

Commentary on ROMANS

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The first chapter of the Book of Romans suggests that man's behavior is very flawed to say the least. Paul like a trial lawyer listed the incitements against man in the last verses of the Chapter. It is not a very pretty picture. Observation is the foundation of all scientific study. We need only to study man to see that he is not always as noble as he should be. How do we know that these behaviors are wrong? How do we know for example, that lying and cheating are not admirable traits in another society or under certain mitigating circumstances?

We can argue that what is right in one place is wrong in another, and therefore arbitrarily dictated by circumstances or culture. However, here is a law within each person that suggests that we are linked by a universal standard. C.S. Lewis explains it this way: If a man trips me by accident and I hurt myself, I am not angry with him. He didn't mean to do it. On the other hand, if someone intentionally tries to trip me, even if I am not injured, I am angry. Why? There must be some code, law, or standard that governs my feelings and reactions. Where is it written that thou shalt not trip another? Where is it written that tripping another is not a "good" thing? The answer is, no where. It has nothing to do with culture or training we all automatically know that tripping someone is wrong.

Lewis goes on with his argument. He talks about science being a practice of "observation." Science can not tell us "why" something happens, it can only tell us what happens. Through observation we can tell that mixing one thing with another, and heating it to a certain temperature caused a certain reaction. The experiment can be repeated enough times to enable the scientist to predict certain results following certain causes. It can explain only to a degree why certain things are like they are. In other words, science knows from observation. Drop a rock from a high roof and it will fall to the ground. The scientist knows by observing that rocks fall.

Man on the other hand is not a rock. If we were to observe man without understanding language we would not really understand him. There are forces, feelings, and ideas within him that are not subject to observation. These forces, feelings, and ideas explain the behavior and actions of man. We can only begin to understand man's behavior as we understand what is happening inside. We know what is going on inside in two ways: One by what other men tell us, and second, by the fact they we are men ourselves.

There is a "something" other than man that explains man. The book of Romans points to three witnesses that testify against man's behavior: Creation in Chapter one, conscience in chapter two, and Creed in chapter three. Creation tells the uncivilized heathen that something is wrong. Conscience tells the civilized man that "something is wrong." The Law of God or the Creed tells the Jew that "something is still wrong." The Book of Romans not only tells us what is wrong, but it tells us how to get right.

Through observation of humanity's behavior we must conclude that man is either an arbitrary accident caused by a cosmic collision of particles of matter, or that man is part 2 of some grander scheme of things. We can mix certain chemicals and predict their behavior. We can bring certain animals together and predict their behavior. But, because man is moved and motivated by other unseen factors, he is not as predictable. Through observation we see man's behavior is often detrimental to the survival of his fellow man. Stealing, killing, cheating are behaviors that demand an explanation. Someone will say that man operates on the principle of what are his "best interests." Not necessarily so. Men have ignored their best interests often and risked their lives when there was no need to do so. Psychology and Sociology try to explain man's behavior. So does religion.

Lewis points out that there are three basic explanation for the way things are: The Materialistic View, The Religious View, and what I will call the Synthetic View. The materialistic view says that both man and life are the result of chance. The Religious view says that God is the cause

of the material world and man. The third view is a convenient view man has adopted in an attempt to escape the consequences of this actions. This third view is the position of the creative evolutionist. The evolutionist holds to a belief that some intelligent force is behind everything. Because this force is not a personal God as such, man is not responsible to answer to it for actions and behavior. It is man's convenient way of circumventing responsibility. It does not demand moral responsibility.

There is another idea and concept that should be considered in our study of sin. That is the fact of a certain acceptable code of conduct or rules for living. This is how it works. Suppose neither you nor I have been to the city of Hong Kong. Suppose you had certain ideas of what it was like and I had certain ideas. One of us would be more correct or "right" than the other. How would we know who is "right" and who is "wrong?" If an actual city of Hong Kong did not exist, your idea would be as good as mine. But because there is a real and actual city by which to compare our ideas, we can be right or wrong. Likewise, when people presume that their idea of God or right and wrong is just as valid as the next person's, they are acting like there is no real standard or real God by which to measure. If God is a figment of each man's imagination then they would be correct, but if God is real there has to be a correct and an incorrect position.

If there is a real God, then there is a real code, standard, and criteria by which we can be measured. Nature tells us that there is a God. Conscience tells us that God is Good. Religion tells us that we should be good. Paul's letter to the Romans tells us, not only that we are not good, he tell us why we are not good, and how we can be reconciled to our creator.

Sin is something God takes very seriously. Man has not. Even those who acknowledge the reality of sin do not always understand the seriousness or significance of it. Man has marked, catalogued, and tagged sins like the naturalist tags and bands birds or as an archaeologist might mark fragments of broken pottery. Even religious people see sin in terms of "big" or "little." There is some measure and degree of truth to this in a practical and pragmatic sense. For example, I would rather have someone "hate" me than "kill" me. I can live with them hating me, but not if they killed me. So sins seem at first to be both "big" or "little," or as Catholic theology likes to call "venial" and "mortal."

This gives a wrong impression about the seriousness of sin in the eyes of God. Adam did not murder anyone when he fell from his position. He committed what would be considered as trivial in most circles. He took a fruit that did not belong to him. Stealing an apple (we do not know what kind of fruit it was), a common misdemeanor plunged all mankind into darkness and into danger of Hell. Moses was not permitted to enter the promised land because of what seemed to be a minor infraction. God did not disqualify him from entering in because of murder (although he indeed had murdered someone with his own hands); he was forbidden entry because he lost his temper and struck the rock more than once. It seemed to be a little thing on the surface, but the act and the consequence points out the seriousness of any sin. Anger, petty larceny, hatred for a brother, a lustful look all disqualify man for heaven and condemn him to a Godless Hell.

The first three chapters of the book of Romans addresses the problem of Sin. For some reason even sinners have 20/20 vision when it comes to seeing sin in others. The Jew would have no problem with anything Paul said in his introduction to Romans with regard to the Heathen and Gentile world. The catalogue of sins is a cornucopia of corruption that the Jew was well aware of in that they believed it surrounded them. Likewise the litany and list of licentiousness given by Paul reads like a modern day copy of some cheap pulp magazine. As Paul concluded his denunciation of the gentiles we can almost hear a loud "Amen" from the Jewish quarter, and a self-congratulation for not being like other men. That attitude was demonstrated by the Pharasee who prayed in the temple (Lk.18:9-14).

Next, the Apostle directed his remarks to those who thought they were “ok.” He pointed out that those who judge others by any high and holy standard judge themselves because they fail to keep the very standard they judge by. Paul pointed out that these “judges” do the very same things and break the very same rules. This was the message of Jesus also. The Jew was satisfied that he had kept the sixth commandment by not murdering anyone. Jesus taught that to hate one’s brother was to break that commandment. He also taught that a look could be sin. A lustful look shattered the seventh commandment into a thousand pieces (Mt. 5:22, 28). The implications of Christ’s teaching was two- fold 1) Man cannot keep the commandments 2) Sin was more prevalent than the Jew tended to think.

In the first three chapters of the book of Romans all humanity is brought into the courtroom of God. All are indicted, tried, and found guilty. The sentence of death is passed, and man stands condemned. Chapter three leaves mankind at the foot of the gallows. He has no excuse, no hope. But wait, there is an answer. God has a plan that will both satisfy his demand for justice and demonstrate his mercy. It is called the plan of salvation. We can leave our place at the foot of the gallows and make our way to the foot of the cross, and by faith receive God’s redemption and righteousness; or we can climb the stairs of judgment and receive the eternal punishment for our sin and unbelief. The next chapters explain how salvation can work and deliver a sinner from the judgment to come.

JUSTIFICATION

The first chapters of Romans make it perfectly clear that “All have sinned and come short of the glory of God.” 3:23 Paul has “proved” his case 3:9. Something is wrong with man. Man is “out of harmony with God.” This being “out of harmony” is what we call sin. Just how bad off is man’s situation? What can be done to restore man to his original or intended condition? Perhaps if man were placed in some idyllic setting and circumstance he would get better? Perhaps what man needs is a new environment of peace and tranquility to bring the best out in him? Paul makes it clear that even in the natural and uncivilized state, man is an awful sinner. Nature declares the greatness and glory of God, but no man was ever converted by nature or by watching a sunset.

Perhaps man should listen to his own heart, to his own conscience to improve his situation and make himself better? Paul destroys that hope by pointing out that man fails to live up to the very standards he sets for himself. Man’s conscience tells him that there is a “standard” that he fails to attain. That standard is “good.” Even when men do wrong, they convince themselves that they are doing it for some greater “good.” When a dictator tortures his prisoners in some dark and hellish prison, he is convinced that it is for the “good” of the state or some other such rationalization. When a thief steals what does not belong to him, he is convinced that he is doing it for some “good” even if it is to improve his own lot. Conscience may not always stop a thief or a dictator from doing something, but conscience is proof that there is a standard and measure of what we call “good.” When man fell, conscience fell. It is not always dependable. It still works often and well enough to witness to the fact that things are not as they should be. Conscience has never converted a sinner. Like creation, conscience is a guiding light that wise men may follow. It is a means to an end. It is not the end.

It is clear that the heathen are lost in spite of the witness of nature. Nature will not save. The civilized man is lost in spite of his conscience. Conscience will not save. Paul then addresses a unique experiment of God as demonstrated in a particular people of the earth. Out of the heathen masses God took a group that studied the heavens and the heart and climbed as high as man could climb in and of himself. God allowed the Babylonians to be their best. The result was impressive but fell far short of the glory of God. Out of these people God chose one man named Abraham and declared that he would from them make a special nation. This nation would not only have the witness of the heavens, and the witness of the heart, but they would have the witness of the Holy Word, God’s law. They would be given all the advantages of possessing the truth of the ages. What conscience could not show in that it was fallen; and what creation could not do in that it was flawed, God’s creed would do in that it was perfect.

Man had originally been made in God’s image. That image was obscured by man’s own liabilities and limitations. What is God like? How can man be restored to his original state if he has no idea of what that state is? He could study nature for all eternity and not know what God is like. He could study his own flawed conscience forever and never know what God is like. But what if God were to give man something that would not only reflect God’s character (God’s glory), but also act as a light to guide man back to God? That is what the law was intended to do.

The law is incapable of saving and converting a single sinner. It was given as a light to illuminate the way. As you walk through the dark forest holding a lantern, the light not only falls on the path, some of its beams fall on you. The law had a two-fold ministry. It would enable man to walk through a dark world without stumbling and it would enable man to see his sin in its exceeding sinfulness. The law would enable man to see what God was like, and it would enable him to see what man was like. It would enable man to compare what he “should” be like with what he “was” like. The Law would declare, “All have sinned and come short of the glory of God.”

God is righteous. That simply means that God is “right.” Man is unrighteous. That simply means that man is “not right.” This state or condition of not being right is what we call sin. Sin

has come between God and man. It is like some giant wall or deep chasm that is preventing the creature to be in fellowship with his creator. Paul's letter to the Romans is a declaration of deliverance from this dilemma.

To look at man's situation as a separation is only part of the story. In and of itself it is too stagnant a description. A better illustration would be to picture a mighty river with water rushing along with a fury toward a precipice. A boat has lost its engine power and is caught in the force of the current. Unless something is done, it will be swept over the water falls and be smashed on the jagged rocks below.

In the first illustration there seems to be little cause for alarm. In the second, the situation demands some solution be found before it is too late. Mankind needs to realize that unless they are "saved" they will be "lost." Nature will not save them. As a matter of fact it is nature and the force of nature that is pulling the little boat to its inevitable destruction. Heart or conscience can not save them, because conscience in itself can only sound the alarm. It has no power to help. Now, religion is something that men can "do" and something he certainly tries to "do" in an attempt to save himself. Religion hands each passenger an oar and tells them to paddle as fast as they can. The current however is too strong, and edge too close for man to succeed. If the little boat is to be saved, it will take a miracle.

That is exactly what salvation is. It is a miracle. A miracle is God stepping into the natural circumstances of things with a supernatural solution. But salvation is more than a miracle, it is a manifestation of God's wisdom and mercy.

The above illustrations explain God's dealing with sin in our nature. It explains how God's salvation is a "deliverance" from danger. What it does not explain is how God plucks us from the waters of destruction, and delivers us from "the wages of sin," death.

In order to understand salvation we must understand what we are being saved from. In salvation we are saved from the penalty of sin, the power of sin, and the presence of sin. Being saved from the penalty of sin is Justification. Being saved from the power of sin is Sanctification, and being saved from the presence of sin is Glorification. At this point in our study we are concerning ourselves particularly with Justification or Salvation from the penalty of sin.

This brings us to the place where we must consider a legal idea and concept. Paul has already brought us into the courtroom where we have been charged, tried and convicted. The judge reads the law. "The wages of sin is death." The jury comes back into the courtroom after some period of deliberations and examination of the evidence. The verdict is read: "Guilty." It only remains for the execution to be carried out. All humanity is on death row.

How can God be true to the standard of right and justice, and at the same time demonstrate mercy and love toward the repentant sinner? How can God possibly deliver a man from the just penalty of the law. The answer is a stroke of genius. God shall declare the sinner righteous if that sinner 1) admits to his guilt, 2) submits to God's mercy and 3) commits to God's method of salvation. These are elements of faith in Jesus Christ. Faith is believing God. We believe what God says about our condition. We believe what God says about our danger. We believe what God says about our only hope. We believe enough to act upon that belief.

When a person exercises this kind of faith God justifies him.

What is Justification?

By definition justification is: the act of God, by which He declares man to be righteous. This has nothing to do with man's character, but rather with his standing. Justification is a legal term which declares man to be acquitted of all charges. Being justified is being made right with God. Now Paul picks up the theme of: How can a man be made right with God? He makes four

important statements about justification.

1) Justification is not attained by doing good deeds. “by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified.” 3:20 In other words a million good works would not make a wrong person right. This is important to understand for all religions of the world are founded on the premise that somehow it is possible to build up a spiritual “credit” with God. In other words that somehow our good deeds will work to cancel our bad deeds and make us right. If this were so then you could do one hundred bad things and get away with them if you only did one hundred and one good things. Paul clearly says that doing all the good deeds in the world will not change man's account with God.

2) Justification is something God does. “Justified freely by his grace.” 3:24 Grace is “God at work” in me. The defendant in the courtroom cannot acquit himself. That is something the judge must do. If a man is to be justified it is only by God's grace. Paul teaches that in another place. “For by grace are ye saved through faith and that not of yourselves it is a gift of God not of works, lest any man shall boast.” Eph 2:8-9. But limiting ourselves to the book of Romans, Paul says the same thing in 3:24-27

Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. Where is the boasting then?”

3) Justification is completely apart from the deeds of the law. 3:28 “Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.” We can put it this way. I once asked a woman if a person is saved by faith in Jesus Christ or by doing good works. She hesitated and then said, “by faith in Jesus Christ.” I detected a struggle going on in her mind though it lasted only a moment. “So,” I said, “in other words, we cannot be saved by works, but can our good works help?” “Yes,” was her reply, and the reply of countless others since the days of Paul, betraying a misunderstanding of the doctrine of justification. The correct answer is that our works do not help one bit. Our good works do not contribute an atom of help in our salvation. We are justified by faith (in Christ) without (or apart from) the deeds of the law.

So what does all this mean? It is simple. All men are lost. All men need to be saved. It is impossible for man to do anything to save himself. The only way for man to be saved is if God saves him. This being saved is called Justification. It is the act of God by which He declares a man “right.” It is God's way of righting the wrong and restoring a fallen man. But why would God declare a guilty man righteous? On what basis does God act? Is God fickle or arbitrary? Paul will address these issues and explain that there is an infinite wisdom behind the plan of Salvation.

4) Justification is by faith.

A Debt is Paid

Metaphors are figures of speech in which one word or idea is used in place of another. The Bible is filled with metaphors as explaining lofty and spiritual concepts is no easy matter. It is like trying to explain complicated ideas and concepts to a little child. We say for example “time marches on.” This conjures up the picture of an army of minutes parading through our world.

Paul uses various metaphoric comparisons to explain what salvation is. Do you remember the story of the blind man who had his sight restored by Jesus? When questioned by the authorities he was at a loss to explain his new found situation. His reply was basically this “I don’t know how it happened, but I know it happened. Once I was blind, but now I see.” It is not enough for us to go through our Christian life like that. I am not suggesting that we should be able to comprehend the incomprehensible; that would be impossible. But since man has a part to play in God’s plan of salvation he has to understand his part. Salvation involves Faith, repentance, justification, sanctification, and glorification to name just a few. A rock or a stone does not need to understand what it is or why it exists. Man, having been created for a greater purpose, is obliged to understand such things, and desires to do so.

One way the Scriptures have attempted to explain man’s condition and situation has been with the use of a legal metaphor. Paul uses legal terms like “guilty.” Since we are familiar with such ideas and concepts we can better understand the spiritual lessons. Each metaphor is limited and is not complete in itself or completely accurate. The comparison breaks down at various points. Let me give you an example of how the metaphor breaks down and forces us to switch metaphorical horses.

We can understand how a person can be a breaker of the law. We can comprehend the indictment, trial, evidence, and verdict of guilty being pronounced. We can even understand the concept of punishment for violations and wrong doing, but how can the guilt of one person be placed upon another? If I break Mrs. Smith’s window while playing ball how does it square things if Mrs. Smith spansks her own son who was not even on the ball field, but was in fact in his room studying his arithmetic? How can I be reconciled to Mrs. Smith by her spanking her own son and letting me off?

You see, here the metaphor breaks down. Paul now enlists another concept to help us understand Christ’s substitutionary suffering and sacrifice. We switch from a legal world to an economic world. Paul begins to use words like “count,” “Reckon,” and “debt.” Christ was not simply being punished for our breaking of the window, but Christ was voluntarily buying a new window and installing it himself. He was paying for all the damages. Now the price that he paid was the sacrifice on the cross to pay for all the broken windows and all the iniquities of man. It is a bit more complicated than that, but this is a good start. Christianity and the “new birth” is a mysterious amalgamation of time and eternity, of justice and mercy, or law and grace.

The last part of Romans three declares that Salvation is not by works of man, but all of grace. Salvation at this point is called Justification. In the fourth chapter, Paul gives an example and illustration of Justification by faith as seen in the life of Abraham.

Abraham was a member of the fallen race. When Paul said “all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God,” that includes Abraham. What could Abraham do to change his situation? He also has heard the verdict of the jury, “guilty.” Romans 4:3 tells us of the only escape and hope for Abraham. “Abraham believed God.” In other words, Abraham

had faith in God, or better yet, Abraham trusted God. What did Abraham believe? The truth of the matter is that Abraham believed whatever God said, unlike Adam and Eve who doubted God’s word. But more specifically, Abraham believed the promise God made unto him (v.23). “For this promise, that he should be the heir of the world was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.”

God told Abraham that he would be the father of a great nation, and yet he was not the father of even a single son. Faith does not operate on the basis of what is yet, or what is seen. If God said Abraham was to be a father, then it was so. It is said that Abraham “against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, and that he was “not weak in faith,” and that he “considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old.” The Bible goes on to say the he “staggered not at the promise of God.” In other words Abraham had every reason not to believe God. All the evidence pointed to the absurdity of the suggestion that Abraham would have a son. Some things might be easy to believe, but God did everything in the realm of circumstances to give Abraham reason to doubt the promise.

Here is faith: “being fully persuaded that, what he had promise, he was able also to perform.” In other words Abraham lived and operated on the principle that “if God said He was going to do it, He would do it” The Scriptures say that he was “fully persuaded.”

So what is it that God wants from us? He wants us to believe in him, and he also wants us to believe him. There is a difference. To not believe in God, is an absurd position. Psalm 15 calls such a person a “fool.” Even the devil believes in God. That is not enough. We must believe what God says. We must believe God’s word. That is what Abraham did. Abraham was a believer, and that is how he became the father of a great nation. Because of sin, the whole world was an enemy of God. One man was different He believed God. Because he believed God, God declared him restored, right, or righteous. “Abraham believed God and it was counted unto him for righteousness” (4:3). This word “counted” is a banking term which means “added to the account” Sin is not only an estrangement, or being out of harmony with God, it is also being in debt.

A man’s life is a ledger filled with the red ink of indebtedness. As a matter of fact, an indebtedness is carried over from the original sin of Adam so each man begins life with great liabilities and no assets (if liabilities are sins and assets are good works). By the time a man reaches the age of accountability his indebtedness has increased to the point that he is hopelessly behind. Religion tells us to try to work off indebtedness, but it is futile. These debits or debts are what David was speaking of in Psalm 31: 1-2 and quoted here in Romans 4:7-8 “Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.”

Here is picture of a person hopelessly in debt, and unable to work. He is impoverished and in a desperate situation. But what if that person were to inherit a very large amount of money and that were to be added to their account? Suppose that the amount was not only enough to cover their indebtedness, but enough to last for the rest of their life. If you can picture and comprehend that, you see exactly how a man can be justified.

It is as if God says, “I have a great and wonderful gift I want to give you. Even though you owe me more than you can ever pay, I want you to have this gift that will settle your accounts.” That is what Christianity is. What God did for Abraham He wants to do for us. What is it that God wants us to believe? He wants us to believe and receive His Son Jesus Christ “But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.”

We might point out that Abraham had neither Temple, or Bible, or Ceremony, or ritual, circumcision, or any other thing that people today equate with being righteous. Abraham had one thing and one thing only. He believed God.

Paul makes another important statement in Romans 4. Abraham was the Father of the Faith. “And the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had being yet uncircumcised. (12) “Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is father of us all.” (16). Abraham is more than the father of the Jew. He is more than the father of the Arab (as he is in Ishmael), he is the father to all those who take God at His word.

Therefore

The results of Justification

In Romans Chapter five we find both the fruits and the roots of justification. When a person is “justified” he is “saved” or born again. A person who is justified is a Christian. A Christian has the fruits of a Christian. They are listed in the fifth chapter of Romans.

First there is peace (v. 1)

This is not the peace that puts its head on the pillow and sleeps like a baby. That is the peace of God. It can be the Christians, but this is not what Paul has in mind here. This peace is Peace with God. Before a person is justified he is out of harmony with the Spirit of God. He is a rebel and an enemy of God. Sin is an awful offense against God, and man was a terrible sinner. The very first result of being Justified is that there is a cessation of hostilities. This Peace is the result, not of some negotiated settlement, but rather of an unconditional surrender to God. By faith in God’s words and in a spirit of repentance, man waves the white flag of capitulation, throws down his arms of rebellion and submits to a conquering God.

The Romans knew something of a peace even in their day. It was known as the Pax Romana. It was a peace imposed from without. The conquering Roman armies crushed their enemies into a posture of submission. Those vanquished nations were forced to pay tribute to Rome and homage to Caesar. Christianity does not bring peace with the sword of oppression. The only one crushed and beaten was Christ. He bore all our iniquities and all our transgressions. The only blood was his blood. The only pain was his pain. The only death was his death. Instead of coming with legions God came with love. Instead of with spears and force, God came in Spirit and in flesh..

Instead of with propaganda, God came with truth. Planted like some standard on the field of battle the cross was the gathering point for all who would know God and be saved from their sins, for all who were tired and weary of struggling against God’s will, word, and way. The cross became the turning point in the battle that resulted in peace with God. The second fruit of justification is the end of separation from God. Man was designed to have fellowship with his creator. Sin made fellowship an impossibility. A holy God can not look upon sin. When Jesus became sin for us upon the cross, the Father looked away from the Son. 1 Peter 3: 18 says, “For Christ also hath once suffered, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit.” The supreme purpose of Christ’s ministry is summed up in the words “bring us to God.” It was impossible for man to find his way to God by himself. No priest or angel is capable or worthy to do so. Jesus Christ was the only one who was both able and worthy enough to do so. He died that he might bring us to God.

The Jewish Temple was made up of three main compartments: the Outer Court in which any Jew may enter, the Holy place that was open only to male Jews who were ceremonially clean, and the Holy of Holy place which was said to be the dwelling place of the Almighty. This Holy of Holy place was shrouded by a heavy veil that would hide the Shekinah Glory (presence) of God from the people. When Jesus died the physical veil of earthly temple was rent in two (Matt. 27:51). No more was God the Father inaccessible to his creatures. Any Justified sinner would now have access into the presence of the Almighty.

If anyone wants access to God he must come through Jesus Christ. Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth and the life, no man cometh to the Father but by me.” One of the wonderful fruits of Justification is that we now have access to the Father.

The third fruit of Justification is Joy. There is even Joy in the presence of the Angels in heaven when one sinner repents and is justified. On several occasions Jesus described the results of salvation in terms of Joy and happiness. The story of the Prodigal son is the most familiar. What must have been the joy of a man born blind and is made to see? What must be the joy of a cripple as he walks for the first time? What must be the joy of a leper who is made clean? Such is the joy of one who is justified by the Grace of God. The world is looking for joy in every quarter without success. Jesus called himself the true vine. The vine was the Jewish symbol for joy.

We see that God's grace is ours through faith in verse two. "We have access by faith into this grace." We are also told that we stand by this grace. Some have defined grace as God's unmerited favor. That it is to be sure, but it is more. Grace is God at work in you.

Salvation is a work of God. "And that not of yourselves." Paul told the Philippians in another place, "being confident of this very thing, that he who hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Phil. 1:6). Upon and with Justification God begins to work and is committed to work in the life of the believer. We Christians are prone to speak of our "commitment" to God. Salvation is God's commitment to us. That is Grace. This "God at work" in us is seen in Romans 5:3-4. It speaks of tribulation working patience. We should never forget that it is God that is working. The tool he may be using at any given moment could be tribulation, but God is the agent. Knowing this Paul would later say, "all things work together for good to them that love God. . . ." (Rom. 8:28).

Another result of Justification is the abiding presence of God himself in the person of the Holy Spirit (5). God does not live in temples made with hands. God now lives in individuals. The Holy Spirit is given to every believer (Rom. 8:9). The Holy Spirit is the link that connects us to God. Much more shall be said of the Holy Spirit later on.

The sixth result of Justification is the infusion of God's love "shed abroad" in our hearts. In another place we are told that God is Love (Hohn 4:7). Love is a subject that would take up volumes by itself, but it is significant and it will suffice here to note that "love" is a quality missing from the animal world.

Lastly, the Justified person receives hope. This is mentioned in verses 2,9-10. This "hope" is not the "wishful" thinking or "cross your fingers" kind of hope that the world is familiar with. It is a confidence and assurance that belongs to all who have a promise by one who is able to fulfill it. The believer has a hope of glory as well as a hope (assurance) that the coming wrath of judgment shall in no way negate the deliverance that comes from trusting Christ.

There are many more "by-products" of Justification. In other places they are called "treasures" or "blessings." We are reminded by Paul that all we enjoy, we enjoy because of the "blood" of Jesus Christ (vs.9). We are not Justified by his life, or his teachings, or his love. We are justified by the shedding of his blood. This is the heart of Christianity. The Jewish religion had a vast and accurate knowledge of God along with his attributes and his nature. We did not need Christianity to teach us that God is love, light, or truth. We did not need Christianity to tell us that God is kind, wise, or holy. We did not need Christianity to tell us that God is a spirit or that men are sinners. Jesus is the personification of all these things, but it was quite unnecessary for Christ to come to reveal what we could already know. Christ introduces one all important element that is both absolutely necessary and altogether offensive to the liberal and unbelieving mind, and that is the element of his blood. We are justified by his blood. Take away the cross and you take away Christianity. Our justification is based upon the work of Christ upon the cross.

The last thing Paul addresses in the fifth chapter is the question of just how could the death of one result in the justification of so many. The answer is in the idea of "union." Man is a race. He is a fallen race but as a race, each man is genetically attached and connected to another man who lived before him. We received our life from another as an inheritance and a heritage. Along with life we inherited a sin damaged life.

We are told that sin entered the world through one man, Adam. In as much as we are genetically related and spiritually related to Adam, inherit the curse that was pronounced upon Adam (Gen 3). So as the disobedience one (Adam) caused such death and destruction, so the obedience of one (Jesus), can bring grace and deliverance.

Someone might say it is not fair that we all should be punished for the sin of one. That might

have some credibility were it not for one awful fact. Adam failed the test of Eden. If every man woman and child were given the same test each would also fail. There was only one who passed the test, and that was Jesus Christ. He alone kept the commands of God the Father and as the perfect one, was worthy to represent fallen sinners upon the cross taking the full sting of the curse for us.

A False Conclusion

By this point Paul's readers would be either ecstatic or confused. If all my sins have been forgiven by faith alone in Jesus Christ and not by my religious works, and I am free from the law, then can I ignore the law and live as I please, even if it means indulgence and excess? If all my sins are forgiven do I now have a free license live a loose and carefree life? It would almost seem that way to the unregenerate mind of an unbeliever.

Paul now picks up an important thread that is woven into the fabric of truth. Paul now takes up the theme of Sanctification. Justification has to do with our judicial standing. It does not address lives. Justification deals with what only God can see. Sanctification is the evidence or manifestation of what God has done.

When Jesus told the man borne by four (Mk.2) that his sins were forgiven He created quite a stir. "Who was this who claims to forgive sins. Only God can do that," thought the Pharisees in the crowd. Jesus then spoke to these unbelievers. "Which is harder," he asked, "to say thy sins are forgiven or take up thy bed and walk?" The answer is simple. Anyone can claim to be able to forgive sins. How can such a claim possibly be verified? But what if He did something spectacular that could be verified, logic as well as faith would insist on the credibility of His claims. Jesus performed a miracle. the lame man was healed. The conclusion is that the one who had the ability to heal the sick also had the ability to cleans the sinner.

The same connection must be made in understanding Paul's explanation of Salvation. Justification is Jesus saying to the believer "thy sins are forgiven." This is something we cannot see, but accept by faith. Sanctification is Jesus saying to the believer "take up thy bed and walk." This is something that everyone can see.

In Romans 6: 1 Paul asks the question Should we now continue in sin in order to allow God to show off His grace? God's answer to sin is Grace, and the work of Grace is something which glorifies God, then should it not follow, that the more we sin the more grace is needed and therefore the more God is glorified? This is absurd reasoning for several reasons.

That kind of logic is the same as a criminal taking credit for the work of the police force, suggesting that the police would not be able to feed their families were it not for him and people like him. For if there were no criminals there would be no need for law enforcement personnel. Or it would be like the germ taking credit for the doctor's success, reasoning that if it were not for germs, doctor's would be out of work. Such reasoning is flawed as well as foolish.

Being set free from the condemnation of the law is no invitation to break the law. It is no license to sin. Do you remember the crucifixion story and how the crowd chose Barabbas instead of Jesus? Can you imagine the criminal's surprise when the guard open the prison door and said to the startled thief, "Go home, you are free"? Can you imagine his joy as he stepped into the street a free man? All we know is that he was set free. What happened after that is the stuff romantic novels are made of and subject to pure speculation. It would be nice to think that this criminal would have changed his ways. That he would have learned his lesson, but we have no reason to believe that he did. One thing is for sure: if he was not converted and changed on the inside (that is, in his heart), his deliverance to the outside was temporary and insignificant. Pilate's pronouncement declared him pardoned (God's pronouncement goes beyond that and pronounces us innocent); but Pilate's pronouncement could change Barabbas's location, it could not change his vocation. Therefore, the salvation of Pilate was partial and incomplete, God's salvation is total.

God not only opens the prison doors of our condemnation and changes the locks, He changes the life. Changing or opening the lock is Justification Changing the life is called Sanctification. Justification and sanctification are linked to one another. Where one is, there the other one is also.

Paul explains salvation in terms of an identification with Christ. It is not just that Jesus died for us. In a wonderful and supernatural way we died with Christ. That is identification. When Jesus was crucified, we were crucified (Gal.2:20). When Jesus died, we died (Rom. 6:2). When Jesus was buried, we were buried; and when He arose, we arose with him.

Four ideas or concepts help us to appreciate our new position in Christ.

REALIZE, RECOGNIZE, RESIGN, REMEMBER.

First we need to realize what Jesus did. He was crucified, buried and He rose again. We need to recognize that what Christ did He did for us. He died for me. Just as Adam sinned for me, Jesus died for me. In Adam I sinned. In Jesus I died. Lastly we need to take the last step and allow God to be God of our lives. The New Testament word is “yield.” Realized (1-10) Recognize (11) and Resign (12-19). There is one more important idea found here to explain the absurdity of seeing Justification as a license to sin. That word is remember. In verses 22 and 23 we are told that we have been delivered from those things of which we are ashamed. We are also reminded that we have been delivered from death into life. Does a man who has been rescued from a burning building climb back up the fireman’s ladder and leap again into the flames? No, he realized the building was burning, he recognized the danger he was in, and lastly he resigned himself or yielded himself to the will of the rescuer. The analogy is better completed when we learn that the fire was started by the person rescued and he has vowed to never play with fire again. Justification is like being carried out of the burning building. Sanctification is changing our ways and habits as pertaining to fire.

We are to reckon ourselves as dead unto sin and alive unto God. That means we are to consider ourselves to be servants of God, whereas we were once servants of sin. The legalists were alarmed at the preaching of Grace. They were charging Paul with destroying the truth of God. Paul answers these legalists in chapter six of Romans. Let us remember that God did not ask our advice as he devised his plan to save sinners. Let us remember that God is sovereign and infinitely wise. Have we been saved to sin? No, we have been raised “to walk in newness of life.”

Relationships- Old and New

Romans is written to believers. Chapters six, seven, and eight are no exception. Paul is speaking to people who know the law (7:1).

Law and Marriage

Paul describes the relationship of a wife to a husband in verses 2-6. As long as both parties are alive they are bound by the laws of their oath and marriage vows, and by the laws of society. Even if the husband is unkind and cruel she is “bound” to him and is his wife. Perhaps she wants to marry someone else. She may not, by the laws of the state and the laws of heaven.

This is our state and predicament We are married to the Law. This law knows nothing of love and tenderness. It is as cold as the stone it was originally written on and as indifferent to feelings as granite rock. The Law is good in the sense that it will never do wrong. It is holy in that it reflects absolute perfection in morals and conduct The Law is always correcting and condemning and it is impossible for anyone married to it to please in every point Paul pointed out that he pleased the law in all points except one. But keeping the first nine of the ten commandments was not sufficient Perhaps some can relate to being married to such a “perfectionist”

Perhaps the wife in Paul’s example desires to be free from one marriage relationship to enter another. If she marries another while her first husband is alive she is called and “adulterous.” As long as we live we are under the dominion of the law. We are married to the law. But what if that first husband dies? Is she still “bound” to him? The answer is yes and no. In as much as he is no longer around to tell her what to do, she is free from him. But she is alone. She still bears his name, Mrs. Jones or Mrs. Smith legally. She still lives in the same house etc.

Paul is talking about the Ten Commandments. He is not talking about God. God is much more than the ten commandments. The purpose of the law was to demonstrate to man his sinfulness and inability to earn his way back to salvation through works.

This is where many people stop in their understanding of these verses. Here is the beauty of it In Christ we died to the law. We are free from its obsessive demands which we found impossible to keep in our humanity. But let us not keep our old name, or our old domicile. Let us be married to another (7:4) let us take his name. Let us live up to that name. Let us live with him and he with us (In. 15:4).

The law of Moses was a complete set of moral requirements that not only reflected the Holiness of God but a certain ideal standard. Paul never says that the law was not good. There is nothing wrong with the law. The something is wrong with us. In our unregenerate state we and the law were incompatible in that we could never fully please or fulfill the requirements of the law. There was nothing wrong with the law. Our nature was incapable of keeping the law.

The thing that made us incompatible was our sin nature. It is not only stubborn and rebellious it is deceptive and dishonest The evil and sinful nature is exposed and revealed 17 with all its shortcomings when placed next to the perfect law. The law is the perfect straight edge that reveals our crookedness.

Sin and the Law

In verse 8 Paul said, “But sin taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin was dead. In what way was sin dead? And if it was dead, why not leave it alone? At first this seems difficult to understand, but it is really quite simple. Perhaps I am sitting on the grass having my lunch, enjoying it and a beautiful day. Right in the middle of my enjoyable experience a policeman taps me on the shoulder and points out a sign that failed to get my attention: “Keep of the Grass.” I had been oblivious or dead to the fact that I was violating the law, but now I and my conscience have been informed. From this day on I can sit on the grass to eat my lunch, but I must ignore my conscience which will remind me of the little sign. Without the law (knowledge of the law) sin was dead (I was oblivious to the

violation). Ignorance of the law is no excuse. But once informed the violator is doubly guilty. Once he was dead in sin (or to sin) through ignorance, but once made aware of the law, he is alive in sin, if he willfully sins.

Paul then explains how he thought he was keeping all the commandments of God until his conscience was made aware of the last and final commandment, covetousness. That law had been violated. As hard as he tried he found himself always breaking that law. It troubled him that the law which was supposed to bring life brought death, for the wages of sin is death.

The Flesh

When a person is converted and discovers that by faith in Christ his sins have been forgiven he is filled with joy and peace. It is wonderful to know that sin has been dealt with. However, it is not long before, to his dismay, the new believer discovers that his old nature is still there. There come wrong thoughts, attitudes, and actions. This is very discouraging.

Paul addresses this dilemma and explains what is happening. We were converted when we trusted Christ, unfortunately our flesh was not. Jesus said to Nicodemus, "That which is flesh is flesh." Flesh here is not the physical body, but the old human nature. Our old nature is incorrigible. "I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing" Rom. 7:18. We have an unwanted companion which will be with us through life. Let us never forget: the flesh of the unbeliever is the same as that of the believer. You can not trust it. You cannot follow it. You cannot reform it. And you cannot run from it. "Evil is present with me" v.21.

The War

Paul speaks of his desire to do right and the conflict he has with another "law" that seems to be written in his members (life). The Christian is a "complex" being. He has a "New Life Principle" and he still has an "Old Life Principle." These are two antagonists. Satan, our arch-enemy, has a friend within the camp. Satan directs all his temptations and evil suggestions to this old nature that is still apart of us. Paul struggled with this reality himself and shares with us the solution to this awful situation. Because we are in Christ we have won the war, but until our life is over we have many battles to fight. We cannot possibly defeat the flesh with the flesh. What a difficult situation we find ourselves in. 18

The Death

Before Paul shows us the path of victory, he tells us another horrible truth. He describes our condition to be worse than we imagine. Have you ever seen carrion? Have you ever been unfortunate enough to see a dead body that was rotting and filled with maggots and vermin. If you have, you would remember. Picture what it would be like to be tied to that stinking carcass. That is a disgusting idea. Unfortunately, it is an idea that found its way into the minds of evil men looking for ways to torture their enemy and make death more terrible. The Romans were known to tie a living prisoner to a dead one. The death of such an unfortunate soul was a slow, painful, and disgusting one. During the first hours of this union, while he still had strength, we would call out for help. Such was the torture. Paul uses this to describe how he feels when he realizes that he is chained to his filthy, rotten human nature and would be so until he died. "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" It is not a pretty picture.

The Answer

Christ is and has the answer to every problem. Paul shall in his next chapter tell us how we can live in triumph and victory through the Power of the Holy Spirit.

"In"

The key to understanding our Justification, Sanctification and Eternal Security is found in the word "in." Being in Noah's Ark made all the difference for Noah's family and the animals. Those who were not "in" were lost and without hope. Likewise, being in Christ makes all the difference for us. The condemnation is outside of Christ. Salvation is to those who are "in" Christ.

Christ did not come to destroy the law, but to fulfil it. It is in this spirit that Paul speaks of the Spirit of life freeing us from the law of sin and of death. We are under the influence of the greater law of the Spirit.

How does this work? If a piece of wood is dropped out of a window it falls to the ground because of a law of nature called gravity. But what if that wood is carved and fashioned into an aerodynamically delicate airplane. Now it does not respond to the law of gravity in the same manner. Has the law of gravity been destroyed or cancelled? Of course not, it has merely been superseded by another law.

The law of Moses could only reveal our heavy sinful nature. It took another law, the law of grace and of the Spirit of life to allow us to fly.

There are two laws now at work in the life of the believer: the law of the flesh (or natural man) and the law of the Spirit (operating on the new spiritual man). As we “mind” the things of the Spirit we come under the wonderful influence of the Spirit much as the wings of an eagle ride the wind and rise effortlessly on an invisible column of air. The spirit of the Christian is lifted by an invisible influence of God. In the eagle's case, the law of aerodynamics overrides the law of gravity. What would happen if the eagle pulled in its wings while in flight? It would tumble, caught in the pull of the earth and the influence of its own weight.

In verse 6 we see the believer tumble, not from grace, but from victory as he minds the things of the flesh. Paul goes on to say that to be carnally minded is death (or detrimental and destructive) to the spirit life.

In the flesh

When Noah was looking for dry land after the rains ended, he sent out a dove and later a raven. The dove returned because there was nothing out there for it. It returned with an olive branch in its mouth which was a welcome sign to Noah. The raven, on the other hand, looks for flesh and carrion. It has different appetites. It did not return. It looks for death. The dove looks for life. The Christian has two natures after conversion. The raven will find death. The dove will find peace and life. We dare not let the raven out of its cage. It will never look for or find good things. “They that are in the flesh cannot please God” 8:8.

We now hunger and thirst after righteousness as Christ spoke of in his sermon on the mount. Until we experience the resurrection or the rapture of our physical bodies we will always have to deal with certain limitations and liabilities that are the result of the original sin. The “flesh” however, is primarily an attitude or an inherent spirit that does not lean toward or long for God. The flesh was knocked out of its orbit in the fall and still wobbles out of sync and harmony with heaven.

In the Spirit

Suddenly there is another large being within the solar system of our spiritual life that exercises a power and a pull upon our mind, will, and emotions. This supreme being is God, known only through Jesus Christ, and is described in 8:9 as the “Spirit of Christ” Jesus once said, “If I be lifted up, I will draw all men unto me.” He was speaking primarily of the cross, but it is the finished work of the cross that answers darkness and death and draws us back to God where we belong. We are still “of” the flesh, but we need not be “in” the flesh. The “in” here means “under the influence.” Paul speaks of this in his letter to the Galatians. “Be not drunk with wine, but be filled with the spirit”

Salvation will ultimately be complete with the reclamation of our mortal bodies on the last day. We along with creation await the removal of the curse of sin. We shall all be released from what is called the “bondage of corruption.” The principle of this corruption has not yet been reversed. Christians still get old and die physically. All of creation waits in anticipation for the great and glorious day of deliverance.

But What About Israel?

Paul now turns to Israel and the matter of their unbelief. Was he being untrue to his great heritage? Was he abandoning the faith of his fathers? Paul was so closely touched by this question of unbelief that he begins by saying he is telling the truth. It seems Paul is so personally touched by the subject of an unbelieving Israel that he takes up the subject with an oath. Very strange indeed, until we realize how close he is by the topic.

He was never far removed from the memory of his own unbelief. "Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief". 1Tim. 1:13 The proper attitude of any preacher and deliverer of God's message of Salvation is one who never forgets how unsaved they once were, and how unworthy they still are. The true preacher never speaks of the wickedness of sinners without a broken heart thinking, "there but for the grace of God go I." Paul makes the incredible statement that shows something of the depth of his love and the breadth of his burden, "For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh" 9:3.

WHO ARE THE ISRAELITES?

They were people of privilege. The blessings showered upon this unworthy people are numerous. Paul lists the spiritual blessings that made most Jews well up with pride. They were adopted or chosen. They enjoyed the glory or what we would call God's presence. They were the recipients of covenants or agreements with God. They were of all the people of the world entrusted with the moral code of society. They were privileged to be the servants of God in both life and worship. They were the people who owned the promises of Heaven which were more valuable than any bond that today might be bought on Wall Street. Israel is the nation that owns Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob: the fathers.

The Jew would agree with all these enumerated privileges of their heritage. They would have been as proud of any American that sees the flag pass by during a parade on the fourth of July, or any Englishman that hears Britannia, or any Turk who sees the Crescent. Paul adds another privilege to the list that stops the parade and pricks any pride. After he mentions the "fathers" he includes the greatest gift and personage given to the world by way of the Jew, and that person is Jesus Christ who "is over all."

Has Israel completely missed the tide of opportunity as the Gentile world sails off with salvation and God's grace? The answer is: no; but the answer opens up a whole new spiritual wonder. "For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel." For example, explains Paul, not all of Abraham's seed are God's promised seed. Ishmael is just as much a son of Abraham as Isaac with regard to the flesh, but not of the Spirit.

Paul clearly points out how God has a right as God to make a people as he chooses. "Hath not the potter power over the clay, . . .?" vs.21. The Jew could understand the sovereign right of God to separate Isaac from Ishmael.

Paul carries the divine right of God farther as he points out that that same sovereign God has a right to divide the children of Isaac into the believers and the unbelievers. In other words, not all Israelites are saved. Does not the God who chooses Isaac and the Spiritual seed of Isaac also have the right to choose the Gentiles to be saved by grace? The answer, of any man who claims to know God, must be yes.

But how is it that a Jew who followed the path of righteousness and the keeping of the law, temple, rituals and such is lost, while the Gentile who did not follow after righteousness, nor follow the Holy Scriptures obtain righteousness? Paul's answer is clear and plain. They

erred in seeking righteousness without faith. They were trusting in their works instead of God's grace. Later we are also warned that whatever is not of faith is sin. So Israel had followed the shadow and not the substance. They had the form of Godliness but denied the power there of.

GENTILES

Paul makes it clear that the saving of the Gentiles was part of God's plan all along. Hosea had said, "I will call them my people, which were not my people; and her beloved, which was not beloved (Hos 1:10). The Jew had somehow never understood one of the great themes of the Bible which was so beautifully articulated by John: "For God so loved the world. "Paul ends chapter nine with a reference to the stone over which the Jews stumbled. This stone is also called the rock of offense. This stone, of course, is Jesus Christ. Many stumble over him. God has set him in the middle of every man's path. A person either stops and ponders his significance, repent and believe or they stumble over him to their eternal hurt. A person who trusts Christ will never be disappointed.

SALVATION IS FOR EVERYONE

Salvation might be "of the Jew" but not "for the Jew." Salvation is for all. Chapter ten is a continuation of the argument of the previous chapter. Paul again stresses that man's righteousness will not save him. The keeping of the law will not save a single person. Israel's sin was in setting out to establish their own righteousness. They had a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge.

THE REMEDY

The word or solution to this mistake is closer than you think. This is the essence of what Paul was saying. "The word is nigh unto thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach" 10:8. Faith. Paul keeps coming back to this concept and important catalyst of conversion. Salvation is not in adopting a litany of religious ceremonies or traditions. Salvation is not in meticulously practicing a certain kind of behavior. Salvation is not reserved for one people and their proselytes. Salvation is in the person of the righteous Son of God who substituted himself in our place to pay for our unrighteousness and to replace it with his righteousness.

Verse nine is the threshold before the one who is called the Door. "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed" (Rom. 1:9-11).

The next verses make it perfectly clear that Salvation is offered to all. There is no difference between the Jew and the Gentile in the eyes of God as to their nature. The raw material is the same.

If the Jew has a zeal without knowledge what is their hope? The answer is the preacher. They shall not believe if they are ignorant. They shall not believe if they do not hear. They will not hear unless someone speaks to them. No one will speak to them unless someone goes to them. Some await the visit from the preacher or soul-winner. The church should be busy about this great task. Many Jews did not believe because they had not heard. On the other hand many heard yet did not believe. They did not believe "the report" as Isaiah said. These are lost. God has held out his hand to some in vain, because they would not take it and be saved.

HAS GOD REJECTED ISRAEL?

The answer is found in chapter ten. God is using even the salvation of Gentiles in his operation of Israel. The conversion of the Gentiles was designed to get Israel to wake up and consider the Christ they rejected. There is still hope for Israel. God is not finished with her yet. God does

not renege on his promises. We are told that the gifts and calling of God are without repentance (Rom. 11:29).

THE WARNING

The Gentile is warned not to presume or boast in the face of Israel's humiliation. The same God who grafted a wild branch on the tree of righteousness can just as easily remove a branch that had been graciously grafted. Salvation is never a cause of presumption or pride. Remember "not all Israel is Israel" Or putting it another way not everyone who calls himself a Christian is saved. One who is truly saved realizes that he is unworthy of such love.

THE BENEDICTION

"For of him, and through him and to him, are all things; to whom be glory for ever. Amen" God made us, God sustains us, and God made us for himself. God is Sovereign

Service

The church is not a building. It is not a business. The church is not supposed to ever become a burden. The church is supposed to be a body. The New Testament Church was born in the upper room as a creation of the Holy Spirit. As God breathed into Adam's nostrils His very own breath to make him a living soul, so too a rushing mighty breath from heaven filled the disciples in the upper room and they became a living body. The Lord Jesus promised to be in the midst of the New Testament Church. In Romans twelve Paul lists the body parts of this spiritual body called the church. The body parts are called gifts or members and they are Prophecy, Ministry, Teaching, Giving, Exhortation, Administration, and Mercy. To have any of these missing is to have a crippled or handicapped organization rather than a healthy spiritual organism.

1. The Prophet. Here is the church's vision. A prophet is a Seer. To be without the gift of prophecy is to be blind. Such a church may as well sit with a tin cup outside the beautiful gate or along the Jericho Road with Bartimaeus begging. Without a vision the people perish. A healthy church must be gifted with those who have spiritual 20/20 vision. The Prophet is first to see God's will and the first to say God's word. They are those who loudly proclaim, "Thus saith the Lord." Jesus is the Word.

2. The Minister. The minister is the servant. This is the gift of helps. If the Prophet brings the eyes, the servant brings the hands. What is a body without hands. Somewhere along the line during the last two thousand years the Minister found his way to the highest seat and station. Jesus washed the disciple's feet. Jesus was the Servant of Servants.

3. The Teacher. The gifted church is able to understand God's Word. The gifted church is not ignorant. Every body has a brain. Gifted teachers are able to present complicated truths in simple ways. The Lord Jesus could point to a flower or a door and explain profound Divine truth. Jesus was the Teacher come from God.

4. The Giver. Giving is an art. The Bible calls it a gift. The natural thing is to take, the supernatural and spiritual thing to do is to give and not to expect anything in return. "God so loved the world that He gave..." God is the great giver. Those with the gift of giving see resources (time, talent, and treasure) as a sacred stewardship. Giving is the arm of the church.

5. The Exhorter. Here is the mouth. The exhorter brings continual encouragement to continue, go on, and endure. The word finds its root meaning is the same word to describe the Comforter or the Holy Spirit.

6. The Ruler. The gift of organization comes from a God who loves order. To be without government is to experience anarchy. The New Testament church was governed by God. But God sends His leaders and His under-shepherds. The broken walls of Jerusalem cried out for a Nehemiah, who went from being a cup bearer to being a governor. Someone said the ruler is the head. No, only Jesus is the head. The Ruler is the feet. Feet point in the direction the body should go.

7. The Love. The gift of mercy is the heart of the church. Without this there is no church. Jesus said it was "By this" that men would know that we are His disciples.

The Christian and Government

Some would have you to believe that Jesus was a revolutionary or a rebel. Totalitarian states hate and fear the church for all the wrong reasons. They ban any and all meetings, public and private. They seek to eliminate and remove the church's leaders as if they were a threat to their leadership. They outlaw preaching, seeing it as a political forum. They discourage the sale and reading of the Bible not understanding its power and influence.

The Jews understood a little more about the threat of Christianity than did the Romans. The Jews were afraid that the popular hope for a Messiah-King would provoke Rome into crushing their privilege as well as the Nazarene. For three years had not Jesus spoke of the "Kingdom?" It was the center piece of his teaching. Was this kingdom a counter kingdom bent on destroying the status quo and government? The criminal charge that was posted on the cross was that Jesus was "King of the Jews."

Those who think that Christianity is supposed to change the world either by bullets or ballots do not understand it at all. That Christ's attention was ever concerned with issues of the day is never found in the historical record. He cared not at all what was on the political agenda, he had his own agenda. He never led rallies to change the rules of sinful man. He knew that "that which was flesh [was] flesh and that which [was] spirit [was] spirit." He was sure to render unto Caesar that which was Caesar's (Matt. 22) but more importantly "unto God the things that are God's."

Legislation, be it the collective will of the people or the edict of a dictator, and the laws of the land are merely the back drop and stage before which and on which Christianity is played out. This is not to say that believers are to be careless and indifferent as brute beasts oblivious as they graze from meadow to meadow. It does mean that the Christian sees and understands deeper issues that are unseen by the spiritually blind.

The constitution for our kingdom comes, not from Washington or Moscow, but from the sermon on the mount. Every believer, be he an inhabitant of Siberia or Seattle is united by a spirit that is not of this world and has a manifest destiny that knows no borders. God is our King.

Paul addressed the subject of government in his letter to the inhabitants of the most awesome political power the world has ever known. The Roman government was often cruel and wicked. It was merciless against its enemies. It was indifferent to the needs of the individual. Because it hated the masses and feared the mob it ruled with a fist of iron. What should the believer do when he found himself caught in the circumstances of tyranny?

Let us remember that governments come and go. President's, Pharaohs, and Kings are merely players being manipulated by the Prince of the Power of the air, Satan. The message of the Church must always be the call to righteousness and justice, but because righteousness is something that is born from within the hearts of man at conversion, righteousness can never be the law of the land.

What I mean is, legislation can give the "form of godliness while denying the power. For men to live together there must be some form of government. Even within the cottage there must be some constitution, where the father is president, the mother secretary of state and the children loyal citizens pledged to protect and defend their family at all costs. Order is the first law of life. There must be order. God has ordained government as an institution to bring and keep order among the citizens of this world. While there are thousands of different forms of government and much disagreement on polity, certain basic rules hold back the confusion of anarchy. Christians are never to contribute to the forces of confusion and anarchy.

Reverence for God is submission to authority. He who has reverence for God will also have

respect for his fellow man. He will respect his fellows rights as he would have his own rights respected. Government is an agreement to respect certain rights others for the good of the whole.

“The powers that be are ordained of God” Rom.13:1 does not mean that God raised up Adolph Hitler. It does not mean that God is responsible for all the evil kingdoms, dictators, and despots of the world. Satan is the one behind ungodly kingdoms.

In Genesis Chapter one we are given some helpful information on this subject. On the First day God created light. On the second day God created the heavens. The third day saw fruit and the forth day saw the establishment of order. The Sun ruled the day and the moon ruled the night. Here is the ministry of the sun and the moon: to bring light as contrasted to darkness. This is the job of all authority. God ordained it as such. The job of all authority is to govern or rule by light over darkness. “Rulers are not a terror to good works” 13:3. Our Lord alluded to this when he told us in his word that men love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil (In. 3:19).

What God has ordained is the power or the authority of government not the man who temporally holds or seizes that position. God will hold those men and women responsible for what they do with the authority they wield. A good example of this is found in John 19:10-11. “Then saith Pilate unto him, Speaketh thou not unto me? knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee? Jesus answered, Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above: therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin.” Pilate could try to wash away his responsibility of punishing evil and rewarding good, but it is impossible to wash away sin.

Romans thirteen teaches us what our attitude should be toward government. It should be one of submission. When a person or persons holding the reigns of power try to make a Christian violate a commandment of God, the believer has no choice, but to obey the higher power, God. In this regard, even when resisting the government the believer is under authority. Peter said, when forbidden to preach (a direct contradiction to the instruction of Christ: Matt28:19-20, John 21:15-17) “We ought to obey God rather than man” Acts 5:29.

Romans thirteen teaches us:

1. We are to recognize authorities right (1)

This means that we understand that there must be a system of order and authority in life. We are to be subject or submissive to those who hold authority over us.

2. We are to resist only to our own hurt (2)

This means that we are not to work against the ordained authority figures in our lives. This is speaking to our attitude and spirit more than anything else. If we rise up against duly constituted authority we endanger ourselves and our fellows. If we violate the law, we must be willing to pay the price that comes from such an action.

3. We are to realize government is for good (3-4)

All government must rest upon the idea of good. Sometimes perverted men take hold of government and have a distorted sense of what is good.

4. We are to respond to obligations accordingly (6)

We are to pay our taxes, support the common defense, and engage in those shared necessities of an ordered society.

5. We are to respect those holding authority (7)

We respect the office. When a judge enters the courtroom we all rise, not because of the person or personality, but in respect to the power this man holds 26

Fellowship

Chapter fourteen begins to describe practical Christianity. It begins a litany of proverbs and axioms of Christian Living. It deal with attitudes as well as actions, pointing out dangers and pitfalls of the Church of Christ.

Herbs

We are in danger of wanting to judge others. We set ourselves up as the authority, judge, and jury. People must live up to our standards or expectations. If someone does not fit into the mold of our prejudices, we reject him and encourage him to join the “other church” down the road and label him a “liberal.” A cure for such a judgmental attitude is found in Psalm 40: 2 “He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock.” Isaiah 51:1 Hearken to me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek the LORD; look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged.” We would do well to remember where the Lord found us: in a horrible pit in clay and mud and dirt. How dare we now set ourselves up as judge and jury thinking we somehow are more superior than others?

Every Bible believing church must be orthodox in the theology of the faith and interpretation of the scriptures. We must never flinch or compromise along these lines to the enemy. On the other hand we should be liberal enough to accept a wide latitude of backgrounds and cultures. We should give a wide berth to the personal preferences of others as well as a patient acceptance of those who are not matured or seasoned yet, to babes in Christ, to the wounded and the weak. Paul puts it this way: Him that is weak in the faith, receive ye.”

There are some who are strong Christians and others who are weak. It is interesting to note that the strong one seems to have fewer rules and restrictions for their life and a greater liberty of conscience. The strong person eats everything offered him. The weak individual is offends his conscience with a multitude of foods and therefore eats only herbs. The problem comes with the insistence that everyone eat herbs and what Paul calls doubtful disputations. This “weaker” faith is what I call a “monastery faith.” It can only function when protected by high walls and when isolated form the world and its allurements. Walls are not always mad of stone however. Legalism is a wall fabricated by the weak and is just as sequestered as the convent. Self imposed rules and traditions are substituted for life giving and sustaining grace. In another place Paul refers to this has “having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof.”

Besides our being hewn from the rock, and “digged from the clay,” we are given another reason not to set ourselves up as the judge of others. We have no right to judge another man’s servant. That other believer is a servant of a master other than ourselves. They are servants of Christ. Christ will judge his own servants. “Every one of us shall give account of himself to God” v.12.

Now all these ideas must be moderated and balanced by the responsibility of all believers. No believer has the right to say that “because I am the servant of Christ, I never need to give account to another Christian.” This is dealt with in other places in Scripture, but here it is sufficient to point out that “none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself” v.? 26

Paul has the liberty of conscience to do many things which are not unclean in themselves (v.14), but so as not to cause a weaker brother to stumble he is willing to trim his liberty rather

