

“All Right”



BRIEF STUDY OF PAUL'S LETTER TO THE ROMANS

Ingimar DeRidder

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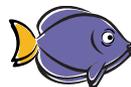
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All Right

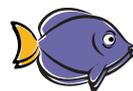
Things are not right. Just look around and see for yourself. We only have to read this mornings newspaper to see that it is so. No sooner do we begin to read then we find ourselves shaking our heads and thinking (as we read of some awful or outrageous behavior of mankind) “that’s not right.” Everyone knows it. What is going on in the world around us at this very moment, are the flawed and futile attempts of people to make things “right.” Every war, political campaign, educational endeavor, or economic reform is someone’s attempt to make things “right.”

The problem with this is that when someone thinks the answer to unbridled capitalism is communism a great struggle is engaged and war has begun. There are political constituents who are trying to overthrow the party presently in power to replace it with what it considers “right.” We can’t seem to agree.

With the Book of Romans, God weighs in on the subject. We use the word “right.” God prefers the word “righteousness.” Righteousness is God’s idea of right. Romans is a divine revelation of “what is right.” Romans provides the Christian with the architectural “spiritual specs” for life.

The message of the church involves declaring “what is right” (1:17), exposing what is “not right,” explaining how to “get right,” and teaching how to “stay right.” You might call Romans the Christian’s Curriculum of Righteousness or “How to make everything All Right.”

It the center of its sixteen chapters is an assurance and a spiritual “ballast” that steadies our ship in the roughest of waters. “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to his purpose.” (Rom. 8:28). This verse enables faith to survive life’s severest storms. It does not say that all things are “good.” We know that they are not. But it does say, that “all things are working together for good.” In other words, it may not be “right,” but, whatever it is, if I love God, it is “all right.” Yes, there are many things that are “wrong” in this world. Much of what was “Wrong” in the world was personified in the Roman Empire. With this epistle Paul lights a lantern just before the darkness of persecution was about to descend on the believers in Rome to reassure them and us that faith will survive. The Book of Romans assures us that in Christ, everything is All Right.



Sin

At the root of all man's problems is sin. We are all sinners. "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Rom.3:23). Many refuse to believe it, but it is true. Until a person accepts the fact that he is sick, he is unlikely to call his doctor. Man's main problem is a sin problem, and it is worse than most think.

Imagine the human heart is like a hive ruled by a sinful fallen will that "lusts" for the very things that will destroy it (v. 24). It is filling up the chambers of its soul with awful things (v. 29). "Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity, whispers, backbiting, on and on. Like crazy bees, we are gathering up or "treasuring up" wrath, not realizing that the very thing the sinner loves shall be the thing that condemns him on the last day. (Rom 2:5)

Understanding sin is a vital part of appreciating who God is and what he wants to do for us. There is a metaphor in these first pages of Romans that goes right to the heart of the matter. It explains how sin took hold and first settled in the human heart. It explains why it has led to such sorrow and awful consequence. It explains why sinners fail to sense the seriousness of their situation. And it offers up the only antidote, alternative, and anti-venom. Paul goes back to its origin, when man chose to believe a lie rather than the truth. There it is in a nut shell. At its core, sin is all the result of a lie. The answer and enemy of a lie is the truth.

Satan is a liar and the father of lies (Jn. 8). Jesus is the Truth. Paul explains that there was a time when man "Changed the truth of God into a lie" (1:25). God's truth cries out from the heavens itself. "The heavens declare the glory of God." Here it says God, "hath showed it unto them ...the invisible things of him from the creation of the world" (v.20). Instead of holding on to the truth, man held it in unrighteousness (or with disdain), "professing themselves to be wise" (as in when the woman saw that the tree was to be desired to make one wise) they became fools. Anyone who believes a lie is fooled and if you are fooled enough you become a fool. We see this foolishness everywhere. The fool is the last to see it. "men leaving the natural use....." (v.27).

Sin is the "misuse" of life. Life is a gift. Life came with simple instructions. Adam and Eve failed to follow them (simple as they were), and the rest is history. Verse 21 of Chapter one could be seen as a simple history of our first parents. No one "knew God" like they did, and yet they "glorified him not as God." It has been down hill ever since.

Paul says “Who, knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.” (1:32). Man became a fool when he believed Satan’s lie that there was “pleasure” in sin. It was a half truth. The writer of Hebrews tells us that such “pleasure” is only “for a season.”

Judgment of Sin.

Who is to say what is sin? Is it not a matter of taste? Is it not a matter of culture? There can be no judgment if there is no standard for judgment. The standard for judgment of what is and what is not a lie is the truth. There can be a million lies, there is only one truth. “But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth...” (Rom. 2:2). Again a sinner is described as someone who does not “obey the truth” (2:8). The consequence of such folly is “indignation, wrath, tribulation, and anguish upon every soul that doeth evil.”

On judgment day man will be judged according to what he knew, and what he did (v.6), and even of what he thought was secret (v.16). Judgment will be for everyone equal (v.11). Gentiles and Jews are both to be judged by the same ruler: the truth. The Jew somehow believed that they were better. They were not. They thought they were guides to the blind (v.19), instructors to the ignorant (v.20), and teachers of others (v.21). They failed to teach themselves. The very law that they used to condemn others condemned them. Paul pointed out that sin was a spiritual problem. It required a spiritual solution. The law was simply a tool not a cure. The sign on the highway may inform the speeder that he is going to fast, but if his radar detector is silent, so is his conscience; and if he does not see a policeman, he does not see the sense of slowing down.

The antidote for a lie is not the law. The antidote for a lie is the truth. The truth must be accepted by faith. God and truth are on one side and man and sin are on the other. All have sinned and come short of the glory of God (3:23). Everyone? Yes, everyone. Moral truth today is considered relative. If enough people do something or behave in a certain manner they are considered normal. What was considered “abnormal” behavior a generation ago (and deemed such in certain psychology textbooks) is today accepted as “normal,” or at least acceptable. The “everyone is doing it” philosophy is the prevalent and preferred standard. Paul does not agree. He says in effect, even if every single man on earth takes one position and calls “good” what God calls “bad,” God is right and man is wrong. It does not matter if man believes the truth or not. Truth is always truth.

Then Paul makes a true statement that mankind finds hard to believe. “There is none righteous, no, not one.” This is something that must be accepted by faith. Without faith it seems incredible. The reason it seems incredible is because we tend to measure ourselves with ourselves. We can always find someone worse than ourselves. But once we measure ourselves with God or God’s standard we are all “unprofitable.” (3:12).

When Paul describes a sinner’s awful state and speaks of the poison of asps (3:13) I again remember my metaphor of the poisoned honey. Just because something tastes good does not mean it is good for you. Paul also speaks of a throat as an open grave, and man as a being full of bitterness.

Paul makes it clear. Man’s sin condition is worse than he thought. It is more serious than he imagined. Not only has he believed a lie, the medicine he is taking (religion) will not work.

The remedy for this awful condition of sin is summed up in a single name: Jesus (v.26). The only remedy for wrong is right. If we reach for a bottle of “our righteousness” we continue to be deceived. Even if there appears to be something there it is a placebo at best. Wishful thinking might make the patient “feel better” but it will not wash away sin. The answer is “his righteousness.” “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.”

If sin is the result of man believing a lie, then God would send his Son, the Truth. Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life, no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.” Jn.14:6.

Questions - One

1. How did man go from “right” to “wrong?” (Rom. 1:25)
2. What happens when someone believes a lie and lives according to a lie? (Rom. 1:22).
3. In what way is holding the truth in unrighteousness a misuse of purpose? (Rom. 1:18; Rom.25-26)
4. How is the sinner filling up his life, heart and mind with the very things that will destroy and condemn him? (Rom. 1:24,29;2:5-6)
5. Were the Jewish people exempt from the sinful condition of mankind? (Rom. 2:1; 3:9)
6. Does a person have to believe the truth for it to be truth? (Rom. 3:3-4)
7. In what way does the law help the sinner? (Rom. 3:20)
8. In what sense did Paul consider himself a “debtor” (1:14) and what hope did Paul hold out to those who have been so misled by the “lie?” (Rom.1: 14-17).



Salvation

There is only one cure, and remedy for unrighteousness. It is the righteousness of Jesus Christ. Salvation is in having his righteousness ascribed to our account. Our sin is cleansed away by the blood of his sacrifice. (Rom. 3: 22-26) Righteousness is something that God “declares” (v.25). The same God who holds our debt, releases us from penalty and burden of that debt and we are delivered by his “forbearance.” If our sin debt is just cancelled, how then are the books balanced? Is our debt just cancelled?. Not exactly. To do that God would not be Just, and God is just (Rom. 3:26). God does not violate his own law. Sin must be paid for. Here is the genius and generosity of God’s amazing grace. It is paid for by another. It is paid for from the vast riches of Christ’s righteousness and the treasures of God’s grace. Salvation is a gift (Rom. 3:24; 6:23).

Now, the world finds this Gospel (Good News) hard to believe. Is it not ironic, that those who have believed Satan’s lie so quickly refuse to believe this truth? “To declare...his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus” (Rom 3:26). Believing God is called faith. It is thus declared that “The Just shall live by faith” (Rom. 1:17). Saving faith is not believing what you believe, it is believing God. That is why Paul later writes “Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God” (Rom. 10:17).

Now, this is “hard” to believe. Man wants to believe in himself, more than he wants to believe in God. Pride is the parade of ego. The gospel is clear, man cannot save himself. This is humbling, and painful to pride. So even if a man admits that he is a sinner (no one is perfect, he says) at least he is “better” than many others. That is also part of the lie that man has embraced. That is the problem the religious person must overcome. Man wants to boast. There is no boasting with grace (Rom. 3:27).

Abraham

The Jews were proud of Abraham. They believed that their blood-relationship to him somehow made them better than others. Paul now points out that it was not the blood of Abraham as much as the belief of Abraham that made him “right” with God (Rom. 2:27-28; Rom. 4:1-13). Then he points out that if it was by the blood of Abraham than the Gentiles would be without hope (Rom. 4:16). No, it is not faith in Abraham’s blood that saves, but rather faith in the blood of Christ (the seed of Abraham, v.4:13) that saves.

Abraham believed God. He believed in spite of circumstances, in spite of his weakness, in spite of others. He simply believed God (Rom. 4:17-20). He believed that God could be trusted (Rom. 4:21). Having done that, God simply “imputed” to him righteousness. Abraham became “right” in a world gone “wrong.” Faith in believing God is true even if no one else believes.

The Law

The Jews held that Salvation was in both Abraham and in keeping the law. Understanding how Abraham was justified exposes that misconception. Abraham was made “right” long before the law was given. He was justified without the law. So can we.

This being made “right” is also called being “justified.” Here we find the balancing of the accounts. In Grace, God balances the books. The type on this page is “justified” in that it is “balanced” and spread evenly across the page. Accounting books are justified when the debits and credits are “balanced”. A sinner is justified when the righteousness of Jesus Christ is placed in his otherwise “bankrupt” account. While we were sinners “Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8) his righteousness has been “imputed” (4:22-25) to our account by grace through faith.

Adam

Understanding “imputation” requires understanding how Adam’s original sin was “imputed” to us. The offense and original sin came upon all men when Adam disobeyed God (When Eve believed the lie). So sin can only be made right by one who was never corrupted by wrong and was only righteous (Jesus). The only hope for the sons of Adam was the Son of God (Rom. 1:3). We are justified by his blood (Rom. 5:9), his life (5:10), his death (5:10); his obedience (5:19), and his righteousness (3:25). Salvation is a gift of grace. Faith in Christ and Christ alone is the only way to make things right with God.

Atonement

Atonement has been called the “satisfaction doctrine.” What happened in the death of Christ, was the demands and requirements of God’s justice have been “satisfied.” The word. The word translated “reconciled” in Romans 5:10 is translated “atonement” in verse eleven (*katalasso*). To be “reconciled means

that all hostility has been removed and replaced with friendship. Atonement, has been transliterated by some to say, At One With, and rightly so.

Theologically speaking, it was the vicarious atonement of Jesus Christ on the cross that settles the sin debt, canceling the penalty of impending eternal death, and replacing it with the promise of eternal life. Faith knows that it can trust the promises of a God who cannot lie.

Questions- Two

1. What is the only thing that can cover our sin-debt? (Rom. 24-26).

2. God declares that a man can be made “Just” (or right) by what? (Rom. 3:26; 1:17)

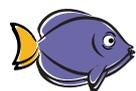
3. Why does the world find this Good News so hard to believe? (Rom.1:22)

4. Why did the Jew find this so particularly hard to believe? (Rom. 3:27; Rom. 2:27-28)

5. It was not the blood of Abraham that they should trust in but the blood of _____. (Rom. 5:9).

6. If the Jewish misconception about Abraham was correct, what hope would the Gentiles have?

7. While faith is not a feeling, what is the sense that overwhelms the believer that has been justified? (Rom. 5:1-2). How does that feel?



Sanctification

On December 17th, 1903, Orville and Wilber Wright flew the first successful heavier-than-air aircraft at Kitty Hawk, N.C. While what they did was more mechanical than miracle, the Wright brothers proved the naysayers wrong. They used the law of aerodynamics to overcome the law of gravity. The law of gravity was not repealed, just overcome for a time by another.

In Christ, we are the “Right” brothers who experience the dynamics of one law that trumps and triumphs over another. The law of sin and death pulls us down. The law at work that results in sin is the reason for all that is “wrong” in the world. Rocks fall because they are heavy. Sinners sin, because they are sinners. Jesus Christ died on the cross and paid the penalty of the law of death. Only he could meet its demands and pay its cost. Salvation results when a sinner receives, believes, and accepts what Jesus did on the cross as a vicarious atonement and payment for his sins.

But a sinner needs more than a payment against one law, he needs the power of another. That is what sanctification is. Grace, not only pays all past accounts for wrong, it also empowers a new life for right. We, by God’s grace become the “right” brothers and “right” sisters in that we no longer have to be held down by the law of sin. We can rise above all that is wrong by a new power that is right. In Grace we have come under the power and authority of righteousness (Rom. 6:18).

Paul points the Romans to a higher life. “Shall we continue in sin... [because Christ has paid our sin debt]? The answer is obvious, No! God calls us to greater things and to live a higher life. “Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin...” (Rom 6:13). We no longer want or need to roll around in the dirt and grime of a sin-filled world. We might have to remain “in it,” but we do not have to remain “of it.”(Rom. 6:23). We can fly.

A New Spirit

If a heavy airplane is to fly it must cooperate with the laws of aerodynamics. What we call the Christian life is the new life, under the influence of a new Spirit, the Holy Spirit. There is a difference of opinion as to whether Romans seven is a description of Paul’s heart before or after he trusted Christ. It does not matter, for that is not the point. The point is that the natural, carnal man (7:14) is incapable of overcoming the law of the sin and death by will power (works). It is the power of the Holy Spirit that empowers this new life (7:6). Even “wanting” to live right (7:19), is not enough to get us off the ground. When we realize that

our power is worthless, then we can recognize that faith must fly by a supernatural power greater than ourselves. (v.18). Salvation is all of Grace. Grace is the “right stuff.” There is no Christian life without it.

I believe Grace is defined in another of Paul’s letters (Phil. 2:13) “For it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do his good pleasure.” Grace is God working. When God is working in a life it is evidenced in both the “will” and the “to do[ing]” of his good pleasure. In other words, If he asks us to fly, he will also give us wings.

Romans Eight shows us the wings. “The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God” (Rom. 8:16). As we “mind” (5,6,7) the Spirit we simply rest in him and God does the rest. We let, he lifts. When we think right we will live right. Faith assures us that, not only have we died with Christ, we have also “risen” with him (6:4). Eventually even our bodies will “rise” with him (Rom. 8:23). Romans 8:8 reminds us of the reason for our life. I am alive for God’s good pleasure not my own. When I “mind” him, yield my will to his, then (and only then) I will feel his wind (Spirit is often translated wind) beneath my wings.

When a person is indwelt, empowered, and impacted by the goodness of God’s grace he realizes that Sanctification is God at work. Man at work, at best is flesh (Jn. 3:6; Rom. 8:6-8). Spiritually, we need more than flesh to fly. We need to be filled with God’s Spirit, the Spirit of God. He who is is humble, and can walk through this world without fear. The Holy Spirit enables and empowers us to live right in a world still filled with much wrong.

Paul brings assurance into focus with a rhetorical question, “If God be for us, who can be against us.” The answer, of course is, “no one.” And because of this, no matter what happens, no matter what trial or tribulation the Christian must face, he is confident that God is at work, and that “all things” are “working together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose” (Rom. 8:28). The Christ who died on the cross, and rose the third day assures us with his word, that while everything that happens to us in this world might not seem “right,” we know that by God’s grace it will be “all right.”

Questions-Three

1. If we are not saved by what we do, does it matter to God what we do? (Rom.6:1-4)
2. Salvation involves not only believing in Christ's death but also in his _____ (Rom. 6:5)
3. What are the wages of sin? (Rom. 6:23)
4. What does Paul teach about service in Rom. 6:16?
5. Is the law bad? (Rom. 7:7;12)
6. Are we able (of ourselves) to even live up to our own standards? (Rom. 7:19-21)
7. What is the "new law" that begins to rule in a believer's life (Rom. 8:2)
8. Does every Christian have this Spirit? (Rom.8:9)
9. How does the Spirit give the believer assurance of salvation (Rom. 8:16).
10. What shall separate us from God? (Rom. 8:31-39)



Sovereignty

Paul, now casts his eye on Israel begins to cry. But in so doing, he takes up the topic of Sovereignty which wipes away all tears. Paul loves Israel, but he loves Christ more. Three chapters (9,10,11) explain Israel's loss and our gain. Sovereignty is more about right than might. If God is God, then he has a "right" to do whatever he wishes. He could have as easily made you a potato as a person, and may every vain person be forewarned that tomorrow he could easily be a vegetable. That God chose a heathen named Abraham and made of him a great nation should have caused the Hebrew to be more humble than haughty. Yet they became proud. They began to boast. They forgot that it was all of God and nothing they had done. This was a lesson lost to them again and again. It was God who parted the sea, not Moses (who gave the law). God deserves all the glory. Israel failed the test of humility, but somehow God used that in his design to reach humanity with the Gospel, which was not just for the Jew, but for the whole world. Theologically this is very deep. Foolish is anyone who thinks they can fathom the depths of God's Sovereign will. It should be enough for faith to accept gracefully the fact that the Righteous God of Glory, has the "right" to do whatever he wills, and to believe whatever that is, it is right.

It seems ironic that the Gentiles (who followed not after righteousness) have been saved, while the Jews (who followed after righteousness) were not saved (or set aside). That is exactly what happened (Rom.9:30). The missing ingredient in Israel's efforts was "faith." A sovereign God has chosen this simple "litmus test" for eternal life. Do you believe me, do you trust me, do you have faith in me? Isaiah summed it up for all the Prophets, "Who hath believed my report?" (Rom. 10:16; Isa. 53). Isaiah revealed a marvel. "He was wounded for our transgressions....and with his stripes we are healed." The Jewish people, not only failed to understand this, they crucified Christ. So, in sovereignty, it seems that God has cast Israel aside. He has not.

Sovereignty has not cast Israel away, (Rom. 11:1) but rather that their stumbling would afford the Gentiles the opportunity to be saved (Rom. 11:11). In this is demonstrated "both the goodness and the severity of God" (Rom. 11:22). That much modern day preaching of the gospel leaves out the "severity" is a mistake. The absence of one cheapens the other. Any Gentile who finds himself included in God's mercy should realize that it somehow involves Israel's stumbling over Christ. This is part of the "all things working together for good...." Paul speaks of this saying, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and his ways past finding out!" (Rom. 11:33). God's Sovereign Will is deep.

Paul warns the Gentiles who are celebrating their salvation not to be proud. A rudimentary understanding of election might make someone proud. A real understanding will make one humble. “Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not high-minded, but fear: (Rom11:20).

The same God who “cut off” a branch can graft it back on. God is not finished with Israel. What happened to Israel is for a “time” until the fullness of the Gentiles.

Some speak of a “second blessing” in the Christian experience. If there is such a thing (I don’t believe it is what most think it is), it is found not in Sanctification but in Sovereignty. Sanctification is a life long process of becoming Christ-like. Sanctification is the new-life principle that can lift a believe above the sin of the world. It is seen when we are no longer slaves of unrighteousness, but servants of righteousness. But how does this “new-life” principle work? Does it suddenly take full control of our will and life? No, that is why we call it a process. The secret of understanding Sanctification must be found in Sovereignty. In Christ, we receive the pardon for sin in “believing.” We find the power, however, before Sovereignty in the “bowing.”

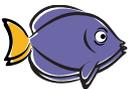
Believing is only part of the Christian experience, bowing is the other. The devil believes, but he does not bow. No one understands the Sovereignty of God without bowing to it in faith. Who or what you bow to in your heart is the real God of your life. The false prophets and unbelievers of Elijah’s day “bowed” to Baal. Those who did not truly believed in God.

Faith does not have to have all the answers. Faith does not have to know why one is cut off and another receives mercy. Faith trusts God. Faith receives God’s Salvation and bows before his sovereign will. Faith believes God has the right to do whatever he wills.

Faith discovers that will to be revealed in God’s word (Rom. 10:17). The Just (Jew or Gentile) that “live[s] by faith” simply believes God’s word and bows before it. I surrender all my “rights” to God. He may do with me what he will. This is more than believing in fate (fate believes is good or bad luck), faith on the other hand, trusts without fear believing that trusting in a God that is good, can only turn out good in the end. God is right and Sovereign.

Questions-Four

1. How special were the Jewish people according to (Rom. 9:4-5)?
2. What does Paul mean by “For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel”? (Rom. 9:6-8).
3. What does Rom. 9:11-13 teach about the sovereignty of God?
4. What does Rom. 9:14-17 teach about sovereignty and salvation?
5. Who is Paul talking about in Rom. 9:24 “Even us” ? (v.25-33)
6. What was Israel’s error as it understood “righteousness” (Rom. 10:3).
7. How can a person become a recipient of God’s grace and salvation? (Rom. 10:8-17).
8. Has God cast away Israel? (Rom. 11:2; 11,23,25).
9. Why did God brake Israel off for a time? (Rom. 10:19).
10. How is Sovereignty described in Rom. 10:36?



Service

We are saved to serve. It is as simple as that. While once we served sin and Satan (not realizing that we were following a lie), now knowing the truth, we must follow the truth, serving God by doing right. This is the call to Christian service. We are to be “living sacrifices,” that is, to serve God. Paul calls it “reasonable.” Again, we are saved to serve.

How do we serve God? How does the Christian life make us different? What are we to “do” now that we know God? First of all, we are different. Sanctified, among other things means “set apart.” We are set apart for God. Sanctification is the spiritual development of our spirit, but because it involves faith in God’s word, it also involves the mind. Paul said, “be ye transformed, by the renewing of your mind” (Rom. 12:2). By God’s grace, we have “changed our mind.” Now we see life differently and live differently.

For the Christian, serving God is not bowing down before statues, or placing food in some temple. We serve God as we serve and love one another. In Romans 12 Paul describes real church service. The church is not an organization, but an organism, a living body made up of many believers which are parts or “members” of that body. Real church membership is found in the functioning of a variety of spiritual gifts which are found in the lives of individual Christians. Just as a healthy body has many organs that all work together in what we recognize as a healthy life, so the church has many “members” or organs that minister to the whole.

Church life must be more than an organ playing, and Christian service must be more than religious activity. The real church is the “work of God” (14:20). Remember the “bee hive” analogy used to describe the human heart? Collectively, the church can be a bee-hive of activity, but that activity must be all and only for the glory of God. Without God’s Grace there can be no fruit (or honey, using the bee-hive analogy). The good “honey” (the Sweetness, the joy) of a healthy church is in holiness and in righteousness.

We often speak of a new local church as “hiving off” from another. When it is done right, it is sweet indeed. The “workers” or “servants” in the local church are ever aware that they are involved in an important and special “work of God” (14:20), and behave accordingly. Holiness involves not only avoiding what is not good or “right,” but actively going about doing good and what is “right.”

In a healthy bee hive, somehow every creature knows its part and place. So too in the healthy Christian community of the church, Christ the Lord is at the center, every saint lives to serve Him and worship Him. How sweet it is!

Chapter Thirteen describes the Christian life outside the “hive” or “haven” of the local body. The church is no enemy to order and to government (13:1). Saints must function in society as good citizens. They are to obey laws and pay taxes, and give respect and honor where they are due (13:7). This honor is to the office and the order that God has allowed, understanding all the while that we are the Lord’s (14:8). We belong to God. The kingdom of God is “righteousness, peace and joy” (14:17). This is another description of a spiritual body. Even in the midst of Rome and Roman law, the Christian life and community can thrive. It must not try to feed on flesh however. The nectar that feeds, fuels, and nourishes this “faith community” is God’s word (Rom. 15:4; 10:17). In it we find faith, hope and love.

Christians also obey the law, not because it “saves us,” but because it is right. The ten commandments are not erased from our lives just because we have “faith,” rather they have a new place and a new purpose (Rom. 13:5, 8,9). All the law is caught up and captured in a single word: love (13:10). Love now becomes the motivation for doing right and living right and serving God. We are surrounded with evil. Holiness is more than hiding from evil however, it is overcoming evil by doing good (Rom. 12:21). We cannot hide in the hive.

Chapter Fourteen helps us to be living sacrifices. God is our judge. Every Christian is God’s servant. It is not for one servant to stand in judgment over another. Rather than judging or condemning one another, we are to serve and help one another. We are to edify and build up one another. In every community some will be stronger than others. The stronger are to help the weaker and all we do must be to “glorify God” (Rom. 15:6). Paul describes the church at Rome as a beautiful thing: “And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another” (Rom. 15:14). This is a beautiful description of the local church. It is a place filled with goodness, knowledge, truth, and a place where we encourage and edify one another.

This letter is to those Christians living in Rome, in the very heart of the beast. If God can do a work there, he can do a work anywhere. Paul is writing to the Gentiles who (because of God’s grace) have become part of God’s great salvation. These believers, and all believers are on a mission of salvation. We, like Paul are debtors and have a message to deliver. We have a gospel. Paul said “I am

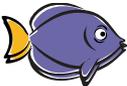
not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek” (Rom. 1:16).

There is a final admonition to “do right”. He said “I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil” (Rom. 16:19). Notice that this is the opposite of what the original sin led to. Eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, has filled the world with woe. Paul points to an innocence that can only be found in a holy heart. The holy heart, the heart made “right” by God loves to learn about “that which is good.” It has no desire to look at or study that which is “evil.” Honey bees look for the flowers, flies like the garbage.

The Romans were surrounded by evil and there were many things in ancient Rome that were “not right.” These Roman Christians, (many of whom would have to face the lions of the Arena) had a faith that is still spoken of through out the world (Rom. 1:8). All who will love righteousness in a world gone wrong will suffer persecution, but Paul might have well said “not to worry,” (if I may use the vernacular). The “God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly,” and besides that, “the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ [is] with you, Amen.” (Rom. 16:20). In other words, it was as if he were saying “don’t worry, the just shall live by faith, and through that faith in Christ, everything is going to be ‘all right.’”

Questions-Five

1. According to Rom. 12:1, we are saved to _____.
2. How are we transformed and no longer conformed to the way of the world? (12:2).
3. What metaphor does Paul use to describe the church and what do we learn from this? (12:4-11).
4. Who do we serve? (12:11).
5. How do we fulfill the law? (13:8)
6. Bees put honey in their chambers, what should we never put in ours? (13:13).
7. Some things might be all right in and of themselves, but they would not be right for us to do, why? (14:13-23)
8. How does Rom. 15:14 describe a healthy local church?
9. What does Rom. 15:20 tell us about right and wrong?
10. Read Rom. 1:14-17. What does this tell us about the Christian life?



Conclusion

Rome was called the “Eternal City” by the ancients. While it still remains, the glory of its empire lies in ruins. The Circus Maximus and the Coliseum are wind-swept and silent. Gladiators have long since dropped their swords and their bones have turned to dust. The Roman Legions, including the famous tenth that sacked Jerusalem, have left the field. The Emperors who thought themselves gods, now know better.

The early myths of the origins of Rome speak of a vestal virgin being raped by Mars the god of war. The result of this were said to be the twins Romulus and Remus. Cast into the river they were rescued and suckled by a wolf, so the story goes. These absurdities are a fitting genesis for a city that worshiped war.

That the Lamb of God was crucified on a Roman cross is true, but all the legions of Rome could not stop the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Worldly governments and their kings have come and gone. Jesus Christ is alive and lives forever. His Kingdom conquers mankind one heart at a time. His only weapon is his word, and faith the only tribute. The hob nailed boot of the Pax Romana is no longer on the neck of human nature. While nations struggle to find a suitable substitute, and put an end to war, the Prince of Peace quietly marches in triumph into every heart that welcome him and there he reigns in righteousness.

