

Romans

Preface

Picture a courtroom. You are the defendant. The prosecutor is Satan and God sits at the bar. Satan begins his final argument, “This man is guilty...” and he begins to list your sins one by one.

What will your answer be? You can’t truthfully say “Satan is lying! I have no sins!” (I John 1:8, 10). You can say, “Yes, but I’m really sorry I did those things...” but that doesn’t erase your sins.

The only thing left to do is to acknowledge your sins and take your medicine.

But you don’t want that medicine. It is hell, “the unquenchable fire, where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched” (Mark 9:43-44).

All have sinned (3:23) and the penalty for sin is fixed: “the wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6:23). There is nothing you or I can do to avoid that punishment. If God is a just God and He is *perfectly* just the price must be paid. There will be an execution of the penalty.

That means that we are in a predicament. We are sinners—our first sin made it so. We are, therefore, subject to the penalty for sin. We are locked in a cell with no means of escape. We have no power in ourselves to gain freedom from the prison. We are in bondage to sin (see II Pet. 2:19).

Paul aims to bring this predicament into bold relief. It is a universal problem. Every individual who has reached an accountable age is in this quandary. What happens when the knowledge of our sins begins to stir up the guilt inside? What can we do?

In Romans, Paul explains the means through which a perfectly just God has arranged for the salvation of imperfect men, through faith in His Son, Jesus Christ. He says the power of God unto salvation is the gospel itself, for everyone who believes (Romans 1:16). The gospel is the good news about Jesus and how He laid down His life in place of

ours, taking the penalty due us, and paying the debt we owe.

But how can a just God save unjust men? Paul’s argument in Romans clearly vindicates the justice of God while explaining in detail the basis of our hope.

Think of the courtroom scene again. The Judge passes His sentence: “Death!” But Christ pulls us to the side and takes our place. As He is led away, the Judge says to you, “You may go; you are free. This man has purchased your pardon. I declare you ‘righteous.’” Paul uses the word “justified” to describe this spiritual acquittal. We are *justified* by our faith in Christ. “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (Romans 8:1).

Why would God do that for people who have offended Him again and again? The answer is in one powerful little four letter word: LOVE. “But God demonstrates His own love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8). God’s love for us is profound, beyond anything words can express.

And think about this: if God did that for His enemies, what will He do for His friends? “You are my friends if you do what I command you” (John 15:14).

So it makes sense that Paul would wrap up the main argument of his letter with the loftiest language known to man. It starts with this statement: “If God is for us, who can be against us?” (8:31)

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Introduction

This study is limited to chapters 1 through 8 of the book of Romans. This part of the book contains Paul's main theological argument and answers Job's question (9:2): "How can a man be righteous before God?" (NKJV). The more we appreciate the absolute moral glory of God, the more we understand the difficulty of that question. The more cognizant we are of our sins, the more anxious we will be to find an answer.

We are indebted to the apostle, and to the Holy Spirit who inspired him, for writing the letter that best reconciles the fact that we are sinners with the wonderful grace that is offered by a loving God. Paul in Romans does this while carefully crafting an answer to another, deeper question: "How can a perfectly pure God, a perfectly righteous judge, allow men who have sinned against him to go free?" Romans explains this apparent dilemma, vindicating the perfect justice of God.

God is the Judge. The work of a judge is to "justify the righteous and condemn the wicked" (Dt. 25:1). He better be very careful that he gets it right: "He who justifies the wicked and he who condemns the righteous are both an abomination to the Lord" (Pr. 17:15).

This is a book about righteousness. The Greek word is *dikaios*, "right" or "just." Louis Berkhoff, in *Systematic Theology*, p. 511, says "*dikaios* was used as an adjective to describe a wagon, a horse, or something else to indicate that it was fit for its intended use." We might use the word to describe something

that meets the standards set for a particular use. It's *dikaios*, "right." It's the root word for "righteous" and "righteousness."

But the word is also translated "just" and is the root word for "justice" and "justify." Paul uses it to describe a declaration that God makes about sinners who have obeyed the gospel: they are "justified." We use the word to describe someone who does an act that may, in some circumstances, be considered wrong or even criminal. For example, a policeman who shoots a man who is pointing a weapon at him is "justified." It's called "justifiable homicide." He had a right to shoot the man in those circumstances.

But God "justifies" those who have no right to acquittal. When God justifies, it is by a declaration or pronouncement that we are something that we are not. We are declared righteous, yet we are sinners. Explaining how God does that, while still maintaining His status as a perfect judge, is one of Paul's aims in Romans. It all centers in Christ and His work. It explains the necessity of the death of the perfect man, who is also God. It is a profound truth and, when understood, clarifies the gospel message.

It is crucial to understand, at the outset, that the story of a man's justification begins with *law* (see notes on p. 8). Law is simply God's revealed will. It is a standard of righteousness. It all begins there. Adam and Eve sinned in the garden only when they violated a stated law of God—eating fruit from the forbidden tree. "Without law, there is no transgression" (Rom. 4:15). Our main problem—sin—is a prod-

uct of law ("sin is not counted when there is no law," Rom. 5:13). The law exists and we break it, thus becoming sinners in need of salvation. Since we can't go back and un-do any sin, we've got a problem. The only solution to that problem is the main topic discussed in Romans, "justification by faith."

The primary reason a man is lost is not because he doesn't obey the gospel; he is lost because he sinned. If no one ever sinned, the gospel would be unnecessary. If no one ever got sick, we would not need doctors and hospitals. In fact, Jesus said something something similar when he said "it is not those who are well who need a physician, but those who are sick" (Mk. 2:17). Jesus was speaking of those who refuse to acknowledge their sickness; they will not seek healing and will die. Likewise, those who refuse to acknowledge their sins will not seek salvation, and will die in their sins.

Romans tells us that for "those who believe" the gospel is the "power of God for salvation" (1:16). Everyone needs that power and everyone can have it. That's why Ernst Kasemann called Romans "the most important theological epistle in Christian history" and why Samuel Taylor Coleridge said it is the "most profound writing extant."

And that's why, "when you get Romans, God gets you."

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Author and Date

Romans was probably written from Corinth during Paul's third missionary journey, c. 57 AD (Acts 20:2-3). There is no doubt that the letter is the work of Paul (1:1) and is addressed to the Christians in Rome (1:7). Paul wrote the letter while on his way to Jerusalem to deliver the monetary assistance that had been collected for the benefit of the saints there (15:25). Afterwards, he hoped to go to Rome on his way to Spain (15:24). As we know from the latter part of Acts, Paul did get to Rome, but in an entirely different manner than he had planned. It is generally believed that Paul died in Rome in 68 AD.

Outline of Romans

Introduction 1:1-17

Salutation, Greetings, Thanks 1:1-15

Theme Statement: 1:16-17

Justification by Faith: 1:18-8:39

The Way of Man: Universal Sin 1:18-3:20, 23

Gentiles: 1:18-32

Jews: 2:1-16

Everyone: 2:17-3:20

The Way to God: Justification by Grace and Faith in Christ 3:21-5:21

God – just, but the justifier: 3:21-3:31

Abraham – justified by faith, not works: 4:1-25

Grace for the ungodly: 5:1-11

Grace greater than our sin: 5:12-21

The Way to Life: Dead to Sin and Law, Alive in Christ and the Spirit 6:1-8:39

Dead to sin: 6:1-23

Dead to the law: 7:1-24

Alive in the Spirit: 8:1-17

From groans to glory; living by hope: 8:18-30

Inseparable! The Savior and the saved: 8:31-39

The Jewish Question: How Will Israel Be Saved? 9:1-11:36

God's right to save the Gentiles: 9:1-33

The means of salvation, whether Gentile or Jew: 10:1-21

Israel will be saved like everyone is saved – by faith: 11:1-36

The Transformed Life: 12:1-15:21

The Way to Live: 12:1-13:14

Transformed by God, not conformed to the world: 12:1-2

Using your gifts to the glory of God: 12:3-8

Practical love: 12:9-21

Living as a good citizen: 13:1-7

Love, again – fulfillment of the law: 13:8-14

The Way to Fellowship – dealing with individual's scruples: 14:1-15:7

The Place of the Gentiles: 15:8-21

Epilogue, Greetings, Doxology 15:22-16:27

Paul's plans and personal reflections: 15:23-33

Greetings: 16:1-23

Doxology: 16:24-27

Class Schedule: Romans 1-8

Class*	Subject	Text
1	Introduction, Salutation, Greetings, Thanks, Theme Statement	1:1-17
	Memorize 1:16-17	
2-4	Everybody sins! “The toothpaste tube problem.”	1:18–3:20, 23
	Memorize 3:23	
5	Thank God for His grace! His mercy is great, but is He just?	3:21-22, 24–31
	Memorize 3:25-26**	
6-7	Going out by faith with Abraham. Justified by faith, not by perfect works.	4:1-25
	Memorize 4:21	
8-10	Grace for the ungodly. Grace greater than our sin.	5:1-21
	Memorize 5:8 (Optional 5:6-10)	
11-13	Crucified with Christ, dead to sin.	6:1-23
	Memorize 6:11 (Optional 6:3-6)	
14-15	Dead to the law.	7:1-25
	Memorize 7:12 (Optional 7:12-13)	
16-18	No Condemnation! Alive in the Spirit	8:1-17
	Memorize 8:1 (Optional 8:1-4)	
19-22	From groans to glory; living in hope, inseparable from the love of Christ	8:18-39
	Memorize 8:18 (Optional 8:37-39)	
22-24	Review	

* Two classes per week (Wednesday & Sunday)

**3:25-26 (ESV), “God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished—he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.”

Pretest

1. What is Romans 1-8 about?

2. Define each of the following terms in one sentence:

♦ Sin –

♦ Justification –

♦ Gospel –

♦ The Righteousness of God (1:17) –

♦ Law –

♦ Righteous –

♦ Grace –

3. Why are people lost spiritually?

4. What is the function of law?

5. Through what means does one become united with Christ?

6. List some reasons people may feel less certain about their salvation than they should.

7. If a judge lets a guilty person go, is he just? Why or why not?

8. What does it mean to be “led by the Spirit”?

9. “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are _____.”

10. What is your favorite passage or thought from Romans 1-8?

11. What do you hope to gain from a study of Romans?

Bibliography & Abbreviations

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- cf. *confer*; “compare”
- Cranfield C. E. B. Cranfield: *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* Volumes I and II (1975, 1979)
- Denney James Denney: “St. Paul’s Epistle to the Romans” in the *Expositor’s Greek Testament*, Vol. II (1979 reprint)
- EGT *The Expositor’s Greek Testament*, W. Robertson Nicoll, Ed.
- ESV The English Standard Version.
- f. See following verse.
- ff. See following verses.
- GNB Good News Bible (Today’s English Version)
- Godet F. Godet: *Commentary on St. Paul’s Epistle to the Romans* (1895)
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- JB The Jerusalem Bible
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- Kubo Sakae Kubo: *A Reader’s Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament* (1975)
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- LB The Living Bible
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Moule	H. C. G. Moule: The Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans (1896)
Murray	John Murray, The Epistle to the Romans (1965)
NASB	New American Standard Bible
NBD	The New Bible Dictionary, J. D. Douglas, et al, eds., 2nd Ed. (1982)
NIDNTT	The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology, ed. Colin Brown, 3 vols. (1975-78)
NIV	New International Version
NRSV	The New Revised Standard Version
NT	New Testament
Nygren	Anders Nygren: Commentary on Romans (1952)
OT	Old Testament
Palmer	Earl F. Palmer: Salvation by Surprise: Studies in the Book of Romans (1975)
RSV	The Revised Standard Version
SH	William Sanday and Arthur C. Headlam: A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans (1907)
Synonyms	Richard Chevenix Trench: Synonyms of the New Testament (1880)
Thomas	W. H. Griffith Thomas: Romans (1912)
TWBB	A Theological Word Book of the Bible, Alan Richardson, ed. (1958)
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Whiteside	Robertson L. Whiteside: A New Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Saints at Rome (1945)

Bible quotations and references are from the English Standard Version (ESV), the New American Standard Bible (NASB) or the New King James Version (NKJV) unless otherwise noted.

Law, νόμος, *nomos*

Simply defined, law is a standard of conduct to be obeyed. The Greek word, *nomos* comes from the terms “to allot” and “what is proper”; its range of meanings in the Greek and Hellenistic world is expressed in words like “norm,” “order,” “custom,” “usage” and “tradition.”

As political order developed in Greece, *nomos* took on the juridical meaning of “a legal norm”; later, it broadened out to include the (divine) law of the world, the law of nature and the moral law. Soon, law became a reigning power: man cannot exist without the law of his community, even less without the law of the universe. But for the Greeks, inability to keep law was never seen as human sinfulness but was blamed on the god who made the law. He never understood law as that which crushes him and reduces him to despair by making him aware that he is unable to keep it (Cf. 7:24 with 9:19).

There arose, by the 5th century BC, a cleft between what is right by law and what is right by nature. For Plato, rejection of the rule of law was apostasy from God, thereby exalting law to divine rank. Earlier, Pharaoh refused to allow the law to be written down since he realized that a codified law took on a life of its own and sometimes overpowered the king.

The Jews, who had the law from God, gave the study of law a life of its own (John 5:39). Their righteousness came, not so much in keeping law, but merely through possessing it and studying it. In effect, they failed to see the value of law in the same way as the ancient Greeks—law, from a divine perspective, is meant to drive a person to God when he becomes aware of his moral bankruptcy in trying to keep law. Few Jews reached this important level of understanding.

Therefore, they, through the law, sought to establish their own righteousness (Romans 10:1ff). They did this by lowering the levels of acceptable performance of law, dragging it down, as it were, to a point where they could keep it, then boasting in their “achievement” of keeping the law.

This is where we meet Paul in Romans, though his concern is not only for Jews who seek to be justified by law, but for anyone who thinks he can stand before God on his own merit. Law, whether codified in the law of Moses or written in the hearts (cf. 2:12-15; 4:15), is designed to prevent sin by giving man the knowledge of sin (Rom. 3:20). It therefore blocks any attempt to excuse sin on the ground of ignorance. It unmasks sin, clearly bringing out sin’s character as rebellion against God. It makes sin a reality for the sinner (Rom. 7:7). Though in itself it is holy and just and good (Rom. 7:12), law has the result of increasing sin in the person who comes in contact with it (5:20). In fact, it is law which gives sin its life (4:15; 5:13, 20; I Cor. 15:56) and thus it causes death for those who do not perfectly keep it (7:9; cf. Gal. 3:10). Law can only define and punish sin; it has no ability to overcome it. There is no provision in law for forgiveness. Therefore, men, as long as they remain under law are confined by it, held by it, in bondage to it (6:14; 7:6; Gal. 3:22).

The meeting of the death of Christ (historically) and our death with Christ (in baptism) sever us from the law of sin and death (8:2). God’s grace and our faith meet in the cross of Christ, which is the complete fulfillment of the law’s goals (perfect obedience, perfect love).

Faith is the recognition of the real purpose of law and a humbling

of oneself before the God who gave it. In that sense, faith establishes law (3:31), it views law from the proper perspective and refuses to regard any of the law as less than important (cf. Jas. 2:10). Faith accomplishes the end for which the law was framed, in much the same manner as love fulfills the law (13:8). We might say that faith is the God-directed fulfillment of the aim of law, while love is the man-directed fulfillment of the law. It is only through faith that we please God (Heb. 11:6) and therefore fulfill the law’s demands *vis-a-vis* God. Likewise, it is only through love that we truly sum up the demands of law *vis-a-vis* other human beings, whether worldlings or brethren.

Law continues to have life, even under the gospel age. Those who fail to obey the gospel remain under law and are amenable to it. They will be judged on the basis of whether they kept the law in its entirety (10:5; cf. Gal. 3:10). Since there is no provision for relief of guilt within the law itself, even one transgression will cut the person off from God and make him a sinner (3:10-20, 23; Isa. 59:1-2). Unless he lives it perfectly, the law will be his undoing. Those, however, who take up their spiritual residence in Christ are dead to the law as a means of justification—it has no dominion over them (6:14) since righteousness is summed up in Christ (10:4—Christ is the goal or fulfillment of the law of righteousness for those who believe in Him; cf. Gal. 3:24). Law still serves to inform and guide, however, and in that sense remains valuable for the Christian. Ideally, though, the Christian lives by faith and love and therefore does not “need” the law (see Paul’s argument in I Tim. 1:5-11). Faith establishes law, love fulfills it.

Faith, πιστις, *pistis*

What is faith? If it is total abandonment of the self to God, what does that mean? How do we do that? Or is that really faith at all?

Faith is not unreasonable optimism in the time of trouble; it is not just keeping the chin up; it is not believing nothing bad will happen to you (bad things happen to faithful people too; see Hebrews 11!). Faith cannot be reduced to a hope in God which means nothing more than trusting that God will bail us out of trials. We will be sorely disappointed if faith is so poorly construed. Nor is faith just belief, whether in God, in the words or in the church (as in Roman Catholicism). Belief is a starting place and the book of John points out how many failed even to begin the journey of faith in relation to Jesus. But for “belief” to be faith, there must be more than mental assent (see James 2:19).

The quality of faith depends upon the object of our faith. I can put great faith in a weak bank and lose all my money; I can put little faith in a strong bank and my money will be safe.

Likewise, the quality of our faith is dependent upon our view of God and our willingness to trust and rely on Him and His promises.

Faith starts with a consideration of both God’s history and our own personal history. Man lives in time. God made us temporal beings. It is within this time-frame that man must decide what to do with what God has done in history. God has acted decisively in history, by sending His Son into the earth; the eternal One has *invaded* time.

In reality, God has pierced time over and over again throughout history: first in creation, then in the flood, in promises, in the formation of Israel, in His judgment, at Pente-

cost, etc. But He did it most decisively and significantly when He sent His Son to earth to become an historical being: “the Word became flesh and dwelt among us so that we could behold His glory, the glory as of the only begotten Son of God” (John 1:14). While God has often invaded time through His word, this time He did it decisively, once for all, by sending His Son this time, God invaded time *personally*.

Faith (or unbelief), for everyone, begins with the response to this historical act of God. God designed and acted; we choose to respond positively or negatively, that is, to accept God’s action for ourselves or reject it. Few would disagree thus far. The major disagreements about “faith” turn on what “acceptance” and “rejection” involve. But we must not forget that faith is, at the root, a response to an historical reality wrought by the Creator Himself. Jesus lived and died and was raised—do we believe it? That is the first and most fundamental question. This removes faith from the realm of the mystical and puts it in the realm of the rational and reasonable, where it belongs. When Paul taught, we’re told he “reasoned with them from the scriptures” (Acts 17:2, 17; 18:19; 24:25). Faith is “reasonable.” Some view faith as simply another work of righteousness, or a feeling better felt than explained. Nothing of the kind is described in scripture.

What does it mean, though, to “believe”? It starts with mental assent, but an effective, saving faith is much more (Jas. 2:19). It is more than passive trust in historical words. But how?

Paul shows faith to be an historical possibility rather than a psychological one. It is actualized at

baptism, not in pious experience (Gal. 3:17-29). It is not a mere disposition of the soul, but a concrete acceptance of the proclamation of the good news. Faith is not at the end of the way to God, but at the beginning [see Kittel, IV, p. 217].

Faith involves a radical decision and repositioning of the self toward God. It hands over the will of the “I” (the *ego*) to God and becomes the *modus operandi* of the Christian. He no longer lives for himself, to himself, in himself, but is crucified with Christ and Christ lives in him (Gal. 2:19-20). He is constantly relating his self to God’s way of salvation and working out his own salvation with fear and trembling (Phil. 2:12-13).

This is why scripture can speak of degrees of faith and a movement of faith in the individual. Everyone must stand in the one faith (Eph. 4; Jude 3) but each must work out that faith in his own life. He must continually come to a new understanding of himself, in light of the faith (cf. I Cor. 13:5); the faithful are not those who have “arrived” at some utopian state of faith, but are those who are constantly growing in the faith (cf. Phil 3:12ff): crucifying the “I” and replacing it with Christ.

Faith is a movement of the will (a radical submission to God) in which the will is given up. It is surrendering, and putting complete trust in the resources which God provides. It is the dynamic relinquishing of any self-reliance and the placing of all hope for final salvation in God. It is at once the ceasing of striving to save one’s self and yet the most active form of obedience to God.

In Romans, Paul emphasizes this last point. Faith puts all trust for salvation in God and none in

self. It is opposed to a concept that is works-oriented, meaning that one through *his own righteous deeds* feels he can somehow stand before God in self assurance. In Romans Paul is concerned with how we are to be justified (acquitted) and sanctified (made righteous before God). It is not by taking pride in our accomplishments; it is not by keeping law; it is not by achieving perfection before God through our good works; none of these things can save us because they are all man-centered. If one should accomplish this, God would owe him salvation. But then, grace and faith would be nullified. We would not need to rely on God because we could rely on ourselves. More profoundly, Christ would not have had to die if we could keep the law perfectly.

Faith, then, involves both credence and commitment (*God's Words*, J. I. Packer, p. 129). It believes (with all the heart) the promises of God (and therefore God Himself, since believing God's word is equivalent to believing God, Rom. 10:17); but more, it *commits* to God. It relies on God to save, which is not a passive act, but an energetic response to the will of God as revealed in His word.

Therefore, faith does whatever God requires as determined by a study of the words of God. One who would refuse to do even one element of the will of God cannot be said to have faith; faith is conditioned upon a total response to God. This is Paul's "obedience of faith" (1:5; 16:26). Paul in Romans assumes obedience as part of the definition of faith; he never implies otherwise and this is in keeping with both classical Greek and Jewish concepts of *pistis*.

In classical Greek, faith involved confident trust, originally not used of things, but only of

persons. It includes conviction and certainty. It was used for those who were bound to a treaty—fidelity to the agreement. In literature, it was used to describe trust in the weapons of war; since trust may be a duty, it carried the nuance of absolute obedience—trust in the king would produce obedience to his word.

In Jewish thought, faith is man's reaction to God's primary action. In the Old Testament, the fear of God and faith (trust or hope) in God are seemingly opposite terms used to describe the same relationship with God. Fear, in fact, is often an expression of faith (Gen. 22:12, etc.). Abraham, through his deep respect for God and his reliance on the promises of God, went ahead and offered Isaac because he believed God would raise him up (Hb. 11:19). Abraham's faith began with a strong belief in the word of God and was confirmed in the action he took at God's bidding. For Abraham, faith was the only possible way to live.

Faith then primarily refers to our trust and reliance on what God has said and done. This trust has active expression in our way of life—our words, deeds and thoughts reflect a living, energetic faith in God and in His Son. We shed all notions of self-reliance and self-sufficiency and self-righteousness in the spiritual realm. In the physical realm, we do all we can with the strength God has given us, but we rely on God for the rest. For example, in health matters, we see doctors, take medicine, exercise, eat right, etc. But we rely on God for those things which are not in our control. In finances, we earn what our ability allows us, save, invest, etc., but rely on God to provide for us (Hb. 13:5). In the church, we

plant and water but God gives the increase (I Cor. 3:6). In every area of life, we realize our responsibility and seek to fulfill it, but come to God in faith for the rest.

It all comes down to focus and glory. We focus on God, not in passive reliance on God, as if we are commanding Him, but in seeking His will, recognizing our own inability both to save or even sustain ourselves. We glorify God through our humble acquiescence to Him; He gets all the credit, we get none; He is the great Cause, the great Maker and Mover. Our faith is a radical commitment to this God.

Knowledge does not eliminate this faith but enhances it (Rom. 10:17). It is not sight, but a kind of sight. According to 2 Cor. 5:7, we walk by faith (trusting, relying on God and His promises) instead of sight (trusting, relying on what we already have). Faith helps us "see" what can't be seen (Hb. 11:1).

In Romans, Paul uses the concept of faith in various ways: "The faith" (1:5; 14:1; 16:26) is the body of doctrine in which all Christians stand (cf. Jude 3). Paul also speaks of the faith of the Romans, a faith which is spoken of throughout the world (1:8). This faith must have had a visible manifestation for the whole world to have known about it. In 1:12, he talks of a mutual faith that he and the Romans shared and hope to be encouraged and to encourage by it, by the mutual reliance and trust that they share in God's promises. This is the faith that causes them to push on, even through trials which test their faith. He also discusses faith as the source of gifts: each person in the body has been given a certain measure of faith; the giver is God (12:3, 6). Therefore, there is no room for a man to think "more highly of himself than he ought."

In 14:22, faith is used in a personal sense: there may be matters which some of us take as faith, but which are not clearly spelled out in God's word (like not eating meats or observing certain days); this may or may not mean that we are "weak in the faith" (14:1); in any case we are to have that faith to ourselves and be fully convinced so that we do not do something "not from faith" (14:5, 23). This is not saving faith, but faith which is based upon personal conviction.

Finally, and most significantly, Paul uses the term faith to describe the means of our salvation (1:16-17; 3:21-31; 4:1-25; 5:1-2). Faith is our reaction to God's action in history. God has graciously given His Son to die (5:6-10); we respond by faith — by actively relying upon God's action and the promises which flow from it. Faith is the antithesis, in this regard, of

works of righteousness, the perfect performance of the demands of law (3:10-20; 6:14). But since all have failed (3:23) and since the law has no provision to overcome sin, we must rely upon God to save us. We have no power within ourselves to do the job of salvation, although God has given us the power to respond (cf. Jn. 1:12).

Faith is the giving of self, which means, paradoxically, the giving up of self. By definition, nothing is withheld — we do not hold in reserve part of the self, "in case it doesn't work out." Faith is a whole-hearted (radical) change of direction which starts in the mind and progresses through the whole of man. Faith is holistic, it is total, it is unreserved trust in God. Imperfect expressions of this trust are noted through the scriptures (little faith, weak faith, etc.). But in all

cases, it is trust in God instead of self and nothing else is faith.

For Paul this faith finds expression in the everyday, not just in "religion" (whatever that is). The person of faith is the one who lives by faith (1:17); is transformed (12:2); conformed to Christ (8:29) instead of poured in the mold of the world (12:2); he walks according to the Spirit instead of the flesh (8:4), setting his mind on the things of God (8:5-1). He obeys his government, loves people, is diligent about the things and people of God, uses his abilities in glory to God and seeks peace with his brethren (chapters 12-14). In other words, his faith is expressed in his humility and holiness and in the fruit that he bears as a faithful Christian who lives among his brethren and among people in the world. His whole life is directed outward and upward.

Romans 1:1-15

Paul refers to himself as a servant (Gk., *doulos*) of Jesus Christ, which demonstrates his attitude toward his calling as an apostle. The gospel was foretold in the Old Testament and was the goal of the promises given to the fathers (Gen. 12:1-3). Everything pointed toward Jesus Christ—to His life, His death and His resurrection. He was descended from David, according to the flesh, but declared to be the Son of God in power, according to the Spirit (v. 4). In the human realm, he has David as a father; in the spiritual realm, he is the Son of God and that is demonstrated in the most powerful way by the resurrection of Christ.

It was through Christ that Paul and the others received grace (favor) and apostleship. His calling as an apostle was a pure act of grace and he never minimized that calling (see I Timothy 1:12-17). He preached the gospel for one purpose and that was to produce whole hearted commitment to Christ; he calls it “the obedience of faith” (1:5; cf 16:26). Prior to his calling, he was “set apart” to the Law. Now, he is set apart to the gospel, the “good news” (cf. 1:1). He is a “called” apostle preaching to a “called” people (see Acts 2:21, 39). These are “saints”; “saints,” from the same root word as “holy” are not dead people who lived exemplary lives, but people who are living and actively participating in the gospel of Christ. “Saints” and are the same as the “called” in v. 6.

The Romans are in his prayers constantly, and he makes frequent requests to God that he might have opportunity to see them. He didn't want to go to Rome to be a sight-seer. He wished to strengthen them (perhaps through the impartation of spiritual gifts, v. 11) and be encouraged by them, v. 12. He informs them that his inability to see them has not been by his choice but that he has been hindered by God's own design (v. 13). In any case, he is “eager to preach the gospel” to them and anxiously awaits the opportunity (v. 15). He is ready, in fact, to preach the gospel anywhere and to anyone. It is this attitude which prompts the well-known theme statement of v. 16.

FROM THEIR WORLD TO OURS...



What do brethren in other places think of us?

It's impressive that Paul says the Roman faith is spoken of all over the world (1:8). What do you suppose the Roman church had done to deserve such a reputation? Perhaps they were financially supporting other preachers. Or perhaps they were growing rapidly and other brethren heard about it. While local autonomy is crucial, it should also be noted that reputation among brethren is also important. Paul's commendation should cause us to pause and think about what brethren in other places may think about this church, if indeed they know about us at all.

Notice, too, that while Paul was expecting to encourage the Romans, he was also expecting encouragement from them. Are our visitors more encouraged when they leave? Think of some things we can do to insure that we encourage those who visit us, so that they are more ready to preach and practice Christianity.

Romans 1:16-17

Paul felt an obligation to preach the gospel to all men, and he wanted to preach the gospel in Rome, as well (v. 15). The two “for” statements of v. 16 tell us why: first, Paul says he was “not ashamed.” Is this just a literary device to emphasize his pride in the gospel? Or is he responding to the real possibility that preaching the gospel can be a source of human embarrassment since, in the words of I Cor. 1:18, it is “foolishness” in the eyes of pagans. After all, the gospel message centers in the most horrible death a man could suffer, crucifixion. To make salvation dependent on a death sounds foolish those who are worldly wise. So, as the writer of Isaiah says, “Who has believed our report?” (Isa. 53:1).

But Paul is not ashamed and in the next “for” clause he elaborates on why he is not ashamed: this good news is indeed God’s *power to save*.

The Greek word for “power,” (*dunamis*) has its roots in the vocabulary of the Old Testament, in passages such as Ex. 9:16 where Yahweh said that Pharaoh was raised up in order to demonstrate Yahweh’s power in him (cf. Rom. 9:17). David refers to Yahweh as the “power of my salvation” (Psa. 140:7). In the New Testament, Paul often refers to God’s word as *dunamis* (cf. I Cor. 2:4-5; 4:19-20). The word “power,” then, refers to a personal God who uniquely possesses the power to deliver man from danger. The gospel, Paul says, is that power (cf. I Cor. 1:18).

Paul explains why the gospel is the power to save in the next “for” clause (v. 17). The gospel—the good news about what Jesus has done for us—reveals God’s plan to save man, *a plan of righteousness*. In other words, this is how we are justified or pronounced “not guilty,” freed from our sins. It is a righteousness that comes by faith. The gospel has been revealed with the express purpose of creating the faith that saves us.

“From faith to faith” may mean that the gospel is revealed *as a plan of righteousness by faith*, and it is revealed in order to *bring about* faith). Or could it mean, “from Old Testament faith to New Testament faith. Or, it may simply be a way of emphasizing the importance of faith (see Romans 10). I tend to favor the first explanation, but any of these are plausible.

Those who are justified will be those who *live* by their faith. “Live” may mean that we are living

FROM THEIR WORLD TO OURS...



Dunamis – Power!

It should be obvious that the only way we will lean on God’s power to save is if we are convinced we have no power of our own for the purpose. To what extent have we really grasped the concept that it takes nothing less than the power of God Himself to save us?

The use of the word *dunamis* is interesting in light of the great power of Rome. We too have grown used to being the most powerful nation on the face of the earth, giving us a sense of invulnerability, perhaps. But it will still take God’s power to save us and it will still require unyielding trust in Him. There is no one and nothing else in which we can place our trust and hope to be saved. Only God has the power.

our life by faith or that we are made alive by faith; I prefer the latter (cf. Hab. 2:4).

Note on the Text

The use of the Greek word *dunamis* (“power” in v. 16) has caused some preachers to mention that it is the word from which we get our English word “dynamite” which, of course, is *powerful*. However, that meaning has no bearing on what Paul is discussing here. While dynamite’s power is to destroy, the gospel’s power is to save. While the gospel is indeed “dynamic,” it is not true that it somehow “blasts” us into heaven.

Questions

1. Explain “not ashamed” in v. 16. See I Cor. 1:18-30; II Tim. 1:8, 12.
2. For whom is the gospel “the power of God for salvation”?
3. Why “to the Jew first”?
4. What is the “righteousness of God”?
5. Restate vv. 16-17 in your own words.

Romans 1:18-32

The next major section of Romans (1:18–3:20) has one basic objective: to establish the *need* for salvation. God’s character is not only displayed in His matchless love for man but also in His wrath against sin. It is this characteristic of God which is most often ignored and yet it is patently true (cf. Heb. 10:26–31; 12:28–29; cf. 2 Cor. 5:11). Paul says this wrath is (present tense) revealed against all ungodliness and unrighteousness (v. 18). God is perfectly just; perfect justice requires an element of wrath (Gk. *orgee*: “a settled anger”) against all that is opposed to Him. He is perfectly good and the perfect good must deal with evil; good cannot coexist with evil.

Wrath is as true a characteristic of the one true and living God as is mercy, kindness and love (see Hebrews 10:31; 12:29). We’ll see, later on, that God’s wrath put Jesus on the cross just as surely as His love put Him there. We do not have a properly balanced view of God when we overemphasize one of His characteristics to the exclusion of another. God’s nature is a perfect blend of justice and love (cf. 11:22).

In 1:18–3:20, Paul argues that all have sinned, whether Gentile or Jew. 1:18–32 convicts the Gentiles who had corrupted themselves through their pagan affiliations in the most vile ways imaginable. Even if 21st century America has come to accept these vices as “alternative lifestyles,” they are the paradigms of evil, as far as Paul is concerned.

Thus, the Gentiles had become the objects of God’s wrath. Three times (vv. 24, 26, 28) Paul says God had given them up to their degrading ways. It is a sobering thought to be reminded that people can become so hardened in their sins that God will finally give up on them (cf. I Tim. 4:1-2; II Thess. 2:9-12; Eph. 4:17-19).

FROM THEIR WORLD TO OURS...



Those wicked Gentiles!

The major point of this section is to show that the Gentiles had been sinners. We may feel fairly secure as we read the early part of this indictment. After all, Paul is mainly condemning idolatry and homosexuality. But have you carefully read the last few verses of chapter one? I’m convinced that even before Paul gets to chapter two, he convicts all of us here — unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful. Who can say they have never been guilty?

Questions

1. What is the “wrath of God”? How do we reconcile this attribute of God with I John 4:8, “God is love”?
2. How do you interpret “God gave them up...” (v. 24, 26, 28)...
3. Be ready to discuss some of the less “overt” sins listed in 1:18-32. E.g., strife, gossips, slander, haughty, boastful, foolish. Provide some examples of how those sins are manifested in one’s life.
4. What’s the point of this section?

Romans 2:1-16

Paul turns his attention to the “moralist,” probably the Jew, the “holier than thou” person who likes to preach, but doesn’t practice what he preaches. The “therefore” is interesting since one would not normally associate the sins of the pagan world with the Jews. Nygren feels that it is precisely that which Paul addresses: the Jews were practicing the same sins which they accuse others of committing, hiding behind their status as Jews, thinking that would save them (cf. Mt. 3:8-9). This is folly, Paul argues, because the judgment of God is absolutely righteous – it is according to truth and without partiality. You can’t fool God into thinking you are righteous, if you are not *practicing* righteousness (cf. I John 3:10).

These people had forgotten that God will judge each person according to his own deeds (v. 6), a quotation from Psa. 62:12 (though the Psalms passage appears in a positive context: David was confident in being judged “according to his deeds”). A man’s claims to a relationship with God mean nothing at all if his actions are unholy. God’s goodness is designed to lead a person to repentance (v. 4). If a man fails to respond to this immeasurable grace, he must face God’s perfect justice. There is no third alternative. And, as someone observed, “*God’s wheels grind slow, but they grind small.*”

Some were claiming that having the law was sufficient to save them. Paul points out that it is vain to have the law if one does not keep the law (cf. James 2:10). In such cases, the law serves only to judge the man. But even those without the law (Gentiles) may be more righteous than those who have the law if the former, because of conscience, do the deeds of the law (cf. v. 14, “by nature do what the law requires”). God will judge even the secret things by Jesus Christ and that judgment will be according to the gospel (v. 16. Paul says “my gospel”; that doesn’t mean he originated it, but that he owns it and preaches it). He is a God who “shows no partiality nor takes a bribe” (Dt. 10:17).

FROM THEIR WORLD TO OURS...



Beware “secret things” – God knows

Check the closets of your life – for what secret things will God hold you accountable at judgment? A lot of folks in the church are silly enough to think that they can put on a good face and somehow fool God. Sure, they are fooling their brethren, but God sees all things: “And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account” (Heb. 4:13) Being “in the church” will save no one, by itself.

Why must we be threatened before we do the right thing? Why is it sometimes so difficult to be motivated by the *goodness* of God (2:4)?

Notes on the Text

According to Paul in 2:16, every person is going to be judged “according to my gospel...by Jesus Christ.” Some teach that there are different standards of judgment and that we do not everyone comes under judgment of the gospel until they are a party to the new covenant (I admit this is an oversimplification).

Paul states clearly that *all* who sin will be judged by the same standard, “my gospel...by Christ Jesus.” If that is so, then everyone, whether a Christian or not, must answer to that gospel. If that is true, then, for example, if someone is divorced unlawfully, even before becoming a Christian, he is judged by the same “marriage law” as those who are Christians. The adage, “ignorance of the law is no excuse” seems to apply here as well.

Romans 2:17-29

The Jews were proud possessors of the Law of Moses. They called it their own and relied on it and boasted in God in it (v. 17). After all, they were *Jews*, Israelites, the chosen people of God. They were instructed out of the Law and approved the essential things (v. 18) and even became teachers of the Law (vv. 19-20).

But there was one major problem: possessing the law is not the same as *keeping* it. These Jews, who knew the Law so well, and took pride in it, were not practicing the Law. Even as they boasted in the Law, they dishonored God through their breaking of the Law (v. 23).

There is a strong allusion here to Psa. 50:16-21, which also scorns the hypocrisy of practicing evil while teaching righteousness. And Jesus scolded Jews who “search the Scriptures” looking for eternal life, but fail to find the true source of life, Jesus Christ.

The result was that “the name of God was blasphemed among the Gentiles” (v. 24). The quote from Isa. 52:5 is interesting since, in its original context, it referred to the blasphemy which came from the captivity of the children of Israel by the pagan nations of Egypt, Assyria and Babylon (cf. Ezek. 36:20). God wanted to redeem them for His own name’s sake. But what have they done? They have blasphemed God themselves, in the hypocrisy of boasting in the Law while breaking it. Paul is placing them in the same class as those pagan nations who captured them and blasphemed God’s name. That was a shocking charge.

Therefore, their circumcision (their heritage as Jews) had become *uncircumcision* (v. 25). It is not those who are Jews by birth who are the true children of God. Instead, those who serve God from the heart are the true “Jews” (vv. 28-29; see Phil. 3:3; Gal. 6:16). This is so because those who lovingly serve God in faith, with all the heart, soul and mind are the ones who are fulfilling God’s original objective for Israel. The church is the “new Israel,” whose “circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter and whose praise is not from men, but from God” (v. 29, NKJV).

The point of all this, of course, is to establish that the Jews, like the Gentiles, were sinners, in spite of (and maybe even because of) their confidence in the Law.

FROM THEIR WORLD TO OURS...



The Peril of Privilege

There is more to apply here than meets the eye. The Jews had great privileges, but were guilty of hiding behind those privileges. We can do the same thing when we think that being a member of Christ’s body has some saving significance in itself. Never forget that Christ is the Savior of the body (Eph. 5:23) – this is the church (body, people) of CHRIST.

What privileges do we have and how are we using them: to claim a status, or to practice godliness from the heart?

Romans 3:1-8

If everyone is equally guilty before God, is there any advantage in being a Jew? Paul answers with an emphatic, “much in every way” (3:2). The Jews had a great advantage because they were the first to be entrusted with the word of God (v. 2; cf. 1:16). The fact that some did not believe God’s word did not alter the faithfulness of God to His word (v. 3). God’s veracity is not based upon whether or not man accepts what He has said; God is true regardless of man’s response (v. 4). He is a God who cannot lie (Titus 1:2), immutable and faithful (see Heb. 6:18).

In v. 4, Paul quotes Psalms 51:4, a Psalm in which David confesses his sin before God and acknowledges that such a confession “justifies (‘declares righteous’) God.” This fits neatly into Paul’s argument. He is demonstrating that all men, including the Jews have sinned and come under the judgment of God. But the oracles of God were committed to the Jews and yet most of them refused to believe and obey God. God remains faithful to His word, however, in spite of their disobedience (cf. Psalms 89:30-37). In fact, the sin of man serves to “demonstrate the righteousness of God” (His plan to save man) and “God will prevail when He is judged;” i.e., He will “pass every test.” His condemnation of sinners, then, proves His own righteousness. Stated another way, God uses everything, even sin itself, to bring about His purpose.

But if our sin gives God the opportunity to demonstrate His plan to save us, could it be said that He is unjust if He punishes sin (“inflicts wrath”)? Paul answers: “Certainly not!” If that were true, then God could judge no one, not even those (the “world” v. 6) whom all would agree are deserving of judgment. But “it was axiomatic that there would be a judgment day when some would be acquitted and some would be condemned” (Morris, page 159).

Paul continues the assumed objection in v. 7, this time in terms of truth and falsehood. If God’s glory, or truth, is enhanced by our sin (“lie”) why are we still judged as sinners? Some were even slandering Paul, mocking his teaching of justification by faith, saying “do evil that good may come!” The blasphemy was, in other words, that *the end justifies the means*—the more we sin, the better God looks, so sin freely! Paul says of those who teach such nonsense: “their condemnation is just!” (v. 8).

FROM THEIR WORLD TO OURS...



Ever been accused of teaching too much grace?

Consider how it is that Paul’s teaching was being used for such slanderous purposes as described in verse 8. Are we presenting the gospel in such a way that slander like this is possible? That is, have we put the emphasis in the proper place (on the grace of God), as Paul always did? Or have we constructed a works-righteousness of our own?

Questions

1. So...what advantages did the Jews have and why does it matter?
2. Does one's reaction to the truth affect whether it is true or not? Why does that matter?
3. V. 7 – what “lie”?
4. Why would some charge Paul with saying, “do evil so that good will come” (v. 8)?

Romans 3:9-20

All have violated law, regardless of the law they had. The Gentiles had violated God's universal moral law, and the Jew had violated the law given to Moses, which included the moral law. No one can claim justification on the basis of any law because no one has kept any law perfectly.

To establish his point, Paul combines parts of a number of Old Testament quotations, a method which would be especially impressive to his Jewish readers. Most of the quotations are from the book of Psalms (cf. 14:1-3; 5:9; 140:3; 10:7; 36:1). The passages prove that the reality of sin is readily observable "there is none righteous." For example, observe how the tongue is abused (vv. 13-14). Every individual has sinned in speech. Or consider the reality of war: shedding blood is a fact of life; "the path of peace is not known" in every era and in every part of the world. The basic problem is spelled out in v. 18, "there is no fear of God before their eyes," a conclusion David reached in his oracle concerning the wicked (Psa. 36:1).

Paul says the law "shuts the mouths" (v. 19, NKJV) of those who would seek to be justified by it. Ironically the law which some are relying on for salvation is the standard by which they are judged to be guilty.

No one (Jew or Gentile) will be justified by (any) law because law, or "*the principle of law,*" can only provide a standard of behavior; it cannot provide the means of deliverance. It can only provide a knowledge of sin, it cannot overcome sin. It is not the function of law to forgive, a subject Paul will continue to develop in this letter.

FROM THEIR WORLD TO OURS...



How far removed from Rome are we?

Remember that Paul was writing to a church that existed in the capital of the world's greatest empire. They lived with corruption and the sins of the tongue and the reality of war was common to them. Their nation was built on bloodshed and still held the world by the neck. They feared no one, least of all the God of heaven, whom they could not see. Don't you ever think about how much like Rome we've become? Do we need to look very far to see the reality of sin in our world?

The most rudimentary function of law is to provide a knowledge of sin. Given that function, what reactions can we expect to the law? I.e., what kind of person will be *comfortable* with an increased knowledge of sin? What kind of person will be troubled by it?

Romans 3:21-31

Paul asserts that God's righteousness (His plan to save) is revealed "apart from law" (v. 21), meaning that law will not be the basis used to judge us. Instead, God's righteousness is by faith. The "law" system makes no provisions for forgiveness, but only provides a standard to "keep" (cf. 10:5). Failure to do so results in sin and (spiritual) death. Furthermore, the Law of Moses was a law given only to the children of Israel; if salvation came by that Law, then the Gentiles would have no access to God's righteousness. However, this plan is *witnessed* by the Law (of Moses) and Prophets. In other words, the Law testified about the coming of Christ and the gospel concerning Him (cf. Gal. 3:24).

In verse 23 Paul makes the point he's made before—all have sinned. But God has provided a remedy and it is "free" (v. 24). God's grace is a freely bestowed gift. That means that we receive it without cost, although it cost God a great deal—His only begotten Son! This is the basis of our salvation, the ground upon which we stand. Without God's initial action of providing a way for us to be saved, our faith would mean nothing. We are saved by God's grace. That's fundamental (cf. Eph. 2:8-10).

This grace was expressed in a monumental historical act. God gave His son to be a "propitiation for our sins." Some confuse the similar term, "expiate" with the word found here, "propitiate." To "expiate" means "to cover"; but "propitiation" goes much deeper. It means to satisfy once and for all. In this context, it means to satisfy the wrath of God. In a sense, the sacrifices under the Old Testament served as an expiation, since they served to cover the sins of the people (this is how God "passed over the sins previously committed," v. 25). But these sacrifices never objectively took the sins away because they could never fully satisfy the righteous judgment of God (cf. Hb 10:4). It took a *propitiation* to do that. Christ's blood did what the blood of bulls and goats could not do, fully satisfying the wrath of God and taking it out of the way for those who trust in Him.

Thus God, while He justified the sinner, was also proved perfectly just Himself. It was not only His love acting at the cross, but His justice as well

FROM THEIR WORLD TO OURS...



Getting a Grip on Grace

Preachers face two major problems in their preaching: (1) convincing people of their sinful condition and (2) convincing people that they have been saved. Few people ever come to grips with the reality that they are sinners. Pride gets in the way and most people, tragically, just can't get to the point where they say they're wrong. But then there are those who do, but who get lost in the despair of sin and never learn about the grace of God. That man sees his sinful condition and puts a period there. But God sees it and puts a comma there. Grace is masterfully stated by Paul in this passage of Romans. What does it mean to you?

(cf. Acts 2:23). No one can charge that God is "all mercy, but no wrath," nor "all wrath and no mercy." Both are active in the cross of Christ.

But what of the law? Does faith void out the law and make it worthless (v. 31)? NO! Our faith *establishes* the law—upholds it. Our faith places law (as the revealed will of God) on a pedestal where it belongs. Unlike the Jews, who dragged the law down to their own level, our faith raises the law up and displays it as holy and just and good (7:12).

Questions

1. How do the Law and the prophets “bear witness” to the righteousness of God?
2. V. 22, “for there is no distinction.” Between whom?
3. How does justification by grace, through the redemption that is in Christ, demonstrate the righteousness of God?
4. How had God “passed over former sins”? Did He just let them go, as if it didn’t matter?
5. What “boasting” is Paul talking about (v. 27)?
6. How will Jews and Gentiles be justified?
7. How do we “establish” or “uphold” the law by faith?

Romans 4:1-12

Many confusing arguments have been based upon these verses, especially the quotation from Gen. 15:6 (v. 3). Calvinists appeal to the quotation to teach a doctrine of justification by faith only, claiming that “faith” and “works” are opposites.

The “works” in this passage are indeed something opposed to “faith” in this passage, so we need to know what these “works” are. Are these works the same as “obedience”? Was then Abraham justified by God, irrespective of his obedience? Of course not; even a cursory reading of Hebrews 11 or James 2 will reveal that Abraham was not credited with righteousness whether he obeyed God or not. Abraham obeyed God, which was a product of his faith, and this *obedient* faith was “accounted to him for righteousness.”

The “works” of Romans 4 are acts that would create a debt from God to the one doing them. In other words, the person doing *these* works would have *earned* God’s wage of righteousness (v. 4) through the keeping of God’s law. But the only possible way a person could qualify for such a wage would be by *perfect performance* of the law, since failure in one point makes one a “law-breaker” (Jas. 2:10; cf. Gal. 3:10, where the sense is that one must continue to keep all aspects of the law, all the time). On the other hand, God “owes” a *law-breaker* nothing.

Paul argues in this chapter that even “our forefather Abraham” was a law-breaker and therefore had “nothing to boast about before God.” But Abraham had faith and that faith was accounted (or credited) to Abraham as righteousness. It is important to understand that *Abraham was just as righteous before God as one who had kept the law perfectly*: This is because Abraham had faith, the kind of faith we must have if we are going to be justified by God.

As noted above, there is nothing here to imply that Abraham’s faith excluded his obedience. Nor does anything said here imply that there were no conditions to be met. David understood conditional justification because in Psalm 32, partially quoted here, he says that he did not receive this forgiveness *until* (condition) he acknowledged his sins before God. Before he confessed, he was lost (see Psa. 32:3-5).

Circumcision was at the center of the controversy in the early church between the Jewish *nomists* (those who put emphasis on law [from Gk. *nomos*, “law”]) and the apostles (cf. Gal. 2:3-5; Phil. 3:2-3). Paul argues that Abraham’s justification was not tied to circumcision, but to his faith, which preceded circumcision: “not while circumcised, but while uncircumcised.” The *sign* of circumcision was given to Abraham in Genesis 17, but he had already proven himself faithful prior to that time. In fact, the sign of circumcision was given to him *because* of his faithfulness. It is not “status” (i.e., as a Jew; cf. Mt. 3:8-9) but faith which is the deciding factor, and Abraham became the father of all the faithful, whether Jew (“circumcised”) or Gentile (“uncircumcised”).

It might be fruitful to point out here that there may be different manifestations of the same faith (see Mott, page 21ff.). Sometimes, faith is asked to *accept* something (cf. Gen. 15:6) and sometimes it is asked to *do* something (Jas. 2:21-23 uses Gen. 15:6 to describe this kind of faith, referring to Gen. 22, Abraham’s offering of Isaac). Neither kind excludes the necessity of obedience, nor eliminates the fact that conditions may be part of the promise which faith must believe.

Only a Calvinistic bias fails to see that obedience is necessary for faith to be effective (without obedience where obedience is called for, the faith would be “dead”; see James 2). One who trusts God with all his heart will act on God’s word, not only believing what it says, but doing God’s bidding (cf. Jas. 2:19ff.). Abraham exemplifies the conditional nature of faith. For example, if he had not gone when God told him to go, we would not be reading about him in Romans 4.

Questions

1. Besides Abraham, who else does Paul mention in this passage? For what purpose?
2. Explain and internalize v. 4.
3. God justifies one “who does not work”? (v. 5). How is that possible?
4. Paul asserts that Abraham was counted faithful prior to receiving the sign of circumcision. So?

FROM THEIR WORLD TO OURS...



The value of Old Testament Study

In 3:21, Paul said that the righteousness of God is “witnessed” by the Law and the Prophets. We cannot fully understand the New Testament unless we have familiarity with the Old Testament. (cf. 15:4). Read Genesis 12:1–3 and dwell on the promises made to Abraham and how those promises were worked out in history.

What does it mean to you to know that you were in God’s plans from the very beginning?

Do you see a difference between “works” and “obedience” as Paul uses the terms in Romans?

How would you summarize the record of man’s relationship with God through Genesis 12? How does that help you understand God’s dealings with Abraham?

A faith-based vs. a works-based mindset

Those who were claiming that their circumcision put them in a special class were making a very basic error. The righteousness of God is not based on any external status symbol, but upon a faith which appropriates His grace.

In what ways are members of the body of Christ liable to make the same mistake as these Jews? Why is it so dangerous?

What mind-set must we have to avoid such a serious mistake?

Romans 4:13-25

Paul now turns to a consideration of law as a means of salvation. If Abraham was not justified through his circumcision, maybe it was because he kept the law. Paul's answer helps explain v. 4: if Abraham had "worked," God would have owed him salvation.

Was God obligated to save Abraham because he "worked"? In v. 13, Paul says "it is not through law that Abraham and his offspring received the promise" (NIV). By "law," Paul means a system of righteousness; i.e., a plan of salvation or a method (if you will) of being justified. "Works" are "works of law" and to be justified by works (law) requires *perfect performance of the law*. But if Abraham had perfectly performed the law, God would owe him salvation and grace and faith would be irrelevant.

But Abraham was not justified by perfect performance of law, because he didn't keep the law perfectly. He was justified because the grace of God (v. 16) created the opportunity for Abraham to be justified through "the righteousness of faith" (v. 13). The law, by its very nature, cannot produce righteousness, but wrath (v. 15).

Furthermore, Paul reasons, the promise was given *before* the law and if only those "of the Mosaic Law" (Jews) are heirs, then faith is pointless and the promise is meaningless (see Gal. 3:17-18). The promise is that all nations would be blessed (forgiven in Christ), not just Israel. The reason all nations need forgiveness is because all have sinned (3:23; 5:12). The Law had no provision for forgiveness; no law, in its purest sense, can forgive. It can only convict.

The last clause in v. 15 says that "where there is no law there is no transgression" (Gk. *Parabasis*; not *hamartia* "sin"; this is important because *parabasis* always means to "go beyond;" *hamartia* is the more general word meaning "to miss the mark"). The meaning seems to be that there is no transgression of a command if there is no command to "go beyond." The Mosaic Law (referred to here) made those under it more accountable to God because it spelled out in great detail what God expected from them. Therefore, instead of providing a level of comfort for the Jews because they possessed the law, the Law actually served to increase their guilt! (see 5:13, 20; 7:7-12; Gal. 3:19).

FROM THEIR WORLD TO OURS...



Developing a faith like Abraham

Is the study of Romans just an academic exercise designed to stimulate the mind and little else?

Note vv. 23-24: this was written for our sakes also, that we might know how to be justified by faith in the God who raised up Jesus (v. 25).

We need to learn a lesson, then, from the nature and quality of Abraham's faith. Note Paul's distinctive language describing Abraham's faith – "contrary to hope, in hope believed"; "did not consider his own body"; "did not waver"; "being fully convinced." This is the kind of faith that justifies, nothing less! When our faith matches Abraham's faith, we can be assured that it is accounted to us for righteousness as well.

Only faith, not perfect performance, can bring justification. And the faith Paul is talking about is a faith based not only on what God says, but on who God is. It's fascinating to observe the intertwining of faith and hope here. Abraham's faith in God produced "hope against hope" (v. 18); he believed and hoped even though his body "was as good as dead" (v. 19); he was fully convinced that God could do what he had promised (v. 21).

That last sentence may be the closest thing we have to an actual definition of faith in the New Testament. When we place our faith in the promises of God, we can be fully convinced, without any doubt whatsoever, that God will do what He promises.

Paul ends this chapter with the important note that the words of Gen. 15:6 were not written just for Abraham's sake, but for ours as well. We'll be justified on the same basis as Abraham.

Questions

1. Where is the original promise to Abraham found in the Bible?
2. Name some of the problems that we face if salvation comes through the Law (or a system of law).
3. Can law forgive? Why or why not?
4. Describe the nature and scope of Abraham's faith.
5. Explain how the words "it was accounted to him for righteousness" (Gen. 15:6) applies to us.



FROM THEIR WORLD TO OURS...

Romans 5:1-11

“Therefore” (v. 1) leads us back to the previous chapter: the faith of Abraham was written about in order to help us develop the same kind of faith that he had (4:23). Having been justified by faith, certain results will follow.

The result of justification is that “we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Paul is not talking about a subjective peace (“peace of mind”) but about the primary kind of peace which is the absence of hostility between us and God. Before, I was an enemy of God (though He still loved me! cf. 5:8). But now, through the act of God in Christ and by my trusting submission to and reliance on God, I am a friend of God, totally at peace with Him.

Faith gives us access to God’s grace; grace is the basis of our salvation, it is the source of all our blessings. That’s why Paul says we “stand” in it. Without grace we would never have opportunity to exercise faith. Grace is the basis of our hope, faith is the means of appropriating it for ourselves.

Justification brings peace which leads us to us to “rejoice in the hope of the glory of God” (v. 2). A person who is truly at peace with God can endure any affliction (Gk: *thlipsis*, a word which denotes real hardships), knowing that such afflictions eventually lead to a perfection of hope, through the building of *perseverance* and *character*. This hope is not the kind that disappoints, because it is based in the love of God.

Again, Paul says we exult in God because we have received the reconciliation (v. 11). In vv. 6-10, Paul describes the saving work of Christ in terms of our situation at the time. We were all without strength, ungodly, sinners, and enemies. We were in quite a predicament of our own making. There is no way we could expect to be reconciled to God unless He took the initiative. People do not voluntarily die for other people, even righteous people. Perhaps someone will die for a truly good person (the person, perhaps, whose life makes a difference for others). But we are neither good nor righteous (3:9-20, 23), and yet, “God demonstrated His love” to us by causing Christ to die for us (5:8; cf. this verse with Jn. 3:16). Paul says if He does that for His enemies, will He not do *much more* for His friends (v. 10)?!

“Saved by His life” (v. 10) may be taken to mean either saved “in the sphere of” Christ (Sanday & Headlam, Nygren) or as referring to Christ’s intercession or mediation for His people (Murray, Moo; cf. Hb. 7:25). I prefer the latter (cf. Heb. 7:16, 25).

Not just acquitted, but reconciled, too!

When reading the term “justified,” think of a law court. You stand before the judge awaiting your sentence. If you are “justified,” it means you are “acquitted” or “pronounced ‘not guilty’” by the judge.

When reading the word “reconciled,” on the other hand, think of a relationship. Perhaps you’ve had the experience of being estranged from someone you really love very much, perhaps a parent, child or friend. If you are truly reconciled to that person, then the relationship has been restored to its former state of friendliness and mutual concern.

Consider: not only has God loved us enough to “acquit” us, a wonderful act in itself, but has also restored our personal relationship to Him through Christ. While we would be happy with the acquittal by itself, how much more precious is the relationship?! Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift! (II Cor. 9:15).

Questions

1. Distinguish faith and grace; what is the function of each? What is their relationship to hope?
2. How can sufferings (v. 3) lead to hope (v. 5)? What is special about this hope?
3. Paul describes our condition before Christ died for us using three words. What are they and how do they differ?
4. Paul says we are “justified by his blood” (v. 9). Aren’t we justified by faith? Explain the difference, if any.
5. What is reconciliation? Give an example from daily life.
6. What is the significance of the terms “much more” and “more than that” in vv. 9-11?



Romans 5:12-21

Paul now contrasts two representatives, Adam and Christ. Adam represents sinful man. He ushered in the rule of death through sin and all have followed him. But Christ came and proved that grace is greater than our sin – “much more did the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abound to the many” (v. 15). Paul’s point is not to show the origin of sin; it is to show the *fact* of sin and its remedy (grace) with the emphasis on the latter.

The first man Adam sinned and is therefore a fitting representative of all men who have sinned (note Paul’s use of Adam as a representative in I Cor. 15 also). Death came to all men “*because all sinned.*” What kind of death is Paul talking about? It is true that physical death came into the world upon Adam’s sin (see Gen. 3:19), but that hardly fits the context here. The death that “reigned from Adam to Moses” was a result of the violation of positive moral law (v. 13 proves that law is a prerequisite to sin and that moral law has always been in force, even before the Law of Moses). The Law of Moses came in and *increased* sin by providing more codes to be governed by (v. 20). So men were dead in their sins and under condemnation, deserving the wrath of God. What we inherited from our physical forefather, Adam, was a world into which he introduced sin, *not his sin* (cf. v. 14). V. 12 says that death came because *all* sinned, not because Adam sinned. All have followed Adam’s lead, committing “many transgressions” (v. 16), resulting in death.

Even before Adam’s trespass hurled humanity into the orbit of sin, God had a remedy prepared (cf. Rom. 8:28-30; Eph. 1:4). To explain the remedy, Paul introduces a number of contrasts between Adam’s act and Christ’s act. Adam, as representative of every man, introduced the rule of death into the human family; Christ introduced the rule of life (II Tim. 1:10; I Jn. 5:11-13).

The point Paul is making here is simply that grace, introduced through Christ, is much greater than the sin introduced by Adam. The words “*much more,*” which occur throughout this section, are significant. It is this emphasis on the “*much more*” of grace that leads Paul to deal with the questions of 6:1, 15.

FROM THEIR WORLD TO OURS...

Grace greater than our sin

Paul is speaking in cosmic terms here, contrasting the profound unrighteousness of all mankind since Adam with the profound gift of grace through Christ, which is accessible to everyone (cf. I:16; Jn. 1:12). But all scripture is meant to be personally applied, and there is much to apply here. Some people have difficulty forgiving themselves – the past haunts them continually and they never seem to escape the shadows. Let them read (correctly!) Romans 5. And let us refuse to let Calvinists, with their upside down doctrines, take passages like this away from us! Paul’s “*much more*” (found four times in the Greek in vv. 12-21) is designed to lift us out of our spiritual doldrums, and help us realize that God’s grace is greater than any sin conceived and committed by fallible man. God gives us eternal life and grace reigns! Don’t you feel better already?

Questions

1. Outline the contrasts between Adam and Christ.
2. “What we lost in Adam we gained in Christ.” What did we lose; what did we gain?
3. If there is sin, there must be _____. (v. 13)
4. If v. 12 and 18 teach, as Calvinists believe, that all men share in the sin of Adam, what does v. 18 teach? Did Paul teach a doctrine of universalism (everyone is saved, regardless of belief)?
5. What do vv. 13 and 20 teach us about law?

Romans 6:1-14

The key argument of 5:12-21 is that grace is greater than sin. Given that truth, since sin provides the occasion for the demonstration of grace, why not sin “that grace may abound?” (cf. 3:8)? Paul’s disdain for such shallow, immature and unspiritual thinking is obvious “Certainly not!” (Sanday & Headlam: “a horrible thought!”). If you “died to sin,” how can you continue to live in it? Paul’s proposition is that it is not logical for one who has become a Christian to “go on presenting the members of his body as instruments of unrighteousness” (v. 13).

Paul makes dying to sin a pivotal point in a believer’s life. Therefore, it is important to know how and when this death occurs and what the results of this death are. On that point, Paul could not be more lucid: “Or don’t you know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death?” Two things are affirmed: baptism puts us *into Christ* (cf. Gal. 3:26-27) and *into His death* (cf. Col. 2:12).

Can you be a Christian and not be *in Christ*? (See 8:1). Paul affirms that the only way one can get into Christ is by being “buried with Him through baptism.” The image is clear enough—baptism is a likeness of the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. So, we are buried (in water) and we rise (from the water) “to walk in newness of life” (v. 4), in the likeness of His death and resurrection.

What is the effect of this baptism into Christ and into His death? What does it do for us? The answer is summarized in v. 10. Why did Christ die? He is a *once-For-all* sacrifice for sin. Why does He live? “He lives to God.” In like manner, v. 6 says, our “old self was crucified with Him that the body of sin might be done away with” (i.e., our past sins are forgiven; cf. Acts 2:38; Gal. 2:20) “that we should no longer be slaves to sin” (our present life is changed in regard to sin—we are no longer held captive by it).

In verse 7, Paul says that “he who has died is freed from sin.” The word translated “freed” is the same Greek word translated “justified” in other places. Paul is saying that our death to sin (which occurs in baptism) justifies us.

“But I thought Paul said we were justified by faith,” someone might ask. Exactly! Baptism is not a ritual or ceremony or outward sign of an inward reality. It is an *act of faith* which God has prescribed, and when we are obedient, God changes His mind toward us, and cleanses us from sin (cf. v. 17). We enter into a new rela-

FROM THEIR WORLD TO OURS...



Dead to sin, alive to Christ

Paul says we died with Christ and died to sin in our baptism. He argues from that assumption that it is entirely illogical for us to go on sinning. There are three ways in which it might be said that we are dead to sin: (1) we are dead to the love of sin (2 Pet. 2:12-13); (2) we are dead to the practice of sin and, (3) we are dead to guilt of sin. In baptism, our guilt is taken away and we are put into Christ. While we sometimes make mistakes and fall short, we no longer have a love for sinning and we do not practice sin (cf. 1 Jn. 3:9). Why? Because we have been freed from sin (Rom. 6:7). Therefore, we count ourselves as dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ (v. 11). “As a man thinks in his heart, so is he” (Prov. 23:7). How do you consider yourself?

tionship in which it is illogical for us to go on sinning.

6:11 is an important verse, worthy of memorization: “So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.” Paul wants us to see ourselves differently. We are not “alive to sin” any more; that mentality has given way to a new one—to be dead to sin and alive to God in Christ.”

Questions

1. If grace is a free gift and has been offered because we have sinned, why doesn't grace abound the more we sin? If we are not under law, but under grace, why be concerned with the keeping of law? Outline Paul's argument in chapter 6.
2. Describe baptism and its importance, using 6:3-7.
3. Paul tells us not to allow sin to reign in our bodies (v. 12). How do we accomplish that?
4. Sin will have no dominion over us because we are not under law, but under grace (v. 14). Explain.



FROM THEIR WORLD TO OURS...

Romans 6:15-23

Since salvation is a gift of grace from God and not based upon perfect performance of law (v. 14), perhaps it follows that there is no restraint—maybe sin doesn't matter. As in v. 1, Paul's response is an unreserved "may it never be!" He had argued in v. 14 that if we are under grace instead of under law then sin is not a master over us. But holiness is not passive. He had already argued in v. 13 that we were to present ourselves to God and our members as instruments of righteousness. This is something we *do*.

Now Paul says that we are "slaves to whomever we present ourselves to obey" whether sin or obedience (v. 16; cf. II Pet. 2:19). A "slave" is one who assigns all of his personal rights to another. If we practice sin, we are slaves to sin (regardless of what we may claim to be). If to be under grace means that we are not mastered by sin, then to be under grace also means that we must present ourselves to God in "obedience from the heart" (v. 17). Most likely, vv. 17-18 refer back to the beginning of our obedience in baptism. In baptism, we obeyed (past tense—i.e., a decisive act in the past) from the heart (an act that was voluntary and sincere) that "form of teaching (the gospel) to which you were committed." That voluntary, decisive act made us free from sin (v. 18; cf. v. 7), and we became "slaves of righteousness." The slave imagery graphically describes our relationship to either sin or God. Speaking "in human terms," Paul argues that all of us are slaves to someone. We must make the choice to be a slave of evil or a slave of righteousness.

What we choose has eternal ramifications. Those who choose the "slavery" of sin will reap the "wages of (spiritual) death" (v. 23). But those who submit to God will receive the "free gift of eternal life in Christ." This important verse nearly sums up the gospel: we either get what we've earned through our sin (eternal destruction) or we accept God's offer of the free gift of eternal life in Christ. The Greek word for gift here is *charisma*, which usually refers to a gift that comes from God, unattainable by man's effort.

The Christian's baptism is the great dividing line across his life. In it, he entered into a relationship full of consequences, looking both backwards to his former sin-filled life and forward to a new sin-free life. He is no longer "under law" but "under grace." Paul has described the process in terms of slavery. Next, in chapter 7, he uses marriage to illustrate his point.

Of what benefit is slavery to sin?

Paul's emphasis, of course, is on the eternal implications of our actions. It is incredible to Paul that one who has identified with Christ would fall back into the old ways of sin (see I Cor. 6:18-10) or the rudiments of law (cf. Gal. 4:9). For Paul, his baptism (an expression of faith) meant that he was alive to God and on his way to heaven!

What is the day-to-day benefit of this knowledge and attitude? How does confidence help you live better? See Pr. 10:16; 12:28, where Rom. 6:23 is put into practical, everyday terms. What is the better life, even from an earthly viewpoint: the life of sin or the life of righteousness? Can you answer from experience?

Questions

1. Why would someone make the argument that is implied in v. 15?
2. Describe how Paul is using the “slavery-freedom” metaphor to describe our sanctification.
3. What “wage” is due the sinner? What is the difference between a wage and a gift?



Romans 7:1-6

Paul writes to “those who know the law” (v. 1). The first question is, “what law?” It could be any of several; after all, Rome was the “capital of codification.” But it probably refers to the Old Testament law. Undoubtedly many of the Gentiles in the Roman church had been “God-fearers” or synagogue worshippers before coming to Christ. Also, new converts would have been exposed to the Old Covenant early in their Christian instruction (Moo, page 436). There is abundant evidence that Gentiles were, in many cases, familiar with the Law (cf. Gal. 4:21).

Paul uses marriage as an illustration to demonstrate our freedom from the principle of law as an entrance requirement. A “woman is bound to her husband while he lives” but when he dies, she is free to remarry (vv. 2-3). Death changes one’s relationship in marriage and the same is true in our relationship to law. Law (*any* law) has dominion over a man only so long as he lives. The point of the illustration is that a believer is freed from the rule of law by a death and brought into a covenant relationship with Christ by a life (grace). When we were converted, we died to the law and that freed us to be joined to Christ. As long as we were “under law,”¹ the law, in some way, brings out our sins and aggravates them. The much-disputed latter part of chapter 7 addresses how this is so (see notes on page 40).

The actual result of no longer being under law is that we serve in a new way, a way or state determined by the Spirit instead of the old way which was determined by the “letter” or law (v. 6). Paul contrasts the spirit and letter in 2:29 and II Cor. 3:6-7, where he draws a sharp contrast between the old and new covenants (Moo, p. 446). While there was more than law in the OT, and godly people like David understood that, its essence was in its code: it had to be kept exactly as written for one to be justified by it (cf. Gal. 3:10). To live under law, which has no provision for forgiveness, is a source of misery for the conscientious person. Why? Because the law does not serve to curb sin but serves to arouse it. Paul explains that in the following verses.

¹ Cf. 6:14, “under law” is similar to being “in the flesh”; v. 5; “characterized by fleshly desires and outlook” Morris, page 274; not “controlled by the sinful nature” NIV; cf. *Sanday and Headlam*, page 174: “Although *sarx* (Gk. for “flesh”) is human nature especially on the side of its frailty, it does not follow... that he regards the body as inherently sinful.”

FROM THEIR WORLD TO OURS...

The sting of law

Since this passage is discussing law and not marriage, is there any *proper* use of this passage when discussing marriage and divorce? Why or why not?

We should not be under the impression that discussion of the principle of law has no relevance to us. If we understand that Paul uses “law” not only to refer to the Law of Moses, but as a principle by which we can choose to live and be judged, then we will see the importance of understanding his arguments. In fact, everyone who is not a Christian has chosen to live under law. Why is that such a terrible thing? What does it mean for them? See I Cor. 15:56).

Romans 7:7-25

This passage has been the source of much controversy for centuries. There are at least three possible interpretations: (1) Paul is describing his own present experience; (2) Paul is describing his life prior to conversion, when he lived under the law as a Jew; (3) Paul is using “I” as a rhetorical device to make his argument and is describing a person who is attempting to, in good conscience, keep the law.

If the law is unable to save us and if it only serves to arouse our passions toward sin, then one may conclude that the law itself is sin. Again, however, Paul is emphatic: *Certainly not!* If law were a bad thing, then Paul wouldn’t have been convicted by the law as a sinner (v. 7).

Paul concludes that the law is good. But, he asks, “has what is good become death to me?” He answers this question in the rather difficult section which follows, using the first person.

See notes on page 40.



FROM THEIR WORLD TO OURS...

The benefit of law

When did sin “revive” or come to life for you? Were you ever, like Paul, “alive once without [the] law”?

Why does Paul use the law against coveting for an example? Is that law different in some way than other laws?

Are you happy or not that there are laws to be obeyed? Would you like to be absolutely free of law? What function does it serve for you?

Reality of law or enslaved to sin?

There are several views of this particular passage of scripture. Some feel that it is an accurate description of a Christian’s life, here and now (in other words, they feel Paul is describing his life as it actually was). This is the meaning one gets when reading the passage for the first time. On the other hand, others feel Paul is dramatizing one’s life under the law, only from the perspective of a Christian (see Additional Notes). In any case, as long as we live, we will struggle against sin. The law always provides an occasion for sin to inflict its sting on us. Galatians 5:17 describes the battle between the flesh and the spirit that goes on until we die.

However, Paul seems to be describing a state of captivity of some sort; he describes himself as being imprisoned by sin, “sold into bondage.” How ever you may interpret this passage, do you believe a Christian should ever be “in bondage” to sin? Reconcile II Peter 2:19, “for whatever overcomes a person, to that he is enslaved,” with Paul’s words here.

Questions

1. Attempt to write out a paraphrase of what Paul says in this chapter before reading the notes on page 42. What are some of the problems you find in the interpretation of this section? What scriptures come to mind that Paul seems to be contradicting, if the text is taken at face value?

Notes on Romans 7

I'll begin our examination of this passage with some words from Leon Morris (Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, page 276): "First, we should be clear that Paul is writing about the law, not trying to answer the questions that modern people ask. The passage is not primarily a piece of autobiography or a psychological study of the Christian experience. It is a sustained treatment of the place of the law."

The context, which starts in chapter 6, establishes the truth of Morris' statement. Chapter 7 is about law, not about "sinning in spite of ourselves." In chapter 6, in fact, Paul emphatically denied that we should sin for any reason, implying that sin is something totally within our control. We decide to present our bodies as slaves, either to sin, or to righteousness. The reality of being "under grace" should make our decision an easy one — we will present our members as "slaves to righteousness."

In the first part of chapter 7, Paul uses an illustration from marriage to demonstrate that we are not bound (married) to the law anymore. Instead, we have died to the law (the "oldness of the letter") and have been joined to another, Christ, so that we can bear fruit and serve in the "newness of the Spirit."

All of the talk about the law, thus far, has been negative; that is, Paul argues that law (or the principle of law) serves a purpose but is subordinate to grace and faith. So some might conclude that the law itself is sin. Paul says "may it never be!" and proceeds to develop an argument which demonstrates the value of the law. In doing so, he chooses to speak in the first person. In a study by Werner Kümmel, referenced by Moo, page 452, it was shown that *ego* (in Greek, first person singular) could be used as a rhetorical device without any personal reference being intended at all (cf. Rom. 3:7). So the use of the first person, in itself, is not decisive for determining the meaning of this passage.

In vv. 7-13, Paul argues that the law is good (v. 12) because without it he wouldn't have known about sin. For example, coveting (the tenth commandment) is a sin all have committed, but how would one know about coveting except there was a law which defined it as sin? "For through the law comes the knowledge of sin" (3:20). Law defines sin *as* sin (7:13).

But Paul affirms another function, or an effect, of law: *it gives sin its life*. This fact flows from the previous thought. If there is no sin without law, then law "cre-

ates" sin, just as "good" defines "bad." That does not make the law sin, but gives sin the opportunity to do its evil work. Without the law in place, the sin cannot exist. Using the example of coveting, Paul says that the sin of coveting took the opportunity created by the law against coveting and produced coveting in him of every kind. Does that mean the law against coveting is bad and therefore should bear the blame when we die spiritually? Of course not! (v. 13). It is sin that kills us, through the commandment (because without the commandment, there is no sin). Paul is simply establishing the difficulty of living under a "holy and righteous and good" law.

The law functions as an identifier of sin (v. 13) because this holy, righteous and good law (v. 12) is the revealed will of God. So this law, whether the moral law of God or the Law of Moses, identifies any transgression of it as sin. Sin is a missing of the mark of God or a transgression of God's will, not just a violation of a civil or common law code. Law, then, identifies transgressions as utterly sinful.

From verse 14, Paul begins a description of the plight of a man who is living under law, but who has the perspective of a Christian. Using the first person singular, he describes the misery of wanting to do good, but being unable to do so. The law provides a standard but also keeps driving him further away from God. It's like a nail in wood, with the law as the hammer. Each blow from the hammer (the law as it is violated) drives the nail deeper into the wood. Even if the blows should cease (by living a sinless life from that point on) there is still no way to pull the nail out of the wood. Years of living perfectly could not make up for the sins of the past. All you can do is cry, "wretched man that I am, who will save me from the body of this death!" (v. 24).

I do not believe this refers to Paul, either in his life as a Christian or before. The language here does not cohere with his statement of Acts 23:1 that he had lived all his life in good conscience. The person described here had a *miserable* conscience! He knew the right thing to do, but didn't do it! (Cf. James 4:17). He seems unable to do good, no matter how hard he tries, and he is all too aware of his failings. When Paul was living as a strict Pharisee, he did so in good conscience, not second-guessing himself. He thought he "must do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth" (Acts 26:9), but he had always endeavored "to have a conscience without offense toward

God and men” (Acts 24:16). Paul was not distraught during his life as a Jew; on the contrary, he was confident. But this passage is describing someone who is tormented by his failure to keep the law. It is identifying a very different kind of mentality than Paul ever ascribed to himself.

Nor is this passage describing the average regenerate person. There may be some comfort in thinking that Paul is describing a Christian’s life here—that in reality we are powerless to keep from sinning. We may feel some relief in knowing that the battle against sin is lost and that our sin is not really our fault (v. 17).

But does that sound like the same Paul who wrote 6:11-13, 16; 8:5-8? This surely is one of those passages that the unstable twist to their own destruction (II Pet. 3:16)! If we think that the Christian life is a losing battle against the flesh, we’ve totally missed the point. We might as well jump feet first back into the world and enjoy the ride!

Just what *is* Paul saying? The use of the first person is not an uncommon literary device to make a dramatic point. The subject is *law*. Paul is placing himself in the position of one who is living under the law, not as a self-righteous Jew, but as a person who, as it were, is stuck with the law. He wishes there was a better way. He knows that the law is good because when he does what he doesn’t want to do, he confesses that it is good. Why? Because if the law approved the action, then he would be doing what he *wants* to do. That’s his predicament! (v. 16).

This is a man who knows the law and knows he is breaking it. Sin indwells him (v. 17) because he has found no way out from under the crushing burden of law, and the law-sin principle defines his spiritual life. Law can only convict, not forgive. Eventually, as he continues to compare his deeds with the demands of law, he comes to realize that nothing good dwells in him. He *wishes* to do good (that is, fulfill the law) but he cannot achieve it (v. 18-19)—the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak.

Sin dwells in all of those who are living under law instead of under grace. Law, left by itself, provides a perfect breeding ground for sin. It is like good soil, meant to grow beautiful lawns, shrubbery and flowers. But left on its own, as good as it is, ultimately, weeds will infest it and take it over. The soil was good, meant for life. But when sin comes along, it finds “good ground” in the soil of law.

A person who desires with all his heart to please God will begin to search for God in His word. When he finds law, he will begin to understand how inade-

quate he is, that he is an utter spiritual failure. The more law he learns, the more intense are the feelings of delinquency. It will drive the spiritually sensitive person to his knees. But it is at that point that we see a chief function of the law. Paul’s “O, wretched man that I am” is a dramatic way of restating the words of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount: “Blessed are the poor in spirit... blessed are those who mourn.” Until this person experiences his complete spiritual bankruptcy, he will never answer Paul’s question: “who will set me free from the body of this death?” For the spiritually sensitive man, the answer is in the good news—“Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!” (v. 25a).

I admit that the latter part of verse 25 presents a problem for this interpretation. It seems that Paul should finish with his answer, but he goes on to say that he serves God with his mind, but with his flesh, the law of sin. My only explanation is that he is staying on course with his argument and simply repeating it: under law (i.e., in the flesh), we serve sin—there is no possible alternative; this is so even though we are seeking to serve God in the mind. The implication is that we must go back to the answer of 25a—through Jesus Christ, we can be more than conquerors! (8:37) That is why he can say with confidence in the next verse (8:1) that there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ. Another way of stating that is that there is condemnation for those who are “in the flesh” 8:8; cf. Paul’s argument in Gal. 5:16-18.

I believe this interpretation harmonizes best with Paul’s view of Christianity as a life of uncompromising holiness (I Cor. 6:18-20). We are held responsible for our needs (2:6-8) and will give an account for how we lived (2 Cor. 5:10); Christ dwells in us and we are pure and holy; we have no fellowship with the works of darkness (Eph. 5:11) but walk as children of light (Eph. 5:8). Since we have been raised with Christ to sit in heavenly places (Eph. 2:6) we seek those things above, where Christ is (Col. 3:1) considering ourselves heavenly citizens (Phil. 3:20). We have put off the old man and put on the new, and put to death the members which are on the earth (Col. 3:5-11); we have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires, and walk in the Spirit (Gal. 5:24-25). We consider ourselves dead to sin and alive to Christ (Rom. 6:11). Given that description of the Christian life, it can hardly be said that “sin dwells in me” can it?

Romans 8:1-4

The “therefore” of v. 1 sends us back to chapter 7 where Paul made it clear that living under law brings misery and shame. The only way to be delivered from the death which law inevitably brings is through Jesus Christ (7:25). There is “no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (8:1).

“Condemnation” (Gk. *katakrima*) is a legal term which includes both judgment and execution and is used as the antithesis of “justification” in 5:16, 18. If one is in Christ, he will not be held accountable for his past sins and punished. Why? Because one rule sets us free from the other (cf. 6:14). If we are under grace, we cannot be under law, and vice versa. The “law (‘rule’ or ‘principle’) of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus sets us free from the law (‘rule’ or ‘principle’) of sin and death.” The rule of the spirit of life is the gospel, the life-giving good news of Jesus, which is the “power unto salvation” (1:16). Unlike law, this “rule” has as its central principle the ideas of grace, mercy and love, though it contains an element of law (cf. 1 Cor. 9:21). Law itself never forgives, it just makes ever-increasing demands. Therefore, while not through any fault of its own, but because of the “weakness of our flesh,” (v. 3) it brings sin and death.

But God did what the law could not do. What could the law not do? The law could not justify us because we could not keep the law. But God sent Jesus who accomplished our justification through the sacrifice of Himself on the cross (cf. 3:21-26; 4:25; 5:6-11). He came in the “likeness of sinful flesh,” but never sinned (Heb. 4:15; 2 Cor. 5:21). At the cross, in His fleshly body, He “condemned sin” once and for all by taking all of our sins onto Himself (see Hb. 10:1-10).

“That” (v. 4) introduces a purpose clause. What is the effect of Christ’s death for us, relative to the law? Paul says that through Christ we *fulfill* “the righteous requirement of the law.” We are viewed by God as if we have kept the entire law. That’s justification: “pronounced righteous,” even though we are not.

We’ve come full circle. While we could never hope to keep the law ourselves we fulfill the requirement of the law through Christ. As long as we remain in Christ, it is as if we had lived all our lives in perfect harmony with God’s will; such is the effect of Christ’s death.

FROM THEIR WORLD TO OURS...



No condemnation!

This is one of the most uplifting statements in scripture. In essence, it requires that we ask but one question: “Am I in Christ?” Chapter 6 provides an answer to how we get into Christ initially. The following verses in chapter 8 tell us how to stay in Christ.

Being “in Christ” means being acquitted, pardoned and justified. It means we live our life without fear of eternal punishment. It means we live in the comfort of knowing we are children, not fearful prisoners.

Questions

- I. “There is therefore no condemnation for those who are Christ Jesus” is an absolute statement with an implied absolute promise.
 - a. Be able to clearly state the conditions of owning this statement/promise, as explained in vv. 2-4.

 - b. What is the “righteous requirement of the law” that is fulfilled in us?

 - c. Find other statements in Romans and the rest of the New Testament that explain what it means to be “in Christ”?

2. What does Rom. 8:1 do for your confidence?

Romans 8:5-11

Salvation is not unconditional, despite theologies that teach otherwise (e.g., unconditional election, once-saved, always-saved, irresistible grace). Paul says we must “walk” (v. 4; “live,” v. 5) “according to the Spirit, not according to the flesh.” This is the condition for remaining “in Christ.” “Those who walk according to the flesh cannot please God” (v. 8) and such fleshly-mindedness is “death” (v. 6).

What does “flesh” mean? It does not mean “sinful nature,” as the NIV renders it; that is an interpretation, not a translation. The Greek word is *sarx* and is everywhere else translated “flesh,” even in the NIV.

To get the meaning, it is best to let Paul interpret Paul: living by the Spirit or by the flesh is determined by where the mind is (v. 5), what the “walk” is (i.e., your day-to-day life; cf. Eph. 5:2, 8, 15), and how well you subject yourself to the will of God (cf. Mt. 7:21-23).

Living, walking and setting our minds “in the flesh” is equivalent to being “conformed to this world” (12:2). While we must exist in the flesh, we are not obligated to be controlled by the flesh (cf. v. 12). We set our minds on things above, realizing we are citizens of heaven (Col. 3:1-4; Phil. 3:20) waiting for our final conveyance to our home. Those who are truly “in Christ” work hard to keep that perspective.

Paul says that is impossible to be “in Christ” and “in the flesh” at the same time (v. 9). Spirit and flesh do not mix, despite some interpretations of chapter 7 which insist that they do. One excludes the other. Paul’s point, however, is not sinless perfection, but focus and direction of life. Our mind-set and our “walk” are controlled by the Spirit (cf. I John 1:7). Those who are in the Spirit are those who have changed their minds about sin (i.e., they have repented) and are relying upon the Spirit to direct them along the paths of righteousness which leads to God.

But how does the Spirit do this? Earlier, Paul said that we are saved (“justified”) by our faith in the gospel (cf. 1:16-17). Later, he’ll say that faith comes from hearing the word of God (10:17). The Spirit is responsible for revealing the gospel by which we are saved and telling us about the God in whom we trust. The Spirit of God dwells in us when the word of God—which is living and active (Hb 4:12)—dwells in us. Our minds are transformed by the renewing of the Spirit (12:2). Note that all three persons of the

FROM THEIR WORLD TO OURS...



Living in the Spirit

The Holy Spirit is the most mysterious person of the godhead to most people. Perhaps that is a result of the King James version translation, “Holy Ghost.” In our vernacular, “ghosts” are mysterious. But the Spirit is said to be in every Christian (v. 9).

Read the passage (8:5-11) carefully and write down what Paul says the Spirit does for those in whom He dwells. Also, review John 14-16, where Jesus tells the disciples what the Spirit will do for them when He leaves. Notice the emphasis on the transmission of the word of God.

Is He really that mysterious, after all?

godhead are said to dwell in the Christian in this passage. It is curious that many only refer to the “personal indwelling” of the Holy Spirit when this passage clearly says that all of the godhead dwells in us.

Our mortal bodies will be enlivened by the Spirit (v. 11). When does this take place? Is Paul talking about the resurrection? That’s possible. But Whiteside asks, “is it our mortal bodies that are going to be raised?” (*Commentary on Romans*, p. 175; cf. II Cor. 4:11). Paul’s emphasis in this entire section seems to be that faith in Christ gives us a power to what we cannot do under a law system: we have the power to live the Christian life, to do God’s will. The Spirit gives us the power to “present our (mortal) bodies as a living sacrifice” (12:1) and to present our members as “instruments of righteousness” (6:13). Paul said in II Cor. 4:11, that the apostles were “always delivered up to death so that the life of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal bodies.”

If v. 11 is simply a statement about our future resurrection, it is comforting enough. But if it is affirming that the Spirit gives us power to live for Christ now, while in the flesh, it is a profound promise that energizes us for everyday living.



Romans 8:12-17

There may be those who think that as long as we are in the flesh (i.e., “mortal”) that we are obligated to live in a fleshly way. Paul answers that in vv. 12-13: we are not debtors to the flesh; it is a choice, and those who choose to live in the flesh will die.

It is only those who are “led by the Spirit who are the sons of God” (v. 14). As children of God, “we have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear” (v. 15), but the spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, “Abba, Father!” This may well be the traditional cry of the slave who has been graciously adopted by his master who has conferred upon the slave all of the rights and privileges of the family, including his share in the inheritance. Paul adopts this term to describe our change of status—from slaves to beloved members of the family of God (see sidebar).

In v. 16, Paul says that “the Spirit Himself bears witness (‘testifies’) with our spirit (the inner man or the heart of a person) that we are children of God.” This is a difficult verse for those who believe the Spirit dwells in them personally. They look for some feeling or sign to know that the Spirit is truly “testifying.” But if we understand that the Spirit works with and through the word of God, it is easy to understand. When we read the word and obey it, we can have confidence that we are “in step” with God—the Spirit, through the word, “testifies” to that. We believe it and we know it because we can read and understand it.

If we are children of God, Paul adds, then we are “heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ” Himself! (v. 17). We inherit along with Christ who is “heir of all things” (Heb. 1:2). That inheritance is our home in heaven, described by Peter in I Pet. 1:3-5.

There is a caveat, however. Paul says that we are children “provided we suffer with him” (ESV). Suffering for Christ is a common New Testament theme, probably because it was a common first century experience. “Suffering” implies that we are being forced to decide between Christ and the world and that we have decided for Christ, *regardless of the consequences*. Those consequences—whatever they are, in whatever age we live are what we must suffer if we hope to be considered as “children of God.”

FROM THEIR WORLD TO OURS...

“Abba, Father!”

Living in Christ is not about sinless perfection! Of course, that is the goal, the ideal toward which we strive. But Paul tells us that the real key is to fully appreciate the relationship aspect of life in Christ. Compare v. 15, “Abba, Father!” with the cry of the man who says, “wretched man that I am!” (7:24). Living under the law system, where sinless perfection is required, produces fear and despair. But God takes our fear away, as a loving Father who wants very much to save us.

“Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us that we should be called children of God, and such we are” (1 John 3:1). What a wonderful thought! Are you aware of the high place to which God has raised you? Just consider the love which exists in the perfect Father-child relationship. God gives us, through His matchless grace, a sense of worth, belonging and competence (ability). God decided that we are worth saving, so much so that He sent Jesus to die. He has built us into a family, with His name at the head. And He has made every provision to enable us to do His will and keep His commandments, “which are not burdensome” for those who love Him (1 John 5:3).



Romans 8:18-27

Paul tells us we need to suffer with Christ but says these sufferings are “not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us”(v. 18; see 2 Cor. 4:17). “Glory” in the OT was often used to describe the brilliant appearance of God on earth in various “epiphanies,” such as the cloud or the pillar of fire which led Israel through the wilderness (cf. Ezek. 1:28; 11:23). It is in this sense that John uses the term in John 1:14, “we beheld His glory” (perhaps referring to the transfiguration). When used in this way, glory means radiance or brilliance and we are going to share this “glory” with Christ when He comes again (cf. I Jn. 3:2; I Cor. 15:42ff.). Compared to that “glory” all our troubles will pale into insignificance.

There are many difficulties in vv. 19-23 and it is not within our scope to detail all of them. Much of the difficulty would disappear if we could determine with certainty what Paul means by “the creation.” It may mean everything that God has created, but the context seems to demand that the term is limited in some way. For one thing, this “creation” is not the same as “the children of God” (vv. 21, 23).

Paul is using figurative language and probably talking about irrational creation (plants, animals, etc; not human beings or angels). Thus he is describing the figurative “waiting” by “creation,” with those who are children of God, for the coming day of the Lord. He is contrasting the “groaning” of this life with the glory of the next and pointing us toward the hope of our final redemption. “Whole creation” (v. 22) is used to dramatize the difference in the present with the future state of the world. We, along with all creation, wait eagerly for our final “redemption” (v. 23).

Hope is the major theme here and Paul says that it is in hope that we have been saved (v. 24). Hope, like faith, takes the place of sight. Once we see what we hope for, we hope for it no longer. But if we truly hope for that which we do not yet see, then we will “with perseverance eagerly wait for it” (v. 25). Biblical hope (*elpis*) involves both a *desire* for something and an *expectation* that it will be received (see Hb. 11:13-16 for a similar discussion regarding faith). Eagerly waiting for something we long for helps us endure suffering (cf. Heb. 12:1-2).

In the meantime, since we do not know how to pray as we ought, the Spirit, in some way, intercedes

FROM THEIR WORLD TO OURS...

How’s your hope?

Hope is the “point of departure” in discussing Christianity. How’s your hope? Do you feel strong about your place in the next world? What can you do to improve your hope?

Read 5:1–5 again and think about how your troubles can help you in the long run. What does Paul say in chapter 8 about suffering? What kind of suffering do you think he is talking about?

Are you eagerly awaiting the realization of this hope?

for us (vv. 26-27). This is a difficult passage, but one thing seems clear: God knows the “mind of the Spirit” and the Spirit purifies or clarifies our faulty prayers and makes them acceptable to God.

We know from other passages that we pray through Christ – He is our Advocate (I John 2:1) and our High Priest who intercedes for us (Heb. 3:1; 7:25). How do Christ and the Spirit work together? We don’t have enough information to say for sure. But there is great encouragement in this passage, knowing that, in some way, the Spirit makes certain that our prayers are acceptable to God.

Romans 8:28-30



FROM THEIR WORLD TO OURS...

Paul sums up God's plan in these three verses. "And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to His purpose" (v. 28, ESV). This statement is not saying that "everything is good" — sin, for example, is never good. And it's not just a maxim about how God takes care of those who love Him.

In the context, Paul is saying that "all things" that God has planned for our salvation work for good, but only for a certain kind of person: those who love Him and those who are called according to His purpose. This kind of person has entered a partnership with God and is being led by the Spirit of God (8:14). There is no promise here to one who is in rebellion against God or out of sympathy with His purposes (even His unrevealed purposes).

Paul describes how God's purpose has been and is being worked out. In planning for the redemption of man from the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:4), He foreknew that a certain class or kind of person would love Him and agree to His purposes. He predestined, or chose out beforehand, this kind of person with the aim that that person will be conformed to the image or likeness of Christ. Paul says that Christ is the "firstborn" of that "class" — we are in the class (i.e., we are the kind of person God predestined) when we are conforming ourselves to Christ. The call (v. 30) of the gospel is designed to attract *this* kind of person (cf. 1:16; I Thess. 2:13-14) and those who are thus called by the gospel are justified and (will be) glorified when Christ returns (Paul states the latter as an accomplished fact. Why? Read vv. 31-39).

There is no hint of Calvin's idea of unconditional election in this passage, though Calvinists appeal to it. Paul says God called those whom He predestined. If predestination means that certain individuals were chosen beforehand, why "call" them? Chapter 10 says that the call has gone out by those who have preached the gospel and that everyone who answers the call will be saved (10:13). There is no hint of "election" in that passage.

All things work together for good.

There is great power in these three verses! Paul is telling us that God had a plan from the beginning and it includes us. If we love God and if we are called according to His purpose (as opposed to "other purposes," including our own selfish ones), then we fit into the class of people whom God chose to save long ago. How does that make you feel?

What is our ultimate goal, then, as far as the personal development of our character and the final state of our souls? (You find the answer in these verses.)

Questions

1. What are “all things” and how do they “work together for good”? What is the “good”?
2. What is, or should be, the goal of every Christian?
3. Make sure you understand each of the terms in v. 30: *predestined; called; justified; glorified*.

Romans 8:31-39

We must first determine what “these things” (v. 31) refers to. There are a number of alternatives: it could refer to the paragraph immediately preceding this one or to the whole letter up to this point. It seems to make the most sense to think of the discussion which began in v. 18 about suffering, with the teaching of the rest of the letter in the background. The emphasis here seems to be on the trials that Christians face because of their faith. Paul seems to be anticipating that the Romans were in for a great deal of suffering, though it probably had not begun as yet (in AD 57). We do know that Nero began a campaign against Christians in Rome by AD 64.

So Paul says if God is for them, no one, not even the Roman emperors, are strong enough to defeat them. God plus one is always a majority! All we have to do is remember what God did—He sent His Son to die for those who were hostile toward Him (v. 32; 5:6-10). If we truly believe He gave us such a gift, then how could we ever fail to lean on Him for *all* things? Paul is teaching that faith is something that continues throughout our life and is the secret to overcoming any trouble that may come our way.

Paul uses the language of the legal system in vv. 33-34: “Who shall bring a charge against God’s elect?” It doesn’t matter, because “it is God who justifies!” “Who condemns?” It makes no difference because “Christ died and is risen” and it is He who “makes intercession for us.” Christ Himself takes our case to the Judge of the universe (I Jn. 2:1). Those who are “in Christ” (v. 1), are not subject to punishment, no matter what any person may say or do. Christ paid the price with His blood (Acts 20:28).

Love is the theme of the final verses of the chapter. “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?” Paul’s unequivocal answer: *nothing!* What love is Paul talking about? Is it our love for Christ or His for us? Most every scholar feels Paul is clearly talking about Christ’s love for us, and that seems to fit the context best (cf. v. 37, 39).

The Roman Christians must face the kind of trouble that might suggest that Christ’s love for His people has failed. But Paul quotes scripture (Psa. 44:22) to show that God’s people have always suffered for their faith, but that suffering never severs a person from God. Nothing in this life or in death can separate us from the love of God in Christ. What a promise! In fact, we are more than conquerors through His love for us (v. 37).

FROM THEIR WORLD TO OURS...



Dying for Christ — literally

From AD 64 to well into the second century, Christians suffered often at the hands of the Roman government, which was determined to stamp them out. The emperors (like Nero in AD 64) began to resent the fact that Christians confessed another king besides them. In fact, the Romans coined a word, *contumacea* (Latin for “contempt of court”), for the failure of a Christian to confess the emperor. It was a crime worthy of death. The Christian was clothed with the skin of a lamb and sent onto the grounds of the Coliseum to face the hungry lions, in front of delirious crowds. Do you think that he or she, at that time, not only believed Paul’s words that are found here, but trusted in them? I wonder if we believe like that.

Glossary

DEATH

Can refer to physical death, a separation of the soul and body. Most often in Romans refers to spiritual death, a separation of the soul from God.

FAITH

An active, obedient reliance and submission to God, based upon His promises.

GRACE

That which bestows pleasure or delight; favor extended without regard to merit.

HOPE

Confident expectation of a spiritual life beyond this world.

JUSTIFICATION

To be declared righteous or pronounced “not guilty,” even though deserving of God’s wrath because of sin.

LAW

A rule or standard which governs conduct. Sometimes, a principle.

RIGHTEOUSNESS

Sometimes, refers to God’s holiness or goodness. Most often in Romans, “Righteousness of God” refers to God’s plan to redeem man, His plan to make them right with Him, to justify them.

PEACE

Often refers to the state of reconciliation which we enjoy because of God’s grace.

PROPITIATION

The means by which God’s wrath is averted through the sacrifice of Christ.

RECONCILIATION

A change from a state of enmity to a state of friendship.

REDEMPTION

To buy back, to redeem. The idea is that of purchasing our pardon and thereby redeem us from the state of bondage to sin by which we were previously held. The term “ransom” is used in a similar way.

SANCTIFICATION

The continuing process of being *made* righteous after being “declared” righteous (justified).

SIN

Lawlessness, unrighteousness, iniquity; “missing the mark.” It is something done, a deed committed or undone, a deed omitted. It is action, not a “state.”

WORKS

Generally refers to perfect performance of the law.

WRATH

God’s anger against sin. It is not a sudden, impulsive outburst, but a settled anger.