simply lives according to her love for the man, her full attention there, and he according to his love for her. Our eyes are not to any outside standard of comparison. Our eyes are upon the Lord, continually attentive and attending to Him, as a faithful servant to his master. And in so doing the Spirit will begin to work out the righteousness of the law in us.

Victory over the influence of our old nature is not won through our defeat of our old nature. Victory comes through recognizing that it's bigger than us and that we need help (vs. 24-25), and then all attention riveted to our only Helper.

## **Class 10 – Romans 8:1-17**

The great theme of this book of Romans is justification by faith, that God is willing to declare you righteous through your faith in His promise of life in Jesus Christ. There is no work of man in making one fit for heaven. Justification is a work of God in a believing soul.

In chapter 5 Paul began dealing with the fruits of justification in sanctification, God's good work of fulfilling the law's righteousness in the life of a believer. Now in chapter 8 the Spirit comes into focus as a vital part of our victorious Christian living. The life lived after the Spirit is contrasted here with a life lived in the flesh. Note that "*the Spirit*" is referred to 19 times in chapter 8, and "*the flesh*" 14 times. Remember that the latter part of chapter 7 described the two principles of the two natures at work in the believer, my "*inward man*" (7:22) or "*mind*" (7:23, 25) delights in God's law, while "*the law (of sin) in my members*" (7:23, 25) seems stronger. We saw there the defeated life of one who attempts to whip his flesh into subjection to God's law. Chapter 8 now comes in with victory and never looks back, with eyes off the law, sin, and self, and on God's Spirit and Saviour.

**8:1** *There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.*

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### **8:1-4** – Confidence and Victory.

Vs. 1 – *Nothing* of a condemning sentence now stands against the soul at rest “*in Christ Jesus*”, who “*shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life*” (Jn. 5:24).

Compare no *separation* in vs. 39. In Jesus we will never again know either condemnation or separation from God. The unsaved have nothing *but* condemnation and separation from God (3:19). The saved have *none of it!* The Lord holds absolutely nothing against the redeemed soul, “*no condemnation*”! Therefore the saved soul is in no way obliged to earn God’s favour, for he *already has it! All of it!* The happy, victorious Christian life begins here, in knowing that your salvation is sure. Compare the confident words of the Lord’s servant in Isa. 50:7-9. What tremendous rest and relief this is for the troubled soul in Christ who lives in defeat trying to keep the law in order to avoid God’s condemnations, when at last he discovers the matter of sin quite settled, with “NO



**8:2** *For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.*

**8:3** *For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh:*

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CONDEMNATION” written over his new relation to God. It’s God Himself who has proclaimed it true!

*“Who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit”* – Here is a truth so strongly underscored. The telling characteristic of one in Christ is that their eyes are to the Spirit rather than to the law, attempting to align their unruly flesh with its holy dictates.

Vs. 2 – Again, we are dead and buried to the law, raised and married to the Lord (7:4). The principle of life through the Spirit frees the believing soul from the impossible task of living the law in the flesh, which only results in defeat. And being freed from any thought of *keeping* our salvation, we’re now free to live to God’s pleasure simply out of love for Him.

Vs. 3 – The law could not;

- Satisfy God’s wrath against a man’s sin.

**8:4** *That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.*

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- Cleanse a soul from sin and guilt.
- Break the power of sin's hold leading on to righteous living, because of the weakness of the flesh (7:13).

Jesus came "*in the likeness of sinful flesh*" as a man, yet without the sin nature of man.

How did Jesus condemn "*sin in the flesh*"? He carried sin away in His death, and carried it away from me in my co-death with Him (6:3-6, compare I Pet. 2:24, "*Who His own self bare our sin in His own body on the tree*"). And then He broke sin's power unto death through His resurrection. Jesus did what the law could not do. He actually conquered ("*condemned*") sin and death. Again, the end product is the law fulfilled in the believer far more than in the law-keeper, both in his justification and in his victorious living through the Spirit's sanctifying work. Not sinless perfection, but an inward, Spirit-led bent toward not sinning (I Jn. 3:4-10).

**8:5** *For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit.*

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Vs. 4 – Look well where the eyes of the victorious Christian life are fixed. Again, not to the law, vainly attempting to whip the flesh into submission, but to the Spirit. Those living in victory walk after the Spirit. What does this mean?

- God's words are the Spirit's voice (II Pet. 1:21) – they're *listening*.
- Christ's exaltation is the Spirit's purpose (Jn. 16:14; 15:26) – they're *gazing* (II Cor. 3:18).
- The Spirit's gifts and fruits (Gal. 5:22-23) are His aim – they're *applying*.
- The “*works of the flesh*” are the Spirit's enemy (Gal. 5:17-21) – they're *denying*.

The victorious Christian life does not live in fear and doubt and anxiety, but in the settled rest of “*life and peace*” (vs. 6).

**8:5-11** – Two Ways Contrasted.

Vs. 5 – Flesh or Spirit *mind*. The unbeliever,

**8:6** *For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.*

**8:7** *Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.*

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without the Spirit of God dwelling within, has a mind consumed with the things of the flesh (earthly). The contrast is in those minding the Spirit's things (heavenly, Col. 3:1-2).

Vs. 6 – Flesh or Spirit ends. Though physically alive, the unsaved are spiritually dead (Eph. 2:1), and will end in eternal death. In contrast, one with both physical and spiritual life already has “*everlasting life, and . . . is passed from death unto life*” (Jn. 5:24).

Vs. 7 – The fleshly mind is incapable of anything but rebellion against God. To be otherwise would involve a change in its very nature, which the flesh simply cannot do. The fleshly mind can no more be reformed than can a *corpse*! There is no more hope of educating it into holiness than there is of teaching a scarecrow to hoe furrows and plant seed. It's dead! Requiring the resurrection life that only the Spirit can and does provide at new birth. The unsaved may try to deny their hostility toward God,

**8:8** *So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.*

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yet it is evident in their minds directed after the flesh and leaning far from the will of God. Compare Cain and his line (Gen. 4), stacking up quite a list of earthly accomplishments among them, yet with little thought toward God, or coming to Him only in their own way. This is the essence of all false religion.

Vs. 8 – They who so naturally live to please themselves cannot please God. Even if they would attempt to “worship” God, in the way of carnal Cain bringing his sacrifice to the altar, still they come with fleshly minds, essentially in rebellion against the Lord. God’s response to their unacceptable offerings is the same as with Cain. And as Cain, the unsaved are angered when one suggests their offerings unacceptable, their very anger testifying to their lost condition. May the Lord’s words here be “*as goads*” to such angry, unsaved souls, until they’re driven at last to the one acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to the Lord. That once-for-all offering of Jesus Christ and His blood shed for us.

Vs. 9-10 – The contrast in the saved;

**8:9** *But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.*  
**8:10** *And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.*

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- They do have the Spirit. What humble temples we are, that the very Spirit of God would so indwell us! Much like the sea beast with the man of God (Jonah) in its belly. Or as the earth with Jesus Himself in the heart of it (Matt. 12:40). An honour to the one and humiliation to the other, and *all of grace!!*
- They “*are not in the flesh*”.
- They are “*in the Spirit*”. There are emphases here in the Greek, “But *you yourselves* (emphasis) are not as the unbelievers, in the flesh, *but* (emph.) in the Spirit.”  
  
“*If so be . . .*” (vs. 9) does not imply some believers don’t have the indwelling Spirit. The sense of the phrase is “since”. All believers have the Spirit or they “*are none of His*”, having no connection with Christ.
- Their body is dead because of sin.
- Their spirit is alive because of righteousness.

As if their body is abandoned to death, with only their spirit saved for time and eternity.

Clearly the Lord is not talking about a disposition, attitude, or lifestyle that brings a transformation. He speaks of *death* and new *life* here, the miracle of new-*birth*, the miracle *resurrection* of one who was spiritually dead. It is a thoroughly renewed or transformed soul of which God speaks, through the presence of the Spirit of God within, bringing with it a new attitude or frame of mind.

There are clear assumptions in this portion we would be unwise to miss. Believers are the very opposite of unbelievers. They don't walk after the flesh (vs. 4), but after the Spirit. They don't mind the things of the flesh (vs. 5), but the things of the Spirit. They are not carnally minded (vs. 6), but spiritually minded. They don't have fleshly, self-serving minds (vs. 7), but rather are subject to God's will. They are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit (vs. 8-9), and thus are well-pleasing to God. They are an entirely different kind of being, like a fish in the water transformed into an air-breathing creature. The Spirit is the very element in whom the saved live now, even as they lived in the flesh before. As if breathing new air, celestial rather than terrestrial.

*“The body is dead because of sin”* – The believer still possesses a physical body, but one condemned to death because of sin. *“For in Adam all die”* and *“the wages of sin is death”*. The ancient sentence still holds (5:12). The seed of decay is still in us. Saved or no, we will physically grow old and die. As with Paul’s experience on the shore of Melita, the ship is going to go down. There’s no help for it. But though the ship be lost the crew will be saved, for there is also now another principle working in the believer. Life is also now present in their doomed bodies, through the indwelling Spirit of God.

*“But the Spirit is life because of righteousness”* – The believer having received Christ’s own righteousness by faith, though in a body stricken with the death wound of sin, yet he has been rescued from the power of death. As a poisonous snakebite brings the invasion of deadly poison flowing hopelessly, uncontrollably through the veins, so every descendant of Adam is a sinner in him, stung, poisoned by sin and doomed to death. But through faith in Jesus Christ comes the entrance of God’s Spirit, the antidote counteracting the deadly poison of sin. ***Blessed second invasion!!*** Through the second Adam!

Note the divine line-up of indwellers in vs. 9-11;



**8:11** *But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.*

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- Vs. 9 – *“The Spirit of God”*.
- Vs. 9 – *“The Spirit of Christ”*.
- Vs. 10 – *“Christ”*.
- Vs. 11 – *“The Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead”* (God the Father).

The whole Trinity of God comes to the believer in the wonder of His inward presence!

Vs. 11 – Though the body be condemned to death, even our mortal bodies shall be raised to immortality through the work of that One who showed Himself able in Christ’s resurrection. As Jesus was raised so we shall be raised. Believe it believer! The presence of the Spirit within is in fact the guarantee that we, though destined to physical death, will be raised from death in the same wonderful way Christ was.

**8:12-17** – Signs of Sonship.

**8:12** *Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh.*

**8:13** *For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.*

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Vs. 12 – We don’t owe anything to the flesh, to live according to it. Yet Paul is not saying that it doesn’t matter how we live. We who name the name of Christ are obligated to live lives separate from evil as we seek to walk in the Spirit.

Vs. 13 – To live according to flesh is to be about to die. “*Mortify*” refers to the continual activity of the believer. We are to be mortifying or putting to death the practices of the body “*through (by/in) the Spirit*” as our ongoing life habit. There is an enabling through the indwelling Spirit, yet our own determined desire is required as well. In Col. 3:5-9 we find similar encouragements, listing specific kinds of things to be mortified. And as the dead leaves and branches of our old sinful practices are pruned away, room is made for the fruits of the Spirit to flourish (Ps. 92:12).

Here is one sign of a true child of God. Such a one is not living “*after the flesh*”, but is walking “*after the Spirit*” as he puts to death the fleshly deeds of

**8:14** *For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.*

**8:15** *For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.*

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the body.

Vs. 14 – “These (emph.) are the sons of God, the ones being led by the Spirit”. Here again is a sign of God’s true sons. Those not being led by the Spirit away from fleshly practices display a question mark over their sonship. What can be said of the one who is after the flesh with no real interest in the things of the Spirit? He’s either *fighting* the blessed influence of the Spirit, or *without* it!

Vs. 15 – The Spirit the believer has received is not one of craven fear. In Christ we have received the Spirit of God’s own Son (Gal. 4:6), being adopted into God’s own family, and resulting in a personal relationship with God such that we can now cry to Him as our own Father. “*Abba*” is an endearing term for “father”, like “Dad”. To refer to God as “*Abba*” expresses our loving relation to Him. Here is another sign of a son of God. God’s child recognizes a personal relationship with God, which he did not know before he was justified.

**8:16** *The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:*

**8:17** *And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.*

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Vs. 16 – A further evidence of our sonship is the witness of the Spirit to our own spirit that we are now related to God as His child.

Vs. 17 – We are heirs of all of God! The indwelling Spirit of God already given to us is the “*earnest*” (down-payment or deposit) of that glorious inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession (Eph. 1:13-14).

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## **Signs of Sonship**

Experiencing through the Spirit an end of the deeds of the body (vs. 13).

Being led by the Spirit away from fleshly practices (vs. 14).

The evidence of a new personal relation to God as Father (vs. 15).

The direct inner witness of our sonship by the indwelling Spirit (vs. 16).

## Class 11 – Romans 8:18-39

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

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Though we walk in the Spirit, finding victory over the flesh (vs. 1-11), and though the signs of our sonship be evident (vs. 12-17), yet our situation is still less than perfect this side of glory. There is a groaning in suffering that we endure with all creation under the effects of man's fall to sin and death. But the Lord now gives good reasons for encouragement in those suffering in Christ.

### **8:18-30** – From Suffering to Glory.

The same theme of glory in vs. 18 and vs. 30 ties this section together.

Vs. 18 – “*This present time*” is compared with what “*shall be*”. The former is light, brief, and passing, while the latter is “*a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory*” (II Cor. 4:17). What we face now cannot even be compared with the glory to come.

**8:19** *For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.*

**8:20** *For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope,*

**8:21** *Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.*

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Not even in the same galaxy!

Vs. 19-22 – The whole creation fell to cursing with man’s choice to sin (Gen. 3:17-19), and will begin to return to an Eden-like state of blessing at Christ’s return.

Vs. 19 – The word translated “*earnest expectation*” carries quite a strong meaning, picturing the neck stretched to see in eager anticipation of something coming (Phil. 1:20). The whole of creation yearns toward the universal renewal to come with Christ’s return to the blessing of His earthly kingdom (Rev. 20; Isa. 11, 35, 65:17ff; Ezek. 34:25-27; Hos. 2:21-22), and with the new heavens and earth to follow (Rev. 21-22; II Pet. 3:13). God’s creation will be restored to the glory and excellence it knew before man’s fall to sin.

Vs. 21 – “*The glorious liberty*” is literally “into the

**8:22** *For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.*

**8:23** *And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.*

**8:24** *For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?*

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*liberty of the glory of the children of God*". When our faith at last breaks through into sight in the glory of God's presence we will then know complete freedom from the shackling, corrupting tyranny of sin upon God's creation.

Vs. 23 – Attention now to the saved. Refuge from God's condemnation in Christ does not completely free us from suffering the effects of sin in this life.

That we "*have the firstfruits of the Spirit*" is a reminder of the indwelling Spirit as a pledge of the fullness of God to be ours in that coming day. Though in Christ we've already "*received the Spirit of adoption*" (vs. 15), we still await the fullness of "*the adoption*" in the full inheritance of the complete "*redemption of our body*", for "*we shall be changed*".

Vs. 24-25 – When faith turns to sight and we're

**8:25** *But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.*

**8:26** *Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.*

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actually enjoying the fulfilment of God's promises the expectation of hope will no longer be needed. The Lord's will for His own is that we demonstrate the reality of our faith now through our patient waiting and looking for His promises. It's that fruit of faith for which the Lord seeks in us.

Here in vs. 18-25 is encouragement in the battles the Christian is sure to face in life. The oppression and sufferings we must endure just aren't going to be forever. We live in hope, in anticipation of a day that will indeed come according to God's promise. And when that day finally dawns and the night at last is past, the glory then will so far outweigh our present afflictions that the suffering of "*this present time*" will dim to insignificance.

Vs. 26-27 – Our Spirit Helper.

Vs. 26 – The word translated "*helpeth*" here pictures the action of taking hold of something with



**8:27** *And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.*

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

---

someone, like grabbing the line with someone who's straining to pull something or running to the aid of one struggling with a load too heavy to handle. And one of the ways the Spirit of God helps in our weaknesses is in our prayer life. "*Groanings*" does not refer to moaning complaint but to deep emotion or concern. In those hardest times when maybe we just don't even know how or what to express in prayer, when our anguish of soul is too great to even put to language, in those times the Spirit is there to intercede, expressing our heart's distress to the Father. Here is another word of encouragement for the troubled saint, knowing that the Spirit of God is our Helper, taking up the line to lend His strength in the hard pull of life on earth.

By the way, these "*groanings*" cannot refer to tongues-speaking as some suggest, for these are not just unintelligible things, but *unutterable*.

Vs. 28-30 – The outcome is secure in God's hand.

**8:29** *For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.*

**8:30** *Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.*

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“*All things*” includes the events of the dark days as well as the bright. “*Them that love God*” refers to believers, in whose hearts “*the love of God is shed abroad*” or poured out (5:5), and especially believers walking in loving attention to the Lord. The phrase “*to them who are the called according to His purpose*” is then explained in vs. 29-30.

“*Predestinate*” is to foreordain or determine ahead of time. Those the Lord knew ahead of their time He pre-determined to the complete salvation of following Christ through death and resurrection to His own likeness in glory (I Jn. 3:2). Every event “*traced upon our dial*” is toward the Lord’s purpose for us of conformity to the image of Jesus Christ. In the purification of gold the metal is heated and skimmed of dross several times and then polished with abrasives until one can see himself in the shine. Even so our God refines us in the fire of trials, painfully scraping off the dross and working the hard abrasives over us, until He can see His

Son in the shine of our lives.

We're not informed here of what the Lord "*did foreknow*" or knew in advance, but implied is some particular knowledge concerning His chosen. A careful study of God's words will prove that God's sovereignty and human responsibility unite in God's work of redemption. In God's sovereignty human responsibility is never trampled, and in human responsibility God's sovereignty is never compromised. The answer to explaining these things is not found in denying either aspect.

*"He called"* – The Lord calls to salvation through His words, through the Spirit's convicting work, and through the testimony of His saints.

*"Them He also glorified"* describes the end of God's work for man's benefit through Christ, that many may "*come from east and west*" to "*sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven*" (Matt. 8:11).

In this link of past tenses in vs. 29-30 Paul looks upon the work of redemption as if already completed, expressing the utter *certainty* of God's purpose. It's as if every soul the Lord foreknew and thus pre-determined to Christ-likeness has already

**8:31** *What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?*

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been “*called*” to salvation in Jesus Christ, “*justified*” or declared righteous, and “*glorified*” in the “glory of the liberty of the children of God”. It’s that certain! And don’t miss the total transfer here as well. None slip through the seams. God’s careful eye is on His own, every one of them! He will see them through from eternity *past* to eternity *future*, from His foreknowledge to glory. Every soul truly justified will ultimately be found in glory, for vs. 30 is all about only one “*He*” (6 times). It’s all about the *Lord’s* doing, not about man’s keeping.

Here is another encouragement for the saint in troubled times. *The outcomes are assured!* Whether good things or bad things, “*all things work together for good*” for the saint through the Lord’s gracious oversight.

**8:31-34** – “*If God be for us*”.

The logic in this portion is just as simple and obvious as it is stirring and comforting. Put simply, there is absolutely nothing in all of God’s great creation that can prevent His gracious purpose of

**8:32** *He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?*

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bringing His sons to glory.

Vs. 31 – It’s all a question of “*who*” (4 times in vs. 31-35). If the *supreme* Being has received us, what difference does it make who else rejects us? It matters not how mighty our enemy if the *Almighty* be our Friend. If the *highest* Judge has fully pardoned us, what lesser judge could condemn us and make it stick? Who could if they wanted to? Who would dare try? Compare Isa. 50:7-9. “*The LORD is on my side; I will not fear: what can man do unto me?*” (Ps. 118:6) Satan is the very strongest being against us in all of God’s creation, and yet he is but a created being who has repeatedly failed throughout history whenever he has attempted to oppose God’s purposes. The doom of that greatest enemy of God is already written in the Book, from first (Gen. 3:15) to last (Rev. 20:10), three chapters in from either end.

Vs. 32 – What greater pledge could God give that He is “*for us*” than the gift of the sacrifice of His own Son? And if He would give us the very greatest

**8:33** *Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?  
It is God that justifieth.*

**8:34** *Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died,  
yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right  
hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.*

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possible gift He could ever give, how could He withhold from us any lesser gifts? Indeed if Jesus Christ be yours then “all things are yours” (I Cor. 3:21-22). The Lord could not possibly express His kind commitment to our well-being more completely than in what He has already done for us through our Saviour. Therefore we are completely assured that He remains committed to our best. He is “*for us*”! Believe it believer! It could not possibly be otherwise!

Vs. 33-34 – No condemnation! If it’s *God* who has chosen His redeemed, if it’s *God* who has declared a soul righteous, if it’s *Jesus Christ* who though He was dead has been raised and exalted to the very highest, if it is *He Himself* who now stands at the Father’s right hand as our Advocate to plead on behalf of His saints, then what accuser against us could ever make his condemnations stick? Whoever should dare try would be running right against the very will of God. We find an example of both the conflict and the failure of our foe through Christ’s

intercession in Lk. 22:31-32, *“And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.”* Satan was demanding opportunity to sift all of Christ’s disciples, thinking to expose them as mere chaff. *“But I have prayed for thee.”* And Christ’s interceding work on Peter’s behalf was sufficient to keep him from being utterly cast down. Through the Lord’s keeping Peter’s faith proved strong to lift him from his denials to a place of usefulness and leadership in the church, as we see in Acts 1-12. We tend to see only Peter in his turn-around, *“but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren”*. “When”, not “if”. Jesus knew what His prayer on Peter’s behalf would accomplish. Other failures of Satan to condemn God’s elect can be found in Satan’s attempt to sift Job, and Balaam’s effort to curse the children of Israel (Num. 22-24). *“Behold . . . He hath blessed; and I cannot reverse it. He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath He seen perverseness in Israel: the LORD his God is with him”* (Num. 23:20-21).

Don’t miss the *fullness* of God “for us” here in this stirring portion, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit;

**8:35** *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?*

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- Vs. 26 & 27 – “*The Spirit itself [Himself] maketh intercession for us*”.
- Vs. 31 & 32 – “*If God be for us*”.
- Vs. 34 – “*It is Christ . . . who also maketh intercession for us*”.

### **8:35-38** – Who or What Can Separate Us?

As we come out the end of chapter 8 it’s a question of who or what could ever drive a wedge between a soul and his Saviour.

Vs. 35 – Nobody, no *person* could ever manage to separate a saved soul from “*the love of Christ*”. And would not the challenge of this enquiring “*who*” also include the saved one himself? As no one can pluck a child of God out of Christ’s hand (Jn. 10:28-29), not even that saint himself, even so no one is able to bring separation between Christ and a child of His love, not even that child himself.

No *event* can separate the saved from their Saviour,



**8:36** *As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.*

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not even the “*sword*” or death. Death only puts the saint “*present with the Lord*” (II Cor. 5:8), closer than ever and that forever!

Understand as well by this that no trouble can ever fairly be read as indication of separation from God. Though our afflictions may seem at times to say to our soul that God has left us, this can never be true.

Vs. 36 – A quote from Ps. 44:22. Believers in every age have been able to identify with these thoughts. The idea here seems to be that the saints of God have always seemed an easy kill by their enemies, since they don’t tend to fight back. But the Lord God Himself is their avenger, and their killing proves to be not such an easy thing in the end. Compare Herod’s efforts and end in Acts 12 and Haman’s in the book of Esther. As well, though God’s true children are esteemed by men of the world to be as insignificant as sheep, yet they are in fact those “*of whom the world was not worthy*” (Heb. 11:35-38).

**8:37** *Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.*

**8:38** *For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come,*

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Vs. 37 – Looking through to the end, *it's all victory!* Not only are we conquerors, but the word from which we get “hyper” is behind the English here. Hyper-conquerors! Super conquerors! Even in the very worst the world can do to us, even in death we are the victors. Whether released from prison, as Joseph, Peter, Paul, and Silas, or released from life to death, as James and John the Baptist, both walk away the victor over their enemies. To be sure “*the horn*” of the righteous “*shall be exalted with honour. The wicked shall see it, and be grieved; he shall gnash with his teeth, and melt away: the desire of the wicked shall perish*” (Ps. 112:9-10).

Vs. 38-39 – Blessed persuasion!

“*Principalities*” and “*powers*” probably refer especially to the ranks of evil angels or demons (Eph. 6:12; Col. 2:15).

“*Things present*” and “*things to come*” pretty well covers the existing time line.

**8:39** *Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

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*“Nor height, nor depth”* – No amount of space can make separation (Ps. 139).

*“Nor any other creature”* covers every other created thing outside of a soul before his Saviour.

*“Shall be able to separate us”* – A surety extending from the present into the eternal future (*“shall”*). Not now nor *ever!*

Absolutely nothing is left unmentioned in this list of possible antagonists. Every concept of time, space, and created being is covered in Paul’s eloquent words of assurance here. Not a single thing could ever come between saint and Saviour, between true Christian and *“Christ Jesus our Lord”*. We came into this chapter with *“no condemnation”* and we go out with *no possible separation!!*

What greater encouragements could we carry in our hearts as we face life in *“this present time”*?

- Our present sufferings won’t be forever, and the glory of heaven will dim them to

insignificance anyway (vs. 18-25).

- The Holy Spirit is our Helper, taking up the line to lend His strength in the hard pulls of life (vs. 26-27).
- Whether good comes or bad, the outcomes are assured (vs. 28-30).
- Come what may, God in all of His fullness is unquestionably *“for us”* (vs. 31-34).
- Absolutely nothing ever *can* or *will* come between saint and Saviour (vs. 35-38).

Here is comfort in our *“walk after the Spirit”*. Remember how Jesus introduced the Spirit at the first as *“the Comforter”* (Jn. 14). A walk with eyes to the things of the Spirit will ever be a walk of comfort and *“life and peace”*. How much the Lord has so freely given to us! What eternal joy to be a Christian!

## Class 12 – Romans 9:1-33

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**9:1** *I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost,*  
**9:2** *That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart.*

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These next three chapters of Romans deal with the question of reconciling the old dispensation with the new. How are we to understand God's new way of salvation freely available to all by faith in relation to His previous special focus upon the Jewish nation? Chapter 9 looks especially to Israel's past while chapter 11 turns to her future.

The overall thrust here in Chapter 9 is not as some suppose, God's election of souls to salvation or damnation. The focus here is rather that God reserves the right to direct the channel of opportunity. He moves in conjunction with a man's expression of his will, and with a clear foreknowledge of every soul.

**9:1-4** – Every Advantage but Accursed.

Vs. 1-2 – Paul likely felt the need to so affirm the

**9:3** *For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh:*

**9:4** *Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises;*

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truth of his words because he was being accused of *forsaking* or not caring for the Jews.

Vs. 3 – The Jewish nation had become a people accursed from God. Paul, as Moses before him (Ex. 32:32), was willing to be cursed in their place, so great was his love for his own people. Jesus *did* become accursed in the place of all men, so great was His love. Here is the heart of true spiritual leadership, consumed with God’s love and willing to be sacrificed for others.

Vs. 4-5 – Privileges of the children of Israel.

*“The glory”* – Red Sea parting, Sinai scene, earth opened under sons of Korah, Jordan parting, Canaanites crushed, etc.

*“The covenants”* – Of Abraham, Moses, and David.

The nation of Israel had every advantage from God.

**9:5** *Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.*

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But though they were blessed with greatest outward opportunities, yet God's special blessing upon them did not win their *hearts*. Here is the great lesson learned from history. God's granting of outward advantage does not necessarily win the heart. The Jewish people eventually became like a spoiled rich boy, born with every privilege, yet denying responsibility, gratitude, love, and servanthood.

Now don't miss the obvious here in vs. 4. Paul does *not* say that the promises to Israel have been handed to the church. He does *not* suggest that God will not actually fulfil His promises upon literal Israel, but that He will mystically fulfil them in the church. Read it again, carefully this time. "*To whom pertaineth . . . the promises*". Are you listening? He does not speak of those to whom the promises were pertaining or once pertained, but to whom they are pertaining. And there can be no doubt here as to who this applied to. The promises pertain to literal, national Israel.

**9:6-13** – Their Rejection Does not Deny God's Word.

**9:6** *Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel:*

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Vs. 6 – Here is a key portion in response to the Jewish accusation levelled at this Christian religion Paul promoted. They complained that Paul seemed to make the word of God of no effect by teaching that God’s blessing and attention is now turned from the Jewish nation. What of all God’s forever promises and unbreakable covenants with the Jewish people? How could Israel now be set aside, with God going on in pursuit of the Gentile world? How could this be so and God’s words be true? But it’s not that the Word or promises of God have fallen unfulfilled. It is that from the beginning it has never been that all descendants of Israel (or Jacob) are Israel, or that every individual in the nation was *meant* to fully benefit from the privileges and promises made available by God. Receiving the blessing of God’s favour has never been a matter purely of *physical* heritage as the Jews believed. This point Paul now begins to demonstrate. To be sure there were outward advantages that came through their physical descendancy. But God’s fullest blessings always came by faith. Understand that God’s Word has not fallen short of fulfilment just because His promises have not been fulfilled on



**9:7** *Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called.*

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every physical descendent of Abraham throughout the ages. The actual people (line) of promise are those who believe within the visible nation of Israel. In the same way the actual *church* of God are those of genuine faith within the visible church on earth. There are promises made to the church, as to Israel, which will only be fulfilled on true *believers* in the church. So we might say that not all of the church are the church, just as not all of Israel are Israel.

The Jewish people assumed God's blessing was upon them as individuals because of their *ancestry* traced to Abraham, to whom God had made eternal, unconditional promises (Gen. 12:1-3). They assumed they held God's favour because of their *outward practice* of the Law of Moses, which they alone possessed as a nation. Paul now, as Samson, with an arm around each of these two supporting pillars, is empowered by the Spirit of God to pull down the house of the self-righteous through sound teaching.

Vs. 7-9 – Ishmael was also the physical son of Abraham. Yet it would not be Ishmael, that son

**9:8** *That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed.*  
**9:9** *For this is the word of promise, At this time will I come, and Sarah shall have a son.*

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after the flesh through Hagar, who would share the privileges. Rather “*in Isaac shall thy seed be called*”, only in that promised miracle child. That first son of Abraham was excluded from the privileges. Thus from the very head of the race there were sons of Abraham who were not in the privileged line. There were children of Abraham’s *flesh* who were not “*children of the promise*”. So a principle of “not all” was established right from the start in those two physical sons of Abraham himself.

In fact the focus of God’s attention and privileges has always been following down a certain channel;

- Not all the descendents of *man*, but only the lines of Seth – Noah – Shem – Abraham.
- Not all the descendants of *Abraham*, but only Isaac.
- Not all the children of *Isaac* (vs. 10-12), but only Jacob.

**9:10** *And not only this; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac;*  
**9:11** *(For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;)*

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- And not all the descendants of Jacob even, “*for they are not all Israel, which are of Israel*”. It was only ever the faithful *remnant* among Jacob’s descendants who received God’s fullest blessing, through faith in His promise. Compare vs. 27-29.

So an ancestry traced back to Abraham has never been an insurance of anything but heightened opportunity.

Vs. 10-13 – The point is now chased further with Isaac’s sons. A case could be made against Ishmael, who was a bad boy from a bad relationship. But Isaac’s legitimate wife, Rebekah, conceived both Jacob and Esau. Yet again, Jacob was received and Esau excluded by the Lord from privilege (vs. 12), though they were born not only of the same woman, but even as twins. N.B. the similarities and differences. Abraham’s other son, Ishmael, was through a woman who was not his

**9:12** *It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger.*

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wife, an Egyptian slave girl, a carnal act, a manmade, arm-of-flesh solution, reflecting a faltering trust in God's promise. As well, perhaps Ishmael disqualified himself through his own godless actions of persecuting Isaac (Gen. 21:9-10). But with Isaac and Rebekah it was a right union with the right woman, and even out of the same conception ("*same lump*", vs. 21). And in this case the Lord chose even before their birth, before they had any ability to earn God's choice, before either could qualify or disqualify himself through his outward actions, before there was any cause visible to humans. Do you see Paul's point? It's a return to his earlier point in chap. 4. Receiving the blessing of God's favour has never been a matter of outward good works, as the Jews believed. God actually lined up two important object lessons for the nation of Israel, tucked right into the circumstances of their first two great patriarchs;

- Abraham's two physical sons (Ishmael and Isaac) show that not all descendants of Abraham are included in God's blessing, that from the first it was never a matter of

**9:13** *As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.*

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ancestry.

- Isaac's two physical sons (Esau and Jacob) show that receiving God's blessing was never a matter of outward works.

Now please be honest and recognize with me that this portion has *nothing to do* with God ordaining souls to eternal blessing or destruction before their birth, as it is so commonly twisted. Eternal issues of heaven or hell are not even in the context or discussion here. Only earthly issues of privileged and excluded lines are under consideration. Does the Lord refer to removing from Esau and sons the possibility of salvation? Are we told that? Again, read carefully.

Vs. 13 – This quote from Malachi 1:2-3 was spoken by the Lord *centuries* after these brothers lived their lives and displayed their faith or lack of it. Must we conclude that this was God's attitude toward the brothers before they were born? Again, are we told that here? Could we not take this as demonstration of the *accuracy* of God's foresight in choosing as He

**9:14** *What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid.*

**9:15** *For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.*

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did, even before their births? Here was the expected, predicted outcome of what God knew of the hearts of these twins even before they were born.

**9:14-29** – Their Rejection Does Not Deny God’s Justice.

Vs. 14 – God was not unrighteous to disallow Esau from a place of privilege, even before there was any visible reason to do so. The Jews might have thought so, since for them it was all a matter of practice and ancestry.

Vs. 15 – Paul quotes the Lord’s words to Moses when Israel had again displayed their stubbornness in the context of God’s glory and long-suffering (Ex. 33:19). Note that there is nothing here of pre-birth determinations, only post-rebellion options. To mercy or to judge was the question. And the point is that the Lord graciously decided to mercy Israel in that situation where He might have justly

**9:16** *So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.*

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hardened them unto destruction in their own choice for hardness. They owed their very existence to their God of mercy, not to their goodness or good works. And if in His mercy the Lord now decided to bless the Gentiles, could Israel hold that against Him in all fairness? For only by His mercy had *they* been spared. This is where Paul is going.

Vs. 16 – The Lord mercies whom He will. Man's salvation is not sourced in man or through man's own determination (John 1:12-13). It is not a matter of man's willing it or running. It's a matter only of the blessing of God's mercy, through a man's faith. The Lord is indebted to *none* to bless, for all deserve His curse. The focus is ever upon the merciful God, never the earning of man. Compare Christ's John 3 emphasis on the passive *being* born again. The work of regeneration is God's not man's, though there is a part we play in our believing. N.B. the great focus here on God's mercy without man's outward practice;

- Not yet having been born (vs. 11).
- Having done no good or evil (vs. 11).

**9:17** *For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth.*

**9:18** *Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth.*

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- Not of works, but of calling (vs. 11).
- Not the one willing or running, but the mercying God (vs. 16).

Paul sought to lead the Jews from a human centred salvation to a God centred salvation.

Vs. 17-18 – God was not unrighteous to use Pharaoh as He did.

*“I raise thee up”* – Is this raised up into existence, or into the circumstance in which history found him? Out of an unborn state, or out of the mass of godless humanity? We are not told here that Pharaoh was hardened from before birth, are we? He was hardened in that circumstance of confrontation with Moses. From the first God said *“I will harden Pharaoh’s heart”* (Ex. 7:3), not *“I have done so”*. The record reveals that before any statement is made of God’s hardening, Pharaoh hardened his *own* heart (compare Ex. 5:1ff and 7:1-



**9:19** *Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will?*

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5). Pharaoh had ample opportunity to believe, both before the arrival of Moses and after. But Pharaoh chose not to, and so the Lord helped him in that choice (compare 1:24-28). God may choose to harden the hard, working together with the hard-hearted to help them become what they've chosen to be. The point is that though the Lord chose to mercy Israel in the wilderness (vs. 15), He chose to harden Pharaoh. Both mercying and hardening are God's prerogative in situations deserving His judgment upon hardened sinners. He reserves the right to use the rejection of men to His own glory and is not unjust in this. In fact He will take the greatest treachery the world has ever seen in the coming reign of antichrist and turn it to greatest advantage, drawing out of the Tribulation period the greatest harvest of souls to salvation of all time (Rev. 7). Even so God helped along Israel's hardening against their Messiah, who were already wilfully self-hardened in their unbelief, to the end that Jesus might be rejected and killed for the greater opportunity of all people of earth. Again, a divine decision to mercy or harden souls before birth is not even under discussion here.

**9:20** *Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?*

**9:21** *Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?*

**9:22** *What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction:*

**9:23** *And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory,*

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Vs. 19 – How then can we be held morally responsible? Paul's thoughts are again sarcastically taken to extreme (3:5, 7-8; 6:1, 15).

Vs. 20-21 – A calm response to an unreasonable question. God does as He pleases in His handling of men and nations. It is not the place of small man to demand explanations of Him.

Vs. 22-23 – “*fitted*” – Not made, formed, or created, but fitted, equipped, or made ripe. This does not refer to God's pre-birth fitting of a soul for destruction, but to the hardening process leading on to destruction we've already seen much of in these chapters. God ultimately gives over to a reprobate mind that stubborn soul refusing to retain Him in their knowledge. God hardens the

**9:24** *Even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?*

**9:25** *As he saith also in Osee, I will call them my people, which were not my people; and her beloved, which was not beloved.*

**9:26** *And it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people; there shall they be called the children of the living God.*

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hard. This is not God's pre-birth election of souls to hell or heaven, but God working in conjunction with the decisions of men, condemning and blessing, and using both to show forth Himself as the great, just, yet merciful God, impartially seeking the greatest possible harvest of souls among men. Compare vs. 23 with 8:29-30.

Vs. 24-26 – That the Lord chose to move on behalf of the Gentiles is both His prerogative and *no surprise!* It was a direction established both in prophecy (Hos. 2:23; 1:10) and in the Lord's covenant with Abraham from the start (Gen. 12:3). Paul demonstrates that the inclusion of Gentiles is consistent with God's way in dealing with Israel as well. Only by God's will and mercy were His special privileges directed toward Israel at the first, in the same way that they are now directed away. He owed them nothing. They earned nothing of His grace. The Lord chose to mercy Israel out of His

**9:27** *Esaias also crieth concerning Israel, Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved:*

**9:28** *For he will finish the work, and cut it short in righteousness: because a short work will the Lord make upon the earth.*

**9:29** *And as Esaias said before, Except the Lord of Sabaoth had left us a seed, we had been as Sodoma, and been made like unto Gomorrhah.*

**9:30** *What shall we say then? That the Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith.*

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own graciousness, even as the Gentiles now.

Vs. 27-29 – Quotes from Isaiah (10:22, 23; 1:9), showing that from the beginning only “*a remnant shall be saved*” from the nation of Israel. Not all.

**9:30-33** – Concluding comments.

Vs. 30 – Though the Gentiles had not followed after the righteousness of God’s law, yet they found the righteousness of God by faith.

Vs. 31-33 – Though the Jews had followed after the righteousness of God in the law, yet that very pursuit became the predicted stumbling block (Isa. 28:16). For they came to believe that they could

**9:31** *But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness.*

**9:32** *Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumblingstone;*

**9:33** *As it is written, Behold, I lay in Sion a stumblingstone and rock of offence: and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.*

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establish their own righteousness, *earning* God's favour through outward works. And this self-exalting belief blinded them to the value and vital need of Jesus Christ as Saviour. Yet still the offer to the individual stands (vs. 33). The one who believes will never be put to shame.

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## **The Calvinist Position**

God in His sovereign control over the affairs of men has made choice between human souls, either to salvation or to condemnation, prior to our existence. His choice among souls has *absolutely nothing* to do with any merit in an individual, lest His gift of salvation be earned through some human merit rather than wholly of God's grace. Thus every soul is predestinated to salvation or condemnation from before birth, purely on the basis of God's

uninfluenced choice. In life a human soul is utterly powerless to respond to God, until the moment *God* deems fit to spark life into that soul and grant faith to believe. Man is held completely responsible by God, and therefore is condemned for his sin and faithless heart, though he is completely unable to respond until the moment *God* gives that ability to those who are so chosen. Responsibility, without ability to respond. Much of the power of the Calvinistic position arises from a misread of Rom. 9.

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## **A Case for Human Responsibility**

It is always important to approach a Bible portion with an eye to its immediate context, and further to read a “difficult” portion through the clarifying lens of the broader context of the whole Bible. It’s evident that the thrust and nature of the Bible approach to man is that of *appeal, threat, command, plea, encouragement*, wooing the *will* of man, implying he has a will and the free ability to use it, always holding before man the option of ways an individual might go, and holding him accountable to make a choice. Compare;

- Ezek. 18:30-32 – The Lord lays two ways before man in a portion strongly commanding his turning.

- Jonah 3 – The Lord repented or changed with the decisions of men. Compare Ex. 32.
- I Tim. 2:4 – “*Who will have all men to be saved and to come unto the knowledge of the truth*”. It is the Lord’s expressed wish or will that all men be saved. This He is desiring (θελει) on an ongoing basis. Compare II Pet. 3:9 – He is “. . . *not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance*”. Compare Ezek. 33:11.

So what is this strange concept that can see God at the same time willing the salvation of all, and yet willing or decreeing the condemnation of most? Doesn’t God’s expression of His longing for man’s salvation indicate that He, in His sovereignty, has in some way left the fulfilment of His longing outside of His own doing or power? Doesn’t this alone indicate that He has left man with a real choice?

- Acts 16:31 – “*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved*”. A command to *believe*, implying both responsibility and ability to respond. Compare every call to repentance in the Bible.

What is this strange conclusion that sees God

*commanding* a man to do that which he is fundamentally unable in himself to do?

- Romans 10:13 & Acts 2:21 (quoting Joel 2:13)
  - “*Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved*”. The Greek phrase (παν ος αν) expresses something like “all whosoever” shall call. Clearly this means that whosoever is willing may call, and extending the potential scope to *all* or *every* person.

None can fairly suggest that God plays no part in every individual soul saved, but;

- Why does God earnestly set before man the way of life and the way of death if man’s choice is not a valid thing, but already a done deal?
- Why the need for the urging of persuasive ambassadors (II Cor. 5:11) if man has no real ability in himself to choose?
- Why the vast emphasis on God pleading with man *throughout the entire Bible*?
- Why the continual appeal to man’s will if he really has no free will?

Characteristic of the Calvinistic perspective is the failure to effectively integrate these clear statements and the overwhelming fabric of God’s Book, which



clearly establishes a very real human ability and responsibility. The obvious fact of a valid human responsibility simply cannot be dismissed or explained away.

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

(Rom. 10:9)

## **Class 13 – Romans 10:1-21**

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*10:1 Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved.*

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I count 11 O.T. quotations in this short chapter. Paul quotes freely from the law, poetry, and prophesy (both major and minor) in supporting his arguments here, carefully drawing from a cross section of the whole O.T. By this means he counters the charge of pulling out isolated texts for proof of some obscure doctrine.

Don't miss how strongly the free will of man comes out in this chapter. One thing the Lord foreknew would develop in time was the Calvinistic abuse of the chapters on either side of this portion. Therefore the need of this corrective set between.

This chapter is a further display that the O.T. also spoke of righteousness by faith, and the sending of it to the Gentiles. And though Israel heard and knew but refused to see and believe, there still remains opportunity for the individual Jew/Gentile

**10:2** *For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God,  
but not according to knowledge.*

**10:3** *For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and  
going about to establish their own righteousness,  
have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness  
of God.*

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to find life in the Saviour of man.

### **10:1-4** – Israel Missed.

Vs. 1 – Again the expression of Paul’s earnest longing for the salvation of his people (9:1-3).

Vs. 2 – There was in the Jewish people a surface pursuit of the Lord, but not according to the full knowledge of His “*better*” revelation of Himself and provision in Jesus Christ (Heb. 1:4; 7:19, 22; 8:6; 9:23). There was a time when Paul, like them, had acted “*ignorantly in unbelief*” (I Tim. 1:13). Didn’t we all!

Vs. 3 – Because the Jewish people were busy building their own tower to heaven they were not ready to hear of their way denied for another way. Though they were aware that God is righteous, they were not careful to perceive just *how* righteous. Here is the core fault of the self-righteous. In their

**10:4** *For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.*

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view, making themselves good enough to be acceptable to the Lord is an achievable goal. A bit like busily building a 3 meter bridge to span a 3 kilometre canyon. As all who are self-righteous, in their pride they just would not let themselves be confronted with how vast the gulf between God and man really is. When a man truly sees and understands the surpassing excellence of the Lord, the absolute perfection of His holiness, he knows in that moment how *impossible* to reach or please God by human efforts. When a soul finally arrives at the hopelessness of this project, recognizing himself utterly incapable of the calibre of righteousness God demands, he is ready at last to walk across the bridge already provided in Jesus Christ. Here was the point of Israel's refusal to bow in submission. The only hope for the self-righteous is to renounce his *own way* to God's acceptance and embrace the righteousness God offers only in Jesus Christ. This Paul had done (Phil. 3:4-9), counting all as "*dung*".

Vs. 4 – Jesus is the better way to which all of the law of God leads and points, fulfilling all the types and shadows there. And where the law of God

**10:5** *For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, That the man which doeth those things shall live by them.*

**10:6** *But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above:)*

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required a level of righteousness no man could ever manage, Jesus fulfilled the law in His life and fulfils the righteousness of it in the lives of those who believe on Him, securing for them God's acceptance.

### **10:5-13** – The Gospel is To Be Accepted By All.

Vs. 5 – Quoting from Lev. 18:5, Paul again expresses the way to be justified through the Law of Moses. Having done it, kept it, perfectly practiced it, one will have life through the law. Yet again, the one offending in even one point is guilty of all (James 2:10), for *perfection* is the standard the God of perfect holiness demands. “*The man which doeth those things*” implies perfectly so. Compare Gal. 3:10, quoting from Deut. 27:26, “*Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them*”.

Vs. 6 – The other way, the *only* way for fallen man

**10:7** *Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.)*

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to be justified is also found in the writings of Moses (Deut. 30:12-14). Don't miss Deut. 30:10, that the commandment so easily within reach was not a legal, earned righteousness, but a turning to the Lord with the whole heart and soul. Even to try to go up into heaven to find God's favour, as with the Babel tower project, will only bring the Lord down in judgment, as it did in Gen. 11. In this age, to deny Emmanuel, that Son of God who already came down to man, is to bring God's wrath down upon the rejecting soul (Jn. 3:13).

Vs. 7 – To go down into the abyss would be to attempt to bring God up to speak, as King Saul conjuring Samuel up from the dead and the Lord speaking through him. Again, only to speak judgment. And again, to try to do so would deny what God has already done in raising Jesus up from death. On these two great points rests the whole gospel message;

- That Jesus Christ, the Son of God, did indeed come down in the flesh and dwell among men. Any voice denying this is no voice of the

**10:8** *But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach;*  
**10:9** *That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.*

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only true God (I Jn. 4:2-3, 15).

- That Jesus Christ was raised from death.

Every human attempt to go either up or down implies that we need something more than what God has already provided in His living and written Word. And that attitude toward His sufficient Word will only attract His judgment. And to ascend or descend to bliss or abyss would be just as impossible for a soul as keeping God's perfect righteousness.

Vs. 8 – The Lord's words are near and the benefit of them currently stands available. We have only to believe in order to receive His favour. The way of salvation is not a great impossible task. It is near to all and available for the simplest among men to receive.

Vs. 9-13 – The call of faith. True faith cries out to



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

**10:11** *For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.*

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the Lord like that repentant publican (Lk. 18:9-14), and like him walks away justified! No soul believing and calling upon the Lord will ever be put to shame, but will find life and salvation in Jesus Christ. Compare Isaiah 49:23, where the Lord affirms that *“they shall not be ashamed that wait for Me”*. Faith in God’s sure promises will *never* leave one confounded at the last. No promise of His will ever be as a dead-end street, a wasted journey. Never as a long, twisting passage, with notice posted at the entrance promising light at the end of the tunnel, yet leading only to the blackness of darkness at the end. No!! The promise written at the entrance was posted *by God* in His own writing! It will end just as He said, no matter how things appear at present. We can rest assured that in Jesus we follow no fable or farce. *God will deliver on His promise!*

These two quotes from the prophets (vs. 11 from Isa. 28:16 and vs. 13 from Joel 2:32) show that salvation unto life was always for those who *believe* and *call*, rather than for *“the man who doeth those*

**10:12** *For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him.*

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*things*". Paul already quoted Isaiah 28:16 in 9:33. Seems he wants us to get it! See how the way to salvation is reduced to the simplest possible term – *a call!* Anyone can call, even a little child. No confusing formula. No suave, philosophical argument. No difficult lifestyle to adopt. Just a desperate meaningful cry. As Peter's cry on the troubled sea, "*Lord, save me!*", bringing immediate rescue. Just an honest call for help, with the keen awareness that there is a problem and that Jesus can do something about it.

Vs. 12 affirms that nationality makes "*no difference*" in finding God's favour. The Jews would have read those prophetic "whosoever's" on either side of vs. 12 as relating only to the Jews (as the Calvinist relates them only to the elect), yet Paul widens their application to include the *whole human race*. "*Whosoever*" means *anybody* and *everybody*, in no way limited to any particular chosen group. And these "whosoever's" came from the O.T., the Jews' own book. They couldn't argue with it.

**10:13** *For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.*

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Note the parallel thought back in 3:22-23, “*. . . for there is no difference. For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God*”. There, no difference between Jew and Gentile in their *sinfulness*. Here, no difference in their *opportunity*. They both have equal access to Christ, and in Christ to the blessing of God’s favour. God is not partial. Just as all who sin will be judged, even so all who believe will be saved.

Vs. 13 – Again the Greek phrase here is literally “all whosoever” shall call (παν ος αν). This is the simple expression of opportunity open to *all*. None excluded. No soul has ever approached the Lord in faith and found Him a closed door, open only to a select race or range of souls. No one has ever approached Him in faith and not discovered that He is ready to mercy and receive in love. “*Thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive, and plenteous in mercy unto all that call upon Thee*” (Ps. 86:5). His response to all who believe is the same. The word is “*rich*” or *overwhelmingly good*! The Lord stands ready to pour out His grace upon *every* soul who seeks Him through faith and repentance. How

priceless the wealth of what we have from God;

- This is a promise of salvation from God to you. This clearly indicates man's fallen, sinful nature, and *need* for salvation.
- And this salvation is a gift. It's a passive "*be saved*" salvation, not the DIY, save-yourself kind. It is the Lord who gives this salvation.
- And He gives this salvation by our merely calling upon His name. A *momentary act*, not a process.
- And He gives access to all, "whosoever" may call. Four times the word all or every in the Greek in vs. 11-13 (cf. vs. 4).

Who may receive? "Whosoever" – All among all men of earth.

What must we do to receive? "Call" – Cry out in faith.

Where do we find so great salvation? "*The name of the Lord*" – The *one* Mediator of the *one* God.

When? "*Now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation*".

**10:14** *How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?*

**10:15** *And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!*

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There's an interesting point to note in this vs. 13 quote from Joel 2:32. When Joel wrote he used the great name of God "Jehovah". As Paul now quotes here, to whom does he refer? Obviously to Jesus Christ. Seems a bit blasphemous doesn't it? Unless of course Jesus is Jehovah Himself! Compare Isa. 45:21-23 with Phil. 2:9-11 on this score.

### **10:14-21** – The Gospel to Be Preached to All.

If that message of salvation by faith was meant from the beginning for all, then God meant from the beginning that it be taken to all. Still with his eye to O.T. prophecy, Paul now shows that the gospel's extension to the Gentiles was forecast in the old Book as well.

Vs. 14-15 – Faith requires hearing, which requires proclaiming, which requires sending. A glaring

truth here is that God has seen fit to make His gift of eternal life dependent upon gospel carriers or preachers. *“It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe”* (I Cor. 1:21). And the Lord has written His attitude over every such active carrier of His true gospel, saying, *“how beautiful”* those who *“bring glad tidings of good things”* (Isa. 52:7).

The focus of this quote is upon the *feet*. Idlers may have the best of intentions. But only when concern translates into action, actual steps, does the beauty of a man’s way really begin to blossom. Only when the intensity of yearning crosses mountains (Isaiah said *“How beautiful upon the mountains”*). Only when our love begins to overcome the “mountains” of obstacles the evil one is sure to cast into the way, only then does it win God’s praise, labelled *“beautiful”* by Him. Will you keep trying when things aren’t working? Will you still give to the Lord’s work when facing the obstacle of ends that don’t meet in your budget? Will you still pray for the winning of the world when your heart is consumed with your own personal concerns? How beautiful the one who goes, tries, helps, labours, *stays* when and where it is most difficult!

Vs. 16 – Isaiah’s complaint indicated an extremely

**10:16** *But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report?*

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poor response to God's message through him in his day (*"who hath believed our report"*, 53:1). This is the heart's cry of every soul sincerely seeking to speak for God and win for Him, pleading with God for some fruit, yet hearing only words of hatred and rejection. To Moses they said, *"You take too much upon yourself!"* (Num. 16:3). To Ezekiel, *"Is he not a speaker of parables?!"* "We don't know what on earth he's talking about!" (Ezek. 20:49). To Amos, *"The land is not able to bear all your words!"* (Amos 7:10-13). To Jeremiah, *"As for the word that thou hast spoken unto us in the name of Jehovah, we will not hearken unto thee"* (Jer. 44:16-19). To Paul, *"what will this babbler say?"* (Acts 17:18). Of Jesus and Paul, *"Away with such a fellow from the earth: for it is not fit that he should live"* (Acts 22:22; Jn. 19:15). Yet their fruit abides! It has always been so with God's preachers. Jesus assured His faithful seed-sowers that they would find wayside hearers, rocky ground hearers, thorny ground hearers, and good ground heeders. We find that Isaiah's concern for Israel in his own day became prophetic of their response to Jesus Christ and His gospel. As well, the Jews might complain, "How could this truly be

**10:17** *So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*

**10:18** *But I say, Have they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world.*

---

the Messiah if the vast majority of Israel have not believed? How could this be *God's* work if it sports such a meagre success rating?" But Israel's poor initial response to their Messiah can be found in prophecy as well. And though the response to the message was meagre, Isaiah never quit preaching it. Neither did Jeremiah or Noah. Response, or lack of it, is not our call to service. All *must* hear since none can believe unless they do.

Vs. 17 – Again, as stated in vs. 14 (N.B. the emphasis), God's appointed way for faith to form in a heart is through His words heard. He made the heard word His way, and He gave you a mouth and other means to communicate. There must be an entrance of the truth, as a seed must enter the soil to grow. And the volume of grumbling from angry rejecters must never succeed in shutting us up. We are to speak "*in season, out of season*" (II Tim. 4:2), with or without approval.

Vs. 18 – And did Israel hear? The answer is "yes".



**10:19** *But I say, Did not Israel know? First Moses saith, I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are no people, and by a foolish nation I will anger you.*  
**10:20** *But Esaias is very bold, and saith, I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me.*

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Paul quotes now from Ps. 19:4, describing the universal “voice” of God’s creation, quietly declaring His glory to every soul of man, crossing every language barrier.

Vs. 19 – Didn’t Israel know that the Lord would one day turn to the lost sheep among the Gentile nations? They certainly should have. Moses again spoke (Deut. 32:21), not only of Gentile inclusion in God’s plan of salvation but of the resulting Jewish jealousy (Acts 13:45). Because Israel provoked their God to jealousy through their attention to gods that are no gods, therefore the Lord vowed to provoke them to jealousy through a people they considered to be “*no people*”. This reflects the proud Jewish attitude toward “the dogs of the Gentiles”. Israel would be provoked to angry jealousy upon seeing others, whom they considered far below them, entering into their own special privileges and promises from the Lord (Matt. 8:11-12), others invited to their party, and even taking centre stage

**10:21** *But to Israel he saith, All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people.*

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for a while.

Vs. 20-21 – Isaiah had struck the same chord, speaking both of the Gentiles finding God at last, and of Jewish hardness (Isa. 65:1-2, compare Rom. 9:30). Again, Isaiah’s report of Israel’s response to his prophecies became prophetic of their similar response in Christ’s day. With all of the advantage and opportunity they had, still God’s continual beckoning through His prophets fell on deaf ears throughout all of Israel’s long day in the sun of God’s special attention. They were a people ever given to fighting Him though sitting long in the very lap of privilege. Such a people certainly had no just cause to be jealous if the Lord should finally turn His attentions elsewhere. They didn’t want the Lord or His righteousness, yet were angry when anybody else found blessing from His hand. God forbid that it should be so with us.

.....  
God’s message of salvation;

- Is simple.

- Extends to all.
- Is to be taken to all.
- And a few will believe.

Now who will go? *“Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?”*

*“Here am I; send me”*

“I say then, Have they stumbled  
that they should fall?  
God forbid:  
but rather through their fall  
salvation is come  
unto the Gentiles”

(Rom. 11:11)

## Class 14 – Romans 11:1-16

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*11:1 I say then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin.*

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We have seen that though the nation of Israel has been set aside for a time from the focus of God's attention (chap. 9), still the opportunity stands open for any individual Jew to believe in Jesus Christ for salvation (chap. 10). Paul now chases further in chapter 11 the consideration of what the Lord is doing with His chosen people, with most of Israel not finding salvation in their Messiah at that time. He shows in this chapter that national Israel's rejection and tumble to unbelief is neither *total* nor *final*, but that it is only an interlude in God's focus on Israel, providing opportunity for God's gracious outreach to the Gentile world.

### **11:1-10** – Israel's Rejection is Not Total.

Vs. 1 – For those unhappy souls who believe and teach that national Israel no longer features in prophecy, with her promises now shifted to the

**11:2** *God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew. Wot ye not what the scripture saith of Elias? how he maketh intercession to God against Israel saying,*

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church, the answer is quite clear. *God forbid!* says the Apostle. The proof of this is in individual Jews who have found the Saviour, Paul himself being an example and representative. *“For the Lord will not cast off His people, neither will He forsake His inheritance”* (Ps. 94:14). Full stop!

How great indeed was God’s mercy in Paul’s salvation;

- God’s mercied Israel in saving out a remnant, as represented in Paul the Israelite.
- God was merciful to save such a blind and vicious rager against His truth and church as was Saul of Tarsus (Acts 8-9).
- God was merciful to send Paul the Apostle out to the Gentile world of his day (Acts 26:17-18).
- See God’s mercy to our day and every day in the inspired writings left to us through that divinely gifted man.

**11:3** *Lord, they have killed thy prophets, and digged down  
thine altars; and I am left alone, and they seek my life.*

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Vs. 2-3 – Here is the record of Elijah’s complaint to the Lord when in deep despair (I Ki. 19). The spiritual condition of God’s people in Elijah’s day was similar to that of Paul’s day. Israel was rejecting all of God’s messengers back then. Even the stunningly miraculous evidences through Elijah led to no sweeping revival as he hoped. In the same way the nation refused the even more amazing and confirming testimony of Jesus of Nazareth.

.....

## **On the Side**

See in Elijah how the strongest of God’s saints can fall to depression at times. We do well to keep an eye to David’s righteous will to remember where his strength lay. When tempted to despair he proclaimed, “*I will yet praise Him . . . therefore will I remember Thee*” (Ps. 42:5-6, 11). He had resolved to keep his heart and hope where it should be.

.....

Vs. 4 – As in Elijah’s day, so in every day, the Lord

**11:4** *But what saith the answer of God unto him? I have reserved to myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal.*  
**11:5** *Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace.*

---

always maintains a carefully nurtured body of true believers. This remnant is in fact the preserving salt of the nation, keeping the whole from running immediately to ruin (Isa. 1:9). Then and now, as at all times, though the Lord reject the *nation*, opportunity remains for *individuals*. In every day some will believe.

Note that the way of salvation combines both divine side and human side, God's reserving *and* man's believing acceptance of the true and refusal to bow to the false.

Vs. 5-6 – The vital point for the reader to grasp, particularly among the Jews, is that salvation is by grace through faith, not through works. If it be a matter of human merit then it is no longer a matter of divine grace. And if a matter of grace then it can no longer be of human merit. The two principles of work and grace run in opposite directions (Gal. 3:8-12; Eph. 2:8-9). Any attempt to mingle the two, for either the receiving or keeping of salvation, is like



**11:6** *And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then it is no more grace: otherwise work is no more work.*

**11:7** *What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded.*

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trying to mix water and fire. Each is the undoing of the other. *“Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt”* (4:4). Either man’s salvation is a gift of grace or debt of work.

*“The election of grace”* – Though Paul was among the most vicious in his opposition of the truth, yet the Lord chose to mercy him. Pharaoh, showing a similarly hard heart, God elected to further harden unto perdition (9:17). Did Pharaoh harden his heart or did God do it? The answer can only be, Yes! Then the nation as a whole, being desperately hard of heart in the wilderness, God elected to mercy through the pleading of Moses (9:15; Ex. 32-33). Thus again (9:18), it is the Lord’s choice whom He mercies through further opportunity (Paul on the Damascus road) and with whom He meets hardness with hardening. Pre-birth determinations are not in the context here either.

**11:8** (*According as it is written, God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear;)* unto this day.

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Vs. 7 – Israel has not found divine acceptance or righteousness as they were seeking, because they were seeking it in the wrong way, through righteous works. “*But the election*”, those God chose to mercy, found His acceptance through faith. And the rest, in their unrepentant rejection of the light, He has further hardened to reprobation.

Vs. 8-10 – This is completely in keeping with the old Book the Jews held close, showing that God’s dealing with His rebellious people in this way is no new thing.

Vs. 8 – A quote from Isaiah (29:10). This was what Isaiah was told to expect when sent to preach to the stubborn Jewish nation (Isa. 6:9-10). Israel’s determined love for their sleepy blindness moved the Lord to *contribute* to their slumber. In quoting this Paul shows the Lord’s just contribution to Israel’s determined blindness in his own day as well, displaying God’s hardening response to Israel’s stubbornly hard attitude toward Him in rejecting their Messiah. Pre-birth determinations still not in

**11:9** *And David saith, Let their table be made a snare,  
and a trap, and a stumblingblock, and a recompence  
unto them:*

**11:10** *Let their eyes be darkened, that they may not see,  
and bow down their back alway.*

---

the context.

We see God's hardening of the hard in II Thess. 2:9-12 as well. God will allow Satan and his emissaries the greatest abilities (vs. 9) to deceive those who will have already taken their stand against the truth in that day. To those who *did not* receive the love of the truth (vs. 10), those not having believed the truth and rather having had pleasure in unrighteousness (vs. 12), God will allow very good cause for the believing of the lie, leading on to judgment.

Vs. 9-10 – Quotes from Psalms (69:22-23 & 35:8), again describing God's response to stubborn, rejecting man.

*"Their table"* speaks of the privileged communion the Jewish nation enjoyed with the Lord, with provision from His hand. Of all people of earth they were chosen to eat with the King at His own table, as Mephibosheth invited to King David's table (II

Sam. 9). Not because of his own worthiness or personal friendship with David. Mephibosheth was loved and privileged because of his connection to his father Jonathan, whom David loved. Even so Israel is loved and preserved and privileged and provisioned “*for the fathers’ sakes*” (vs. 28). In the same way, in Christ we are welcomed into the Father’s loving presence and provision. Not because of our own worthiness, but only because of our connection to His Son whom He loves. As the runaway slave, Onesimus, found safety through his connection or friendship with Paul, who was friend as well to the offended master, Philemon. Hear the wonder in the one who has made the Lord his Shepherd; “*Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: Thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over*” (Ps. 23). Israel’s yearly feasts were a visual representation of this “*table*” or provision of the Lord, for all the feasts were celebrated “*unto the Lord*”. The feasts were all memorials of the Lord’s past, present, and future goodness to them as His chosen nation. The church ordinance of Communion is similar, feasting together with the Lord around His surpassing grace seen in Christ’s death. What tragic irony that the Jewish nation would slap away the Lord’s hand in putting their own Messiah to death *on the feast day* of Passover. With a show of celebrating His

goodness to them they were actually showing their hatred. David's prayer in Ps. 69 to that One so willing and able to be their very Bread of Life, is that the Lord would turn the table on them. Because of Israel's ingratitude David asks that their Helper might turn Hunter, trapping and tripping and hastening them to the slaughter. Privilege and prosperity turned to payback.

*"And bow down their back always"* speaks of the hard service of slavery, of the nation becoming the tail and not the head (Deut. 28:13 & 44). God is so able to turn blessing to cursing in judgment. He is able to cause that those who *will* not, *shall* not, and even *cannot*. He can make the blessing of food and the joy of eating it such that it doesn't satisfy. *"Ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm"* (Hag. 1:6). He can make the blessing and promise of produce end only in disappointment. *"Ye have sown much, and bring in little . . . and he that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes . . . ye looked for much, and lo, it came to little"* (Hag. 1:6 & 9).

Paul shows through these O.T. quotes that a rebellious people side-tracked by their God is no new and different occurrence. They had been there

**11:11** *I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy.*

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before. The Jews had come again to think themselves quite untouchable, quite in a class apart, and thoroughly appointed by God to blessing as an unalterable given. But the *shocking truth* is that they too are subject to God's choice to harden the hard unto destruction when showing themselves impervious to His will. God surprised the Jews by handling them in the same way He did the Gentiles (Pharaoh). Paul displays in chap. 9 as well the history of this way of God's dealing, even with the children of Abraham.

### **11:11-36** – Israel's Rejection is Not Final.

Vs. 11 – Does this all mean that God is now finished with the nation of Israel? Has the faltering of their faith and faithfulness resulted in their complete fall, without hope of recovery? Did it mean this when these words were first spoken, which Paul has here quoted? “*God forbid!*” Foolish thinking! It did and does mean only God's severe judgment upon His people and dispersion for a

time. But it meant neither an end of national Israel nor an end of God's promises fulfilled upon them. As it meant back then so it means the same to this day. God's passing over of Israel is neither *total* nor *final*.

The fact is, God contributed to Israel's stubborn hardness leading on to her dispersion, partly in order that the door of opportunity might be swung open to the whole world. In this sense as well "*salvation is of the Jews*" (Jn. 4:22). Through their rejection, greater access to such treasures was handed to us. How very tender our hearts should be toward that nation used of God to bring the Scriptures and Saviour into the world. God always had the Gentiles in mind from the beginning (Gen. 12:3). In fact, even the old dispersions and captivities of the nation carried the same purpose. It was God giving the day to the Gentiles (Assyrians and Babylonians), putting God's witness out into the nations, establishing synagogues or centres of true understanding throughout the surrounding lands. And by this means He prepared the way for the greatly successful missionary efforts of Acts. It was about God's judgment upon rejecting Israel to be sure, but it was also about greater access to the light for the Gentile world, both in the past and in Paul's day. And further, this in turn toward the

**11:12** Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world,  
and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles;  
how much more their fulness?  
**11:13** For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the  
apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office:

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purpose of provoking Israel to jealousy, when they see the evidence of God's grace upon the Gentiles, calling out from among them a people for His name (Acts 15:14). This will ultimately lead to Israel's yearning for their God and return to Him and their rejected Messiah. God, with His gracious eye to all mankind, has moved hearts that He might include as many as possible.

Vs. 12-15 – So if Israel's tumble has brought so much blessing to the Gentile world, how much more shall her restoration bring the richness of worldwide blessing in Christ's earthly kingdom! Compare how God's severe dealing with Jonah in his rebellious flight brought blessing to the few sailors, whereas God's working through him in his repentance by so much greater a degree brought blessing to the entire city of Nineveh!

Vs. 12 – “*The diminishing of them*” refers to national Israel now set aside “*until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in*” (vs. 25).



**11:14** *If by any means I may provoke to emulation them which are my flesh, and might save some of them.*

**11:15** *For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?*

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“*Their fullness*” speaks of Israel’s future restoration, when they shall see and be converted to the Lord as completely as they were blinded in Christ’s day (Zech. 12; Hos. 2; Dan. 9).

Vs. 14 – How well Paul understood the need to stir rejecters to aggravation if any would pay attention to the truth and find deliverance there. We see the same in his missionary journeys in Acts. The twin responses of those touched by the gospel are *bitter jealousy* and *believing joy*. We must be willing to provoke some to anger if we would see some saved.

Vs. 15 – Israel’s casting away in unbelief, through the rejection and murder of her Messiah, was as if her *death*. And the day of her final and forever revival and restoration to the Lord will be so significant, so vast and unprecedented, that it will be like *resurrection from death*, an event on a par with Christ’s resurrection. This is pictured in Ezekiel’s vision of dry bones (Ezek. 37). It’s pictured as well perhaps in the completeness of

**11:16** *For if the firstfruit be holy, the lump is also holy:  
and if the root be holy, so are the branches.*

---

repentance in Nineveh.

Vs. 16 – If the saved remnant of national Israel (of which Paul is a representative, vs. 1) “*be holy*” or set apart or consecrated to the Lord, “*the lump*” or larger body of the redeemed nation in that coming day will likewise be holy. The firstfruits are the initial token of the great harvest of the whole yet to come. And if “*the root*” of the faithful fathers “*be holy*” (as Abraham, who “*believed God . . . unto . . . righteousness*”), so shall also be those from among both Jews and Gentiles finding true connection to God through the faith of Father Abraham.

## **Class 15 – Romans 11:17-36**

As we come to the end of this 11<sup>th</sup> chapter of Romans we come to the end of Paul's focus upon the current gospel dispensation as related to the Jews. In chap. 9 we joined God's apostle in glancing back to the Lord's dealing with Israel in the *past*. In chap. 10 it was more a matter of the Lord's *present* handling of Israel. Individuals, both Jew and Gentile, are free to call upon the Lord for salvation. In chap. 11 our eye is largely to the Lord's plan for Israel into the future. In their hardness the Lord has chosen to harden them, that the Gentiles might enjoy a time of greater opportunity, that the nation of Israel might in turn be stirred "*to emulation*" (jealousy, anger), and that ultimately "*all Israel shall be saved*" (vs. 26).

Chapter 11 ends the *doctrinal* portion of Romans as well, and in so doing rises to the crescendo of one of the greatest doxologies of the Bible. Chapter 12 will begin that portion of more practical admonition, based upon the riches of our God and what He has done in and for us.

Vs. 17-24 – Tree of God's attention. Still through the figure of an olive tree, Paul continues to show how the Lord's current programme for the Gentiles

**11:17** *And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree;*

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relates to His purpose for Israel. The “*good olive tree*” represents the nation of Israel nourished through the blessing of God’s special opportunities granted them (3:2; 9:4-5). And this through “*the root*” of their forefathers and the Lord’s love and covenants with them. The “*wild olive tree*” represents the Gentile nations (vs. 13), now grafted into the blessing of God’s special attention and opportunity, with the gospel testimony through the words of God now readily available to them.

Now we must understand that this picture of grafting into the good tree does not depict salvation, with individual unbelieving Jews broken off and believing Gentiles grafted on. Connection to the root rather describes a time of particular opportunity or attention or focus from God, as we see Him turning to the Gentile world from Acts 13 onwards. This in the same way that special opportunity went, by God’s choice, to Isaac rather than Ishmael and to Jacob rather than Esau. This is where Paul began in chapter 9 (vs. 7-12). This

**11:18** *Boast not against the branches. But if thou boast,  
thou bearest not the root, but the root thee.*

**11:19** *Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off,  
that I might be grafted in.*

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divine choice did not exclude any *individuals* of Ishmael's or Esau's race from believing for salvation. Again, the gift of salvation is not in the context there either. Only that they did not have access to those "*much every way*" advantages of 3:1-2.

Vs. 17 – "*If some of the branches be broken off*" – Its an expression of the permanence of the national "tree" of Israel. Only some branches broken off. In this current age of God's focus upon Gentile outreach Israel has lost the privilege of God's special attentions. The generations of Jews since Christ's day are the broken branches.

"*And thou*" – Vs. 17-24 speak (2<sup>nd</sup> person singular) to the Gentile nations as if a single individual, even as the Lord often speaks to Israel (Matt. 23:34-39). Compare Christ's words in Jn. 10:16.

Vs. 18-20 – No place for boasting. When tempted to boast, Gentiles must remember that they are not

**11:20** *Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not highminded, but fear:*

---

the root or trunk, but only branches. And not even are we the natural branches, but grafted by grace into God's good tree. That which we are grafted into is more important than we. Branches are expendable, roots are not. And not through our own particular goodness or earning are we so placed and privileged. It is to a right attitude of humility that the Lord would lead His church. He spoke in a similar way to Israel long ago, that He loved them *because He loved them*, not because of any worthiness in them (Deut. 7:7-8). But they lost track of this, forgetting that it was upon God's grace alone that they stood. And now you Gentiles take care not to think that God has chosen to grace you with heightened opportunity because of some particular specialness in you. He loved you because He loved you, and is now gracing you for a time with the sun of His gaze shining on your side of the world. Don't foolishly follow in Israel's proud way. Don't think, as they, that He has rejected all others for the "priceless pearl" of your presence. Don't ever come to believe that your privileges from God are your ticket to heaven. The Lord is perfectly willing and able to handle the Gentiles in the same

**11:21** *For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee.*

**11:22** *Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.*

---

way He did the Jews. As Israel became high-minded, not fearing the Lord, disbelieving, knowing they were the natural branches, assuming permanence, even so you Gentiles beware that you not fall to the same attitude in your new place of privilege from the Lord. Remember your position as but a wild olive grafted onto God's cultivated stock by His grace, in no way first and foremost whether in position, quality, or time. You in fact are secondary, wild, and momentary. Boast not in *your* brilliance, but in the glory and grace of the One who has placed you in the way of blessing.

Vs. 21-22 – The Lord has shown Himself as willing to be severe as He is willing to be kind and good, cutting off for a time even His chosen covenant people, those He would naturally be inclined to hold close. It stands to reason that He would be even less inclined to spare the unnatural branches than the natural. If the Gentiles should in turn misuse their privileges the Lord will cut them off from

**11:23** *And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in: for God is able to graft them in again.*

**11:24** *For if thou wert cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and wert grafted contrary to nature into a good olive tree: how much more shall these, which be the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree?*

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special advantage just as He did the Jews. Again this does not speak of loss of salvation, but of loss of particular opportunity. These words are not spoken to individuals but to the Gentiles as a whole, in essence to the church. The Lord's goodness extends to the church so long as she walks with Him in His goodness. But when she no longer does so, the Lord will cut her off and turn the channel of privileged focus back to the nation of Israel. This He *will* in fact do, for it is already written in prophecy. When the Lord raptures all true believers from earth, He will then turn from the false, apostate church left behind (II Thess. 2:3), from special focus upon Gentile outreach, to work again with the nation of Israel. This will be Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week (Dan. 9). It's another reason why the true church of genuine believers cannot be a part of the Great Tribulation, but must first be removed in the Rapture.



**11:25** *For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.*

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Vs. 23-24 – When the Jewish nation as a whole at last shall respond in belief they too will be allowed back into their place of the Lord’s special attention.

Vs. 25-32 – Israel’s restoration is sure.

A true estimation of our worth is the cure for high-mindedness, lest we misread God’s eye in our direction for the moment. The “*mystery*” of God’s working is the partial blindness or hardening which has come upon Israel, providing the window of opportunity for the Gentile world, which we are now experiencing. Israel’s blindness is “*in part*” in that;

- There are many saved out of the Jewish people (vs. 1). Their blinding was not *total*.
- This is not a forever condition upon Israel. Their blinding is not *final*.

“*The fullness of the Gentiles*” again speaks of that moment when Jesus comes for His bride in the rapture of the church, “*and so shall we ever be with*

**11:26** *And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written,  
There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall  
turn away ungodliness from Jacob:*  
**11:27** *For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall  
take away their sins.*

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*the Lord*” (I Thess. 4:13-18; I Cor. 15:51-55). There will then be many more Gentiles saved out of the Great Tribulation (Rev. 7), but these will not be a part of the church.

Vs. 26-27 – “*All Israel shall be saved*” – Referring to all Jews living in the tribulation period and experiencing the things Jesus warned His people of in Matt. 24. When Jesus returns to His kingdom (Rev. 19-20) then “*they* [national Israel] *shall look upon Me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn*” (Zech. 12:10). Then at last the Jewish people shall come to acknowledge the truth and He who is “*the truth*” on a national scale, just as they refused the truth on a national scale in their rejection and murder of their Messiah. “*All Israel*” does not mean every Jew of every age, for Paul has already made the point that “*they are not all Israel, which are of Israel*” (9:6). All *believing* Jews of every age will be combined with the nationwide response among the Jews on earth at the time of Christ’s return.

**11:28** *As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the father's sakes.*

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Paul then turned to the prophets for proof of Israel's future return to the Lord. In vs. 26 he clipped a bit from the beginning of Isa. 59:20. Then in vs. 27 he added bits perhaps from Jer. 31:33-34. These he combines to show the promise of a coming Rescuer who will succeed in turning Israel right around from their ungodliness and sin, bringing them at last into the blessing of their new covenant. Ps. 14:7 relates the fulfilled longing and greatest national joy of that coming day; *"Oh that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion! . . . Jacob shall rejoice, and Israel shall be glad."* These prophecies were fulfilled in part at Christ's first coming, and will be fully so in His return.

Vs. 28 – In the current gospel era Israel has been hardened for the sake of the Gentiles, providing their greater opportunity. Yet that they have been chosen by the Lord to be loved and graced as a nation *stands*, due to His love for the fathers, *"because He would keep the oath which He had sworn unto your fathers"* (Deut. 7:8).

**11:29** *For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.*

**11:30** *For as ye in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief:*

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Vs. 29 – The Lord says what He means and means what He says. His purposes and promises are unchangeable. Praise God for that! Where would be *our* hope were He not true to His word to Israel? See Ps. 89:29-37. What He promised to the Jewish forefathers He will do, though it be a long and round-about course. Compare how the Lord accomplished the nation's entry into their Promised Land at the first in the same way. He made promise, but they could not enter directly or immediately, because of their unbelief and disobedience at Kadesh Barnea. And so the promise came through a long wandering way, due to their faithless choices. But He certainly did bring His promise to pass anyway, according to a normal understanding of it! Delay never cancels God's promise, nor does it suggest a reread in a dimmed allegorical light. Wait a bit! If it makes no sense right now, be wise to wait with me.

Vs. 30-32 – Hardness exchanged for mercy. Four times “*mercy*” in these three verses. Only those

**11:31** *Even so have these also now not believed, that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy.*

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who learn to regard themselves as objects of God's mercy have at last laid the proper foundation for true godliness of heart and life. *"It is of the LORD's mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not"* (Lam. 3:22). Praise God for Jewish unbelief and disobedience, for it brought to us;

- The Redeemer's sacrificial death in our place and resurrection.
- The way of access to God and His mercy opened, *"through the veil, that is to say, His flesh"* (Heb. 10:20).
- The gospel focus upon world outreach.

And then, through jealousy over God's mercy shown to the Gentiles (vs. 14), the Jews will ultimately be restored to the Lord as well. Throughout Paul's entire argument here it is clear that Israel's rejection in unbelief is only for a time, and that God's unchangeable purpose to mercy that nation will yet come to pass in literal fulfilment of all that has been spoken.

**11:32** *For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all.*

**11:33** *O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!*

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Vs. 32 – Here is the summary of it. Both Jew and Gentile have known their day of hardening and mercying, toward a greater harvest from among mankind. And all in the sovereign purpose of God to grace *the most*, to show *all* equally helpless without Him, to show *all* on level ground, no race having cause of boasting over another. All with an eye to that crowning day when “*He might have mercy upon all*”, that day of both Israel’s restoration and Gentile fullness in Christ’s kingdom, and beyond in the new heavens and earth.

Vs. 33-35 – Doxology of praise. This epistle of Paul has been quite doctrinally or theologically oriented to this point, and yet we come out the end of this section with Paul singing a *hymn of praise*! Sound doctrine was never meant to be a collection of cold, sterile arguments leading to little more than intellectual pride. It was not so with this apostle. In pondering upon the Lord’s working with mankind Paul was filled anew with exultant praise to the Lord, for the surpassing wisdom of His gracious

purposes for man, as if he could no longer hold back his wondering heart. Though Paul thoroughly grounded his views in doctrine, never did he so “earth” his heart that it was not ever energized with the electric vibrancy of love and emotion. And yet, never is a significant doctrinal portion or thrust missing from this apostle’s writings. More and more missing in our modern church pulpits to be sure, but not missing from the writings of God’s men. To leave God’s doctrine is to leave the true God. It is to be found worshipping a god of our own making, not the One who made us. *“The knowledge of the Holy is understanding”*.

Vs. 33 – *“O the depth”* – Depths so deep man could never hope to fully explore. And a depth of *“riches”*, expressing not only the wealth of the Lord’s wisdom, but the unfathomable nature of His faculties all directed *toward us!* What an inexhaustible store of blessing is the true God! He is so deeply rich toward mankind in His desire to love the unlovely!

*“His judgments”* are His righteous purposes. *“His ways”* are the righteous means by which He carries out His purposes. Purposes and practices by which He brings greatest fruit out of human rejection, lifting beauty out of ashes.

**11:34** *For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor?*

**11:35** *Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again?*

**11:36** *For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen.*

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Vs. 34 – No created being is on a par with God. None can know God’s mind in anything like fullness. Nor does He feel the need to seek out the advice of any, “*for who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct Him?*” (I Cor. 2:16).

Vs. 35 – The Lord mercies none as a matter of debt or repayment. He is the great Giver, with all motivation for His grace found only in Himself. None “*hath first given to Him*” to *earn* His blessing.

Vs. 36 – Of “*all things*” the Lord is;

- The source (“*of Him*”, or “out of Him”).
- And the means (“*through Him*”, “by means of Him”).
- And the end (“*to Him*”, “unto Him”).

The book of Revelation displays this in its behind-the-scenes images of creature response to the



Creator (5; 7:10-12). Of Jesus Christ Col. 1:16 expresses similar thoughts.

With the Lord being who and what He is, how can we give less than our all to Him?

***Thine be the glory!!***

“I beseech you therefore, brethren,  
by the mercies of God,  
that ye present your bodies  
a living sacrifice,  
holy, acceptable unto God,  
which is your reasonable service”

(Rom. 12:1)

## **Class 16 – Romans 12:1-21**

The great apostle has come to the end of his doctrinal portion of this book (chap. 1-11), having discussed matchless matters of God's Person and purposes for all mankind, both Jew and Gentile. Now with chap. 12 Paul begins to deal with matters of duty, conduct, and character. It's Paul's typical pattern in his epistles; first Christian theology, then Christian living; first eternal truths, then present duty; first privilege, then practice. The whole Bible communicates the same.

Don't miss that fact that the doctrinal instruction portion of this book is more than twice the length of the practical. Perhaps we might conclude that at least two thirds of our presentation of Christianity should deal with such issues as who God is, who man is, what God offers in justification, the what's and how's of sanctification, what is God's plan for the ages, etc. Smaller focus perhaps upon the practical matters of how we should then live. Otherwise we teach a way of life without a true grasp of the reasons why. Our Christian character and conduct must be founded upon a clear understanding of our own worthlessness and the Lord's surpassing worth and grace.

**12:1** *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.*

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## **12:1-2** – Living in God’s Will.

These two verses are the introduction of the practical portion of this book. All the Lord would say to us concerning Christian living begins right here.

### Vs. 1 – The Great Presentation.

*“Therefore . . . by the mercies of God”* – This opening *“therefore”* looks back over the vast panorama of God’s blessing and mercy laid up for us in Christ. Because you have been justified freely by His grace (chap. 3), because you have found peace with God (5:1), because you are rejoicing in hope of the glory of God (5:11), because sin’s dominion over you has been broken (chap. 6), because you have received the gift of eternal life from God’s hand (6:23), because you are free from condemnation (8:1), because you are indwelt by the Holy Spirit (chap. 8), because the Son and Spirit intercede for you (chap. 8), because you are predestined to be conformed to

the image of the Son (8:29), because no charge can ever be laid against you before God (8:33), because none can ever separate you from God's love (8:35-38), therefore based upon the unsearchable store of God's bounty toward you in Christ I beg of you to present your life a living sacrifice to Him. This is Paul's (God's) plea. There can be no greater motivation for dedicating our lives to the Lord's will than a clear understanding of all He has already done for us in Christ. We are called to recognize the Lord's claim upon us and to present or yield our bodies to Him, to His service, even as Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego *"yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any god, except their own God"* (Dan. 3:28).

To *"present"* is to yield or hand over or place at God's disposal. The same Greek word is translated *"yield"* in 6:13. The terms and picture here are after the sacrificial ritual of the O.T. offerings. The whole burnt offering was to be an animal that cost something, killed, laid on the altar, and wholly burned before the Lord (Lev. 1). This offering expressed the giver's entire giving of himself in devotion to his God. The presentation must be of *"your bodies"*. Good intentions are not enough. The totality of our lives and activities must be placed on the altar before the Lord.

**12:2** *And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.*

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This is our “*reasonable service*” in the sense that this sacrifice is not as in the O.T. era, performed upon a physical altar. This sacrifice of which Paul speaks is to be a sacred act of worship upon the altar of our heart, wholly abandoning ourselves to our God of compassion. It’s to be as the slave’s willing presentation of himself to his master in Ex. 21. It’s to be as a couple’s presentation of themselves to each other in marriage. All bridges burned! To *not* so respond to the Lord, in view of His multiplied mercies at so great a personal cost, is simply unreasonable. Such yielding of our lives wholly to the Lord is a holy and acceptable offering to Him only through His grace in Christ. How else could Christ’s suffering and death be deemed an acceptable swap for our everything? And how could we give Him less than our all?!

“All that I have, all that I am, all that I ever hope to be  
I now give, without reservation, to Thee!”

Vs. 2 – The Great Transformation.

*“Be not conformed to this world”* – This is written as a command. Don’t you be fashioning yourselves after this current age or the world’s lifestyle. Don’t let the world force you into its mould. The presentation of ourselves to the Lord leads on to a change from the way we used to walk, *“according to the course of this world [age]”* (Eph. 2:2). The whole world order or age is Satan’s domain (I Jn. 5:19). Any conformity there is departure from the Lord.

*“Be ye transformed”* is also a command. The word used runs deeper than the more superficial “conform”, describing our very essence rather than a mere outward change. Transformation comes of renewed minds through the *“washing of the water by the Word”* (Eph. 5:26). As we turn from world conformation to renewed transformation the Spirit begins the process of wonderful practical change within us. We come to acknowledge God as Creator (Gen. 1). We begin to recognize the selfish traps of fashion and self-esteem (I Pet. 3:3-4). We’re able to discern between helpful and harmful entertainments. We see through Satan’s lies to what is right and real. Our spiritual gifts are discovered and others begin to be moved for God through our influence. And many other Christ-like decisions, attitudes, and actions begin to form as the sweet fruit of the Spirit’s transforming work

**12:3** *For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.*

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upon the branch of our lives. The Lord calls us to *lead* through this evil age, not to *be led* by the nose. Don't let Satan's passing-away world dictate to you what is to be important in your life, but rather diligently seek out your guiding principles from God. Both "*conformed*" and "*transformed*" are passive, indicating another acting upon us. Both the Lord through His Word and Satan through his world are desiring to shape us after their pattern. It just depends on which master you present yourself to and allow to lead you. It just depends on where your eyes are directed (compare II Cor. 3:18). Where vs. 1 speaks of the momentary action of presenting, vs. 2 speaks of the ongoing process of transforming. Sanctification is no momentary bolt of lightening, but a life-long decision for Christ-likeness.

### **12:3-8** – Humble Service.

Paul turns now to the matter of Christian service. First Christian surrender, then Christian service.



First things first. To be sure, every heart given to the Lord (vs. 1) and becoming like the Lord (vs. 2) will turn to the same. It's where true consecration leads us.

Vs. 3 – The first cut of the tender Vine-Keeper's knife is to prune us down to size. Paul's words "*to every man that is among you*" warn all against too high a self-opinion. "*But in lowliness of mind, let each esteem other better than themselves*" (Phil. 2:3). If we *received* every blessing and ability we have from the Lord, "*why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?*" (I Cor. 4:7), as if you yourself were the source. Paul demonstrates what he demands, speaking only "*through the grace that is given unto me*". Obviously humility is top of the list in a yielded, Christ-like life (compare vs. 16). Pride is the chief enemy of true righteousness. Putting these words together with vs. 2, it becomes evident that pride is that primary world trait to which we must avoid being conformed.

"*To think soberly*" of one's self is not a *low* self-opinion, but a *sober* self-opinion, a fair, honest self-opinion. Not soaring, not grovelling, but a sound, objective estimation.

Vs. 4-5 – Diversity in unity. A single body with

**12:4** *For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office:*

**12:5** *So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.*

**12:6** *Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith;*

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many members is Paul's common illustration for the church or body of Christ (I Cor. 12; Eph. 4:6).

Vs. 6-8 – The spiritual “gifts” referred to here are God-given abilities to minister to others for Him. Every believer (member of Christ's body) has some ability graciously given by God to serve Him and others in some special way.

“*Prophecy*” (vs. 6) – The ability to preach or forth tell and to predict or foretell God's words, to declare what we cannot know in and of ourselves. As the Lord said to the prophet Jeremiah, “*I have put My words in thy mouth*” (1:9). With the completion of the Bible as the era of the apostles came to a close, this gift of prophecy, the gift that produced the Book, passed away (I Cor. 13:8; II Pet. 2:1). No more the need.

“*Ministry*” (vs. 7) – The word in the Greek is

**12:7** *Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching;*

**12:8** *Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness.*

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*diakonia*, from which we get our English word deacon. The word means “serving”, describing one especially gifted to minister to the needs of others on a material or practical level.

“*Teaching*” (vs. 7) – This is one supernaturally gifted to understand, apply, and communicate the Word of God. When one so gifted explains the Bible you find yourself wondering why you never saw it so clearly before. This gift is required of those who serve as elder or pastor (I Tim. 3:1-2; Titus 1:9).

“*Exhortation*” (vs. 8) – This one is gifted to comfort or encourage or effectively urge others to pursue some right course of conduct. This may be the spiritual gift behind those effective as evangelists. This gift performs, not so much in the area of instructing the *understanding*, as the gift of teaching, but its potency is in convincing the heart or will of others to do right. Compare Barnabus (Acts 4:36; 11:22-24).

“*Giving*” (vs. 8) – Though all are to be giving of their wealth toward the Lord’s good purposes on earth if they would have His blessing, folks gifted to give are particularly set apart by God as channels. These are to exercise their gift “*with simplicity*”, with sincerity of heart and liberality, without self-seeking show. The greatest temptation when giving to the help of others is to promote ourselves by letting people know of our good deeds.

“*Ruling*” (vs. 8) – The Greek word means “*placed in front*”, referring to one superintending over others. This is one gifted of God to govern or give direction to the work of His church. Not ruling in the sense of bossing, but wisely leading. These are to serve “*with diligence*”, indicating the most earnest, attentive care for others because the church is God’s cherished possession.

“*Showing mercy*” (vs. 8) – This is the spiritual gift of one especially stirred to sympathy with the misery of others in the hardship of some miserable condition. As the gifts of ministering and giving, this one shows itself less in words, and more in acts of aiding or feeling for those in need. We all feel for those in difficult or lonely circumstances, but one so gifted of the Spirit is *moved to action* through the Spirit working within. Saints so gifted cannot be

**12:9** *Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.*

---

away from where they can bring comfort to those who are troubled.

**12:9-21** – Christian Character.

Now a series of brief, potent statements on practical Christian living, relating largely to our relationship with each other. In a world full of voices demanding to be our guide, here is the voice of *God's* guidance.

Vs. 9 – Love without hypocrisy or fakery. Ever be real or sincere in your active commitment to the very best for others.

*“Abhor that which is evil”* – Be treating every form of evil or wrong as something you totally despise. Compare I Pet. 3:11; Job 1:1, 8.

*“Cleave to that which is good”* – When it comes to your choices, always come down on the side of what you know is good or best, regardless of what you feel like doing. Compare 13:10; I Cor. 13:6.

Vs. 10 – “Be kindly affectioned one to another with

**12:10** *Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another;*  
**12:11** *Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord;*

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*brotherly love*” – In your loving care for Christian brothers, love and prefer them like your own family.

*“In honour preferring one another”* – In honouring or valuing others, try your best to be the very best at it. Give credits to the other. Promote the reputation of the other. Address others with respect. Can you imagine a church (or world) where all are infused with such a character trait? It’s what heaven will be!

Vs. 11 – *“Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord”* – Always working with the awareness that the Lord is watching, and all out for Him in everything you do! *“Whatsoever your hand finds to do, do it with your might”* (Eccl. 9:10). Compare Col. 3:23. All attention and earnestness in work, school, responsibilities, etc. All carefulness in your walk and service for God.

Vs. 12 – *“Rejoicing in hope”* – Ever keep a happy heart in the convinced assurance of glory to come.

**12:12** *Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation;  
continuing instant in prayer;*  
**12:13** *Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to  
hospitality.*

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*“Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen”* (Heb. 11:1). Faith makes us as sure of things to come as if we had the proof of hard evidence.

*“Patient in tribulation”* – Ever endure patiently every distress, trouble, pressure, or persecution, knowing by faith that all is from the hand of our loving Father.

*“Continuing instant in prayer”* – Give constant attention to prayer. Compare how often we find Jesus praying in the gospel of Luke.

Vs. 13 – *“Distributing to the necessity of the saints”* – Make the needs of others your own.

*“The saints”* – We need not feel responsible for the physical needs of the whole world, but for fellow believers in church. And not just making our money available to them, but freely offering any and every resource for the help of our brothers in Christ.

**12:14** *Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not.*

**12:15** *Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.*

**12:16** *Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits.*

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*“Given to hospitality”* – Showing a genuinely caring, welcoming, helpful spirit toward all. The Lord would have us turn from ourselves to selfless attention and care of others in every way.

Vs. 14 – To *“bless”* is to have a good word to say. Be speaking well of those hating and hurting you. This is given as a command and repeatedly, with the negative forbidden for *triple* emphasis. Personal pride is truly crippled when we can actually respond in this way. Compare Jesus (*“Father forgive them”*; I Pet. 2:23) and Stephen (Acts 7:60).

Vs. 15 – Genuine feeling in sympathy with others. Folks too full of themselves have no room for empathy toward others.

Vs. 16 – Unity through humility. Humility is the only element in which unity can thrive. Here is where Paul began in vs. 3. Don’t set your mind on



**12:17** *Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men.*

**12:18** *If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.*

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high, impressive things or association with significant people. Be willing rather to associate with the lowly. Love your neighbour as yourself and include all in that word “neighbour”.

Vs. 17-21 – Handling aggressors.

Vs. 17 – The Lord’s way for us is to never repay evil for evil. Give forethought only for what is good for all, even for those who hate us (Phil. 4:8).

Vs. 18 – Be sure *you* are not any part of the cause for any continued disunity. From your side of every potential strife, be sure you are living in peace with all. This verse sandwiched between two on the wrong of revenge addresses the grave danger of harbouring resentment (compare Lev. 19:18). You and I are responsible to see that things are put right. If our brother has anything against us, we go and put it right (Matt. 5:21-25). If we have anything against our brother, we go and put it right (Matt. 18:15-17).

**12:19** *Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.*

**12:20** *Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.*

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Vs. 19 – Instead of our acting in anger we are to “*give place*” for God’s wrath. Vengeance is His domain, and we may be assured that He “*will repay*” for He has said He will. See Deut. 32:35. The Lord will settle all scores “*in due time*”. In fact “*the things that shall come upon them make haste*”. Do you believe it? Letting the Lord be our Avenger is an act of faith in His promise. Remember how David thanked Abigail for preventing his vengeance (I Sam. 25:26-33). God took Nabal out “*in due time*”. Compare Ps. 35:11-16; Prov. 20:22; 24:16-18, 29; Job 31:29-30.

Vs. 20 – A practical reflection of vs. 14 & 18 (quoting from Prov. 25:21-22). As returning a good word for evil (vs. 14), as ensuring that there is a will for peace from our side of every dispute (vs. 18), even so this same attitude is to be expressed in the good deeds of caring for those who hate us.

Vs. 21 – We are not to be overcome by evil in the

**12:21** *Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.*

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sense here of not being overly disturbed by some hurt and moved to respond in kind. We are to overcome evil in the sense of responding to hurt with kindness, which may in turn move an enemy to repentance for his wrong.

“The night is far spent,  
the day is at hand:  
let us therefore cast off  
the works of darkness,  
and let us put on  
the armour of light”

(Rom. 13:12)

## Class 17 – Romans 13:1-14

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**13:1** *Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God.*

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Paul continues in this chapter as he began in chapter 12 with practical matters of Christian responsibilities.

### **13:1-7** – Responsibility to Government.

Vs. 1 – Here is instruction for “*every soul*”. None are exempt. No special concessions. And God’s command is aimed at our ongoing habit of submitting ourselves, and that toward *every authority* higher than us, from president to politician to policeman. Peter wrote his first epistle after Emperor Nero had begun his brutal persecution of Christians, yet still God’s apostle called the saints to the same submission in I Pet. 2:13-14. Jesus even taught submission to “*the scribes and Pharisees*”, only because they “*sit in Moses’ seat*”, though He made it clear that they were no kind of good example to follow (Matt. 23:2-

**13:2** *Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation.*

**13:3** *For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same:*

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3). No one has ever stood in a place of authority, whether saved or unsaved, except by the appointment and placement of God Himself (Dan. 2:21). Our loyalty to the Lord's own authority will show itself in loyalty to earthly authorities.

Vs. 2 – Obvious conclusions;

- To stand against any human authority is to resist God's own appointment, and thus to resist God Himself (as a general rule).
- To so stand against is to line oneself up for a hiding, either before a human judge or before the divine Judge backing him. “*Damnation*” here does not refer to hell's eternal destruction, but to due punishment for wrong.

Vs. 3-4 – Paul relates principles here, which generally hold true;

- Government doesn't normally trouble those

**13:4** *For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.*

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who live right.

- Right-doers are likely to live without fear of government.
- Right-doers are more likely even to receive praise than trouble from government.
- Wrong-doers have good cause to fear, for they're sure to run into trouble, either before earthly or heavenly judge.

History has proven these principles generally true, with the odd exception. This is God's preserving design through human government, and in this the governments of men serve as God's servants.

That "*he beareth not the sword in vain*" (vs. 4) points to government's God-given right and responsibility over the life of its subjects. They hold the power of life and death. And God expects human government to use that "*sword*" (capital punishment), for it wasn't given to him for nothing. Certainly it is to be used in the case of murder

**13:5** *Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake.*

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(Gen. 9:6; Ex. 21:12-14; Lev. 24:17). There is warning here for both powers and people. No government is wise to refuse to use the sword God has handed to them. And if a murderer is spared from capital punishment through the folly of soft, liberal government, then he has the Lord to thank that he is not dead and languishing in the torments of hell even now. It's God who has mercied him in his sparing, and he has every cause to wholly turn his heart to that mercying God without delay.

Vs. 5 – There is a “*must*” we must heed here if we would have God’s smile. Not only are we to bow to government out of fear of its power over our physical lives, but we are to bow “*also for conscience sake*”, as a Christian seeking the Lord’s pleasure. Not only out of fear, but out of love. Jude noted that one mark of the ungodly is to “*despise dominions*” or reject authority (Jude 8; II Pet. 2:10), showing no conscience toward God or desire for His pleasure.

Notice that there are no exceptions given here. No specifics on the type of government, its ideological



**13:6** *For for this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing.*

**13:7** *Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour.*

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persuasion, or degree of graft are mentioned. Such concerns don't seem to matter. Yet the Lord's command here does not forbid us resisting government should they step over their boundary, demanding that we deny some clear command from God. In such cases government itself becomes a resistor of God's higher authority, and we must be willing to graciously stand with Peter, saying "*we ought to obey God rather than man*" (Acts 5:29). Though we must see the authority of human government as higher than us, we must also see that One whose authority is higher even than theirs. Compare Daniel's gracious refusal of the king's food (Dan. 1) and the king's decree (Dan. 6), and the stand of his friends against idol worship (Dan. 3:16-18). Compare Peter and John's firm refusal to silence their witness in Acts 4:19-20.

Vs. 6-7 – Not only must we live in willing submission to government, but we must gladly help pay their wages as well. "*Tribute*" describes taxes,

rates, or tolls. Though the tax burden be unreasonable, even shading to unrighteous, still we are to pay with integrity what is due, thereby showing our willing submission to government and God.

*“For they are God’s ministers”* – Don’t miss the triple weight on this point with vs. 4. To help pay their wage is to service God’s own appointments. So we are essentially paying to *God* what we pay in taxes brother! We’re wise to let this truth chase away our frustrations and end our endless grumbles over the taxman. Just pay up and let it go, trusting your keeping to *“your heavenly Father”* (Matt. 6:24-34).

*“Render therefore to all their dues”* (vs. 7) – Indicating the balance of paying *all* that is due and *only* what is due. Thus every valid loophole to avoid tax is allowable, and everything invalid is not! Compare Christ’s command to the Herodian challengers, to *“render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s”* (Matt. 22:21). Compare Christ’s agreement to pay the temple tax *“lest we should offend them”* (Matt. 17:24-27). His miraculous provision there also points up His ability to provide for us when we’re willing to honour Him by honouring *“the higher powers”*.

Compare Paul's refusal to pay the bribe for which Governor Felix hoped (Acts 24:26). He preferred the resulting two years in jail over paying a bribe. Thus confirming government officials in their unrighteous greed is not included in God's admonition to submit.

*"Custom"* – Referring to tax on merchandise, V.A.T., etc.

*"Honour"* – *"Honour all men . . . honour the king"* (I Pet. 2:17). We are to show our respect for governmental leaders, even with our prayers for them (I Tim. 2:1-4).

Even the worst of governments is better than anarchy. It's likely that Paul's words were written during Nero's reign as well, a man Harry Ironside says was so evil and egotistical he "ripped up the body of his own mother in order that he might see the womb that bore him". It was that important to him! But still the Lord's word is to *submit*. And if to a Nero, then to *any* and *every* governor no matter how corrupt. Even Nero was allowed to the throne by the Lord for His perfect purpose (yes, even a Mugabe), perhaps to bring punishment for wickedness or to lead to revival. And a couple of unjust imprisonments later, having had ample

**13:8** *Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.*

**13:9** *For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.*

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opportunity to rethink his position, Paul's advice to Titus remained the same (Titus 3:1).

### **13:8-10** – Responsibility to Love.

Vs. 8 – There is strong stress on the negatives in this verse. A literal rendering of the Greek is something like “to no one nothing you all be owing except to be loving one another”. And a debt-free status is again given here as a present continuous command. Whether it be money or other things due to others, and whether owing to government or to anybody, our goal should be a debt-free life. We certainly should never be found in a situation where our assets do not cover our liabilities. A fitting word for our modern debt-drenched world. All obligations are to be cleared, making way for the one obligation to actively live for the very best for others.

**13:10** *Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.*

**13:11** *And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.*

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Vs. 9-10 – When we live in love for others we actually fulfil the whole of the 2<sup>nd</sup> tablet of the law. On the 1<sup>st</sup> tablet were commands relating to God (Ex. 20:1-11), and on the 2<sup>nd</sup> tablet commands relating to man (Ex. 20:12-17). To live that positive 2<sup>nd</sup> great command to love our neighbour as we care for ourselves (Matt. 22:37) is to fulfil all of the negative commandments relating to others. Compare Gal. 5:13-14; James 2:8. Selfishness moves us to the offence of breaking commands relating to man, but true love “*seeketh not her own*” (I Cor. 13:5). Adultery, murder, theft, deceit, lust, etc. all bring harm to the other in gratifying self. Genuine love simply will not allow what is not in a neighbour’s best interest. To love God with everything is to actively seek the best for others, and to sincerely love others is to love God. Compare I Jn. 4:8, 20-21.

### **13:11-14** – Christ-likeness.

Vs. 11 – The brevity of our time remaining on this

**13:12** *The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.*

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earth is reason enough for an active life of love (“*but for a moment*”, II Cor. 4:17). The Lord would wake us, as if from a sleep of insensitivity and inactivity. The realities of eternity draw nearer with every passing hour. They will so soon be our experience, either through our death or Christ’s return. This must move us to faithful living and fearless loving in the small window of earthly existence granted to us. We must not sleep as Jonah in the ship while the unsaved desperately fight the results of God’s anger all around us. We hold the answer to all of their hopeless anguish. We have the bread of life for their soul’s hunger, the living water for their relentless thirst. Our calling is to arise to join the work of the prophets and the Spirit, saying, “*Ho, everyone that thirsteth, come ye*” (Isa. 55:1). “*The Spirit and the bride say, Come*” (Rev. 22:17). The Spirit and the church or bride must combine for an effective witness on earth.

Vs. 12 – The dawning of that “*day*” of deliverance from this dark age will be an end of our opportunity to live for the Lord among unsaved men. Jesus

**13:13** *Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying.*

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spoke of His own resolve in a similar way, but turning the figure, when He said, *“I must work the works of Him that sent Me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work”* (Jn. 9:4). Our chance to live to the Lord’s glory is *now!* How are you investing your talents brother?

*“Cast off the works of darkness”* – As if removing the graveclothes of our darker existence. Compare Heb. 12:1; I Cor. 9:24-27. Children of the light who would prove *“what is acceptable unto the Lord”* must have nothing to do with *“the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them”* (Eph. 5:8-11).

*“Put on the armour of light”* – We are to live our life clothed with the assurance of that bright coming day *“at hand”*. And not just garments but *“armour”*, reminding us that life in this dark age is a spiritual battle against the forces of evil. Compare Eph. 6:11-16; II Cor. 10:4; Rom. 6:13.

Vs. 13 – *“Let us walk honestly”* – Decently, in a becoming manner.

*“As in the day”* – As we would in the broad daylight of the Lord’s very presence. Folks do things in the dark or in secret that they wouldn’t do in the light of day. Walk as an open book for all to see. Walk as one aware that we are always in the light of the Lord’s full gaze. Walk in the light as His children of light (I Jn. 1:7).

Some would mock Baptists for their negative list of “don’ts”, but the tradition comes from the Lord. How are we to walk? *“Not in”*;

- *“Rioting”* – Insolent, half-drunken, riotous partying.
- *“Drunkenness”* – Intoxication with anything such as alcohol, drugs, rock music, etc.
- *“Chambering”* – Immorality, sleeping around.
- *“Wantonness”* – Acknowledging no restraint in the utter disregard of others. “No Rules”.
- *“Strife”* – Loving a controversy.
- *“Envy”* – Selfishness eyeing the advantages of others.

The refusal to heed or even hear such prohibitions from God is the main problem in today’s sick society.



**13:14** *But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.*

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Vs. 14 – So fully consumed and attuned to Jesus Christ and His likeness that our interest in the things of earth fades to backstage. Love for Him is our greatest motive for purity.

*“Provision”* is in the sense of “fore-vision” or forethought. Don’t even give thought in advance as to how *“to fulfil the lusts”* of the flesh or to gratify evil desires. Why do we fall into sins of the flesh? Because we make provision for them. We think and think and think about the possibilities long before we put our evil desires into practice. God’s command is to bring *“into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ”* (II Cor. 10:5).

I’ve read that the eyes of Augustine of Hippo were finally opened through these last verses of Rom. 13, when he at last saw that the ability to live the victorious Christian life was not in himself but in his connection to Jesus Christ. He had lingered long outside the door of God’s fold for fear that he would not be able to live the Christian life once he stepped into Christ. Ironside relates an interesting situation when Augustine later unexpectedly “came

face to face with one of the beautiful but wanton companions of his former days”. He immediately turned and ran. “She followed, crying, ‘Austin, Austin, why do you run? It is only I.’ He replied as he sped on his way, ‘I run, because it is not I!’” He had learned in a very literal but effective way to *“make not provision for the flesh”*.

## **Class 18 – Romans 14:1-26**

This chapter is a guide to how fellow believers are to interact with each other in issues of difference. Two types of Christian attitude are presented. There are those who feel uneasy about the supposed wrongness of certain practices. These are referred to as “*weak*” brothers or “*weak in the faith*”. In view of the previous verse (13:14) we understand that the matters over which these are concerned are not clear moral wrongs. Nor are their concerns clear doctrinal issues either, for we’re often called to hold to pure doctrine. The concerns of the weak rather relate to things considered to be doubtful or dangerous by them, yet things which actually need not be binding on our consciences. Then there are those who are not troubled by such scruples. By implication these are stronger in their faith (15:1). The question addressed in this chapter is not so much the rightness or wrongness of personal views in such secondary matters, but how to conduct ourselves, both in relation to each other and in relation to our own conscience. This issue is obviously an important one since it is so often visited in the N.T. (I Cor. 8 & 10; Acts 15). In the church at Corinth it was largely a question of meats offered in sacrifice to idols and then made available to the public and whether such foods were

**14:1** *Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations.*

**14:2** *For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs.*

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appropriate for Christians to use. Since much of the discussion in this chapter relates to food there may have been similar queries in the church at Rome as well.

### **14:1-23** – Liberty Exercised in Love.

Vs. 1-3 – Receive each other as God has received us. A brother with different opinions as to practice should not be taken to task. We should not be given to disputing through and determining which view is more correct and then passing judgment over the misgivings of the other.

Outside of the clear rights and wrongs for this age from God's Word, both in belief and practice, there are many things of which we must individually decide. Things such as prayer postures, faddish stuff like Jewish style worship and feasts, fasting, vegetarianism or other eating prohibitions, Sabbath or Sunday observance, head covering for women, hair length, oil anointing, foot washing, the

**14:3** *Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not;  
and let not him which eateth not judge him that  
eateth: for God hath received him.*

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particulars of dress, church polity, types of hymns, etc. An interesting feature of the N.T. is that it's rather sparse on specifics of the rights and wrongs of our practice. We are presented with principles or guidelines within which we must decide right conduct in specific circumstances. It seems all things amoral are right and lawful, but it's ours to decide for ourselves what is *best* in each case (I Cor. 10:23). The *motive* and the *effect* upon others of our actions are God's chief concerns. Herein is a great difference between the old and new covenants, for the old laid out a detailed code of conduct in most every issue of life (Ex. 20ff). While the O.T. made distinction between clean and unclean, the one strong in faith fully recognizes that the law was fulfilled in Jesus Christ. And so he happily does not avoid foods considered defiling by some. "*For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving*" (I Tim. 4:4). The faith of the strong in the words of God lifts him above the troubling doubts to which the weak are still subject. And subject not as a matter of salvation or justification, for that is a doctrinal

**14:4** *Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand.*

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matter already settled earlier, but as to what is or is not pleasing to the Lord in the Christian life. Yet the weak, fearing defilement, stick with vegetables. Paul doesn't enter into the "*doubtful disputations*" of rights or wrongs at this point either. His primary concern here is with *attitudes* between weak and strong, that the one without scruples not view with contempt the one with, and that the one with scruples not deem fit for judgment the one without.

So Christian maturity can allow for differences in approach to Christian living. And we're wise to recognize that true devotion to God can exist even with the most seemingly ridiculous of scruples. Don't despise them my heart!

Though a weaker brother with a different approach to the Christian life is to be met with a welcoming spirit, it probably wouldn't be wise to grant him leadership or a teaching role in the church. And he should be willing to understand that.

Vs. 4 – All God's true children are but servants of

**14:5** *One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.*

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the same Master. No fellow servant can fairly make himself the lord of another. “Who are you” to do so, Paul challenges. Again he speaks of our attitude here, for of course we must be free to discuss differences. We can’t just ignore such. But we’re not free to *censure* or *condemn* others over such issues. Over moral or doctrinal issues, yes! (Gal. 5:12; I Cor. 5; Matt. 18:17). Over wickedness, yes. But not over weakness. Each is responsible to the *Lord* as Master. And the Lord is quite capable of guiding His servants to a right position. Though the other may disagree on matters which seem quite important to you, he is not to be considered a fallen Christian, for it’s the Lord who holds him up.

Vs. 5 – Here is a further example, of those regarding one *day* as holier than another, as opposed to those who see no day any different from another.

Paul relates here an important principle – “*Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind*”. Compare vs. 14 & 22-23. All must ensure that they not act against their own conscience before the Lord.

- 14:6** *He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks.*
- 14:7** *For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself.*
- 14:8** *For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's.*
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Vs. 6-12 – All done “*unto the Lord*”. Whether with or without scruples as to days and foods and such, we must do what we do (or not) with an eye to the *Lord’s* smile. This is ever the core concern. *Jesus* is our Master, not self, whether in life or death. We are in no position to fight His will whatever befalls. We are never outside the realm of His watch-care, both in this life and in that on the other side of death’s veil. Our life, death, income, and outcome are all devotion to Him. Full stop! Said another way, “*for to me to live is Christ*” (Phil. 1:21).

Vs. 9 – Here is the ultimate purpose for God’s work of grace in Jesus Christ. Not just that we might be rescued from hell to live our life for ourselves, but that we would live for Him as His blood-bought child. Jesus is far, far more often called “Lord” than “Saviour” in the N.T. (150 times more). He came



**14:9** *For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living.*

**14:10** *But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.*

**14:11** *For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God.*

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not only to be Saviour, but Lord. “*Every knee shall bow . . . and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord*” (Phil. 2:8). And living with Him as our Lord, we should never allow matters between the Master and His servants to drive wedges between we who are His servants. Neither censuring nor despising other servants is our business but the Master’s. For we will all face Him in that day we give account for ourselves before His judgment seat. Literally “each of us” in vs. 12, highlighting our individual, personal accounting there. Compare II Cor. 5:10. Our awareness that we will all stand in judgment before our God should serve to moderate our attitude toward each other (Phil. 4:5).

Paul quotes from Isa. 45:23 in support (vs. 11). Again what was applied to *Jehovah* there in Isa. 45 is applied to *Jesus* here (Compare Phil. 2:9-11).

**14:12** *So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.*

**14:13** *Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in his brother's way.*

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And note as well that at “*the judgment seat of Christ . . . every one of us shall give account of himself to God*” (vs. 10 & 12). Who is Jesus Christ but Jehovah God?

Vs. 13 – In view of our co-service and co-judgment with all of God’s servants, rather than scrutinizing each other, assessing the faults or merits of the other, run this one through your little personal critique column for assessment. Never furnish cause for sinning or stumbling in another brother. Instead of making others the servants of your assessments, make yourself the servant of all! Never give cause for their fall to discouragement through your rejection of them, but rather take up the line to pull with the Lord in His work of holding His servants up (vs. 4).

“*Let us not therefore judge one another*” – Compare Matt. 7:1-5, where Jesus forbids a spirit of criticism and prejudging God’s servants. Remember the

**14:14** *I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself: but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean.*

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balance there in Christ's words. We're to be seers and discerners (not blind in our love), yet ever longing for the best for others in spite of their faults. We are to be ever using the same standard on *ourselves* that we use on others (Matt. 7:3-4), while looking to lead the other to the same standard of perfection to which we ourselves are aspiring (Matt. 7:5). Not that we cannot suggest change in another, even demand it. But that we as well must be honestly seeking to correct our own faults and willing for the input of others.

Vs. 14 – Paul's own firm persuasion aligned with those strong in faith and untroubled by scruples. He could see clearly that with the dispensation of law coming to an end in its fulfilment in Jesus Christ, the old code concerning special foods and days and such was no more. *"For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth"* (10:4). Yet this being said, there must be care to do nothing against a clear conscience. Our conscience can perhaps be instructed, but it must

**14:15** *But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably. Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died.*  
**14:16** *Let not then your good be evil spoken of:*

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at all times be *respected*. Convictions must be honoured, whether they be our own or those of others.

Vs. 15 – To hurt a Christian brother through our actions is to break God’s 2<sup>nd</sup> chief command of love. Remember 12:9-10 & 13:8.

*“For whom Christ died”* – When we recognize how greatly Christ has honoured us in His death on our behalf, we at last see clearly how we are to honour each other (12:10).

So the strong says to the weak, “Hey, you’re *free!*” And God taps him in the shoulder and says, “Not so fast! He’s not free from his conscience”. So the strong responds, “O.K. so *I’m* free”. And God says, “Not so fast! You’re not free from his conscience either”. The rule is sensitivity to conscience, both your own and your brother’s.

Vs. 16-17 – It’s possible in the practice of our

**14:17** *For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.*

**14:18** *For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men.*

**14:19** *Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.*

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freedom from code in Christ to violate the weightier matters of *“righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost”*. These are the sum and substance of God’s kingdom, His true nature and way. These are the essential foundation of Christian fellowship and harmony, not forcing the details of our lifestyle on others. These are what commend us to God. But *“meat commendeth us not to God: for neither, if we eat, are we the better; neither, if we eat not, are we the worse”* (I Cor. 8:8). There must be care that we not make bad what is meant for good through offence and hurt feelings (peace and joy lost) and brothers led to sin against their conscience.

Vs. 18 – The Lord always puts service to Him together with proper service to men. We cannot serve the Lord independent of the opinions of other believers.

Vs. 19 – Pursue peace and the building up of each

**14:20** *For meat destroy not the work of God. All things indeed are pure; but it is evil for that man who eateth with offence.*

**14:21** *It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak.*

**14:22** *Hast thou faith? have it to thyself before God. Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth.*

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other rather than that which breeds strife and leads others to stumble in their walk.

Vs. 20-23 – Again, do nothing to offend either your brother or your conscience. This section is an expansion of the warning in vs. 14. The point is strongly and repeatedly emphasized in this chapter that though all things morally neutral are fine in themselves, they are not fine for the one who cannot partake without offence.

Vs. 21 – Here is Paul’s central goal in relation to others, that he not be the cause of a brother’s offence. Liberty restricted and guided by love. Compare I Cor. 8:13. Though “*to drink wine*” we may consider a freedom, the possibility of leading my brother to harm thereby warns us away from it.

Vs. 22 – A word to the strong. Keep your freedoms

**14:23** *And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin.*

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to yourself, making no display of them. Happy the man who in sincerity before God never lets his good turn to bad.

Vs. 23 – A word to the weak. The one not fully persuaded should not do what to him is doubtful, for God will hold him accountable for acting against his conscience, “*for whatsoever is not of faith is sin*”. For an act to be right it must align both with God’s standard and our conscience. Thus the old adage applies – *if in doubt, don’t!*

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Do you remember how Hebrews 12:12-13 applies this same principle to our basic encouragement in our Christian walk? The Lord prods us there, not just to come to encouragement, but to level out our bearing and bring to an end our easy tendency to drift back into discouragement. And the reason given, “*lest that which is lame be turned out of the way*”. Lest others with faltering faith (the weak) be turned away from the only right path through their observation of your doubtful or discouraged life.

Always our thoughts must be toward others, and how our lives impact them. We bear a responsibility to others looking on, to show them the right way to respond in faith. It's part of our obedience to that 2<sup>nd</sup> great command,  
*“Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself”.*



## Class 19 – Romans 15:1-33

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**15:1** *We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves.*

**15:2** *Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification.*

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### **15:1-7** – Summing Up Others-centred Living.

Continuing the thrust of chap. 14, of not allowing our liberties in Christ to trample over others, Paul talks now to the strong.

Vs. 1-2 – “*We then that are strong*” refers to those strong in faith to recognize their liberty in Christ. These folks are now named what was only implied about them in the previous chapter. The strong are called to patient endurance of those weaker of faith who see things differently than they. To be a servant of Christ and living in love is to not live to our own pleasure or selfish interests. It is to live for the good and growth of others. This is opposite to the way the self-seeking world thinks. Compare brothers taking brothers to court in I Cor. 6, where Paul asks, “*why do ye not rather take wrong? Why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded?*” (vs. 7). Compare the latter day self-lovers of II Tim.

**15:3** *For even Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me.*

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3:1-2.

It's not that we're to be flattering people-pleasers, "*for if I yet pleased men I should not be the servant of Christ*" (Gal. 1:10). Pleasing others must not be the end in itself, but only for the good of others, toward edifying or helping to make them strong. All must be toward the genuine spiritual welfare of others. We are called both to a passive *bearing* and an active *building* ("*edification*") in others. We are called to be given to their best in the self-denying way of true love (I Cor. 10:33).

Vs. 3 – Christ our great example. Jesus did not live to please Himself (Jn. 4:34; 5:30). "*For I do always those things that please Him*", He said (Jn. 8:29). By faith Jesus recognized that it was insults flung at God the Father that were falling upon Him. But He selflessly endured such hurt toward the pleasing of His Father and the saving of souls. Jesus, though spotlessly innocent of any wrong, was hated "*without a cause*", solely because of His stand with His Father in the right. The only possible reason for

**15:4** *For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.*

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such a reaction from the world is the same as Cain with Abel, “*because his own works were evil, and his brother’s righteous*” (I Jn. 3:12). The same will be true of all who belong to Jesus and stand with Him, for like Him we “*are not of the world*” (Jn. 17:14-16). Compare Jn. 15:18-25; 16:1-3; Matt. 10:22-25. The world naturally loves their own and hates those foreign to their corrupt nature. The saved supernaturally love Christ and gravitate to the things of God (Jn. 8:47; 10:27; 18:37). These two spiritual families are worlds apart. But the point of comfort here, both for Christ and for us, is that the world doesn’t really hate we who are on the ground. It’s actually the God to whom we belong that they hate. Their hate is a whole lot easier to take when we understand that the abuse is not really levelled at us personally. Like your client walking away because of his nasty run-in with your boss. It’s easier because it’s not *your* personal failure. We are merely guilty by association from the world’s perspective, “*without a cause*”.

Understand how this vs. 3 quote from Ps. 69:9 is

**15:5** *Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus:*

**15:6** *That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

**15:7** *Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God.*

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the hinge-pin upon which liberalism turns from an uncompromising stand for truth. Fearing the world's insults aimed at the Father, they're determined to mix enough carnality into their Christianity to hide their family relations from the God-hating world. While calling it a novel method for reaching the world, it is really the well-worn practice of denying God! It's not that the end justifies the means, but that the means denies the Master. A refusal to stand and endure scorn with Him is back of their subtle evasions through "innovation".

The key concepts in the early verses of this chapter are *bear* or endure (vs. 1), *build* or edify (vs. 2), and now *bond* or agree (vs.5-6).

Vs. 5-7 – We are to walk and talk in agreement and be mutually receptive to each other in Christ. Though opinions differ, loving friendship must

**15:8** *Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers:*

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remain. And the source of such a happy church atmosphere is “*the God of patience and consolation*” who would lead His children to be like Himself. The command to “*receive ye one another*” here in vs. 7 is the same word with which Paul began this whole section in 14:1. Certainly this must be the case when our differences are non-essentials. We must remember that we were received in Jesus (14:3) when we were powerless, ungodly, sinning enemies of God (5:6-8). If God loved and forgave us when we were truly a mess, how tolerant we should be of minor differences between brothers.

### **15:8-13** – Jew and Gentile Together.

Paul seems to sum up the main argument of the book here.

Vs. 8 – For the Jews. Jesus came as the Servant-Messiah of the Jewish nation, patiently offering the promised kingdom first to them. He came in complete fulfilment of all the promises of God concerning Messiah’s first coming. And even

**15:9** *And that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy; as it is written, For this cause I will confess to thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto thy name.*  
**15:10** *And again he saith, Rejoice, ye Gentiles, with his people.*  
**15:11** *And again, Praise the Lord, all ye Gentiles; and laud him, all ye people.*

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though He was rejected by the chosen nation, no word of God, not one of His covenants or promises, *has* fallen or ever *will* fall to the ground unfulfilled. Neither has Christ's earthly work fallen void of meaning for Israel as a nation though rejected by them.

Vs 9 – For the Gentiles. Far from a failure, Christ's rejection and death was an open door *“for His mercy”* to the whole world. Here again is much of the essence of what Paul demonstrates in this letter. The gospel dispensation is not a perversion of the old. It is the very fulfilment of it!

Vs. 10-12 – Paul quotes selections from the O.T. law, poetry, and prophesy, all serving to display further evidence of God's aim from the beginning to embrace *all nations* with the Jews. Our inclusion was no afterthought. And these blessings are to those who once were *“strangers from the covenants*

**15:12** *And again, Esaias saith, There shall be a root of Jesse, and he that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles; in him shall the Gentiles trust.*  
**15:13** *Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.*

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*of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world”* (Eph. 2:12). This hidden purpose of God from of old is what Paul calls “*the mystery of Christ . . . that the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel*” (Eph. 3:3-9). All of these O.T. quotes look from the far distant past to the present age, picturing Gentiles glorifying God (vs. 9). Again, all that happened to and through Jesus is in no way contrary to what God had spoken.

Vs. 13 – Only in Christ by faith, only “*in believing*” the great truths of the gospel is there the fullness of “*joy and peace*” and abounding hope.

With vs. 13 the whole doctrinal and practical teaching portion of Romans ends. The main focus from here relates more to personal matters of plans, purposes, and people.

**15:14-21** – Paul’s Zeal in Ministry.

**15:14** *And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another.*  
**15:15** *Nevertheless, brethren, I have written the more boldly unto you in some sort, as putting you in mind, because of the grace that is given to me of God,*

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Vs. 14 – Paul expresses his confidence in the believers there.

*“Full of goodness”* – Speaking of their good actions or works according God’s words.

*“Filled with all knowledge”* – Their good awareness of God’s words was the only knowledge that really mattered.

*“Able also to admonish”* – The word here means literally to put in mind or perhaps to put the mind back where it belongs. Here is the application of God’s words in ministry to each other. These saints were quite able to sort each other out, putting sense into those in whom sense was missing. This would involve loving patience, encouragement, and rebuke. Compare in Ezra (7:10) that ready scribe who *“prepared his heart to seek the law of the LORD (filled with all knowledge), and to do it (full of goodness or good works), and to teach in Israel*



**15:16** *That I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost.*

**15:17** *I have therefore whereof I may glory through Jesus Christ in those things which pertain to God.*

**15:18** *For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ hath not wrought by me, to make the Gentiles obedient, by word and deed,*

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*statutes and judgments*” (able to admonish in the application of God’s words to others).

Notice that these words of confidence in them are aimed at the whole church body there, not just to pastor or church leaders. The responsibility to admonish the saints (with the capability to effectively do so) falls upon *all* in the church. Our shared aim, *“that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus”* (Col. 1:28).

Vs. 16 – See how Paul speaks of his ministry to the Gentiles as a privilege from the Lord. In his *“offering up of the Gentiles”* Paul saw those saved through his ministry as if an offering to God.

Vs. 17-18 – He would dare mark to his credit only what could fairly be marked to *Christ’s* credit. “Only what’s done for Christ will last”.

**15:19** *Through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.*

**15:20** *Yea, so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation:*

**15:21** *But as it is written, To whom he was not spoken of, they shall see: and they that have not heard shall understand.*

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Vs. 19 – “*Fully preached the gospel*” doesn’t mean they preached to every person in the whole area. It means that Paul and company had established churches in key centres throughout those regions. And then those churches were expected to saturate their surrounding areas with the gospel message. Paul had laboured from Jerusalem to Illyricum (Dalmatia), a province along the Adriatic Sea, northwest of Macedonia, some 2,500 kms from Jerusalem.

Vs. 21 – This is a quote from Isa. 52:15, where the reference is to Messiah as the Servant of Jehovah, who through His suffering would “*sprinkle many nations*”. He would then be announced to nations who had not heard of Him before. So it has and will come to pass exactly as stated in Isa. 52:13-15.

**15:22** *For which cause also I have been much hindered from coming to you.*

**15:23** *But now having no more place in these parts, and having a great desire these many years to come unto you;*

**15:24** *Whensoever I take my journey into Spain, I will come to you: for I trust to see you in my journey, and to be brought on my way thitherward by you, if first I be somewhat filled with your company.*

**15:25** *But now I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints.*

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### **15:22-29** – Paul’s Desire to Come to Them.

Vs. 23-24 – Having covered the provinces between Jerusalem and Illyricum, Paul was looking to the regions beyond where Jesus Christ had not yet been preached. He just ever kept pressing *beyond, beyond, beyond*, through the Spirit’s work of love in him. Paul was a man fully spent for the Lord. Whether he ever made it to Spain we have no record. Perhaps so after his release from his first Roman imprisonment. Behold Paul’s great affectionate passion (“*great desire*”) for people. May the Lord make us like him in this!

Vs. 25-27 – First things first. Note the background in Acts 19:21. Paul carried a certain foreboding in going up to Jerusalem (Acts 20:22-24).

**15:26** *For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem.*

**15:27** *It hath pleased them verily; and their debtors they are. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things.*

**15:28** *When therefore I have performed this, and have sealed to them this fruit, I will come by you into Spain.*

**15:29** *And I am sure that, when I come unto you, I shall come in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ.*

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Vs. 27 – “*And their debtors they are*” – The blessing of the gospel had its earthly beginning at Jerusalem. Again “*salvation is of the Jews*” (Jn. 4:22). N.B. that contributing materially to those who contribute spiritually to you is considered a duty by the Lord, even as the payment of a debtor’s debt.

### **15:30-32** – Paul’s Earnest Request for Prayer.

Paul could not have pressed them for prayer more strongly, pleading on the basis of what Jesus has done and the love the Spirit instils in God’s own (5:5). He was well aware of the threat involved in going back to Jerusalem. Paul begs for prayers in all of his epistles except Galatians (II Cor. 1:11; Eph. 6:19-20; Phil. 1:19; Col. 4:3-4; I Thess. 5:25; II

**15:30** *Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me;*

**15:31** *That I may be delivered from them that do not believe in Judaea; and that my service which I have for Jerusalem may be accepted of the saints;*

**15:32** *That I may come unto you with joy by the will of God, and may with you be refreshed.*

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Thess. 3:1-2; Philemon 22). Even the brief request to “*pray for us*” in Heb. 13:18 is another one of those subtle indications of Paul’s involvement in the writing of Hebrews. No other N.T. writer requested prayer for himself as Paul so often did.

The word translated “*strive together*” is behind our English word “agonize”, expressing the intensity of earnest praying. As Jacob wrestling with God at Peniel (Gen. 32; Hos. 12:3-6). As Epaphras, “*always labouring fervently for you in prayers*” (Col. 4:12). It was the kind of praying Paul both wished for from them and practiced himself (“*together with me*”). His prayer requests were three;

- To be rescued from unbelievers.
- To be received by believers. Perhaps he feared that lingering prejudice in Jewish believers might stand in the way of their

accepting a gift from Gentiles.

- To be refreshed “*with you*”.

God so amazingly answered these requests, yet not in ways anybody could have expected;

- The gift from the Gentiles was apparently accepted by their Jewish brethren (Acts 21:17ff).
- Through the quick action of Roman soldiers Paul was delivered from certain death in Jerusalem in the hands of the Jews (Acts 21:27-34).
- Through the brave testimony of a young nephew Paul was delivered from a bitter plot and pact against his life (Acts 23:12ff).
- After two years’ imprisonment in Caesarea (because he wouldn’t pay a bribe) he was again delivered from the Jews with his appeal to Caesar (Acts 23-26).
- *All* were rescued from an impossibly hopeless storm and shipwreck on the sea (Acts 27-28).
- Paul at last arrived in Rome to be refreshed with the believers there (Acts 28:14ff).

He later reported in his letter to the Philippians of a

very fruitful ministry in Rome, though in prison (Phil. 1:12-14; 4:22). In fact it was from Paul's days of bondage there in Rome that we received the priceless N.T. books of Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon, epistles so characteristically upbeat and Christ-centred in their theme. How clearly it was a time of *victory* for this man, not defeat. How graciously the Lord did answer their prayers on His behalf.

Vs. 33 – See how the Lord is characterized throughout this chapter;

- Vs. 5 – “*The God of patience and consolation”.*
- Vs. 13 – “*The God of hope”.*
- Vs. 33 – “*The God of peace”.*

All expressions of the ways the Lord is given to blessing man through His unbelievable endurance of us, even as we should bear with one another (vs. 1).

In Christ the Lord brings the peace of reconciliation with Himself, or “*peace with God*” (5:1). And He

brings to man “*the peace of God*” (Phil. 4:7), our inward experience of peace. And to this is added a greater measure of peace with others as well, since a heart put right with God is no longer seeking vengeance against all who oppose (12:17-19).



## Class 20 – Romans 16:1-27

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**16:1** *I commend unto you Phebe our sister, which is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea:*

**16:2** *That ye receive her in the Lord, as becometh saints, and that ye assist her in whatsoever business she hath need of you: for she hath been a succourer of many, and of myself also.*

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Paul's closing is a chapter of warm greetings, yet with several points of interest.

### **16:1-2** – Commendation of Phebe.

Phebe was apparently the carrier of this letter from Corinth where Paul wrote to the church in Rome. She was from the church at Cenchrea just to the east of Corinth on the opposite (eastern) side of the isthmus. We know nothing else of Phebe outside of this passage. She was certainly highly regarded by Paul, who had in some way personally benefited from her care.

Phebe is described as “*a servant of the church*”, which could perhaps be taken as an official church office of deaconess. The word behind “*servant*” is

**16:3** *Greet Priscilla and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus:*

**16:4** *Who have for my life laid down their own necks: unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles.*

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often translated “deacon” in the N.T. If referring to an official position as deaconess her service would have been confined to the care of her own gender, children, and the sick. The role of women in the church is to be that of *helper* rather than *ruler* in authority over men (I Tim. 2:12). There is a growing ignorance of this truth in the modern church, as unfortunate as it is wilful.

### **16:3-16** – Salutation of Saints.

Most of the people Paul greets in this portion are not known apart from their names found here, yet they were obviously people quite significant in Paul’s life. We’re left with the wish to know more about them. As well the *number* of folks Paul knew (27 greetings) is quite surprising in a city he had yet to visit. There was likely much people movement in that day with Rome the central hub. And Paul had been in the Lord’s work for many years by the time of this writing. Some of these were his own relatives, some he had perhaps led to Christ, some

**16:5** *Likewise greet the church that is in their house.  
Salute my well-beloved Epaphroditus, who is the  
firstfruits of Achaia unto Christ.*  
**16:6** *Greet Mary, who bestowed much labour on us.*

---

had laboured with him or helped in the work along the way. We're given here another glimpse into Paul's deeply affectionate nature. Through the Spirit's transforming work in this sold-out soul Paul was one who loved and was easy to love, gaining many friends throughout his days on earth. He knew them by name likely because he often remembered them in prayer.

Vs. 3-5 – Priscilla & Aquila are an interesting study. Being Jews, they were exiled from Rome with the rest of their race by the Edict of Claudius Caesar in 52 A.D. This put them in Corinth, in line to be saved and discipled when Paul's ministry brought him there during his 2<sup>nd</sup> missionary journey (Acts 18). They then went with Paul and company to Ephesus, staying behind as he moved on (Acts 18:18ff). A few years later they were still at Ephesus, and with a church meeting in their home (I Cor. 16:19). They seem to have been instrumental in establishing the church at Ephesus, preparing the way for Paul's lengthy

- 16:7** Salute Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen, and my fellow-prisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me.
- 16:8** Greet Amplias my beloved in the Lord.
- 16:9** Salute Urbane, our helper in Christ, and Stachys my beloved.
- 16:10** Salute Apelles approved in Christ. Salute them which are of Aristobulus' household.
- 16:11** Salute Herodion my kinsman. Greet them that be of the household of Narcissus, which are in the Lord.
- 

ministry there (Acts 19). Paul purposed to go to Rome in those days (Acts 19:21), and we now find them there, again with a church meeting “*in their house*” (vs. 5). It appears this couple devoted themselves to the pioneering work of getting churches going in key centres through the use of their home. Priscilla & Aquila are a study in hospitality or effective home use. We have no record of when or how these two risked their lives for Paul (vs. 4).

Vs. 5 – Epāenetus was perhaps the first man Paul led to Christ in the province of Achaia on his 2<sup>nd</sup> missionary journey.

Vs. 7 – Again, we have no record of when Paul’s relatives or “*kinsmen*”, Andronicus and Junia, spent

**16:12** Salute Tryphena and Tryphosa, who labour in the Lord. Salute the beloved Persis, which laboured much in the Lord.

**16:13** Salute Rufus chosen in the Lord, and his mother and mine.

**16:14** Salute Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermas, Patrobas, Hermes, and the brethren which are with them.

**16:15** Salute Philologus, and Julia, Nereus, and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints which are with them.

---

time with him behind bars. Four of Paul's prison experiences are recorded; twice in Rome, and once each at Philippi and Caesarea. It may be that II Cor. 11:23 suggests more (*"in prisons more frequent"*). It seems these two men were well known by the apostles.

Vs. 13 – At some point along life's journey this unnamed mother of Rufus had been like a mother to Paul, and he hadn't forgotten. Selfless motherly care is highlighted by the Lord, even through this passing mention of this unknown servant. Unknown to *us*, but not to the Lord. Some would make this apostle out to be a hater of women through comments elsewhere in his writings, but we certainly don't see it in this chapter. Womanhood is lifted high throughout.

Vs. 16 – Greet *"with an holy kiss"* – A common

**16:16** *Salute one another with an holy kiss. The churches of Christ salute you.*

**16:17** *Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.*

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eastern form of greeting, both then and now. The point is not necessarily to adopt the same particular custom in all places. The point is to be open and willing in the demonstration of affection within the church family, by whatever method may be the customary expression of respect and love in your culture. *“Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another”* (12:10). And show that affection with all *“holy”* propriety.

### **16:17-20** – Instruction Against Dividers.

Paul does not end his letter without earnest warning of the circling spiritual predators. Satan, as a fierce lion, is ever restlessly roving about seeking to destroy God’s good works and men (I Pet. 5:8). That good work at Rome, as every sound church, could only be preserved through the watchful care of concerned saints.

**16:18** *For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.*

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Vs. 17 – “*Mark them*” – Keep a critical eye to such troublemakers. God doesn’t mean that His children be naïve. N.B. their methods to mark;

- They divide off a following by means of tripping folks up through false teachings (vs. 17). Even as the tactic of the evil one is to get his prey alone, “*drawn away*” from the strength of fellowship (James 1:14). As a pride of lions working a herd, singling one out for the kill.

They prey upon “*the simple*” (vs. 18). As beasts of both the four and two-legged type tend to avoid the hard cases, hitting soft targets instead. Compare the truth deniers of II Tim. 3:1-9, who “*lead captive silly women*”, those who are foolish, weak-willed, unwatchful, unsuspecting of evil intention like children, ungrounded. There are always character flaws in *both* predators and the prey with whom they are effective.

- They speak well (vs. 18), with fancy,

flattering, polished, plausible words. “*Ravening wolves*” in “*sheep’s clothing*” is Christ’s description (Matt. 7:15). They are like their smooth-talking father the devil (Gen. 3). But clever speaking got that bright angel of darkness *nowhere* with Jesus in His temptation, because of His clear discernment and Word-kept heart. Compare the deception and fall of the “*man of God*” in I Ki. 13. Compare the subtle craft of the Gibeonites in Josh. 9. Compare the pressing persuasion of the women in Samson’s life (Judges 14 & 16).

Their motives;

- Not the service of Christ. Though this is surely the way they present themselves.
- They are servants of their own selfish interests or gratification (“*their own belly*”). Compare Phil. 3:18-19. Compare King Jeroboam’s true, selfish motives in contrast to the false front of his stated motives in I Ki. 12:26-33. We’re told in I Tim. 6 why men teach other than “*wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and . . . doctrine which is according to godliness*” (vs. 3-4). It’s because they are “*proud, knowing nothing . . . of corrupt minds, and destitute of*



**16:19** *For your obedience is come abroad unto all men. I am glad therefore on your behalf: but yet I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil.*

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*the truth". His counsel there is as here, "from such withdraw thyself".*

So what is our best response to deceivers? "Avoid them"! Turn and walk away from them, and have nothing more to do with them. Don't waste your time in private discussion or public debate with them. Our approach in such cases is only to sternly admonish. And after one or two efforts to admonish such heretics, they are to be rejected (Titus 3:10-11).

Vs. 19 – The Lord wants His children to have the skill of an expert in relation to good, and to be innocent, unskilled, guileless with regard to evil. The common counsel that God's children need experience in evil in order to be able to effectively cope with life or to be a better witness didn't come from God's mouth. Never was there a more useful witness for God than Jesus Christ. Yet Jesus was completely without the personal experience of evil. Wisdom's way is to shun both evil and error, and to

**16:20** *And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.*

---

teach our children from early to do the same. Don't be foolish enough to even *dabble* with such false teachers or teachings as Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, followers of Armstrong or Scientology, the mysticism of Transcendental Meditation or Yoga or other eastern tripe, Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism or any of it's slants, Christian Science, 7<sup>th</sup> Day Adventism, the Masonic Lodge or any secret society, occult practices, or superstitious drivel. And keep a careful eye to churches drifting into any shade of such beliefs or practices, or dipping into the filth of the world's defiled methods or music. Note with care your initial discomfort with much of the worship approach of modern charismaticism. Beware the trend in every form of false religion to become servants of *self* more than servants of the *Saviour*.

Vs. 20 – The whole stinking, poisonous stream of false teachers, with their foul fountainhead of perverted persuasions, will soon come to God's appointed end. Paul alludes here to that first promise of Satan's ruin in Gen. 3:15.

**16:21** *Timotheus my workfellow, and Lucius, and Jason, and Sosipater, my kinsmen, salute you.*

**16:22** *I Tertius, who wrote this epistle, salute you in the Lord.*

**16:23** *Gaius mine host, and of the whole church, saluteth you. Erastus the chamberlain of the city saluteth you, and Quartus a brother.*

**16:24** *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.*

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### **16:21-24** – Salutations from Corinth.

Paul now sends greetings *from* those with him.

Vs. 21 – Timothy was mentioned in almost all of Paul's epistles (except Galatians, Ephesians, and Titus). He was a faithful man, ever at Paul's side or carrying on his work from the day he was first invited to join the missionary team (Acts 16:1-3).

Vs. 22 – Tertius was Paul's secretary or amanuensis who actually put pen to paper as the apostle gave the words to write. It seems Paul often made use of a secretary in writing his epistles, some suppose because of eye trouble. He would then commonly take up the pen and scribble a few words at the end as something of a signature. Compare II Thess. 2:17-18; I Cor. 16:21-24; Col. 4:18; Gal. 6:11ff. It may be that Tertius wrote as far as vs. 23 or 24,

**16:25** *Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began,*

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and then Paul took the pen and finished with the closing doxology of praise in his own hand.

**16:25-27** – *“To God only wise be glory”.*

Paul’s earnest doxology is similar in some of its expression to Jude’s (vs. 24-25), and conveys something of a summary of his message in the book.

Vs. 25 – In spite of those opposing voices of Jews and false teachers, God is quite able to establish His own in the truth. And the means He is pleased to use is Paul’s *“gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ”*. Here is Paul’s theme throughout. Here is our only hope of salvation. And here is Paul’s particular gift from the Lord, to reveal *“the mystery”* of salvation by faith *“made known to all nations”*.

This N.T. use of the word *“mystery”* refers to things held unrevealed by the Lord until He saw fit to make them known, purposes of God held in reserve

**16:26** *But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith:*

**16:27** *To God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen.*

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until Israel was given fullest opportunity to play out her hand concerning her Messiah. Only then did God reveal His heart through the Apostle Paul, to draw out of all nations, both Jews and Gentiles, a people of His own by faith, forming them into the one body of the church through the indwelling Spirit. Compare Eph. 2 & 3.

Vs. 26 – The O.T. prophets gave only a guarded glimmer of the details of our current gospel dispensation (Gen. 12:3; Jer. 31:31-34). But now *“the commandment of the everlasting God”* is that the mystery of the gospel be secret to the world *no longer*, proclaimed in fact to *“every creature”*.

Again *“the obedience of faith”* (1:5; 10:16). Our proper response to God is a combination of both obedience and faith, both bowing in repentance and believing for redemption. Compare 15:18 and the marginal note in 15:31.

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## On the Side

Did you notice;

- That there is no mention of pastors at either the church (churches?) at Rome or that at Corinth in this exchange of greetings?
- That there is no indication of *any* church hierarchy at Rome in Paul's day?
- That Peter's name is not mentioned as even being present at Rome, let alone anything like residing as the first Pope there?

With care we must read what is *not* here as well.

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And so we must bring our time in this great book to a close. Oh may the Lord take our understanding of His eternal truths and apply it to our living in wisdom, for our blessing, for His glory, for the good of others, and for the grounding of His church on earth.

“To God be the glory, great things He hath done!”

