

STUDIES IN PAUL'S LETTER TO THE ROMANS

by
STEVE WILLIAMS, M.Th., Ph.D.

WORLD LITERATURE PUBLICATIONS

Box 3815
New Delhi 110049

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THE PUBLISHER'S STATEMENT

As on several previous occasions, our brother and friend, Steve Williams, has provided us with another excellent book for the work here in India. This one is: **STUDIES IN PAUL'S LETTER TO THE ROMANS**. I think you will find it readable, informing, and helpful in your own personal study of the scriptures. It is designed just for that and likewise is recommended for class use.

The book of Romans is considered to be difficult by many, and yet Bro. Williams has been able to get it down to the basics to enable readers in general to understand the great themes that run through it.

I might tell you that Bro. Williams now serves as a teacher in International Bible College in Florence, AL, U.S.A. He hopes to visit India in the near future to help some with the Lord's work in this country. I am sure that he will find a warm welcome.

J.C.Choate
Church of Christ
New Delhi 110049
March 25, 1991

INTRODUCTION

Why should there be another book on Paul's letter to the Romans? There are many excellent commentaries on Romans already available. The study of Romans which follows is unique in some ways, however. It is aimed at the general reader rather than the technical scholar, but it is based upon careful research and modern scholarly opinion. It is hoped that this volume will be useful for Sunday school teachers and the busy preacher. Also, most books on Romans have a bias towards Calvinism. This volume offers alternative interpretations on many controversial passages.

Sources for further study are suggested by way of the bibliography. Notes are given in abbreviated form by the author's last name and the page number in parentheses within the text. The letter to the Romans has difficult sections which are avoided by the average Bible student, but a thorough study of the whole book is rewarding. The more difficult sections of Romans have been given more extended comments than the easier sections. Hugo McCord's new translation is used in the comments in this volume, but this study of Romans may be coordinated with a reading of any version of the Bible. The reader is encouraged to study Romans a section at a time, reading the text over several times to become thoroughly acquainted with Paul's flow of thought.

A special thank you goes to Geneva Parkinson and Deborah Hutton Weir for their help in preparing the manuscript. Also a thank you goes to the Wednesday evening adult class at Cactus Drive Church of Christ in Levelland, Texas, for their encouragement while the author taught Romans during the writing of this book.

-- Steve Williams

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PAUL'S GREAT EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS

Romans 1:1-17

The letter of the apostle Paul to the church in Rome is the topic for this series of lessons. The letter or book of Romans was written by the apostle Paul between A.D. 55 and 59, most likely in A.D. 57. No one knows how the church was established in Rome, although it is certain that neither Peter nor Paul founded it. It is possible that converts from Rome on the first day of Pentecost, mentioned in Acts 2:10, went home to start the church there. While Peter may have visited Rome and while Paul most certainly did, claims to apostolic succession by the Roman Catholic Church have no basis in fact. Now it is even admitted by many Roman Catholic scholars that Peter did not found the church in Rome or have a long, early ministry there. The congregation in Rome was most likely composed of a mixture of Jewish Christians (Rom. 4:1) and Gentile Christians (Rom. 1:5-6, 12-14; 11:13, 28-31, 15:16), the latter probably being the dominant group.

What was Paul's purpose in writing a letter to the Romans? Romans has been called "the clearest gospel of all." Many have assumed that Romans is Paul's attempt to state in summary fashion his view of Christian doctrine, Paul's last will and testament, so to speak. This view is based upon one significant difference between Romans and other letters of Paul. When Paul wrote to other churches, he was writing about specific situations of which he was familiar. He often wrote in response to specific problems that needed answers. When Paul wrote to Rome, he was writing to a place he had never visited (Rom. 1:11-15). It is frequently argued that Paul's lack of knowledge of the specific situation in the church

in Rome meant that he wrote a general summation of his thought. Romans might be viewed as Paul's letter of introduction to the Christians in Rome by means of summarizing his teaching.

While this theory is attractive, it does not do justice to the letter to the Romans. It is true that Paul's letter to the Romans does deal with specific problems less than his other epistles. Paul had not been to Rome, but he knew about the church in Rome and some of the problems they faced. The last chapter of Romans is evidence that Paul had much contact with Christians in Rome. Some sections of the book of Romans are evidence that Paul was dealing with problems or questions the church in Rome faced (e.g. chapters 9-11, 13-15). There are many important topics in Christian thought which Romans does not address, so Romans is not a complete summary of the gospel according to Paul. We can conclude that Romans is not Paul's systematic theology of the Christian faith.

Nevertheless, in the letter to the Romans the scheme of redemption is so marvelously presented and summarized that teachers of Romans are fond of saying, "If you get Romans, God will get you."

Paul's message in Romans is majestic and moving. If you grasp the beautiful outline of God's working in Christ as presented in Romans, you will become zealous with a desire to live and share the story of righteousness in Christ. The book of Romans has probably affected later Christian thought more than any other New Testament book. Fitzmyer says, "The contribution that Romans has made to Western Christian thinking is inestimable" (p. 293). Likewise, C.H. Dodd claims, "For us men of Western Christendom there is probably no other single writing so deeply embedded in our heritage of thought" (p. xiii). Hopefully reverent study of Romans by Christians in India will result in a similar assessment in Asia one day.

Matthew Black calls Romans "the theological epistle par excellence in the New Testament" (p. 18). Even though other letters of Paul were written before the letter to the Romans, Romans has always occupied the first position among Paul's letters in the canon of the scriptures due to its length and importance. Albert Barnes says, "There is no book of the New Testament that more demands a humble, docile, and prayerful disposition in its interpretation than this epistle" (p. xii).

The letter to the Romans is the fountainhead from which many reform movements have sprung. Luther and Calvin owe much to Romans. The Restoration movement of America owes a great deal to Romans. Many an individual has turned away from sin toward righteousness due to the powerful message Romans outlines. Romans has been able to "accomplish...obedience" from millions through the centuries (Rom. 15:18). William Tyndale, a man who played an important role in getting the Bible in English into the hands of the common man, said this of Romans: "No man verily can read it too oft or study it too well: for the more it is studied the easier it is, the more it is chewed the pleasanter it is, and the more groundly it is searched the preciouser things are found in it, so great teasure of spiritual things lieth hid therien."

Paul began his letter to the Romans by introducing himself as a servant of Jesus Christ and an apostle (Rom. 1:1). Paul told the saints in Rome that he hoped to see them soon in order to encourage them and preach to them (Rom. 1:11-15). For Paul's preaching the gospel was matter of necessity. He felt a compulsion to tell others about Jesus. He said he was "a debtor" to the world, owing them the privilege to hear the gospel (Rom. 1:14). Enslaved to Jesus Christ out of appreciation for saving him from sin, Paul could not refrain from preaching Jesus as God's Son (Rom. 1:1-4). It was in his blood. Paul felt obliged to tell the whole world about Jesus Christ (Rom. 1:14), including the great city of Rome

(Rom. 1:15). As Hunter put it, "A harvest of souls in Rome, the hub of the great heathen world, was an understandable ambition for the Apostle to the Gentiles" (p. 27). Paul was not like a new military chaplain who once faced a group of soldiers at a worship service. He shyly asked them if they wanted to hear some jokes or a sermon. One of the soldiers responded, "If you have come 3,000 miles and do not know what to tell a bunch of soldiers who may die within three days, I guess you had better tell jokes."

Paul had no difficulty in knowing what he would tell the saints in Rome. He would preach to them the gospel, "God's saving power," of which Paul was "not ashamed" (Rom. 1:16). There are many messages which might be proclaimed in these studies, but the most important message is "the gospel" of which Paul speaks in his letter to the Romans. He introduces his theme with these words:

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is God's saving power to everyone who believes, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. In it the righteousness of God is being disclosed by faith unto faith as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith" (Rom. 1:16-17).

The gospel reveals the righteousness of God, that is, the activity of God by which he saves his people from their sin. Rather than the futility of trying to be right before God through the law of Moses, Paul declares that eternal life comes by faith. Those who are righteous due to their faith will live. This is not merely mental assent to religious truths. Faith for Paul is living and active in obedience. He speaks of "the obedience of faith" (Rom. 1:5). Based upon Habakkuk 2:4 which Paul is quoting here, he is also likely saying that the righteous will live by faith, that is, they will endure by being faithful to God.

In A.D. 386 a man named Augustine, a native of North Africa, was sitting in the garden of a friend in Milan, Italy. He was weeping and struggling within his soul between a slavery

to sin and a desire to give himself to righteousness. Nearby some children were playing and singing the words, "Tolle, lege! tolle, lege!" These words, probably part of some childhood game, meant, "Take up and read! Take up and read!" Augustine picked up a scroll lying by his side and began to read. By chance he read from Romans 13:13-14, words which condemned his sin and demanded spiritual living rather than fleshly living. From that moment forward Augustine was a changed man, changed by the power of God's inspired word in Paul's letter to the Romans. Our message to you in this series of studies in Romans is to take up the letter of Paul to the Romans and read. Read Romans from beginning to end, and your life will be changed for the better. F.F. Bruce, an evangelical scholar, declared, "There is no telling what may happen when people begin to study the Epistle to the Romans" (p. 60).

THE GENTILES UNDER GOD'S WRATH

Romans 1:18-32

After the introduction to the letter to the Romans, Paul begins a discussion of the spiritual condition of the Gentile world. His evaluation of the Gentiles' state is that they are under "God's wrath" (Rom. 1:18), that is, they are lost in sin. The wrath of God does not mean that God gets angry like human beings do and he vents his passions on us. Rather, when we live in sin, we separate ourselves from him and bring judgment upon ourselves (see Dodd, pp. 20-24).

The Gentiles under the wrath of God can not claim ignorance as a justification for their "godlessness and wrongdoing... because that which can be known about God is plain among them, for God has made it plain to them" (Rom. 1:18-19). We often hear people say, "Ignorance is no excuse." On the other hand, we usually judge people less harshly if they did wrong out of ignorance.

The Gentiles could not even use the excuse of ignorance. Even though they did not have the law of Moses, the Gentiles knew there was a God and that he was powerful (Rom. 1:20). Paul says the existence and power of God are evident from creation. One does not have to read the Bible to know there is a God, and that he created the world. Logic, common sense, and an inner awareness in man tell us that. This world could not have happened by chance. This world exhibits design which implies a designer, namely, God (Heb. 3:4). This world exhibits order, which implies one who gave it order, namely, God. This world is an effect which implies some sort of cause, namely, God. Nature itself tells us there is an almighty creator God (Psa. 8:19; 1-6; Isa. 40:21-26). There is a limit to what man can know of God through nature and reason alone, but

one can know that there is a God, an "eternal power and divine nature" (Rom. 1:20).

As Hendriksen put it in his commentary on Romans: "Even without the benefit of such products of human invention as microscope and telescope, they were able to reflect on the vastness of the universe, the fixed order of the heavenly bodies in their courses, the arrangement of the leaves around a stem, the cycle of the divinely created water-works (evaporation, cloud formation, distillation, pool formation), the mystery of growth from seed to plant, ...the thrill of the sunrise from faint rosy flush to majestic orb, the skill of birds in building their 'homes' without ever having taken lessons in home building, the generous manner in which food is supplied for all creatures, the adaptation of living creatures to their environment... The evidence was overwhelming" (p. 71).

In spite of the majesty of God that is evident in creation, the Gentile world "neither honoured him as God, nor gave thanks to him" (Rom. 1:21). Instead of acting wisely, they acted foolishly by worshipping and serving "the creation rather than the Creator" (Rom. 1:25). Proper worship for God was exchanged for idols and images of "man, birds, four-footed animals, and reptiles" (Rom. 1:23). As the Old Testament prophets did before him, Paul condemns idol worship very sternly (Ex. 20:4-5; Deut. 4:15-19; Psa. 106:20; Jer. 2:11). But idol worship was not the only sin of the Gentiles.

The Gentiles were also guilty of lust in their hearts and immorality (Rom. 1:24). Their sin was that of "lustful and shameful passions" (Rom. 1:26). Bad religion and bad morals go together. You can not have good religion and bad morals. Similarly, false religion always leads to immorality. Paul enumerates many specific sins that illustrate the immorality of which the Gentiles were guilty, but he especially condemns

the sin of homosexuality as unnatural and perverted. "Their women exchanged the natural use for unnatural intercourse, and likewise also the men abandoned natural intercourse with women, and were inflamed in their lustful passion for one another, men with men doing that which is unnatural, and receiving in themselves the inescapable punishment of their perversion" (Rom. 1:26-27).

Homosexuality, whether practiced by males or females, is a horrible evil (Gen. 19:1-11; Lev. 18:22; 20:13; 1 Cor. 6:9-10; 1 Tim 1:10; 2Pet. 2:6; Jude 7). Homosexuality is unnatural. One only has to know basic human anatomy to understand why. Homosexuality is the cause of many other kinds of evil. Not only do homosexuals stand under the wrath of God for their sin, they suffer from "a harvest of bitterness.... Some of the fruits are: a guilty conscience, sleeplessness, emotional stress, depression. Moreover, such mental discord does not leave the body untouched" (Hendriksen, p. 79). Homosexuals should repent of their sin and seek after God.

Paul enumerates many other sins of which the Gentile world was guilty. They were guilty of "all wrongdoing, wickedness, greed, and malice" (Rom. 1:29). These are general words that describe the craving after evil commonly known in the world. They were guilty of "envy, murder, strife, deceit, and meanness" (Rom. 1:29). Envy or jealousy at another person's good fortune sometimes leads to murder. Even if one is not guilty of murder, one might sin through strife, that is, a quarrelsome, contentious disposition. Deceit refers to dishonesty and underhanded ways of achieving one's goals. Meanness refers to a desire to hurt and harm other people or to assume the worst about others.

The Gentiles were also "gossipers" and "slanderers" (Rom. 1:29). Gossipers are those who publicly tell bad news or information about other people. The information may be true, or it may be false, but gossipers love to tell something bad.

Slanderers are those who secretly do what gossipers do more openly. Slanderers are especially concerned with hurting another person's reputation. They were also "haters of God, obnoxious, arrogant, and boasters" (Rom. 1:20). The source of their sin was a lack of respect and reverence for God. They hated the true God. They were obnoxious. They treated other people with contempt, because they were arrogant and boastful, thinking only they themselves amounted to anything.

The Gentiles were "planners of evil things" (Rom. 1:30). They delighted in thinking of new or novel ways to commit sin. They were "disobedient to parents" (Rom. 1:30). Respect for parents, elders, or those in authority was not their desire. They were also "senseless, disloyal, inhuman, and unmerciful" (Rom. 1:31). "Senseless" does not primarily mean deficient in mental ability, but rather lacking in spiritual wisdom due to their sinful attitude. They were disloyal, that is, they could not be trusted to keep their promises. They were inhuman or loveless. They did not have the normal human compassion one should have, whether toward the elderly, children, the sick, the poor, or the weak. Every person deserves respect as a creature of God, created in his image, and loved by him. The Gentile sinners were also unmerciful. They showed no pity on others. They felt no compassion. Human life was very cheap in their eyes.

Paul concludes his detailing of Gentile sin in these words: "They, knowing the judgment of God that they who practice such things deserve death, not only do them, but even approve of those who practice them" (Rom. 1:32). Not only were they guilty of committing sin, but also they encouraged others to do the same and drag them down with them into the mire and ruin of sin: "Iniquity is most aggravated when it meets with no inhibition from the disapproval of others" (Murray, p. 53).

It is interesting how universal Paul's depiction of Gentile sin is . Repeatedly in the past one hundred years, Bible translators have worked with people who speak various languages as a native of various countries. Many times after helping translate Romans 1:18-32, the native speaker asks, "Who wrote this? How did he find out about our people? Why is he saying these things?" Paul's depiction of the Gentile world of the first century is an equally accurate portrait of many cultures today in the twentieth century.

The Gentile world was lost apart from God and Christ due to sin. What Paul said of the Gentile world of the first century is no less true of the world today on every continent and in every country. The gospel must be preached, not merely to better mankind, but because mankind is lost. People are not lost because they have heard the gospel and rejected it. People are lost even before the gospel is preached to them. That is the reason the gospel must be preached in order that the power of God unto salvation may be known (Rom. 1:16).

THE JEWS UNDER GOD'S WRATH

Romans 2:1-3:8

In Romans I Paul has declared that the Gentile world is under the wrath of God due to their sin. They have no excuse. One can imagine how a Jewish listener or reader would have delighted in Paul's scathing denunciation of Gentile sin. In Romans 2 the discussion turns to the Jewish people, and Paul is no less harsh in condemning their sin. Paul does not come right out at the beginning and mention the Jews. He hints at their being the subject of his rebuke in verse 9 and finally declares it clearly in verse 17, but they are the object of his analysis even in verse 1 of Romans 2. Paul's "transition from Gentile to Jew is conducted with much rhetorical skill, somewhat after the manner of Nathan's parable to David" (Sanday and Headlam, p. 54). The reader listens to Paul with agreement and suddenly realizes, as did David, that he is the one being reprimanded.

Paul begins: "Therefore you are without excuse, O man who judges, because you condemn yourself in the way you judge another, since you, the one who is judging, are doing the same things" (Rom. 2:1). Paul is not making this up. There were Jews who thought this way. They thought they would be granted indulgences that others were denied. Since they were children of Abraham, they thought God would not judge them as strictly (Mt. 3:8-9; Jn. 8:33, 39).

One example of this is the Jewish book commonly called the Wisdom of Solomon, one of the apocryphal or non-canonical books written in the first century B.C. The Biblical Solomon is not the real author. In this book the Jewish author manifests an arrogance as if the Jews are almost immune from judgment as God's chosen people. For

example, Wisdom says, "While chastening us, you scourge our enemies ten thousand times more,... and when we are judged we may expect mercy"(Wisdom 12:22). The Jews said, "For even if we sin, we are yours, knowing your dominion" (Wisdom 15:2). The Jews thought that God would judge them like a father, but the Gentiles like a stern king (Wisdom 11:9).

In response to this type of attitude, Paul says the Jews are without excuse. Rather than being exempt from judgment, they condemn themselves by hypocrisy. The very sins they condemn in others, they commit themselves. So Paul asks, "Do you think that you will escape God's judgment, O man who judges those who do such things, while doing the same things yourself?" (Rom. 2:3). Instead of laying up treasures for themselves in heaven, they are storing up for themselves the "wrath" of God (Rom. 2:5).

Although Paul is condemning the attitude of the Jews, this sinful frame of mind is not unknown among the Gentiles, -- or even in the history of the church. Mankind is prone to point to faults in others while ignoring the same faults in self. Among the Gentiles of Paul's day this attitude could be found. There were great philosophers like Seneca whose philosophy was similar to Christianity in many ways; yet, Seneca was not a perfect man. While he preached many great virtues, his own life fell short. Let us not assume that we are immune from this sinful attitude either.

This attitude among the Jews is one of trying to take God's mercy for granted (Rom. 22:4). This attitude implies that God is partial, a respecter of persons. Instead, God's judgment will be impartial "He will repay each one according to his works" (Rom. 2:6), not according to one's birth. Those who live good lives will be saved (Rom. 2:7, 10). Those who practice evil will be lost (Rom. 2:8-9). "For God is not partial" (Rom. 2:11; cf. Acts 10:34; Gal. 2:6).

God's judgment will be fair for both Jews and Gentiles. Whether one has the law (the law of Moses) or does not have the law, God's judgment will be just. The Gentiles might attempt to justify themselves, saying, "The Jews had the law. They knew what was right and wrong. They should be condemned. We however, were ignorant." Of course, Paul has already shown this method of argumentation to be false in chapter 1. The Gentiles are without excuse (Rom. 1:20). Gentiles sin by breaking the law of nature or the law of the heart. Although they do not have the law of Moses, they are sinners and thus under the wrath of God (Rom. 2:12).

Even though the Gentiles did not have the law of Moses, many of them were religious and moral people. Cornelius is one outstanding example. A very important word is used by Paul in describing this. He says, "When the Gentiles--who have not the law --naturally do the things of the law, these having not the law are a law to themselves" (Rom. 2:14). Paul is saying that there are some things we naturally know to be right or wrong, even if we have never seen or read a Bible. This is the law that is written on one's heart (Rom. 2:15). The Gentiles had not even lived up to that law very well (Rom. 1:18-32).

The word "naturally" or "by nature" (*physis*) can refer to something someone has learned by habit (thayer, Greek-English Lexicon, p. 660). Ingrained habit can make something second nature for a person. Behaviour can become automatic or natural. The context clearly shows that this is not Paul's usage here. By the term "naturally" or "by nature," Paul is talking about a capacity with which the Gentiles were born. It was part and parcel of what made them human beings, and Paul is saying that the Gentiles practiced good by nature.

In Ephesians 2:3 we are told by Paul that the Gentiles were "children of wrath" or sinners "by nature ." Is there a

contradiction? Are we born with a capacity to know and do good; yet, are we also born depraved and evil? No! By nature, that is by the capacities with which we are born or the natural order of things, we can know good and practice it (Rom. 2:14). On the other hand, by nature, that is by ingrained habit, we can become sinners (Eph. 2:3). McCord wisely translates Ephesians 2:3 that we "were by custom children of wrath."

Calvinism wrongly teaches that everyone is born a sinful, totally depraved individual. The Bible does not teach hereditary total depravity. C.H. Dodd, one of the greatest scholars England ever produced, realized this in his commentary on Romans. He wrote: "We note this as against the doctrines of 'total depravity,' and the complete impotence of the human will, which have been attributed to Paul" (p. 37; cf. DeWolf, pp. 186-88). Or, as we might add, it is "wrongly" attributed to Paul. By habit or practice we become sinful, but we are born innocent.

We are born with a clean slate and with a capacity or free will to do and to be both good and evil. Paul contradicts the error of Calvinism in Romans 2:14 by saying that by nature or by birth we have a capacity to know and do good. This does not mean that people are good enough on their own to be saved, for everyone also performs evil. But we are not totally depraved from birth. So Paul says the Gentiles and the Jews are both without excuse and lost apart from Jesus Christ.

The Gentiles had the law written in their hearts (Rom. 2:15), but the Jews had the law of Moses. The Jews took pride in this (Rom. 2:17). They considered themselves wise enough to instruct others in the truth, because they had the law of Moses (Rom. 2:19-20). But Paul asks the Jews, "You, therefore, who teaches another, do you not teach yourself?" (Rom. 2:21) The Jews needed to practice what they preached. They taught against sins like stealing, adultery, and robbery; yet, they were guilty of the same sins (Rom. 2:21-23).

We remember that Jesus condemned the scribes and Pharisees for not practicing what they preached (Mt. 23:2-3). Their failure to live up to their own standards resulted in the name of God being impugned by non-Jews. Paul declared, "God's name is slandered among the Gentiles because of you" (Rom. 2:24).

Paul has destroyed two strongholds of Jewish self-righteousness and confidence, namely, dependance upon racial heritage and possession of the law of Moses. Neither of these guarantee salvation or exempt one from the requirements of obedience to God (Rom. 2:10). Paul concludes his condemnation of the Jews by attacking their stronghold of circumcision. Was not the Jew in an advantageous position over the Gentile due to circumcision? Did not circumcision mark the Jew as a chosen one of God? Paul agreed that circumcision was profitable (Rom. 2:25), but only within certain limitations. Circumcision was not just a privilege, but an obligation or a duty.

To be circumcised meant one was committed to keeping the law of Moses (Rom. 2:25; Gal. 5:3). How many Jews did this perfectly? None, of course. This meant that the Gentile who was a good moral person was as well off or better off than a Jew who broke the law (Rom. 2:26-27; cf. Mt. 12:41-42). Paul says that what really matters is not circumcision or uncircumcision, but whether or not one is faithful and obedient unto God (Rom. 2:28-29; cf. Gal. 5:6; 6:15; 1 Cor. 7:19).

Paul has been quite harsh on the Jewish people. Every bastion of their security has been destroyed by his arguments. One might well ask, "What is the Jews' advantage?" (Rom. 3:1). Paul does not deny benefits of being Jewish. Possessing the law of Moses was beneficial (Rom. 3:2). Men may fail to live up to God's law, but God is always faithful (Rom. 3:3). Sinful man can not expect automatic forgiveness from God.

(Rom. 3:8; 6:1-2), but God is faithful and will keep his promises of forgiveness. Those promises are conditional upon man's faithfulness so, although God is faithful, his faithfulness includes being faithful in judging wrongdoers (Rom. 3:4-6). Man can not expect to sin so that grace will abound.

With this Paul ends his condemnation of the Jews. Paul has not concluded that the Jews are saved and the Gentiles are lost. His point is that both Jew and Gentile are lost in sin and are under the wrath of God without Jesus Christ. All are lost and in sin (Rom. 3:10,23). Friend, that includes you and me. We are all sinners who need Jesus Christ as our Saviour.

GOD'S REMEDY FOR UNIVERSAL SIN

Romans 3:9-31

In his letter to the Romans Paul pronounces the Gentiles guilty of sin and under the wrath of God (Rom. 1:18-32). Paul then declares the guilt of the Jews (Rom. 2:1-3:8). Although the Jews had some advantages like their possession of the law of Moses, in the final analysis, were the Jews any better off than the Gentiles? Or were they worse off than the Gentiles? Paul says they were neither. Everyone is under the wrath of God, Jew and Gentile; "We have previously brought the charge that all are under sin, both Jews and Greeks" (Rom. 3:9).

To prove the universality of sin, Paul quotes a collection of Old Testament texts taken mostly from the book of Psalms. he begins, "No one is righteous, not even one. All of them have turned away. All of them together have become worthless. No one is kind, not even one... They have not known the path of peace. Reverence for God is not before their eyes" (Rom. 3:10-12,17). Various parts of the body are mentioned in this collection of quotations such as the throat, the tongue, the lips, the mouth, the feet, and the eyes (Rom. 3:13-17). In other words the whole man is sinful in every way before God. Everything man does is tainted by the bondage of sin. Also the whole Jewish nation was lost in sin. While there were "good" Jewish people and while evil men do some good deeds, apart from Christ the Jews were lost. Likewise, the whole world is in sin and lost without Christ.

Paul uses repetition to stress the universality of sin and man's woeful condition apart from Christ. He is not talking about only a few people but "every mouth," "all the world," and all "flesh" (Rom. 3:19-20). The law of Moses will not

save these people. The law points out their sin and raises man's awareness to sin (Rom. 3:20), but the law is unable to save mankind. This is true for everyone, Jew and Gentile; "There is no distinction: all have sinned and come short of God's splendor" (Rom. 3:22-23). No human can hope to stand right before God based upon his own goodness. We stand before God as lost sinners, morally and spiritually bankrupt and destitute. By crushing every source of human confidence for self-righteousness and declaring all of mankind as being under sin, Paul has brought his reader to the point where one might well ask, "Then who can be saved and how?"

The ancient Roman Poet Horace laid down guidelines for writers of his day. He told them not to bring a god into the story line too quickly to solve a problem "unless the problem is one that deserves a god to solve it" (*Ars Poetica* 191; Bruce, p. 101). The problem of man's sin was one that man could not solve on his own. The solution required divine assistance, and such a solution Paul now proclaims. He says, "God's righteousness has been revealed," but this was done "apart from the law" (Rom. 3:21). A new era has begun where salvation is independent of the law of Moses. This new era will supersede the law (Rom. 10:4). This new reign of God's righteousness comes "through faith in Jesus Christ" (Rom. 3:22).

Rather than salvation being vainly attempted through a system of law, it will be by the grace of God. Paul says we "are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 3:24). Through Christ's death on the cross and the shedding of his blood, he became the means of justification for mankind (Rom. 3:25-26). Whether Jew or Gentile, all are under the power of sin and lost. But Christ is the answer to sin.

The blood of Jesus is even the payment for the sins of saints during the Old Testament era. Paul refers to these as

"past sins" which God overlooked (Rom. 3:25). The Greek term for "overlooked" or "passed over" (*pareisin*) means to neglect, to let go unpunished. In one place it refers to paralysis, that is, an absence of activity. The thought is not that God did not care about sin and ignored sin due to apathy. God was not being lenient and indulgent. God was not contradicting his holy nature which can not bear the presence of sin. Rather God temporarily suspended the punishment of the sins of the Old Testament saints, since in his foreknowledge he knew of the future death of Christ which would eternally pay for those sins.

The death of Christ was "a demonstration of his [God's] righteousness" (Rom. 3:25), that is, the cross was the ultimate proof that God has always been just, fair, and holy in dealing with sin. The animal sacrifices of the Old Testament provided only temporary payment for the sins of the Jews. They did not really atone for sin (Heb. 10:4). The sins of Old Testament saints were ultimately forgiven, because they were paid for by the future death of Christ; thus, God did not allow sin to go unpunished. The death of Christ is retrospective and prospective in its efficacy, affecting the whole world in all ages (1 Jn. 2:3; Heb. 9:15; 11:40; 12:23).

Because salvation is found only in Jesus Christ through his sacrifice on Calvary, man has no room to boast (Rom. 3:27; Eph. 2:8-9; Williams. pp. 1-33). We are unable to earn our salvation by meritorious deeds. Rather than a law of legalism where man achieves perfection on his own by keeping rules, salvation is by the "law of faith" (Rom. 3:27). We must trust in God and in the cleansing blood of Christ for righteousness. Salvation is by faith (Rom. 3:28). At this point in his translation of the New Testament in German, Martin Luther added the word "alone ." He was criticized by the Catholics of his day for this and one modern day Calvinist admits, "Luther should not have inserted this word"

(Hendriksen, p. 136). Salvation by faith alone gives too many people the impression that good deeds and obedience are not necessary, but they are. Objecting to faith "alone" is not always an attempt to smuggle in salvation by law, as Nygren charges (p. 165). Rather it is an effort to insure that faith is properly defined as an active faith (Jas. 2:14-26).

The thought of this section of Paul's letter to the Romans is summarized quite well in the well known hymn by Toplady, "Rock of Ages:"

Not the labour of my hands,
Can fulfill the law's demands;
Could my zeal no respite know,
Could my tears forever flow,
All for sin could not atone,
Thou must save and Thou alone.

Nothing in my hand I bring:
Simply to Thy cross I cling;
Naked, come to Thee for dress;
Helpless, look to Thee for grace;
Vile, I to the fountain fly:
Wash me, Saviour, or I die.

If salvation depended upon the law of Moses, then it would be available only to the Jews. So Paul asks, "Is he the God only of the Jews, and not of Gentiles also?" (Rom. 3:29).

Since salvation depends upon faith, it is available to all of mankind. Yes, God is a God "of the Gentiles also" (Rom. 3:29). The circumcised will be saved by faith and the uncircumcised will be saved by faith (Rom. 3:30). In contrast to this, about A.D. 150 one of the Jewish rabbis had written, "God said to the Israelites, "I am God over all who come into the world, but I have linked my name only with you. I am not called the God of the nations of the world, but the God of Israel""(Exodus

Rabbah 29; cited by Fitzmyer, p. 302). With this assessment Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, obviously disagrees. Christ, and thus God, is for the whole world, not for the Jews only.

Does the principle of salvation by faith apart from works of the law of Moses "nullify the law?" (Rom. 3:31). From one standpoint, yes. Christ is the end of the law (Rom. 10:4; Col. 2:14; Eph. 2:15). In another sense the gospel makes "the law to stand" (Rom. 3:31). In that the gospel brought out the true purpose of the law and was the law's ultimate goal, the gospel fulfills the law (Mt. 5:17). Paul illustrates this in chapter 4 with the example of Abraham which will be our next topic.

AN EXAMPLE OF SALVATION BY FAITH

Romans 4:1-25

In the first three chapters of Romans Paul has demonstrated that the Gentiles must seek salvation by faith. It is the same for the Jews. Salvation for the Jew is "by faith without the works of the law" (Rom. 3:28). This line of argument might seem to nullify the law of Moses. It seems to contradict what God did through Moses during the Old Covenant. Paul closes chapter 3 with the surprising declaration that salvation by faith does not nullify the law of Moses. Instead, Paul's argument makes "the law to stand" (Rom. 3:31). Rather than destroying or conflicting with the law of Moses, Paul's teaching is actually in perfect harmony with it. Chapter 4 of Romans is Paul's proof of this unity.

Paul declares that even in the Old Testament, righteousness came from God. It was not based upon human merit. This was also true during the Patriarchal age. The example Paul uses to make his case is Abraham; "What shall we say that Abraham our forefather has found according to the flesh?" (Rom. 4:1). If Paul's doctrine is upheld by the Old Testament account of Abraham's salvation, there is little a candid Jewish person can say in response, because Abraham was the father of the Jewish nation and their great example. Paul's case is proven by his use of an Old Testament quotation which says, "Abraham believed God and it was accounted to him for righteousness" (Rom. 4:3; quoting Gen. 15:6). If Abraham had earned his salvation by means of works, he could boast of his accomplishments. Since he is unable to do this, his righteousness must have come by a means other than works, that is, by faith (Rom. 4:2).

Abraham's salvation was not something he earned as we

earn wages (Rom. 4:4). We are unable to put God in debt to us. Instead, salvation comes by grace. It is by the free accounting or reckoning of God (Rom. 4:6). Paul adduces further evidence of this from the writings of David: "Happy are they whose lawless deeds have been forgiven, and whose sins have been covered. Happy is the man whose sin the Lord will not take into account" (Rom. 4:7-8; quoting Psa. 32:1-2). Paul has appealed to the highest authorities for a Jew to prove justification by faith. "What Paul does here is to wrest Abraham from the champions of 'law righteousness' and hold him up as a shining example of the man 'who through faith is righteous' " (Hunter , p. 50).

Paul's argument is unanswerable, but he realizes some Jewish readers may remain unconvinced. They might grant that Abraham was saved by faith, but they would define faith strictly in legalistic terms of being circumcised. They would remind Paul that Abraham was circucumcised. In fact, some of the Jewish rabbis had developed a teaching that solved this dilemma for them. They claimed that Abraham "kept the law of the Most High" (Sirach 44:20; an apocryphal book wrongly accepted into the canon by Roman Catholicism). Since Abraham lived before Moses, how could Abraham have kept the law? The law of Moses came after Abraham's death, so Abraham was not under the law.

The solution for Jewish legalists was that Abraham kept the law by anticipation. Another non-canonical book says, "At that time [the time of the patriarchs] the unwritten law was named among them, and the works of the commandment were then fulfilled" (Apocalypse of Baruch 62:2). Although the law of Moses had not been written yet, these Jews contended that Abraham already knew it and obeyed it perfectly! Some Jews went so far as to claim that Abraham kept the law of Moses perfectly and never sinned. In particular, Abraham had been circumcised. In this manner the Jewish

legalists hoped to safeguard circumcision and the law of Moses as being essential for salvation.

Paul had an unanswerable argument for this futile speculation about Abraham and circumcision. In the Old Testament the blessing and the promise of God to Abraham are recorded in Genesis 15. Abraham's circumcision is recorded in Genesis 17. While it is true that Abraham was circumcised and "established the covenant in his flesh" (Sirach 44:20), this occurred after God had declared Abraham righteous on the basis of his faith (Rom. 4:11). Circumcision could be a seal of the promise, but not the means or the conditions of it. Circumcision might have been a part of Abraham's ongoing walk with God, but he was declared righteous long before he was circumcised.

Therefore, the blessing of God to Abraham's descendants is available for Jews and Gentiles (Rom. 4:9, 11-12). Since the promise does not depend upon circumcision, it is not limited to the Jews. Paul shows that racial heritage and physical circumcision mean absolutely nothing unless one believes in God and obeys his word. On the other hand, if one takes God at his word and trusts in him, he is a descendent of Abraham and an heir of the promise of God to Abraham, even without physical circumcision or the law of Moses (Rom. 4:11-13, 16-17). The law tells us what sin is, but the law is unable to save mankind (Rom. 4:15). Salvation must come from God in whom man has faith.

Next, Paul illustrates how radical and complete Abraham's faith in God really was. God had promised Abraham that he would have many descendants, but as an old man Abraham was still childless. It seemed impossible for him to have a child due to his age and the age of Sarah and her inability to have children in the past. Nevertheless, Abraham continued to hope against hope (Rom. 4:18). His faith was not weak (Rom. 4:19). From the physical point of

view Abraham was as good as dead as far as his ability to beget a child (Rom. 4:19, in this verse the KJV adds an extra "not" after "considered" due to an inferior manuscript reading).

"Abraham did take into consideration every relevant factor, including his great age and the high improbability, by all natural reckoning, that he would ever have a son when his body was now 'as good as dead' ... Yet, having considered all these factors, he concluded that the certainty of the divine promise outweighed every natural improbability" (Bruce, p. 118). In spite of what seemed impossible from a human point of view, Abraham "did not waver in his faith in God's promise, but he became strong in faith, giving praise to God, being fully persuaded that he was able to do what he had promised" (Rom. 4:20-21). Humanly it seemed impossible for Abraham to have a child, but he believed God could accomplish it. And God did! In this way Abraham is a great example of faith.

How does this ancient story of Abraham relate to people in the Christian era? Paul says Abraham's story "was not written for his sake alone . . . but also for our sake" (Rom. 4:23). It has relevance to us today in that we must seek salvation by faith as Abraham did. We must trust in the same God in whom Abraham trusted. Abraham trusted in God who was powerful enough to enable an old man, as good as dead in his child begetting ability, to have a child (Rom. 4:17-22). He trusted in a God who was able to allow a formerly barren woman, now advanced in age, to give birth to a child. Likewise we are to trust in God who was powerful enough to raise Jesus our Lord from the dead (Rom. 4:24). Jesus died for our sins and was raised from the dead for our salvation (Rom. 4:25). By trusting in God who was in Christ redeeming the world unto himself, we find salvation (Rom. 4:25).

THE BLESSINGS OF JUSTIFICATION

Romans 5:1-11

Paul has demonstrated in great detail that salvation comes through faith in Jesus Christ. It cannot be earned or merited; it is a free gift of the grace of God. Based upon this affirmation, Paul continues: "Since we have been accounted righteous by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5:1). Peace means an inner calm and assurance based upon a relationship one has with God due to our faith in Jesus Christ. Man has no peace with himself or with his God as long as he is under the bondage of sin. There is no peace for the wicked (Isa. 57:1-21). Christ, the Prince of Peace (Isa. 9:6), came into this world to bring peace of mind to the individual (Phil. 4:7), peace among mankind (Eph. 2:13-14), and peace between man and God. Mankind was estranged and hostile, separated from God by sin. Now man is reconciled to God by the blood of the cross (Col. 1:20-22).

As Christian we should be examples of this peace of mind, of an unworried, unhurried, calm, tranquil approach to life and its problems. We are God's children, and he is in control of history! why should we have anxiety? If we preach Christ as the Prince of Peace without being examples of peace in our lives, we are being very inconsistent. As one brother put it, "To offer Jesus to the world as the prince of peace while we.. grind out our lives in doubt, frustration and anxiety is worse than stupid. It is a bald-headed man trying to sell hair-restorer. It is a 450 pound, five feet six inch man speaking to people about dieting. It's a man wasting-away before our very eyes from some horrible disease while he professes he has the sure cure... Commit your way to Christ and then enjoy the peace which results. Maybe then the world will take us seriously

when we offer Christ. I met a Christian who was popping as many pills as an addict. She was worried sick about her salvation. I met a saint who wept every day wondering if he was right with God... This is the 'gospel' of 'uncertainty'. The 'gospel' of 'anxiety'. It isn't the gospel of 'peace'" (McGuiggan, pp. 159-60). We need to be examples of the blessings of peace with God.

Because we have peace with God through Christ, we now have "access" through him (Rom. 5:2). The Term "access" can mean "introduction." It was sometimes used for access into the royal chamber of a king. Only privileged people could enter a king's private chamber. We would have no right to enter the heavenly chamber of God on our own. Our access is made possible by Christ who introduces us into the presence of God. This is why we pray in the name of Christ. This is why Christ is the only mediator between God and man (1 Tim. 2:5). The saints, Mary, and human priests are unable to take our prayers to the throne of God. Only Christ is able to perform this noble task. Through Christ we have boldness and confidence of access to God through our faith in him (Eph. 3:12).

The development of the Christian's spiritual life is described splendidly in only a few words by Paul: "We also rejoice in sufferings, knowing that suffering produces patience; and patience, character; and character, hope" (Rom. 5:3). As Christians we rejoice in spite of any sufferings we experience. We know that patience results from suffering, character results from patience, and hope results from character. If we react properly to hardship, it will produce patience and stronger moral fiber in us (Jas. 1:2-4; 1 Pet. 1:6-7). As our character develops, we will gain a stronger hope in the promises of God.

The kind of hope we receive from living the Christian life "does not disappoint" (Rom. 5:5). It is not illusory, vain, or futile. Living the Christian life is rewarding and satisfying. In

the end the promises of the devil will prove false. He is a liar as in the beginning when he deceived Adam and Eve; however, God's promises will be fulfilled. There will be a home in heaven for his faithful servants. When we arrive in heaven, we will not be disappointed. We will be gratified beyond any description that words can provide (1 Cor. 2:9).

Hope does not disappoint, "because God's love has been poured in our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us" (Rom. 5:5). Our hearts have been filled up with the love of God. Does this mean that we are given a love for God or has God's love for us been given to us? Commentaries are pretty unanimous in favor of the latter (e.g., Allen, Barclay, Black, Bruce, Denney, Hendriksen, Hodge, Hunter, Lard, Murray, Nygren, and Sanday and Headlam, all in. loc.; cf. Rom. 5:8; contra Augustine and Barnes; Dodd combines the two views). Our love for God is not as strong as it ought to be. We are all aware of our failings in this respect. Rather, our hope is in the glorious love which God has for us.

What Paul means is that we have been made aware and sensitive to the love of God due to what Christ has done for us and due to the Holy Spirit being given to us at baptism (Gal. 3:2; Acts 2:28; 2 Cor. 1:22). Paul is not saying that a Christian's character is miraculously transformed by the Holy Spirit so that we become loving persons. Christians still struggle with temptation, character flaws, and hatred. But in spite of our weaknesses, and due to our faith in Christ, we experience God's love for us. That is our hope. It is true that we are enabled to love by the love of God (1 Jn. 4:19), but our hope is the glorious realization that God loves us.

In a similar way, we are accounted or declared righteous by God. This is said in the forensic or legal sense, not in the moral sense. We are not made into Good people automatically. The transformation of a Christian into a good person is a slow, agonizing, life-long struggle with temptation

and human frailty. Likewise, in Romans 5:5 the Holy Spirit does not make us loving people automatically as if by magic. The Holy Spirit shows us the love of God. That marvelous love God has for us is our hope. It then takes a life of walking with God to begin in a small way to learn to live out that love in our lives.

Another reason we can know that God loves us is that while "we were still weak, Christ died for the godless at the right time" (Rom. 5:6). At just the right moment when the providence of God working in history had come to fruition, Christ came into the world and died for mankind's sins (Gal. 4:4). The beautiful part of this great story of God's love is that Christ died for the "godless," for "sinners," and for "enemies" of God. Mankind was, and still is, "weak" and unable to save himself. It was essential for God to provide the sacrifice and the means of salvation.

God's love is even more remarkable when contrasted with finite human love. Humans might die for a good or a righteous person, but we would not want to sacrifice our lives for wicked people who are our enemies (Rom. 5:7). God's love is different from our love in that he sent his Son to die for evil and unrighteous people (Rom. 5:8). This is because God's love is not conditioned upon the object of his love, but upon his inner essence and nature. God loves because it is his will and nature to love, not because something worthy in mankind prompts a loving response from him. "As the love of a mother for her child... is not founded on the attractive qualities of that child, but is often strongest when its object is the least worthy, so God loves us when sinners" (Hodge, P. 136). So why would my Saviour come to earth to die on Calvary? It is not because of human worthiness, but because he loved me so.

A Sunday school speaker frequently would ask children, "What kind of children does God love?" "Good children," would always be the reply from confident children

who were certain their answer was correct. "Doesn't God love any children but good children?" the teacher would continue to ask? "No," the children would always answer. Then the students would be startled by the declaration from this teacher, "I think that God loves bad children very much." Some children would express disagreement while others would stare in bewilderment. The teacher would explain that God does not like for children to be bad, but God loves all children. The teacher would ask the children if their mother loved them, if they had ever been bad, and if their mother still loved them even when they were bad. Slowly the children would begin to understand the infinite love of God that loved mankind in spite of sin, rebellion, and disobedience.

In many cultures the idols to which worshippers bow down are creatures with an angry snarl on their face. They appear angry and vicious, almost demonic. If they are a representation of a deity, that deity is not one of love. The God of the Bible, the only real God, is a God of love and compassion. That love and compassion meant that God took the initiative and made deliverance from his wrath toward sin possible through the blood of Christ (Rom. 5:9; 1 Thess. 1:10). Reconciliation is the act of God drawing man to himself through Jesus Christ, his Son (Rom. 5:10). If the innocent one dying on the cross had not been God, that is, divine, we would have cried out, "God, why are you letting this happen?" "Said the boy Bevis (in Richard Jefferies' tale) as he looked at a picture of the Crucifixion, 'If God had been there, he wouldn't have let them do it!'" (Hunter, p. 58). But, that is the glory of the cross. God was there-- on the cross in his Son, and his life and death are the means of salvation. This is why Christians rejoice "through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5:11).

THE ANALOGY BETWEEN ADAM AND CHRIST

Romans 5:12-21

The last half of Romans 5 is one of the most disputed sections of all the Bible. Because of the influence of Augustine and Calvin, a whole system of teaching is usually built around this portion of Scripture. Calvinism, as it is commonly called, is a system of thought that can be summerized in five key points. One easy way to remember them is the acronym TULIP: (1) total depravity, (2) unconditional election, (3) limited atonement, (4) irresistable grace, and (5) perseverance of the saints. This system of thought contends that every person is born totally depraved and incapable of doing works of righteousness. We not only inherit the guilt of Adam's sin, we receive a corrupt human nature. In Adam's fall, we sinned all, as the old proverb says . Supposedly Romans 5:12 teaches this, but this is only one doctrine of a complete system of thought.

Calvinism also treaches unconditional election, that is, that God has chosen certain individuals to be saved. This choosing is his choice without any conditions being fulfilled on the part of those chosen, not even fulfilled in the foreknowledge of God. The limited atonement doctrine teaches that the death of Jesus saves completely, but Jesus only died for the elect. Since only the elect could be saved, and all others are depraved and incapable of doing good, it would have been improper and wasteful for Christ to have died for them. Irresistable grace means that God will send the Holy Spirit upon those whom he has elected for salvation. The Holy Spirit will change them from depraved persons to sanctified saints. This action of the Holy Spirit will be effective;

an individual cannot resist it. Since certain individuals are chosen for salvation and their wills are transformed by the Holy Spirit, Calvinism teaches that they will persevere as saints, or once saved, always saved.

Calvinism is a unified system. All five points stand or fall together. Does Romans 5:12-21 lay the groundwork for these doctrines? No! I believe a careful study of this portion of Scripture is consistent with free will and individual responsibility before God, rather than the bondage of the human will and total depravity due to the sin of Adam. Paul is drawing a contrast between Adam and Christ as type-antitype (Rom. 5:14; 1 Cor. 15:22). Adam brought sin and death into the world. Christ brought grace and life (Rom. 5:15-17). The single man, Adam, through his one act of disobedience brought a poison into the world and the resulting condemnation. The single man, Christ, through his perfect obedience on the cross, has brought a cure for the poison of sin and acquittal for that resulting condemnation (Rom. 5:18).

Adam's sin had far reaching effects. Sin was present in the world even before the law of Moses was given to define sin. Paul knew this was true because death was present between the period of time from Adam to Moses (Rom. 5:13-14). "The sin which was in the world before the law is not the guilt of Adam's fall imputed to the race as fallen in him, but the actual sin which individuals had committed" (Denney, p. 628). Once the law of Moses was given, it had the effect of increasing sin in the sense that the law acted as a magnifying glass to point out the errors of mankind. A knowledge of what was sinful increased. Thankfully, God's grace also increased to an even greater measure to overcome the death which reigned through sin (Rom. 5:20-21). This is Paul's analogy, that "As many were made sinners through the disobedience of one man, so many will be made righteous by the obedience

of one man" (Rom. 5:19).

Does Paul's analogy between Adam and Christ teach hereditary, total depravity? Is every person born guilty of the sin of Adam? Is every person born with a depraved nature because of Adam's sin? If we work through the analogy backwards, we can see that such conclusions are beyond Paul's intentions in contrasting Adam and Christ. If the sin of one man, Adam, automatically condemns all of mankind irrespective of our complicity through personal sin, it follows that the obedience of one man, Jesus Christ, automatically saves all of mankind irrespective of our complicity through personal obedience. To be consistent with Paul's analogy, if Adam's sin directly condemns all of mankind, Christ's obedience directly saves all of mankind. In other words, if universal, hereditary, total depravity is true, universal salvation must also be true.

Calvinism is at least consistent on this point--consistently wrong. Calvinism avoids the implication of universalism by teaching that Jesus Christ did not die for the whole world. His atonement is supposedly limited to only the elect. This contradicts the language of Paul in Romans 5:12-21. The extent of the effect of Christ's obedience is equal in range to the effect of Adam's sin. Adam's sin entered "the world," affecting "all men," or "many" (Rom. 5:12, 15, 18-19). Christ's atonement is not limited in scope when compared to the effect of Adam's sin. Christ's death likewise affects "many" or "all men" (Rom. 5:15,18). Rather than making the atonement limited in comparison to the effect of Adam's sin, Paul implies that it is more effective (Rom. 5:15-16,20). The doctrine of the limited atonement is also inconsistent with other Scriptures (Jn. 1:29; 3:16-17; 4:42; 2 Cor. 5:14, 19; 1 Tim. 2:4,6; 4:10; Tit. 2:11; Heb. 2:9; 2Pet. 3:9; 1 Jn. 2:2; 4:14; See Pinnock [1989], pp. 51-96).

Since the doctrine of the limited atonement is erroneous,

working backwards through Paul's analogy helps explain how Adam's sin influences mankind. Christ's obedience brings righteousness to "many" (Rom. 5:19). We know that everyone will not be saved. Only those who imitate Christ by the "Obedience of faith" will be saved (Rom. 1:5). Similarly "many" are made sinners by the sin of Adam. Everyone is not automatically made a sinner, but only those who imitate Adam and follow him by sinning personally (Rom. 3:10,23). This was the argument of Pelagius in his fifth century conflict with Augustine. He contended that "If the sin of the first Adam automatically implicates all people before they sin on their own volition, then benefits of the last Adam are likewise distributed en masse without anyone having to make a personal commitment to Christ" (Phipps, p. 128). It is the same argument of the modern writer, Denney, who says, "The result in both cases is mediated; in the former by men's actual sins; in the latter, by their faith in Christ" (p. 630). Justification in the absence of faith is alien to Paul's thinking. Likewise, condemnation in the absence of actual, personal sin is foreign to Paul's thought.

Let us now examine the all important verse in this portion of Scripture. In Romans 5:12 Paul begins his discussion by saying, "Because of this, as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, in this manner death passed over to all men, for all sinned" (Rom. 5:12). Adam brought sin into the world. Sin is universal among accountable individuals (Rom. 3:10,23). Physical death is the fate of all of mankind, but Paul is speaking of more than mere physical death, since it is contrasted with acquittal and eternal life (Rom. 5:18,21). Death as a power that reigns is widespread (Rom. 5:14). This is true, not because all inherit a corrupt nature from Adam, but because all of us are personally guilty of sin ourselves. Augustine taught that a depraved nature has been transmitted like a disease through semen, so infants are sinners from birth.

Paul says nothing of the sort in Romans 5:12-21. Because Adam brought sin into the world, it has resulted in all becoming sinners, but not by heredity.

The last phrase of Romans 5:12 says, "For (eph ho) all sinned." Many translations render it "because all men sinned" or "inasmuch as all sinned." Augustine did not know Greek. The Latin translation which he was using at this point was defective. Instead of saying that death spread to all men "because" all men sinned, the Latin said that death spread to all men "in whom (in quo) all sinned." The "whom" was taken by Augustine to mean "Adam." Thus he wrongly taught that in Adam we all sinned. He wrote, "All men were seminally in the loins of Adam when he was condemned" (Unfinished Work Against Julian 5.12). Again he wrote, "By the evil will of that one man all sinned in him, since all were that one man, from whom, therefore, they individually derived original sin" (On Marriage and Concupiscence 2. 15).

Therefore, Augustine's doctrine of hereditary depravity and original sin was based upon an incorrect Latin translation of Paul's letter to the Romans. The "ho" of Romans 5:12 is neuter, not masculine, and the phrase "eph ho" is a conjunction equal to "because." Even if "ho" were masculine, "man" (anthropos) is too distant in verse 12 to be the antecedent, besides other problems in the Greek with this attempted translation (see Sanday and Headlam, p. 133; cf. Black, pp. 86-89; and Fitzmyer, p. 307). Many Calvinist scholars admit that "in whom" is a wrong translation for Romans 5:12, but they inconsistently claim it is a "true interpretation" or "doctrinally sound" (e.g. Bruce, p. 130; Hendriksen, p. 178).

Even if one did admit a representative sense whereby Adam represented us when fell, that does not justify the doctrine of hereditary, total depravity. Since the correct translation is "because," or some similar wording, Paul's teaching is consistent with the prophetic tradition of individual

responsibility. As one writer put it, "In believing that 'the children's teeth are set on edge' by those who ate the forbidden fruit, Augustine shows that he never accepted the individual responsibility message of some Israelite prophets (Ezek. 18:2; Jer. 31:29)" (Phipps, p. 133).

Sin had its origin with Adam as the father of the human race. Adam opened the door and let sin into this world. Adam unleashed a force that has been destructive among all of mankind ever since the Garden of Eden. Christ has entered humanity and unleashed a power that can reverse the effects of sin. That is Paul's argument in Romans 5:12-21. To read into it the doctrine of hereditary depravity is incorrect. For this reason Pelagius, in his conflict with Augustine, was right when he insisted that infants did not need to be baptized. Augustine was in error when he taught that infant baptism was "medicine" to save infants from inherited "original sin" (Phipps, p. 126). Well did one scholar write, "Nothing has been more pernicious in theology than the determination to define sin in such a way that in all its damning import the definition should be applicable to 'infants'; it is to this we owe the moral atrocities that have disfigured most creeds, and in great part the idea of [infant] baptismal regeneration, which is an irrational unethical miracle, invented by men to get over a puzzle of their own making" (Denney, pp. 627-28).

Pelagius correctly described infants in this way: "Everything good and everything evil, in respect of which we are either worthy of praise or of blame, is done by us, not born with us. We are not born in our full development, but with a capacity for good and evil; we are procreated also without virtue or vice and before the activity of our own personal will there is nothing in man but what God has formed in him" (cited by Augustine, *On Original sin* 14). Augustine worked long and hard in a vicious attempt to discredit Pelagius. After three attempts he succeeded in having Pelagius declared a

heretic. Pelagius was not correct on everything, but he was more apostolic than Augustine. Augustine is held in high esteem to this day, but his system of teaching, now incorporated in Calvinism, is bizarre and a perversion of the teachings of Paul.

SERVING CHRIST RATHER THAN SIN

Romans 6:1-23

Throughout the last three chapters of Romans, Paul has placed emphasis upon what God has done in Christ to bring about reconciliation and justification for mankind. Even though man has sinned grievously against God, God's love flows abundantly for salvation. In Romans 6 Paul makes sure a wrong impression is not left. He makes sure that no one misunderstands salvation by grace through faith to mean that man is completely passive in the salvation process. Rather than being passive, man must be active in faithful obedience. Paul has shown how we are made righteous by faith. Now he delineates how the righteous ought to live by their faith (Rom. 1:16).

Does the abundant grace of God mean that man's sin need not be held in check? Paul strongly denies this proposition: "What shall we say? Shall we continue to sin that grace may increase? No, indeed! How shall we who died to sin continue to live in it?" (Rom. 6:1-2). This is similar to a question Paul has already dealt with, that is, should we "do evil, that good may come?" (Rom. 3:8).

What does Paul mean by saying that we have died to sin? The illustration or metaphor is usually taken to mean that as a dead man has no concern with the affairs of this world, so a Christian should have no concern with sin. Ideally this is true. It should be this way for all Christians. Unfortunately, as Paul's letter to the Romans demonstrates, Christians still struggle with temptation and sin. Paul's next chapter tells of this struggle. Even though our death to sin is not fully realized due to human weakness, it is anticipated in the redeeming work of Christ and is accomplished more and more daily as

we serve Christ the Lord. Another way to look at it is that sin can no longer condemn a faithful Christian. We are to be dead to sin in whatever way Christ died to sin (Rom. 6:10).

We died to our old self of sin at the point of baptism: "Do you not know that as many of us as were immersed into Christ Jesus were immersed into his death? We were buried together with him through immersion into death, in order that we also might walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:3-4). Death and burial are metaphors that picture a sinner's death to his old life of sin. Resurrection pictures a sinner's rebirth to a new life as a Christian (cf. 2 Cor. 5:17). The metaphors not only picture our change of life, but also suggest the very action or mode of baptism.

Although some writers strenuously object to the idea (e.g., Murray), being "buried" in baptism is undoubtedly a metaphor of the mode of baptism as immersion or dipping in water. As we die to sin and are buried, similarly we are placed under the water. As we are raised to walk in newness of life, we are raised out of the watery grave of baptism. It is true that Paul's chief topic in Romans 6 is not the proper mode of baptism (Hendriksen, p. 197n); however, the proper mode, immersion, is implied in the analogy to burial and raising.

Even without this metaphor of burial as an indicator that baptism is by immersion or dipping, the correctness of immersion versus sprinkling or pouring is certain. The history of early Christianity also confirms immersion as the mode for baptism (see Ferguson, pp. 33-54). A majority of scholars of religious groups that do not practice immersion will readily admit that the New Testament practice was immersion. A few who still defend sprinkling are example of men who are blinded to the truth by prejudice and tradition. The Greek words for baptize and baptism can have no other meaning.

The older, but still highly useful, Greek-English Lexicon by Thayer defines the various Greek words for baptism as "to

dip, to immer, submerge, immersion, immerse" (pp. 94-95). The Greek-English Lexicon translated by Arndt and Gingrich, the standard dictionary for New Testament Greek, defines these various terms as "dip, immerse, dipping" (pp. 131-132). The standard reference work for classical Greek by Liddell and Scott gives the definition "dip, plunge, dipping in water, immersion" (pp. 305-6). In fact, the English words "baptize" and "baptism" are a translation which originally was a transliteration. The Greek terms baptizo and baptisma were merely brought over into English by substituting English letters for the Greek letters. This was a "safe" practice to avoid offending those who practiced baptism by forms other than immersion, but it has only continued misunderstanding of the original apostolic teaching and further encouraged the erroneous practice of sprinkling. McCord is literally correct when his translation uses the word "immersion."

According to Paul in Romans 6, baptism not only symbolizes a change in status and relationship from a sinner to a saint, but also it is an effective part of that change. We are baptized or "immersed into Christ Jesus" (Rom. 6:3). A change of status from outside of Christ to inside Christ results from Christian baptism. In baptism we are "united with him" as a branch is grafted into a limb or as a branch is united with a vine (Rom. 6:5). At baptism one is making more than a public profession that he is dying to his old life of sin. When we are baptized, we are "buried together with him," that is Jesus (Rom. 6:4). We are joined with Christ in the great redemptive acts of his death, burial, and resurrection. We receive the benefits of his historic acts of atonement and redemption by being baptized.

Those who contend that baptism is nothing but a lovely symbol are not being fair with Paul's wording in Romans 6 or the rest of the New Testament! Immersion as an external act alone profits nothing (1 Pet. 3:21), but baptism as an act of

faith by one with a penitent heart is more than a symbol (Acts 2:38; 22:16). It is an essential and integral part of our obedience to God by which he prepares the human soul for cleansing in the blood of Christ. Is baptism essential to salvation? Is baptism essential to becoming a Christian? That question can be answered easily by asking, "Did Paul's thought leave room for unbaptized Christians? In Paul's day all baptized people were Christians. One cannot be a Christian in the fullest sense of the word without being baptized.

Paul appeals to his readers to live a life consistent with the change that occurred at baptism. Sin is not to "reign" in their lives (Rom. 6:12). Instead, God should reign (Rom. 6:13). Merely because one is not under a system of law like the law of Moses does not mean a Christian is without obligation (Rom. 6:15). We cannot serve two masters, but neither can we serve no master. If we attempt to serve no master at all, we will serve self. The question is not will we serve a master, but which master will we serve (Rom. 6:19-20)? We should not serve sin which leads to destruction, but righteousness which leads to eternal life (Rom. 6:16,18, 23).

Paul says that the Christian who is serving God is thereby free from sin (Rom. 6:18). We are free from the penalty of sin, because we are forgiven through Jesus Christ. We are also free from bondage or servitude to sin. To be free from sin is not so much to be free from individual slips and errors, but to be free from bondage and domination by evil. Paul does not declare that a Christian is sinless in the sense that a Christian never does a wrong deed. Rather the direction of our life is one of yielding ourselves to righteousness (Rom. 6:19).

In becoming Christians we committed ourselves to a way of life. Paul says, "Thanks be to God that you obeyed from the heart the pattern of teaching into which you were delivered" (Rom. 6:17). What he means is that baptism was preceded

by teaching or preaching (Mt. 28:19-20; Mk. 16:15-16; Acts 2:1-41). Being dipped in water in baptism was to be undertaken by an individual that believed and who understood the basic fundamentals of the Christian faith. When one became a Christian, there was system of doctrine, a way of life, which was outlined for the new convert and to which one should be dedicated to keep. Part of that pattern of teaching included serving God rather than sin.

Finally, Paul urges his readers to live pure lives because of the rewards of holiness. The outcome of sin is death (Rom. 6:21). Sin is something of which one ought to be ashamed (Rom. 6:21). By contrast, being a slave of God produces the outcome of eternal life (Rom. 6:22). Sin is a hard taskmaster. It pays a salary of death. Well did Moses Lard write, "What the wages of sin is, the Apostle here tells us: it is eternal death. How astounding the fact that so many should serve for such a reward!" (p. 218). By contrast, God does not owe us anything. Yet, if we will serve God, he will give us a gift, one of eternal life (Rom. 6:23).

FREEDOM FROM THE LAW

Romans 7:1-25

In Romans 6 Paul has emphasized the need to live a life of righteousness rather than a life of sin. Every person who has tried to live a devout and holy life knows this is difficult task. If one attempts to conquer sin by means of a system of law, one will be unable to win over sin. In Romans 7 Paul explains that Christians are no longer under a system of law. Freedom from law does not mean that Christians have no rules to observe, no duties to perform, and no prohibitions against sin. Paul is rejecting any attempt to save oneself by rigid, perfect observance of a legal code such as the law of Moses. He describes man's inability to conquer sin through law.

Paul reminds his readers of a legal principle that "the law has authority over a person as long as he lives" (Rom. 7:1). He uses an example from marriage. A woman is bound to her husband by law as long as he lives. If her husband dies, she is free from the union to her husband (Rom. 7:2). If she married another man while her first husband is still alive, she becomes an adulteress. However, if she, as a widow, marries another man, there is no adultery or immorality involved (Rom. 7:3). Paul's point is that when death occurs, relationship changes and legal authority applicable before the death may no longer be in force after the death.

We should not push Paul's analogy any further than this, because he does not make each point in his analogy coincide as is done in an allegory. Paul's conclusion is that Christians "were put to death to the law through Christ's body, that you should be married to another" (Rom. 7:4). In the first part of the analogy the woman's husband dies. She's the one left

living, is free to remarry. In the second part of the analogy, the Christian dies. The Christian, the one who has died, is free to remarry. We know that a dead person does not get remarried, so this is why we must not treat this section as a complete allegory with consistent parallels throughout. Paul's point is simply that death cancels the bond or covenant.

When one becomes a Christian, a death has occurred. Paul could have said that the law died by the work of Christ, but he did not say that. Even more we would have expected Paul to say that we were formerly married to sin and Satan, but sin was put to death. Both of these would have been true, but Paul's emphasis in this chapter is to show that Christians are not under law, but under grace. When we were baptized, we died to the law. A Christian is not under the law of Moses, and this includes Jewish Christians. Salvation is not by a system of works of merit based upon perfect obedience to a legal code. We are to die to sin, but Paul's point is that we die to the law and are free from law. Since law and sin are related, as Paul will soon show, to die to the law opens one to a means by which one can conquer sin, that is, living by the Spirit.

If we were under a system of law, there would be no hope for salvation for sinful human beings. Law, like the law of Moses which came from God, was good. It was not sinful (Rom. 7:7). It was sacred, upright, and good (Rom. 7:12). It was spiritual, designed to encourage proper character and virtue (Rom. 7:14). The fault was not with the law itself. Since God had given the law, the law was not imperfect. The law was suitable and good for the purpose for which it was intended, but it was unable to save sinful man. Its design was to show man the right way to live and define sin. Without a law to explain what is right and what is wrong, man might live in ignorance on many things (Rom. 7:7).

Paul is quick to explain to his readers that the real problem is sin living in mankind (Rom. 7:8). The law only roused or

incited sin. "Sin found an opportunity through the command, and brought about in me every desire. Sin is dead apart from the law" (Rom. 7:8). This principle is clear if we consider a simple illustration from raising children. When a child is growing up, that child frequently tests the authority of parents. If a parent tells the child not to eat a cookie, the child may grab for a cookie anyway to see what the consequences are. The very fact that the parent said, "No," makes some children want to do something anyway. We call this the lure of forbidden fruit. As Bruce illustrates, "The smoker may forget how much he wants to smoke until he sees a sign which says, 'No smoking'" (p. 147).

Another illustration of the lure of forbidden fruit comes from Augustine's life story: "There was a pear tree near our vineyard, laden with fruit. One stormy night we rascally youths set out to rob it and carry our spoils away. We took off a huge load of pears--- not to feast upon ourselves, but to throw them to the pigs, though we ate just enough to have the pleasure of forbidden fruit. They were nice pears, but it was not the pears that my wretched soul coveted, for I had plenty better at home. I picked them simply in order to become a thief. The only feast I got was a feast of iniquity, and that I enjoyed to the full. What was it that I loved in that theft? It [was] the pleasure of acting against the law... The desire to steal was awakened simply by the prohibition of stealing."

The law, the commandments, and prohibitions against sin were not evil. They were designed to help man be good and to lead him to life (Rom. 7:10). Sin, however, encouraged man to rebel against any commandment. As Paul wrote, "When sin found an opportunity through the command, it deceived me, and killed me through the command" (Rom. 7:11). The law was "good," but sin used the law to bring about death in man (Rom. 7:13). Paul had no problem with law like the law of Moses. His problem was with Judaizing teachers

who taught salvation by means of law. Paul knew human nature too well to agree with this. Law alone could not make good man. Law could not provide the incentive. Law could change the heart. And when man failed to live up to the law, the law condemned man.

Paul, said, "I was once alive without the law, but when the command came, sin sprang to life" (Rom. 7:9). Paul was referring to himself as a youth. As a child Paul did not know the difference between right and wrong. He knew no law. Only as he grew toward maturity did a knowledge of commands and law grow within him. As it grew within him, sin sprang up in rebellion against law. At that point, as Paul sinned against the commands, Paul "died" spiritually (Rom. 7:10). Notice that Paul died after sin sprang to life as Paul grew toward maturity as an adult. As a youth, as an infant, Paul was not dead spiritually. Sin was dead or without effect on him (Rom. 7:8-9).

Many commentators contend that Paul is thinking of the "bar mitzvah" ceremony which a Jewish boy went through at the age of thirteen. Paul mentions no specific age, and common sense says that the age of maturity and full responsibility before God varies from individual to individual. Whatever that age may be, it is clear that Paul never taught that infants are guilty of sin, either their own or Adam's, so hereditary total depravity is an unbiblical doctrine. As a baby grows to adulthood, the conscience and a sense of right and wrong develop. We become responsible before God for our own sin. This is commonly called the age of accountability. A little baby or small child not have this sense developed, so they are not condemned before God (Deut. 1:39; Mt. 18:1-4).

As an adult Paul was frustrated with his own lack of will power to do right. Paul outlined the struggle that goes on in every individual between right and wrong: "I do not know what I am doing. I am practicing what I do not will to practice;

I am doing what I hate... I am not doing the good that I will; but I am practicing the evil that I do not will. If I am doing what I do not will to do, I am no longer doing it, but sin which is living in me. I then discover the law, that when I will to do good, evil is present in me. I delight in God's law in the inner person, but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and making me a captive to the law of sin in my members. I am a miserable man! Who will rescue me from the body of this death?" (Rom. 7:15-24).

We can see our own lives in this word picture of Paul. There is a war between right and wrong that goes on in the soul of every individual. We may know what is right, but we find ourselves doing what is wrong. We may hate sin, but we find ourselves performing it. Knowing what is good and wanting to do it is not enough. Man needs help to conquer sin. Law can tell us what is good (Rom. 7:16), but man often assents to the law's goodness with the mind while failing to live up to the law with the flesh (Rom. 7:25).

Ovid, the Roman poet, said, "I see the better things, and I approve them, but I follow the worse." The ancient writer Seneca said, "Men love and hate their vices at the same time." The ancient Greek philosopher Plato described the human soul as a chariot being pulled by two horses, one of noble breed and the other of opposite breed and character. Paul described this inner struggle in terms of flesh and spirit. We all go through this war within our hearts between good and evil. What is the solution to this struggle in the soul? Law is not the answer. It only defines sin and incites rebellion within man. The answer comes through Jesus Christ (Rom. 7:25), and Romans 8 gives the answer as living according to the Spirit.

LIVING ACCORDING TO THE SPIRIT

Romans 8:1-39

If we lived under a legalistic system of law, all would be condemned, because no one is perfect (Rom. 8:3). Since we are under a system of grace, Paul concludes, "There is therefore no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:1). Christ has suffered punishment and death for us, thus we are forgiven if we are in him. The death of Jesus "pronounced sentence on sin," that is, Jesus was our substitute and sentence was pronounced on Jesus (Rom. 8:3). He was executed and thereby obtained an escape from the punishment of sin for those who are in Christ. By following Christ a Christian can live a holy and devout life and fulfill the requirements of God's law (Rom. 8:4). The wretched man of Romans 7:12-24 finds the solution to his own sinfulness by walking according to the Spirit (Rom. 8:4). As one poet put it (cited by Bruce, p. 162):

To run and work the law commands,
Yet gives me neither feet nor hands;
But better news the gospel brings;
It bids me fly, and gives me wings.

Christ appeared "in the likeness of the flesh of sin" (Rom. 8:3). Paul would also have been correct to say that Christ appeared "in flesh" (1 Jn. 4:2; 2 Jn. 7). Christ was God the Son incarnate in human flesh. Paul did not say that Christ appeared in the likeness of flesh, because this could deny the incarnation. Likewise, Paul did not say that Christ appeared in sinful flesh, because this would deny that Jesus Christ was sinless and perfect. Paul chose a fourth expression, and declared that Jesus Christ appeared "in the likeness of the flesh of sin," or sinful flesh. To the uniformed bystander watching

Jesus die on the cross, the common assumption would be that Jesus Christ was as much a criminal as the two thieves at his side. Many assumed that Jesus was a sinful man, but they could never sustain an accusation of wrong doing against him. He was human, but he was not sinful. Paul said Jesus appeared in the "likeness" of sinful flesh. God laid our sins upon him, but Jesus was not personally sinful. He suffered the effects of sin and even died, but he personally did not sin.

To whom does Christ give life? Paul says it is for those who live according to the Spirit. There are two ways person can live, according to the flesh or according to the Spirit. Living according to the flesh means living in sin in opposition to God with our minds fixed on worldly things (Rom. 8:5,7). Those who live this way are displeasing to God and subject to eternal death (Rom. 8:6, 8, 13). Living in sin is a living death. As one early Christian writer put it, as he looked back on his sinful youth before his conversion, "Such was my life--was that life?"

In contrast to walking according to the flesh, Paul says Christians are those who walk according to the Spirit. Throughout this section it is sometimes confusing as to whether Spirit refers to the Holy Spirit and should be capitalized, or whether it refers to the human spirit, or simply to the idea of truth and purity. Really there is little difference for our interpretation. It is the Holy Spirit that has shown us the way of purity and truth by which the human spirit should live. Also, some wonder if it is the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God, or the Spirit of Christ? (Rom. 8:9,14). Are these the same? Paul is referring to the Holy Spirit, but the variety of terminology is appropriate. The Holy Spirit comes from God and is given by Christ (cf. Acts 2:33), so all three terms are appropriate.

Paul declares that if we focus our "attention on spiritual things," we will be recipients of peace, righteousness, and life

(Rom. 8:5-13). That is the debt or obligation of a Christian, to overcome sin and walk according to the Spirit (Rom. 8:10,13). We are to be "led by God's Spirit" (Rom. 8:14). We are led by God's Spirit by obeying God's word, the Bible, which is given to us by Holy Spirit. Paul does not imply that we are sinless, but righteousness should dominate our lives. Rather than sin controlling our lives, God's law should rule (Rom. 6:1-2, 17-18; 8:7,13).

If we are walking according to the Spirit we are called "the sons of God" (Rom. 8:14). We receive the "spirit of sonship" or adoption (Rom. 8:15). We can call God "Abba," the Aramaic word for Father. Rather than living in fear, we can look to the almighty God in assurance and tender affection as a son would look to his father. We can know that we are children of God, because God has given the Holy Spirit to the church as a testimony of our adoption (Rom. 8:16). And if we are children of God, we become heirs along with Jesus Christ (Rom. 8:17). Remember that an heir does not earn the inheritance. It is a free gift from the Father (Rom. 6:23).

Being children of God who have a great inheritance awaiting us is not an exemption from problems in this life. We may be called upon to suffer for the name of Christ (Rom. 8:17; Acts 14:22; 2 Tim. 3:12). Although these sufferings may be severe, as they were for Paul, they "are not worthy of comparison with the splendor that is going to be disclosed to us" in the rewards of heaven (Rom. 8:18; 2 Cor. 4:17). Many things in life are relation depending upon that with which they are being compared. An object may be hot, but another object may be hotter, and yet another the hottest. Compared with the hottest object, a lukewarm object may seem cool. Paul is not saying that suffering is an illusion. Paul had endured terrible hardships for the cause of Jesus Christ. His point is that heaven will be so wonderful that our suffering in this life will seem minor by comparison.

Our redemption in Christ should seem so wonderful to us that we ought to groan inwardly with great expectation (Rom. 8:23). To show how strong our longing for Christ and salvation ought to be, Paul makes an argument from the lesser to the greater. First Paul speaks of the created world, the rocks, the plants, and the animals, as if they were a person (cf. Psalms 19:1-4). Creation was "subjected to futility" by God who cursed nature when Adam and Eve sinned (Gen. 3:17).

The natural creation did not sin of its own free will as mankind did, but it suffers from man's errors. Even today materialistically minded, exploitative mankind is devastating the natural world in a mad pursuit for material wealth.

We are custodians of this world and should use resources wisely, doing as little harm to nature as possible. This world is a frustrating world where there is sin, conflict, disappointment, and violence. The perfect peace of the Garden of Eden is not present in our world of poverty, war, pollution, disease, and sin. Paul speaks of creation itself longing for the final redemption of mankind, since this will mean the ultimate redemption of nature itself (Rom. 8:19-21). This painful longing is as strong as that of a woman trying to give birth to a child (Rom. 8:22).

One day there will be a new heaven and a new earth where the perfection of the original Garden of Eden will be restored and surpassed (Isa. 11:6-9; 65:17; see Barclay, pp. 113-14; Bruce, pp. 169-70; and Sanday and Headlam, pp. 211-12). What is Paul's point? If inanimate rocks can hope for this, should not man? If plants and animals can do this, should not man who is created in the image of God? Since man possesses a soul or a spirit and a mind with powerful abilities of reasoning, should not man be groaning and waiting expectantly for redemption (Rom. 8:23)? We have received the Holy Spirit as proof or evidence that heaven awaits us (Rom. 8:23). How can we devote our lives to transitory,

earthly things when we have a great hope for things that are unseen (Rom. 8:5, 24-25; 2 Cor. 4:18)? we are saved by our hope. Our hope is for the revelation of Jesus Christ at the end of time when he will take his followers to a home of eternal glory in heaven.

The final verses in Romans 8 are an encouraging statement of Christian assurance. In our efforts to live a life pleasing to God so that we have hope of a home in heaven, the Holy Spirit aids us. Christ is at the right hand of God as our advocate (Rom. 8:34; Isa. 53:12; 1 Jn. 2:1-2), and the Holy Spirit is within us pleading on our behalf (Rom. 8:26). Even when our words fail us and we do not know what to say, God through the Holy Spirit knows our true needs (Rom. 8:27). Paul does not teach "once saved, always saved," but he does make a bold declaration of the salvation of the faithful believer. Even though bad things may happen to us, we know that God "works all things together for good" (Rom. 8:28).

Paul stresses the truth that God acted first in the redemption of man. Before man responded in faith and obedience, God planned the salvation of man through the sending of Christ into the world. God's prior action is described with words like "foreknew" and "predetermined" (Rom. 8:29-30). This has wrongly been understood ever since the days of Augustine that God selected some individuals to be saved and only those can be saved. This is not Paul's point here as all commentaries, except those written by Calvinists, are quick to note. Paul is speaking of a class of people or a group. God predestined that salvation would be for those who became "partakers together of his Son's likeness" (Rom. 8:29). "Paul is not speaking of the predestination of individuals; he is describing God's design apropos of Christians as a group" (Fitzmyer, p. 317). God "did not predestine that his children would be obedient but that the obedient would be his children" (Allen, p. 82).

The assurance of the believer is due to the great love of God. If God has given us his, most precious possession, his only beloved Son, will he not give us lesser things (Rom. 8:32)? God is the judge. God's vote makes a majority (Rom. 8:31), so whom do we have to fear if we are pleasing to God (Rom. 8:33-34)? Paul declares that nothing can separate us from the love of God and Christ (Rom. 8:35, 39). The opinion of the commentaries is overwhelming that the love of God and Christ in these verses refers to Christ's and God's love for us, not our love for God and Christ. Even if tragedy like famine or death is our lot in life, that does not mean that God does not love us (Rom. 8:35-38). In Christ we have an overwhelming victory over sin, satan, death, and the world (Rom. 8:37).

THE PROBLEM OF ISRAEL'S UNBELIEF

Romans 9:1-29

Romans 9-11 deals with the problem of why most of Israel has rejected Jesus Christ. Paul begins the discussion in an unusual way by assuring his readers that what he is saying is the truth. He does not want his words to be taken lightly as mere verbage or rhetoric: "I am speaking the truth in Christ; I am not lying; and my conscience is testifying with me in the Holy Spirit" (Rom. 9:1). Paul is about to write something so difficult for any Christian to believe that he insists quite strongly that he is not lying. Even the Holy Spirit knows Paul is telling the truth. What is so shocking that Paul must use such strong words?

Paul continues by telling his readers that he has "intense sorrow, and ceaseless pain" in his heart (Rom. 9:2). His deep sorrow is over the rejection of Jesus Christ by most of the Jewish people. The surprise comes in Romans 9:3 when he declares that he would forfeit his salvation for the sake of his Jewish brethren if that would bring salvation to them. Paul knows that salvation is an individual matter and can not be obtained by proxy, but his love for his fellow-countrymen is so intense that he wishes that he could give his life for them. In this statement he expresses feelings similar to Moses who was willing to perish with the Jewish people (Ex. 32:32). The tremendous love of God shown to the world in Jesus Christ has stimulated a similar sacrificial disposition in the great apostle Paul.

Part of the tragedy of Israel's rejection of Jesus Christ is that they had many advantages. It should have been different. Of all nations of the earth, they were God's chosen people. God had made his covenant with them and given them the law through Moses. They were the ones who attended God's temple. They were the ones to whom promises were made (Rom. 9:4). They

had a history of many great ancestors. Most important of all, the Christ came from among them (Rom. 9:5). At the end of this listing of advantages of the Jews, Paul writes, "Christ, who is above all things, blessed be God forever! Amen" (Rom. 9:5). The proper punctuation of this phrase is much disputed. It is possible to translate it, "Christ, who is God over all, blessed for ever." If the latter is correct, it is an extremely strong affirmation of the deity of Christ (For a full discussion see Sanday and Headlam, pp. 233-38).

The next three chapters are a difficult and controversial section of Scripture. Many modern writers openly disagree with Paul's statements. Some say his arguments are not valid. Others wish Paul had never written these chapters. Calvinists, on the other hand, delight in these chapters, thinking that their system of double predestination is contained therein. If, however, we are careful to follow Paul's argument all the way through to the end of chapter 11 and if we are careful to use Paul's reasoning to answer only the question at hand, we need not be offended by his reasoning on the one hand or forced to relent to Calvinism on the other hand.

In Romans 9-11 Paul is not discussing the salvation of individual souls. Some of his illustrations have nothing to do with salvation, as such, but focus instead on God's working out his plan in history. These chapters deal with nations and groups of people, not merely individuals. Paul is trying to answer why most of Israel has rejected Christ. He does not imply that all Israelites are lost, for he himself is an Israelite. Paul's aim is to justify God, to show that God has not failed. God had made promises to the nation of Israel, but most of the Jews were not recipients of those promises. Had God failed to make good on his promises? Notice how the problem is introduced: "It is not as though God's message has failed" (Rom. 9:6).

Paul demonstrates that God has not failed by reminding his readers that God's purpose and intent was never to work simply among the Israelites alone. Being a Jew by birth was

no guarantee of salvation in Paul's day, and it never had been! The fact that some Jews were lost during Paul's day was no surprise. All Jews had never been saved or even within the covenant. God's plan had worked according to his will, not according to fleshly descent. All of Abraham's offspring were not included in the covenant and promises of God. The promise went through Isaac, and through Ishmael (Rom. 9:7-9). Likewise, not all of Isaac's descendents were within God's covenant either. Esau's descendents became the Edomites, but Jacob's descendents were God's covenant people. God had made his choice of one nation over another even before the forefathers of the respective nations were born (Rom. 9:10-13). The Jews would agree with Paul up to this point. They agreed that the Edomites, for example, were not God's covenant people. Remember, though, that Paul is speaking of God working out his plans in history. Paul is not saying that every descendent of Jacob was saved or that every descendent of Esau was lost. He is not even saying that Jacob was predestined to be saved and Esau to be lost. Is it not possible that both of them have been saved? Paul's quotation in Romans 9:13 comes from Malachi 1:2. The context shows clearly that Malachi is speaking of two nations (Mal. 1:3-4; cf. Gen. 25:23). As to salvation, are not some of Jacob's descendents lost and some of Esau's saved? We even know that some Gentiles like Rehab and Ruth were saved although they were outside of the covenant of promise by birth. Paul's point is that the covenant was passed on through Jacob. His point is not double predestination to salvation and damnation.

God decided to make his covenant with Isaac and Jacob and allow the Messiah to descend through them rather than through Ishmael or Esau. That was God's decision and choice, and it was not based upon human merit or racial stock. It was not made according to human standards, because the younger son received his father's blessing. Paul is destroying the Jewish pride of self-righteousness based upon racial heritage. Election

"rests on grace and not earning power (law). It too is received by faith and not flesh" (McGuiggan, p. 282). God is not bound to Israelites "no matter what." He makes his own choices by his own standards. We have no right to question God's choice in any matter (Rom. 9:14). God's will is "just" by definition. He can do no wrong.

From a strictly theoretical point of view man has no right to challenge any decision of God, even if it appears unjust to us from our biased human perspective. God has mercy and compassion as he wills, not as man wills or thinks (Rom. 9:15-16). Relating this to the overall topic of chapters 9-11, Paul is saying that man does not even have a right to accuse God of failure or injustice in the fact that the majority of his chosen people, the Jews, have rejected Christ. God works out his plans in history without consulting mankind. It is his affair, not ours. We have no more right to call God into court than Job did in the Old Testament.

As an example of the sovereign right of God to work out his purpose as he will, Paul refers to the Old Testament incident of God hardening Pharaoh's heart (Rom. 9:17-18). If God wanted to use a wicked Pharaoh to rescue his chosen people from slavery and send them on their way toward the promised land, that was God's right. The idea that God would harden someone's heart seems to imply that God is the author of sin and evil. This would take responsibility for sin away from man. There are other ways to interpret the hardening of Pharaoh's heart that do not make God the author of Evil, however.

In an excellent study of the hardening of Pharaoh's heart, Walter Kaiser (pp. 252-53) has made an analysis of the subject of the verb "harden" in Exodus. After two predictions that God would harden Pharaoh's heart (Ex. 4:21; 7:3), Pharaoh is the subject of the verb "harden" during the first five plagues (Ex. 7:13, 14,22; 8:15, 19,32; 9:7). Only after Pharaoh had hardened his own heart and refused to believe the evidence that Jehovah was the true God, rather than Egyptian deities, it said that God hardened Pharaoh's heart (Ex. 9:12; 10:1, 20,27;

11:10; 14:4, 8, 17). Mixed in with the assertions that God hardened Pharaoh's heart are still further statements that Pharaoh hardened his own heart (Ex. 9:34,35; 13:15).

Kaiser's word study is very enlightening. God did not harden Pharaoh's heart until after Pharaoh had already hardened it himself. Only when God saw that Pharaoh was calloused and stubborn did God act upon him. Even when God acted upon Pharaoh by hardening his heart, did God do this intentionally, thus becoming the author of evil? Was the hardening not done indirectly as a side effect of God's actions intended for another purpose? Just as the sun can cause different effects on wax and clay, melting one and hardening the other, likewise God's miracles in the plagues could have two different effects. For some people the plagues resulted in belief. That was the purpose of the plagues (Ex. 7:5, 17; 8:10,22; 9:14,16,29; 10:2; 14:4,18). Even Pharaoh's magicians believed the plagues were performed by the finger of God (Ex. 8:19).

The effect of the plagues upon Pharaoh's heart was that of hardening it. Something God had given the Egyptians for their good to reform them was abused by Pharaoh, thus his heart was hardened. God is said to have hardened it, because God sent the plague. As Kaiser wrote, "God is not the author of evil. There is no suggestion in Exodus 4:14 that he secretly influenced Pharaoh's will or forced a stubborn resolution, which otherwise was incompatible with Pharaoh's basic nature and disposition" (p. 256). Again, Paul's point is that God will work out his will in history to show his power that his name may be proclaimed (Rom. 9:17). He may even use wicked men like Pharaoh to accomplish his purpose.

God "has mercy on whom he will, and hardens whom he wills" (Rom. 9:18). Remember, as Jack Cottrell reminds us, that this text refers to God choosing "individuals and nations for temporal roles in his plan of redemption. That is, he

chooses whom he pleases for service, not salvation" (in Pinnock [1989].p. 114). Paul's quotation of Exodus 33:19 in Romans 9:15 is significant. That quotation should retain its Old Testament "nonsoteriological connotation. It is not saving mercy, but the mercy of temporal blessings--i.e., the blessing of choosing certain ones for the privileges of service" (Ibid., p. 115).

Paul asserts that man has no right to challenge or question God's actions. God is the Creator; we are his creatures. God is the potter; we are the clay (Rom. 9:19-21; cf. Isa. 45:9; Jer. 18:1-11). It is true that man is living and intelligent while a clay pot is not. Man is created in the image of God while a clay pot is not made in the image of the potter. Paul's emphasis is upon the absolute justice of God and the great distance between God and man. We can not judge God by human standards. God defined what justice is. If the standard of justice comes from outside God, then God is no longer God, so if God is patient with sinners, giving them an opportunity to repent, that is his business (Rom. 9:22). God's patience with sinners is not unjust any more than his mercy on the righteous (Rom. 9:23). And if God's mercy includes the Gentiles along with a remnant of the Jews, that is not unjust either (Rom. 9:24). Rather than being guilty of injustice, God can only be accused of being merciful.

The disbelief of many Jews is no more a failure on God's part than the inclusion of the Gentiles among God's chosen people, because God had predicted the inclusion of the Gentiles long before it occurred. Paul demonstrates this with quotations from Hosea (Rom. 9:25-26; see Bruce, p. 196 on the Hosea quotations). The inclusion of the Gentiles is an example of the success of God's word, not it's failure (Rom. 9:6). Likewise, the fact that most of Israel has rejected Christ does not mean that God has failed. Although a majority of the Jews have disbelieved, a remnant has believed, so God's

promises to Israel are still intact in the remnant. It has often been the case that only a remnant was faithful among the Israelites. Paul proves this with quotations from Isaiah (Rom. 9:27-29). The reality that most Israelites have rejected Christ is not a failure on God's part.

In defending the justice of God, Paul makes some strong statements about the sovereign will of God. If God acts according to his own principles and if man can not resist the will of God, does God have a right to find fault with a man? If we are what we are due to the overpowering will of God, how can God hold us responsible for that which we could not help? That is Paul's question in Romans 9:19. Does God have a right to condemn the Jews? Paul's answer in Romans 9:1-29 is that we have no right to ask God this question. Sinful, finite man does not have the right to impugn the justice of God.

We do ask this question, and Paul does give an answer. Paul's answer comes in Romans 9:30-10:21 where he shows that all Jews who are lost are lost due to their own sin, not due to any injustice on God's part. God has not forced the Jews to disbelieve. He has given them every opportunity to believe, but in Romans 9 Paul simply affirms the justice of God no matter what! Paul does demonstrate in Romans 10 that God is not a despot who makes right by might. Paul should not be understood to say that God is the author of evil. God does not force men to be bad or do wrong. God's word of promise to Israel has not failed either, because a remnant is still the recipient of God's promises. (On Romans 9 also see the chapter by James D. Strauss in Pinnock [1975], pp. 190-208).

THE REASON FOR ISRAEL'S UNBELIEF

Romans 9:30-10:21

Paul is tremendously saddened by the fact that most of Israel does not believe in Christ (Rom. 9:1-5). He says, "The desire of my heart, indeed, my prayer to God for them, is their salvation" (Rom. 10:1). The rejection of Christ by Israel does not imply that God's word has failed in any sense (Rom. 9:6ff). There is no injustice with God in letting this state of affairs exist. (Rom. 9:14). What God does is just. God is righteous and merciful (Rom. 9:19-24), but one question still remains: "What is the reason for Israel's unbelief?" Has God caused them to disbelieve? If he has, would not this absolve Israel of any responsibility for not believing (Rom. 9:19)?

Starting with Romans 9:30 Paul explains why Israel has not believed. It was not God's fault. The problem lies with Israel. First of all Israel has not sought salvation in the right way. Instead of seeking righteousness by a system of faith, as many of the Gentiles were doing (Rom. 9:30), most of the Israelites were still trying to earn or merit their salvation by means of a system of works (Rom. 9:31-32). They stumbled over the truth that Jesus Christ is the rock, the cornerstone, the key to salvation (Rom. 9:33). Salvation must be sought through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ who died on a Roman cross, not by human effort. Most of the Jews had difficulty accepting this, thus their disbelief..

The problem with the Jews was not a lack of zeal. Paul testified "for them that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge" (Rom. 10:2). Paul, himself, as a former Pharisee who was extremely zealous in persecuting the church, was an example of the misdirected zeal of the Jews (Phil. 3:5-6). Since their zeal was directed toward trying to

earn salvation by keeping the law of Moses, they were not recipients of the righteousness that comes from God. In order to obtain righteousness by means of a system of law, one must obey the law perfectly (Rom. 10:5). The Jews were not able to do this. Paul said he was blameless with respect to the observance of the law (Phil. 3:6; Gal. 1:14), but at best this was an outward, ritual observance that was blameless from human judgment. Paul's righteousness "in the law" was inadequate for salvation and justification (1 Tim. 1:13-16). Only Christ obeyed the law perfectly.

The Israelities were "trying to establish their own righteousness" rather than receive the righteousness that comes from God (Rom. 10:3). Thankfully, Paul could proclaim that Christ was the end of the law. Instead of salvation coming by a legal system, salvation comes on the basis of faith due to Christ (Rom. 10:4). Christ is the "end" of the law and the "goal" of the law. The word can have both meaning. Christ is the end of the Mosaic system, and he is also the goal or fulfillment toward which the system of Moses pointed (Gal. 3:23-26). Instead of seeking vainly for a salvation by law, mankind can find salvation by believing in Jesus Christ. Salvation by law is difficult, no, impossible for sinners. Once the law is broken, a person is guilty under the law. Salvation by faith in Christ is possible even for sinners, as Paul is about to show.

The nature of salvation by means of a system of faith is illustrated by Paul in a beautiful manner by a quotation from Deuteronomy 30:11-14. In the Old Testament Moses is telling Israel that the commandments of God are not impossible to understand or to obey. Israel does not have to travel to heaven to hear God's word. They do not have to cross the ocean to have God's message delivered to them. Instead God's will is near to them, in their mouth and in their heart, so that they can do it. Paul extends this principle of Moses with reference

to Jesus Christ. Mankind does not have to ascend to heaven and force Christ the Son to come to earth to die for our sins (Rom. 10:6). Christ came of his own free will. Likewise, when Jesus Christ died, mankind did not have to go into his tomb and attempt to revive him in order to have a living Saviour (Rom. 10:7). Christ was raised by the power of God.

Salvation is not an impossible task beyond the capabilities of mankind. It is not some distant, secret, impossible, unattainable quest for man. God has already worked out our salvation. Christ has already come to earth and paid for our sins with his blood. Salvation is an accomplished fact already. Man does not have to do anything for salvation in the sense of achieving it or paying for sin.

Salvation is very near, on our lips and in our hearts (Rom. 10:8). God has done all of the work. Man must simply receive the gift of salvation by confessing the Lord Jesus and believing in him in our hearts, including a belief in the resurrection of Christ (Rom. 10:9; 6:23). Salvation is by a system of faith rather than merit: "He who believes on him shall not be put to shame" (Rom. 10:11). Paul is not contrasting faith with obedience. He is contrasting faith with earning by works of the law. Obedience is a part of faith as the context clearly shows (Rom. 10:16; 1:5). Remember how this fits into Paul's overall theme. Most of Israel is lost because it has not sought salvation by faith in Christ. It is their own fault, not God's.

Salvation by faith in Christ is open to all of mankind, Jew and Gentile. God is no respecter of persons. Whoever calls on his name will receive a kind reply from God (Rom. 10:12-13). As long as the message of salvation is known, salvation is as close as one's tongue and one's heart (Rom. 10:8-9). However, the message must be known. Paul stresses the importance of the world-wide proclamation of the gospel in order to make salvation known to all of mankind. If people are going to call upon God for salvation, they must

first believe. If they are going to believe, they must first hear the message. If they are going to hear the message, someone must go and tell it to them. If someone is going to go tell the message, others must be willing to help send them (Rom. 10:14-15). The supreme importance of evangelism and mission work for the church could not be stated in more dramatic terms. The salvation of lost depends upon it!

Salvation is such a precious commodity to a lost sinner that even the feet of the preacher of the message of salvation will seem beautiful (Rom. 10:15). Feet are not beautiful. They are the ugliest part of the human body in the opinion of most people. However, if someone brings you wonderful news, even their feet are beautiful to you. Even if their feet are dirty and smelly from a long journey, they are beautiful. Paul's statement about beautiful feet is a quotation from Isaiah 52:7. Originally it referred to messengers bringing news about the end of Babylonian rule and the exile of Israel. After the long Babylonian captivity, messengers would one day bring the joyful news that Cyrus would allow the Jews to return to Jerusalem to rebuild their city and their temple. Likewise, preachers of the gospel bring the good news of deliverance from the captivity of sin.

Paul seems to have wandered from his theme, but he has not. If salvation is as close to each of us as the message, if we only believe and obey it, does Israel have an excuse for not believing? It is apparent that all of Israel has not obeyed (Rom. 10:16). They have not all believed. Since faith comes as a result of hearing Christ's teaching (Rom. 10:17), is it possible that Israel does not know about the gospel of Jesus Christ? Paul asks, "Have they not heard?" (Rom. 10:18). Alas, Israel can not be excused due to ignorance. Paul himself has preached repeatedly to the Jews as the book of Acts attests. Others have preached to Israel. The message of the gospel is being spread all over the whole earth just as widely as nature

itself proclaims the glory of God (Rom. 10:18; Psa. 19:4), so Israelites can not excuse themselves by saying, "We did not know."

Another possible excuse is now dismissed by Paul. Even if Israel did hear the message, maybe they did not understand it (Rom. 10:19). Did they really know? Has God been unjust in asking too much of Israel by demanding that they believe? By no means. Paul's refutation of this excuse is the fact that the Gentiles have believed (Rom. 10:19-20). The Gentiles did not have the law of Moses, the sonship, the covenants, the temple service, the promises, the centuries of training in God's will, or the numerous prophecies of the coming Messiah (Rom. 9:3-5). In spite of this deficiency, many Gentiles believe in Christ. Without all of the spiritual advantages, many "foolish" Gentiles know and understand the gospel (Rom. 10:19). How much more so should Israel be able to understand and know the truth. The fault in Israel's unbelief is not in the message or the messenger, but in the recipient of the message. The fault lay with the Jews themselves.

Not only was the message of salvation understandable to the Jews, but also God has prodded them toward acceptance by the techniques of jealousy (Rom. 10:19-20). By including the Gentiles within the people of God, it was hoped that Israel would become jealous and also accept Jesus as the Christ. The Jews looked down on the Gentiles. The Gentiles were unworthy of God's attention according to the Jews. If God did pay attention to the Gentiles, this should make the Jews jealous. Sometimes a dog will show no interest in a bowl of food until another dog comes near. Suddenly the first dog will eat the food very quickly. He is jealous and does not want the second dog to get his food. Likewise God not only made sure that the message of salvation was preached to the Jews, but also he encouraged them to believe and obey it by making them jealous of the Gentiles.

Returning to the question at the first of this chapter, "What was the reason for Israel's unbelief?" a clear answer was given by Paul. Paul quoted a statement from Isaiah and applied it to Israel of his day: "I have held out my hands all the day to a disobedient and rebellious people" (Rom. 10:21; Isa. 65:2). The reason for Israel's unbelief was that they were disobedient and rebellious. The fault was their own. William Barclay has a perceptive summary of Paul's discussion of Israel's unbelief: "The things about which we are in doubt are far fewer than we would like to think. There are in reality very few times when we can honestly say; 'I never knew that things would turn out like this' ... Often we plead ignorance, when, if we were honest, we would have to admit that in our heart of hearts we knew the truth...All through this section Paul has been driving home the personal responsibility of the Jews. They ought to have known better; they had every chance to know better; he finished this passage with a picture of God with outstretched hands of appeal to the Jewish nation, appeal which the nation rejected" (p. 153; cf. Hunter, pp. 97-98).

ISRAEL'S ALIENATION IS NOT FINAL

Romans 11:1-36

In Romans 11 Paul is still dealing with the problem of Israel's unbelief. In Romans 10 Paul has explained that Israel's unbelief is her own fault. Does this mean that God has rejected his people? "No indeed!" is Paul's answer (Rom. 11:1). God still has a remnant from among the Jews who are faithful. Paul himself an example of this, because he was an Israelite of the tribe of Benjamin. As in Elijah's day, when Elijah thought he was the only faithful one left, God revealed to him that there were thousands who had not bowed their knee to Baal (Rom. 11:2-4). In the same way the grace of God has resulted in a faithful remnant in Paul's day. This remnant of the Jews was in the church, so God's promises made long ago to Abraham were still being fulfilled through a remnant of old Israel that was part of the new Israel.

The majority of Israel had excluded itself by seeking salvation in the wrong way through works of merit. However, an elect minority of Jews had found salvation, as many of the Gentiles also had (Rom. 9:30-31; 11:6-7). It was not surprise to God that most Jews had rejected Christ. Paul illustrates various means of rejecting God's will with paraphrases from Isaiah, Deuteronomy, and Psalms. Unbelieving Israel was hardened (Rom. 11:7). While this presents moral problems, remember that it is unbelieving Israel. God did not cause them to disbelieve initially. As Denney said, "The hardening in this case is always regarded as a punishment for sin, that is, as a confirming in an obduracy which originally was not of God, but their own" (p.677).

Only after Israel disbelieved were they hardened. The agent of the hardening is not specifically mentioned, although

it is probably God as Romans 11:8 implies. Moses Lard argues that "God never yet hardened any man in order to keep him from doing right, or in order to lead him to do wrong. He is not the author of sin" (p. 351). He suggests that satan did the hardening. This is compatible with other scriptures (2Cor. 4:4), but there is no justification for bringing Satan into the discussion here. The implication is strong that God is the agent. It is best to view this hardening as a side effect of an action of God which was not intended to lead men into error; yet, it has that effect upon a rebellious heart (Rom. 10:21). The plagues hardened Pharoah's heart, although their purpose was to soften it and cause belief.

Some of the Israelites would not see and hear in the sense of accept and understand (Rom. 11:8). This "spirit of stupor" was not sent arbitrarily or at random, but as a judgment. Others would have their security of self-righteousness as God's chosen people become a snare and a trap. Their own pride would result in a darkening of their understanding (Rom. 11:9-10). God would not overrule the free will of unbelieving Jews and make them see, understand, and believe. He let them alone and left them in thier condition. Disbelief among the Jews was not God's original desire, but once it occurred, God was able to overrule the evil of their disbelief by making it become a means of offering the gospel to the Gentiles (Rom. 11:11). For example, the persecution of the early church by the Jews resulted in Christians being scattered abroad preaching the word (Acts 8:4). Since the Jews thrust the word of God from themselves, Paul turned to the Gentiles (Acts 13:46; 18:6; 28:28).

The stumbling of the Jews in disbelief became a benefit to the world. The riches of the gospel became known widely as a result of Jewish disbelief (Rom. 11:12). If the failure of God's chosen people to believe could result in that much good, how much more so could their belief be a positive force

for evangelizing the world? This is what Paul means when he says, "How much their fullness!" (Rom. 11:12). The term "fullness" probably has a connotation related to number, but Paul does not imply that all Jews are eventually going to accept the gospel. "Fullness" is also used of the Gentiles (Rom. 11:25). It refers to the full number being reached, but it does not imply any certain percentage of the whole that makes up that number. Fullness in Elijah's day was seven thousand which was a small percentage of the nation. Paul is simply declaring that if Jewish disbelief has been overruled by God for good, God could do much more good in the world if many of the Jews believed.

Paul now says a word to Gentile Christians. Paul's ministry has stressed the conversion of the Gentiles. Of that fact he is not ashamed (Rom. 11:13). Although Paul has gone to the Gentiles, his preaching to the Gentiles could have the side effect of the conversion of many Jews by making them jealous of God's granting of blessing to the Gentiles (Rom. 11:14). "So, indirectly, the apostle to the Gentiles may prove an apostle to Israel" (Hunter, p. 101). Gentile Christians should not manifest an arrogant or hateful attitude toward unconverted Jews, since Jewish rejection of the gospel has meant that the church turned to the Gentiles in its preaching. The Jews had done the Gentiles a favor.

If the Jewish loss of Christ has meant the proclamation of salvation to the whole world, again, Paul asks, what benefit would come from Jewish acceptance of the gospel (Rom. 11:15)? It would be like the dead coming to life (Rom. 11:15). It would mean spiritual life for each individual saved, but it would also mean a revival in the church. It would be new life for old Israel. As the prodigal son was accepted back by his father as once dead but now alive, Israel, God's son, could be accepted back as alive once again. Paul himself is a marvelous example of this point. The conversion of Paul, an Israelite, had

been a great boost for evangelism in the church. As a former unbeliever and persecutor of the church, Paul's adherence to the gospel he once rejected was a mighty testimony for Jesus Christ. If more like Paul could be converted, how much more powerful would be the efforts of the church.

Paul now uses some illustrations to try to help Gentile Christians appreciate the heritage they have obtained from Israel. At this point in time Gentile Christians had probably surpassed Jewish Christians in numbers in most places throughout the Roman empire. Paul warns the Gentiles not to become proud as if they were self-made men. It is a danger of which we are all susceptible. We too quickly forget the contributions of the pioneers who have gone before. Paul compares the Patriarchs and Jews of ages past to the firstfruits and to the root of a plant. As the latter fruits are dedicated by the first, and as the branches are dedicated because the root is dedicated (long before the branches sprouted), likewise the church in Paul's day owed much to the faithful remnant of Israel from the past. The firstfruits and the root refer to either the Patriarchs from the Old Testament days or to the Jews who had accepted the gospel, most likely the former (Rom. 11:16, 28).

Paul is not implying the salvation of later generations of Jews simply on the basis of the merit of the Patriarchs. He has denied throughout his epistle that racial heritage justifies one before God. The remnant doctrine emphasizes that God's promises and blessings are not imparted to all Jews, but only to the faithful remnant. Paul's purpose becomes clear when he rebukes the arrogance of some Gentile Christians who seem happy that God rejected Israel. The true Israel, the remnant, has not been rejected by God, and his promises are still being imparted to them.

Paul illustrates the interrelatedness of Jew and Gentile in the family of God with the allegory of the olive tree. Israel is

the olive tree and Jews are natural branches (Rom. 11:21). The Gentiles have been incorporated into the people of God, and Paul compares this to the grafting in of wild olive branches (Rom. 11:17). In most horticulture the process is reversed. The fruit bearing branches are grafted into the root of a wild, non-fruit bearing plant. That approach, while sound in gardening practice, would not suit Paul's purpose of rebuking the arrogance of the Gentiles who are the wild olive branches. Also, there is evidence that wild olive branches were sometimes grafted into plants that had quit producing in order to reinvigorate them (see Bruce, pp. 217-18, where he quotes William Ramsay).

Gentile Christians had no right to be joyful about the current state of affairs where most of Israel did not believe. It was because of Israel that the Gentiles were able to be a part of God's covenant people. Israel was the root while the Gentiles were grafted in branches (Rom. 11:18). Unbelieving Jews were like branches that had been broken off (Rom. 11:19; Jn. 15:1-11). God's blessings were conditional for the Jews. But it was the same with the Gentiles. If the Gentiles turned to disbelief, they would be broken off too (Rom. 11:20-21). On the other hand, if a Jew turned to Christ in belief, he would be grafted back in the olive tree (Rom. 11:23). The Gentiles stood only by faith, not due to human effort or self-righteousness. If human standards such as racial descent saved, God would pick the natural branches, the Jews (Rom. 11:24). Being a partaker of the fatness of the olive tree was on the basis of faith and not for any reason that might lead to boasting (Rom. 11:17, 20, 25). God was not arbitrary. He was kind or severe depending upon man's faith (Rom. 11:22).

Paul's next few verses are very controversial. The partial disbelief among the Jews would continue until the "fulness of the Gentiles has been realized. In this way all Israel will be saved" (Rom. 11:25-26). Whatever Paul means, he says

nothing about the restoration of an earthly Davidic kingdom or the land of Palestine. Also, the saving of all Israel is conditional upon faith (Rom. 11:20). Many commentators think Paul is predicting a future conversion of the majority of or all of the Jewish people. This is possible, and I certainly hope that is his thought, but Paul could have been much clearer if that was his message. If the conversion of all Israel was certain, why does Paul speak so tentatively saying, "If they do not continue in unbelief" (Rom. 11:23)?

McGuiggan rightly points out that Paul's theme in Romans 9-11 is that God has not forsaken his promises to Israel, because he is fulfilling them in the remnant. "How does the coming mass conversion of a modern generation of Jews offset the eternal lostness of past generations?" (p.336). The conversion of millions of Jews in the future would not justify a single Jew being wrongly forsaken by God during Paul's generation. That Paul is not speaking of a distant, future event is evident from the repeated use of "now" in Romans 11:30-31. Paul's point must be that God has not forsaken his promises at any point in history. At present he is faithful by saving the elect remnant of Israel. For this reason I agree with Hendriksen and many others that "all Israel" must mean "the total number of elect Jews, the sum of all Israel's 'remnants'" (p. 381). "All Israel" does not include every Jew any more than the "fullness" of the Gentiles includes every Gentile or the "fullness" of Israel includes every Jew (Rom. 11:12, 25-26). The manner in which Israel will be saved ("in this way" or "and so" - Rom. 11:26) is illustrated in the quotation Paul makes from several Old Testament texts. Salvation will come by means of the Redeemer who will turn people from godlessness and remove their sins (Rom. 11:26-27).

Israel, as a whole, may be estranged from God at present, but their enmity from God has been to the benefit of the Gentiles (Rom. 11:11, 28). According to the principle of

election and according to the promises made to the fathers (Patriarchs), Israel is still beloved by God (Rom. 11:28). God will keep his promises to them (Rom. 11:29), at least in the remnant, and continue to hold out the offer of salvation to the rest of Israel (Rom. 10:21; 11:23, 26). As the rejection of the gospel by the Jews resulted in the preaching of the gospel to the Gentiles, even though the Gentiles were once disobedient; likewise, God will continue to offer salvation to the Jews, even though they are now disobedient (Rom. 11:30-31). God's desire is not to save a certain nation or race of people, Jew or Gentile, while rejecting the rest. God's desire is to have mercy upon all mankind without distinction (Rom. 3:22; 10:12).

The offer and hope of salvation is dependent upon God's mercy, not any pre-existing merit in man. All of mankind has been disobedient (Rom. 3:9-10, 23). "God has imprisoned everyone in disobedience, that he may show mercy to everyone" (Rom. 11:32). As a jailor puts a prisoner in prison, as a fisherman surrounds a fish with a net (Lk. 5:6), or as a wall or army surrounds a city, God has "imprisoned" (**sunkleio**) man "in" (**eis**) disobedience (cf. Gal. 3:21-23). "This is the nearest approach made in the N.T. to putting the sin of man into a direct and positive relation to the act and purpose of God" (Denney, p. 685). Some commentators ignore the difficulty. Others contend that **eis** ("in" KJV, "unto" ASV, or "to" RSV) in this verse must have a casual meaning, that is, God imprisoned everyone "because of" or "on account of" disobedience (Blackwelder, p. 91). It is doubtful, though, that **eis** ever has a casual significance.

Does God consign or imprison mankind "unto," with the goal of and for the purpose of, disobedience? Does God act and so order that man be sinful, that is, has God predestined that people would sin? Murray, as might be expected, takes this position. In verse 32 he contends that "The accent now falls upon the determinate action of God....It is so ordered in

the judgment of God..... There is no possibility of toning down the severity of the action here stated" (p. 102). However, this conclusion is not necessary if one rightly understands the meaning of "consigned" and "in."

As a jailor puts men in prison, God puts mankind under condemnation in a spiritual prison under his wrath. The question is whether or not he has done this due to man's unbelief or to cause man's unbelief. Barnes' comments are appropriate: "In regard to the **agency** of God in this, we may remark, (1) That the word does not mean that God **compelled** them to disbelief the gospel....(2) The word does not imply that the sin and unbelief for which they were shut up were not voluntary.....(3) The keeper of a prison does no wrong in confining a criminal; or the judge in condemning him; or the executioner in fulfilling the sentence of the law. So of God. What he does is not to **compel** men to remain under unbelief, but to **declare** that they are so; so to encompass them with the proof of it that they shall realize that there is no escape from the evidence of it, and thus to **press** on them the evidence of their need of a Saviour" (p. 263).

The meaning of verse 32 hinges on the meaning of the preposition **eis**. If it had a casual significance, that would solve all the problems, but that is an easy way out for which there is little or no lexical authority (see the three articles by Roberts in the bibliography). However, "in" (**eis**) may denote the state or condition of sinfulness. It (**eis**) may refer to "place" rather than goal or purpose (Thayer, p. 183; Arndt and Gingrich, p. 227). God holds Jews and Gentiles in prison in the state or condition of disobedience. They are unable to escape this imprisonment apart from the mercy of God.

God is not the author of sin. God has "hemmed in" sinners or "shut them up" (**sunkleio**) in that condition, but he has not forced the condition of sinfulness on them. God has not caused mankind to be sinful any more than the law has caused

mankind to be sinful; since, according to Paul, "The scripture imprisoned (**sunkleio**) all things under (**upo**) sin" (Gal. 3:22). Denney's comment is to the point: "It is within Paul's thought to say that the sin of Jews and Gentiles, to whom he preached the Gospel, did not lie outside the control, or outside the redeeming purpose, of God; but it does not seem to me to be within his thought to say that God ordains sin in general for the sake of, or with a view to, redemption....God subordinates sin to His purpose, but it is not a subordinate element in His purpose" (p. 685).

All sinners are imprisoned by the judgment of God, but God can overrule man's sin with his redemptive mercy. All are guilty of sin, and all receive the offer of grace. Paul is not a universalist, as some contend, except in a representative sense. In other words, there has been a representative acceptance of the gospel by the various nations, namely, Jew and Gentile, thus mercy is shown to everyone (see Bruce, p. 223). Paul closes this chapter with a declaration of the majesty of God who, in his great wisdom, has worked in history to bring salvation to both Jew and Gentile in Christ (Rom. 11:33-36). It was God's plan and his doing that achieved salvation, not man's wisdom or power.

THE CHRISTIAN WAY OF LIFE

Romans 12:1-21

The first eleven chapters of Romans concentrate on doctrine and truth. Facts are outlined which a Christian should believe. While there is some discussion of Christian living, for example, avoiding sin (Rom. 6), the extended treatment of Christian ethics begins with Romans 12. Paul writes, "Therefore, brothers, I beg you through God's mercies, to give your bodies as a living sacrifice, dedicated and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service" (Rom. 12:1). The word "therefore" is a connecting word. The conclusions that follow are based upon the truths that go before. Based upon the truth that man has sinned and God has redeemed man through Christ, man ought to live a certain way. This pattern of exposition of Christian doctrine followed by ethical exhortation, the two being linked by a "therefore," is one that Paul followed elsewhere in his writing (Eph. 4:1; Col. 3:5; cf. Jn. 13:17).

Paul exhorts Christians to be dedicated and committed in the service of Christ. He speaks of giving our bodies as a living sacrifice. We are not to offer animal sacrifices, but a sacrificial life of obedience to God's will. This is "spiritual service" or "worship." The Greek term here refers to service in worship. There has been much needless controversy over the question of whether or not everything a Christian does is worship. Paul is not trying to undermine the importance of worship in a higher sense or the value of public, corporate worship on the Lord's day. Certainly we are right in distinguishing between ordinary activities of life and special actions, whether in private or in public, when we collect our thoughts in adoration and sing praises or pray to our God. Moments like the Lord's

Supper should be worship in a heightened sense. To say that everything is worship on this level is ridiculous.

On the other hand, Paul has reminded Christians that every aspect of life should be devoted to God in a reverent manner. By declaring all of our lives as worship in a lower sense, Paul has not cheapened worship. "Not at all! It points out that the whole of the Christian's life is potentially sacred. It doesn't bring public worship 'down;' it raises daily living 'up'" (McGuiggan, p. 354). William Law in 1728 wrote some thoughts which give the gist of Paul's message quite well:

He, therefore, is the devout man, who lives no longer to his own will, or the way and spirit of the world, but to the sole will of God; who considers God in everything, who serves God in everything, who makes all the parts of his common life parts of piety, by doing everything in the Name of God, and under such rules as are conformable to His glory...

As a good Christian should consider every place as holy, because God is there, so he should look upon every part of his life as a matter of holiness, because it is to be offered unto God....

As the whole world is God's, so the whole world is to act for God...

As all things are God's all things are to be used and regarded as the things of God....

If, therefore, we desire to live unto God, it is necessary to bring our whole life under this law, to make His glory the sole rule and measure of our acting in every employment of life (pp. 1, 32-33, 42).

Paul would not approve of a person being religious on Sunday and living very sinfully on Monday. Paul would not approve of a person being very religious when at prayer but very dishonest or vulgar when at work or play. Every part of our life should be kept pure. All of our life must be devoted or given to God.

Paul urges Christians: "Do not be molded by this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may discover God's good and acceptable and complete will" (Rom. 12:2). The world will tempt us to do things that are wrong. Sinners in the world will try to get us to be like them. We must resist this evil influence. Instead, we need to be changed from the inside outward by a new way of thinking. By faith in God and by beholding Christ's perfect example, we are to be "transformed" into Christlike people (2 Cor. 3:18). The Greek Paul uses is the one from which we get the English word "metamorphosis." As a caterpillar turns into a butterfly, an evil sinner can be changed into a holy Christian. The change will not occur in a moment. It is a lifelong struggle as we are transformed bit by bit, inch by inch, into holy people. If we imitate Christ, however, a change will be evident in us after a period of time as we "discover God's good and acceptable and complete will" (Rom. 12:2).

One of the first virtues Paul mentions as a part of the Christian life is humility: "Do not regard yourself more highly than you ought" (Rom. 12:3; Phil. 2:3). Each Christian has been given gifts or abilities according to the grace of God. The "measure of faith" given to each probably does not mean faith in the usual sense of trust in God (Rom. 12:3,6). The context implies a meaning of "responsibility" (Black, p. 152). In the church, which is the body of Christ, there are many members, as a physical body has many members (Rom. 12:4-5). As different parts of a physical body has different functions like seeing and hearing, likewise Christians have different abilities and talents (cf. 1 Cor. 12:12-30). Every function is vital for the whole, so no member should be arrogant as if he were more important than others.

Paul does not list every gift that God gives. Miraculous gifts which have already ceased and non-miraculous gifts are listed together. When Paul wrote his letter, Christians

possessed both. First Paul lists prophecy which is inspired preaching. Service refers to our helping one another. Teaching would include preachers and other types of teachers. Encouragement or exhortation is a gift of motivating others to right living. Giving refers to sharing of our means with others. Leading probably refers to the elders of the church (cf. 1 Thes. 5:12). Kindness would include various acts of mercy toward others (Rom. 12:6-8).

Next, Paul strings together many brief exhortations on Christian living which need little comment or explanation: "Let love be genuine. Hate the evil, and cling to the good; in brotherly love, be devoted to one another; in honour, let each one esteem the other more highly; be diligent, not lazy; be spiritually enthusiastic; serve the Lord; rejoice in hope, be patient in sufferings; be devoted to prayer; help the needy saints; show hospitality" (Rom. 12:9-13). Our love should be sincere and result in outward action toward fellow Christians. Our concern should not be with receiving honor for self, but with giving honor to others. Also, we should be committed to the Lord instead of apathetic.

Throughout this section Paul's teaching is very similar to the Sermon on the Mount by Jesus. Even though the four gospels had not been written and circulated at this time, the evidence suggests that Paul already knew many particulars about the teaching of Jesus. The unity of the church is a theme around which many of Paul's exhortations are centered. "Agree with one another," he admonishes (Rom. 12:16). They are to have brotherly love, and it should be genuine love. They should be devoted to one another as Christians. Christian unity should be visible in mutual joy and in mutual suffering and mourning. If laughing together brings friends together, how much more so does weeping together cement a common bond of brotherly affection (Rom. 12:15). If they put others first, honoring others first, and keep arrogant

thoughts about self in submission, then unity among the various members of the body of Christ will result. Paul declares, "Do not fill your mind with inflated thoughts, but involve yourself in humble matters. Do not be wise in your own estimation" (Rom. 12:16).

Finally, Paul gives various statements against vengeance: "Bless the ones who: are persecuting you; bless and do not curse...When someone wrongs you, do not repay with another wrong.. If possible, as far as you are able, live in peace with all people. Beloved, do not take revenge, but give way to wrath, for it is written, 'Justice is mine; I will repay,' says the Lord. If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him a drink, because you will heap burning coals upon his head when you do this. Be not overcome with evil, but overcome evil with goodness" (Rom. 12:14, 17-21; Prov. 25:21-22). Instead of fighting evil with evil, Christians should fight evil with good. Even if evil people do not get the punishment we think they deserve, we are not to take it upon ourselves to be their judge and punisher. We should stand back and leave that work to God. Their punishment may not come until the final judgment day, but evil men will be punished.

If we do good to our enemies, they will not be able to drag us down to their level. We should live by a higher standard, God's standard. In doing good to our enemies, we will shame them as if burning coals were poured upon their heads. The ultimate purpose of doing good to others, however, is not to win a victory over them and embarrass them publicly. The final goal is to win our enemies to the truth. If we fight evil with evil, we may win the fight, but we will never win the heart of our enemy to the truth or win them as a friend. If we fight evil with good, we may lose the fight in the eyes of the world. We may die a cruel death as Jesus and Stephen did. We may not win our enemy, but the only way to win our enemies' heart

and mind to the truth is to overcome evil with goodness.

Therefore, based upon the salvation that God has given us in Jesus Christ, how should Christians live? No finer statement can be found of how we should live than the last chapters of the letter of Paul to the Romans.

CHRISTIAN DUTIES TOWARD THE STATE

Romans 13:1-14

Paul continues the ethical portion of his letter to the Romans in chapter 13 with a discussion of the Christian's relationship to civil government. Who would be better to receive these admonitions than the church which was situated in the shadow of the rulers of Rome who ruled the world at that time? But the power of Rome had permitted Jesus to be executed. Although Rome had not started persecuting the church yet, Rome was not a benefactor of the church except in incidental ways. The rulers of Rome at this point in history were all pagans and rarely guilty of decency or a semblance of morality. In spite of the faults of the Roman government, Paul commanded Christians to be subject to the government: "Let every person be subject to the higher authorities, for there is no authority but by God, and the existing powers have been instituted by God" (Rom. 13:1).

By encouraging submission to civil government, Paul is not condoning evil actions performed by evil rulers. Paul states the ideal of God for civil government, an ideal which men only approximate in real life. God has decreed that there be government. God is a God of law and order, so organized rulership over the affairs of men is consistent with God's own nature. Although God has instituted or ordained that there be civil government, this does not imply that God approves of every government. The prophets, including John the Baptist and Jesus himself, frequently condemned civil government for its defects. The book of Revelation is a scathing denunciation of the Roman Empire turned to Caesar worship and persecution of Christians. Government rulers are "God's

ministers" ideally, but not always in practice (Rom. 13:6).

The God-appointed purpose for civil government is to bring judgment on evil works (Rom. 13:3). Although some governments are guilty of evil works and condone wrong rather than right, the general tendency of civil government is to punish men guilty of evil. While good men sometimes suffer at the hands of civil servants (Jesus and Paul being excellent examples), usually it is not this way. Civil government has authority "to punish" evildoers, an authority given by God (Rom. 13:4). Most people obey civil government out of fear of punishment (Rom. 13:3,5). Christians are given a higher motive to obey the laws of human societies, namely, one of conscience out of respect for the ordaining of government by God (Rom. 13:5).

Christians are not exempt from paying taxes (Rom. 13:6-7). We are not accountable to God for improper use of our tax money by a government unless we have approved or condoned the improper use. As Jesus taught, we must render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's. Paul said we must also show "respect to whom respect is due; honor to whom honor is due" (Rom. 13:7). There is much inherent in a Christian's relationship to civil government than what Paul discusses in Romans 13. Christians may have to disobey civil laws if they conflict with God's law (Acts. 5:29). While Christians are citizens of the various kingdoms of this world, our ultimate loyalty and citizenship is with God and in heaven (Phil. 3:20; Eph. 2:19; Col. 3:1; Heb. 11:13; 12:22-24; 1 Pet. 1:1, 17; 2:11). Because human laws are imperfect, obedience to them is not absolute, but partial and conditional.

Paul's teachings about obedience to civil government have been grossly misused to encourage passive obedience to governments guilty of injustice, oppression, and totalitarianism. As long as a government is good, following Paul's instructions in Romans 13 is easy. What should a

Christian do when a government is evil? What should be done when men pervert God-ordained authority into a terror of good works? How should we respond to a government not of justice but of injustice? Paul does not condone violence to oppose such a government. Jesus himself was not a revolutionary (Mt. 5:38-42). Jesus did not side with the Zealots. Even as the Romans killed Jesus, he did not fight in any way whatsoever (1 Pet. 2:21-23), so violent opposition is not the answer.

However, these truths do not imply that Christians are to be passive in the face of evil. Too often evil has prevailed because good people hid their eyes or were afraid to speak. As the prophets have always condemned evil in high places, the church has a prophetic role to preach justice and righteousness. As Paul did not shrink from declaring "righteousness, self-control, and the coming judgment" before Felix, the church has a duty to be the conscience of civil government. Our weapons are not those of violence and force, but truth, righteousness, the gospel of peace, faith, salvation, the word of God, and prayer (Mk. 10:42-45; Eph. 6:13-18). The world will mock these weapons and our type of warfare (Jn. 18:38), but if any dare question the effectiveness of it, let him examine what Jesus has accomplished through the same means.

Paul's discussion of a Christian's relationship to civil government and rendering various obligations to others leads to brief comments about loving one's neighbor: "Do not owe anything to anyone, except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law" (Rom. 13:8). The law of Moses gave many specific examples of how one could love another. These included not committing adultery or murder, and not stealing or coveting (Rom. 13:9). Other examples could have been added by Paul. All of these are specific examples of how you can love your neighbor as yourself. The

kind of love that Paul is speaking of is a high and lofty ideal. It is not a sentimental, emotional feeling. It is seeking what is best for another person (Rom. 13:10). If you love another person, you will seek to do them no wrong, thus you will do the specific types of things the law of Moses required and avoid the sins it condemns.

Romans 13 is concluded with a brief call to Christians to be alert in the warfare against evil. While in sin, Christians were in darkness. Now they are in the light of the glory of Jesus Christ. Since night is passing away and the revelation of Jesus Christ is becoming fuller all of the time, as if day is dawning, Christians should "put off the works of darkness" and "live properly as in the day" (Rom. 13:12-13). This means, among other things, they are not to engage "on carousing [revelry] and drunkenness; not in sexual debauchery and sensuality; not in quarreling and jealousy" (Rom. 13:13). Salvation is nearer for them than when they first believed, that is, their standing before God to receive their reward is nearer (Rom. 13:11). No matter when Jesus returns, this would be true. Each day that passes brings us closer either to death or to the second coming of Christ (Heb. 9:28). While the second coming is certainly within Paul's view here, his thought is broader. It includes the progressive conquering of the world by Jesus Christ for righteousness (Rev. 11:15), so the passing of almost two thousand years since Paul penned these words is not an error (see Hendriksen, pp. 444-46; Murray, pp. 168-69).

Paul uses a common metaphor of putting off and putting on in this section. Christians must renounce sin by putting "off the works of darkness" (Rom. 13:12). Not only must we repent when we become a Christian (Acts 2:38), we need to continually struggle against sin in our lives and die to sin daily. On the positive side we are to "put on the weapons of light" and clothe ourselves "with the Lord Jesus" (Rom. 13:12, 14;

cf. Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:9-10,12). When we are baptized into Christ, we put on Christ (Gal. 3:27). Living the Christian life, however, is a constant effort to become more and more like Christ every day.

MAINTAINING UNITY WHEN WE DISAGREE

Romans 14:1-23

Romans 14 is a discussion of how brothers and sisters in Christ can maintain unity even though they may disagree. The type of disagreement which Paul discusses is where a brother, called the weak brother, believes that a certain action is wrong. He in all good conscience can not participate in that action. The stronger brother is more mature in his understanding of the Christian faith and realizes that the action in question is not sinful. How should the stronger brother treat the weaker brother? Paul says, "Welcome him who is weak in the faith, but not for arguments about opinions" (Rom. 14:1). The unity of the church and brotherly love is more important than a stronger brother ridiculing a weaker brother.

Paul uses several illustrations of controversies to which his principles of unity could apply. He mentions those who refuse to eat meat, preferring only vegetables (Rom. 14:2). Others honor special days (Rom. 14:5). It is uncertain if Paul is referring to specific problem that existed in the church at Rome or if he is merely using these as typical or hypothetical examples. It matters little for our interpretation. Notice, though, what Paul is not discussing. Paul would not want matters of essential doctrine treated in this manner. He is discussing areas of freedom where Christians have liberty. Liberty in Christ should never be used as a means to justify sinful deeds (Gal. 5:13; 1 Pet. 2:16). Likewise, realize that Paul is talking about how to deal with a weak brother, not a troublemaking, divisive individual. He has in mind the honest, sincere individual who needs teaching and Christian fellowship. The false teacher who is spreading heresy is not

under consideration here.

The first example Paul gives is that if a brother who desires to eat only vegetables (Rom. 14:2). This could refer (1) to vegetarians, (2) to those who objected to meat not slaughtered by Jewish food standards, or (3) to meat that had been sacrificed in association with pagan worship. The latter is the situation in 1 Corinthians 8:1-13; 10:23-33 and is the most likely possibility here in Romans 14. The second example is that of those who esteem certain days over others (Rom. 14:5-6). In both of these examples Paul places himself in the camp of the stronger brethren who will eat meat and who esteem all days alike (Rom. 14:14). But how should these stronger brethren treat the weaker brethren?

Paul urges very strongly that the stronger brethren avoid being judgmental toward the weaker brethren. If a weaker brother is accepted by God, what right does the stronger brother have to judge him (Rom. 14:3)? Christ is our Master and we are his servants. God will judge each of us. Our brothers and sisters in Christ are not our judges (Rom. 14:4). We are not in the judging business. Rather than playing the role of judge, we should remember that each of us will be judged by God (Rom. 14:10-12). "Each one of us shall give an account of himself to God" (Rom. 14:12).

"None of us lives to himself, and none dies to himself," Paul declares (Rom. 14:7). This verse is frequently taken out of its context to refer to our mutual interdependence on one another as Christians and as human beings. It is true that each of us depends upon others, and we should be concerned about our influence on others. This whole chapter teaches that thought, but verse 7 does not state that fact. The next verse explains the way in which none of us lives or dies to himself: "If we live, live for the Lord; and if we die, we die for the Lord" (Rom. 14:8). Paul is saying that in everything we do, our obligation to Christ as Lord must be considered. We belong

to Christ, therefore each of us must serve him and be pleasing to him. We will never please all of our brothers and sisters in Christ, but thankfully God does not require that impossible task of us. We must simply live "for the Lord" (Rom. 14:6,8).

Instead of playing the role of judge of the weaker brother, the stronger brother should aim at unity: "Let us therefore pursue peaceful things, and things that build up one another" (Rom. 14:19). Instead of taking a confrontational attitude, the stronger brother should avoid offending the weaker brother (Rom. 14:14). For example, if a weaker brother felt it was wrong to eat a certain type of food, the stronger brother should not attempt to force him to eat it (Rom. 14:15). In fact, the loving thing to do would be for the stronger brother to refrain from eating that sort of food when in the presence of the weaker brother to avoid causing him to stumble (Rom. 14:20-21). The stronger brother who treats the weaker brother with gentleness and love will please God by his actions. He will also gain respect among man due to his kind behavior (Rom. 14:18).

The stronger brother is correct, according to Paul's judgment, but unity in the church and the salvation of souls is more important than proving we are right on every point to every individual with whom we may disagree. We should not tear down God's work, that is, upset immature, weak Christians' faith, over trivial matters like the kind of food we choose to eat (Rom. 14:20). The type of matter which Paul is discussing over which brethren may disagree is not an essential point of doctrine. It is not a fundamental first principle. Our lives as Christians should stress the truly important matters. Paul explains, "God's kingdom is not food and drink, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Rom. 14:17).

While eating meat is not wrong in and of itself (Rom. 14:14,20), it is wrong for a person to eat meat if it bothers his or her conscience. The conscience can be wrongly informed as was the case with the weaker brethren. Nevertheless, living

consistently with our own conscience is a cardinal principle. Each of us should be fully convinced in our own minds of what is right and wrong and live by those convictions (Rom. 14:5). In the final few verses the term "faith" is used in this sense of being convinced in our conscience, so McCord translates it by "conviction." Whatever that conviction is, we must obey. If we do an action that violates our conscience, it is wrong. The action itself may not be wrong; it may be permissible in God's sight. However, if we have "doubts" (a guilty conscience about performing an act), the action is sinful. This is what Paul means when he says "The one who doubts is condemned if he eats, because he lacks conviction; and everything which is not of conviction is sin" (Rom. 14:23).

While the stronger brother is encouraged to show respect for the conscience of the weaker brother, a mutual respect is essential for church unity. The weaker brother should not attempt to rule the majority of stronger brethren by constantly crying, "That offends my conscience, so you can not do it!" a minority, or even a single individual, could dominate everyone by such an appeal. Everyone should not bind all of their private opinions on others (cf. 1 Cor. 10:29). As the stronger brethren should keep their opinions to themselves (Rom. 14:22), the weaker brethren must not be allowed to be a disruptive influence by aggressively promoting their opinions (Rom. 14:1).

A good illustration of this principle comes from a congregation where one man wanted to use a single communion cup in the Lord's Supper. All others, for reasons of sanitation and personal preference, desired to use multiple communion cups. The question is one of indifference as far as Christian doctrine is concerned. The "cup" in the gospels referred to the contents of the cup, not the container. Rules about containers or vessels to be used in the Lord's Supper are not found in the Bible. Either method would be acceptable. The brother who insisted that it must be done with one cup is

like the weaker brother in Romans 14. The stronger brethren realized that either method was acceptable before God.

How was the problem solved? The majority could have used one cup out of deference to the brother whose conscience was offended. That would have been a viable solution except that it might have set a dangerous precedent where a single brother managed to rule over a whole congregation by an appeal to his conscience. Another acceptable solution was attempted by making a special communion tray with a large cup in the middle and small, individual cups around the end. Each individual was allowed to choose either an individual cup or to share a common cup. In my opinion, this solution was perfectly in harmony with the teaching of Paul. It showed respect for the feelings of the weaker brother but did not allow that brother to dominate and bind non-essentials on the majority by an appeal to his conscience.

Romans 14 elucidates a beautiful principle of Christian love which can help maintain unity among Christians in spite of our disagreement in areas of non-essentials. The thought of Paul is expressed well by Martin Luther who began one of his books with the words: "A Christian man is a most free lord of all, subject to none." In Christ we are free (Gal. 5:11). Christ is our Lord. No human being is allowed to lord it over a Christian. However, Luther's second sentence of the same book read like this: "A Christian man is a most dutiful servant of all, subject to all" (cited by Bruce, p. 246). How true this is. We are not under the lordship of other human beings; however, out of Christian concern for how our actions may affect others, we are under bondage to be a good example and to show sympathy for the scruples of others. because Christ is our Lord, we should "pursue peaceful things, and things that built up one another" (Rom. 14:19).

APPEALS FOR UNITY AND TRAVEL PLANS

Romans 15:1-32

In Romans 14 Paul has given advice on how to maintain unity in the church when we disagree over opinions. The stronger brethren should be patient with the weaker brethren, that is, those who believed a certain action was wrong even though the gospel did not condemn it. Paul again classifies himself in the category of the strong, for he opens chapter 15 with these words: "We who are strong are obligated to carry the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves" (Rom 15:1). The underlying principle which is at work throughout these last few chapters of Romans is that we should love our neighbour as ourself (Lev. 19:18). We should be unselfish and seek the good of others (1 Cor. 10:32-33).

It is not the mere pleasing of others with which Paul is concerned, but doing what is best for the eternal welfare of others (Rom. 15:2). The supreme example of how this is done, and the inspiration to do this, is Jesus Christ himself. Christ did not seek his own welfare in a selfish way. He sought the supreme good of mankind by taking the punishment for our sins (Rom. 15:3; Isa. 53:4). If any man was ever free of the compulsion of peer pressure of legalism over trivialities, it was Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, Christ's freedom did not result in an arrogant attitude toward those less wise than himself. His was an attitude of love.

Paul quotes from the prophetic Psalm 69:9 in explaining how Christ sought the benefit of others rather than himself, even though it meant terrible suffering. Paul explains that his use of the Old Testament scriptures here, and throughout his writings, is proper: "The things that were written previously

were for our instruction, that we might have hope through the patience and encouragement of the scriptures" (Rom. 15:4). The Bible itself is the greatest book of devotion that anyone can read. A habit of regular Bible reading will produce marvelous effects upon the soul including hope, patience, and encouragement. God is a God of patience and encouragement, and Paul prays that God will grant the church in Rome unity in their efforts together in Christ, especially in their worship (Rom. 15:5-6).

Christ is an example for all Christians in promoting unity. Christians should accept one another in the same way Christ has accepted each of them (Rom. 15:7). There were differences between Christians in the church in Rome including the distinctions between Jew and Gentile, but they were to follow the example of Christ and overcome these differences. Christ was born as Jew (Gal. 4:4). According to Paul, "Christ has become a servant of circumcision" (Rom. 15:8). Jesus was sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Mt. 15:24). As a Jew Jesus was able to establish or fulfill the promises God had made to the Jewish patriarchs long ago. Salvation for Jews was made possible in Christ.

Christ not only fulfilled the Messianic hopes and aspirations of the Jews, but he also fulfilled God's promises to the Gentiles. Paul quotes a string of Old Testament texts which show God's universal purpose to bless all of mankind (Rom. 15:9-12 quoting Psa. 18:49; Deut. 32:43; Psa. 117:1; Isa. 11:10). Christ accepted both Jew and Gentile. Likewise, the church at Rome should have unity in accepting one another. "Christ was an inclusive Saviour, and therefore His Church must be an inclusive Church" (Barclay, p. 217). Verses 1 through 6 close with a brief prayer, and so does the section of verses from 7 to 13. It is a prayer of hope: "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in the powerful hope of the Holy Spirit (Rom.

15:13).

Beginning with Romans 15:14 Paul's epistle deals with more personal matters. Paul uses sound psychological principles of motivation in commending his readers for their goodness and knowledge (Rom. 15:14). Just as the writer to the Hebrews followed the scolding of his readers by saying, "We are persuaded better things concerning you," Paul follows his lengthy admonitions in Romans with a positive note. Paul has written to the Romans quite boldly on some subjects. He had a right to do so as an apostle to the Gentiles, even if he was not the founder of the church in Rome. His bold message was necessary for Paul to fulfill his God-given function as an apostle of Jesus Christ (Rom. 15:15-16). Paul was actually quite humble in his presentation. He described his message as simply "reminding" the Romans of certain truths.

Paul's work as an apostle and as a minister of the gospel is described by himself in priestly terms (Rom. 15:16). As a priest before God, Paul offered unto the Lord nothing less than the Gentiles. Paul gave a subtle defense of his work among the Gentiles by saying that "they have been set apart by the Holy Spirit" (Rom. 15:16). A sacrifice must be holy before it is offered to God. The Gentile Christians had been sanctified or made holy when they were baptized (Eph. 5:26). The spread of the gospel among the Gentiles made Paul proud and caused him to rejoice (Rom. 15:17); however, he did not boast about any accomplishments of his own. Anything he had achieved came only by Christ working through him (Rom. 15:18).

Paul had preached the gospel from Jerusalem to Illyricum (Rom. 15:19). We know of Paul being as far south as Jerusalem and as far north and west as Macedonia, but we have no account of him preaching in Illyricum. The text could mean that he had preached as far as the borders of Illyricum.

It is possible, though, that Paul visited this region during one of his tours of Macedonia (Acts. 20:1-2). The book of Acts does not pretend to tell every location in which Paul preached. Illyricum is on the eastern coast of the Adriatic Sea across from Italy in modern day Albania and Yugoslavia.

In preaching the gospel, Paul always tried to blaze new trails. He wanted to preach where the gospel had not been preached before and establish churches where there was no church (Rom. 15:20). He wanted to tell people of Jesus who had never heard of Christ before (Rom. 15:21). The old missionary slogan is worth remembering: "No man has the right to hear the gospel twice until every man has heard it once." We should be filled with the passion to preach the gospel to the whole world as Paul was. This policy of Paul to preach in new regions meant that he hoped to visit Rome, something he had often wanted to do but had been hindered from doing in the past (Rom. 15:22). His work east of Rome was complete, so Paul hoped to visit Rome while enroute westward to new territories. His dream was to travel as far as Spain some day to preach the gospel (Rom. 15:24).

At the moment, however, Paul must make a trip to Jerusalem (Rom. 15:25). Paul was going to accompany those taking a contribution from Macedonia and Achaia to the poor Christians in Jerusalem (Rom. 15:26; Gal. 2:9-10). This donation to the poor in Jerusalem represented several things that were quite important to Paul. It showed the unity of the body of Christ that should exist between Jew and Gentile. It showed maturity among the Gentile saints by their appreciation of their heritage which was traced back to the saints in Jerusalem (Rom. 15:27). It also represented a maturing of the Gentile church which Paul had established. They were now able to stand on their own, so that Paul was free to pursue mission work in new territories (Rom. 15:23).

After the collection for the poor had been safely delivered

to Jerusalem, Paul hoped to go to Rome (Rom. 15:28). Visiting Jerusalem was fraught with danger for Paul, however Non-Christian Jews would be hostile to Paul. He knew this and, in the strongest of terms, begged the Christian in Rome to pray for him (Rom. 15:30-31). His earnest desire also was that unity would prevail and that the collection from the Gentiles would be received in a good spirit by the Jewish saints. If all went well, Paul would then be able to visit Rome with joy (Rom. 15:32). Paul did finally visit Rome, but his fears about danger in Jerusalem were not unfounded. Paul was saved by the Romans from death at the hands of the Jews. Paul visited Rome as a prisoner after an interval of several years (Acts 21:15-28:31). Whether he ever traveled further west than Rome, we do not know (but see Clement of Rome 5 and the Muratorian Fragment). Paul closes this section with a brief prayer. "May the God of peace be with all of you. Amen" (Rom. 15:33).

GREETINGS AND BENEDICTION

Romans 16:1-27

The final chapter of Paul's letter to the Romans is a treasure of personal notes and descriptions. We often rush through passages like this to our own loss. Of the twenty-four names in this chapter, as many as six are women. Paul was not anti-woman as he is often accused of being. Women are commended and praised by him for their essential contributions to the work of the early church. Thirteen of the twenty-four names are also found in inscriptions and documents of the imperial household in Rome (Phil . 4:22). Some of these people may have been servants, employees, or distant relatives of the Roman Emperor.

Paul begins with a commendation of Phoebe, probably the one who was to deliver Paul's letter to Rome: "I recommned to you Phoebe our sister, a servant of the congregation in Cenchrea. Welcome her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the saints, and help her in whatever need she may have, for she herself has helped many, and me also" (Rom. 16:1-2). The Greek word for "servant" is the word for "deacon" (diakonos). Much controversy has surrounded this verse. Was Phoebe a deaconess? Should we have female deacons as an office in the church today? The answer to these questions depends to a great extent on what is meant by "deaconess" and "office." The Greek term for "deacon" is more a term of service than one of rank and privilege. It refers to anyone who is performing the work of ministry for others.

As an office, that is, a recognized group of people with a ministry to perform, some leadership authority, and a title descriptive of the work, there were male deacons but no female deacons of equal rank (Phil . 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:8-10,

12-13). By the late third century an order or office of deaconesses had developed in the East. In the West they were not found until the fifth century. In Rome they were not accepted until as late as the eighth. Deaconesses were ordained (Apostolic Constitutions 3. 15); however, by this same period of time many minor orders had arisen including singers, doorkeepers, laborers who buried the dead, readers, and sub-deacons. The deaconess was not considered to be an office equal to that of deacon (Apostolic Constitutions 8. 28).

In the New Testament church there were women who served. They were ministers as all Christians are ministers, but there was no office of deaconess on a par with that of deacon in the early church. (For more information see the articles by Davies and House). The leadership roles were given to the men, but many women distinguished themselves in their service to the church as did Phoebe. She may have been a woman of some financial means who had been able to help many others, in particular in rendering hospitality of which she would be in need in Rome. Then, as now, there were many functions for which women were needed due to modesty and propriety. Where a man could not go, a sister in Christ could minister to other women who were ill. They could assist women at baptism or instruct women in Christian living (Tit. 2:3-4). We would all do well, men and women, to be more concerned with serving than obtaining rank, privilege, and titles (Mt. 20:25-28; 23:10-12).

Paul then begins a list of greetings to those he knows in Rome. He greets Priscilla and Aquila, a great Christian husband and wife (Rom. 16:3-5). This couple had served Christ faithfully in Corinth and Ephesus also. Even from the meager information we have on them in the New Testament, we know that they moved numerous times. It is to their credit that wherever they lived, they were active and faithful

Christians. We read of the "congregation that is in their house" (Rom. 16:5; 1 Cor. 16:19). Churches did not have buildings in those early days. They managed to do marvelous things for the Lord without huge holding in property. Maybe our expensive real estate holdings are not as great an advantage, or our lack of property such a great detriment, as we imagine.

Aquila and Priscilla gathered relatives, employees, friends, or converts into a congregation which would base its worship and ministry in their home wherever they lived. In a day and age when many Christians fall out-of-duty when they move to a new location, Priscilla and Aquila are great examples of how we should stay faithful. It was probably in Ephesus that they had "risked their own life" for Paul (Rom. 16:4). Priscilla's name is mentioned first before her husbands' several times which may be an indicator that she was the more outgoing of the two. Some scholars have speculated that they were the authors of the letter to the Hebrews. Others speculate about Priscilla being a wealthy individual or from a noble family, but of such matters we can not be certain.

Most or all of the names that follow in Romans 16 may have been part of the house church of Priscilla and Aquila. We know very little that is certain about most of them. Epenetus is a common name from that period of time. He was the first or among the first converts of the province of Asia (Rom. 16:5). Of Mary we know nothing (Rom. 16:6). Andronicus and Junias may have been a husband and wife, but Junias is probably a masculine name (Rom. 16:7). They were fellow-countrymen of Paul, although the term can mean blood-relative (cf. Rom. 9:3; 16:11,21). They had been in jail at some time in the past, possibly in Ephesus, possibly with Paul. They had been Christian longer than Paul had been. They were "Well known by the apostles." This could refer to their being of some reputation with apostles like Peter and John. Next, Paul sends greetings to Ampliatus (Rom. 16:8).

Ampliatius was a common Roman name. There is a tomb decorated with paintings in the catacombs of Rome in the cemetery of Domitilla dating back to the first or second century which bears this name. The single name on the tomb indicates its occupant was probably a slave, but the early decorations suggest respect for this individual beyond that usually given to a slave. If it is the same Ampliatius as in our text, he was honoured in his burial because of his great faith in Christ. Of the next names, Urbanus, Stachys, and Apelles, we know nothing except that they are names worn by others during this period of time, sometimes of the imperial household (Rom. 16:9-10).

Paul next greets "the household of Aristobulus" (Rom. 16:10). A man named Aristobulus was the grandson of Herod the Great. He lived and died in Rome. When a friend of the Emperor died, his servants and slaves became associated with the household of the Emperor, but they would still go by the name of their former master. The household of Aristobulus could be Christian slaves of this same household to whom Paul sends his greetings. If this theory is true, it is no coincidence that the next greeting is sent to Herodion, a good name that a Jewish Christian might wear who had some association with the family of Herod (Rom. 16:11).

Greeting to the household of Narcissus might allude to a Narcissus who was a powerful freedman who had been the secretary of Claudius in Rome (Rom. 16:11). We know very little of Tryphena and Tryphosa except that their names were common and they may have been sisters or even twins (Rom. 16:12). Rufus may very well be the son of Simon of Cyrene who carried the cross of our Lord (Rom. 16:13; Mk. 15:21). Nereus is a name associated with the church in Rome and Domitilla from very early times (Rom. 16:15). Of the rest of the names in verses 14 and 15, we know nothing specific except that most of them were common in Rome in the first

century. The authenticity of Romans is enhanced by the frequent occurrence of these names and possible identifications of them with people known through historical and archeological studies. The absence of the name of one so prominent as Peter from these lists suggests that he had not arrived in Rome at this time. (On this whole section see Lightfoot, pp. 171-78, and Sanday and Headlam, pp. 416-28).

The "holy kiss" was probably a greeting between Christian of the same sex (Rom. 16:16). It was usually given on the cheek, the forehead, or the hands and was a customary way of greeting others in that culture. Paul also sent greetings from other congregation to the saints in Rome. In the sternest section of the whole epistle, Paul warns against false teachers in the church (Rom. 16:17-18). He urges the saints in Rome to "watch out" for these people. The KJV says, "Mark them which cause divisions." That translation has been wrongly understood to mean that we should brand or ruin the reputation of one with whom we disagree on a doctrinal point. "Mark" does not bear that meaning here. It simply means to take notice of. Paul is encouraging vigilance, but not vigilantes (Lewis, p. 6).

Paul concludes with words of commendation of the past faithfulness of the Christians in Rome and encouragement to continue to be faithful unto God (Rom. 16:19; Mt. 10:16). God and Christ are on their side, and Satan will lose the struggle (Rom. 16:20; Rev. 11:15). Other Christians send greetings. They are individuals known elsewhere as companions of Paul, although some of them could be other Christians with the same name (Rom. 16:21-23). Tertius served as the amanuensis or secretary for Paul. Paul may have had bad eyesight, although the use of a secretary was quite common. The epistle closes with a doxology or a benediction which is placed at various places in different manuscripts of

Romans (Rom. 16:25-27). And so we come to the end of the great epistle of Paul to the Romans. We close by repeating the words overheard by Augustine from some children playing nearby : "Tolle, lege! tolle, lege!" Take up and read, take up and read, Paul's great letter to the Romans.

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