

# INVITATION TO CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP



Commentary on  
The Epistle to the Romans

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## THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS

### COMMENTARY ON THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS

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## FOREWORD

This work, *The Epistle to the Romans*, is part of a larger, seven-year Catholic Bible study, *Invitation to Christian Discipleship*. A second component of The Acts of the Apostles consists of a summary of lectures and worksheets designed for the student, published separately under the title of *The Gospel of God*. This seven-year study has been developed for the Catholic laity so that the Word of Christ, rich as it is, dwells in them.

*Thus they will be able to grasp fully, with all the holy ones, the breadth and length and heights and depths of Christ's love, and experience this love that surpasses all knowledge so that they may attain the fullness of God himself.*  
(Eph. 3:18-19)

The general motivating force behind this study is the preservation and growth of the Christian Faith as understood and transmitted by the Catholic Church through the centuries. It has four immediate goals:

1. To ensure a true spirit of repentance.
2. To foster a deeper commitment in faith to the Lord Jesus Christ.
3. To create a greater awareness of the Holy Spirit in believers.
4. To encourage a more vibrant participation in the life and mission of the Church.

*Invitation To Christian Discipleship* has been accredited by the Catechetical Institute of the Diocese of Orange, California. It is now available to all parishes and at-home study groups. It is designed for a layperson to present.

# LETTER TO THE ROMANS

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION TO SAINT PAUL AND TO ROMANS

#### INTRODUCTION

Persecution came to the first Christian Community at Jerusalem with the death of Stephen. Persecution forced the disciples of Jesus Christ to extend the Church beyond Judea. As we read in the Acts of the Apostles: "That day saw the beginning of a great persecution of the Church in Jerusalem. All except the Apostles scattered throughout the countryside of Judea and Samaria." (Acts 8:1) "Those in the Community who had been dispersed by the persecution that arose because of Stephen went as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch, making the message known to none but Jews. However, some men of Cyprus and Cyrene among them who had come to Antioch began to talk even to the Greeks, announcing the good news of the Lord Jesus to them." (Acts 11:19-20)

Antioch in Syria became the first major center of Christian worship beyond Palestine. The Church established in Antioch became truly a catholic community. Here, for the first time, members of the Community were called 'Christians.' To the newly established Community at Antioch the Church leaders in Jerusalem sent Barnabas as an official representative. (Acts 11:23) After Barnabas assessed the needs of the Church at Antioch he went to the city of Tarsus searching for Saul- at one time a great persecutor of the Church- who had been converted to Christ Jesus some ten years earlier. As recorded in Acts: "Then Barnabas went off to Tarsus to look for Saul; once he had found him, he brought him back to Antioch. For a whole year they met with the church and instructed great numbers." (Acts 11:25-26)

The Holy Spirit destined Barnabas and Saul to become the first missionary team formally sent by the Church into pagan fields. Acts records this account of their vocation: "On one occasion," while they were engaged in liturgy of the Lord and were fasting, the Holy Spirit spoke to them: 'Set apart Barnabas and Saul for me to do the work for which I have called them.' Then, after they had fasted and prayed, they imposed hands on them and sent them off." (Acts 13:2-3)

The newly formed missionary team first went to the Island of Cyprus about a hundred miles west of the mainland. Probably in early spring of 46 A.D. Barnabas and Saul arrived in Cyprus. Barnabas had been born in Cyprus. Saul preached

here his first sermon to a Gentile pagan- Roman governor Sergius Paulus. Acts records the effect of Saul's sermon to Sergius Paulus: "He believed, so impressed was he by the teaching about the Lord." (Acts 13:12) From this moment on the author of Acts refers to Saul by the Roman name of Paul. The changing of the name from Saul to Paul subtly indicates that Saul's apostolate to the Gentile world has begun. Jesus Christ selected Paul to be the Apostle to the Gentiles. The Risen Lord revealed to Ananias: "This man is the instrument I have chosen to bring my name to the Gentiles and their kings..." (Acts 9:15) Jesus appeared to Paul shortly after his conversion while he prayed in the temple at Jerusalem, and He told Paul: "I mean to send you far from here, among the Gentiles." (Acts 22:21) The time had come to fulfill this appointed destiny.

### APOSTLES TO THE GENTILES

Now under the leadership of Paul the missionary team returned to Asia Minor landing at Perga in the province of Pamphylia. For unknown reasons Paul and Barnabas did not evangelize in Perga but set out for the Galatian country with the Roman colony of Pisidian Antioch as their immediate destination. This journey involved crossing the perilous Taurus Mountains. This mountain range ran 500 miles from east to west rising up as high as 12,000 feet. From Perga to Pisidian Antioch was hazardous 100 miles journey through rugged canyons subjected to flash floods, robbers and freezing temperatures. Paul may have had the trips into the Galatian country in mind when he later wrote: "I have traveled continually, endangered by floods, robbers, my own people, the Gentiles; imperiled in the city, in the desert, at sea, by false brothers; enduring labor, hardship, many sleepless nights; in hunger and thirst and frequent fasting, in cold and nakedness." (22Cor.11:26-27)

The word 'Galatian' derives from the Roman name given to the Celts. The Romans called them 'Gauls' – Galli or Galatae. Celtic invaders poured into southern Europe around 275 B. C. and crossed over into Asia Minor. King Attalus of Pergamum succeeded in halting the Celtic invasion confining them to the northern part of Asia Minor's great central plateau. This area became known as the Galatian country. In the northern part of Galatia were the three important cities of Ancyra, Tancum and Pessinus. Separated from these northern cities by a great desert called Arzlon lay the four important cities of Southern Galatia- Pisidian Antioch, Lystra, Iconium and Derbe. The Romans conquered Galatia in 189 B.C.

Acts records the missionary activities of Paul and Barnabas in the four cities of southern Galatia. Even though Paul later travels through northern Galatia, no mention is made of any evangelizing activities there. Probably to the Christians in Pisidian Antioch, Lystra, Iconium and Derbe, Paul addressed his 'Letter to the Galatians'.

Many Jews lived outside of Palestine and were scattered among the cities of the Roman Empire. Jewish law prescribed that a synagogue be established in any area in which ten to twelve Jewish families dwelt. Beyond Palestine many synagogue services were conducted in Greek rather than in Hebrew. This had been made possible by the translation of the Hebrew sacred writings into Greek by Jewish scholars in the city of Alexandria. This work, known as the Septuagint Bible, was completed around 100 B.C. The use of the vernacular in the synagogue opened the door of Judaism to the Gentile world. Many Gentiles, impressed by the Jewish faith and morality, attended the synagogue. Many stopped short of actually becoming Jews. The Jews referred to these men and women as God-fearing Gentiles. Among this group of Gentiles came many of the early converts to the Christian Community. When Paul preached in the synagogue he consciously addressed himself to this group of people.

The missionary technique used by Paul and Barnabas was to arrive at the synagogue service on the Sabbath. As itinerate preachers, they hoped for an invitation to address the congregation. In actual fact, when Paul and Barnabas arrived at the synagogue in Pisidian Antioch the leaders of the synagogue sent this message to them: "Brothers, if you have any exhortation to address to people, please speak up," (Acts 13:15) Acts presents a summary of Paul's sermon in the synagogue there. It serves as a good example of the Gospel presentation at that time. It also demonstrates the orthodoxy of Paul's preaching as it was similar to that preached by Peter and Stephen.

When Paul rose to speak he not only addressed his fellow Israelites but also others who "reverenced our God". He addressed his sermon to Jews and Greeks alike implying salvation is offered to all. He referred to them all as "my brothers." Paul saw religious history as a continuous unfolding of the divine plan in which divine power works slowly as leaven within the history of mankind bringing all creation to salvation and perfection. He saw the Old Testament as a preparatory stage for this salvation. For Paul, King David most perfectly symbolized Jesus Christ because David "spent a lifetime in carrying out God's will." (Acts 13:36a.) Paul preached, as Peter had done, the remission of sins through Jesus, and the sanctification flowing from Jesus Christ as being beyond the sanctification of the Mosaic Law:



*You must realize, my brothers, that it is through him that the forgiveness of sins is being proclaimed to you, including the remission of all those charges you could never be acquitted of under the law of Moses. (Acts 13:38.)*

Paul preached salvation through faith, “In him, every believer is acquitted.”  
(Acts 13:39.)

The sermon delivered by Paul differed from that given by Peter and Stephen in that Paul emphasized salvation for Jew and Greek alike through Jesus Christ. Paul subtly lowered all barriers. Salvation had been a possession of the Jews. They believed it to be their personal inheritance through Abraham. They prided themselves upon being God’s chosen people with a special and unique relationship with God. Many Jews, both Christian and non-Christian, were not about to accept Paul’s teaching:

*“There does not exist among you Jew or Greek, slave or freeman, male or female. All are one in Christ Jesus. Furthermore, if you belong to Christ you are the descendants of Abraham, which means you inherit all that was promised.”*  
(Gal. 3: 28-29.)

At Pisidian Antioch the Jews did not refuse to believe in Jesus as the Messiah. They rejected the doctrine of the universal salvific will of God. They would not accept that the Messiah could bring salvation equally to Jew and Greek alike. “When the Jews saw the crowds, they became very jealous and countered whatever Paul said with violent abuse.” (Acts 13:45.) The crowds coming to salvation stimulated the jealousy of the Jews. Salvation that belonged to the Jews was being offered in the market place to Gentile “dogs.”

Acts implies that this refusal of the Jews to share salvation led them to reject a Messiah who offered such salvation. Paul’s awareness of this truth was a moment of spiritual crisis in his life. It was a historical moment in evangelization. It was at this moment that Paul proclaimed:

*“The word of God has to be declared to you first of all; but since you reject it and thus convict yourselves as unworthy of everlasting life, we now turn to the Gentiles. For thus were we instructed by the Lord: “I have made you a light to the nations, a means of salvation to the ends of the earth.”*  
(Acts 13:46-47.)

The author of Acts adds, “the Gentiles were delighted when they heard this ....”  
(Act 13:48.)

## DIVISION IN THE CHURCH

Obstacles to Paul's ministry came first from Jews who rejected the gospel message. Later, opposition would arise within the Church itself among certain converted Jews who insisted all Christians must become Jews. The Gentiles who converted to their error and who propagated it were called Judaizers by Paul. Jesus' first disciples experienced themselves as Jews. They attended synagogue services and worshipped in the temple, "They went to the temple area together every day" (Acts 2:46), and "There they were to be found in the temple constantly, speaking the praises of God" (Lk. 24:53).

The question the Apostles put to the Risen Lord demonstrated how Jewish the outlook and expectations of the early Church were, "Lord, are you going to restore the rule to Israel now? (Acts 1:6.) Only time, experience, and the Holy Spirit taught the Church that you cannot put a new patch on an old garment; you cannot put new wine into old wine skins.

Philip the Evangelist took the first step towards catholicity when he received Samaritans into the Church (Acts 8:1-13). The Jews considered the Samaritans a heretical sect. In the case of the Samaritans, they at least believed in circumcision and adhered to the first five Books of the Bible. Likewise, Philip received the black eunuch, the treasurer of the Candace of the Ethiopians, into the Church. In the case of the Ethiopian he was a "God fearing Gentile" who was legally refused membership in Judaism for being a eunuch. Philip's ministry symbolized the fulfillment of the prophecy from Isaiah:

*For thus says the Lord: To the eunuchs who observe my Sabbaths and choose what pleases me and hold fast to my covenant, I will give, in my house and within my walls, a monument and a name Better than sons and daughters; an eternal, imperishable name will I give them. And the foreigners who join themselves to the Lord, ministering to him, Loving the name of the Lord, and becoming his servants--All who keep the Sabbath free from profanation and hold to my covenant, Them I will bring to my holy mountain and make joyful in my house of prayer; Their holocausts and sacrifices will be acceptable on my altar, For my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples.*

*(Is. 56:4-7.)*

In the case of the Samaritans and of the Ethiopian, the Church found support in the Old Testament for their admission into the Church.

The first real crisis developed when Peter baptized the pagan centurion Cornelius and his household and ate with them. Peter was forced to defend his action before the Christian Community at Jerusalem. As we read in Acts:

*...when Peter went up to Jerusalem some among the circumcised took issue with him, saying, "you entered the house of uncircumcised men and ate with them." Peter then explained the whole affair to them step by step from the beginning "As I began to address them the Holy Spirit came upon them, just as it had upon us at the beginning. Then I remembered what the Lord had said: 'John baptized with water but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.' If God was giving them the same gift he gave us when we first believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I to interfere with him?"*

*(Acts 11:2-4,15-17.)*

Acts tells us that some among the circumcised took issue with Peter's actions. In reality, all members of the community would have been among the circumcised. This expression appears to identify a sect or party already existing within the Church. In actual fact we do know such a party did exist. The necessity of circumcision for salvation was the essential point of their doctrine. Certain members of the Pharisaic party converted to the Church maintained that all who entered the Church must not only be baptized but circumcised in order to be saved. Paul considered this teaching to be heretical and he hotly contended against those who fostered this false doctrine. Acts records the following incident:

*Some men came down to Antioch from Judea and began to teach the brothers, "Unless you are circumcised according to the Mosaic practice, you cannot be saved." This created dissension and much controversy between them and Paul and Barnabas.*

*(Acts 15:1-2.)*

Since these men came from Jerusalem they no doubt presented themselves as presenting the Jerusalem Church in this matter. Later the authorities in Jerusalem had to correct this impression by a letter in which they wrote to Antioch:

*We have heard that some of our number without any instructions from us have upset you with their discussions and disturbed your peace of mind.*

*(Acts 15:24.)*

Paul defended and expounded the true doctrine. He maintained that Gentiles had only to believe in Jesus Christ and be baptized in order to receive the grace of salvation. The Jewish party insisted that they must also be circumcised. This

implied that they must observe the Mosaic Law in order to be saved. This was the crux of the controversy.

Paul's enemies sought to discredit his teachings by casting doubt on his authority to teach. They personally attacked Paul on the grounds that he was neither an apostle nor did he possess authority from Jerusalem to preach. They even went further by imputing to him base and evil motives for preaching the Gospel. At about this same time Paul received word of the damage being afflicted upon his converts in the Galatian churches. Apparently the same men or those of their party had reached into Galatia. After having called Paul's teaching authority into question and creating doubt among the Galatians concerning his credibility, they then proceeded to attack his teachings on faith and salvation and to impose their own erroneous ways. Apparently they won certain Galatians over to their cause. Their disciples sought to judaize the rest of the Christian community. When Paul received the news, he was unable to go to Galatia. He immediately wrote a letter refuting the charges and defending his position on salvation. Some scholars hold that the letter to the Galatians was the first draft of his teachings conceived in controversy and later developed and perfected in the letter to the Romans. Indeed, some thoughts expressed in Romans only find their clarification in the letter to the Galatians.

Possibly at this very time, Paul had been commissioned by the community at Antioch to present the case to the authorities in Jerusalem. We read in Acts: "Finally, it was decided that Paul, Barnabas, and some others should go up to see the apostles and presbyters in Jerusalem about this question." (Acts 15:2.)

This conflict within the Church resulted in a Council being held in Jerusalem around 50 A.D. to settle this matter so vital to Church doctrine and unity. At this Council Peter definitively defined the Church's doctrine. Acts records that when the delegation arrived in Jerusalem:

*They reported all that God had helped them accomplish. Some of the converted Pharisees then got up and demanded that such Gentiles be circumcised and told to keep the Mosaic law.*

*The apostles and the presbyters accordingly convened to look into the matter. After much discussion, Peter took the floor and said to them: "Brothers, you know well enough that from the early days God selected me from your number to be the one from whose lips the Gentiles would hear the message of the gospel and believe. God, who reads the hearts of men, showed his approval by granting the Holy Spirit to them just as he did to us. He made no distinction between them and us, but purified their hearts by means of faith also. Why, then, do you put*

*God to the test by trying to place on the shoulders of these converts a yoke which neither we nor our fathers were able to bear? Our belief is rather that we are saved by the favor of the Lord Jesus and so are they!"*

*(Acts 15:4-11.)*

The Council of Jerusalem settled the question about Gentile Christians. Nevertheless many Jewish Christians, particularly those living in Jerusalem, still believed in the necessity for Jewish converts to observe the Mosaic Law in its entirety. Perhaps they lacked the spiritual freedom to do otherwise. It seems that James, Bishop of Jerusalem, was one such Christian.

Among the members of the Jerusalem Community, Paul never appeared to be popular. He always remained suspect. In the early days of his conversion, they doubted his sincerity. We read:

*When he (Paul) arrived back in Jerusalem he tried to join the disciples there; but it turned out that they were all afraid of him. They even refused to believe that he was a disciple.*

*(Acts 9:26.)*

Years later when Paul visited Jerusalem for the last time, only a few years before his death, suspicion still lingered. James, Bishop of Jerusalem addressed these words to Paul:

*"You see, brother, how many thousands of Jews have come to believe, all of them staunch defenders of the law. Yet they have been informed that you teach the Jews who live among the Gentiles to abandon Moses, to give up the circumcision of their children, and to renounce their customs. What are we to do about your coming, of which they are sure to hear?"*

*(Acts 21:20b-22.)*

Time and circumstances brought about a complete separation between the Christian Church and the Jewish religion. With the destruction of the temple by the Romans in 70 A.D., temple worship ended. Following the Roman conquest of Israel, the Pharisees gathered at Jamnia and made a concentrated effort to maintain the purity of Judaism. Jewish Christians were forced out of the synagogues. Therefore, by the end of the first century, the separation of the Church and the synagogue had been completed, each now destined to go its separate way. There was, unfortunately, bitter enmity with one another for many centuries. Long before this would come to be, Paul had given the theological reasons for this separation in his letter to the Romans.

Paul returned to his home base at Antioch following the Council at Jerusalem and shortly afterwards set forth on his second missionary journey. He went first to visit the Galatian churches. He intended to evangelize further in Asia Minor (modern Turkey today), but was impeded by the Holy Spirit. He was led by Divine Providence to cross over into Europe. Paul came to Europe by way of Greece, a country at this time divided into the Roman provinces of Macedonia to the north and Achaia to the south. Paul landed in Macedonia and eventually established churches in Philippi, Thessalonica and Beroea. His missionary activities even extended northwest as far as Illyria, a part of modern Yugoslavia. Persecutions by the Macedonian Jews forced Paul south to Athens and ultimately to Corinth where he resided for almost two years. Here developed a charismatic Christian Community, the majority of which was Gentile. This church would cause Paul much future anxiety.

From Corinth Paul returned to his homebase in Antioch for awhile before beginning his third missionary journey. "After spending some time there he set out again, traveling systematically through the Galatian country and Phrygia to reassure all his disciples." (Acts 18:23.) Probably in the summer of 53 A.D., Paul arrived in Ephesus where he would work for almost three years. In Ephesus Paul taught publicly in the lecture hall of Tyrannus. Acts informs us "with the result that all the inhabitants of the province of Asia, Jews and Greeks alike, heard the word of the Lord." (Acts 19:10.) During this period, Paul received disturbing reports about the Church at Corinth. Corinth was situated almost directly across the Aegean Sea from Ephesus. Paul's authority within the Corinthian Community had been briefly rejected. With a brief visit and with letters and emissaries, Paul sought to regain authority and restore order in Corinth. In the meantime trouble broke out in Ephesus. Members of the coppersmith and silversmith guilds accused Paul of seeking to destroy their native religion. Without having resolved the conflict in Corinth, Paul left Ephesus for Macedonia. It was a low point in his apostolic career. As he himself testified: "When I arrived in Macedonia I was restless and exhausted. I was under all kinds of stress--quarrels with others and fears within myself." (2Cor.7:5.) When the difficulties between himself and the Corinthians were resolved, Paul went to Corinth (probably in the winter of 57 A.D.) where he was to remain three months and write the Letter to the Romans.

Paul viewed his mission in the East as finished. His eyes now turned toward the West and to Rome, the power center of the Mediterranean world. The beginnings of the Church in Rome remain unknown. Possibly visitors from Rome converted by Peter's preaching at Pentecost carried the seeds of faith back to Rome. Historically, Peter and Paul are spoken of as being the founders of the Church at Rome. No doubt their later presence in the city solidified and confirmed the Church there, but its origins preceded their arrival. According to a Roman historian, the

Jews were expelled from Rome by Claudius around 48A.D. because of constant riots in the Jewish section over a certain "Chrestus." It is highly possible these riots resulted from the Jewish Christians proclaiming Jesus of Nazareth to be the Christ. When Paul first arrived in Corinth he met Aquila and Priscilla, two Jewish Christians expelled from Rome by Claudius. By the time Nero became emperor, the Christian Community had increased sufficiently to be made the scapegoat for Nero's burning of Rome. According to the letter of Clement, there was a large body of Christians in Rome at the time of Nero (1 Clem.6:1.) The Roman historian Tacitus confirms an immense multitude at the time. (Annls. 15:44.)

By the time of the emperor Domitian there were Christians even in the imperial family. It is possible that Peter briefly visited Rome between the death of the Apostle James and the Council of Jerusalem.

Paul's final destination was not Rome but Spain. As he himself stated in his letter to the Romans:

*Now I have no more work to do in these regions, and I continue to cherish the desire to visit you which I have had for many years. As soon as I can set out for Spain, I hope to see you in passing; I trust that you will send me on my journey only after I have had the joy of being with you for a little while.*

*(Rom.15:23-24.)*

## LETTERS TO THE ROMANS

Why did Paul write a letter to a Christian community unknown to him? The Church at Rome would not have been merely another Christian Community. As the saying went, "All roads lead to Rome." Equally true, the roads from Rome reached the vast corners of the Roman Empire. Paul recognized Rome as the center for world evangelization. He desired to influence the Church at Rome as evident from his statement, "I continue to cherish the desire to visit you which I have had for many years." After a brief visit to Jerusalem, Paul intended to go to Rome. Even before his arrival he felt the need to express the content of the Gospel he preached to the Christians in Rome. Paul was a man misunderstood within the Church and men misrepresented his teachings. Apparently Paul hoped for a good reception in Rome. To send to the Church a clear and concise explanation of the Gospel he preached could possibly insure a favorable reception. At least, his position would be clear and they would know where he stood. It could set the record straight, and even more, it could enlighten and confirm the Roman Christians in their faith and motivate them to more accurately proclaim the Gospel. The letter, if accepted, could certainly

preserve the Church in Rome from falling into the error of the Judaizers. Perhaps Paul, most of all, realized how truly destructive of Christ and his message this error was.

In the relatively quiet and peaceful months in Corinth (around the year 57A.D.) Paul wrote the "Letter to the Romans." Martin Luther held that this letter set forth the Gospel clearer than any other writing in the New Testament. Over the centuries this work has been equally admired and misinterpreted. Much of the misunderstanding that divided Christianity in the past had its roots in erroneous interpretation of this letter. Apparently, Romans is used by many Christians to interpret the rest of the Scriptures.

In studying Romans it is important to know what Paul actually desired to express. In order to do this, we must constantly remind ourselves that it was composed almost two thousand years ago in a world of thought much different from our own. Paul's own personal environment greatly influenced his thought process and his usage of words. Paul was a product of a Hellenized culture, one in which Greek thought interacted upon various cultures of the Near East including the Jews. Judaism and the old Testament were Paul's main background but a Hellenized Judaism. It has been said that Deutero-Isaiah (Chapters 40-55 of Isaiah), the Book of Wisdom, and 2nd Esdras are the three works that best express the influence that shaped the thought process of Paul.

As we read Romans in English, we have a tendency to give meanings to the words in keeping with our own usage of the language. This may not express what Paul consciously intended. We often force the Scriptures into saying something meaningful to us and our times. The biblical scholar Krister Stendahl has written that there is no greater threat to serious biblical studies than a forced demand for "relevance." Anything that sounds pious finds acceptance. He goes on to encourage us to have patience and faith enough to listen and seek out the original meaning of the author. Read the Bible first to discover the original meaning and let our findings direct our understanding of God's word rather than our desires.

We need to understand the meaning of important concepts at the time in which they were written. Paul's thoughts have to be not only translated from Greek into intelligible English, but the thoughts themselves need interpretation from their ancient concepts into ideas meaningful for us today. It is a two-fold work: to discover, as exactly as possible, Paul's own conscious awareness being expressed in words and terms used in 58 A.D., and secondly, to see what bearing these teachings have upon our own times and lives today. Krister Stendahl wrote that we should first seek the original meanings and all these things would be ours as well.



When Paul set himself to write to the Romans, he drew upon years of religious experience and reflection. The letter not only expresses thoughts expressed in his letter to the Galatians but also expresses ideas from his first letter to the Thessalonians and to the Corinthians. When compared with Galatians the thoughts now expressed are less volatile; his attitude toward the law and Judaism is less negative. What he once expressed hastily, in the midst of alarm and controversy, he now has deepened, refined and perfected.

The apocalyptic thoughts prevalent among the Jews of Paul's time greatly influenced his thoughts and the interpretation of historical events. Men believed and taught that history moved towards a great cosmic crisis in which God would directly intervene in world history; at which time this present age would pass away, giving place to the age to come in which there would be direct intervention of divine power into the affairs of men and nature. The age of miracles would come. Paul saw the coming of Jesus Christ as the heralding and the beginning of the age to come. "The old order has passed away: now all is new!" (2Cor.5:17b.) The history of mankind is now to be interpreted in the light of the fact that the New Age has dawned with the coming of the Christ.

Paul's ideas are presented in the informality of a letter following the style of letter writing of the time. Nevertheless the contents of the letter reflect one great theme clearly and comprehensively conceived. The theme itself finds expression in these words:

*I am not ashamed of the gospel. It is the power of God leading everyone who believes in it to salvation, the Jew first, then the Greek. For in the gospel is revealed the justice of God which begins and ends with faith; as Scripture says, "The just man shall live by faith."*

*(Rom.1:16-17.)*

After making this formal declaration, the supportive arguments presented in the body of the letter proceed logically to their conclusion in Rom.15:13, "So may God, the source of hope, fill you with all joy and peace in believing so that through the power of the Holy Spirit you may have hope in abundance."

## PAUL'S SELF-IDENTITY

As customary at the time, the author of the letter identifies himself and then identifies the recipients of the letter.

*Greetings from Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart to proclaim the gospel of God which he promised long ago through his prophets, as the holy Scriptures record—the gospel concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh but was made Son of God in power according to the spirit of holiness, by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord. Through him we have been favored with apostleship, that we may spread his name and bring to obedient faith all the Gentiles, among whom are you who have been called to belong to Jesus Christ.*

*To all in Rome, beloved of God and called to holiness, grace and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

*(Rom.1:1-6.)*

Paul's own personal identification is rather lengthy. He projects a definite image of himself to the Romans and presents his credentials to address this letter to them. To the Romans who prided themselves on their freedom and being masters of the world, Paul declares himself to be the slave or "doulos" of the king whose only crown had been made of thorns, Christ Jesus. Paul establishes his identity in relationship to Jesus Christ. He tells his readers that as a slave, he has no will of his own. His will is to do the will of his Master, the Lord Jesus Christ. By a picture of contrast, Paul the slave and Jesus the Lord, Paul humbly presents himself before the Romans to be nothing of importance in himself. This does not mean that he saw himself without importance or power but rather what there was of importance and power within him were attributable not to himself but to his relationship with Jesus Christ. He quickly identifies his importance to the Church at Rome; he was called to be an apostle and set apart to proclaim the gospel of God. He had been called and divinely appointed to be an apostle of God. This immediately places him in the category of such great Old Testament personages as Abraham, Moses, Joshua, Jeremiah and Isaiah who likewise were called and appointed by God as apostles and who were servants of Yahweh. An apostle was a person sent on a mission as the ambassador of another. The apostle acted for and in the name of the person who sent him. Jesus Himself had been the apostle of the Father. The Holy Spirit is the Apostle of the Father and the Son. Paul views himself as an apostle in the same sense as he had expressed in his letter to the Galatians, "an apostle sent, not by men or by

any man, but by Jesus Christ and God his Father who raised him from the dead." (Gal.1:1.) Paul claims his apostolic authority comes directly from God, an authority recognized by the acknowledged pillars of the Church who were James, Cephas and John. (See Gal.2: 8-9.)

God called and set Paul apart as an apostle to proclaim the gospel of God. Gospel means good news. Paul must proclaim God's Good News, and this Good News is Jesus Christ. It is what God our Father has done and is doing through Jesus Christ. This Gospel is not a new proclamation in the world. In the Old Testament, God foretold it through the mouths of the prophets. Paul proclaimed the Gospel concerning God's Son "who was descended from David according to the flesh but was made Son of God in power according to the spirit of holiness, by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord." (Rom. 1:3-4.) Other great men have lived, died and left a memory. Jesus has lived, died and lives again a life filled with the fullness of power. Paul states the doctrine of the Incarnation and the Resurrection, and, as stated here, it does not reflect Paul's full understanding of Jesus. Perhaps Paul is quoting from a formula of faith common in the early Church and one familiar to the Romans. The thoughts expressed reflect the primitive preaching of Peter recorded in Acts 2:22-34. Paul believed Jesus to be the divine Son of the Father prior to the resurrection. Later he writes in the same letter, "God sent his Son in the likeness of sinful flesh" (Rom.8:3b). To the Corinthians he wrote, "For your sake he made himself poor though he was rich, so that you might become rich by his poverty" (2Cor.8:9b). To the Galatians he said, "But when the designated time had come, God sent forth his Son born of a woman, born under the law, to deliver from the law those who were subjected to it" (Gal. 4:4-5a.) We are very familiar with the hymn quoted by Paul in his letter to the Philippians,

*Though he was in the form of God, he did not deem equality with God something to be grasped at. Rather, he emptied himself and took the form of a slave, being born in the likeness of men.*

*(Phil.2:6-7).*

What the formula quoted by Paul in Romans expresses is that the Son of God appeared on this earth clothed in the lowliness and weakness of a human being. But from the moment of the resurrection, the Son of God put aside lowliness and weakness and clothed Himself in glory and in the fullness of power.

Paul affirms that this glorified Jesus bestowed the favor of the apostleship upon him. Paul did nothing to merit this predilection. It is a pure favor from God, a favor according to Paul that is undeserved:

*I am the least of the apostles; in fact, because I persecuted the church of God, I do not even deserve the name. But by God's favor I am what I am. This favor of his to me has not proved fruitless.*

*(1 Cor. 15:9-10)*

As Paul said to the Galatians:

*... he who had set me apart before I was born and called me by his favor chose to reveal his Son to me, that I might spread among the Gentiles the good tidings concerning him.*

*(Gal. 1:15-16a.)*

Not only is Paul commissioned by the Risen Lord to spread the Good News but the Lord designated the people to whom he must bring the gospel, the Gentiles. Paul tells us that this fact the pillars of the Church in Jerusalem recognized:

*... recognizing that I had been entrusted with the gospel for the uncircumcised, just as Peter was for the circumcised... James, Cephas, and John, gave Barnabas and me the handclasp of fellowship signifying that we should go to the Gentiles as they to the Jews.*

*(Gal 2:7-9.)*

Paul subtly implies that the Christians in Rome fall under his jurisdiction, "among whom are you who have been called to belong to Jesus Christ." The letter he now writes comes with God-given authority "to all in Rome, beloved of God and called to holiness." (see Rom. 1:6-7.)

## THE CHRISTIAN VOCATION

Paul views his apostolic task, not only to speak the name of Jesus, but also to bring all the Gentiles to obedient faith. In the concept of the Old Testament, faith for Paul implies obedience, and disobedience indicates disbelief. Those who truly have received, in faith, the Person of Jesus will consequently obey Jesus. Paul implies that through obedient faith, believers become the beloved of God. That is how he identifies a Christian, as the beloved of God. This becomes true because the Christian has become incorporated into Jesus Christ of whom the Father said, "You are my beloved Son. On you my favor rests." (Lk.3:22.) Paul confirms this by saying each Christian who is the beloved of God has a vocation to be a saint; each is called to holiness. Paul told the Corinthians that all must one day give an accounting of their lives as Christians to Jesus Christ, "The lives all of us are to be revealed before the tribunal of Christ so that each one may receive his recompense, good or bad, according to his life in the body." (2Cor. 5:10.)

## THE SPIRIT OF PAUL

Paul was zealous and had an eagerness to preach the gospel. He wrote the Romans:

*I am eager to preach the gospel to you Romans as well.... My brothers, I want you to know that I have often planned to visit you (though up to now I have been kept from it) in order to do some fruitful work among you, as I have among the Gentiles.*

*(Rom. 1:15,13.)*

No spiritual sloth possess the soul of Paul. His works breathe his personal love for God's holy will. The love that consumed his life identifies him more than anything else as a disciple and apostle of Jesus Christ. One sees in Paul evidence of that same love of which the evangelist John wrote, "God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, .... God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him." (Jn. 3:16-17.) With the psalmist Paul could truly exclaim, "Zeal for your house consumes me." (Ps. 69:10.)

The genuineness of Paul's love for God becomes evident in the personal love he expresses for others. Respect is a genuine element of love, and Paul demonstrates his respect for the Romans when he tells them, "I give thanks to my God through Jesus Christ for all of you because your faith is heralded throughout the world." (Rom. 1:8.) He does not intend to bring faith to them but to enrich their faith. "For I long to see you and share with you some spiritual gift to strengthen you." (Rom. 1:11.) That is love speaking, for it always shares its gifts with those it loves. Love desires to nourish and strengthen the life of the beloved. Perhaps nothing expresses Paul's sensitivity to the needs of others as when he tells the Romans that he does not intend to come only as a great giver, but he comes also to be enriched personally by his communion with them. People have not only a need to receive love but an equal need to give love. Paul writes, "Rather what I wish is that we may be mutually encouraged by our common faith." (Rom. 1:12.) The Romans too are to be givers.

The spirituality of Paul's love is revealed when he tells the Romans that although he has never had the joy of meeting them personally and sharing with them in the body, he nevertheless has been constantly united with them in prayer, "The God I worship in the spirit by preaching the gospel of his son will bear witness that I constantly mention you in prayer. (Rom. 1:9.) Paul likewise prays about his own desire to go to Rome. He realized that even holy and loving ambitions must be submitted to the Will of God. Because of the frailty of our nature, even the best desires are not above suspicion; we are contaminated by self-love. The ways of men

are far removed from the ways of God. For this reason Paul humbly prays that his holy ambition to preach the gospel in Rome would only come to be if God willed it – “always pleading that somehow by God’s will I may at last find my way clear to visit you.” (Rom.1:10.)

The universality of Paul’s mission and love is revealed when he writes to the Romans, “I am under obligation to Greeks and non-Greeks, to learned and unintelligent alike.” (Rom. 1:14.) When Paul says Greeks, he refers not to a nationality but to a culture. A Greek was a civilized man to the Mediterranean world who had absorbed the Hellenistic culture. In this sense the Romans and even Paul himself were Greek. The non-Greeks were the barbarians. Paul truly states that all men have a claim on his love: the cultured and the uncultured, the rich and poor, the wise and foolish, the intelligent, the ignorant, the good and the bad. Again he reflects that the compassionate love of the Father lets His sun shine and His rain fall upon all alike. Paul loved not only the lovable but the unloved; much more than that, Paul loved the unlovable more, for such love alone is Christ-like.

### CALL TO EVANGELISM

Pope Paul VI's encyclical on Evangelism calls modern Christians to be modern apostles. The Bishops of our country have commissioned us to reach out to the millions of unchurched and the fallen away Catholics of our land. Most Christians have not responded, nor will they. Spiritual sloth possesses so many of us. Self-love encases us within the prisons of our own selfish concerns and pursuits. Spiritual sloth is a distaste and dislike for the things of the spirit, encompassing prayer, reading or studying of the Scriptures, and the performance of the spiritual and corporeal works of mercy. Where there is no active concern for the spiritual and temporal welfare of others, there is no active love of God, regardless of the number and frequency of our pious practices and exercises. Our Christianity is an illusion. "We are all responsible for our times and our brothers." (Pope Paul VI.) Only those who truly love God respond to the needs of our times and our brothers.

Christians who heed the call of the Church and the Spirit within their hearts would do well to learn from Paul, the greatest evangelist ever. They should first learn to pray ardently for those with whom they desire to share the Good News; next, pray eagerly for the opportunity to reach them; and the most important is to pray that they will go forth with a love that desires to share its gifts and be a source of strength to others, with a love that knows it will receive more than it gives, a love that cannot discriminate.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE THEME OF ROMANS

#### INTRODUCTIONS

Following his personal introduction and greeting, Paul immediately states the theme to be explained and defended in his letter:

I am not ashamed of the gospel. It is the power of God leading everyone who believes in it to salvation, Jew first, then the Greek. For in the gospel is revealed the justice (righteousness) of God which begins and ends with faith. As Scripture says, "The just man shall live by faith." (Rom. 1:16-17.)

Four very important concepts are expressed in the theme: gospel, salvation, justice or righteousness of God, and faith. If we do not accurately understand these four terms in the light of Paul's own conscious awareness, we will distort the entire message of his letter to the Romans.

#### GOSPEL OF POWER

The expression "to proclaim the gospel" appears twenty-one times in Paul's writings and the word "gospel" occurs sixty times. It is primarily a Pauline term. In our modern usage of the word it usually refers to the four written accounts concerning the life and ministry of Jesus of Nazareth, but its usage in the New Testament is never in reference to a written work. The English word "gospel" comes from the Anglo-Saxon word "gospell" meaning good spell or good news. "Godspell" was a literal translation of the Greek word "evangelion" signifying the reward given to a bearer of good news. Likewise, the glad tidings brought were referred to as an "evangelion". In its religious context the Greek translates the Hebrew word "bassar" as used in Isaiah to refer to the message of final salvation coming in the end times through the Messiah. Isaiah writes:

*Go up onto a high mountain, Zion, herald of glad tidings; Cry out at the top of your voice, Jerusalem, herald of good News! Fear not to cry out and say to the cities of Judah: Here is your God! Here comes with power the Lord God, who rules by his strong arm, ... Like a shepherd he feeds his flock; in his arms he gathers the lambs, carrying them in his bosom, and leading the ewes with care.*

(Isaiah 40:9-11.)

And again in Isaiah we hear:

*The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me; He has sent me to bring glad tidings to the lowly, to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives and release to the prisoners, To announce a year of favor from the Lord and a day of vindication by our God, to comfort all who mourn.*

*(Isaiah 61:1-2f.)*

*How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings glad tidings, announcing peace, bearing good news, announcing salvation, and saying to Zion, "Your God is King!"...they shout for joy, for they see directly, before their eyes, the Lord restoring Zion. Break out together in song, O ruins of Jerusalem! For the Lord comforts his people, he redeems Jerusalem.... All the ends of the earth will behold the salvation of our God.*

*(Isaiah 52:7-10.)*

From the Old Testament we understand that the gospel is an announcement of salvation that is actually occurring at the time. The gospel implies divine action and activity; when proclaimed, it causes things to be. Just as people awaiting news with anxious expectation are transported by good news, the good news changes them. So, too, it is with the gospel--the glad tidings of salvation. We must not think of the gospel so much as a presentation of ideas or religious truths but as a happening, a constant occurrence. The gospel is not so much the Word of God, unless you mean by that expression Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh living and acting in the world, as it is an announcement of God's power operating in the world at the very moment the gospel is being proclaimed. Paul rightly defines the gospel as the power of God. The gospel is the active, dynamic presence of divine power operating in this world. Paul clearly states what gospel power accomplishes, "leading everyone who believes in it to salvation, the Jew first, then the Greek." We can simply say that the gospel is the Good News; God is now operating in this world bringing salvation to all men through Jesus Christ.

As a herald of the gospel, Paul has paid a heavy price. He confessed, "In preaching it I suffer as a criminal, even to the point of being thrown into chains--but there is no chaining the word of God!" (2Tim.2:9.) To the Corinthians he spoke of the "absurdity of the preaching of the gospel." (1 Cor.1:21.) From experience he knew the gospel scandalized the Jews, and the wise Greeks considered it foolishness. Hated by the Jews, and considered a fool by men of the world, Paul became a fool for the sake of Jesus Christ. He would even be called mad. (See Acts 26:24.) But, Paul judged and valued on a spiritual scale.



He knew the gospel to be the power of God bringing the best of gifts to mankind. Regardless of the personal price paid in this world, Paul sincerely testified, "I am not ashamed of the gospel!" He realized this foolishness of God was wiser than the wisdom of men. He loved the eternal salvation of people enough to become an object of hatred and scorn in order to save some at least.

## MEANING OF SALVATION

For a clearer understanding of this salvation preached by Paul let us try to understand the concept of salvation in its Old Testament context. The Greek word "soteria", translated salvation, carries the meaning of the Hebrew word "hosia", meaning to take one out of a tight spot. In other words, to rescue or to deliver someone from an evil situation. The noun derivatives from the verb, are: yesa, yesua, yesuah. They express the idea of help, rescue, and salvation. "Hosia" and its derivatives are often used in a military context in the Old Testament. The verb carries the meaning of winning a victory for someone. A person victorious in battle was called a "mosia" or savior. The victory itself was called a salvation. In the minds of the Israelites, God was always the "Mosia"--the Savior. They attributed every victory won by human means to the divine operation of Yahweh. A number of Old Testament texts dealt with the salvation at the end times--an eschatological salvation that would be the complete, final, messianic victory achieved by God through His Messiah. This final and complete salvation was the real object of Israel's hope of salvation.

The New Testament presents Jesus Christ as Israel's hope of salvation. The Greek translation of "mosia" was "soter." The New Testament refers to God as "soter" or savior, but Jesus Christ receives the title of "savior" even more often. "A savior has been born to you, the Messiah and Lord" (Lk.2:11b), "He whom God has exalted at his right hand as ruler and savior is to bring repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins"(Acts 5:31). Paul preached at Pisidian Antioch, "God has brought forth from this man's descendants Jesus, a savior for Israel" (Acts 13:23); "Christ is head of his body the Church, as well as its savior" (Eph.5:23); "We eagerly await the coming of our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ"(Phil.3:20); "...as we await our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of the great God and of our Savior Christ Jesus" (Ti. 2:13). Men of Samaria referred to Jesus as "the Savior of the world"(Jn.4:42). The very name Jesus is the Hebrew "Yesua" a contracted form of "Yehosua" meaning "Yahweh is salvation." As John wrote, "We have seen for ourselves, and can testify, that the Father has sent the Son as savior of the world." (1 Jn.4:14.) At the presentation of the Child Jesus in the temple, the holy Simeon said:

*"Now, Master, you can dismiss your servant in peace: you have fulfilled your word. For my eyes have witnessed your saving deed displayed for all the peoples to see: A revealing light to the Gentiles, the glory of your people Israel."*

*(Lk.2:29-32.)*

According to the New Testament, what would this "tight spot" be out of which Jesus would rescue and save His people? In other words, of what does the salvation coming through Jesus consist? Matthew in his gospel account explains the meaning of the name of Jesus and describes the essence of salvation to be freed from sin. We read that the angel said to Joseph concerning Mary, "She is to have a son and you are to name him Jesus because he will save his people from their sins." (Mt.1:21.) Zechariah prophesied that his son John would give "his people a knowledge of salvation in freedom from their sins." (Lk.1:77.) Paul wrote Timothy, "You can depend on this as worthy of full acceptance: that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." (1Tm.1:15.) In other places within the New Testament, salvation is described as deliverance from God's final wrath and condemnation. This would likewise imply a freedom from sin since the Scriptures confirm that God's wrath and condemnation fall upon men because of sin. Paul writes in Romans: "...we shall be saved by him from God's wrath." (Rom.5:9.) He speaks to the Thessalonians of Jesus as the one "who delivers us from the wrath to come." (1Thes.1:10b), and tells them that "God has not destined us for wrath but for acquiring salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ." (1Thes. 5:9). The positive aspects of salvation, life and a place in heaven, are emphasized in Ephesians:

*But God is rich in mercy; because of his great love for us he brought us to life with Christ when we were dead in sin. By this favor you were saved. Both with and in Christ Jesus he raised us up and gave us a place in the heavens.*

*(Eph.2:4-6.)*

We are told in Colossians that salvation means to be rescued from the power of darkness and to be brought into the kingdom of Jesus:

*Giving thanks to the Father for having made you worthy to share the lot of the saints in light. He rescued us from the power of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of his beloved Son. Through him we have redemption, the forgiveness of our sins.*

*(Col.1:12-14.)*

In 2 Timothy 2:10, we are told that salvation involves eternal glory. There we read of "the salvation to be found in Christ Jesus and with eternal glory."

## THE GIFT OF FAITH

Faith is one of the most important concepts in Romans. Paul maintains the gospel brings salvation to those who believe in it. Paul teaches that salvation begins and ends with faith. Therefore let us try to grasp the concept of faith from Paul's point of view. Due to our past training we are inclined to view faith primarily as an intellectual assent to the facts of divine revelation. We accept as true what God has revealed on the authority of God who cannot deceive or be deceived. If we can give intellectual assent to the Christian creed, we consider ourselves as possessing the virtue of faith. Paul does not deny the intellectual aspect of faith. He himself labors diligently to give his converts a firm rational foundation for their faith. As for Paul and the Jews of his time, the whole heart and essence of faith went much deeper intellectual assent. Faith does not deal so much with the object of faith, whom we believe in or even the content of faith which we believe in, as it does with the personal response of faith: how faith is expressed in the life of a believer.

The Hebrew verb "to believe" (he emin) signifies to hold as trustworthy. "Ne man" signifies to be firm, to be reliable, and to be loyal. Faith in the Old Testament is expressed by a loving and trusting confidence in God that He will fulfill His promises because He can be trusted to do so. The foundation of man's confidence and trust is that God is trustworthy. The theme of God's trustworthiness weaves through the thoughts of Paul: "God is faithful, and it was he who called you to fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ" (1 Cor.1-9): "May the God of peace make you perfect in holiness... He who calls us is trustworthy, therefore he will do it" (1Thes.5:23-24); "Besides, God keeps his promise- (1Cor.10:13): -This great confidence in God is ours, through Christ- (2Cor.3:4). The emphasis of Paul's faith is not what is in man but rather in who God is, -It is not that we are entitled of ourselves to take credit for anything. Our sole credit is from God." (2Cor.3:5.) It is an attitude of soul that humbly acknowledges its own powerlessness to achieve the higher goals of life and comes to a radical and utter dependence upon the power of God in one's life. The person of faith gets self completely out of the way to make room for God's initiative. One author has referred to such faith as an act which is the negation of all activity, a moment of passivity out of which the strength for action comes, because in it God acts.

Paul does not see this faith as a subjective quality inherent in the soul of a person at the time when the gospel is being presented. In other words, before the gospel is preached the person is without such faith. It is the power of the gospel that creates this quality of faith in the believer, that makes it possible for one to believe and to trust God. Faith being a divine gift imparts to the person the power needed to believe. For Paul the proof of biblical faith was the fact that one now belongs to Christ and through Him now participates in the new life. What psychologically

transpires in the life of a person coming to faith has been described in these words of Jesus,

*When a strong man fully armed guards his courtyard, his possessions go undisturbed. But when someone stronger than he comes and overpowers him, such a one carries off the arms on which he was relying and divides the spoils.*

*(Lk.11:21-22.)*

In other words, the believer is delivered from the power of Satan and escapes the kingdom of darkness and becomes a possession of Jesus Christ and enters into the safety of the Kingdom of Light. Jesus had once described Paul's own mission in these words,

*"I have delivered you from this people and from the nations, to open the eyes of those whom I am sending you, to turn them from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God; that through their faith in me they may obtain the forgiveness of their sins and a portion among God's people."*

*(Acts 26:17-18.)*

Faith opens the door of the courtyard of one's life, occupied and dominated by Satan, to the stronger person – Jesus Christ.

The quality of faith demanded by Paul finds beautiful expression in the 46<sup>th</sup> Psalm,

*God is our refuge and our strength, an ever –present help in distress. Therefore we fear not, though the earth be shaken and mountains plunge into the depths of the sea; though its waters rage and foam and the mountains quake at its surging. The Lord of hosts is with us; our stronghold is the God of Jacob."*

*(Ps.46:2-4.)*

Isaiah taught Israel, "He who puts his faith in Yahweh will not be shaken." (Is.28:16.) And he warned them, "...unless your faith is firm you shall not be firm." (Is.7:9.) Biblical faith includes the free abandonment of the whole person to God and to His Christ. This is the quality of faith Jesus requested when He said to the apostles, "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Have faith in God and faith in me." (Jn.14:1.) Jesus foretold to the apostles the sufferings to come in order to forearm them, "I have told you all this to keep your faith (confidence) from being shaken." (Jn.16:1.) For their lack of confidence, Jesus rebuked His disciples, "What an unbelieving lot you are! How long must I remain with you? How long can I

endure you?" (Mk.9:19.) Confidence in Jesus produces miracles and its lack, prevents them. We read in Matthew:

*The disciples approached Jesus at the point and asked him privately, "Why could we not expel it?" "Because you have so little trust," he told them. "I assure you, if you had faith the size of a mustard seed, you would be able to say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it would move. Nothing would be impossible for you."* (Mt. 17:19-20.)

As said before, there is a correlation between faith and obedience, and disobedience and disbelief. Faith implies obedience. Disobedience evidences a lack of faith. It is often difficult for us to comprehend the connection between faith and obedience. This is because we have narrowed our concept of faith to being primarily an intellectual assent to a list of revealed truths. Faith often for us is no more than rarified, God-given intellectual honesty. As we have demonstrated, faith in the biblical sense is a person response with complete confidence and trust in God; when we truly grasp this, the relationship between faith and obedience becomes clear. Faith involves traveling in the dark. In a sense, faith is always blind. It involves trusting in the light, in the love and in the vision of another. When we live by faith it is as if we were in a valley filled with dangerous ravines and treacherous rivers and we desire to leave the valley and reach the safety of a lofty mountaintop. In order to reach that mountaintop we must close our eyes, put our hand in that of another, and permit the other to lead us. If we truly lacked faith in that person, our lack of confidence could arise because we did not trust their sense of direction, or their intelligence, or their strength to protect us from harm, or a love that would truly care for us. If this were the case, we would be filled with anxiety and fear. We would move slowly along with our guide, feeling our way along, holding back, freezing up and refusing to move at times. We would be unable to keep our eyes closed; it would be necessary to take a peek to reassure ourselves. This is a representative picture of the faith of many people. This quality of faith prompted Jesus to say, -Oh you of little faith--why do-you doubt?" The secret of the sanctity of the little French girl, Therese Martin, who died a saint at twenty-four, was faith. She traveled quickly over the road of sanctity because she put her hand in the hand of God and let him lead her. She never became anxious, she never took a peek, but with the docility of a little child she blindly followed where God the Father led. She did confess that in the last three years of her life she had made more acts of faith than in her entire past life. How quickly she arrived safely home through faith!

For the Jewish rabbis, faith involved the keeping of the Mosaic Law. They believed that God would fulfill His promises to the Jews, but on the condition that they observe the law. This implied that salvation would come to the Jews through their obedience to the law. It was easy to proceed from this premise to the belief that

one is saved through the observance of the law, through one's own good works. At this point, Paul parted company with Jewish thought. Paul maintained faith, and not the works of the law, opened the door to salvation. Indeed when the woman, a public sinner, one who had failed to observe the law, came to Jesus at the house of the Pharisee and there anointed his feet with oil, washed them in her tears and dried them with her hair, Jesus said to her, "Go in peace! Your faith has been your salvation."

(Lk.7:50.)

## THE JUSTICE OF GOD

One of the most difficult sentences to interpret in Romans is verse seventeen. It's understanding is the key to interpret Paul's mind correctly.

There we read:

*"For in the gospel is revealed the justice (righteousness) of which begins and ends with faith, as Scripture says, "The just shall live by faith."*

(Rom.1.17.)

What does Paul mean when he says that the gospel reveals the justice or the righteousness of God? First of all, when he uses not intend to imply an intellectual illumination takes place but rather that revelation is an act of God now taking place. It signifies a process is in progress but not yet completed, a divine activity is manifestly occurring within human experience that remains mysterious and unsearchable to the human mind.

The use of the present tense of the verb (reveal) signifies gospel continuously manifests the justice or the righteousness of God. It is most important to understand the phrase, "the justice of God." Perhaps there is no phrase in Romans more important to understand.

From our previous training we are inclined righteousness as a moral attribute or virtue by which one person renders to another his or her due--what is another's by right. To receive such justice people often go to court. To grasp Paul's meaning we must leave this concept behind. Its use in the Old Testament will help us to understand the meaning intended by Paul. Even in the Old Testament justice is juridical term but with this difference, justice or righteousness is not viewed as a virtue possessed by God or man but as an act or activity of whether that judge be God or man. Justice is the action of the judge declaring the injured party to be in

the right. Justice is the act that vindicates the oppressed and delivers the captive out of evil. Yahweh as their justice or righteousness, the Judge who would vindicates them before the world and delivers them from their enemies. They asked: "Shall not the judge of all the earth act justly?" (Gen.18.25.) Yahweh would render justice to the Israelites not because they had an intrinsic right to it, justice was not due them because of their personal moral goodness, but rather God rendered justice to them as a consequence of Israel's covenant with Him. Yahweh is faithful to the covenant He has sworn to the Chosen People. The Jews expected justice not so much because of what they had done but because of what Yahweh had promised. Justification is an experience of Israel result the Lord's faithfulness to His promises. In the minds of the Jews, this righteousness would come only to those who kept the laws of the covenant. This emphasis led them to consciously center upon the keeping of the law, to emphasize their own good works rather than upon God's fidelity to His promises. Therefore justification became more a work of man than an activity of God.

For the Jews, the justice of God would be synonymous with God's activity as a savior. The Psalmist sang, "Your justice is like the mountains of God; your judgments, like the mighty deep: man and beast you save, O Lord." (Ps.36:7.) The following words of Isaiah accurately describe Israel as a recipient of the justice of God:

*"I rejoice heartily in the Lord, in my God is the joy of my soul: for he has clothed me with a robe of salvation, and wrapped me in a mantle of justice. Like a bridegroom adorned with a diadem, like a bride bedecked with her jewels. As the earth brings forth its plants, and a garden makes its growth spring up, So will the Lord God make justice and praise spring up before all the nations."*

*(Is.61:10-11.)*

Justification in the Old Testament is completely a work of God of which Israel is but the blessed recipient.

It was a belief among the Jews that the justice of God would come into its full flowering with the coming of the Messiah. Isaiah expresses Israel's longing for this day:

*Let justice descend, O heavens, like dew from above, like gentle rain let the skies drop it down. Let the earth open and salvation bud forth: let justice also spring up! I, the Lord, have created this.*

*(Isaiah 45:8.)*

We read in Jeremiah, "In his day Judah shall be saved, Israel shall dwell in security. This is the name they give him: 'The Lord our Justice.'" (Jer.23:6)

This justice of God especially implied that Israel would be saved from its sins and their evil effects. Speaking of the Servant of Yahweh, Isaiah writes, Through his suffering, my servant shall justify many (53: 11. ) The Hebrew term "hisdiq," used to signify "to justify" always carries the concept to pronounce guiltless. The above statement could mean that the Servant of Yahweh would help many to obtain their rights, but when followed immediately by "and their guilt he shall bear," it really means that the Servant of Yahweh will obtain forgiveness for many sinners. For Paul, the justice of God would be incompatible with sin, for sin is the cause of the wrath of God. When one receives the justice of God, it implies one's sins have been forgiven.

We can save ourselves a lot of problems in understanding Paul if we do not center our attention on the effects of the justification in the souls of the believers, but rather try to hold in mind the concept of the justice of God as a divine saving activity on the part of God in the life of a believer. If we center in on what justification accomplishes in the soul of the justified, we can easily be misdirected and confused about what Paul teaches us. Try to hold in mind, as we have suggested, the concept of justification or righteousness from the point of view of it being a free, loving action of God that results in salvation. (The effects of salvation within the soul are another concept entirely. At this point Paul is teaching us how men are saved and not what are the results of salvation on the souls of men.)

Paul maintains that this divine act of salvation, called the justice of God or righteousness of God, occur in the lives of those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Once again we see the importance of faith to salvation. Nevertheless, we can only correctly say faith save when we clearly understand by that expression that faith is a necessary condition for God's action in the life of a sinner. In itself, faith does not save. It is the door to salvation. God saves. It is entirely right to confess "Jesus Save" for those who put their faith in Him.

### THE FRUITY OF IDOLATRY

With quick strokes Paul paints a picture of the divine action of salvation, the justice of God, working in the lives of those who believe. At this point he presents a contrasting picture, in depth and length, of the wrath of God upon the unbelievers, the disobedient, and the unfaithful. In the passages that follow Paul makes a case for the universal need of mankind for that justice of God coming through Jesus Christ. He implies that without Christ, all mankind is under the wrath of God.



Paul presents a very gloomy and dramatic picture of paganism in the Greco-Roman society of his day. He does not intend to imply that there were no good pagans, nor that paganism lacked any high ethical standards. The philosophies of the Stoics and Epicureans fostered very high ethical codes. The Stoics themselves taught that all unnatural acts were evil. Many philosophers taught monotheism, the existence and worship of one God. They often condemned the evils of idolatry. But, too often, what was condemned in theory was excuse in practice. Paul's presentation, although a generalization, is no exaggeration. Many poets and philosophers of the time have given us an even more drastic picture of the moral decay of the Greco-Roman society.

The Jews believed idolatry to be the root of all evil. It hit and falsified the path to truth and goodness. Idolatry fostered the selfishness of men, for idols or gods were but symbolic expressions of men's own personal desires and ambitions. We read in the Book of Wisdom, "For the worship of infamous idols is the reason and source and extremity of all evil" (14:27), "for by the vanity of men they came into the world..." (14:14). Idolatry was widespread throughout the empire. Acts relates that while in Athens, Paul "grew exasperated at the sight of idols everywhere in the city." (Acts 17:16.) From our historical records we know that female and male prostitution and homosexuality were associated with many forms of idolatrous worship.

Paul begins by stating, "the wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against the irreligious and perverse spirit of men who, in this perversity of theirs, hinder the truth." (Rom.1:18.) The recipients of God's anger are those who live their lives as if there was no God; those without any true religious relationship; and those persons who deliberately pervert the true spirit of religion. These would be men who hindered the spread of the gospel and denied true religion. Men like Alexander the coppersmith and the silversmith Demetrius who stirred up Ephesus against the gospel and forced Paul to leave O Asia Minor. (See Act 19:23-24.)

Paul maintains that ignorance and intellectual error are no excuse for idolatry. He teaches that men, by the natural light of human reason, can come to a correct knowledge of God. "In fact, whatever can be known about God is clear to them~ he himself made it so." (Rom.1:19.) A man can come to a knowledge of God in the sense expressed in Wisdom:

*For all men were by nature foolish who were in ignorance of God, and who from the good things seen did not succeed in knowing him who is, and from studying the works did not discern the artisan.*

*(Wis.13:1.)*

Foolishness conveys the concept of ungodliness in the Old Testament. Chapters thirty-eight through forty-one of the Book of Job picturesquely teaches what nature reveals about God. Psalmists sing, "The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament proclaims his handiwork." (He proclaims that the heavens and the firmament preach, day and night, a wordless sermon.) "Through all the earth their voices resound, and to the end of the world, their message." (Ps.19:1,5.) Paul himself said:

*Since the creation of the world, invisible realities, God's eternal power and divinity, have become visible, recognized through the things he has made. Therefore these men are inexcusable. They certainly had knowledge of God, yet they did not glorify him as God or give him thanks.*

*(Rom.1:20-21a.)*

What Paul teaches in Romans between verses eighteen and thirty-two seems to echo, in summary fashion, the thirteenth and fourteenth chapters of Wisdom.

*Paul attributes idolatry to a deliberate perversion of the spirit of truth:*

*"These men who exchanged the truth of God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator....."*

*(Rom.1:25.)*

*They stultified themselves through speculating to no purpose, and their senseless hearts were darkened. They claimed to be wise, but turned into fools instead: they exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images representing mortal man, birds, beasts, and snakes.*

*(Rom.1:21b-23.)*

Paul maintains that because men have deliberately chosen this path away from true religion and embraced idolatry they deserve the wrath of God. Paul sees this wrath of God being demonstrated in the lives of men and women through their unnatural and evil lives, "They did not see fit to acknowledge God, so God delivered them up (abandoned them) to their own depraved sense to do what is unseemly." (Rom.1:28.) Irreligion and idolatry produce their own bitter fruits. Moral rottenness permeates the society. This was evident to Paul from the widespread practice of lesbianism and homosexuality. Historians maintain that fourteen out of the first fifteen emperors of Rome were homosexuals. Such immorality would have been especially abhorrent to a man such as Paul who taught of the sanctity of the human body. To the Corinthians he had written,

*Shun lewd conduct. Every other sin a man commits is outside his body, but the fornicator' sins against his own body. You must know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is within.*

*(1Cor.6:18-19a.)*

Paul presents a representative portrait of the pagan society of his day. He lists its vices, as was customary among its own philosophers, into two categories: first, the sensual vices and second, the anti-social vices. In verses twenty-four through twenty-six, Paul describes the personality corruption symbolized in the perversion of natural sex life. The enslavement of men and women to these sins is seen by Paul as the penalty for their perversity. They lose the dignity of their manhood and womanhood.

In verses twenty-nine through thirty-one, Paul presents the anti-social vices prevalent in this society. Usually “pleonevia,” translated as ruthless self assertion or ill will, headed the list of anti-social vices. This was defined by Aristotle as the man who pursues his own interest with complete disregard for the rights of others and with no consideration for humanity—a totally selfish person. Paul paints this picture of social life at the time:

*They are filled with every kind of wickedness: maliciousness, greed, ill-will, envy, murder, bickering, deceit, craftiness. They are gossips and slanderers, they hate God, -are insolent, haughty, boastful, ingenious in their wrongdoing and rebellious towards their parents. One sees in them men without conscience, without loyalty, without affection, without pity.*

*(Rom.1:29-31)*

Again, Paul holds them culpable. He maintains they knew these things to be evil, and they not only deliberately chose evil, but they energetically fostered the same evil within others. In Paul's mind only one verdict remains possible: All who do such things deserve death (Rom.1:32.) Paul describes the Greco-Roman world as a temporary Hell on earth!

## THE WRATH OF GOD

When Paul says, “The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven,” he once again uses the present tense of the verb implying a present and on-going situation in the world. The Greek word “orge,” translated as wrath, commonly signifies anger. Does Paul imply anger to be an attribute of God? If so, he implies God to be in a continuous state of anger. We know the Old Testament is not shy in presenting pictures of an angry God.

The wrath of God in the Old Testament is a symbolic picture of Yahweh's reaction to Israel's breaking its covenant with Him: “Upon them I will pour out my wrath like water.” (Hosea 5:10.) Ezekiel gives this description:

*Thus shall my anger spend itself, and I will wreak my fury upon them till I am appeased: they shall know that I, the Lord, have spoken in my jealousy when I spend my fury upon them. I will make you a waste and a reproach among the nations that surround you, which every passer-by may see. When I execute judgment upon you in anger and fury and with furious chastisements, you shall be a reproach and an object of scorn, a terrible warning to the nations that surround you. I, the Lord, have spoken!*

*(Ez.5:13-15.)*

Isaiah gives this concrete example of the wrath of God:

*At the wrath of the Lord of hosts the land quakes, and the people are like fuel for fire; No man spares his brother, each devours the flesh of his neighbor. Though they hack on the right, they are hungry; though they eat on the left, they are not filled. Manasseh devours Ephraim, and Ephraim, Manasseh; together they turn on Judah. For all this, his wrath is not turned back, his hand is still outstretched!*

*(Isaiah 9:18-20.)*

Zephaniah speaks of the final day of Wrath when:

*...on the day of the Lord's wrath, When in the fire of his jealousy all the earth shall be consumed. For he shall make an end, yes, a sudden end, of all who live on the earth.*

*(Zep. 1:18.)*

Israel prayed to Yahweh:

*Pour out your wrath upon the nations that acknowledge you not, upon the kingdoms that call not upon your name.*

*(Psalm 79:6.)*

The Psalmist tells us:

*The Lord searches the just and the wicked; the lover of violence he hates. He rains upon the wicked fury, coals and brimstone; a burning blast is their allotted cup.*

*(Psalm 11:5-6.)*

Even the New Testament speaks of the anger of Jesus. The Scriptures tell us to be angry but sin not. One author has pointed out that even the highest human ideals of personality require an honest recognition of evil and wickedness for what it is. The Bible everywhere assumes that God will judge men for what they have done in

life, and that God's punishment will fall on the unjust. Anders Nygren describes the wrath of God as God's holy displeasure at sin. He maintains it is more than a passive displeasure of sin. Karl Barth made this terrible statement, "The Wrath of God is the righteousness of God-- apart from and without Christ." Perhaps he came closer to the divine reality when he said that the Wrath of God signifies the total situation that obtains the lost condition when man has departed from God. The biblical scholar C.H. Dodd is rightly very reluctant to speak of wrath or anger as an attribute of God. He suggests Paul does not intend this. He points out that Paul never uses the verb "to be angry" with God as the subject. Paul does not hesitate to predicate love, grace, or faithfulness of God. He speaks of the love of God and he says that "God is love." (See 2Thes.2:16; Eph.2:4.) He speaks of the grace of God and that God deals graciously with us (Col.1:6). He speaks of the faithfulness of God and that God is faithful (1Cor.1:9). Although he speaks of the wrath and anger of God, he never says God to be angry. Dodd points out that Paul often speaks of this same anger in an impersonal way, calling it "The Wrath." Paul also refers to "the children of wrath" (1Thes.2:16; Rom.5:9,12:19,13:8; Eph.2:3). He speaks of "vessels of wrath" (Rom.9:22), and the "day of wrath" (Rom.2:5). Dodd maintains the wrath of God appears to mean to Paul not a certain feeling or attitude of God towards mankind, but rather some process or effect now operative in the world. Paul definitely intends to contrast the justice of God with the wrath of God. Just as we have seen the justice of God to be a positive activity of God's love, rather than a virtue or attribute in God, we also see the wrath of God to be a negative activity of God's love. By this I would mean the love of God permits men to freely follow their own free wills even when they freely choose evil. What we speak of as God's wrath is no more than the evil fruits produced by our own sins. It is what God permits to be, not what He directly wills to be. I think the Scriptures best express this as an abandonment of a person by God to their sins and to the bitter harvest they reap.

Three times Paul states that God has abandoned (paredoken) those who have abandoned the true God. God abandoned them to "their lusts" (v.24), "to disgraceful passions" (v.26), and "to their own depraved sense to do what is unseemly" (v.28). This corruption of human personality and of society itself is seen as a natural process of cause and effect and not as a direct cause by God. Men have freely chosen evil, and evil flows from their evil actions. God respects the freedom of His creatures and does not intervene. This too is part of the mystery of Divine Love. True love always permits the beloved to be free.

Paul's thoughts clearly echo the sentiments expressed by Stephen in his sermon before the Sanhedrin. Stephen also preached that when men deliberately choose alien gods, the true God abandons them. When Israel "fashioned the calf and offered sacrifice to the idol, and had a festive celebration over the product of their

own hands...God turned away from them and abandoned them..." (Acts 7:41-42.) Paul and Stephen use the same word "paredoken" to express that God turned away.

We read in Hebrews, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." (Heb.10:31.) Paul tells of an even more fearful thing--to fall out of the hands of the living God--for God to turn loose our hand and turn His back upon us and to be left to oneself in a world where evil choices bring eternal recompense.

Rather, let us always pray that because of our loving faith in Jesus Christ, the Lord's words to Isaiah will always be realized in our lives, "I have put my words into your mouth and shielded you in the shadow of my hand..." (Is.51:16.)

## CHAPTER 3

### UNIVERSAL NEED FOR SALVATION

#### INTRODUCTION

Saint Paul firmly believed that every human being needed the grace of salvation coming through Jesus Christ in order to escape the coming wrath of God and to come to eternal life. However he knew many people had no awareness of their personal need for salvation. They did not experience themselves as in need of being saved. They possessed neither a conscious awareness of alienation from God nor an awareness of personal sin. They had no fear of the wrath of God. Many people within Paul's experience considered themselves saved. Primarily these would be Jews who knew themselves to be the Chosen People. Because of God's covenant love, the Jews believed they would escape the wrath of God on the day God would judge the entire world. Recalling that day to mind Paul writes:

*...that day of wrath when the just judgment of God will be revealed, when he will repay every man for what he has done: eternal life to those who strive for glory, honor, and immortality by patiently doing right; wrath and fury to those who selfishly disobey the truth and obey wickedness. Yes, affliction and anguish will come upon every man who has done evil...But there will be glory, honor, and peace for everyone who has done good*

*(Rom.2:5-10.)*

Many Jews considered this glory, honor and peace as an assured possession. Paul seeks to destroy their spiritual complacency. His most difficult task would be to convince men of sin who experienced themselves as righteous. Even Jesus Himself found this group the most difficult to reach. Jesus' words almost imply the self-righteous to be beyond repentance. Jesus came for sinners, but one with no conscious awareness of sin would be unable to identify with Jesus as savior. These words of Jesus to His disciples give His personal evaluation of the spiritual state of such men, "Unless your holiness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees you shall not enter the kingdom of God." (Mt.5:20. )

To his readers Paul first presented the most obvious examples of people subjected to the Wrath of God and in need of salvation. The Jews unhesitatingly believed people given to idolatry were destined to be fuel for the wrath of God. Men and women whose sins shock society have always received social condemnation and are seen, at least, to be in need of rehabilitation. The written gospel accounts

confirm that people, considered by Jewish society to be sinners, flocked to Jesus of Nazareth. To the socially accepted Jesus said:

*"Let me make it clear that tax collectors and prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God before you. When John came preaching a way of holiness, you put no faith in him; but the tax collectors and the prostitutes did believe him."*

*(Mt.21:31b-32.)*

On one occasion when a priest preached a revival at an Indian Mission about the sinfulness of people, an old Indian woman, much given to alcohol, interrupted his sermon on sinning with her loud confession, "You mean me, missionary! You mean me!" People living outside the boundaries of socially accepted sins often feel themselves to be sinners and experience a conscious need to be saved. The constant condemnation of society often produces a deep sense of guilt and often an unconscious need to be punished. Many people, objectively worse sinners, feel no sense of guilt because society condones their sins. Furthermore, such people can even possess a sense of righteousness by habitually performing works considered good by society. Many keep their evil in the dark which permits them to maintain, before their own eyes and those of others, an illusion of goodness. St. John wrote of such when he said, "Men loved darkness rather than light...he does not come near it for fear his deeds will be exposed." (Jn.3:19b-20.) In other words, the fear that one's illusion of goodness will be dissipated and be seen for what it truly is, a prime subject for the wrath of God.

## JUDGE AND JUGEMENT

To the mind of Jews, Paul stated the obvious when he wrote, "The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against the irreligious and perverse spirit of men who, in this perversity of theirs, hinder the truth." (Rom.1:18.) Paul now turns his attention towards those who would be the first to hurl stones of condemnation against immoral pagans. His words could be directed towards pious pagans but most probably Paul has the Jews in mind when he says, "That is why everyone of you who judges another is inexcusable. By your judgment you convict yourself, since you do the very same things." (Rom.2:1.)

The concept of judgment plays such a large part in this section of Romans that it would be well to review the concepts of judge and judgment as understood in the Old Testament. According to the Jews of Old Testament times, a person could possess a certain right or juridical claim called a "mispat." The person having the just claim to the "mispat" was called "saddik," meaning righteous. It was the role of a judge (sopet) to declare between parties disputing over a right (mispat) who was



righteous (saddik) in the dispute—who truly possessed the "mispat." No person was considered totally righteous (saddik) until declared so by a judge. Only then was a person's right juridically established beyond question or doubt. The right or "mispat" must exist prior to the judgment but the judgment is necessary for it to be fully established.

A judge who deprived a person of his "mispat" would be an unjust judge who failed in the essential role of a judge~ primarily the role of the judge being to defend and vindicate the rights of people. It was the role of the just judge to declare who possessed the right, and therefore who was juridically righteous. The Old Testament considered Yahweh to be "the spirit of mispat." Isaiah says, "On that day the Lord of hosts will be...a spirit of justice..." (Is.28:5-6.) It presents Yahweh as a lover of the rights of people. "For I, the Lord, love what is right, I hate robbery and injustice." (Is.61:8.)

Since it was usually the rights of widows, orphans and aliens that were violated, the Old Testament pictures Yahweh as the defender of their rights. "For the Lord, your God...executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and befriends the alien..." (Dt.10:18.) When Sarah felt unjustly deprived of her right (mispat) by her husband Abraham, she appealed her case to a higher court. "May the Lord decide between you and me," she said to her husband. (Gn.16:5.) David said to the jealous King Saul, -The Lord will judge between me and you, and the Lord will exact justice from you in my case." (1Sam.24:13.)

A just judge, of necessity, must look two ways. Therefore a judge must also decree another person not to be "saddik," to be unrighteous in the sight of the judge and therefore subject to some penalty. When Israel broke its covenant with Yahweh, the just Judge declared Israel to be unrighteous and subject to punishment. Many of the prophets (especially Ezekiel) emphasized the secondary aspect of judgment in Yahweh's case with Israel. Through the prophets, Yahweh manifested the guilt of Israel and decreed its punishment.

The New Testament emphasizes the negative aspect of judgment in reaction to the general rejection of Jesus of Nazareth as Messiah and Lord. Men denied to Jesus his "mispat," his rights. Therefore men became unjust and unrighteous and subject to condemnation before the Divine Tribunal on the Day of Wrath. This negative aspect of judgment plays a major role in Paul's letter to the Romans.

In the Christian Church we have an interesting paradoxical situation worth noting at this time. In the Catholic Church the confessional is called the tribunal of

penance. In the confessional a repentant person declares himself to be guilty, unrighteous--lacking "saddik." The Lord, on the other hand, through his representative the minister, declares the sinner to be righteous, "saddik," freed of guilt and sin. In the case of a sinner in the confessional, II the sinful person has no prior claim within himself to a declaration of righteousness. It is granted in lieu of the merits of Jesus Christ.

We need to keep in mind the primary work of judgment: to declare someone righteous. Because negative judgments have become so common, to be judgmental has become synonymous with being condemnatory. Nevertheless, in case of judgment, someone is declared to be righteous. More often than not it is the person making the negative judgment. In these cases, the judge declares self to be the righteous one. This is what is known as being "self-righteous." Because people are so prone to such behavior, the Scriptures encourage us to judge not. Jesus encouraged His disciples to be compassionate rather than judgmental. "Let him who is without sin throw the first stone." (See In.8:7.) He did this for the good of His disciples as He pointed out to them, "For the measure you measure with will be measured back to you." He implied that those who refrained from condemning others would escape a negative judgment upon themselves from God. God would declare them righteous. (See Lk.6:36-38.)

### PAUL ACCUSES THE JEWS

Paul now demonstrates how those who condemn others could have their, judgment recoil upon their own heads. Paul had described the gross immorality of the pagans. Every good Jew would be one with Paul in condemning these pagans. As if recording an echo from their hearts Paul says, "We know that God's judgment on men who do such as this is just." (Rom.2:2.) Of this just decree, we have already been informed, "God's just decree that all who do such things deserve death.. (Rom.I:32.) We now hear Paul turning the tables upon his audience, "...By your judgment you convict yourself, since you do the very same things." (Rom.2:1.) One's immediate reaction would be denial. For one has not committed such immoral deeds as described by Paul. But Paul's accusation lies on a much deeper level than surface sin. The evils in the lives of the pagans, so readily condemned by the Jews, would be only sinful fruit of a more fundamental sin. We are told God condemns the pagans because of their unfaithfulness to the truth they possessed. "They certainly had knowledge of God, yet they did not glorify him as God or give him thanks." (Rom.I:21.) Unfaithfulness to the knowledge of truth is a sin regardless of whether the knowledge of truth comes from the natural light of reason or through divine revelation. Paul maintains that in principle the Jews have acted in the same manner. They too have refused to live their lives in keeping with the knowledge of God. That

is the root of their sin and the grounds of their identification with the pagans.

The sinfulness of the Jews, because of their superior knowledge of God and more refined moral lives, would not be as evident as that of the pagans. (They really looked good in comparison.) Nevertheless, they all fell under the dominion of sin and their verdict against the pagans fell upon their own heads. "All who do such things deserve death!" Paul now asks, "Do you suppose, then, that you will escape his judgment, you who condemn these things in other yet do them yourself?" (Rom.2:3.)

Here we have almost the reversal of what takes place in the confessional. When men consciously stand before God with a sense of righteousness and with a conscious awareness of being better than others, they end by being declared sinful and unrighteous in the sight of the Lord. Luke recorded this truth when he revealed the Lord's verdict upon the "holy" Pharisee and the sinful tax collector. The tax collector could only pray, "O God! Be merciful to me a sinner." The tax collector returned home from the temple justified but not the "holy" Pharisee. "For everyone who exalts himself shall be humbled while he who humbles himself shall be exalted." (See Lk.18:9-14.)

### PAUL ANSWERS THE OBJECTIONS

No Jew would readily admit Paul's thesis that all men were under sin and in need of salvation if by all men he included the Jews. At this point Paul seeks to answer the objections of the Jews to his thesis. The Jews of the Old Testament considered the blessings within their lives as evidence of God's approval of them. They experienced the merciful love of God, and they were the recipients of the blessings of the covenant. In the case of the pagans this was obviously not so. "The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against the pagans." Paul argues that these blessings are not due to the Jews sinlessness but rather to the faithfulness of Yahweh to His Chosen people. God chose to draw the Jews to Himself through love rather than fear. It was not that the Jews did not deserve the wrath of God but rather that Yahweh was calling the Jews to repentance through kindness. Paul asks his objectors, "Do you presume on his kindness and forbearance? Do you not know that God's kindness is an invitation to you to repent?" (Rom.2:4.)

Paul presents the picture of the Jews as people who take advantage of the love of another in order to sin. In life we see husbands, wives, children, kin, and friends who, when secure about the love of another, abuse that love.

It gives them a freedom to offend the loving person because they know the person will not withdraw his love from them. The loving person will continue to forgive the

injuries and love the unloving one. This is a terrible abuse of love, with drastic consequences within the souls of men and women who use the love of another in order to sin against them. In time, they can become persons incapable of receiving love, damned souls. Usually before that day, their own unlovingness will have succeeded in destroying the love of the other for them. Human love has its limitations. Some people try the love of others beyond their limitations leaving the loving one empty and broken-hearted. Broken hearts must be mended before they can contain love again. In the case with God and man, God's love is infinite and it is the sinner who becomes incapable of receiving divine love. Abraham's words to the rich man in Hell describe this situation. The rich man in Hell said to Abraham:

*“Father Abraham, have pity on me. Send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water to refresh my tongue, for I am tortured in these flames.” .My child,” replied Abraham, “remember that you were well off in your lifetime, while Lazarus was in misery. Now he has found consolation here, but you have found torment. And that is not all. Between you and us there is fixed a great abyss, so that those who might wish to cross from here to you cannot do so, nor can anyone cross from your side to us.”* (Lk.16:24-26.)

We see it is not Abraham's love, symbolic of the love of God the Father, that ceases, but rather that the other is in a state in which love cannot be received. The damned man himself fixed the great abyss by the unloving life lived on earth.

The lives of many Christians reflect this same condition. They are not ignorant about the demands of the Christian life, but they trade on God's love. God's love in their lives, evident from his many blessings, lull them into a false sense of security. They delude themselves into believing that they will be saved by their faith regardless of their unchristian lives. They often quote Paul in defense of their lives. If they lean on Paul, he'll give them no true support but will himself condemn them. In their blindness they fail to realize their lives deny and negate true faith in Jesus in which they now place their confidence. Their faith does not save! Many Catholics use the confessional as an excuse to sin. Since the tribunal of God's merciful goodness remains always open in this life, they trade and gamble on that merciful love. They sin deliberately, telling themselves, “I can always later go to confession.” They fail to realize that sin may be making them incapable of receiving the merciful love of God offered to the repentant in the Sacrament of Penance. Unconsciously, they too fix a great abyss between themselves and God's love.

Many abuse the love of God and do not accept God's kind invitation to repent. To all, Jew, Greek and Christian alike, Paul says:

*In spite of this (kindness of God), your hard and impenitent heart is storing up retribution for that day of wrath when the just judgment of God will be revealed, when he will repay every man for what he has done. (Rom.2:5-6.)*

Paul teaches, as was common among the Jews of his time, that all mankind would be brought before the Divine Tribunal of judgment at the end of time. The Jews often referred to this time as the Day of Wrath. It was of this day the prophet Zephaniah spoke when he said:

*...the day of the Lord's wrath, When in the fire of his jealousy all the earth shall be consumed. For he shall make an end, yes, a sudden end, of all who live on the earth. (Zep.1:18.)*

According to Isaiah it will be a day on which God will be exalted and the proud destroyed.

*For the Lord of hosts will have his day against all that is proud and arrogant, all that is high, and it will be brought low Human pride will be abased, the arrogance of men brought low, and the Lord alone will be exalted, on that day. The idols will perish forever. Men will go into caves in the rocks and into holes in the earth, From the terror of the Lord and the splendor of his majesty, when he arises to overawe the earth.*

*(Is.2:12,17-19.)*

Cosmic terrors will accompany this day. Again Isaiah records:

*The stars and constellations of the heavens send forth no light: The sun is dark when it rises, and the light of the moon does not shine. Thus I will punish the world for its evil and the wicked for their guilt...I will make the heavens tremble and the earth shall be shaken from its place, At the wrath of the Lord of hosts on the day of his burning anger.*

*(Is.13:10-13.)*

*The earth will burst asunder, the earth will be shaken apart, the earth will be convulsed. The earth will reel like a drunkard, and it will sway like a hut: Its rebellion will weigh it down, until it falls, never to rise again.*

*(Is.24:19-20.)*

The prophet Joel confirms:

*Before them the earth trembles, the heavens shake; The sun and the moon are darkened, and the stars withhold their brightness. (2:10)*

*...For near is the day of the Lord in the valley of decision. Sun and moon are darkened, and the stars withhold their brightness. (4:14-15.)*

Isaiah teaches it will be a day in which sinners will be destroyed, "Lo, .the day of the Lord comes...To lay waste the land and destroy the sinners within it!" (Is.13:9.) Isaiah, Jeremiah and Zechariah all confirm that this day will come upon all the nations of the earth. Jesus Himself spoke of this ..day when, referring to the cities of Galilee, He said, "It will go easier on the day of judgment for Tyre and Sidon than for you." (Lk.10:14.)

It was a belief among the Jews in New Testament times that Yahweh would judge the world through an Elect One, His angel. Paul professed Jesus Christ to be this Elect One to judge the world. Paul wrote to the Corinthians:

*The lives of all of us are to be revealed before the tribunal of Christ so that each one may receive his recompense, good or bad, according to his life in the body. (2Cor.S:10.)*

Paul reminded the Thessalonians:

*You know very well that the day of the Lord is coming like a thief in the night. Just when people are saying, "Peace and security," ruin will fall on them...and there will be no escape.*

*(1Thes.S:2-3.)*

## DAY OF JUDGEMENT

Paul sees the Day of judgment as the great day of equalization on the face of the earth. All will appear before the same Judge and be subjected to the same just judgment. Only one's works will distinguish one's judgment from that of another. Paul writes the Romans:

*He will repay every man for what he has done: eternal life to those who strive for glory, honor and immortality by patiently doing right; wrath and fury to those who selfishly disobey the truth and obey wickedness. Yes, affliction and anguish will come upon every man who has done evil, the Jew first, then the Greek. But there will be glory, honor, and peace for everyone who has done good, likewise the Jew first, then the Greek. With God there is no favoritism. (Rom.2:6-11.)*

Paul contrasts those persons patiently doing good with those selfishly disobeying truth in order to follow their own evil desires. The patient person is the one who faces evil in his life and refuses to be overcome by the evil. He does not become sad

and despondent over the presence of evil; he overcomes evil by doing good. It is a contrast here between the person who denies and dies to self in order to do good to others, and with the person who rebels against abiding in goodness under the stimuli of life's difficulties, deliberately choosing a path of selfish gratification in personal and social relationships. In Greek, the word "eriheia (translated: to selfishly disobey the truth) carries the meaning of one who seeks selfish rewards in all one does. Being patient always implies dying, in some degree, to self will. It usually refers to one's relationship with other persons. It implies to have the power to act otherwise: to be able to inflict evil but deliberately choosing, not only to bear with another's evil, but to persevere in doing good to them.

The thoughts expressed by Paul find support in the Book of Daniel. We read in the 12th chapter of Daniel:

*It shall be a time of unsurpassed distress since nations began until that time. At that time your people shall escape, everyone who is found written in the book. Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake; some shall live forever, others shall be an everlasting horror and disgrace. But the wise shall shine brightly like the splendor of the firmament, And those who lead the many to justice shall be like the stars forever.*

*(Dan.12:1-3.)*

With this day in mind, Paul wrote the Corinthians:

*It matters little to me whether you or any human court passes judgment on me. I do not even pass judgment on myself. Mind you, I have nothing on my conscience. But that does not mean that I am declaring myself innocent. The Lord is the one to judge me, so stop passing judgment before the time of his return. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and manifest the intentions of hearts. At that time, everyone will receive his praise from God.*

*(1Cor.4:3-5.)*

At this point, Paul digresses from the logical flow of thought to insert a side thought. Paul maintains that on Judgment Day, God will reveal what truly is within the hearts of men, will bring to light what is hidden in darkness, and manifest the intentions within every human heart. The author of Shogun wrote of the three hearts of every Japanese: the first heart they show to the world; the second heart they show to their families and intimate friends; the third heart, the real one, they show to no one. It is this "third heart" that is to be revealed on Judgment Day. "On the day when in accordance with the gospel I preach, God will pass judgment on the secrets of men through Christ Jesus." (Rom.2:16.) What will be the criteria by which the just Judge of all the world will justly judge men? The Jews believed the Mosaic Law to be the criteria by which man would be judged. As a Jew, Paul believed the

Mosaic Law to be the most complete manifestation of God's will on earth in regard to the divine commands and prohibitions. Paul likewise believed in the law of nature, a law not different from the Mosaic Law but less clear and complete. Both laws manifest the eternal law of right and wrong written in the hearts of all men.

Stoic philosophers in Paul's time taught the whole universe to be rational. Within each human being the law of the universe was internalized and implanted in the heart of every human being. Possessing the power of reasoning, a human being could recognize this law within self and within the universe, and a person could attune life to be lived in harmony with the law of the universe. One could judge one's actions to be in keeping with, or opposing, the harmony of the universe. This judging process within man which the Stoics called the power of conscience was an expression coined by them. The conscience of a person only recognized the existing law and the law became the I criteria for judging the moral goodness or evilness of human behavior. Paul speaks very stoically when he say:

*Sinners who do not have the law (Mosaic) will perish without reference to it; sinners bound by the law will be judged in accordance with it. For it is not those who hear the law who are just in the sight of God it is those who keep it who will be declared just. When Gentiles who do not have the law keep it as by instinct, these men although without the law serve as a law for themselves. They show that the demands of the law are written in their hearts. Their conscience bears witness together with that law, and their thoughts will accuse or defend them on that day when, in accordance with the gospel I preach, God will pass judgment on the secrets of men through Christ Jesus.*

*(Rom.2:12-16.)*

Paul maintains that all men will be judged by their deeds performed in the flesh. But they will not all be judged by the same standard. The pagan will be judged according to the law of nature; the Jew will be judged according to the Mosaic Law; the Christian will be judged by the Law of Christ, or in other words, by "the Law of the Spirit, the spirit of life in Christ Jesus..."(Rom.8:2.) Paul has implied that the good pagan is better than the bad Jew, and he will certainly fare better on the day of Judgment. Shall not the just Judge of all the earth judge rightly?



## FAITH AND DEEDS

Paul's teaching on the role of deeds in final judgment does not contradict his teaching on the role of faith in salvation, but rather it clarifies the nature of a saving faith. A person's deeds reveal the presence or absence of faith. Obedience to the truth must issue forth in works in keeping with the truth, just as a rebellious spirit must issue forth in deeds contrary to truth. St. James asked his contemporaries:

*"You have faith and I have works--is that it?" Show me your faith without works, and I will show you the faith that underlies my works! ..... Faith without works is as dead as a body without breath."*

*(Jas.2:18,26.)*

This does not imply that good deeds save us. The condition of salvation must exist prior to and at the time of the good works. Our deeds will be the means by which the reality of our faith will be judged. God will look not only at the deed but the motivation for the deed. Good deeds prove whether one has come to faith and persevered in faith.

There is temporary salvation and there is permanent salvation. Recall that it means to enter into salvation: to escape the power of darkness as dominion of Satan, to be freed of one's sins, to enter into the kingdom of light and come under the dominion of God, to become one of God's people. As long as we live on earth, possessing freedom of will, we can fall from grace and revert to the old way of life. We can repudiate our baptismal commitment. The Book of Hebrews speaks of this terrible possibility.

*For when men have once been enlightened and have tasted the heavenly gift and become sharers in the Holy Spirit, when they have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, and then have fallen away, it is impossible to make them repent again.*

*(Heb.6:4-6a.)*

Remember, one must actually have "mispat" and be righteous before judgment, but it does not become one's permanent possession or state until juridically declared so by the judge. Therefore, the temporary situation of salvation will only become one's permanent possession when Christ, the Judge, declares a person to be "saddik" (righteous). Paul clearly teaches Jesus will make this judgment based upon the deeds done in the flesh. In this again he echoes the Old Testament, "You render to everyone according to his deeds" (Ps.62:13b), "...he will repay each one according to

his deeds" (Prv.24:12), "By their fruits you will know them" (Mt.7:20). Paul teaches that the only advantage the Jews will have on Judgment Day will be one of chronological order. They will be the first to be judged.

### PRIDE IN THE LAW

Paul now proceeds to answer the objections of his hypothetical objectors. We are probably hearing echoes of his previous synagogue debates with Jews. Many Jews placed their spiritual security upon their possession of the law. Paul begins, "Let us suppose you bear the name of 'Jew' and rely firmly on the law and pride yourself on God." (Rom.2:17.) Outside of Palestine the Israelites were commonly called Jews. The word Jew comes from the Hebrew "Yehudah" translated in English as Judah. The Hebrew name "Yehudah" derives from "hodah" signifying praised. So the word Jew means praised. Between verses 17 and 20 of Romans, Paul enumerates all the things upon which a Jew justly prides himself.

*Instructed by the law, you know his will and are able to make sound judgments on disputed points. You feel certain that you can guide the blind and enlighten those in darkness, that you can discipline the foolish and teach the simple, because in the law you have at hand a clear pattern of knowledge and truth.*

*(Rom.2:18-20.)*

The Jews exulted in their superior position of possessing God's revelation to the world. Paul suggests with all these blessings come corresponding obligations. He now suggests the Jews have failed to practice what they preach. Thereby they have scandalized the pagans and caused the name of Yahweh to be held in contempt among pagans.

Paul implies that this superior revelation possessed by them has not saved them from sin. Therefore, it will not save them from the wrath of God. The Pharisees especially maintained that they would be saved because of their observance of the Law. In Galatians Paul had written:

*All who depend on the observance of the law, on the other hand, are under a curse. It is written, "Cursed is he who does not abide by everything written in the book of the law and carry it out."*

*(Gal.3:10)*

As customary among 'the rabbis of the time, Paul refers to the entire Old Testament by the name of The Law, the most honored part of Scripture. Paul asks:

*Now then, teacher of others, are you failing to teach yourself? You who preach against stealing, do you steal? You who forbid adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples?*

*(Rom.2:22-23.)*

Pagan temples often possessed great wealth. The Jewish historian Josephus took great pains to prove that the Greek word for Jerusalem was not a derivative of "hierosylein," meaning to rob a temple. Paul could be making a reference to Jews who avoid paying the temple taxes. Paul goes on to ask:

*You who pride yourself on the law, do you dishonor God by breaking the law? As Scripture says, "on your account the name of God is held in contempt among the Gentiles." (Rom.2:23-24.)*

God had permitted the Jews to be carried into captivity because of their sins. This resulted in the conquerors of the Jews holding the name of Yahweh in contempt. Ezekiel:

*But when they came among the nations [wherever they came], they served to profane my holy name, because it was said of them: "These are the people of the Lord, yet they had to leave their land."*

*(Ex.36:20.)*

Approximately ten years after Paul's writing of this letter, the Rabbi Jochanan ben Zakkai delivered a discourse in which he lamented the increase of murders, adultery, sexual vice, juridical and commercial dishonesty, and bitter strife among the Jews.

## CIRCUMCISION OF THE HEART

At this point many Jews would argue with Paul that it was not necessary to keep the Mosaic Law in order to be saved, all that was necessary was circumcision. Through circumcision every Jew shared in the covenant promises made to Abraham. We read in Genesis:

*This is my covenant with you and your descendants after you that you must keep: every male among you shall be circumcised... If a male is uncircumsied... such a one shall be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant.*

*(Gen. 17:10,14.)*

Some rabbis maintained that Abraham sits by the gates of Gehenna and prevents any circumcised Jew from entering Hades. More orthodox Jews taught that apostate Jews and those grossly immoral were miraculously deprived of their circumcision after death in order that they could be thrown into Gehenna.

Paul's response to this was that it is not enough to be circumcised in the flesh. One must be spiritually circumcised. The Scriptures spoke of this as being circumcised in the heart. Paul argued that God did not look at the external observance of The Law but at the internal motivation for keeping The Law. In this

line of argument he stands on firm scriptural support. In the Book of Deuteronomy we read, "Circumcise your hearts, therefore, and be no longer stiff-necked." (Dt. 10:16.) Deuteronomy teaches the spiritual effects of circumcision of the heart.

*The Lord, your God, will circumcise your hearts.... that you may love the Lord, your God, with all your heart and all your soul, and so may live.*

*(Dt. 30:6.)*

We read in Jeremiah, "For all these nations, like the whole house of Israel, are uncircumcised in heart." (Jer. 9:25b.) Jeremiah maintained that all men of uncircumcised hearts give themselves over to evil deeds (Jer. 4:4). The words of Jeremiah support Paul's accusation that the Jews, for all their divine blessings, are objectively no better before God than the Gentiles. Paul goes on to say:

*Circumcision, to be sure, has value if you observe the law, but if you break it, you might as well be uncircumcised! Again, if an uncircumcised person keeps the precepts of the law, will he not be considered circumcised? If a man who is uncircumcised keeps the law, he will pass judgment on you who, with your written law and circumcision, break it. Appearance does not make a Jew. True circumcision is not a sign in the flesh. He is a real Jew who is one inwardly, and true circumcision is of the heart; its source is the spirit, not the letter. Such a one receives his praise, not from men, but from God.*

*(Rom. 2:25-29.)*

As we see, Paul does not deny the importance of circumcision for a Jew but maintains that it cannot be separated from the observance of the Law. He proceeds from this point to teach that external observance of the Law is insufficient. God judges the hearts of men. He will scrutinize the intentions behind the keeping of the Law. The obedience to the Law pleasing to God is that obedience that proceeds from love of God. Paul now makes a major point. He asks the question, "Who is the real Jew?" Not the one who legally observes the letter of the Law, for the letter kills, but rather the one who fulfills God's will out of love of God. This is the one who seeks not the praises of men, gained by exact observances of the Law, but the one who seeks praise from God. Paul has made a play on the words Jew and praise. The real Jew in the eyes of God, the man praised, is not the man of the letter of the Law but the man with the true spirit of religion. Paul knows that this inner observance of the Law cannot proceed from the Law nor from the nature of man, but it finds its source in the Holy Spirit.

## THE ADVANTAGE OF BEING A JEW

From all this flows the logical question, "Is there any advantage in being a Jew?" Paul seems ready to give several reasons for an affirmative answer, but he gets sidetracked, and he answers the question with, "The answer is, much, in every respect. First of all, the Jews were entrusted with the words of God." (Rom.3:2.) This implies they possess greater knowledge of God's perfect Will for mankind. They possessed a safe guide leading into union with God. From this union necessarily would flow great spiritual blessings within their lives, with manifestations within the physical dimensions of life. Of all men they were the most blessed by God. Since the just God rewards men in keeping with their deeds, with the Law to guide them, their deeds should surpass those of others. Therefore, their eternal reward is greater than all others. The other side of this coin will always be, "More will be asked of a man to whom more has been entrusted."

(Lk.12:48c.)

Instead of following along in this line of questioning, Paul digresses to answer a common sophism among the Jews which ran in this way: Well, if the Jews are unfaithful to the covenant, then Yahweh himself will not keep the covenant and Himself prove unfaithful. To the pious Jew this would be scandalous and they would reply with Paul, "Of course not! God must be proved true even though every man be proved a liar." (Rom.3:4.) From that would flow this deduction: therefore it is against the faithlessness and falsity of man that the fidelity and truthfulness of God stands out. Man's sinning creates the environment for the glorification of God. This being so, isn't it unjust for God to condemn sinners for the sins that provide the opportunity for His glorification? In fact, they are asking, "Is it not right to do evil in order that good may flow from it?" To this, Paul responds, "This is the very thing that some slanderously accuse us of teaching, but they will get what they deserve." (Rom.3:8.) Paul's answer to this line of argument would be that God's justice flows from the very nature of God. In actual fact, God's judgment of a sinner is a declaration of what a sinner has become through his life in the flesh. God's just judgment is based upon the primary effect of sin upon the sinner. In other words, sin produces evil effects in the lives of sinners. Sin corrupts the personality of the person. The judgment of God reveals exactly what man has become through sin. What man becomes in time, he lives with in eternity.

Paul now approaches the main point of his thesis. Speaking to the Jews he asks:

*Well, then, do we find ourselves in a position of superiority? Not entirely. We have already brought the charge against Jews and Greeks alike that they are under the domination of sin.*

*(Rom.2:9.)*

The point of Paul's thesis is that all men are under the dominion of sin, subjected to the wrath of God, desperately in need of being saved. For the first time he mentions sin in Romans. He personifies sin as a master dominating slaves. Paul now lists a series of quotations from the Old Testament substantiating the truth that all men are sinners. By associating the throat, tongue, lips, mouth, feet, and eyes with sin, he subtly implies the whole person to be under sin. The logical conclusion being that all of a man is tainted by sin in the sight of God. Paul writes:

*It is as Scripture says: "There is no just man, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one in search of God. All have taken the wrong course, all alike have become worthless; not one of them acts uprightly, no, not one. Their throats are open tombs; they use their tongues to deceive; the venom of asps lies behind their lips. Their mouths are full of curses and bitterness. Swiftly run their feet to shed blood; ruin and misery strew their course. The path of peace is unknown to them; the fear of God is not before their eyes."*

*(Rom.3:10-18.)*

In another place the Scriptures teach that without the fear of God it is impossible to please God.

Paul has implied that although the Law reveals the perfect Will of God, it has not given man the power to accomplish God's Will. Men are under an obligation to fulfill the entire Law, an obligation impossible to fulfill. "We know," says Paul, "that everything the law says is addressed to those who are under its authority." (Rom.3:19.) In actual fact the Law serves, in the concrete reality of human experience, to reveal to a man how truly alien his life is to the Will of God. Paul draws his arguments to a close with these words:

*This means that every mouth is silenced and the whole world stands convicted before God, since no one will be justified in God's sight through observance of the law...*

*(Rom.3:19b-20.)*

Paul reinforces the idea that "the law does nothing but point out what is sinful." (Rom.3:20b.)

Paul's teaching remains as true in our day. Laws do not make men good or holy--be they the laws of nature, of human reason, or revealed religion. All of them serve the purpose of revealing, in one degree or another, the true, the good, the beautiful. Yet they always leave the human spirit stranded in a desert, looking longingly at a promised land impossible to obtain. "If we say, 'We are free of the guilt of sin,' we deceive ourselves; the truth is not to be found in us."

(1 John1:8.)

The hard reality of human existence brings to each person their personal need for salvation. Every man needs his personal savior. The gospel proclaimed by Paul is every bit as The message preached by Peter in Jerusalem remains forever refreshingly true.

*This Jesus is "the stone rejected by you the builders which has become the cornerstone." There is no salvation in anyone else, for there is no other name in the whole world given to men by which we are to be saved.*

(Acts 4:11-12.)

## CHAPTER 4

### SALVATION THROUGH FAITH

#### INTRODUCTION

In the Epistle to the Romans, Paul speaks of the non-Jew as Greek. He has maintained that the non-Jews were presently experiencing the wrath of God within their lives due to their religious living and due to their evil spirit of perverting religious truth. The wrath of God is presently being experienced in the lives of pagans by God abandoning them to their immorality. Paul likewise taught that the Jews, despite the fact of being the Chosen People and presently experiencing the kindness of God, were also just subjects for the wrath of God due to their failure to live lives in keeping with the divine revelations received. Paul pointed out that the Jews received the Scriptures and they come under the authority of the Scriptures. Therefore, they are obliged to obey all the Scriptures. "...everything the law says is addressed to those who are under its authority" (Rom.3:19a.) Paul demonstrated from the testimony of the Scriptures that no Jew observed the law of God. "There is no Just man, not even one." (Rom.3:10.) Since God demanded the Jews to keep the law and they failed to do so, every Jew was under a curse. "Cursed is he who does not abide by everything written in the book of the law and carry it out." (Gal.3:10.) Paul insisted that every human being, Jew and pagan, was in bondage to sin. "...they are under the domination of sin." (Rom.3:9b.) Therefore, all men were subject to the wrath of God on that Day the Just Judge would judge the world. Paul concluded, "This means that every mouth is silenced and the whole world stands convicted before God." (Rom.3:19b.) Man had not been able to find righteousness through the observance of law, be it the natural law of reason or the revealed law of the Scriptures. "All men have sinned and are deprived of the glory of God." (Rom.3:23.)

The Greek word translated as sin is "hamartano" meaning missing the mark. It could be used in reference to an arrow missing the target. In the moral realm it signified the failure to obtain a moral good. We might say today that one just didn't make the grade. In classical Greek and the Septuagint Bible it signified a transgression against God's law and moral laws and customs.

What has Paul done? He certainly painted a darkened picture of human existence. He deliberately sought to shatter man's eternal hopes. Paul did this because he saw these hopes to be false. Man had placed his hopes in that which could not insure salvation, but in what man trusted, the works, of the law, which were in actual fact the grounds of his condemnation. Man built his eternal hopes



upon sand and his house could not endure. Paul sought to destroy all in which man placed his false hopes, all in which his spiritual complacency, now rested. He did this in order to build man's hope anew but this time to build upon rock. After the darkness comes the light. Paul now reveals the real source of eternal hope. Light has come into a darkened world to enlighten all men; "The real light which gives light to every man." (Jn.1:9.)

The light and hope of the Jews and the Gentiles was a person, God-made man. John the Evangelist wrote of this same cause of hope:

*...the Word was God The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us, and we have seen his glory: The glory of an only Son coming from the Father, filled with enduring love For while the law was given through Moses, this enduring love came through Jesus Christ Any who did accept him (Jesus of Nazareth as the Word made flesh) he empowered to become children of God. These are they who believe in his name--who were begotten...by God.*

*(Jn.1:1,14,17,12-13.)*

Paul has taken pains to demonstrate clearly that all mankind dwells under the dominion of sin and are subjects for the wrath of God, Jew and Greek alike. He now makes it equally clear that God offers, through Jesus Christ, salvation to all sinners. As stated in Ephesians:

*God has given us the wisdom to understand fully the mystery, the plan he was pleased to decree in Christ, to be carried out in the fullness of time: namely, to bring all things in the heavens and on earth into one under Christ's headship.*

*(Eph.1:9-10.)*

Paul wrote his disciple Timothy, "God our savior...wants all men to be saved and come to know the truth." (1Tm.2:4.) If God wills all men to be saved, he also wills the means by which all men can be saved. Paul now reveals the divine universal plan of salvation. It is a plan lying beyond the observance of the Mosaic Law or of any law. The saving power of God is being presently manifested in the world, in the lives of sinners, independent of the observance of any law but one, the law of faith. Paul writes, "But now the justice of God has been manifested apart from the law, even though both the law and prophets bear witness to it." (Rom.3:21.) The Greek expression translated, "but now" denotes more than chronological order--it signifies an era, a new age.

The Old Testament (law and prophets) confirmed Yahweh to be "Mosaia"-- Savior. Ezekiel expressed the saving Will of God in these words, "For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone who dies, says the Lord. Return (repent) and live!" (Ez.18:32.) God now offers a universal means to salvation. A door to salvation has been opened not only to Jews but to the Gentiles as well. Paul asks:

*Does God belong to the Jews alone? Is he not also the God of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles too. It is the same God who justifies the circumcised and the uncircumcised (Rom.3:29-30.)*

Of necessity the door of salvation must be other than the Mosaic Law. Paul already demonstrated that through that door no man could enter into salvation. Once again Paul reiterates, "All men have sinned and are deprived of the glory of God." (Rom.3:23.) They have fallen short of God's glory. The word glory (doxa) signifies the external manifestation of the internal essence and nature of God those external effects caused by the presence of God. If God appeared in a room, the effects upon the room would be the external glory of God. Scripture speaks of sin destroying the glory of God in man and in the world. The presence of God becomes hidden or even absent in a person's life or action, or in a situation. Glory would be the divine element in man's life and in his activity resulting from man's intimate union with God. It ought to be manifested in a creature made to the image and likeness of God. The Scriptures testify that God made all things for His glory.

### CAUSE OF SALVATION

Paul now tells us that if all men have been deprived of God's glory through sin, "All men are now undeservedly justified by the gift of God through the redemption wrought in Christ Jesus." (Rom.3:23-24.) Paul reveals that the justice of God is now operative in this world through Jesus Christ. It is operative in all those persons who believe in Jesus Christ. (See Rom.3:22.) Remember the justice of God is that divine operation in the world producing righteousness in the lives of human beings. Paul declares that men are undeservedly justified, that is, made righteous without personally having merited it in any way. This means that men are being brought to salvation through no merits of their own. Neither faith nor deeds can merit the grace of salvation (Council of Trent). Salvation comes as a free gift from God to all who believe in Jesus Christ. There is no adequate cause in man for the gift of salvation and its effects upon the life of man. However an adequate cause for salvation does historically exist. It is an effect of "the redemption wrought in Christ Jesus. Through his blood, God made him the means of expiation for all who believe." (Rom.3:24-25a.) As written in Ephesians, "It is in Christ and through his blood that we have been redeemed and our sins forgiven, so immeasurably generous is God's favor to us." (Eph.1:7.) Paul teaches that redemption, expiation, and

justification come from the death of Christ on the Cross. Of the three, only justification depends upon the faith of the recipient.

## MEANING OF REDEMPTION

Again we must pause and carefully examine the meaning of redemption and expiation as used by Paul at this time. It would be so easy to imply what Paul never intended, or to imply much more than he intended.

We should not have too much difficulty with the concept of redemption. Paul uses the term in Romans and First Corinthians:

*But we ourselves, although we have the Spirit as first fruits, groan inwardly while we await the redemption of our bodies."*

*(Rom.8:23.)*

*God it is who has given you life in Christ Jesus. He has made him our wisdom and also our justice, our sanctification, and our redemption."*

*(1Cor.1:30.)*

The Greek word "apolytrosis," translated redemption, comes out of the institution of slavery. Many captives in war became the slaves of the victors; children born to slaves were born into slavery. Redemption was the act of paying the necessary ransom to bring a person back from slavery and captivity or it meant purchasing the freedom of a slave by paying the price of the slave. In any case, redemption conveys the concept of an enslaved person being delivered and freed from slavery.

The New Testament does not convey exactly this Greek idea. There is no mention to whom the price is paid. God is spoken of as the One redeeming mankind, and the price is paid. It carries more the Old Testament concept of a divine action as when Yahweh delivered the Israelites from slavery in Egypt. Redemption, no doubt, signifies the freedom from the enslavement and power of sin. Paul has already referred to the fact that all men were under the dominion of sin which implies sin has mastery over man. It would not be alien to Paul's thought to also signify being freed "from the dominion of Satan." (See Acts 26:18.) Ephesians picture redemption as freed from sin. "It is in Christ and through his blood that we have been redeemed and our sins forgiven, so immeasurable generous is God's favor to us." (Eph.1:7.) In Colossians we read, "Through him we have redemption, the forgiveness of our sins." (Col.1:14.)

The New Testament treats redemption of mankind as a historical fact. It has already occurred. By His death on the Cross, Jesus redeemed mankind. Mankind has been redeemed! Will a person now be saved? In order to be saved, one must be justified. Justification depends on faith. Keep in mind there is a distinction

between redemption and justification. Historically we know that Abraham Lincoln freed the slaves in the United States with his Emancipation Proclamation. Despite this fact, many former slaves remained in the environment of slavery because they feared the responsibility and price of freedom.

From the statement made by Paul in Romans 8:23, we know that the full effects of the redemption have yet to be received by the saved. They must await the resurrection of the body from the dead. The body is yet to be redeemed. At this moment in time, the saved possess this only in hope. This hope is grounded upon the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. "If we have died with him, we will certainly rise with him."

### MEANING OF EXPIATION

In Romans 3:25 Paul states, "Through his blood God made him the means of expiation for all who believe." Some translations read: "God displayed Christ as a means of expiation." This would emphasize more clearly that there is a reference to the Cross of Christ. "Hilasterion" the Greek word used by Paul and translated as expiation or propitiation; it is a derivative of the verb "hilaskomai" meaning to expiate or propitiate. In classical Greek it often signifies to placate or to appease the anger of the gods or a conqueror. It was also used in reference to expiate or to wipe out a crime or sin. The Greek concept could infer that Jesus died to placate the anger of the Father. This has often been expressed in sermons and devotional writings, but its usage in the Old Testament does not warrant this interpretation. "Hilaskomai" is often used to translate the Hebrew concept of "kipper" where God is spoken of as the One who wipes out sin and guilt. "Kipper" can also carry the meaning of covering over guilt or sin. (Marti Luther favored this interpretation.) When God is the object of the verb "hilaskomai," it never a question of appeasing the wrath of God. The most common usage being that God Himself expiates sins and removes guilt. The Psalmist says, "We are overcome by our sins; it is you who pardon (expiate) them." In Isaiah we read "Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and proclaim to her that her service is at end, her guilt is expiated." (Is.40:2a.) We read in Daniel, "Then transgression will stop and sin will end, guilt will be expiated." (Dn.9:24b.) Jesus is spoken of in the Book of Hebrews as coming "to expiate the sins of the people." (Heb.2:17a.) In chapter 27:9 of Isaiah the same noun is used: "This, then, shall be the expiation of Jacob's guilt, this the whole fruit of the removal of his sin."

In keeping with the Old Testament usage, most probable interpretation of Paul would be, not that Christ's death appeased the wrath of God, but rather that God Himself through the mean of Christ's death on the Cross, expiates, wipes out sin and guilt. In this sense, it is love of God for sinners that once again moves to the forefront in the Scriptures. It likewise spotlights the love of Jesus who willingly

accepted death on the Cross in order to be God's means for cleansing the souls of men of sin. "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world."

### SEAT OF MERCY

There is also good reason to believe Paul was implying that the Cross has become the mercy seat of the New Covenant. "Hilasterion" was also used to translate the Hebrew "kapporet" translated into English as propitiatory or mercy seat. In this context it denotes a cover. It referred to the pure gold lid that covered the Ark of the Covenant. The Ark of the Covenant was a chest containing the two stone tablets of the Ten Commandments. The Book of Hebrews (9:4) mentions that it also contained the rod of Aaron and a gold urn containing manna. When Solomon constructed the temple, he placed the Ark in the Holy of Holies. We are told that the Glory of God in the form of a bright cloud rested upon the Ark. The Ark was a symbolic representation of Israel's covenant with Yahweh, and the cloud of glory above the Ark represented God's abiding Presence among the Israelites. On the feast of Yom Kippurim, the high priest entered the Holy of Holies and sprinkled blood upon the "propitiatory," the golden lid covering the Ark. This sprinkling of blood purified the people, the temple, and the land to Yahweh. The propitiatory became known as the mercy seat of Yahweh.

The Hebrews believed that all life belonged to God and, in some degree, was of God. They believed blood to be the channel of this divine gift of life. They held blood to be sacred. Because it contained the life of God, they believed in its power to purify. The priest sprinkling the blood on the propitiatory represented the mercy of God purifying His people and symbolized the rededication of their lives to Yahweh and to His Covenant.

Since this section of Romans speaks of the glory of God, blood, and the remission of sins (particularly of sins committed in the past), it is possible Paul intends to evoke to mind the Day of Atonement and to present to his Jewish readers the Cross of Christ as the representative symbol of the New Covenant, and the blood of Christ, sprinkled upon the Cross, as the ratification of the New Covenant and the cleansing of the sins of the people. Therefore the Cross becomes the new mercy seat of the Father. All who come to it in faith, look upon it in hope, will experience the Mercy of God in having their sins forgiven.

Paul teaches that the shedding of Christ's blood was sufficient reason to justify God's expiating the sins of men--past and present. This sacrifice of Jesus preserves the justice of God in forgiving sinners. The Cross stands forth as the propitiatory, one covered with an element far more precious than gold, one adorned

and sparkling with the red jewels of the Precious Blood of Jesus Christ. We read in First Peter:

*Realize that you were delivered from the futile way of life your fathers handed on to you, not by a diminishable sum of silver or gold, but by Christ's blood beyond all price: the blood of a spotless, unblemished lamb chosen before the world's foundation and revealed for your sake in these last days.*

*(1Pt.1:18-20.)*

In the Book of Hebrew we read:

*For if the blood of goats and bulls and the sprinkling of a heifer's ashes can sanctify those who are defiled so that their flesh is cleansed, how much more will the blood of Christ--who through the eternal spirit offered himself up unblemished to God--cleanse our consciences from dead works to worship the living God.*

*(Heb.9:13-14.)*

The Scriptures certainly imply that the blood of Jesus does more than cover over sin. The Power of that blood eradicates sin and utterly purifies the spirit of a believer fulfilling the divine prophecy found in Isaiah, "Though your sins be like scarlet, they may become white as snow: though they be crimson red, they may become white as wool." *(Is.1:18.)*

### SOME EFFECTS OF SALVATION

Paul has now begun to define the object of Christian faith and hope: the Love of God the Father and the love of His Beloved Son and the death of Christ on the Cross. Part of the content of faith has also been revealed. The Father is reconciling sinners to Himself through the blood of Christ shed upon the Cross. The Blood of Jesus Christ through His crucifixion has been made available to cleanse the souls of all sinners.

Paul makes no mention of Christ's death as a sacrifice for sins, but it is implied. For the blood of the Atonement, an animal was sacrificed. The animal was sacrificed not for the sake of God but for the need of man in order that man could be purified by the blood of the sacrificed victim. Therefore, the victim was sacrificed for man's sake. Man comes to realize that his sins have alienated him from God, the Source of Life. Since man is a free agent, he must acknowledge his responsibility in this separation. He must make some effort to purify himself in God's sight and be reconciled with God. The victim was sacrificed for man's need and not for God's need. The Book of Hebrews (10:4) observes, "It is impossible for the blood of bulls

and goats to take away sins." When Isaac asked his father Abraham, "Where is the sheep for the holocaust?" Abraham responded, "Son, God himself will provide the sheep for the holocaust." (Gn.22:7-8.) We have quoted Peter's words concerning an "unblemished lamb chosen before the world's foundation and revealed for your sake in these last days." Man needed the sacrifice and Jesus became man's willing sacrifice. "No greater love has anyone than he who lays down his life for his friends." "I call you friends." (See Jn.15:13,15.) By sending His .Son into the world, the Father provided the sacrifice through which sinners could be cleansed of sin and once again be united with God. Good Friday was indeed the Day of At-one-ment. "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (See Jn.1:29.)

According to Paul, certain universal results flow from the principle of salvation through faith. The first being it puts an end to all human boasting, a boasting footed in the spirit of pride that takes delight in self and its accomplishments. In the realm of salvation, there is no room for the glorification of man. All the glory belongs to God. Paul asked, -What occasion is there then for boasting (human pride)? It is ruled out. By what law, the law of works? Not at all! By the law of faith. (Rom.3:27.) Paul concludes his argument with "For we hold that a man is justified by faith apart from the observance of the law." (Rom.3:28.) Once again let us reiterate, it is not faith that justifies; God justifies. Faith is an indispensable means for justification.

When Martin Luther translated Romans into German (from Latin), in verse 28 he added -alone" to the word faith--it reads "faith alone." This was an arbitrary addition to the Scriptural text. Perhaps he took this liberty in order to emphasize the importance of faith in the role of salvation. Unfortunately, it opened the door to an avalanche of erroneous deductions. It led certain men to over-emphasize the truth. An over-emphasis of a truth destroys the harmony of truth as much as error does. One can only over-emphasize one truth at the expense of another. Men interpreted the phrase, "A man is justified by faith alone," to imply no other acts were necessary within man in order to come to salvation. It led some to teach that no other act was possible because man lacked freedom of will. This led to the erroneous doctrine of predestination that maintained God pre-willed certain men to Heaven and others to Hell.

We will discuss the doctrine of predestination when the problem arises in chapter eight of Romans. The Catholic Church reacted to these teachings at the Council of Trent by teaching that along with faith there are cooperative works on the part of man that are necessary for salvation. These works of man cannot merit salvation but they are necessary conditions along with faith. Along with faith there must be some degree of sorrow for sin, a willingness to repent, and a desire for reconciliation with God. "Anyone who comes to God must believe that he exists, and

that he rewards those who seek him." (Heb.11:6b.) Essentially, the Council of Trent upheld the freedom of the human will.

The doctrine of salvation through faith also opens the door of salvation to all mankind. Paul stresses that Yahweh is not only God of the Jews but God of all. God selected Israel to be a light to the Nations, to be a channel of saving grace for all the world. "Salvation comes from the Jews!" Again Paul asks:

*Does God belong to the Jews alone? Is he not also the God of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles too. It is the same God who justifies the circumcised and the uncircumcised on the basis of faith.*

*(Rm.3:29-30.)*

Paul proclaims there is only One God whose merciful love embraces all creation.

Lastly Paul maintains that his doctrine does not make the Scriptures null and void. It does not prove the Scriptures to be erroneous but rather it verifies and upholds the Scriptures. Furthermore, the Scriptures prepare people to come to accept the doctrine of salvation through faith. The Law becomes the means to convict people of their personal sinfulness.

*Indeed, the law serves only to bring down wrath, for where there is no law there is no transgression. Hence, all depends on faith, everything is grace."*

*(Rm.4:15-16a.)*

Again Paul asks, "Are we then abolishing the law (The Scriptures) by means of faith? Not at all!" he answers, "On the contrary, we are confirming the law." (Rom.3:31.)

## THE EXAMPLES OF ABRAHAM

The next logical step will be to prove the last statement. Paul will use the example of Abraham. At this point in the letter it is very obvious that Paul has Jewish Christians in mind. If he can prove this point to the Jewish Christian in Rome, he may well win them over to the gospel he preached. If Paul proves that Abraham was justified by faith and not by works, he could win a decisive victory. The Israelites claimed to be the pure descendants of Abraham through Isaac and Jacob. This entitled them to claim the blessing bestowed upon Abraham. According to their mentality, the whole nation had been embodied in Abraham. Abraham represented Israel before God, long before Israel came to be. He personified the Jew, the Praised of God. We read in Hebrews: "Scriptures testifies that this man lives on," meaning in the people of Israel.



Before entering into this section of Romans, let us review the highlights of the life of Abraham as recorded in Genesis. Abram makes his appearance in the Scriptures at the close of chapter eleven in Genesis. Born in Ur of the Chaldeans (southern Mesopotamia) to Terah who migrated with his family to Haran. Abram means, in Hebrew, the father is exalted. Apparently, he was a welcomed child. In Haran, Abram received his first recorded vision of God. God called him to leave his father's house and go into a strange land. "Go forth from the land of your kinsfolk and from your father's house to a land that I will show you." This was Abram's call out of paganism that would make him an alien and stranger in the world. At this time God made his first promise to Abram.

*"I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you and curse those who curse you. All the communities of the earth shall find blessing in you."*

*(Gn.12:1-3.)*

Abram went as the Lord directed him. According to Genesis, Abram was seventy-five when he departed Haran. Sometime later Abram received another vision in which the Lord said to him:

*"Fear not, Abram! I am your shield; I will make your reward very great." But Abram said, "O Lord God, what good will your gifts be, if I keep on being childless...See, you have given me no offspring, He took him outside and said, -Look up at the sky and count the stars, if you can. Just so, " he added, "shall your descendants be." Abram put his faith in the Lord, who credited it to him as an act of righteousness.*

*(Gn.15:1-6.)*

Abram believed God. He trusted Him. At this moment in his life he comes to righteousness before God.

The years passed and nothing of what God promised came to pass. Abram was ninety-nine when God again appeared and revealed Himself as "I am El Shaddai" translated as "Almighty God," but it would probably be more accurate to say "Mountain God." God said to Abram:

*"Walk in my presence and be blameless. Between you and me I will establish my covenant, and I will multiply you exceedingly." When Abram prostrated himself, God continued to speak to him: -My covenant with you is this: you are to become the father of a host of nations. I will render you exceedingly fertile; I will make nations of you; kings shall stem from you. I will maintain my covenant with you and your descendants after you*

*throughout the ages as an everlasting pact, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you... This is my covenant with you and your descendants after you that you must keep: every male among you shall be circumcised."*

*(Gn.17:l-7,10.)*

*God further said to Abraham: -As for your wife Sarai, do not call her Sarai; her name shall be Sarah (Princess). I will bless her, and I will give you a son by her Abraham prostrated himself and laughed as he said to himself, "Can a child be born to a man who is a hundred years old? Or can Sarah give birth at ninety?"*

*(Gn.17:15-18.)*

God confirmed that Sarah would bear a child within a year.

At this moment in Abraham's life, God establishes a covenant with him. God enters into a special contractual relationship with him with eternal consequences. God changes Abram's name to Abraham, symbolic of his new relationship and destiny. Abraham means father of a multitude. At this point God establishes the rite of circumcision as a sign of the covenant and the means of entrance into the covenant. Likewise God now foretells the birth of his legitimate son through Sarah. This causes Abraham to have a good laugh. Apparently Sarah had the same sense of humor as her husband. We are told that she was listening at the entrance of the tent and heard the Lord say to Abraham that she would have a son by next year at this time. When she heard this, she burst out laughing.

*The Lord said to Abraham: "Why did Sarah laugh and say, 'Shall I really bear a child, old as I am?' Is anything too marvelous for the Lord to do? "..Because she was afraid, Sarah dissembled, saying, "I didn't laugh." But he said, "Yes, you did."*

*(Gn.18:l3-15.)*

*Sarah became pregnant and bore Abraham a son in his old age, at the set time that God had stated. Abraham gave the name Isaac to this son of his whom Sarah bore him...Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him.*

*(Gn.2l:2-5.)*

The name Isaac has been translated to mean God laughs. Abraham and Sarah laughed but the laugh was on them; God had the last laugh. Sarah said, "God has given me cause to laugh, and all who hear of it will laugh with me." Then Abraham

held a great feast. (See Gn.21:6-8.) As we would say, a good laugh was had by all. Certainly we have an argument here for God having a sense of humor.

What was to follow was no laughing matter. Abraham received the supreme test of his life. It would decide whether Abraham trusted in God Himself, or whether he had merely trusted in God's promise to him. There is a distinction. God commands Abraham to take Isaac to Moriah and offer him as a holocaust. We read in Genesis:

*Some time after these events, God put Abraham to the test. He called to him, "Abraham!" "Ready!" he replied. Then God said: "Take your son Isaac, your only one, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah. There you shall offer him up as a holocaust on a height that I will point out to you."*

(Gn.22:1-2.)

At the moment of sacrifice--already in his heart Abraham had sacrificed his son--the angel of the Lord stopped the actual sacrifice. The Lord said to Abraham:

*"I know now how devoted you are to God, since you did not withhold from me your own beloved son...I swear by myself, declares the Lord, that because you acted as you did in not withholding from me your beloved son, I will bless you abundantly and make your descendants as countless as the stars of the sky and the sands of the seashore...in your descendants all the nations of the earth shall find blessing—all this because you obeyed my command."*

(Gn.22:16-18.)

This dramatic incident confirms that true faith will always be expressed in obedience. The degree of obedience being in accordance with the degree of faith.

Let us now return to Paul's presentation. Paul does not present his argument with the logical precision of a Greek philosopher but in rabbinical fashion. His method is somewhat alien to our mode of arguing: we are closer to the Greek mentality than to the Semitic. It has been said that the Semitic mind prefers the psychological over the logical presentation. Western minds appeal to the intellect and the Semitic mind appeals to the entire person. His line of argument has a scattering shotgun effect, hitting mind, heart, and emotions in order to elicit a total personal response to the idea being argued. One way or another, such arguments would rarely be calm, cool and collected. In keeping with the accepted rabbinical method Paul uses the Scriptures that are beneficial to his point of view and ignores those that do not.

Paul asks his readers, "What, then shall we say of Abraham, our ancestor according to the flesh?" Paul apparently was well aware of the rabbinical teaching, "All that is recorded of Abraham is repeated in the history of his children." (Genesis Rabbah 40:8.) The Jews all agreed Abraham to be righteous. If the righteousness comes from works in obedience to God's commands, then Abraham has a right to boast and take credit for what has been earned. Paul says, "When a man works, his wages are not regarded as a favor but as his due." (Rom.4:4.) It was a teaching among the rabbis that Abraham's righteousness actually came from his observance of the Mosaic Law. Long before the Law had been revealed to Moses, Abraham, through divine intuition or direct revelation, came to a knowledge of the law and observed it in his lifetime. Paul maintains that the Scriptures confirm the opposite, "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as justice." (Gn.15:6.)

The verb "elogisthe," translated credited or reckoned, was a bookkeeping term. It usually referred to crediting a man's account for something done. In Abraham's case, righteousness is credited to his account because of his faith and not because of any work performed. Paul quotes one of the psalms, attributed by him to King David, to support his point: "Blest are they whose iniquities are forgiven, whose sins are covered over. Blest the man to whom the Lord imputes no guilt." (Ps.32:1-2.) The three verbs used in this psalm (forgiven, covered over, not imputed) are but three figures of speech to express the single idea of the removal of sin. The only point Paul desires to make being that David also confirmed the possibility that a person can become righteous without performing works. Paul has offered two Scriptural witnesses for his point of view. The psalm mentions blest rather than righteous, but Paul equates the two concepts. Paul has made his first point: long before God made a covenant with Abraham and before the law of circumcision, on the night Abraham looked up into the stars and believed God, he had been declared righteous before God. A man had become righteous through faith and not deeds. What has been, can be!

Martin Luther found support in this section from Romans and Psalm 32 for his doctrine that justification is merely imputed to the believer; it is credited to his account. In other words, a sinner remains a sinner but is considered as sinless by God. It would be far from the mind of Paul to assume that Abraham's justification was only a mere legal fiction: that Abraham remained, in actual fact, unrighteous but legally declared to be righteous. This would be equivalent to a man with leprosy having a judge make a decision that legally he must be considered a man without leprosy despite the fact that he is a leper. There is nothing in the Genesis account nor in Paul's words to believe that he would have considered Abraham an unrighteous man.

**Martin Luther personally believed righteousness could not be actually possessed by a person but only credited to him by God because of faith. God's grace did not actually change the sinful condition of the human spirit; man remained essentially sinful. This denied the ancient Christian doctrine of sanctifying grace which teaches that God's grace actually restores the soul to its original state of grace held before original sin (even though certain effects of sin still remain in the person). Luther's doctrine would imply to me that the power of sin which destroyed the original state of grace was more powerful than the power flowing from the death of Christ on the Cross. Christ's death and the shedding of His blood were insufficient to restore the soul to a sanctified state.**

**It is true that the words used in the texts quoted can mean to cover over and to reckon to one's account, but does this interpretation convey the meaning of the author? Words are but symbols to express ideas. They often prove inadequate. It is for this reason that a proper interpretation of Sacred Scripture must seek to determine the intention of the author. What does God desire to say through His inspired instrument, and what did the author himself desire to express. We need to bear in mind that divine inspiration of the Sacred Scriptures extends only to the original work and to the intention intended by the sacred writer. Divine inspiration is not extended to translations and copies of the Sacred Scriptures. It is the teaching authority of our Church that confirms for us today that the Sacred Scriptures possessed today are substantially free from error in matters of faith and morals.**

**When Paul quotes Genesis and Psalm 32, it obviously was not his intention to demonstrate what the nature of justification is but what the means is by which a person comes to justification. His intention being to demonstrate from the Scriptures that a man was justified without the works of the Mosaic Law. The author of Genesis gives no evidence to have us believe that Abraham was not a man intrinsically righteous before God. In the mind of Paul, Abraham would have been the prime example of a Jew circumcised in heart. When Abraham obediently went to offer the life of his son, his only beloved son, he vividly demonstrated that he loved God above all else on earth. This is the spirit of the circumcised heart. In the case of the psalm, we are dealing with poetry. A form of literature filled with symbolisms, various similes and metaphors are used to poetically express an idea. The thought can get lost in the figures of speech. The content of the psalms and the Scriptures in general do not support Luther's doctrine of implied justification that righteousness is only credited to one's personal account.**

**Paul moves to make his second point: Justification through faith is open to both the circumcised and the uncircumcised. Paul urges his readers to examine the circumstances in which justification came to Abraham. It was prior to his receiving circumcision. Paul maintains that the covenant and the circumcision resulted from**

Abraham's state of righteousness which resulted from his faith. Abraham was essentially a man of faith before and after his circumcision. Therefore, the true descendants of Abraham must be first and foremost children of faith. Through faith one becomes a true spiritual descendant of Abraham. All who come to the faith of Abraham, circumcised or uncircumcised, would be true descendants of Abraham. Without faith, circumcision would be of no avail. Paul concludes his second point by saying:

*Thus he was to be the father of all the uncircumcised who believe, so .that for them too faith might be credited as justice, as well as the father of those circumcised who are not merely so but who follow the path of faith which Abraham walked while still uncircumcised.*

*(Rom.4-11-12.)*

Since Abraham's righteousness did not depend upon his circumcision but upon his faith, no Jew could expect his circumcision to do more for him that it did for Abraham. The Jews themselves taught: "All that is recorded of Abraham is repeated in the history of his children."

Paul now turns his attention to the Mosaic Law. Many Jews maintained that righteousness could only be achieved through the perfect observance of the Law. Paul demonstrated that in actual practice this never comes to be. His point now being that it never intended to produce righteousness. "The law serves only to bring down wrath.. (Rom.4:15a.) Paul argues that God made certain promises to Abraham, "I am making you the father of a host of nations All the communities of the earth shall find blessing in you." Paul equates blessing with justification. As a result of God's promise this justification would come to the descendants of Abraham. Paul holds the only true descendants of Abraham are men and women of faith. When the Jews maintain that justification comes through the observance of the law, they are nullifying the promise made to Abraham. To the Galatians Paul said, "No law that came four hundred and thirty years later could cancel that and make the promise meaningless." (Gal.3:17.) Paul's conclusion being that the Jews cannot make justification a legal right. It remains forever a grace, a favor from God given to those who believe.

*Hence, all depends on faith, everything is grace. Thus the promise holds true for all Abraham's descendants, not only for those who have the law but for all who have his faith. He is the father of us all, which is why Scripture says, "I have made you father of many nations." Yes, he is our father in the sight of God in whom he believed, the God who restores the dead to life and calls into being those things which had not been.*

*(Rom.4:16-17.)*

**That does not appear to be a description of a God who only imputes righteousness to believers.**

**For Paul, Abraham was the greatest example of faith in the Old Testament. His life depicted the faith pleasing to God and leading to righteousness, to salvation. At the call of God, Abraham left the security of his family and his land and went forth as an alien into a foreign land. All previous sources of security were left behind. His sole trust being in the God who calls from the familiar, leads into the unknown and says, "Fear not! I am your shield!" God made Abram a promise. Abram was childless and He promised to make him the father of nations. This promise became the source of hope. It never became the source and object of faith. Before the promise he had faith in God. He believed while the promise remained unfulfilled. The promise served to test and strengthen his faith. Through his long years of life, he discovered that God's ways are .not our ways. As the years passed, the promise remained but a promise. He watched himself and Sarah grow old. There was a time he hoped God would grant them a child while it was still physically possible to do so. That hope faded with the passing of the years. Yet, faith remained. When no natural foundation for hope remained, God revealed that Sarah would now bring forth a son. No wonder he fell on the ground and rolled with laughter. He must have said, "Lord, you sure know how to try a man!" But Abraham had hung-in-there and he had won. He couldn't have but experienced an overwhelming sense of joy that only tears and laughter could release. Sarah too would learn the lesson that Jesus would one day teach his disciples: "Nothing is impossible for those who have faith."**

**Abraham held the cause of his hope in his arms, his son. Yet, the test of faith was not ended. .The next step demonstrated that faith must lead to love. God commanded Abraham to sacrifice his son on Moriah. The promise fades to the background, and faith in God moves to the forefront. He must once again hope against hope. In this latter stage of life, a new element is present. Abraham loved his son more than life. Something greater than faith empowered Abraham to climb Moriah with Isaac. The love of God empowered him to climb this most difficult of all mountains. Abraham loved God above all things. On Moriah it was not Abraham's faith God lauded. "I know now how devoted you are to God, did not withhold from me your own beloved son...you obeyed my command."**

**In a sense, the rabbis had been right. Abraham had known and fulfilled the law. On Mt. Sinai, many centuries later, God commanded the Israelites to place nothing before him and to love the Lord God with all their hearts, and with all their souls, and with all their strength. (Dt.6:5.) Abraham possessed the spirit of the**

Mosaic Law. Paul had once written, "There are in the end three things that last: faith, hope, and love, and the greatest of these is love." (ICor.13:13.) Centuries later Abraham would understand the mysterious plan of God foretold in the incident on Moriah when Jesus, the beloved Son of God, would die upon a Cross in the shadows of a temple resting upon Mt. Moriah. Abraham had unconsciously become a symbol of God the Father's love for the world.

## THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

Paul teaches that God's words to Abraham are applicable to all men and women of faith. Paul says, "The words, 'It was credited to him,' were not written with him alone in view; they were intended for us too." (Rom.4:23.) It is applicable to all those who come to that quality of faith possessed by Abraham. Paul further defines the object of Christian faith:

*For our faith will be credited to us also if we believe him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead, the Jesus who was handed over to death for our sins and raised up for our justification.*

*(Rom.4:24-25.)*

Jesus had once said to His disciples, "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Have faith in God and faith in me.. (Jn.14:1.) Paul blends together at the Cross faith in the Father and the Son. It is our faith that the Father and the Son save us through Christ's death on the Cross. Redemption and expiation flow from the death of Jesus. Jesus raised from the dead is the source of Christian hope. As the Father brought newness of life to the dead body of Jesus, who died trusting in His love, so He will bring to newness of life souls dead in sin who place their faith in the redeeming death of the Son. Such souls will come to righteousness, to salvation. "All depends on faith, everything is grace!" Jesus resurrected from the dead remains the security found in one's good works. There is death to all self-confidence and self-righteousness. Complete confidence is placed in the merits of Jesus' death to bring one to a life of grace and ultimately into the full effects of the redemption. Paul preached:

*I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you...you are being saved by it at this very moment if you hold fast to it as I preached it to you. (ICor.15:1-2.) (If we have died with Christ, we will certainly be raised with him!)*

*In baptism you were not only buried with him but also raised to life with him because you believed in the power of God who raised him from the dead. Even when you were dead in sin and your flesh was uncircumcised,*



***God gave you new life in company with Christ. He pardoned all our sins. He canceled the bond that stood against us with all its claims, snatching it up and nailing it to the Cross."***

***(Col.2:12-14.)***

## CHAPTER 5

### REASON FOR THE HOPE WITHIN

#### INTRODUCTION

Before proceeding further in our study of Romans it may be well to remind ourselves that Paul writes to Christians in Rome, perhaps even to Jewish Christians. He presumes they know certain religious truths. Paul does not intend for his letter to be a complete exposition of the Christian faith. We must not read into the letter more than the author intends. Knowledge of certain Christian truths and a certain understanding of religious history is being presumed. Paul has no intention of stating and defining the obvious. For example: When Paul upholds the importance of faith in the process of salvation, he does not exclude the need of other works. He was well aware of the need to call mankind to repentance; of the need of “proclaiming a baptism or repentance which led to the forgiveness of sins.” (Lk.3:3b.) The Scriptures constantly confirm that in the psychology of Christian conversion, repentance and sorrow for sins must precede the acceptance of the Gospel message in faith. The grace of repentance would be an initial grace from the Father, leading persons to believe in Jesus Christ. Where man lacked a conscious awareness of sin, there would be no conscious awareness of a need to be saved; a person would not realize the need for a Savior – a Messiah. The gospel accounts describe the mission of John the Baptist as a preparatory role for the acceptance of the Messiah. John preached repentance:

*He would say to the crowds... “You brood of vipers! Who told you to flee from the wrath to come? Give some evidence that you mean to reform. Do not begin by saying to yourselves, ‘Abraham is our father.’ I tell you, God can raise up children to Abraham from these stones. Even now the ax is laid to the root of the tree. Every tree that is not faithful will be cut down and thrown into the fire.”*

*(Lk.3:7-9.)*

John’s preaching implied that repentance was a necessary condition in order to come to faith in Jesus. The words of Jesus to the Pharisees implies that their failure to repent at the preaching of John now made them incapable of coming to faith in Him. Jesus himself taught the Jews, “You will all come to the same end unless you reform.” (Lk.13:5b.)

From its very first sermon, the Church preached the necessity of repentance: “You much reform... reform your lives! Turn to God, that your sins may be wiped away! Thus may a season of refreshment be granted you by the Lord when he sends you Jesus, already designated as your Messiah....Save yourselves from this generation which has gone astray.” (Acts 2:38,3:19;2:40.)

Paul does not intend to imply that baptism was not necessary for salvation. The acceptance of baptism was part of the package of a saving faith. Baptism was the external expression of internal faith. Remember, faith of itself does not justify. It leads to justification. God justifies through Jesus Christ. The rite of baptism mystically incorporates the repentant person into the very life of Jesus. Through baptism, a person identifies with Jesus as Savior, and Jesus identifies the baptized as his own—an extension of Himself. Paul himself pictures baptism as a rite in which a person dies to an old way of life, a life corrupted and doomed to death through sin. Baptism, for Paul, likewise depicts the resurrection of the baptized to a newness of life. Now a person possesses a new life rooted in God as firmly as Christ Himself is rooted in the Father. In keeping with this new source of life, the baptized must now develop a new personality – a Christ-like personality. A baby is born into life but the personality of the child remains yet to develop and unfold. It is for this reason we hear Paul preaching that we have died with Christ in baptism, and we have been raised to life with Him.

One of the first commands Paul received after his own conversion was “Why delay, then! Be baptized at once and wash away you sins as you call upon his name.” (Acts22:16.) When Paul encountered the disciples in Ephesus he asked them:

*“Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you became believers?” They answered: “ We have not so much as heard that there is a Holy Spirit.” “Well, how were you baptized?” he persisted. They replied, “With the baptism of John.” Paul then explained, “John’s baptism was a baptism of repentance. He used to tell the people about the one who would come after him in whom they were to believe—that is, Jesus.” When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.*

*(Acts 19:2-5.)*

From the beginning of the Church, faith and baptism went hand-in-hand.

They were the two sides of the same coin. In his first sermon, Peter preached:

*“You much reform and be baptized, each one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, that your sins may be forgiven; then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit”...Those who accepted his message were baptized; some three thousand were added that day.*

*(Acts 2:38,41.)*

“Added” to what” To Christ; to the Church. We see that baptism is the (ordinary) means to be incorporated into Christ, to become a member of His Church, to receive the Holy Spirit. Paul would have presumed that the Christians in Rome understood and accepted these fundamental principles of the Christian faith.

Also, it may puzzle us as to why Paul could, apparently, so easily dismiss circumcision since it had been established as a divine decree. Paul knew God willed to save all men. The example of Abraham being saved through faith prior to the establishment of the covenant and the rite of circumcision, demonstrated that the ordinary means chosen by God to save mankind would be through faith. God promised Abraham that he would be the father of many nations and God would bless his descendants, among whom were the Israelites. God entered into a special covenant with Israel. However, a special covenant entered into with one nation could not nullify the promise made to other nations. Paul understood God chose the Jews for a special destiny in the world. In order to fulfill this destiny he separated them from the rest of mankind. By the rite of circumcision he marked and separated them from all others. Circumcision was an external sign to the Jews and to the pagans that they were "different" from the rest of peoples. God chose Israel to bring salvation to the world. They were destined to be the light to the Nations. Salvation was to come to the Nations through the Jews. This came to be with the coming of the Messiah—the Savior of the world. The mission of the Jews would be continued through the mission of the Messiah.

Moses himself foretold that Israel must abide by the Law given through him until the New Moses came. With the coming of the Messiah, God would establish a New Covenant. It would not be a covenant of the flesh but of the spirit. The prophets of old foretold Yahweh would make a new covenant. We read in Jeremiah and in Ezekiel:

*The days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their fathers...I will place my law within them, and write it upon their hearts: I will be their God, and they shall be my people.*

*(Jer.31:31,33.)*

*I will give you a new heart and place a new spirit within you...I will give you a new heart and place a new spirit within you ..... I will put my spirit within you and make you live by my statutes, careful to observe my decrees.*

*(Ez.36:26.)*

With the coming of the Holy Spirit, Paul realized that circumcision could no longer be of any spiritual benefit. All now depended upon the reception of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit came as a result of faith in Jesus and the commitment of one's life to Jesus, effected and symbolized in the rite of baptism. Paul knew that baptism in the name of the Lord had replaced 4t circumcision as the means of entrance into the Covenant--into the New Covenant of the Spirit. Paul beheld Faith as the universal means to salvation: the door through which all nations, Jews and Greeks alike, could come to salvation. This had been foretold in the life of Abraham.

Paul did desire to emphasize to the Jewish Christian the practical consequences of sanctification through faith in Jesus Christ, and why circumcision and the observance of the Mosaic Law were no longer necessary for salvation. For Christians to still insist upon them as means of salvation was to depreciate the death of Christ on the Cross. This error had infiltrated the Christian Church and still permeated the faith of many Jewish Christians. It was Paul's intention to bring the Church at Rome to purity of faith. He has clarified in his letter what the object and the content of faith is that leads to salvation:

*For our faith will be credited to us also if we believe him who raised Jesus Our Lord from the dead, the Jesus who was handed over to death for our sins and raised up for our justification.*

*(Rom.4:24-25.)*

Here we see the object of Christian Faith--in whom we Christians believe. We believe in God who raises the dead. We believe in Jesus Christ raised from the dead. Here Paul teaches part of the content of Christian Faith--what we believe in--what we must believe in order to be saved: we believe that Jesus Christ died upon the Cross for the sins of mankind; His death atoned for and expiated all sin; we believe that Jesus arose from the dead; we believe this Risen Jesus has become a source of new life for all believers--a new life producing sanctification or righteousness in the spirits of the believers. This is the point to which Paul presently brings us.

## SALVATION AS A PROCESS

In our former lesson we quoted Paul's words to the Corinthians that they "are being saved at this very moment" if they are holding fast to the gospel he preached to them. (See 1Cor.15:2.) Paul teaches salvation is a process now in progress. Being justified does not necessarily mean being saved in the sense of it being an accomplished fact. Redemption is an accomplished fact! Salvation is an on-going process within the life of a believer (the baptized). Justification is the beginning of a continuum--the beginning of salvation. One has entered the river of salvation but as yet the river has not reached the ocean--man's ultimate and final union with God--the end of the salvation process. Paul wrote to the Colossians:

*But now Christ has achieved reconciliation for you in his mortal body .by dying, so as to present you to God, holy, free of reproach and blame. But you must hold fast to faith, be firmly grounded and steadfast in it, unshaken in the hope promised you by the gospel you have heard.*

(Col.1:22-23.)

Paul implies we must continue to grow strong in faith, and faith will produce hope. Faith brings us to justification, but more than faith is needed to persevere in justification—salvation. Paul does not teach that we are saved but rather that we are being saved and we must cooperate in the process of our salvation. That we are saved is not an object to Christian Faith, it is an object of Christian Hope that we will be saved.

## EFFECTS OF JUSTIFICATION

Paul now turns his attention to the effects of the grace of justification in the life of the believer. "Now that we have been justified by faith, we are at peace with God..." (Rom.5:1.) Peace is the first fruit of justification. The first effect of justification being that we sinners are now at peace with God. He immediately reiterates the cause, calling to mind that this privileged position, "the grace in which we now stand," come through Jesus Christ. Peace was the first word the risen Christ said to His apostles. "Peace be with you. Peace is my gift to you." Jesus, by His death, had made man's Peace with God and could now offer the gift of peace to His disciples.

"Shalom," the Hebrew word for peace, is so rich in meaning no single English word adequately expresses it. It carries the meaning of completeness, perfection; it implies a condition in which nothing is absent. As an ordinary greeting it is a prayer of good health, prosperity. In the Old Testament, the possession of peace implied righteousness as well as prosperity and well-being. If peace appears to be present in

the unrighteous, it will be a false peace. “There is no peace for the wicked...” (Is. 48:22.) Isaiah reveals that Israel’s obedience to Yahweh would cause peace to flow like a river. (See Is.48.18.)

When the New Testament speaks of the blood of Christ making peace between God and man, it implies Jesus broke down the barrier, the wall of enmity created by sin. It implies Jesus established harmony and friendship between God and man where previously there existed the condition in which man was subject to the Wrath of God. In the Scriptures a sinner is not merely a sick or weak person but essentially an evil person—one who hates God whether conscious of the fact or not. Paul states the realistic situation accurately when he says, “You yourselves were once alienated from him; you nourished hostility in your hearts because of your evil deeds.” (Col. 1:21.) The grace of justification removes us from the state of enmity with God to one of friendship with Him. This state Paul calls “Peace.”

Paul enumerates a second effect of the grace of justification. Our hearts are filled with Hope--a hope that God's glory will be revealed in our lives. Even while the Christian stands in God's grace, that grace is not yet the "doxa," the glory of God. This communicated glory of God is yet to be received. Our Hope is so strong we have reason to boast. Paul has informed us that no man has any grounds within self for boasting. He now tells us that the Christians have many reasons for boasting because of the grace of God within their lives. Their foundation for boasting lies in the goodness and love of God. Paul goes on to say, “.....We go so far as to make God our boast through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.” (Rom.5:11.)

Paul now spotlights the great virtue of Christian Hope. Within this continuum of salvation, Paul sees the soul moving from Faith to Hope, to Love. These three powers are but different aspects within the spiritual journey to salvation. They so intertwine and blend within one another that the same Hebrew word is often used to express one or the other and Charity express the inner life of a true Christian. The sources of power from which all Christian action flows.

The Hebrew words used to convey the concept of hope expressed the idea of future expectation. (Kaway--to expect; batah--to trust.) In the old Testament, Israel possessed a confident expectation of God's future protection and blessing based upon its covenant relationship with Yahweh and upon Israel's knowledge of God's faithfulness. The -Hope of Israel" was the Messiah whose coming would deliver them from their enemies and exalt Israel above all her enemies. Isaiah taught that one must hope in Yahweh even when he hid his face (Is.8:17), or when he seemed to withdraw his favor and delayed a long time (Is.26:8). Israel looked forward in hope to the Day of Yahweh—bringing redemption from all evil and introducing the age of

joy and prosperity. The prophets warned Israel that her hope was presumptuous and false. Their sin had merited for them not blessings but punishment from Yahweh. Abraham, who –hoped against hope,- was the model of a biblical hope.

Hope calls to mind what the future holds for the People of God. Perhaps it is that future dimension that best distinguishes hope from faith. Both faith and hope deal with the unseen--that which lies beyond the human senses. (':' Faith deals with a present, albeit unseen, spiritual reality. It gives a J person the power, here and now, to trust one's life to God, to accept as true what has been revealed. The faithful person builds his life upon the unseen spiritual reality. Faith brings us here and now into possession of certain spiritual realities, such as justification and peace with God. Faith also opens the door to Hope. Hope has as its object a future good, one not yet existing in the life of the believer but viewed as obtainable in the future. The virtue of hope creates in a person an expectancy to possess this future good. Since this expectancy carries with it a sense of confidence and certainty, it gives a person the power to be patient and to persevere in patience while one awaits the possession of the future good. The presence of patience within the person becomes evident when faced with evil--an evil unable to create sadness and despair. Because the future good is assured, the patient person may actually possess joy in the time of trial and temptation. A hope rooted in faith and trust, can dynamically elevate the soul above the present evil enabling it to say, "Damn the torpedoes!" It empowers the person to move full speed ahead towards the possession of the future good. Hope becomes not only the root of patience but of faithfulness. In times of tribulation and trial the person does not fall away but remains faithfully committed to the good.

### HOPE'S FOUNDATION

Paul sees hope as the cause of salvation. He writes in Romans as well as in Corinthians:

*In hope we were saved. But hope is not hope if its object is seen (possessed): how is it possible for one to hope for what he sees (possesses)? And hoping for what we cannot see means awaiting it with patient endurance.*

*(Rom.8:24-25.)\*

*The present burden of our trial is light enough, and earns for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison. We do not fix our gaze on what is seen but on what is unseen. What is seen is transitory what is unseen lasts forever.*

*(2Cor.4:17-18.)*

The Christian hopes God will be glorified within his life, and that he will come to a resurrection from the dead. When a person patiently endures the trials of this life,



he expresses hope in "a better, a heavenly home," says the Book of Hebrews 11:16. Patience itself creates Hope, and Paul attributes patience to the grace of God and therefore a cause for boasting, "...we even boast of our afflictions! We know that affliction makes for endurance, and endurance for tested virtue, and tested virtue for hope." (Rom.5:3-5.) Paul also adds, in another place, that the Christian who limits hope to this world is a most miserable person.

Hope in the New Testament differs from that in the Old Testament because of its foundation for hope. The foundation of Christian Hope is the Redemption--an accomplished fact. For this reason Paul can call Jesus: "Christ Jesus our hope." (1Tim.1:2b.) Likewise, the Christian finds a firm foundation for hope in the gift of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit within the believer is not an effect of justification but is a cause of hope. The Presence of the Holy Spirit is evidence of God's love for the person. Paul writes, -And this hope will not leave us disappointed, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us." (Rom.5:5.)

We see that Paul is presuming that Christians know that they have received the Holy Spirit as a result of their baptism. Apparently, at this time, members of the Church received the Holy Spirit in some sensible, external manner. Paul asked the Galatians:

*I want to learn only one thing from you: how did you receive the Holy Spirit? Was it through observance of the law or through faith in what you heard ....that God lavishes the Spirit on you and works wonders in your midst?.....Have you had such remarkable experiences all to no purpose?*

*(Gal.3:2,5,4.)*

Paul now proclaims that God's evident love for Christians is the foundation of their hope. He recalls to mind the truth that while we were sinners--evil and hateful human beings--and while we despised and hated God, the Father and the Son loved us. Paul says:

*At the appointed time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for us godless men. It is rare that anyone should lay down his life for a just man, though it is barely possible that for a good man someone may have the courage to die. It is precisely in this that God proves his love for us: that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Now that we have been justified by his blood, it is all the more certain that we shall be saved by him from God's wrath. For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him by the death of his Son, it is all the more certain that we who have been reconciled will be saved by his life. Not only*

*that: we go so far as to make God our boast through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.*

*(Rom.5:6:11.)*

Paul implies that even though we are presently righteous, we have not yet come to the fullness of salvation. We must still be saved from the Wrath of God on the Last Day. It is an object of Christian hope that we will be saved because of the Love of God.

These beautiful Scriptures powerfully confirm the eternal love of God for mankind. As one author has written, "Jesus did not come to change God's attitude towards men. He came to show what it is and always was." (Barclay.) There is no room to maintain that Jesus died to appease the wrath of God. God is Love. The love of God has no conditions. It is not conditioned by anything we do or anything we become. God loves the greatest sinner on earth. If God loved us enough, when we were powerless, godless people, to send His beloved Son to die on a Cross in order to reconcile us with Himself, then what cannot we hope for now that we are at Peace with God; now that, through Jesus, we have been made godly and empowered by the Holy Spirit to love God? Where man once possessed only fear of God's Wrath, he can now confidently boast of God's love for him. Perfect love casts out fear.

### CHRIST THE NEW ADAM

Here in Romans we catch a bright reflection of salvation as a divine operation of the Holy Trinity. The Triune God loves us. God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit is our boast! The Father gives us Faith to believe in His Son. The Son, through His death and resurrection, gives us cause for Hope. The Holy Spirit by His Presence within our lives brings Charity, the Love of God to our spirits. Within a few verses Paul has said: "Christ dies for us godless men; still sinners, Christ dies for us; we have been justified by his blood (implying his death); reconciled by the death of His Son; through our Lord Jesus Christ...we have now received reconciliation." Within six verses Paul makes five references to the death of Jesus on the Cross and the salvation flowing from His death.

With the pathos of a Greek drama Paul depicts the effect of Jesus' death upon the history of mankind. It is the most singular salutary incident that has occurred in the history of man. Paul burns with zeal to manifest the glory he beholds in the death of Jesus upon the Cross, that precious deed scandalizing the Jews and appearing so vain and foolish to the Greeks. A new beginning for the earth flows from the death of Christ. Within the history of man, a New Creation is now in process. In order to set the deed of Christ in the glorious light due it, Paul brings his readers minds back to the first creation, back to Adam, the first man, and the result

of his life upon mankind. He desires that we recall the first chapters of Genesis. There is presented the original creation in beauty and innocence, a glory to God! God's love evidently being displayed in His creation: "God saw how good it was. Then God said:

*"Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. Let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and the cattle, and over all the wild animals and all the creatures that crawl on the ground." God created man in his image; in the divine image he created him; male and female he created them God looked at everything he had made, and he found it very good.*

*(Gn.1:26-27,31a.)*

When evening came, God would walk in the garden with them. The Lord God gave man this order:

*"You are free to eat from any of the trees of the garden except the tree of knowledge of good and bad. From that tree you shall not eat; the moment you eat from it you are surely doomed to die."*

*(Gn.2:16-17.)*

*Now the serpent was the most cunning of all the animals that the Lord God had made...But the serpent said to the woman: "You certainly will not die! No, God knows well that the moment you eat of it you will be like gods who know what is good and what is bad." The woman saw that the tree was good for food, pleasing to the eyes, and desirable for gaining wisdom. So she took some of its fruit and ate it; and she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.*

*(Gn.3:1,4-6.)*

*To the man he (God) said: "Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree of which I had forbidden you to eat, Cursed be the ground because of you!...By the sweat of your face shall you get bread to eat, Until you return to the ground, from which you were taken; For you are dirt, and to dirt you shall return."*

*(Gn.3:17,19.)*

*Then the Lord said: .My spirit shall not remain in man forever, since he is but flesh. His days shall comprise one hundred and twenty years."*

*(Gn.6:3.)*

Perhaps Jesus had this scene in mind when he said:

*When a strong man fully armed guards his courtyard, his possessions go undisturbed. But when someone stronger than he comes and overpowers him, such a one carries off the arms on which he was relying and divides the spoils.*  
(Lk.II:21.)

Perhaps St. John was thinking back to this moment when he said:

*We know that we belong to God, while the whole world is under the evil one. Have no love for the world...for nothing that the world affords comes from the Father. Carnal allurements, enticements for the eye, the life of empty show--all these are from the world.*

(I Jn.5:19;2:15-16.)

On earth's stage Paul now presents two alien characters--Harmatia and Thanatos. They appear as the handmaidens of the Prince of Darkness, one standing on his right, the other standing to the left. Harmatia is his right hand and Thanatos is his left hand. Harmatia is an evil power, hostile to God and alienates all from God. The English name for Harmatia is Sin. Thanatos, the partner of Harmatia, is Death. They are aliens for they were not part of the original creation; they were not intended as part of the earthly scene. Paul presents them as personified evils within human existence. They totally immerse themselves into human history. Man became so accustomed to their faces, he considered their presence as natural--part of the original plan. This apparent truth the Scriptures reveal to be an illusion. The Book of Wisdom teaches:

*...God did not make death, nor does he rejoice in the destruction of the living. For he fashioned all things that they might have being. For God formed man to be imperishable; the image of his own nature he made him. But by the envy of the devil, death entered the world, and they who are in his possession experience it..... It was the wicked who with hands and words invited death, considered it a friend, and pined for it, and made a covenant with it, Because they deserve to be in its possession.*

(Wis.I:13-14a; 2:23-24; 2:16.)

Thanatos appears like a deadly wasp whose sting is lethal and to which man would seek an antidote in vain. The sting of Thanatos is Harmatia. (-The sting of death is sin- ICor.15:56a.) Thanatos is like those deadly flies that leave their eggs on a victim's sore where they become deadly parasites eating away the victim's life. The initial sting has none of the pain of the wasp. It gives pleasure and can even create the temporary euphoric feeling of a high-potency drug. It is not its initial feeling but its maturing effects that reveal its real essence and nature. Harmatia always delivers her victims back into the arms of Thanatos! "The wages of sin is death" (Rom.6:23)

**“When sin reaches maturity it begets death” (Jas.1:15). When one has Harmatia as a companion, one “leads a life of living death.” (ITm.5:6.)**

**The two great protagonists of the drama do not appear on stage. They stand offstage and out of sight, in the wings: God the Father and God's ancient Adversary, the Prince of Darkness. It is a drama of Life and Death. Death appears to have won the day. The Prince of Darkness reigns on earth and the glory of the Father becomes obscured, hidden by the darkness, for all the earth is under the power of the Evil One. When all appears lost, the Father launches a counter-offensive in His beloved Servant, Jesus of Nazareth.**

**On earth's stage, Jesus Christ makes His appearance as the Second Adam. What His life wrought in human existence will be compared with that of the first Adam. The glory of the New Adam and the New Creation, flowing from His deeds, will stand forth with the beauty and power of the noonday sun breaking upon a world shrouded in unrelenting darkness and filled with the terrors of the "Night." A day has come when man can say: "O Thanatos where is your victory? O Thanatos where is your sting?" Paul was able to write, "Death came through man; hence the resurrection of the dead comes through a man also. Just as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will come to life again." (ICor.15:21-22.) In another place we read: "He has robbed death of its power and has brought life and immortality into clear light through the gospel." (2Tim.1:10.) We read in the Epistle to the Hebrews, "...by his death he might rob the devil, the prince of death, of his power, and free those who through fear of death had) been slaves their whole life long." (Heb.2:14-15.) Christ destroys Harmatia and will finally destroy Thanatos: "Christ must reign until God has put all enemies under his feet, and the last enemy to be destroyed is death (Thanatos). (ICor.15:25-26.) In the Book of Revelation: "...there shall be no more death or mourning, crying out or pain, for the former world has passed away." (Rv.21:4. )**

**To grasp the significance of what Paul teaches we need to understand the Semitic mentality concerning human existence. We concentrate so much upon the uniqueness and individuality of the human person that we are not psychologically prepared to appreciate what the Scriptures teach. We have the tendency to see every human being, in some degree, as an isolated entity and separated from every other human entity. Each person stands and falls upon his or her own individual merits, abilities, and productions. "The temptation of the Western man is to seek salvation by exalting the individual against the masses," wrote A.T. Robinson. As a result we often consider salvation to be strictly private affair between an individual and God. Many would see this as a rationalization of human existence that has little foundation in reality, a deceptive illusion of human existence arising more from sin than from grace. The poets and mystics have always given the lie to this belief. It is**

they who confirm that “no man is an island,” we are all part of the whole. The mystics of India have seen all human life as the flowing of one great continuous river in which each human life is like one drop of the water. As one author has written, “The alternative to the 'they' is not 'I' but 'we.' Man's freedom does not lie in the fact that he is not bound, nor his individuality in the fact that he is not social.” (A.T. Robinson.)

The Eastern man consciously conceives himself as part of a family, a clan, a tribe. His whole existence is defined by his relationship with the family. He can conceive of no life beyond it. What a member of the family experiences, the family experiences--good or evil. What is done to one, is done to all. We find this solidarity of humanity demonstrated in the Book of Joshua where the one individual, Achan, sinned and all Israel suffered because of the sin. As a punishment for the sin of Achan, he and his entire family were killed. For the Semitic, excommunication from society was an evil worse than death. The Western man does not fear excommunication and often deliberately excommunicates himself, hardly ever realizing how often the environment created resembles an existential Hell.

For Paul, human solidarity is the divinely ordained structure in which personal life is to be lived. Paul starts from the fact that man is bound up in a vast solidarity of historical existence which effects every level of his being. In order to grasp Paul's presentation in Romans, we must, at least momentarily, see humanity as part of a whole in which the one effects the many and the many, the one, regardless of how much this may offend the Western sense of distributive justice. (Remember how outraged we would become in school when the teacher punished the entire class for the sine of one. The teacher's actions probably reflected a more ancient mentality, perhaps a mentality still unconsciously ingrain within all of us.)

Very few sections of the Sacred Scriptures have received an authoritative interpretation by the Church. The following passage in Romans is one such passage. This means as Catholics we are not free to give another interpretation. The Church holds that the following Scriptures confirm the doctrine of the unity of the human race: the human race descended from an original pair of human beings. This passage likewise confirms the doctrine of Original Sin. This original pair sinned and therefore all their descendants inherit the effects of that sin. This passage likewise sustains the need for Infant Baptism. These teachings come from the Council of Trent. The Council of Trent itself reaffirmed the earlier teachings of the (16<sup>th</sup>) Council of Carthage in 418 A.D. and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Council of Orange in 529 A.D. Paul himself does not use the term “original sin.” The expression was coined in the time of St. Augustine. Paul does express the concept of original sin.

## ORIGINAL SIN

Paul tells us that sin entered the world through Adam. All the human race stood in Adam. Adam was the representative symbol of mankind. Adam alone did not sin, the human race sinned in Adam, "Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world and with sin death, death thus coming to all men inasmuch as all sinned...." (Rom.5:12.) Paul defends his statement of inherited sin by pointing out that it existed in the world after the time of Adam and before Moses received the Law from God. At this point he speaks in rabbinical fashion, and not in that logical fashion that appeals to the western mind.

Paul argues, where there was no law, no direct command to prohibit the actions of man, man could no sin. As in the example of the Garden of Eden, God commanded them not to eat of the fruit of the tree that grew in the middle of the garden. To eat of the tree became sinful only because of God's command. Therefore, before the divine revelation of the Mosaic Law man could not personally sin since there was no command to disobey. But sin did exist in the world, as obvious from the fact that men died. Sin entered the world through Adam and existed in the world prior to the Mosaic Law because man inherited sin and death through Adam. At this point he chooses to ignore any reference to the law of nature. In the beginning of his letter he had maintained that the pagans were subjected to the Wrath of God because "they certainly had knowledge of God, yet they did not glorify him as God or give him thanks." (Rom.1:21a.) In his letter Paul narrows the concept of sin down to disobedience to a direct command from God. Paul writes:

*--before the law there was sin in the world, even though sin is not imputed when there is no law--I say, from Adam to Moses death reigned, even over those who had not sinned by breaking a precept as did Adam, that type of the man to come.*  
(Rom.5:13-14.)

When Paul speaks of Adam as "that type of man to come," he suggests that the individuals of the human race would personally choose sin just as Adam had done. (Apples never fall too far from the tree!)

## CHRIST AS ANTI-ADAM

Paul now draws a comparison between the effect of Adam's life upon the human race and the effect of the life of Christ upon the human race. Paul pictures Christ to be the New Adam.. Even though he does not refer to him as such here, he did so in his early letter to the Corinthians where he wrote, "Scripture has it that Adam, the first man, became a living soul; the last Adam has become a life-giving

spirit.- (1Cor.15:45.) It is a comparison of opposites and not likes. Christ is the anti-Adam type. There is truly no comparison between even the magnitude of the effects of their lives. In the case of Adam, one sin brought condemnation and death to all mankind. Sin piled up within the human race, corruption of the human nature abounded. Death had even a greater claim upon mankind. Then Christ died upon the Cross and thus came redemption and expiation of sin. Paul implies that the effects of Adams's sin did not depend upon the wills of his descendants they inherited sin as a descendant of Adam, and because they were children of Adam they would die. In the case of Christ, it is suggested that the effects of His gift to mankind flow into the lives of those who will it so. Paul speaks of the "gracious gift" coming through Jesus Christ as available for all, -abound for all." Paul writes:

*But the gift is not like the offense. For if by the offense of the one man all died, much more did the grace of God and the gracious gift of the one man, Jesus Christ, abound for all. The gift is entirely different from the sin committed by the one man. In the first case, the sentence followed upon one offense and brought condemnation, but in the second, the gift came after many offenses and brought acquittal.*

*(Rom.5:15-16.)*

Paul knew that Harmatia (Sin) had its goal and purpose--to deliver all victims to Thanatos (Death). The Scripture presented Thanatos as the power of the Devil. It delivers souls into the Kingdom of Darkness. As the Book of Hebrews has said:

*Now, since the children are men of blood and flesh, Jesus likewise had a full share in ours, that by his death he might rob the devil, the prince of death, of his power, and free those who through fear of death had been slaves their whole life long."*

*(Heb.2:14-15.)*

Therefore, Paul knew redemption would not be complete. Christ's victory would not be total unless the power of Thanatos was destroyed. At this point, when death and life are spoken of, they signify eternal death and eternal life. "Eternal" in this sense does not intend to express, explicitly, a period of unending time, but rather the absence or the presence of God's life within the soul permanently. Those words, quoted earlier from Genesis: "My soul shall not remain in man forever, since he is but flesh. His days shall comprise one hundred and twenty years" (Gn.6:3), are an eternal death sentence. Paul maintains that this sentence has been revoked in Jesus Christ. Jesus brings to the world the gift of God's own life, a gift that will abide. The awareness of this great blessing, coming through Jesus Christ, caused Paul to joyfully break forth with:



*“Death is swallowed up in victory.” “O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?” The sting of death is sin, and sin gets its power from the law. But thanks be to God who has given us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Be steadfast and persevering, my beloved brothers, fully engaged in the work of the Lord. You know that your toil is not in vain when it is done in the Lord.*

*(1Cor.15:54-58.)*

Paul now tells us in Romans: “If death began its reign through one man because of his offense, much more shall those who receive the overflowing grace and gift of justice live and reign through the one man, Jesus Christ.” (Rom.5:17.) Paul now sums up his thoughts on this matter with,

*Just as a single offense brought condemnation to all men, a single righteous act brought all men acquittal and life. Just as through one man's disobedience all became sinners, so through one man's obedience all shall become just.*

*(Rom.5:18-19.)*

If our sense of justice has been outraged by the fact that we had to share in the sin of Adam without any will on our part, it ought to be placated by the fact that we can now share in the merits of the death of Jesus Christ by our willing to do so. Paul would say to us that if, on the one hand, we could not accept the former, how can we claim the latter?

Paul introduces another character unto the stage of religious history. It is "Nomos." Paul likewise personifies the Law: he gives it the force of a personal character. He tells us that Nomos only came into the world to convict men of sin. He became like a sun shining in the darkness, revealing the intrinsic rebellion to God's will ingrained in the hearts of all men. Nomos forced upon mankind a consciousness of sin. He made man know himself as a sinner and to experience guilt. Paul writes:

*The law came in order to increase offenses; but despite the increase of sin, grace has far surpassed it (therefore, the presence of Nomos serves to magnify the charity of Christ), so that, as sin reigned through death, grace may reign by way of justice leading to eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord. (Rom.5:20-21.)*

## DEATH AND THE CHRISTIAN

In the light of the substance of Christian Faith and the firm foundation of Christian hope, Paul knows that physical death of itself is no longer of any serious consequence. Yes, once--before the death of Christ--it symbolized eternal death. But now for the Christian, physical death is but a cause to strengthen faith and hope.

Where Harmatia has been destroyed, Thanatos has lost her lethal sting. Now her sting is no more than that of the wasp that reduces the bodies of her victims to a catatonic state. Jesus Himself told His disciples not to fear those who could only destroy the life of the body and could do nothing more. "Not to fear those" ought to be extended to all forces and causes of physical death--diseases and accidents. He did warn His disciples to be afraid of those things that could ultimately lead to the destruction of their eternal lives, that would one day lead body and soul to Hell. Paul wrote to the Colossians:

*Since you have been raised up in company with Christ, set your heart on what pertains to higher realms where Christ is seated at God' right hand. Be intent on things above rather than on things of earth. After all, you have died! Your life is hidden now with Christ in God. When Christ our life appears, then you shall appear with him in glory. Put to death whatever in your nature is rooted in earth. (Col.3:1-5a.)*

When Paul himself neared the end of his own life he expressed well what should be the sentiments of the Christian heart before the certainty of physical death:

*I firmly trust and anticipate that I shall never be put to shame for, my hopes; I have full confidence that now as always Christ will be exalted through me, whether I live or die. For, to me, "life" means Christ; hence dying is so much gain. If, on the other hand, I am to go on living in the flesh, that means productive toil for me--and I do not know which to prefer. I am strongly attracted by both: I long to be freed from this life and to be with Christ, for that is the far better thing; yet it is more urgent that I remain alive for your sakes. (Phil.1:20-24.)*

## CHAPTER 6

### FREE FROM SIN

#### INTRODUCTION

The coming of God's Son as man into the world was a new beginning for the human race. The Age of Grace had arrived. In Jesus of Nazareth—the Incarnated Son of God--the Holy Spirit of God returned to reside permanently within human nature. The return of the Holy Spirit abiding in Jesus implied that humanity once again shared in the eternal life of God. The immortality lost through the disobedience of Adam had been regained by the obedience of Jesus. Humanity only shared in the eternal life of God through Jesus Christ. There had been no return of the Holy Spirit to mankind in general but only in one particular human being: Jesus of Nazareth. If other human beings were to share in the divine life, in the divine gift of the Holy Spirit, it would be in some way through a personal relationship with that human being who permanently possessed eternal life. By His death on the Cross, Jesus of Nazareth cleared the way for this to come to be.

The Scriptures teach that through sin death entered the world: "The wages of sin is death." In justice, sin must bring death to all who sin. Death implied more than mere physical death, it implied eternal death. In Adam, all have sinned, and all must die. Jesus, God's Son, came among us, "...and took the form of a slave, being born in the likeness of men." (Phil.2:7.) Jesus came as a New Adam (a new beginning) like us in all things but sin. At His baptism in the River Jordan, He identified with sinful humanity and took on repentance for the human race. When Jesus died on the Cross as a sinless Creature, under the curse of sin and because of sin, He satisfied the just claim of sin by Himself dying in payment for sin. He paid the wages of sin for all humanity. He bore our sentence of death and thus freed us from death. By His death on the Cross, Jesus redeemed us from death. The shedding of His Blood upon the Cross expiated--wiped away--sin. The Blood of Jesus, shed upon the Cross, possesses the power to purify a human being from every sin: "...Look! There is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." (In.1~29.) What Adam had done to humanity, Jesus has undone for humanity. Jesus rescued man from the enslavement of sin into which each human being was born. Jesus' death redeemed us from the enslavement of sin.

Redemption does not imply a person will necessarily leave the environment of the slavery of sin. A person may choose to remain in sin. If they die in sin, it is said that for them Jesus died in vain. Since sin had no claim on Jesus, death had no hold upon Him. In justice, as was His due, Jesus arose from the dead to eternal life.

When we speak of eternal life, we are speaking of God's life. When a person comes to eternal life, it implies God's presence within a person's life. Likewise, it implies a union between God and the person. The death of Jesus on the Cross made this union possible by removing the obstacle to eternal life-- sin. However, this union can only occur through Jesus Christ. It is the Presence of the Holy Spirit within a person that causes this union. Jesus is the recipient of the Holy Spirit. He is the Human Reservoir of the Holy Spirit. There must be some identity with Jesus in order to share in the Holy Spirit. When Peter witnessed the Holy Spirit being poured out upon the Roman centurion Cornelius and his household, he rightly concluded that he could not hold back baptism from them.

Prior to the reception of the Holy Spirit there must be some identity with Jesus in order to share in the fruits of the redemption. By this is meant to actually "experience" freedom from sin and its enslavement. Remember, the redemption is a historical fact, but the fruits of the redemption must yet be experienced in the souls of individual human beings. As an example, we may say a well with water has been drilled in the heart of the desert. That the water is now available for all desert people is now a fact. People must come to the well and drink if they do not will to die of thirst. We may say that the Cross is the well of redemption, but people must come to the Cross in order to experience redemption, or they will die in their sins. They must come to the Cross because divine Love can go no further. Love honors the freedom of the beloved! God will not force man into union with Him. Only those go to Heaven who will to go there. When a person wills an end, the person likewise will the means to the end.

Paul reveals that this necessary identification with Jesus occurs through faith. A faith that believes "in him who raised Jesus Our Lord from the dead, the Jesus who was handed over to death for our sins and raised up for our justification." (Rom.4:24b-25.) Identification with Jesus occurs through faith that leads to baptism. Through baptism, faith produces righteousness within the believer. In other words, the believer is justified before God, freed from sin but likewise placed in a state of grace that restores man's likeness to God and establishes a personal friendship with God. Paul identifies this as a state of reconciliation--a human being is as-one with God., There is Peace between God and the baptized person. This sanctified state within the soul of the baptized occurs as an effect of the Holy Spirit's presence within the baptized. The baptized person has entered into the environment of salvation, has passed through the door leading to salvation and is actually being saved, but is not yet saved. As we mentioned in the last lesson, one has entered into the River of Salvation and one must travel within this river, with the Holy Spirit, until one reaches the Ocean--that is, eternal union with the Father. Herein lies

salvation and the point in which a person actually becomes "saved." At this moment in time we do not actually possess salvation except in hope. As the Book of Hebrews confirms:

*So Christ was offered up once to take away the sins of many: he will appear a second time not to take away sin but to bring salvation to those who eagerly await him.*  
(Heb.9:28.)

Paul identifies those who "eagerly await" as those who await Him in hope. He teaches Christians that they have a firm foundation for hoping to escape the future Wrath of God because of God's personal love for them: the Presence of the Holy Spirit and Jesus' death on the Cross being the indispensable evidence of God's unconditional love for them.

### PAUL MISINTERPRETED

By this time we may have personally experienced the fact that Paul's GB, teachings are often difficult to understand. That being the case, it follows that his teachings are often easy to misunderstand and therefore likely to be misinterpreted. This is not uniquely our problem. It has always been a problem. Way back at the beginning of the Church, the problem existed. We can read in the Scriptures in Second Peter where it is written:

*What we await are new heavens and a new earth where, according to his promise, the justice of God will reside. So, beloved, while waiting for this, make every effort to be found without stain or defilement, and at peace in his sight. Consider that our Lord's patience is directed towards salvation. Paul, our beloved brother, wrote you this in a spirit of wisdom that is his, dealing with these matters as he does in all his letters. There are certain passages in them hard to understand. The ignorant and the unstable distort them (just as they do the rest of Scripture) to their own ruin.*  
(2Pt.3:13-16)

So you see, if we find the study of Romans hard to understand, we only confirm the truthfulness of the Scriptures. May the spirit of humility and the Holy Spirit preserve us from distorting them to our spiritual ruin!

There is evidence in Romans that Paul experienced the problem of having his teachings distorted to the spiritual ruin of souls. The first evidence of this occurred in chapter three in which Paul maintains that man's evilness affords the background against which the goodness and the truthfulness of God is revealed. Some men deduced from this teaching that Paul encouraged wrongdoing in order to give an opportunity for the goodness of God to be revealed in their lives. Paul

**maintained that certain people had slanderously accused him of teaching that man could do evil in order that good could come from it. This is not a reference to physical evil but to moral evil. In other words, man could sin if good could flow from the sin. This is never permissible. At times when one is dealing with sinners, the best one can do is get them to do the lesser of two evils. In this case there is no good involved at all, only a lesser evil. We have heard Paul's reply concerning those who accused him of teaching that one could do evil for a good purpose: "...they will get what they deserve." (Rom.3:8.)**

**We also know from his letter to the Corinthians that some of the Corinthians misinterpreted their state of grace and the reception of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. They came up with some very erroneous ideas about Christian life in this world. Perhaps we have in chapter six of Romans an echo of one of the Corinthian problems. Apparently certain Christians maintained that since Paul taught that an increase of sin caused an increase of grace, i.e. "Where sin abounds, grace does more abound!", it was permissible to go on sinning in order to increase grace in the world. No doubt many concluded that since Christ atoned for all sin, they had no need to stop sinning as Christ had already atoned for the sins. {This error still lives in the consciences of many Christians.} Again many of the Jewish Christians could find an excuse to hold onto the Mosaic Law as a means for increasing grace in their lives. For Paul taught: "The Law came in order to increase offenses; but despite the increase of sin, grace has far surpassed it." (Rom.5:20.)**

**Paul now seeks to refute such thinking by demonstrating that the life of a Christian offers, not an excuse for sinning, but rather the power and obligation to remain free from sin. In considering Paul's response it would be well to keep in mind he speaks to people who, as adults, came to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ and were received into the Church through baptism. Likewise they were a people, like Paul himself, who looked for the Second Coming of Jesus to occur in the immediate future.**

**Paul asked the question that probably reflected the sentiments of certain Christian consciences, "What, then, are we to say? 'Let us continue in sin that grace may abound?'" (Rom.6:1.) The very question itself reflects the reality, denied by certain Christians, that the justified and righteous still possess the capability to sin. Paul asserts, "Certainly not!" (Rom.6:2a.)**

## **THE EFFECT OF BAPTISM**

**In the previous chapter, Paul said that those who have received "...the overflowing grace and gift of justice" will "live and reign through the one man, Jesus Christ." (Rom.5:17.) Paul now teaches what it means to live and reign through**

Jesus Christ. The first point Paul desires to make is a negative one: to live as a Christian does; not mean to live in sin. In order to prove that statement Paul recalls to 'the readers' minds the significance of the Sacrament of Baptism freely received by them. With Christian baptism in mind Paul asks, "How can we who died 'to sin go on living in it?" (Rom.6:2b.) Paul has already identified a life of sin as the life of man descended from Adam. He has identified the life of Jesus to be the opposite from the life of Adam. Therefore, the life of Jesus is life without sin Jesus is the One who died rather than sin. Paul implies that baptism was death to the life inherited from Adam. Therefore, baptism was death to a life of sin. If in baptism we died to sin, how can we go on living in sin? He proceeds to say that in baptism a Christian actually participates in the death of Jesus. "Are you not aware that we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?"(Rom .6 : 3.)

Paul teaches the exact point at which baptism incorporates us into the life of Jesus Christ. Baptism brings us into the life of Jesus Christ at the time of His death on the Cross. In the Scripture passage quoted above, Paul implies that the baptized die with Christ on the Cross. As that life of Jesus, inherited also from Adam (although sinless), died upon the Cross, our old life of Adam died in baptism. Paul is recalling to mind the significance of the baptismal rite in which the' person was submerged completely under water symbolizing death to the former life and emerging from the water as symbolic of birth to newness of life--into the very life of Jesus Christ. Paul goes on to explain:

*Through baptism into his death we were buried with him, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might live a new life.*  
(Rom.6:4)

If we have been united with Christ in death, we have been united with Christ raised from the dead by the power of God. In some way and degree, the baptized share in the life of Jesus Christ. Paul stops short of saying that baptism brings the baptized into sharing the life of the Risen Savior. He knew that Our Lord no longer dwelt upon this earth, no longer-possessed a mortal body, but that He stood at the right hand of God. Paul sees our identification with the Christ of glory as an object of Christian hope for the future. He goes on to say, "If we have been united with him through likeness to his death, so shall we be through a like resurrection." (Rom.6:5.) Christians look forward to "a like resurrection."

When Paul writes the baptized "have been united with him," he uses a powerful expression that precludes baptism as being only a symbolic rite. The Greek word "symphytoi," translated as "have been united," carries the concept of grown together. It conveys the same idea of a young branch being grafted onto the branch of an older tree—the engrafted branch now growing with the older branch

and being nourished to growth by the life of the older stock. This vividly demonstrates the intimate union that occurs within the lives of the baptized and the life of Christ. This degree of union Jesus expressed Himself when He said to His disciples:

*"I am the true vine...Live on in me, as I do in you. No more than a branch can bear fruit of itself apart from the vine, can you bear fruit apart from me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who lives in me and I in him, will produce abundantly, for apart from me you can do nothing. A man who does not live in me is like a withered, rejected branch, picked up to be thrown in the fire and burnt...My Father has been glorified in your bearing much fruit and becoming my disciples."*

*(Jn. 15:1,4-6,8.)*

### LIFE IN CHRIST

Paul teaches the baptized person is now in Christ; the baptized is now a member of the humanity of Jesus Christ. Paul writes to the Corinthians:

*This body is one and has many members, abut all the members, many though they are, are one body; and so it is with Christ. It was in one Spirit that all of us ...were baptized into one body. All of us have been given to drink of the one Spirit...There are, indeed, many different members, but one body.*

*(1Cor.12:12-13,20.)*

It is the reception of the Holy Spirit that causes the baptized to be in Christ. Paul makes a distinction between being in Christ and being with Christ. In this earthly existence the baptized are in Christ. They are not yet with Christ. To be with Christ is a future hope. We quoted Paul in the last lesson as saying: "I long to be freed from this life and to be with Christ." (Phil.1.23.) We hope when Jesus comes in glory to be "with Christ." What is experienced in Christ and what will be experienced with Christ are not the same. When we are with Christ we shall share in Christ's glory, but while here on earth we apparently share in another aspect of Christ's life. It seems to suggest that the baptized share in the earthly life of Christ, that the work of Christ continues on earth in the baptized. It has been made possible by Christ's death on the Cross and the sending of the Holy Spirit. This appears to be the meaning of Paul's words: "For me to live is Christ."

Can a Christian hope to identify with the Christ of glory if the Christian has failed to identify with the life Jesus lived upon this earth? Can a Christian by-pass sharing in the sufferings of Christ and still reach Heaven? Paul tells the baptized, "If we have been united with him through likeness to his death, so shall we be



through a like resurrection." If we have remained united to Him in thick and thin, we will be united also with Him in glory. We know Jesus lived over thirty years on earth; the sufferings spoken of by Paul occurred on the day of His death.

Paul implies identification with the death of Christ would make possible the former life of Christ for the baptized. It certainly could make possible a future identification with Christ in glory. Jesus confirmed that no disciple could be above the Master. He commanded His disciples, "Take up your cross daily and come follow me." In the light of this doctrine we can seriously ask the questions: Is baptism really, in some manner, an incarnational process all over again? Does baptism make it possible for the baptized to live the earthly life of Jesus? Is Christ being born again--to live and die--in Christians? If we can answer, "Yes!" to these questions, there is certainly a hidden grandeur and glory to Christian existence. It is a most serious commitment with responsibilities and consequences beyond human awareness. In the light of this we may better understand those words in Colossians:

*Since you have been raised up in company with Christ, set your heart on what pertains to higher realms where Christ is seated at God's right hand. Be intent on the things above rather than on things of earth. After all, you have died! Your life is hidden now with Christ in God. When Christ our life appears, then you shall appear with him in glory. Put to death whatever in your nature is rooted in earth.*

*(Col.3:1-5)*

## SINLESSNESS OF CHRIST

To understand what Paul is saying, and will say, we must bear in mind what Paul previously taught about man's relationship with Adam and Christ. As descendants of Adam, all mankind could be viewed as one living organism, one body, of which Adam was the head and the principle of the living soul within the body. (See 1Cor.15:45.) The body, the human race, shared in all that occurred in the head, Adam. In Adam, we all sinned. From Adam we inherited | the propensity, the liking, for sin. Because we are all in Adam, we all sinned. Paul teaches that Jesus is the New Adam and through baptism the believer becomes identified spiritually with Jesus Christ, as physically he had been identified with Adam: "Adam, the first man, became a living soul; the last Adam has become a life—giving spirit." (1Cor.15:45.)

The Gospel of Luke traces the genealogy of Jesus back to Adam. Matthew stops at David. Romans speaks of Jesus as One "who was descended from David according to the flesh but was made Son of God in power according to the spirit of holiness." (Rom.1:3-4a.) In Galatians we read, "...God sent forth his Son born of a

woman...." (Gal.4:4.) Matthew identifies the woman in his genealogy of Jesus: "Jacob was the father of Joseph the husband of Mary. It was of her that Jesus who is called the Messiah was born." (Mt.1:16.) Through David and through Mary, Jesus is a descendant of Adam.

In Romans, Paul makes a general sweeping statement: "Therefore, just as through on man sin entered the world and with sin death, death thus coming to all men inasmuch as all sinned." (Rom.5:12.) Likewise, Jesus was born under the law. Paul teaches that all under the law are in sin, "This means that every mouth is silenced and the whole world stands convicted before God." (Rom.3:19b.) St. John writes, "If we say, 'We have never sinned,' we make him a liar and his word finds no place in us." (1Jn.1:10.)

If we are going to strictly interpret these Scriptures, we would say they confirm the fact that since Jesus is a descendant of Adam, He is a sinner. If He is a sinner, He is under the power of sin and would need to be redeemed. He could not be the redeemer. It was precisely for this reason that some early Christians taught that the Christ had not come in the flesh, but only in the appearance of the flesh. Here we see the importance of interpreting Scriptures according to the mind of the author and not merely from the significance of the words used. Paul and John never intended to suggest Jesus to be a sinner. They stated a general and there are exceptions to the rule; the exceptions prove the rule. Jesus is an exception to the general rule that all descendants of Adams are sinners. Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "For our sakes God made him who did not know sin [experience sin], to be sin, so that in him we might become the very holiness of God." (2Cor.5:21.) The Scriptures confirm Jesus to be the "begotten" Son of God (See Acts 13:33; Heb.1:5). St. John tells us, "No one begotten of God acts sinfully because he remains of God's stock; he cannot sin because he is begotten of God." (1Jn.3:9.) he also wrote, "We know that no one begotten of God commits sin; rather, God protects the one begotten by him, and so the evil one cannot touch him." (1Jn.5:18.) The Book of Hebrews directly confirms the sinlessness of Jesus, "One who was tempted in every way that we are, yet never sinned." (Heb.4:15b.) Jesus expressed His own J consciousness of sinlessness when He hurled the challenge to the Jews, "Can any one of you convict me of sin?" (In.8:46a.) Even though the Jews accused him of sin, "...we know this man is a sinner" (In.9:24J See Mt.26:65), they could not convict him of sin. Therefore, we rightly confirm that Jesus was an exceptional descendant of Adam. He was sinless and capable of redeeming man from sin.

## THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

The question naturally has been asked, how did Jesus come to be sinless when He inherited a human nature? He inherited His humanity through His mother, Mary of Nazareth. Therefore, Mary would have been the means through which Jesus would inherit the sin of Adam. Christian theologians have concentrated upon Mary in order to discover an adequate cause for the sinless humanity of Jesus. We know that the Catholic Church maintains that Jesus was not the only exception to the rule of being born in sin. It teaches that Mary had been designated by God to be the Mother of Jesus who would be the New Adam. God designated Mary to be the New Eve--the Mother of the New Beginning, the Mother of the New Genesis. She was preserved from the stain of original sin by God. This, the Church refers to as the privilege of the Immaculate Conception, meaning that from the first moment of her existence, Mary was free from sin. It teaches that Mary was redeemed prior to the act of the redemption but through the grace of the redemption. Mary was saved through the death of Jesus upon the Cross--her gift from the Cross was preservation from sin. She herself proclaimed, "My spirit finds joy in God my Savior." (Lk.1:47.) Gabriel announced at the Annunciation, echoing the word of God to Abraham and Sarah, "For nothing is impossible with God." (Lk.1:37.)

Christian theologians found biblical proof for the Immaculate Conception of Mary in Genesis 3:15: "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers..." Enmity implies a complete separation—a gulf exists between two persons. This implies that "the woman and her offspring" would not be under the dominion of Satan. This could not refer to the first Eve as she became a partner of sin. Again, some find the same "woman" of Genesis referred to in Revelations--the last book of the Bible:

*A great sign appeared in the sky, a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars...Then the dragon stood before the woman about to give birth, ready to devour her child when it should be born. She gave birth to a son—a boy destined to shepherd all the nations with an iron rod. Her child was caught up to God and to his throne. The woman herself fled into the desert, where a special place had been prepared for her by God...When the dragon saw that he had been cast down to the earth, he pursued the woman who had given birth to the boy. But the woman was given the wings of a gigantic eagle so that she could fly off to her place in the desert, where, far from the serpent...Enraged at her escape, the dragon went off to make war on the rest of her offspring, on those who keep God's commandments and give witness to Jesus.*

*(Rev. 12:1,4-6,13-14,17.)*

Although many scholars apply the above to Israel or the Church, it does not detract from the fact that it also applies to Mary as a corporate symbol of Israel and the Church. As a corporate symbol, what occurs in the life of Mary will occur or has occurred in Israel and the Church. The angel's greeting to Mary, "full of grace" (kecharitomene), implied a special relationship with God. Elizabeth, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, confirmed that Mary was an exception among women: "Blessed are you among women!" Mary's response was an acknowledgment of the fact: "God who is mighty has done great things for me..." (Lk.1:49.)

One of the early Christian writers, St. Ephrem (306 to 373 A.D.), wrote: "Mary and Eve, two people without guilt, two simple people, were identical. Later however, one become the cause of our death, the other the cause of our life" (Op.Syr 11 327). "Thou and thy mother are the only ones who are totally beautiful in every respect; for in thee, O Lord, there is no spot, and in thy Mother no stain" (Car. Nisib.27). St. Augustine says that all men must confess themselves sinners, "except the Holy Virgin Mary, whom I desire, for the sake of the honor of the Lord, to leave entirely out of the question, when the talk is of sin." (De Natura et gratia 36,42.)

When the Church teaches the Immaculate Conception of Mary, it is defending the sinlessness of Jesus Christ, that the "dayspring of Justice" flowed from a spring of purity, that the fruit came forth from a "good" tree.

### FREE FROM SIN

Paul goes on to tell the Romans, "This we know: our old self was crucified with him so that the sinful body might be destroyed and we might be slaves to sin no longer." (Rom.6:6.) Paul gives his answer at this point to the question whether a Christian should continue in sin. In baptism a Christian has crucified that self that lived in union with Adam. Crucifixion is an instrument of death. By a person being baptized into the crucifixion of Christ, his sinful body has been put to death. "The sinful body" means the end of entire human personality under the power of sin. The result of the crucifixion and death being that the baptized person is now freed from the enslavement of C) sin. This is expressed in the words: "be slaves of sin no longer." Remember, in this context, Paul is not speaking of sin as a moral lapse, a failure to observe the commandments of God. Here he sees sin as a power--a personified power--as Harmatia who dominates and rules over the children of Adam. "...Jews and Greeks alike...are under the domination of sin" [Harmatia]. (Rom.3:9.) The children of Adam are the slaves of Harmatia. The chains of sin bind the children of Adam; the nets of Harmatia encompass them. All fight and struggle against Harmatia being as futile as that of a fish caught within the net of the

fisherman. In baptism, the fish is not only freed from the net but becomes a new specie of fish. Paul confirms: "A man who is dead has been freed from sin." (Rom.6:7.) The baptized now have the freedom to not sin. Paul now explains what this new freedom makes possible. At this point he emphasizes the positive aspects of baptism: "If we have died with Christ, we believe that we are also to live with him." (Rom.6:8.) The baptized have come to a new life "in Christ." "This means that if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old order has passed away; now all is new!" (2Cor.5:17.)

Just as Christ can no longer die again, the baptized should no longer die again, that is, become again the slave of sin. Through baptism the power of sin has been destroyed in the life of the baptized. They are free--they are empowered to live the life of Christ on earth. This, Paul teaches when he writes:

*We know that Christ, once raised from the dead, will never die again; death has no more power over him. His death was death to sin, once for all; his life is life for God. In the same way, you must consider yourselves dead to sin but alive for God in Christ Jesus."*

*(Rom.6:9-11.)*

Jesus, as a human being--a descendant in the flesh from Adam--was tempted to sin. Jesus died rather than sin. His death was not the victory of sin but the victory of Christ over sin. The Book of Hebrews writes of Jesus Christ:

*For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weakness, but one who was tempted in every way that we are, yet never sinned...In the days when he was in the flesh, he offered prayers and supplications with loud cries and tears to God, who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence. Son though he was, he learned obedience from what he suffered; and when perfected, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him."*

*(Heb.4:15;5:7-9.)*

Paul holds that just as Jesus Christ's life was a life lived for God, so now must a Christian's life be lived for God: "... You must consider yourselves dead to sin but alive for God in Christ Jesus." (Rom.6:11.) Paul is no starry eyed idealist who would maintain that baptism eradicated in the baptized the very power of sin, and that the baptized now enjoyed the power of the resurrected body of Jesus. A realistic evaluation of Christian life demonstrates the opposite to be true. Baptism does not place the Christian beyond the power to be tempted nor to sin. It has been said that baptism is no gateway into heaven, or into a state in which the kingdom of God is fully realized. It is a gateway into a new life marked by righteousness, peace,

joy in the Holy Spirit, but it is a life still lived within the flesh—within the body of Adam. The difference between the body of the baptized and the body of the unbaptized being that baptism has freed the Christian from the domination and the compulsion of sin. They possess the power in the Holy Spirit to overcome temptation to sin and to live a life for God. In second Timothy we hear of two new Christian characters and heretics called Hymenaeus and Philetus “who have gone far wide of the truth in saying that the resurrection has already taken place. They are upsetting some people’s faith.” (2Tim.2:18.) WE read in Hebrews a warning to Christians: “Take care, my brothers, lest any of you have an evil and unfaithful spirit and fall away from the living God.” (Heb. 3:12.)

Let me, as simply as possible, sum up what Paul has taught us at this point: Paul sees the baptized being brought into the historical moment in time when Jesus was crucified on the Cross, and the baptized, united with the dying Jesus, becoming one with Him. That historical moment rose above time to be eternalized, to become an eternal incident where there is no past nor future, but now of forever. There the crucifixion of Christ remains a fountain of salvation for all that has passed and all that comes to be. On the Cross, in a historical moment in time, the humanity of Jesus, descended from Adam, suffered physical death. At baptism, a person united with Jesus mystically dies to the life inherited from Adam, and at the precise moment of death arises into a new life, into the sinless life of Jesus Christ. AS once they lived the inherited life of Adam on this earth, now the baptized possess the power to live the inherited life of Jesus Christ on earth. On the physical level, the body of sin remains. The baptized lives with sin but now possesses the power to be free from its domination; possesses the power to make a body, once the instrument of sin, to be an instrument of righteousness; an instrument God may now use for His honor and glory. “If we die with him, we shall live with him; If we hold out to the end we shall also reign with him.” (2Tim.2:11-12a.)

*Paul sums up well how the Christian must live in this world: Do not, therefore, let sin rule your mortal body and make you obey its lusts; no more shall you offer the members of your body to sin as weapons for evil. Rather, offer yourselves to God as men who have come back from the dead to life, and your bodies to God as weapons of justice.*

*(Rom.6:12-13)*

Once more Paul pictures sin (Harmatia) as an evil, rebellious power within the souls of men causing them to live evil lives. The earthly life of human beings becomes the instrument of Harmatia to perpetrate, to produce evil in the world. Sin perverts all the faculties of the human nature for purposes of evil. Quoting from the psalms in

chapter three, Paul has described the conditions where the human faculties of the body become instruments of wickedness:

*...not one of them acts uprightly, no, not one. Their throats are open tombs; they use their tongues to deceive; the venom of the asp lies behind their lips; their mouths are full of curses and bitterness. Swiftly run their feet to shed blood; ruin and misery strew their course. The path of peace is unknown to them; the fear of God is not before their eyes.*

*(Rom.3:12-18)*

This is Paul's description of human nature under the power of Harmatia. Christ has freed Christians from this power. A Christian person ought to dedicate the power of his body to God as an instrument of his righteousness. Paul implies that being a Christian is not merely abstaining from sin in this life but being a power for righteousness. Father Thomas Judge expressed the Christian vocation in these words: -Be good! Do Good! Be a power for good in the live of others!- Paul uses military terminology and implies Christians are the weapons of God in this world. They are His soldiers in the war against Evil. For Christians to come under the power of sin is to betray their Lord in battle.

The Law is never far from Paul's mind. He has taught that no one under the authority of the Mosaic Law can live without sin. He described the purpose of the Law as -to increase offenses." (Rom.5:20.) According to Paul's thought, in order to be free from sin one must be free from the observances of the Mosaic Law. He foresaw where such a deduction lead to moral chaos if misinterpreted. He seeks to emphasize that although a Christian is no longer obliged to observe the Mosaic Law, a Christian is under the authority of a law holier and purer than the Mosaic Law. The Christian lives under the law of grace, which implies under the authority of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit should reign in the life of a Christian: the body of a Christian is to become the Temple of the Holy Spirit.

*Paul writes to the Romans:*

*Sin will no longer have power over you: you are now under grace, not under the law. What does this all lead to? Just because we are not under the law but under grace, are we free to sin? [Do those things prohibited by the Law?] By no means! You must realize that, when you offer yourselves to someone [God or Harmatia] as obedient slaves, you are the slaves of the one you obey, whether yours is the slavery of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to justice.*

*(Rom.6:14-16)*

Paul conceived and experienced himself as a slave of Jesus Christ. He began the letter to the Romans with "Greetings from Paul, a slave of Jesus Christ." He desired all Christians to come to such a surrender of heart to Christ that they too could only conceive of themselves as slaves of Jesus Christ--men and women who have died and are -born again- to a life of righteousness in Jesus Christ.

Paul reminds them of their former lives when they were free from righteousness--free from the influence of the Holy Spirit. He brings before their eyes the life-style many today have chosen in place of a life of obedience to the gospel. He reflects on the life of sin for them: its conditions, its essence, its final reward. In the light of what sin produces, Paul exhorts Christians to choose the life of grace and obtain its final reward. He writes: "Just as formerly you enslaved your bodies to impurity and licentiousness for their degradation, make them now the servants of justice for their sanctification." Paul holds that the body of sin can be sanctified because grace has broken the power of sin over the body. Paul ironically says, "When you were slaves of sin, you had freedom from justice." How many Christians have fled from the enslavement of righteousness into the enslavement of sin? If people think that sin does not enslave, let them seek to be free of sin without the grace of God. Paul asks, "What benefit did you then enjoy? Things you are now ashamed of, all of them tending towards death." Note that Paul says "things you are now ashamed of." Only grace gives people a true shame of sin. The disgrace of being caught in sin is not the same as shame for sin. Sin destroys the sense of shame in sinners. Paul spoke of them as "men without conscience" who "know God's just decree that all who do such things. It deserve death: yet they not only do them but approve of them in others" (Rom.1:31-32). Paul tells us that those who are being saved have entered a river of holiness and that river runs towards eternal life. All those who remain obedient slaves of the Holy Spirit remain in the river of holiness and they will receive an exceedingly great reward: "But now that you are freed from sin and have become slaves of God, your benefit is sanctification as you tend towards eternal life." Paul knows a person must choose one enslavement or the other. He closes this section by describing the different ends of enslavement: "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." (See Rom.6:15-23.)

## CHRIST'S FAMILY

The Gospel of Luke describes an incident in the life of the Lord in which Jesus demonstrated whom He acknowledged to be truly united to Him: whom He acknowledged as His family, His clan, His tribe:

*His mother and brothers came to be with him, but they could not reach him because of the crowd. He was told, "Your mother and your brothers are standing*



*outside and they wish to see you." He told them in reply, "My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and act upon it."*

*(Lk.8:21)*

Here, obedience is revealed to be the essence of the Christian life. It was the essence of the Master's life, "He was obedient even to death on the Cross." (Phil.2:8.) It is because of her obedience that Luke presents Mary, the Mother of Jesus, as the first among Christians. Mary heard from the lips of Gabriel the Word of God:

*"The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you: hence, the holy offspring to be born will be called Son of God. Know that Elizabeth your kinswoman has conceived a son in her old age: she who was thought to be sterile is now in her sixth month, for nothing is impossible with God." Mary said: "I am the servant of the Lord. Let it be done to me as you say." ...Thereupon Mary set out, proceeding in haste into the hill country .....*

*(Lk.1:35-39)*

"My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and act upon it."

# CHAPTER 7

## THE LAW AND PAUL

### INTRODUCTION

The first five books of the Old Testament are known as the Pentateuch. The Pentateuch consists of the books of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. These five books contained the collection of laws and regulations that directed the religious and civic lives of the Israelites. This section of the Old Testament was called the Torah; in Hebrew, Torah means instruction, teaching. The Jews believed the Torah to be the divinely revealed guide for their entire religious and civil life. The Torah revealed Yahweh's unconditional demands upon each and every Jew.

The Book of Exodus gives this account of Moses receiving the Torah from Yahweh:

*Now at daybreak on the third day there were peals of thunder on the mountain and lightning flashes, a dense cloud, and a loud trumpet blast...The mountain of Sinai was entirely wrapped in smoke, because Yahweh had descended on it in the form of fire. Like smoke from a furnace the smoke went up, and the whole mountain shook violently. Louder and louder grew the sound of the trumpet. Moses spoke, and God answered him with peals of thunder Then God spoke all these words.*

*(Ex.19:16-19,20:1)\**

The Jews ascribed to Moses the human authorship of the Pentateuch. The Book of Nehemiah speaks of "the Torah of God which was given through Moses, the servant of God." It speaks of the Torah as "the commandments of the Lord, our Lord, his ordinances and his statutes." (Neh.10:30f.) The rabbis taught that although the Torah came through Moses, it was one of the beings that existed prior to creation. They taught that no one would have part in the future kingdom of God who denied the divine origin of the Torah. However, the later rabbis maintained that God had not Himself directly given the Torah but used an angel as his representative. The Jews believed that human perfection consisted in the observance of the Torah. The Torah was reckoned to included 631 distinct commandments.

We find expressed in the Psalms the ancient attitude of the Jews concerning the Torah:

*The Law of the Lord is perfect, refreshing the soul; The decree of the Lord is trustworthy, giving wisdom to the simple. The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; The command of the Lord is clear, enlightening the eye...The ordinances of the Lord are true, all of them just; they are more precious than gold, than a heap of purest gold; Sweeter also than syrup or honey from the comb.*

*(Ps.19:8-11)*

*Had not your law been my delight, I should have perished in my affliction. Never will I forget your precepts, for through them you give me life How I love your law, O Lord! It is my meditation all the day. Your command has made me wiser than my enemies I have more understanding than all my teachers when your decrees are my meditation. I have more discernment than the elders, because I observe your precepts. From every evil way I withhold my feet, that I may keep your words. From your ordinances I turn not away, for you have instructed me ..... Through your precepts I gain discernment; .....A lamp to my feet is your word, a light to my path. I resolve and swear to keep your ordinances...give me life according to your word...teach me your decrees I forget not your law Your decrees are my inheritance forever~ the joy of my heart they are. I intend in my heart to fulfill your statutes always, to the letter.*

*(Ps.119:92-112)*

The ancient devotion to these sacred Scriptures expressed in the words, “I intend in my heart to fulfill your statutes always, to the letter,” led the Jews of later centuries to develop a “hedge” or “fence” around the Torah. The hedge was built to insure the perfect observance of the letter of the Law. It consisted in an authoritative interpretation of the Torah that advanced the legal observance of the Torah beyond the sense stated by the words of the Torah. (No doubt beyond the sense intended by the authors--divine and human. Many centuries later the Catholic Church would teach that any law that restricted the freedom of People must be interpreted in keeping with the strict meaning of the words used by the law--the law could not be extended to include more than included by the words used. On the other hand, if the law granted freedom, it should receive the widest possible interpretation.)

The Pentateuch became known as the written law, and the hedge around the Torah became known as the oral law or the unwritten Torah and assumed an importance in the Jewish life second only to the written Torah. By the time of Paul both the written and the oral were referred to as the Torah. In the minds of many

Jews very little distinction existed between the written and oral Torah in regard to the moral force of their obligations. It was this combination that Peter later refers to as, "...a yoke which neither we nor our fathers were able to bear." (Acts 15:10.)

### PAUL'S ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE LAW

The Greek translates the Hebrew word Torah as "Nomos" meaning Law in English. When Paul uses the word -law- it primarily refers to the Scriptures-- the commandments and regulations found in the first five books of the Bible. When we realize Paul's references to the Law are also references to the Sacred Scriptures, we realize how revolutionary his teachings would be; teachings certainly calculated to produce violent reactions among pious Jews and indeed a conscience problem for Jews converted to the Christian religion.

St. James, Bishop of Jerusalem, echoes the Christian Jewish mentality towards the Law and towards Paul's teachings when he said to Paul only a few years before Paul's death:

*"You see, brother, how many thousands of Jews have come to believe, all of them staunch defenders of the law. Yet they have been informed that you teach the Jews who live among the Gentiles to abandon Moses, to give up the circumcision of their children, and to renounce their customs. What are we to do about your coming of which they are sure to hear?"*

*(Acts 21:20-22)*

This conversation between Paul and James would have occurred after Paul wrote the letter to the Romans.

The rumors circulated about Paul certainly had a foundation in fact, but Paul's teaching must be carefully understood so as not to be misinterpreted. Perhaps the words ascribed to Paul in Second Timothy best express Paul's attitude towards the sacred Scriptures: "Likewise, from your infancy you have known the sacred Scriptures, the source of the wisdom which through faith in Jesus Christ leads to salvation." (2Tim.3:15.) This text does not say they sacred Scriptures are a direct means of salvation but rather a source of wisdom and knowledge. It teaches that when a person comes to faith in Jesus Christ then the Scriptures, in the light of faith in Jesus, become a path leading to salvation: "A lamp to my feet is your word, a light to my path." Why? Because the Scriptures testify to Jesus Christ--both the Torah and the Prophets bear witness to justification coming through faith in Jesus Christ. (See Rom.3:21.) In light of this, it can truly be said:

*All Scripture is inspired of God is useful for teaching--for reproof, correction, and training in holiness so that the man of God may be fully competent and equipped for every good work.*

*(2Tm.3:16-17)*

When this definition of the importance of the Scriptures in the life of the faithful is carefully analyzed, there is no indication that the observance of the sacred Scriptures produces righteousness or perfection (The Old Testament). It suggests these inspired teachings of God aid those already righteous and justified along the path of holiness. There is certainly no suggestion that the Scriptures are to replace the living authority of Jesus Christ in the Church.

Paul does not deny that a perfect observance of the sacred Scriptures spells out perfection and righteousness. He denied that in actual fact that any man could perfectly observe the Scriptures. Because of this fact, the sacred Scriptures brought about man's condemnation rather than his righteousness; the sacred Scriptures established every man a candidate for the Wrath of God on the Day of Judgment.

When reference is made to the sacred Scriptures by Paul, as in Second Timothy 3:15-17, we must understand the reference is made to the Old Testament alone. As yet there were no writings within the Christian Community accepted by the Community as inspired writings. In other words, the written New Testament had not yet come into being--it was in the process of being created. At this time, only the oral gospel existed. We cannot take what Paul says of the Old Testament and apply it to the New Testament. That would be going beyond what Paul's words intended.

### PAUL'S BATTLE WITH THE TORAH

Paul's battle with the Old Testament centered upon the Jews maintaining that salvation came through the observance of the inspired commandments and precepts of the Torah. Paul does not teach that the Sacred Scriptures are not holy and good. He does not deny the divine inspiration of the Holy Scriptures. Paul holds that his fellow Jews have misinterpreted the purpose of the Scriptures. All of his arguments are intended to place the Torah in its true light. Of course behind all this lies the Gospel truth that righteousness comes through faith in Jesus Christ, and that one reaches perfection through the operation of the Holy Spirit within the lives of the faithful. Paul believes that the Holy Spirit is the One operating within the baptized that now uses the Scriptures of the Old Testament as lights and guideposts along the path of the Divine Will--along the path to Christian perfection. The Sacred Scriptures of the Old Testament mirror, in so many ways, the truths of the Sacred Scriptures of the New Testament:

*God, the inspirer and author of both testaments, wisely arranged that the New Testament be hidden in the Old and the Old be made manifest in, the New. (The old Testament) sheds light on it and explains it.*

*(Vat.Co. Rev.IV, art.16)*

As mentioned previously, Paul personifies Nomos--the Law. He presents it not so much as collection of laws and regulations but as personified power. It assumes the image of a person--perhaps it could be pictured as an angel of God. An angel that cannot give to the Jews the power to fulfill those commandments promulgated by the angel as divine commands. This angelic Torah does not save the Jews but demonstrates the sinfulness of the Jews and convicts them of sin: proves them to be subjects for the Divine Wrath: demonstrates their personal need to be saved; makes clear the Jews need a Savior not only to -save them from their political enemies (this type of Savior they recognized, they needed), but also a Savior to save them from the Wrath of God (this type of Savior many failed to realize they needed).

Paul wars with the Jews for the sake of the Gospel Truth. The Sacred Scriptures become his battlefield with them. Paul attacks the Jewish position that righteousness and salvation come from the observance of the Sacred Scriptures (or even merely from circumcision). His arguments defend the position of the Gospel: Faith in Jesus Christ leads to righteousness. Let us take the ideas expressed by Paul concerning that section of the Scriptures called the Torah and weave them together with the hope of getting a clearer picture of his teachings about the Law. For the full impact of what is being said, we need to keep in mind that when Paul uses "law" it is primarily a reference to the first five books of the Sacred Scriptures. Wherever we read "law" we would not be too wide of the meaning if we substituted "Sacred Scripture." The Jews maintained, because they possessed the Sacred Scriptures and received instruction from them, they knew God's will; that they were able to make sound judgments; guide the blind; enlighten those in darkness; discipline the foolish; teach the simple; walk the clear path of knowledge and truth (See Rom.2:18-20). Paul does not doubt this, but he calls into question their ability to practice what they preach--to take the same medicine they prescribe for others. He contends:

*For it is not those who hear the law who are just in the sight of God; it is those who keep it who will be declared just. (Rom.2:13) Circumcision...has value if you keep the law... (Rom.2 : 25); ...all who receive circumcision...are bound to the law in its entirety (Gal.5:3); ...everything the law says is addressed to those who are under its authority*

*(Rom.3:19).*

*Moses writes of the justice that come from the Law, "The one who observes the Law shall live by it" (Rom.10:5~Lv.18:5). Cursed be he who fails to fulfill any of the provisions of this law*

*(Dt.27:26);*

*It is as Scripture says: "There is no just man, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one in search of God. All have taken the wrong course, all alike have become worthless; not one of them acts uprightly, no, not one."*

*(Rom.3:10-12)*

*All who depend on observance of the law...are under a curse. (Gal.3:10a); It should be obvious that no one is justified in God's sight by the law, for "the just man shall live by faith"*

*(Gal.3:11).*

*The Law does not depend upon faith (Gal.3:12a); Faith does not abolish the law but confirms the law*

*(See Rom.3:31).*

*The justice of God has been manifested apart from the law, even though both law and prophets [the entire Scriptures] bear witness to it justification through Jesus Christ]...(Rom.3:21); ...A man is justified by faith apart from the observance of the law*

*(Rom.3:28).*

*Scripture has locked all things in under the constraint of sin [in chains of sin. (Gal.3:22)*

*Sin is not imputed when there is no law (Rom.5:13b); ...For where there is no law there is no transgression (Rom.4:15b); The law came in order to increase offenses (Rom.5:20a); The law serves only to bring down wrath (Rom.4:15a). Without law sin is dead (Rom. 7:8c); Sin gets its power from the law (1Cor.15:56); ...the written law kills... (2Cor.3:6c).*

*Is the law the same as sin? Certainly not! Yet it was only through the law that I came to know sin (Rom. 7:7); At first I lived without law." (Rom. 7:9.) "Then the commandment came: with it sin came to life, and I died." (Rom. 7:9-10a); I should never have known what evil desire was unless the law had said, "You shall not covet!" (Rom. 7:7c).*

*Yet the law is holy and the commandment is holy and just and good. Did this good thing then become death for me? Not that either! (Rom. 7:12-13); Sin*

*found its opportunity (Rom.7:11a); Sin seized that opportunity... (Rom.7:8a) ...and used the commandment: first to deceive me, then to kill me (Rom.7:11b). (Paul may be recalling the Serpent's encounter with Adam and Eve at this point.)*

*It used the commandment to rouse in me every kind of evil desire 71 (Rom.7:8b); ...sinful passions roused by the law worked in our members and we bore fruit for death (Rom.7:5); ...sin, in order to be seen clearly as sin, used what was good to bring about my death. It did so that, by misusing the commandment, sin might go to the limit of sinfulness (Rom.7:13).*

### LAW STIMULATES SIN

In chapter seven of Romans, Paul pictures the nature of Sin as sin appeared in the Garden of Eden. There, Sin was disobedience to a direct command of God. The Serpent deceived our first parents--led them into disobedience and ultimately into death. This he could not have done...if the command had not been given. Rabbis taught the command had been given to preserve immortality. Paul pictures this act of disobedience brought Harmatia into the world. In Harmatia, sin is personified as an evil force in the world and within the nature of mankind. Harmatia personifies the power of Satan, first as the Tempter to evil and then as the Conqueror and Enslaver of the fallen. The Law served the same purpose in the world as had the command given by God in Genesis. Just as the command gave "the serpent" the opportunity to tempt Eve to sin (without the command there would have been no opportunity), the Serpent seized this opportunity and deceived Eve into sin. Genesis does not place the full blame upon the Serpent. Eve had her own reasons for disobedience: "The woman saw that the tree was good for food, pleasing to the eyes, and desirable for gaining wisdom." (Gen.3:6a.) In Eden there had been, only one commandment. The Law brought 631 commandments. Therefore, the Law affords the opportunity for sin to reach "the limit of sinfulness."

Paul saw Law as giving people a consciousness of their sinfulness. The Law revealed the Will of God; against this revealed will one could measure one's own life. The more one sees one's life in the light of God's revealed will, the more one discovers the sinfulness of one's life. One can become deeply conscious of sinfulness and experience a corresponding guilt.

Law awakens in man a consciousness of sin, but it also stimulates sin. It can stimulate sin because man possesses a rebellious spirit; man desires to be free from any constraints. Herein may lie the devil's power to deceive; or the grounds for his deception. A person comes to see the commandments of God as an encroachment



upon one's freedom of will. In reality the commands of God are loving directives to aid the will to obtain the true goals of every human heart. Law seeks to highlight wherein good truly lies. However, the intrinsic goodness of the act of obedience often remains hidden. The intellect under the power of darkness does not perceive correctly. At times, the intellect only has the light of faith to guide it. A faith that confirms the command must be good as it comes from God who is Good. Too often a person erroneously sees obedience to God's commands as an obstacle to human freedom. We often see a comparable situation to this in the life of a young adolescent. A young person experiences dependence upon the parents, and, as quite natural, desires to be independent of them. In order to achieve independence the adolescent rebels against the authority of parents. So often the rebellion does not represent an act of freedom, but rather what is called "negative dependence" upon parents. In such acts there is no free choice being made between goods being offered and the will. The adolescent merely does the opposite of what the parents desire. The adolescent first waits to know what the parents think before he or she knows what not to think. The adolescent waits for the parents to express their choice before the adolescent knows what not to choose. Disobedience of the adolescent is often not an expression of freedom, but rather their dependence upon parents. From such an example we can see how the Law of the Lord can often stimulate the sins of the spiritually and psychologically immature. They sin in order to be free. Their deception lies in the reality that their sins never bring greater freedom but a greater enslavement. One erroneously seeks the fulfillment of their life in a life of sin and ends by experiencing a life of death. This Paul confirms when he writes:

*When we were in the flesh, the sinful passions roused by the law worked in our members and we bore fruit for death (Rom.7:5). ...the command came: with it sin came to life. Sin found its opportunity and used the commandment: first to deceive me, then to kill me. (Rom.7:9-11)*

Paul mentions a time free from sin. This probably does not refer to a time when Paul's life was free of sin, but rather a reference to the time before the commandments came, as in the Garden of Eden--or else in his own life to a time before he had any conscious awareness of divine commands. Little children often do a great deal of mean, hateful deeds, but we do not accuse them of sin. What they do may be objectively a sinful act, but subjectively they are not sinners. They have no conscious awareness of what is right and wrong. Sin comes when they become aware that there are laws and regulations that govern their relationship with others and with themselves. Even after they know better they may still decide to take the toy from the kid next door or hit him in the head with a bat. (What may have not been a sin at four may be at six.) When a certain person was lyrically speaking about their "age of innocence," G. K. Chesterton caustically retorted: "The only thing you

know about the age of innocence is that you never had it." St. Paul could have said that!

## END OF THE LAW

**Paul maintains of the Torah:**

*It was given in view of transgressions and promulgated by angels, at the hands of a mediator: it was to be valid only until that descendant or offspring came to whom the promise had been given.*

*(Gal.3:19)*

*Before faith came we were under the constraint of the Law, locked in until faith that was coming should be revealed...The Law was our monitor (our watchdog) until Christ came to bring about our justification through faith. But now that faith is here, we are no longer in the monitor's charge.*

*(Gal.3:23-25)*

Paul pictures those under the Law as heirs who, while under the tutors, are no better than slaves. The Law serves as the heir's supervisor and administrator until the heirs come of age and receive their inheritance. (See Gal.4:1-7.) The Law has been the tutor bringing the Jews to Christ, and to religious maturity. Now the tutor is no longer needed, for as Paul says:

*Each of you is a son of God because of your faith in Christ Jesus.*

*(Gal.3:26)*

*Christ has delivered us from the power of the law's curse by himself becoming a curse for us, as it is written: "Accursed is anyone who is hanged on a tree."*

**Paul proclaims:**

*Christ is the end of the law.*

*(Rom.10:4)*

*In his own flesh he abolished the law with its commands and precepts...reconciling both of us to God in one body through his cross.*

*(See Eph.2:15)*

This means the Gospel is the fulfillment of the Old Testament. In Christ it reached its perfection--it's fulfillment. Jesus Christ proclaimed during his earthly ministry:

*"The law and the prophets (the entire Sacred Scriptures) were in force until John. From his time on, the good news of God's kingdom has been proclaimed and people of every sort are forcing their way in."*

*(Lk.16:16)*

(The Jews actually used the Law--the Sacred Scriptures--as their means to condemn and destroy the physical life of Jesus.)

### THOSE DEAD TO THE LAW

Paul tells the Jewish Christians that the "law has power over a man only so long as he lives." (Rom.7:1.) To illustrate this point he gives the example of a Jewish woman who is bound to her husband as long as he lives, but with his death she is free to choose another husband without incurring the sin of adultery. Paul desires to make the point that Jewish Christians have died in baptism and are no longer obliged to observe the Mosaic Law. They have died to the Law and are now free to give their hearts to another. (See Rom.7:2-3.)

*In the same way, my brothers, you died to the law through the body of Christ, that you might belong to that Other who was raised from the dead, so that we might bear fruit for God. When we were in the flesh, the sinful passions roused by the law worked in our members and we bore fruit for death.. Now we have been released from the law--for we have died to what bound us--and we serve in the new spirit, not the antiquated letter.*

*(Rom.7:4-6)*

The Jewish Christian is no longer obliged to observe the precepts and commandments of the Old Testament. They can no longer serve as a source of temptation or sin. Paul immediately teaches: "Just because we are not under the law but under grace, are we free to sin? By no means!" (Rom.6:15.) The Christian is under the Law of Grace--The Law of Grace brings to perfection the Law of the Old Testament. "The whole law," says Paul, "has found its fulfillment in this one saying: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'" (Gal.5:14: Lv.19:18.) In the Gospel of Matthew we read:

*A lawyer asked Jesus: "Teacher, which commandment of the law is the greatest?" Jesus said to him: "You shall love the Lord your God with your whole heart, with your whole soul and with all your mind.' This is the greatest and first commandment. The second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments the whole law is based, and the prophets as well."*

*(Mt.22:35-40)*

The Law of Grace is the perfection of the Old Law because it conserves the spirit of the Sacred Scriptures, and, through the gift of the Holy Spirit, makes the fulfillment of the Law possible.

Paul writes, "Now that we have been released from the law--for we have died to what bound us--and we serve in the new spirit, not the antiquated letter." (Rom.7:6.) Paul reveals to us the service into which this new spirit led him:

*To those bound by the law I became like one who is bound (although in fact I am not bound by it), that I might win those bound by the law. To those not subject to the law I became like one not subject to it (not that I am free from the law of God, for I am subject to the law of Christ), that I might win those not subject to the law.*

*(1Cor.9:20b-21)*

For Paul, "Christ is the end of the Law. Through him justice comes to everyone who believes." (Rom.10:4.) He has undertaken this battle against circumcision and the observance of the Mosaic Law as being a means to righteousness and perfection--among members of the Christian Community--because Paul clearly understood what it implied and its consequences. This he expressed in his letter to the Galatians: "Any of you who seek your justification in the law have severed yourself from Christ and fallen from God's favor." (Gal.5:4.)

### WHY THE LAW FAILED

Paul teaches the Torah--the Scriptures--to be holy, just, and good. He says, "We know the law is spiritual." Paul is affirming the Scriptures come from God. In order to explain why something so holy and godly achieved so little good in the lives of men, Paul turns his attention to man himself. The problem lies in man and not in the Torah. Paul wrote in his First Epistle to the Thessalonians:

*May the God of peace make you perfect in holiness. May he preserve you whole and entire, spirit, soul, and body, irreproachable at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

*(1Thes.5:23.)*

Paul speaks of a person's whole being consisting of spirit, soul and body. These three words in Greek would be "pneuma, psyche and soma." These words play a large part in his teachings and we need to understand them as clearly as possible. Also, Paul uses another very important term in his reference to human beings: he speaks of the "flesh"--it appears in the Greek as "sarx." This term also we must

clearly understand. We know Paul's concept of man was greatly influenced by his Hebrew background, more so than by any Greek influence. However, we know from the Book of Wisdom that Greek thought certainly influenced the Jewish mentality concerning the nature of man. One of the greatest differences between the Greek idea of man and that of the Jews would be that the Greeks held man to be a being composed of two essential parts: body and soul. They taught the soul of man to be spiritual, immortal and wherein lay the true personality of man. On the other hand, the body was physical. The Greek philosophers looked upon the body as evil, it contaminated the soul, hindered it from attaining truth and wisdom. Only at death could a person enter into knowledge, reality and truth. The Jews, on the other hand, conceived man to be a single entity, a single unit. The Hebrews did not seek an analysis of man, they simply saw man as a living being. The human being is an animated body. The body is the soul in its outward, animated expression. One does not have a body, one is a body. If one is, one is a living body. If one is not, one is a dead body. The Jews possessed no developed concept of man surviving after death. They seemed to possess some vague, nebulous concept of some kind of existence after death but nothing equivalent to the Greek thought. However, they did believe there would be a resurrection from the dead. As Martha expressed to Jesus about her brother: "I know he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day." (In.11:24.)

The closest concept in the Hebrew to the Greek thought of psyche or soul would be "nepes." Genesis speaks of God breathing upon man and man became a -living nepes." Perhaps it would be equivalent to saying he became a -living being." "nepes" was alive or a "nepes" was dead. The "nepes" of man lives rather than serves as a principle of life. Animals also possessed a living nepes. The living nepes was distinct from the "breath" of God. However, it belonged to God and returned to God upon death of the being. The nepes itself was not a conscious entity but rather a life force in a being that possessed personal conscious awareness. The Hebrews could say no more. When the concept "nepes" was translated into Greek it became "psyche." It certainly did not carry with it the same meaning of psyche in Greek. When Paul uses psyche-- translated as soul or life--it signifies a living being--one's self or one's person. Paul counts the loss of his psyche as nothing as long as he fulfills his mission. The loss of psyche means simple loss of life. He writes the Corinthians: "I will be glad to spend all I have, and my psyche (life) as well, in order to help you." (See 2Cor.12:15.)

A distinction between psyche in the New Testament and the Old Testament appears when the psyche is seen as the seat of supernatural life and the object of super-natural salvation: "Humbly welcome the word that has taken root in you, with its power to save you." (James 1:21.) The New Testament doesn't seem to present the soul or the psyche as something of itself essentially immortal it's being.

**It is not biblical to think of the soul as some distinct spiritual principle within a human being but rather as the totality of the person as a living, conscious subject. It is the totality of self, which is saved for External life. When we speak of saving a soul, we ought to think of saving a person. A person can live in a body or out of a body. The presence or the absence of the body certainly determines the quality of life lived. However, we are the same person whether in the body or out of the body, whether we live or die in Christ. The New Testament, however, cannot picture a person as being saved without salvation being extended to the "body."**

**When Paul speaks of "body" or "flesh" he is not thinking as a Greek but as a Hebrew. He is not thinking of the body or the flesh as distinct from the soul. This distinction does not exist for the Hebrew. Body or flesh would be synonyms for person or self or man. Body and flesh--soma and sarx--came to represent not the physical elements of a person but the entire personality or the complete being of a man or woman. They came to represent human beings in their concrete existence in this world. Paul distinguishes between a soma- person, and a sarx-person. They are different personality types. A person as sarx--flesh--is seen as evil. When Paul speaks of "the flesh" or of being "in the flesh," he speaks of the man of the world--worldly and unspiritual, incapable of understanding the things of the spirit--to whom all things of the spirit are foolishness. The flesh is what man has made himself in contrast with man as God made him. The flesh is man as he allowed himself to become in contrast with man as God meant him to be. The flesh stands for the total effects upon man of his sins, and of the sins of his father, and of the sins of all men. The flesh is human nature as it has become through sin. Man has become vulnerable to sin. Man falls even when he knows he is falling and when he did not want to fall. The flesh stands for human nature under the power and the domination of sin. It is man as he is apart from Jesus Christ and His Holy Spirit. What is required to meet this situation, according to Paul, is not good advice nor good example but deliverance!**

**When Paul speaks of the "body--soma" or man "in the body" this too is man in his fallen state--weakened, vitiated, tainted by sin, but man who recognizes his creaturehood; man who sees himself as part of the whole--as a community member; man who acknowledges God and does not set himself up in opposition to God. He is open to the power of God and can be an instrument of God's glory. Because of sin he also is mortal and will physically die. Paul asks: "Who can free me from this body under the power of death?" (Rom.7:24.) For a person "in the body" but not "in the flesh" there is hope. This person can be redeemed and come to a resurrection for the dead. For Paul, the man of flesh must be completely destroyed--as is, he cannot be saved. This can come to be by radical repentance, faith in Jesus Christ and through baptism.**

On numerous occasions Paul will contrast the flesh with the spirit. We need also to understand Paul's concept of spirit. Again we must return to his Hebrew background. The word spirit translates the Greek word "pneuma." The Greek word pneuma translates the Hebrew concept of "Ruah." What does ruah mean in Hebrew? Ruah literally means "wind" or "breath." In the Old Testament the Ruah was something that pertained to God--the Spirit of God. The Ruah of God is the principle of life. It was God's own life, and man had the Ruah of God within him. It was not the same as nepes--soul--both man and animal possessed a living nepes, but only man possessed a ruah. In Genesis God revealed: "My Spirit must not forever be disgraced in man~ for he is but flesh; his life shall last no more than a hundred and twenty years." (Gn.6:3.)

The Ruah is life. It is eternal life. Only where the Ruah of God resides can there be eternal life. According to the Old Testament, the Ruah of God conferred upon certain men charisms necessary to fulfill their unique missions. The prophets received a special out-pouring of the Ruah of God and became the mouthpieces of God; they possessed the fortitude to withstand the rejection by all the nation. Saul and David were anointed with the Ruah of God and gained wisdom and understanding necessary to be Kings of Israel. Samson with the Ruah of God was able to overcome numerous enemies of Israel. Ruah was translated into the Greek as Pneuua and into the English as Spirit.

The New Testament presents Jesus of Nazareth as the recipient and the dispenser of the Ruah of God. "He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire." (Mt.3:11.) We read in Acts:

*"Now raised to the height by God's right hand, he has received from the Father the Holy Spirit, who was promised, and what you see and hear is the outpouring of that Spirit."*

*(Acts 2:33)\**

The coming of the Holy Spirit marks the birth of the church. As the spirit was in Jesus, so now the spirit is in the Church. The Church now possesses the Holy Spirit and is empowered to confer the Spirit upon her members.

In the Acts, the spirit is a divine dynamic force, the charismatic spirit of the Old Testament, which moves the apostles to preach and witness to Jesus-- empowers them to deeds beyond their personal capacities. The spirit is not restricted but is given with messianic fullness to the entire body of believers. The Spirit, in Paul, is basically the divine and heavenly dynamic force conceived as peculiarly existing in Jesus and now pervading the Body of Jesus--the Church. In other words the

**Pneuma or Spirit is a new divine life communicated to the baptized by Jesus. As a result of the believer's union with Christ, the Spirit dwells in the individual believer and there the believer is said to be "in the Spirit" communicated through Jesus Christ. The Spirit is the power by which Christians live lives worthy of their calling. It is the gift of the Spirit that insures survival after physical death and resurrection from the grave.**

**Let us now return to Paul's explanation for the failure of the Law to achieve holiness :In the lives of men. He begins by contrasting the nature of the Law with the nature of man: "We know that the law is spiritual, whereas I am weak flesh sold into the slavery of sin." (Rom.7:14.) Speaking of man as flesh, Paul reveals that there is an inner opposition within man to anything that comes from God. He sees man as a slave who is not free to obey the commandments. Paul reflects aloud upon the internal struggle that goes on within a human being. Man lives in a state of confusion concerning the he does. "I cannot even understand my own actions." (Rom.7:15a.) Paul explains what is meant, "I do not do what I want to do but what I hate." (Rom.7:15b.) Here Paul describes the condition of slavery. A slave does not do what he wants to do but what he is forced or commanded to do. He admits there is an inward attraction to the Law--this of itself is a witness that he sees the Law as a good--but he refuses to obey the Law: "When I act against my own will, by that very fact I agree that the law is good." (Rom.7:16.) Paul identifies self with the will. If he desires or wills one thing and yet he does something just the opposite, then some other power is working within him that is stronger than the "I": "This indicates that it is not I who do it but sin which resides in me." (Rom.7:17.) He sees the power to be Harmatia—again sin appears as a personified power that controls and enslaves the person. He sees the actual human existence as bad--man has become flesh: he is not completely evil--he still desires to be good or do good: he has lost the power to do so--he is under the power of another. He is in a hopeless condition:**

*What happens is that I do, not the good I will to do, but the evil I do not intend. But if I do what is against my will, it is not I who do it, but sin, which dwells in me. This means that even though I want to do what is right, a law that leads to wrongdoing is always ready at hand.*

*(Rom. 7:19-21.)*

**Paul implies that God makes His laws for His subjects, but man is in the flesh and is not God's subject. He is subjected to another. This other has his own law and this law opposes the law of God. Man in the flesh is subject to the reign of this law:**

*My inner self agrees with the law of God, but I see in my body's members another law at war with the law of my mind; this makes me the prisoner of*



*the law of sin in my members...So with my mind I serve the law of God but with my flesh the law of sin.*

*(Rom.7:22-23,25b.)*

Paul gives a schizophrenic description of man. He sees the person of man as split in two. The nature of man has lost its harmony. Man inwardly has become as two in one; two persons within one person who oppose each other, war against each other, pull in different directions thus making human life itself the battleground of struggle. The human personality becomes one continuous battlefield. It remains in a constant state of turmoil producing more evil than good within the world. Paul sees this schizoid condition as resulting from the tension caused by the divine revealed Will of God, presented to the conscience of man, conflicting with human desires within the hearts of men. These human desires oppose the Will of God. Paul sees man as having lost the power, due to sin, to oppose the evil within himself or to follow the good he knows he should follow. Paul can only sum up the situation with: "What a wretched man I am! Who can free me from this body under the power of death?" (Rom.7:24.) Paul expresses the cold, despairing awareness that man cannot help himself, he is trapped. He is damned--unless some greater power can save him. Man needs deliverance!

#### CLUB 7-14-21

The above is probably one of the most quoted passages from Romans. Who is being spoken of has been greatly disputed. People through the ages have found a perfect description of their own spiritual condition in Romans 7:14-21. They have honestly been able to say: .I resemble those remarks! A retreat master once preached that we are all members of the same Club: The Romans 7-14-21 Club! Nevertheless, when the passage is seen in the proper context in which it is written, it does not appear to be describing the life of a Christian. Paul is desiring to explain why the Law has failed and why there is a need for salvation through faith. It is a picture of a life in which sin dominates. Even though Paul speaks of "I," he appears to be speaking in the name of fallen humanity, as a representative of the whole. Again, it appears to be a description of man prior to baptism. This is not Paul's description of what Christian life ought to be. This is a picture of a man dominated by sin. Paul maintains Christians have the power now to dominate sin--to use the members of the body "as weapons of God" for their sanctification. Paul tells Christians to "root out" whatever there is of sin in their lives. This implies the freedom and the power to do so. Although Paul realistically expresses the idea that a Christian can sin, and often warns them about sin, he still maintains they are not under the power of sin. They are free not to sin.

Even if certain Christians do experience Romans 7-14-21 as the actual spiritual state of their lives, there is need for concern but not despair. There is every reason to hope. We must never forget the answer to the question, "Who can free me from this body under the power of death? All praise to God, through Jesus Christ our Lord!" (Rom.7:24b-25a.) We have a Savior in Jesus Christ. St. John writes:

*But if we acknowledge our sins, he who is just can be trusted to forgive our sins and cleanse us from every wrong...I am writing this to keep you from sin. But if anyone should sin, we have, in the presence of the Father, Jesus Christ, an intercessor who is just. He is an offering for our sins, and not for our sins only, but for those of the whole world.*

*(1Jn.1:9,2:1-2.)*

## CHAPTER 8

### CREATIONS OF A DIVINE ARTIST

#### INTRODUCTION

A fascinating picture of man emerges from the writings of Saint Paul. It is a product of his Hebrew background and of one Hellenized, but more than all this, it is a concept of man rising out of the religious experience of the Christian Community.

There are only two basic human types: the Adam-being and the Christ-being. Scripture has it that Adam, the first man, became a living soul; the last Adam has become a life-giving spirit. Paul distinguishes between soul-life and spirit-life and the source from which each flows. The soul is the "psyche" and the spirit is the "pneuma." Adam is the principle of psychic-life and Christ (the New Adam) is the principle of pneumatic-life.

Paul does not speak of Adam as being a principle of life existence. He cannot bring himself to refer to even though he knows human life flows from Adam. He is so conscious of death flowing from Adam that he sees him as a principle of death. How can he speak of anyone as the father of life who begets death to his children?

In keeping with his Hebrew background Paul conceives God as the only principle of true life. He sees Jesus Christ as the one who possesses and imparts life. He is the source of eternal life. As in the Gospel of John, so also with Paul, true life is divine life, the life of God. Paul indeed conceives Jesus as the principle of life, the source from which human beings receive immortality and incorruptibility. Paul sees Jesus as the person who can impart to others the life-giving pneuma--the spirit of life.

Paul sees all men as possessing a psychic life or soul-life. This is part of human existence, a natural inheritance. He likewise teaches that certain persons possess a spiritual quality or pneumatic life. He sees this as the seed of eternal life. This pneumatic quality comes from Jesus Christ as a gift to all those who come to faith and baptism in Christ. It is a quality that becomes so personal and permanent that it intrinsically alters the very being of the person. They become new creations: people "born again," "who were begotten not by blood, nor by carnal desire, nor by man's willing it, but by "God" (In.1:13), men and women of the Spirit. They become spiritual people capable of communing with God. They become people of wisdom,

comprehending the Mind of Christ. The question naturally arises: Do only the baptized possess the "spirit"--the principle of immortality? Through the centuries many have taught that Paul believed only the baptized possessed this pneumatic quality and therefore could enter into heaven. It does not seem to be the time and place to discuss the problem at the length it demands, but in passing let us briefly say, Paul sees only two principles of life: Adam and Christ. In truth he sees only one principle--Jesus Christ. Only through Christ could anyone come to eternal life. Christ is the universal means for salvation. "The grace of God has appeared, offering salvation to all men." (Titus 2:11.) We can only state here what the Church has taught based on divine revelation. If God wills the salvation of all men, He wills the means for their salvation. Jesus is this means as His death redeemed all men--expiated for the sins of all. Faith (explicit) and baptism are the ordinary means by which persons come to Christ and are brought to salvation. Many souls never hear of Christ: live and die through no fault of theirs without ever coming to faith and baptism. From the justice and mercy of God, it is deduced that there are extraordinary means for salvation. These means have not been revealed to man. This we do know: All men who are saved are saved through Jesus Christ, and, the Christian Community has the divine command to bring all men to salvation through preaching the Gospel to all creatures. We are obliged to bring the normal means of salvation to all men. The extraordinary means for salvation lies within the providence of God and not within the providence of the Christian Community.

It could be deduced from chapter two of Romans that Paul would be in agreement with the above deductions:

*When Gentiles who do not have the law keep it as by instinct, these men although without the law serve as a law for themselves. They show that the demands of the law are written in their hearts...their thoughts will accuse or defend them on the day when, in accordance with the gospel I preach, God will pass judgment on the secrets of men through Christ Jesus*

*(Rom.2:14-16)*

*He is a real Jew who is one inwardly, and true circumcision is of the heart: its source is the spirit, not the letter. Such a one receives his praise, not from men, but from God.*

*(Rom.2:29)*

Would it be too far from the mind of Paul to conclude that the real Christian is one inwardly, and that there could be a true baptism of the heart? The Scriptures do suggest that many people condemned in this world by the "pious" will be praised in the next world by God.

## PSYCHE AND PNEUMA

We will have to make several important digressions in this lesson. In so doing, we hope not to lose the importance of the teachings to be found in chapter eight of Romans.

We certainly can misinterpret Paul by confusing the terms "soul" and "spirit." This is easy to do since Christian Theology makes little distinction between the two. In Romans we seek to understand Paul's thoughts, which does not express the full maturity of Christian Teaching. In Romans we are at the beginning and foundation of Christian Theology. The Holy Spirit continues to live in the Church and expand the Church's awareness of revealed truths.

As yet, Greek philosophy had not been applied to Christian teachings. In later years Christian theologians would seek to bring about a synthesis between certain philosophical schools (notably that of Plato and Aristotle) and Christian teachings. In later centuries Christianity will teach the spirituality and the immortality of the human soul. These later concepts can cloud and confuse Paul's thought. For Paul, death outside of Christ was eternal death. This had nothing to do with the immortality of the human soul. He was concerned, not with survival after death, but with eternal union with God that implied eternal life. For Paul, to survive after physical death as a permanent occupant of Hell was no life but was the definition of eternal death.

Again, later theology would define spirituality in Greek terms--define it in contrast with materialism. A spiritual being would be an existing person or thing not composed of physical matter. The philosophers contended that all physical life depended upon physical matter for its activities. If all activities within a being depended upon matter, the soul of that being would cease at physical death. But on the other hand, if certain activities of a physical being were immaterial (as thought and reasoning), it implied the source of these activities would be immaterial. The souls of such beings would survive physical death. They taught the human soul to be a spiritual substance enjoying conscious awareness of itself as a unique, distinct being. This conscious being survived physical death. After death a person no longer expressed himself through a physical body. Those still in the physical body could no longer discern the existence and presence of those separated from the physical body. Certain human beings claim their human perceptions are more psychic than physical, and that they can discern and communicate with persons in their pure spiritual states.

Remember, death does not change the person but only the mode of his existence. It is highly possible that people ignorant and boring in this life will be the

same in the next--unless they are brought to perfection in Christ. .One of the best reasons for Purgatory is to keep heaven from being such a bore. Purgatory being not so much to save our souls as to perfect our personalities in grace--preserving heaven from being the habitation of eternal bores.

What we mean by spiritual today may carry the opposite meaning to what Paul intends in Romans. According to our definition Satan, devils, demons, the human soul, not to mention saints, angels and God are all spiritual beings. Being spiritual can mean being evil as well as good. Someone once said that most human beings are not spiritual enough to make "good" devils. Even the Old Testament speaks of an evil spirit causing evil in the lives of men. This evil spirit is referred to as the Spirit of Elohim, and it is always distinct from the Spirit of Yahweh. The Spirit of Yahweh produces good: the Spirit of Elohim produces evil. Scripture speaks of the Spirit of Elohim coming from Yahweh with the sense that Yahweh permits the spirit to operate or even sends this spirit as a punishment. The Spirit of Elohim was sent into Saul and it was an evil, maddening spirit: it came as a lying spirit upon the false prophets (IKgs.22:21f): an evil spirit came between Abimelech and the men of Shechem .(Jgs.9:23). The Spirit of Elohim appears as the hidden and imperceptible cause of madness in Saul, self-deception in the prophet, and hatred between criminal associates.

Paul seems to be thinking of this same spirit when he writes in Thessalonians:

*Therefore God is sending upon them a perverse spirit which leads them to give credence to falsehood, so that all who have not believed the truth but have delighted in evildoing will be condemned.*

*(2Thes.2:11-12)*

Many immature Christians believe any spiritual manifestation to be of God as long as it is not apparently evil. The Scriptures warn: Test every Spirit! Too often it is the Spirit of Elohim coming to deceive. Many Christians have never even heard of the "noonday devil." At noonday the sun is brightest. The noonday devil appears as "light." The Noonday Devil is the greatest simulation of God. Only the most trained and discerning eye can distinguish between the operations of God and the Noonday Devil. The ancient, tried and true method of discernment has been to submit one's spirit to the judgment of a competent spiritual director. Not to any spiritual director but to one who truly knows the person in question. Unfortunately, many persons themselves serve as the spirit of Elohim with their directors and confessors. They seek to deceive the director so that the director will permit them to live their lies. They prefer to believe a nice lie about themselves rather than see the truth about themselves.

When Paul speaks about the pneuma (spirit) in Romans, he uses the term very narrowly. He applies pneuma to the operations of the Holy Spirit or to the Presence of the Holy Spirit. The Pneuma is the Spirit of God in man and working through man. Paul speaks of the Holy Spirit and he speaks of the pneuma or spirit of man. It appears to be a distinction as to who is the source of the spiritual activity. The Holy Spirit is seen in Romans as the Source of all pneumatic powers. When the Actor is the Holy Spirit, the operation is attributed to the Spirit of God. When the actor is the Christian, the operation is attributed to the spirit of man. There is always the implied understanding that the source of power is the Holy Spirit and man is but the channel and recipient of divine power. When Paul speaks of man as "spiritual" or of his spirit acting, this would probably be man in the state of sanctifying grace. Man operating under the effects of the Holy Spirit's Presence.

### MEN OF FLESH AND SPIRIT

As already mentioned, Paul distinguishes between two basic human types: Adam and Christ. Paul refers to the Adam-type as being a "psychikon" person, and the Christ-type as being a "pneumatikon" person. According to Paul there has been only one pneumatikon person on this earth. At this point permit me to introduce the One and Only Spirit-Filled Person: Jesus Christ, Risen from the dead!

Paul teaches that the baptized Christians remain psychikon persons and he distinguishes between two types: one psychikon person possesses the Pneuma of God and the other does not. The man without the Pneuma is the man of flesh. He is likewise called the unspiritual man to whom it is useless to speak of spiritual matters. This type of psychikon person is enslaved by sin and under the power of Satan. The other type of psychikon person possesses the Pneuma of God. He is under the power of grace: he has turned to the Kingdom of God: he acknowledges the Lordship of Jesus Christ: and he submits self to the reign of God. This second type is spoken of as being "in the body" but not "in the flesh."

The difference between the two is the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit makes the difference. This descendant of Adam (Man in the Body) can overcome sin, use human life for the service of God, and through good deeds can sanctify his personality. The spiritual man will die physically because of the effect of sin. He goes into the grave as a psychikon person because he "lives in the Lord" and he will not experience eternal death. He will rise from the grave completely pneumatized. He will come forth from the grave as a pneumatikon person--as an Ikon of Jesus Christ.

It will help us if we keep in mind that when Paul speaks of the "body," it is not usually a reference to a material being but to a person, a person conscious of self as a unique individual, a consciousness that will remain regardless of changes that

may occur in the substance through which a person realizes his existence, be it material or non-material. One thing is certain: Paul attributes the resurrection of our bodies from the dead to the presence of the Holy Spirit within the Christian.

What is psychic is natural; what is spiritual is supernatural in Romans. Let us not confuse the two concepts. Psychic powers would not be supernatural powers but refined human powers. People often do not distinguish between a psychic and a spiritual life. They cannot distinguish between psychotherapy and spiritual direction. They cannot distinguish between the wholesome desire to live a better, healthier psychic existence from a desire to live a more perfect spiritual life. Many come to a spiritual director who have no spiritual lives to direct. They certainly possess, as baptized Christians, the potential for a spiritual life but it still lies dormant. The source and motivation of a spiritual life is the Holy Spirit--the spiritual life is expressed through the operations of the supernatural virtues of faith, hope and charity.

### NEW HEART AND SPIRIT

All that Paul describes he knew to be the fulfillment of God's promise:

*"I will pour out water upon the thirsty ground, and streams upon the dry land; I will pour out my spirit upon your offspring, and my blessing upon your descendants."*

(Is.44:3)

*"I will give them a new heart and put a new spirit within them...so that they will live according to my statutes, and observe and carry out my ordinances; thus they shall be my people and I will be their God."*

(Ez.11:19-20)

*"I will make with them a covenant of peace; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them and I will multiply them, and put my sanctuary among them forever. My dwelling shall be with them..."*

(Ez.37:26-27.)

*"Your sons and daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream .dreams; your young men shall see visions; Even upon the servants and the handmaids (slaves)...I will pour out my spirit."*

(Joel 3:1-2.)

Paul told the Corinthians, "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God; no more can corruption inherit incorruption." (1Cor.15:50.) John describes



the inheritors of the Kingdom of God as persons "who were not begotten by blood, nor by carnal desire, nor by man's willing it but by God." (Jn.1:13.) Jesus said to Nicodemus:

*"I solemnly assure you, no one can see the reign of God unless he is begotten from above No one can enter into God's kingdom without being begotten of water and the Spirit. Flesh begets flesh. Spirit begets spirit."*

*(Jn.3:3,5-6.)*

Again Paul wrote, "Earthly men are like the man of earth, heavenly men are like the man of heaven." (1Cor.15:48.) "Ikon" is the Greek word for likeness. Paul tells us that men of the earth are ikons of Adam. Men of God are ikons of Christ. He reassuringly wrote: "Just as we resemble the man of the earth, so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven." (1Cor.15-49.) He does not deny that presently we are true ikons of Adam, but he maintains we shall one day be ikons of Jesus Christ.

The New Testament presents Jesus Christ as the Image of the New Man, His life being the presence of the reign of God. It displays Jesus as the only begotten Son of God upon whom the favor of the Father rests. For earthly man to come into the reign of God and come under the "favor" of God, he must come into Christ. This becomes possible through faith in Jesus Christ and through baptism. God saves us through Jesus Christ and through the Holy Spirit who recreates the ikons of Adam into the ikon of Jesus Christ.

Chapter eight of Romans deals with the mystery of the Holy Spirit within the lives of the baptized. The Scriptures dissipate ignorance but not mystery. It reveals mystery. Mystery invites us to go beyond the limited horizons of human knowledge, and to experience truth beyond its grasp--truth humbly and gratefully accepted--yet truth always escaping understanding by human intelligence. The mind will never on this earth say, "I see!" But the spirit will be able to say, "I know!"

Within chapter eight, we have twenty-nine references to the Spirit, whereas we had only five in the preceding seven chapters. Here we encounter the flowering of salvation. We are invited to contemplate the theology of the Holy Spirit. It is the study of our salvation. It relates how we come to be saved. Here we discover what it means to be men and women of God and how the Divine Artist fashions us into Ikons of the "man of heaven." The Divine Artist is the Holy Spirit!

## IKON OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

It is fundamental to the thought of Paul to grasp the fact that all he describes about the Christian flows from a personal union of the baptized with Jesus Christ. This union is above and different from any known spiritual union experienced by men or angels.

The Third Person of the Blessed Trinity, called the "Spirit of God" in Romans, comes to dwell in the person of the baptized. The baptized become the Temples of the Holy Spirit. There is an indwelling of the Holy Spirit. This causes the baptized to be "in the Spirit." This is simultaneously called "life in Christ" or "to be in Christ" and is referred to as the "indwelling of Christ." This is understandable when we realize that the Father-Son-Holy Spirit equally share in the divine life. Whoever shares in the divine life, shares in the life of the Blessed Trinity.

However, the Person of the Son became man--not the Person of the Father nor the Person of the Holy Spirit. The Person of the Holy Spirit comes to reside in the baptized. The Person of the Son is said to stand now at the right hand of the Father interceding for the saints on earth. Nevertheless, since the Holy Spirit dwelt first in the humanity of Jesus who humbly submitted Himself in obedience--as man--to the inspirations of the Holy Spirit, the human personality of Jesus was formed through His co-operation with the Holy Spirit. There was such a deliberate identification of Jesus' human nature with the Holy Spirit that the humanity of Jesus reflected the Holy Spirit--the personality of the Holy Spirit. The humanity of Jesus became the Ikon of the Holy Spirit. (The Greek word for likeness is "ikon.") As one could not in any practical way separate the life of Jesus from that of the Holy Spirit, it can truly be said that to be in the Spirit is to be in Christ, and to see the indwelling of the Holy Spirit as the indwelling of Christ.

This identification of the Holy Spirit within the baptized with the Spirit of Jesus serves an important function in the discernment of spirits. We are told to test every spirit! If the life of the baptized is to lose its likeness to Adam and to become an ikon of the heavenly man, it must reflect the life of Christ. The life of Jesus is a historical fact. We possess a general portrait of Christ. We know the essentials of His life and we know certain particulars, such as certain deeds and words. Therefore we possess in the historical life of Jesus a standard portrait for Christian likeness. The life of a true Christian, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, must conform (in spirit not letter) in some degree to the life of Jesus. It brings all "spiritual" experiences to the test of the historical revelation of God in Jesus Christ. The historical life of Christ becomes the measure by which the test of any spirit is working within a Christian. The life of Christ is the criteria by which the spirit must

be tested and discerned. Anything that would lead away from the "life" of Christ is immediately suspect. What cannot be seen to have root in the spirit of Christ is suspect. What is opposed to the life lived by Christ cannot be of the Holy Spirit. What is alien, bizarre, or novel is suspect. Before a thing can be confirmed to be of the Holy Spirit it ought to be demonstrated how it reflects the life of Christ. Of course this is not another "letter administration," it measures Christian activity by the Spirit of Christ, not by the mere external acts of Christ.

### LIFE IN THE SPIRIT

In chapter eight Paul announces: "There is no condemnation now for those who are in Christ Jesus." (Rom.8:1.) Condemnation is synonymous with curse. The Law brought all under a curse, the curse of sin and death. In Jesus Christ this curse has been removed. By dying on the Cross, Jesus bore this curse for us. Paul identifies the "spirit" as the very "spirit of life in Jesus Christ" which "has freed you from the law of sin and death." (See Rom.8:2.)

Paul sees the Incarnation of the Son of God as the Divine means of freeing, man from the power of sin and giving him the power, through the sending of the Holy Spirit, to obey the Word of God:

*Then God sent his Son in the likeness of sinful flesh as a sin offering, thereby condemning sin in the flesh, so that the just demands of the law might be fulfilled in us who live, not according to the flesh, but according to the spirit."*  
(Rom.8:3-4)

Jesus comes as the ikon of Adam--to be victimized by sin. The victim becomes the victor. In Jesus, sin is seen as totally evil and rejected. Jesus wins His victory on the battlefield in which Harmatia (Sin) won all previous battles--human nature fallen, weakened, vitiated by sin. It is as if a soldier broke his sword in battle and the enemy seized that opportunity to deal the soldier a mortal blow. Jesus Christ enters this same battle with the broken sword and, by means of it, conquers the enemy. The verdict of condemnation falls upon Harmatia, not Christ.

### DISTINCTION BETWEEN FLESH AND SPIRIT

The heroic refusal of Jesus--as a child of Adam--not to submit to sin merited the gift of the Holy Spirit for the human nature. It enabled the just reign of God to come in all those who lived "not according to the flesh, but according to the spirit." Paul reiterates: Those who live according to the flesh are intent on the things of the flesh, those who live according to the spirit, on those of the spirit. (Rom.8:5.) A sarx-person (flesh) may be mentally fascinated by religious truth but it will never render

it more than lip service. Its heart and will lie with its interests. "Where your treasure is there your heart will be." The flesh person is interested in self and a self-expressed, fulfilled will according to the standards and values of this earth. Such a person truly opposes the will of God:

*The flesh in its tendency is at enmity with God: it is not subject to God's law. Indeed, it cannot be; those who are in the flesh cannot please God.*  
(Rom.8:7-8)

Here we have a reflection of the Church's teaching on mortal sin, that those in such a state can do nothing to please God nor merit in any way. "Those who are in the flesh cannot please God." The foundation of this doctrine is that God's Holy Spirit is the Source of all godly deeds--all meritorious acts in man. When a person is dead to God--such a person living in the flesh--"the flesh in its tendency is at enmity with God." There is no Holy Spirit operating in their lives.

Those who live according to the spirit are intent on the things of the spirit--they are directed towards life and peace. When Paul contrasts the flesh with the spirit, it is not a contrast between the material and the immaterial but rather the ungodly against the godly. Whatever is of God is of the spirit: whatever opposes God is of the flesh.

*I want you to be wise in regard to what is good and innocent of all evil.*  
(Rom.16:19)

*Everything God created is Good.* (ITm.4:4.)

*A little wine is good for the stomach.* (ITm.5:23.)

*Test everything, retain what is good. Avoid any semblance of evil.*  
(IThes.5:21-22.)

## SONS OF GOD

Living in the spirit is living in the state of sanctifying grace, living under the influence of the Holy Spirit. It is a life of peace with God, but it is also a life directed towards internal peace. It centers a person's mind, heart and energy upon God's will and the fulfillment of that Will. It causes an inner harmony within life and destroys that schizoid and chaotic personality created through sin. Paul indicated the direction to inner peace when he wrote:

*Your thoughts should be wholly directed to all that is true, all that deserves respect, all that is honest, pure, admirable, decent, virtuous or worthy of praise. Live according to what you have learned and accepted, what you have heard me say and seen me do. Then will the God of Peace be with you.*

*(Phil.4:8-9)*

The Holy Spirit's presence distinguishes the man of the flesh from of the spirit. The Spirit of God does not dwell in the man of sin, "If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ." (Rom.8:9.) Paul equates the Holy Spirit with the Spirit of Christ. Christ is present and active in every person possessing the Holy Spirit; all animated by the same spirit form one Body. Those in the Spirit form the living body of Christ. The Church has been called the Corporate Personality of Jesus. All men are an object of Christian love because they are an object of the Father's love, but all Christians are an object of our love because love for the Christian Community means love of Christ.

We must understand that Paul does not equate the indwelling of the Holy Spirit with the indwelling of Jesus. Jesus is not the Holy Spirit. Jesus dwells in the baptized through the Holy Spirit. Paul goes on to say, "If Christ is in you the body is dead because of sin, while the spirit lives because of justice" (the state of righteousness). (Rom.8:10.) No matter how glorious Paul describes Christian existence, he never forgets the effect of sin. Our natural life is doomed to death because of the power of sin. It is the just claim that sin has on the human nature. However, Paul encourages us not to be concerned about physical death--not to fret over it. It is not the end of the story for the Christian. Paul's words imply that the Presence of the Holy Spirit within the baptized has brought about an essential change within human nature. Human nature has been touched by the Holy Spirit's divine indwelling and a Christian person has been divinely changed. By this we mean that the Presence of the Holy Spirit causes a radical change within the human soul--it assumes a Holy Spirit-like quality. We call this quality in the soul sanctifying grace. Sanctifying grace gives a divine-like quality to the human soul. Paul would see this quality being given to the entire person. For Paul, true immortality is not survival after death but is Life-in-God. Because a human being possesses a mortal body, that human being must die. Christian man goes into the grave as a psychikon personality. Because the Christian is living in the Spirit--physical death cannot again destroy the life of Christ--physical death cannot destroy the life of a Christian. After physical death a Christian continues to live in Christ and with Christ. He will come forth from the grave as a pneumatikon person--as a completely spiritualized person--in the likeness of Christ. The Ikon of Christ will have been completed. Only then can a person be called "spirit filled."

Paul describes Christian death in these words:

*If Christ is in you the body is dead because of sin, while the spirit lives because of justice. If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, then he who raised Christ from the dead will bring your mortal bodies to life also, through his Spirit dwelling in you. (Rom.8:10-11)*

Paul wrote to the Corinthian Christians:

*What is sown in the earth is subject to decay, what rises is incorruptible...A natural body is put down and a spiritual body comes up. (1Cor.15:42,44)*

Life after death is not new life but life lived under different conditions.

Life in Christ does not free a Christian from personal works of salvation. Paul knows that evil habits and vices formed by sin remain in the baptized as evil tendencies that must be rooted out. Paul personally confessed: "What I do is discipline my own body and master it, for fear that after having preached to others I myself should be rejected." (1Cor.9:27.) For this reason Paul warns those in Christ:

*We are debtors, then, my brothers--but not to the flesh, so that we should live according to the flesh. If you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the spirit you put to death the evil ...deeds of the body, you will live. (Rom.8:12-13)*

These words are spoken to Christians who have a debt owed to Christ--to make good use of the Spirit received.

Paul describes the status of a sinner as that of slavery. He now describes, for the first time in Romans, the status of a Christian as one of divine sonship. It is common today to think of all men as "sons of God" but there is little support in Scripture for such thought. The Scriptures reveal only one person to be the Son of God, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus implies there are certain conditions to be met for disciples to consider themselves as "sons of God."

*"My command to you is: love your enemies, pray for your persecutors. This will prove that you are sons of your heavenly Father, for his sun rises on the bad and the good, he rains on the just and the unjust. In a word, you must be made perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect."(Mt.5:43-48)*

Paul sees the Holy Spirit as the Source of our divine son ship. We are "in Christ" and therefore united to the Father. The Christian possesses the same status before

the Father as does Jesus Christ. What Jesus possessed naturally, the Christian possesses through adoption into the divine Family:

*All who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. You did not receive a spirit of slavery leading you back into fear, but a spirit of adoption through which we cry out, "Abba!" (that is, "Father"). The Spirit himself gives witness with our spirit that we are children of God. (Rom.8:14-16)*

Paul indicates that the Christians in prayer spontaneously and courageously address God in Heaven as "Abba." He sees the Holy Spirit as the source of such prayer, and the Holy Spirit witnessing to the adoptive relationship that has occurred. Paul wrote the Galatians, "The proof that you are sons is the fact that God has sent forth into our hearts the Spirit of His Son which cries out "Abba!" ("Father!") (Gal.4:6.) Paul maintains that the Holy Spirit forms within the hearts of the baptized the very sentiments and the confidence towards God possessed by Jesus Christ. "Perfect love casts out fear." Paul sees this actually taking place in a Christian's attitude towards God. There is no attitude of a slave towards a master. Christians, through the Holy Spirit, are conscious of being perfectly loved by God and that all fear has been cast aside in one's relationship with God. It is not our perfect love that casts out our fear, but the knowledge of the Father's perfect love for us. This leads Paul to a bold, logical deduction, "But if we are children, we are heirs as well: heirs of God, heirs with Christ..." (Rom.8:17) Paul tells us that we are heirs to God. We have inherited Christ's relationship with God. Eternal life and every lasting union with God is not seen as our reward but as our inheritance. Paul implies we receive this as our just due as sons.

We must understand that all this comes to be because of our union and identification with Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit. Outside of Christ and His Holy Spirit all we could be assured of would be the sun and rain from God. All of this is conditional upon our union with Jesus Christ. Paul becomes very concrete about this union with Jesus and very specific about the degree of union: "...we are heir of God, heirs with Christ, if only we suffer with him so as to be glorified with him." (Rom.8:17.)

What does Paul mean by "if only we suffer with him"? We know that the Christ in glory cannot suffer, yet Paul uses a tense that implies an on-going suffering with Christ. We have been told that through the Holy Spirit, Christ dwells within our lives--our lives are within Christ. What transpires in the life of a Christian under the power of the Holy Spirit can be spoken of as the life of Christ. As yet, we are still in our mortal bodies inherited from Adam. This of itself will always be a source of suffering for the Christian just as it was a source of suffering for Christ when he too dwelt in this mortal body. Paul has no particular sufferings in mind. He

knows as long as we are in the body that we are vulnerable to all kinds of suffering in this world. Our example is Christ who suffered death rather than sin. If we wish to share in His eternal inheritance, we must be identified with Him in this life through our sufferings, even to the degree that we would suffer death rather than sin. For Paul, nothing we suffer in this life can be compared with the glory we will possess with Christ:

*I consider the sufferings of the present to be as nothing compared with the glory to be revealed in us. (Rom.8:18)*

*Eye has not seen, ear has not heard, nor has it so much as dawned on man what God has prepared for those who love him. (ICor.2:9)*

With the eye of the mystic and the heart of the poet Paul sees all creation itself suffering because of sin. He hears the groaning of all nature itself--animated and inanimated beings suffering the curse of man's sin. Paul sees this suffering world as one day being freed from the effects of sin; renewed and reconstituted to show forth, in unveiled splendor, the glory of God:

*Indeed, the whole created world eagerly awaits the revelation of the son of God. Creation was made subject to futility, not of its own accord but by him who once subjected it; yet not without hope, because the world itself will be freed from its slavery to corruption and share in the glorious freedom of the children of God. Yes, we know that all creation groans and is in agony even until now. (Rom.8:19-22)*

Peter's epistle speaks of great cosmic sufferings to be followed by "new heavens and a new earth where, according to his promise, the justice of God will reside." (2Pt.3:13.) We read these words in Isaiah:

*Lo, I am about to create new heavens and a new earth; The things of the past shall not be remembered or come to mind. Instead, there shall always be rejoicing and happiness in what I create;...The wolf and the lamb shall graze alike, and the lion shall eat hay like the ox ...None shall hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain, says the Lord. (Is.65:17-18a,25)*

We hear these words in the Book of Revelation:

*Then I saw new heavens and a new earth. The former heavens and the former earth had passed away, and the sea was no longer He shall wipe every tear from their eyes, and there shall be no more death or mourning, crying out or pain, for the former world has passed away. (Rv .21 : 1, 4)*



The Scriptures seem to imply that one day all creation will share in the fruits of the redemption. Yet, before that time, it too must suffer and die. Christ marked the trail to glory. All who will share in that glory will walk that path to glory, the path of suffering and death. Paul makes it clear that these are part of the elements of life in the Spirit, "Not only that, but we ourselves, although we have the Spirit as first fruits, groan inwardly while we await the redemption of our bodies." (Rom.8:23.) Paul implies that temptations, trials, sufferings are not signs that we are not in the Spirit, but only that we are still in these unredeemed bodies, in these unredeemed personalities of ours. We know what we are, but we must patiently await what we shall be when we become "spirit filled." He sees the gift of the Holy Spirit only as the beginning of our redemption, the first fruits. Meanwhile we suffer and we may groan, but patiently.

Paul has brought us back to our first lesson on salvation because he does not want it forgotten. There he told us:

*Now that we have been justified by faith, we are at peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have gained access by faith to the grace in which we now stand, and we boast of our hope for the glory of God. But not only that--we even boast of our afflictions! We know that affliction makes for endurance, and endurance for tested virtue, and tested virtue for hope. And this hope will not leave us disappointed, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. (Rom.5:1-5)*

Again Paul tells us that our salvation is a matter of our hope:

*In hope we were saved. But hope is not hope if its object is seen; how is it possible for one to hope for what he sees? And hoping for what we cannot see means awaiting it with patient endurance. (Rom.8:24-25)*

The problem is that we all want the full effects of the redemption here and now! Some of us despair because we do not have it; others, out of fear of despair, fantasize to themselves that they have already achieved it--as did certain acquaintances of Paul. The Lord demands we all practice the faith that gives us certainty of His love; that we patiently endure the trials, temptations and sufferings that come our way; He even has the nerve to suggest we rejoice in the salvation we possess in hope!

Oftentimes, when people concentrate on what they do not have, they fail to consider what they do have. Paul feels a Christian ought to accentuate the positive. After all, did not the Lord tell His disciples that He would not leave them alone, that

they would not be orphaned in this world? He would send the Paraclete who would be a comfort and help to them. Paul tries to impress upon us what a wonderful, personal Gift we have in the Holy Spirit:

*The Spirit too helps us in our weakness, for we do not know how to pray as we ought; but the Spirit himself makes intercession for us with groanings that cannot be expressed in speech." (Rom.8:26.)*

Paul seems to imply that those inexpressible longings and desires for holiness and union with the Lord, in which there is no speech in which to clothe them, are prayers, rising from the Temple of the soul to the Father in Heaven on our behalf, from the Holy Spirit. These are prayers of the heart that never reach the lips. Prayers that express the restlessness and discontent of a soul still separated from the source of its true peace. Paul teaches, "He who searches hearts knows what the Spirit means, for the Spirit intercedes for the saints as God himself wills." (Rom.8:27.) What a Friend Christians have in the Holy Spirit--in the Spirit of Jesus! The liturgy of the Church calls the Holy Spirit, "Father of the poor" who "in your gracious visits to man's soul you bring relief and consolation. If it is weary with toil, you bring it ease; in the heat of temptation, your grace cools it; if sorrowful, your words console it..."

Paul views the Christian life as being constantly under the wings of God's providential love. For Christians there are no accidents--no chance--it is not blind fate that rules their lives but divine love. The living faith of Christians--lived in the body--ought to produce a great confidence in their daily lives. They should possess an unconquerable hope amidst life's difficulties. For as Paul says, "We know that God makes all things work together for the good of those who have been called according to his decree." (Rom.8:28.) This is not to say that God makes everything good in the life of a Christian, but whatever comes, God is within the situation bringing good out of it for the person.

Furthermore Paul adds:

*Those whom he foreknew he predestined to share the image of his Son, that the Son might be the first-born of many brothers. Those he predestined he likewise called; those he called he also justified; and those he justified he in turn glorified. (Rom.8:29-30)*

Speaking of the baptized as being predestined would be in keeping with Paul's Jewish training and background. It is not an implied condemnation and damnation of the rest of humanity as some have taught. It is the Jewish explanation of what has actually occurred. They believe nothing occurred by chance or by accident in their

lives. They were under the wings of divine providence and what occurred in their lives--good or evil--God willed. This did not violate their freedom of the will as it all resulted from the covenant relationship--freely entered into with Yahweh. The Jews did not extend God's providential love to the pagans. When Paul speaks of 'Christians being predestined, it is an application of the Jewish mentality to the Christian situation. It does not imply that God violated the free wills of Christians nor that He predestined certain persons to Hell. Paul seeks to confirm the confidence of Christians by teaching them that their status as adoptive sons of God had been foreknown and fore willed by God. In other words, before they came to be, God knew them and loved them. We are dealing here with divine mystery. We are dealing with the mystery of God's foreknowledge and forewill and notwithstanding this mystery--the mystery of the human will. The Scriptures verify these mysteries to be true. They stand as revealed truths accepted in faith, even though the human mind cannot reconcile them.

Paul describes here the Christian situation. It would be unfortunate if we missed the great consoling message he teaches due to intellectual stumbling blocks over "predestination."

### NO CONDEMNATION IN CHRIST

Paul began chapter eight with this proclamation: "There is no condemnation now for those who are in Christ Jesus." If a Christian remains "in Christ" there are no grounds for fear of God's condemnation. Our fearlessness is not based upon our perfect love of God, for that would be an illusion, but upon the demonstrable fact of God's perfect love for us. We have no fear of condemnation from God. After all, who is going to condemn us? The Father?

*Is it possible that he who did not spare his own Son but handed him over for the sake of us all will not grant us all things besides? Who shall bring a charge against God's chosen ones? God, who justifies? Who shall condemn them? Christ Jesus, who died or rather was raised up, who is at the right hand of God and who intercedes for us? (Rom.8:32-34)*

In the light of this Paul asks us Christians to contemplate: "If God is for us, who can be against us?" Whoever that "who" might be who may be against us, they can never change God's unalterable and eternal love for us that comes to us in the love of Christ for us.

The overwhelming reality of God's love for us bursts forth from Paul's heart in an inspired hymn of Hope:

*Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Trial, or distress, or persecution, or hunger, or nakedness, or danger, or the sword? As Scripture says: "For your sake we are being slain all the day long; we are looked upon as sheep to be slaughtered." Yet in all this we are more than conquerors because of him who has loved us. For I am certain that neither death nor life, neither angels nor principalities, neither the present nor the future, nor powers, neither height nor depth nor any other creature, will be able to separate us from the love of God that comes to us in Christ Jesus, our Lord. (Rom.8:35-39)*

**The love of God is such a confirmed fact for Christians that Paul can proclaim with absolute certainty that nothing in heaven, on earth, or in Hell can separate us from the "love of God that comes to us in Christ Jesus, our Lord!" (Rm.8:39.)**

## CHAPTER 9

### THE MYSTERY OF ISRAEL

#### INTRODUCTION

Chapter eight of Romans closed with a hymn of Divine Love. St. Paul confidently proclaimed that nothing could separate a Christian from the love of God coming to us through Jesus Christ. Chapter nine of Romans begins a new section. In the next three chapters, Paul deals with the mystery of Israel. He has spoken on the blessed status of Christians. It is only natural that his thoughts now turn to the Jewish People. Most of them have rejected the gospel message. The Christ bringing such blessings to the Gentiles leaves the majority of the Jews unmoved. If Jesus of Nazareth is the promised Messiah, why did the Jewish Nation as a whole reject Him? This question haunted the hearts of many and perhaps no one's heart more than that of Paul of Tarsus.

Once converted to Jesus Christ, Paul became the most vocal, most tireless champion of the gospel. As the Jews challenged the spread of the gospel, Paul was often brought into open conflict with them. In keeping with his rabbinical training, he defended the gospel message with old Testament Scriptures. Over the years he developed and refined his answers to the Jews' objections to the gospel."

The next three chapters of Romans are such a composite unit they could be studied independently of the rest of the epistle. Many scholars believe that Paul composed this section at an earlier date and incorporated it into his letter to the Romans. It may well represent a sermon delivered by Paul as his answer to the question, "Why did the Jews fail, as a whole people, to believe in Jesus Christ?" Paul's presentation takes the literary form of a diatribe. The diatribe is a method of presenting a teaching in which the teacher states a thesis and then proves his thesis by answering questions from an imaginary opponent.

Out of the many theological skirmishes Paul had with the Jews (non-Christian and Christian) he probably developed the reputation of being an enemy of the Jews, an arch-traitor, who excelled the Gentiles in anti-semitism.

Many people cannot distinguish between love and defense of truth versus hate and deprecation of those in error. We know from experience that many people who hate sin also hate sinners. The Pharisees appear in the Scriptures as such people.

The Scriptures forbid Christians to hate their enemies; they are commanded to love all human beings regardless of creed. Paul was a true Christian motivated by the love of Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit. Men maligned Paul when they portrayed him as an enemy of the Jewish People. Paul was filled with love and respect for his own people. One of the greatest sufferings of his earthly life was to daily witness their rejection of faith in Jesus Christ. It was because he was so concerned about the Jews that he became so upset with them.

### PAUL'S FEELING TOWARDS THE JEWS

Paul begins his exposition on the destiny of the Jews with a confession of his personal love and esteem for his people:

*I speak the truth in Christ: I do not lie. My conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit that there is great grief and constant pain in my heart. Indeed, I could even wish [naturally speaking] to be separated from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kinsmen the Israelites. (Rom.9:1-3)*

Paul's acceptance of Christ comes from divine grace and not from natural preference. All his natural feelings united him with his people. Only supernatural power united him with Jesus Christ at the expense of separating him from his natural family ties. (Once a convert who embraced the Church at the cost of being disowned by his family confessed that the day following his baptism into the Church every muscle in his body was totally sore, caused by the emotional strain of entering the Church at the cost of separation from his natural family. Only divine grace empowers people greatly devoted to their families to choose Christ over their families.) Paul reiterates his personal affection for the Jews:

*Brothers, my heart's desire, my prayer to God for the Israelites, is that they may be saved. (Rom.10:1)*

*Theirs were the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the law-giving, the worship, and the promises; theirs were the patriarchs, and from them came the Messiah (I speak of his human origins). (Rom.9:4)*

Paul recalls the glorious history of the Jews, that decisive role Israel played in the plan of divine salvation. Israel had possessed a starring role. She crowned her glory by bringing upon this earth the Messiah, the Savior of the World.

## GOD AS CAUSE

Paul ends his brief recall of Israel's religious glory with a phrase that has caused considerable difficulty for translators and biblical scholars. Paul speaks of "God forever blessed!" As the phrase appears in the Greek it could modify "Christ." If so, Paul proclaims the divinity of Jesus Christ. Those who believe he does do so have translated the conclusion of verse five as "Christ who is above all, God forever blessed!" Other scholars who hold Paul does not go this far as to identify Jesus as God (at least here in Romans), or those who remain in doubt over the problem, separate the phrase from Christ and present it as one attributing Israel's glory to Yahweh such as "Blessed forever be God who is over all! Amen." The construction of the Greek phrase appears to favor an acknowledgment of the divinity of the Messiah. On the other hand, Paul's customary method of presenting Christ does not favor such a direct affirmation. This seems to be the heart of the controversy: but in presenting this controversy, one meaning of Paul is clear: God is the supreme and sovereign cause for all that has occurred and man can but praise Him. Paul answers the question, "Why did the Jews reject Jesus Christ?" from the point of view of God and then from the point of view of the Jews. Paul gives a divine answer and a human answer to the question.

The divine answer is based upon the ancient Jewish concept of God. God is the Sovereign Being of the universe. Nothing occurs in the universe, good or ill, not willed by God. All God wills flows from the heart of God and has dependence upon nothing beyond God. God acts, and things come to be. From our point of view it may seem at times that God acts arbitrarily or even capriciously with man. For man to think such thoughts, makes God subject to man's judgment. In such cases, man truly exalts himself above God. He places himself in the position of questioning the decisions of his Creator. Man's difficulty with God's performance is but a concrete witness to the divine revelation given in Isaiah:

*For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways, says the Lord. As high as the heavens are above the earth, so high are my ways above your ways and my thoughts above your thoughts. (Is.55:8-9)*

In the mind of Paul, the primary reason the Jews rejected the Messiah was because God willed it. Nothing could come to be unless God willed it.

The Jews did not distinguish, as we do today, between the perfect will of God and the permissive will of God. They did not distinguish between what God wills as a direct expression of His own Nature and between that which God permits to be. God directly wills good. God may permit evil. For example: God willed man to be free--freedom of the will is a good: but by so doing He permits man to choose that

which is evil--misuse of the freedom of the will is evil. God directly wills the freedom of the will. God permits man to sin by misusing the freedom of the will. It can be said that sin flows from the permissive will of God. God permits this because a greater good flows from the freedom of the human will than the evil that will flow from the misuse of it.

Paul knows God's ways and thoughts remain mysterious. At times, the best men do is but discover the pattern of divine behavior in this world. This discovery does not necessarily mean a greater understanding of the Way. The revelation of divine mystery calls us to accept as true what cannot be understood. Whatever comes to be, the man of faith confesses: "God's word has not failed." (Rom.9:6.)

Paul discovered that in God's dealings with man there has been a process of divine selection from the beginning of Israel's history. The Scriptures reveal a divine process of choice and elimination. First of all we see that not all the descendants of Abraham were heirs of "the promise." Ishmael was Abraham's first born son, but Isaac was the son of the divine promise: "I will return at this time, and Sarah shall have a son." (Rom.9:9.) Likewise Isaac had twin sons by Rebekah, Esau and Jacob. Esau was the first born. Before the twin sons were born God chose Jacob: "I have loved Jacob and hated Esau." This is a Semitic expression implying that one is preferred over the other. When such divine decisions are revealed in our little world, the human struggle with the divine-way begins. From the human point of view, the divine usually comes out the loser. Man questions God's justice as if God's justice was on the same level as human justice. Man's justice is to give each his due. The Justice of God is the Mercy of God that gives to all beyond their just deserts and gives differently to different individuals. As the Lord said to Moses: "I will show mercy to whomever I choose; I will have pity on whomever I wish." (Rom.9:15.) God reveals His own sovereign freedom. Paul acknowledges God's right to use His creation freely. Paul sees the Scriptures confirming this right in the Lord's words to the Pharaoh of Egypt: "This is why I raised you up: that through you I might show my power, and my name might be proclaimed through all the earth." (Rom.9:17.) God possesses the freedom to use His creatures both positively and negatively to show forth His glory. In so doing, God will never violate the intrinsic lovingness of His own will, nor will God violate the freedom of man's will.

From man's point of view the justice of God's way will not always be obvious. Man in his weakness and pride will question the acts of God. Paul put man in his proper place:

*Friend, who are you to answer God back? Does something molded say to its molder, "Why did you make me like this?" Does not a potter have, the right to*



*make from the same lump of clay one vessel for a lofty purpose and another for a humble one? (Rom.9:20-21)*

Paul no doubt intends to call to mind the Genesis account of man's creation:

*The Lord God formed man out of the clay of the ground. (Gn.2:7)*

*By the sweat of your face shall you get bread to eat, until you return to the ground, from which you were taken; for you are dirt, and to dirt you shall return. (Gn.3:9)*

In the mind of Paul, any creature with such a beginning and such an ending has no just right to question its Creator.

Paul asks a hypothetical question: What if there are people who in the process of man's history show forth the Wrath of God; men who become vessels of wrath revealing the infinite patience of God towards sinners, and on the other hand, others who have been selected to show forth the richness of God's mercy; persons who literally become vessels of mercy, filled with the grace and blessings of God? Who could deprive God of this right? Paul maintains that God has exercised this right in their very own lives: He has called Christians to be "vessels for mercy--which he prepared for glory." (Rom.9:23b.) Paul affirms, "I am speaking about us whom he called, not only from among the Jews, but from among the Gentiles." (Rom.9:24.)

Paul teaches, "Not all Israelites are true Israelites." (Rom.9:6b.) The word Israel has been interpreted to mean God rules or may God rule. Paul centers upon what is the essential meaning of being an Israelite. Only those could be true Israelites over whom Yahweh ruled through Christ. The Jews and the Gentiles who accepted Jesus Christ comprised the true Israel--were truly Israelites. Paul sees that the New Israel will be a people but not a nation, and only a remnant of the Jewish People will comprise the true Israel of God. Quoting the Book of Hosea Paul writes:

*Those who were not my people I will call "my people," and those who were not loved I will call "Beloved";...they shall be called sons of the living God. (Rom.9:25-26)*

Here Paul sees the Scriptures revealing the divine call and choice of the Gentiles. Isaiah reveals that the "true Israel" would be reduced nigh to a seed. Paul writes,

*Isaiah cries out, referring to Israel, "Though the number of the Israelites should be as the sands of the sea, only the remnant will be saved Unless the Lord*

*of hosts had left. us a remnant, we should have become as Sodom, we should be like Gomorrah." (Rom.9:27-29)*

From the point of view of man, God's business seems such a paradox: The Gentiles who had no burning ambition to possess the "justice of God," in a sense stumbled into righteousness. On the other hand, the Jews who earnestly sought the "justice of God" stumbled on the pathway and lost the way to righteousness.

It was the Will of God that righteousness should come from God to man as a pure gift through faith. The Gentiles came to righteousness because they came to faith in Jesus Christ. The Jews on the other hand had preconceived righteousness to be a result of their external observance of the Mosaic Law. They placed their faith in good works. God demanded they forsake their humanly acquired righteousness and put their faith in the Person of the Christ. God selected faith in Jesus as the cornerstone on which would rise the New Israel of the Spirit. "Because justice comes from faith, not from works." (Rom.9:32b.) Paul instructs us:

*They [the Jews] stumbled over the stumbling stone, as Scripture says: "Behold, I am placing in Zion a stone to make men stumble and a rock to make them fall: but he who believes in him will not be put to shame." (Rom.9:32c-33 )*

## ISRAEL AS CAUSE

Paul now turns our attention to look at the human reason for the Jews' failure to accept Jesus Christ. Paul finds the Jews completely blameworthy from the human point of view. The Jews, he acknowledges, had zeal for God but their's was an unenlightened religious fervor. They lacked any real knowledge of the actual relationship that existed between God and man. Jesus Christ revealed this true relationship. The Jews remained ignorant of the fact that righteousness came as a pure gift from God. They established their own norm for righteousness: justice came from the fulfillment of the Mosaic Law. They placed their faith in good works. God demand their humanly acquired righteousness and put their faith in the Person of Christ. They rejected God's Will in this matter. Paul sees this rejection and the refusal to submit to God's plan as a desire for self-righteousness--a self-righteousness achieved through the observance of the Mosaic Law. However, God reveals that justice comes through faith in Jesus Christ who "is the end of the law." (Rom.10:4.)

The Law has come to an end in Christ. The time of the Torah was from Moses until the coming of the Messiah. The Law finds its completion and fulfillment in Christ. The Jews refuse to accept the fact that the old order has passed away, and

God creates anew--a superior order of grace which is being opened to all mankind. "Through him [Jesus Christ], justice comes to everyone who believes." (Rom.10:4b.)

Paul quotes Moses to emphasize how difficult it would be to obtain righteousness through the observance of the Law: "The one who observes the law shall live by it." (Lv.18:5.) He again quotes Moses and this time sees Moses' words as a description of the righteousness that comes through faith--a means so much easier and available to all:

*"For this command which I enjoin on you today is not too mysterious and remote for you. It is not up in the sky, that you should say, 'Who will go up in the sky to get it for us and tell us of it, that we may carry it out?' Nor is it across the sea, that you should say, 'Who will cross the sea to get it for us and tell us of it, that we may carry it out?' No, it is something very near to you, already in your mouths and in your hearts; you have only to carry it out." (Dt.30:11-14)*

Paul makes a play upon Moses' words applying them to Christ. The impossibility has been achieved by Jesus, the heights have been scaled and the depths have been plumbed. The Christ has come down from heaven; He has descended into the earth and risen from the dead. The work has been done by Jesus. God now only asks man to identify with Christ. Accept Him as Savior. Accept the righteousness coming from Jesus Christ.

Paul describes the simplicity of God's plan for salvation:

*For if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. Faith in the heart leads to justification, confession on the lips to salvation. Scripture says, "No one who believes in him will be put to shame." Here there is no difference between Jew and Greek; all have the same Lord, rich in mercy toward all who call upon him. "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." (Rom.10:9-13)*

It is generally admitted that Paul's usage of the word "Lord" as applied to Jesus clearly implies the divinity of Jesus. Faith in Jesus as Lord implies belief in His Divinity, Incarnation, Redeeming death, Resurrection and final Glorification. Paul makes clear that the response to faith must be total. It must be expressed internally (in the heart) by a complete submission of one's person to Christ. However faith in the heart is not sufficient. Faith must be "confessed with your lips." This does not mean giving lip-service to faith in Christ. It is a reference to the external practice of faith. It demands that faith be practiced in everyday life. Paul would have agreed perfectly with Booker T. Washington: "What you are crying so loud that I cannot hear what you are saying." In other words: "I would rather see a

sermon than hear one.'" For this reason Paul maintains that sincere acceptance of Jesus from the heart leads to righteousness. In other words, it leads to baptism and sanctification through the Holy Spirit; but, he implies more is needed in order to be saved: confession of faith upon the lips (in daily practice) leads to salvation. The person possessing such faith will not face shame on the Day of Judgment: "No one who believes in him will be put to shame." It is a divine promise that all who come to the Lord in faith will be saved. For all who call upon the name of the Lord in faith will discover a Lord "rich in mercy"--a Lord both for Jews and Gentiles. Paul quotes from the Book of Joel when he says: "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." (Jl.3:5.) The "name" refers to Yahweh. From what Paul has previously said, Jesus is the name that saves. "Name" signifies the person. This would signify turning to Jesus in faith. Here is implied the truth explicitly preached by Peter in Jerusalem:

*"This Jesus is 'the stone rejected by you the builders which has become the cornerstone.' There is no salvation in anyone else, for there is no other name in the whole world given to men by which we are to be saved." (Acts 4:11-12)*

Paul maintains that salvation is open to all, and the means to salvation is faith; a faith that sees God's saving power in the Person of Jesus Christ. Again the question arises in Paul's mind: "Why have the Jews not obtained righteousness through faith?"

From his own personal experience Paul knows that there is a process by which one comes to a saving faith. Those who desire to be saved must call on Christ in faith in order to be saved. But how can they call upon the Name of Jesus Christ if they do not believe in Him? And how can they believe in Jesus unless they have heard of Him? And how can they hear of Jesus unless there is someone to preach? And how can men preach unless they are sent? (See Rom.10:14-15.) Paul realizes no one can preach the gospel with the power that produces faith unless they are empowered to do so by the Holy Spirit. It is proclaimed by apostles. Apostles are those chosen by the Holy Spirit and empowered by Him. Apostles are God's ambassadors. Speaking to the Corinthians, Paul said that God:

*...has given us the ministry of reconciliation. I mean that God, in Christ, was reconciling the world to himself, not counting men's transgressions against them, and that he has entrusted the message of reconciliation to us. This makes us ambassadors for Christ, God as it were appealing through us. (2Cor.5:18-20b)*

Paul is likewise well aware there are false apostles among God's people—men who proclaim the gospel for their own purpose. Paul says:

*We at least are not like so many who trade on the word of God. We speak in Christ's name, pure in motivation, conscious of having been sent and of standing in his presence. (2Cor.2:17)*

Has God sent His apostles to the Jews to preach the "good news"? Yes, the Scriptures confirm this: "How beautiful are the feet of those who announce good news." (Rom.10:15b.) Men have been sent. The Jews have heard the gospel. The problem is disbelief:

*But not all have believed the gospel. Isaiah asks, "Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?" Faith, then, comes through hearing, and what is heard is the word of Christ. I ask you, have they not heard? Certainly they have, for "their voice has sounded over the whole earth, and their words to the limits of the world." (Rom.10:16-18.)*

Paul accommodates the words of the Psalm to express the truth that the preaching of the gospel has been widespread.

The Jews have heard and have refused to believe in the gospel: "Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us." God rejected Israel because Israel rejected the salvation offered by God through Jesus Christ.

## ISRAEL REJECTS THE CALL OF THE GENTILES

Could it be possible that the Jews who heard did not truly understand that "no one who believed in him will be put to shame," and "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved"? In other words, had the Jews failed to understand that Yahweh would offer salvation to the Gentiles as well as to the Jews? Paul will not accept this as a fact because the Scriptures had foretold it:

*First of all, Moses says, "I will make you jealous of those who are not even a nation; with a senseless nation I will make you angry." Then Isaiah says boldly, "I was found by those who were not seeking me; to those who were not looking for me I revealed myself." But of Israel he says, "All day long I stretched out my hands to an unbelieving and contentious people." (Rom.10:19-21)*

In Isaiah: 2, Israel received a call to become the Servant of Yahweh and to carry the gospel to the Gentiles. But as one author has observed:

*The Jews preferred to follow Ezekiel, Ezra, and the exclusivist party and to foster a fanatic national pride upon a narrow religion which canonized envy, hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness against Gentiles. (Dodd)*

The Jews refused to accept as good news any proclamation that placed Gentiles on religious equality with the Jews and in which salvation was offered equally to all men. Paul had come to realize this truth in the synagogue at Pisidian Antioch where he had preached:

*"We ourselves announce to you the good news that what God promised our fathers he has fulfilled for us, their children, in raising Jesus...In him, every believer is acquitted." (Act 13:32-33,39)*

On the Sabbath following this sermon we read in Acts :

*Almost the entire city gathered to hear the word of God. When the Jews saw the crowds, they became very jealous and countered whatever Paul said with violent abuse. Paul and Barnabas spoke out fearlessly, nonetheless: "The word of God has to be declared to you first of all but since you reject it and thus convict yourselves as unworthy of everlasting life, we now turn to the Gentiles. For thus were we instructed by the Lord: 'I have made you a light to the nations, a means of salvation to the ends of the earth.'"*

*(Acts 13:44-47)*

The Jewish Nation as a whole rejected the divine plan of universal salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. By their own wills they excluded themselves from that divine plan.

### GOOD FROM EVIL

Earlier Paul said: "Brothers, my heart's desire, my prayer to God for the Israelites, is that they may be saved." (Rom.10:1.) If Paul had despaired of it, he would not have prayed for the conversion of Israel. Despite the apparently hopeless situation, Paul still prayerfully hopes for Israel's incorporation into the divine plan. Paul finds within his own conversion hope for Israel. He too once refused to believe in Jesus Christ. However, the Lord brought Paul from darkness to light. Made him the Light to the Gentiles. Nothing is impossible for God! As his own conversion had brought rich blessings to so many, he foresaw how the entire world could be blessed through the conversion of the entire Jewish Nation.

Paul sees a remnant of Jews saved through incorporation into the Church as a seed of future glory for Israel as a whole. In this remnant Israel continues as God's Chosen People. In the remnant of the saved, particularly in his own case, Paul sees the evidence that God has not rejected His people. He sees this period in Jewish history, and in which he is now living, comparable to a time in the life of Elijah. It

appeared to Elijah all Israel had abandoned God and he alone had remained faithful; he fled to hide in a cave for they wished to destroy him. The situation appeared hopeless. At that moment the Lord revealed to Elijah: "I have left for myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal." (1Kgs.20:18.) Only a few months after writing Romans, we hear James telling Paul in Jerusalem: "you see, brother, how many thousands of Jews have come to believe..." (Acts 21:20.) So Paul can rightly say: "Just so, in the present time there is a remnant chosen by grace of God." Paul immediately desires to make it perfectly clear that those Jews who have come to believe in Christ had not done so because they were a better quality of Jew than those who rejected Christ, but because God chose them: "But if the choice is by grace, it is not because of their works--otherwise grace would not be grace." (Rom.11:6.)

This brings Paul once again back to God as the reason why the Jews rejected Christ. It also confirms in his mind that God has only temporarily rejected the Jews. In this rejection Paul sees a divine purpose unfolding for a greater good. Paul says:

*What then are we to say? Just this: Israel did not obtain what she was seeking, but those who were chosen did. The rest became blind, as Scripture says: "God gave them a spirit of stupor; blind eyes and deaf ears, and it is so to this day." (Rom.11:7-8)*

Paul quotes both Isaiah and David (Rom.11:9-10) as his witnesses that God has caused the Jews to be temporarily blinded to Christ Jesus.

God brings good out of this present bad situation. Because the Jews rejected the gospel, the Apostles turned towards the Gentiles with the good news. The Gentiles believed: "The Gentiles were delighted when they heard this and responded to the word of life with praise. All who were destined for life everlasting believed in it." (Acts.13:48-49.) Through the rejection of the gospel by the Jews, salvation has been offered to the world.

The Gentiles will become witnesses to the Jews of the grace of God coming through faith in the gospel; righteousness and sanctification will be demonstrated in lives of people previously ungodly. This will first have a "sour-grapes" effect upon the Jews. The results will be negative, leading them to be envious of the Christians. Ultimately it will stimulate their conversion to Jesus Christ. These are the good purposes Paul discovers in God's rejection of the Jews as a whole. Paul asks:

*Does their stumbling mean that they are forever fallen? Not at all! Rather, by their transgression salvation has come to the Gentiles to stir Israel to envy. But if their transgression and their diminishing have meant riches for the Gentile*

*world, how much more their full number! If their rejection has meant reconciliation for the world, what will their acceptance mean? Nothing less than life from the dead! (Rom.11:11-12,15)*

Paul cannot but reflect that if God brings good to others out of Israel's disobedience to faith, what will be the tremendous good coming to the world when Israel submits in obedience to faith in Christ? Paul's answer is, "Nothing less than life from the dead!" (Rom.11:15b.) What Paul meant by that statement has been much discussed by biblical scholars. Some have interpreted this to mean that the conversion of the Jews would bring such an increase of spiritual life into the Christian Community it would be like a resurrection from the dead. However, others believe that this refers to the general resurrection from the dead to occur in the end times. The general resurrection will not occur until the Jews come to faith in Christ, then all the Church will come into the fullness of the redemption and God's kingdom will be brought to its perfection. The conversion of the Jews will inaugurate this greatest and final blessing. This latter opinion appears to be the more likely interpretation of "nothing less than life from the dead."

Even though Paul has previously repudiated the Jewish doctrine of righteousness coming to the Jews through natural descent from Abraham as heirs of the "Promise," he does see merit in the doctrine if understood properly. There is something to be said for the solidarity of the nation. Paul had denied the Jewish interpretation of this doctrine in order to uphold the doctrine of justification through faith. Justification through faith in Christ still stands, but Paul sees from the fact that the Jews belong to the Chosen People adds hope for their salvation. Clearly, God's rejection of them has been only partial, as evident from the choice of the remnant. This leads Paul to believe that the rejection of the majority will be only temporary. He reinforces this belief with two analogies.

Paul recalls the Jewish religious custom in which a cake made from the first batch of new dough was offered to the Lord. This offering of the "first fruits" sanctified the rest of the dough and the cakes made from it. So it has been with the remnant that has come to Christ. They are like the first cake dedicated to God. Their dedication will have a sanctifying influence upon the rest of the nation. Paul also calls to mind the religious custom of planting a tree in honor of God. The tree was dedicated to God and all the branches produced by this tree shared in this dedication to God. Paul pictures Israel, at its beginning, like a tree being dedicated to God. The patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob) were the holy roots of the tree. At its roots the tree is still good and holy. This implies there is still a goodness, a holiness in the branches.



## WARNING TO THE GENTILE CHRISTIANS

This idea of the tree immediately triggers Paul's thoughts in another direction--towards the Gentile situation. He foresees the only too human possibility that the Gentiles will be led to vainglory by their present spiritual condition as the adoptive sons of God--leading them to adopt a superior attitude towards the Jewish people. Paul moves to safeguard Christian humility by reminding the Gentiles that previously they possessed no spiritual blessings. Formerly they were poor, spiritual derelicts. All this present spiritual enrichment has come to them out of the spiritual richness that belonged to the Jews. "Salvation comes from the Jews!" To the Christians, Paul addresses this reminder:

*If some of the branches were cut off and you, a branch of the wild olive tree, have been grafted in among the others and have come to share in the rich root of the olive, do not boast against the branches. If you do boast, remember that you do not support the root: the root supports you. (Rom.11:17-19)*

Paul reminds them of their spiritual indebtedness to the Jews. The Christian Church has been built upon the foundation of the Old Israel, and its roots are Jewish.

If the Jews are presently out of divine favor and the Gentiles now enjoy divine favor, this is not a reason for Gentile pride.

*You will say, "Branches were cut off that I might be grafted in." Well and good. They were cut off because of unbelief and you are there because of faith. Do not be haughty on that account, but fearful. If God did not spare the natural branches, he will certainly not spare you. (Rom.11:20-21)*

Paul seeks to remind Christians that the grace in which they now stand comes from the merciful love of God. Within the Christian life there lies no reason for self-glorification. "What do you have that you have not received?" Because of pride the Jews are in their present unfortunate state. They were the natural branches of the tree. They were the natural heirs of the promise. If God did not spare the natural branches because of sinful pride, He certainly will not spare the engrafted branches, the Gentiles, if they too become proud. Paul reiterates once again that the righteous are not yet the saved. Remember, pride attributes to self what ought to be attributed to God. Pride clothes itself in the glory that belongs to God. Pride is Satan's own sin. It is the most spiritual of sins--the subtlest and most deadly of sins. It caused angels to fall from heaven. It introduced sin into the Garden of Eden.

Paul reminds Christians that God deals kindly with them. Yet, nevertheless God can also deal severely with them. He warns us that the present situation in which we experience the kindness of God can be reversed. He says:

*Consider the kindness and the severity of God--severity toward those who fell, kindness toward you, provided you remain in his kindness: if you do not, you too will be cut off. (Rom.11:22)*

Paul's words confirm that no baptized person is confirmed in God's grace.

Paul maintains that it will be easier for God to bring the Jews back into union with Him than it was to engraft the Gentiles into the tree of life:

*And if the Jews do not remain in their unbelief they will be grafted , back on, for God is able to do this. If you were cut off from the natural wild olive and, contrary to nature, were grafted into the cultivated olive, so much the more will they who belong to it by nature be grafted into their own olive tree.*

*(Rom.11:23-24)*

### ISRAEL WILL BE SAVED

Paul has come to the conclusion that eventually all Israel will be saved, they will come to faith in Christ Jesus. He confesses that this is a great mystery. It is possible he suggests that this truth has been revealed to him by God. Nevertheless, he finds support for what he has said in the Scriptures:

*As the Scripture says: "Out of Zion will come the deliverer who shall remove all impiety from Jacob: and this is the covenant I will make with them when I take away their sins." (Rom.11:26-27)*

*Brothers, I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery lest you be conceited: blindness has come upon part of Israel until the full number of Gentiles enter in, and then all Israel will be saved. (Rom.11:25-26)*

Paul has taught that the conversion of the Jews will follow only when the full number of Gentiles have been converted. This has led many to the conclusion that the conversion of the Jews will precede the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

Once again Paul reminds us that God's ways are not our ways, and our thoughts are not His thoughts. From our viewpoint the Jews are the enemies of" the gospel and therefore the enemies of God. From the viewpoint of God, they are beloved by Him.

*In respect to the gospel, the Jews are enemies of God for your sake: in respect to the election, they are beloved by him because of the patriarchs. God's gifts and his call are irrevocable. (Rom.11:28-29)*

One final time Paul brings the problem of the Jews rejection of Christ and the solution to the problem and lays it before the door of God's will:

*Just as you were once disobedient to God and now have received mercy through their disobedience, so they have become disobedient--since God wished to show you mercy--that they too may receive mercy. God has imprisoned all in disobedience that he might have mercy on all. (Rom.11:30-32)*

Disobedience is the essence of sin. All men have sinned. God has willed this to be so that all men will be locked into disobedience. Paul sees the picture of sin as an imprisonment. All humanity is locked within the prison of sin. Every single person needs to be saved. This great evil misfortune that has fallen upon man affords the opportunity for God's greatest display of love. God appears in the history of man as the Savior filled with merciful love. All peoples, Paul proclaims, will experience merciful salvation from God.

This teaching of Paul in Scripture calls to mind the marvelous vision recorded by St. Julian of Norwich:

*On one occasion our good Lord said: Every kind of thing will be well This is the great deed ordained by our God from without beginning, treasured and hidden in his blessed breast, known only to himself, through which deed he will make all things well. For just as the blessed Trinity created all things from nothing, just so will the same blessed Trinity make everything well which is not well it seemed to me that it was impossible that every kind of thing should be well, as our Lord revealed at this time. And to this I had no other answer as a revelation from our Lord except this: What is impossible to you is not impossible to me. I shall preserve my word in everything, and I shall make everything well. And in this I was taught by the grace of God that I ought to keep myself steadfastly in the faith, as I had understood before, and that at the same time I should stand firm and believe firmly that every kind of thing will be well, as our Lord revealed at that same time. For this is the great deed which our Lord will do, and in this deed he will preserve his word in everything. And he will make well all which is not well. But what the deed will be and how it will be done, there is no creature who is inferior to Christ who knows it, or will know it until it has been done..... "*  
*(Showings:32ch. )*

Contemplating the infinite merciful love of God overwhelms the mind of Paul as it has done all the saints of God. Where the mind ends, the spirit" begins. Paul's thoughts give way to his heart bursting forth in a hymn of praise to the Wisdom of God:

***HOW DEEP ARE THE RICHES AND THE WISDOM AND THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD! HOW INSCRUTABLE HIS JUDGMENTS, HOW UNSEARCHABLE HIS WAYS! FOR "WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD? OR WHO HAS BEEN HIS COUNSELOR? WHO HAS GIVEN HIM ANYTHING SO AS TO DESERVE RETURN?" FOR FROM HIM AND THROUGH HIM AND FOR HIM ALL THINGS ARE. TO HIM BE GLORY FOREVER. AMEN.*** (Rom. 11:33-36.)

**CHAPTER 10**  
**CALLED TO HOLINESS**  
**INTRODUCTION**

**Paul wrote to the Christians at Rome:**

*The Spirit himself gives witness with our spirit that we are children of God. But if we are children, we are heirs as well: heirs of God, heirs with Christ, if only we suffer with him so as to be glorified with him." (Rom.8:16-17.)*

**People who are "in Christ," "in the Spirit," possess this glorious status. For this reason Paul addressed the Roman Christians as "...beloved of God and called to holiness..." (Rom.1:7.)**

**It may be deduced from Paul's teachings that Christians have no obligation to observe the prescriptions of the Mosaic Law. The Mosaic Law ended in Christ. Christians are freed from its ritual and moral legalism.**

*You are dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you might belong to that Other who was raised from the dead, so that you might bear fruit of God.*

*(Rom.7:4)*

*We serve in the new spirit, not the antiquated letter.*

*(Rom.7:6c)*

*If you are guided by the spirit, you are not under the law.*

*(Gal.5:18)*

*The law of the spirit, the spirit of life in Christ Jesus, has freed you from the law of sin and death.*

*(Rom.8:2)*

**When Paul speaks of the law of the spirit he implies there is a reign of rule of the Spirit to which Christians must give humble submission. Paul writes in the Letter to the Galatian Christians:**

*My brothers, remember that you have been called to live in freedom-- but not a freedom that gives free rein to the flesh.*

*(5:13)*

*My point is that you should live in accord with the spirit and you will not yield to the cravings of the flesh.*

*(5:16)*

*Since we live by the Spirit, let us follow the Spirit's lead.*

*(5:15)*

Paul encourages Christians to walk in the Spirit, which means to live each day of their lives and every moment of each day under the dominating influence of the Spirit of God.

As mentioned previously Paul speaks of Christians as possessing not only the Holy Spirit but also a spirit. He sees the spirit as being an integral part of a Christian's being and personality. This could only be described as the result of the Holy Spirit's presence within a person. The living principle of man, being transformed by God's presence within a human being, may be understood as the spirit of man. It is difficult for us to explain this without reverting to the principles of the Greek philosophical system, later adopted by Christian theologians, in which a clear distinction existed between soul and body. As we have already pointed out in an earlier lesson, this probably did not represent Paul's concept of a human being. Paul would have viewed man from the Hebrew point of view as a living soul or a living being. When the Holy Spirit entered into this living soul, He brought divine qualities into man's person and enabled man to be spoken of as having a spirit. The Presence of the Holy Spirit guaranteed eternal life to the person. The Presence of the Holy Spirit established a Christian's foundation for hope of salvation. A Christian presently possesses salvation in hope. A person can presently rejoice "in hope" in their salvation. Christians possess the Holy Spirit as the "first fruits" of their redemption. When Paul speaks of the first fruits he implies other fruits are to come. The work of redemption (its effect) has begun but not yet completed. What God has begun, God will complete--if we remain faithful. Paul teaches: "If Christ is in you, the spirit lives because of righteousness (meaning we have been brought into eternal life by sharing in the Holy Spirit)." However a paradoxical situation exists for us: we possess eternal life and yet we physically die. But, even when we die we will live. Paul explains the paradox:

*...the body is dead because of sin...if by the spirit you put to death the evil deeds of the body, you will live If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, then he who raised Christ from the dead will bring your mortal bodies to life also, through his "Spirit dwelling in you. (Rom.9:10,13,11.)*

We are, in other words, mortal human beings who bear within our beings the seed of immortality which assures us when the winter of death has passed—spring will bring newness of life.

Paul makes it clear that as persons on earth we have yet to experience the fullness of the fruits of the redemption. The reality is that we must actually experience the bitter fruits of a person who has been subjected to sin. Sin has left its evil residue within the soul. However, it is equally clear a Christian need no, longer be a subject of sin. A distinction exists between experiencing sin itself and

experiencing some of the evil side effects of sin. Take this example in the physical dimension: a person could contract infantile paralysis and be cured of the disease but the crippling effects of the disease may remain. Sin, too, leaves its crippling effects upon the human personality. It leaves the spiritual faculties weak and vulnerable. If a Christian is imprudent and fails to rely upon the power of the Holy Spirit and the armor of God, sin will prevail over the soul. Despite the presence of the Holy Spirit, a Christian can still be overcome by sin because other spirits—unholy spirits—are permitted to dominate. The Holy Spirit is the personal power of sinlessness and holiness, but a Christian must sincerely will from the heart that God's power be operative within the person's life.

Paul leaves no doubt as to how a life comes to be under the reign of grace. A Christian does not flit and flirt with sin as a moth does with the flame: "You must consider yourselves dead to sin but alive for God in Christ Jesus." (Rom.6:11b.)

One ought to behold one's self as living day-by-day under the grace and inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Paul calls upon Christians to make their lives an active oblation to God: "Offer yourselves to God as men who have come back from the dead to life, and your bodies to God as weapons for justice" (Rom.6:13b); "You are now under grace" (Rom.6:14b). Paul implies that the faculties of a human being and the entire person must work to produce works of grace, deeds performed in the power of the Holy Spirit. Paul maintains that Christians should view themselves as "slaves of Justice." (See Rom.6:18.) They are to see themselves as having no other choice in life other than doing righteous deeds. Paul encourages, "Just as formerly you enslaved your bodies to impurity and licentiousness for their degradation, make them now the servants of justice for their sanctification." (Rom.6:19b.) No matter how previously evil a Christian may have been, Paul sees that as no excuse for sin in their present state of grace. "Now that you are freed from sin (its power) and have become slaves of God," what does it mean to be a slave of God? It means to live with no other will but the will of God. Jesus was the slave of God. If the Spirit that dwelt in Jesus dwells within us, we too can fulfill the will of God. Such a human life progresses steadily towards eternal life and sanctifies self each step of the way:

*Your benefit is sanctification as you tend toward eternal life the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord All who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. (Rom.6:22-23;8:14.)*

## SPIRITUAL WORSHIP

Paul's idealized picture of Christians beholds them as living altars from which the activities and deeds of their lives, as so many living sacrifices, ascend as sweet fragrance to heaven. He writes: "And now, brothers, I beg you through the mercy of God to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice holy and acceptable to God, your spiritual worship." (Rom.12:1) Again we must remind ourselves that by "bodies" Paul means our entire being--the whole life we live on earth. Paul speaks of this as a spiritual worship. The Greek word "latēria," translated as worship, conveys the idea of doing an act for personal reward. It later evolved to mean the dedication of one's time and energy to a certain cause. Finally the word came to express service offered to the gods. In the Scriptures it signifies man's service and worship of God.

The liturgy is the public worship which the Community as a body offers to God. "Liturgy" means public work. Paul does not restrict worship to the public liturgy. He certainly does not restrict worship to one hour a week or even one hour a day: nor does he restrict it to a building or place called a church. Paul sees that every moment of a Christian's life could be a church-service. Wherever one may be or whatever one may do, spiritual worship could be offered to God by the priestly spirit of the Christian.

Spiritual worship consists in the deliberate sacrifice of one's own natural will in order to accomplish the Will of God. It goes without saying that our own natural wills do not move along the same path as the Divine Will: "My ways are not your ways--Your thoughts are not my thoughts." The Divine Will crosses our wills: God is going in one direction and we in another: God goes east and we go south. To follow the Divine Will we must let God's Will cross out our wills. We see this as accepting our daily cross. Or better yet, our daily cross-out!

To hear the Will of God--to discover the Will of God--we need to be sensitively attuned to the Holy Spirit. Paul gives this advise:

*Do not conform yourselves to this age but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, so that you may judge what is God's will, what is good, pleasing and perfect.*  
(Rom.12:2)

We live in a world of change--a world passing away. If we identify with this world, we possess no stable identity nor permanence of being: like the world, always changing and one day passing away. Our character and moral standards would be as changeable as dress fashions. Paul warns not to conform to this age. The Greek



word for conform comes from "schema" which carries the meaning of the constant change. The morality of a Christian is not to be directed by the moral-fashions of the time. Our society today finds war morally unfashionable and sexual promiscuity morally fashionable. Abortion is morally fashionable but, as yet, euthanasia is still morally unfashionable. Christian lives are not to be directed and molded by moral fashions. This is conforming to the world. It means never knowing for sure what we will stand for tomorrow, yet being certain one will never live nor die for anything not morally fashionable. Such behavior robs a person of his or her Christian identity. Whatever Christian morality may be, it will never be that which is convenient and expedient.

Paul directs one away from external conformity towards inner change and transformation. He comes to the inner man--the soul of man--the stable, unchanging element of one's being that makes one a human being. That part of us that remains the same despite the changing "schema" of human existence; that which makes you, you. Paul calls for a radical transformation of the human personality. He calls for the changing of our "morphe"--the unchangeable part of our being. We are to change from men and women of the flesh to men and women of the spirit. That calls for a radical transformation. (Not a face lift--not even a soul lift--Paul calls for a recycling of our lives.) We must become a different kind of human being. We are to be transformed from being like Adam to becoming like Christ.

In order to achieve this Paul calls for a renewal of our minds. This demands that our thinking be completely transformed. The renewal demanded is as when winter changes to spring. A Christian achieves this by putting on the Mind of Christ--another way of saying "putting on the Spirit of Jesus." As a person inwardly submits self to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the mind begins to be renewed. The mind becomes aware of the Will of God--becomes able ' to distinguish between good and evil, what pleases and displeases the Lord and wherein lies perfection of behavior. Teresa of Avila reached such a transformation that she could vow to always do only what she knew to be the highest good. In other words, to do that which she recognized as perfection. When a Christian has "put on the Mind of Christ" he or she does not think of right conduct as conformity with a code nor as the adding of virtue to virtue through self discipline. "It is the harvest of the Spirit, a spontaneous reaction of the inward spirit of a man, controlled by the Spirit of God, to the successive situations in which he finds himself as he lives with other people in society. It associates him with all that is the loftiest and deepest in the universe of his experience. He is not the slave of the conventional judgment of society but has a fresh and independent insight into moral reality." (Dodd.)

Paul understood that the pattern of man's thought controls the pattern of man's behavior. If you think about something long enough it will soon clothe itself in

feelings and emotions and find expression in human behavior. Of course this does not apply to those countless and uncontrollable thoughts that flit through conscious awareness but rather refers to those ideas and thoughts to which one readily says, "Amen!"

## HUMILITY IN SPIRITUAL WORSHIP

Paul now instructs us in what should be the attitude and behavior of one who offers true spiritual worship to God. The presentation in this section of Romans follows no logical pattern of thought. One thought appears to suggest the next thought. The source of inspiration for these teachings could have been concrete incidents of behavior he witnessed in the Christian communities in which he lived. Paul presently writes from Corinth. Open conflict between Paul and the Christian Community at Corinth had existed for some months. Even though Paul and the Community had made their peace, he probably observed the root causes for the disturbances still present in the Community.

Paul first emphasizes the importance of humility within the Christian Community, humility being the foundation of Christian life as it is the foundation of union with God. Jesus told his disciples: "Learn of me for I am meek and humble of heart and you will find peace for your souls." It goes without saying that only the humble are instruments of peace within the community. Pride separates man from God and pride keeps man separated from man. Humility is truth. It is truth that incarnates itself in self-expression. Humility is to know your proper place and to take it. A humble person never denies the truth--good or bad--about self. Humility likewise acknowledges the source of goodness or evilness within self. The good is attributed to God and the remainder to self.

Paul writes: "Thus, in virtue of the favor given to me, I warn each of you not to think more highly of himself than he ought" (Rom.12:3a)--not to live in a homemade fantasy land but be objective and as honest as possible about one's assets and one's liabilities. He goes on to say: "Let him estimate himself soberly, in keeping with the measure of faith that God has apportioned him." (Rom.12:3b.) Christians do not measure themselves by the standards of this world, nor, for that matter, do they measure themselves by each other. "Do not be wise in your own estimation." (Rom.12:16c.) Christians are to measure themselves with the ruler of faith. They are to be measured against Jesus Christ who is the true measure of each Christian. To look at one's life honestly in the light of Christ's life keeps a person humble. They become quite aware of the discrepancies between their lives and that of the Master's. One of the tell-tale signs of pride is when this revelation produces despair and despondency in the soul rather than a greater increase in humility and dependence upon God.

Paul sees it to be a sign of true humility when a person can recognize his , or her place in the Community and the places of other members of the Community according to the charism given to them by God. Paul desires all to see the Church as an active body with each member being assigned roles by God to fulfill. A humble Christian looks to the good of the entire body and to what good, through the exercise of his charism, he can bring to the body. On the other hand, the proud Christian looks to see what the body can do for them. If they exercise their charism, it is for their own advantage. To foster humility in the Community, Paul says: "put away ambitious thoughts and associate with those who are lowly." (Rom.12:16.)

Paul pictures the Christian Community as one body:

*Just as each of us has one body with many members, and not all the members have the same function, so too we, though many, are one body in Christ and individually members one of another. We have gifts that differ according to the favor bestowed on each of us.* (Rom.12:4-6a)

The gifts all have a social orientation--to build up the body of the Church. They are not to be exercised for self but for the common good. They are not to be a source of pride, envy, or jealousy. All the gifts are gifts for all but " all do not receive the same gift. When the charisms are used rightly the entire Church becomes the recipient of the gifts. Paul lists some examples of charisms in the Community, and he mentions the spirit in which they ought to be exercised.

"One's gift may be prophecy." This is the gift of inspired preaching through which God communicates His message to the community. The content is usually religious matters, and, at times, it may deal with future predictions. Paul says: "Its use should be in proportion to his faith." By this it is meant that the inspired prophecy ought to be in "right relationship" to his faith. It must be in keeping with the Christian revelation we have received through Jesus Christ and His apostles. What God has revealed in Jesus Christ and through Jesus Christ is the measure by which the content of the prophecy can be evaluated.

The charism may be "the gift of ministry; it should be used for service." This emphasizes that the ministers (diakonia) are servants within the Community. The Greek word used in this text seems to suggest services given in the form of material aid, such as the distribution of alms. "One who is a teacher should use his gift for teaching" within the Community. It is not enough that the Church proclaims the gospel. The Gospel must also be explained so that the members can respond in the fullest possible way to the gospel message. God has given us minds that we may be able to respond intelligently to His divine revelation.

Some have been given the power to encourage others and they ought to use this gift in encouraging and exhorting members of the Community. The leaders of the synagogue in Pisidian Antioch sent this word to Paul and Barnabas: "Brothers, if you have any words of encouragement to address to the people, please speak up." (Acts 13:15.) Apparently communities are always seeking someone with this charism. Perhaps it was to these that Paul addressed these words: "Rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep." (Rom.12:15. )

Those who possess wealth in the Community are to give alms in simplicity of heart (no charity with a hook). Their giving should flow out of a kindness that gives cheerfully and spontaneously to those in need. Giving is their reward. They truly experience the reality of our Lord's words: "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

Those called to lead the community must exercise their charism with care and diligence. The Church has interpreted this charism as being the servant of the servants of God. Speaking of his own role as a leader in the Church, Paul said:

*Never did I shrink from telling you what was for your own good, or from teaching you in public or in private...I take the blame for no man's conscience, for I have never shrunk from announcing to you God's design in its entirety...Do not forget that for three years, night and day, I never ceased warning you individually even to the point of tears...Never did I set my heart on anyone's silver or gold or envy the way he dressed. You yourselves know that these hands of mine have served both my needs and those of my companions. (Acts 20:20f)*

Paul concludes his list of charisms by saying, "He who performs works of mercy should do so cheerfully." (See Rom.12:6-8.) This could apply to all charisms exercised in the Church. All the charisms of the Church come from the mercy of God. It is a mercy that incarnates itself in the Community in so many ways. Charisms are the mercies of God. The charisms within the Christian Community are but a rainbow of God's mercy descending upon the lives of all its members. Those who show mercy, more than all others, channel the spirit of God into this world. Such channels of the Divine Spirit should of necessity be exercised only in cheerfulness. Paul tells us, "God loves a cheerful giver." And so does everyone else! Our work often preoccupies us and often the spirit in which the work is done is equally important. At times, the spirit in which a thing is done is even more important than the work or the gift itself.

Paul states a principle that could well serve to regulate the general and overall attitude of the Christian heart towards life: "Detest what is evil, cling to what is

good." (Rom.12:9b.) The Christian heart that has been transformed by the renewal of the mind will have no problem in distinguishing between the evil and the good. The good is always that which flows from love.

## AGAPE IN SPIRITUAL WORSHIP

When Paul speaks of love he uses the Greek word "agape." It was a word not commonly used before New Testament times. When St. Jerome sought to translate agape into the Latin, he realized that "amor" failed to express the meaning intended. Jerome translated agape as "caritas." In the English language, love and charity have been used to express the meaning of agape. Yet neither of the two words carry to us the power of meaning behind agape.

In the Gaelic language there are twenty different ways to tell a person you love them. The Greeks had four words by which to express love: eros, philia, storge and agape. Eros expresses love that is predominantly on the (physical side and always involves sexual attraction. This word does not appear in the New Testament perhaps because by that time the word had become synonymous with lust. Philia describes the highest kind of human love—true friendship. It nevertheless leaves something lacking--permanence. The light of love can grow dim and its warmth can be lost. Storge expresses the very limited concept of family love: the love of a parent for a child and the child's love for the parent--love of brothers and sisters and kinfolk. Agape hardly occurs in secular Greek literature. Some see it as a word coined by Christians to express a new quality and attitude towards others that was born in the Christian Community and flows from the Presence of the Holy Spirit.

Agape emerges within the Community and the heart of a Christian as unconquerable goodwill that will never seek anything but the good of its fellow man. It is a spirit that is not conditioned, nor curtailed, by what other people do in word and deed, nor by whom they may be. One of the distinguishing qualities of agape lies precisely in its ability to love the unlovely and the unlovable. It is love lavished upon others without a thought of whether they are worthy to receive it or not: "Your Father in heaven lets the rain fall and the sun shine upon the good and the evil." Agape-love proceeds rather from the nature of the lover than from the merits of the beloved. No one merits agape-love. As Christians have experienced this love without any merit of their own, it should be dispensed by them to those without merit. "My dear people, since God has loved us so much, we too should love one another." (1 Jn.4:11b.) Christians learn the nature of agape-love from experiencing God's love in their own lives. God's love comes to us when we are sinners and enemies of God. Therefore if God's love truly dwells within us, love ought to flow towards those who have sinned against us and whom we recognize as our enemies. God is agape--God is love. St. John writes:

*Beloved, let us love one another because love is of God; everyone who loves is begotten of God and has knowledge of God. The man without love has known nothing of God, for God is love...God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him. (1 Jn.4:7-8,16)*

Agape-love involves a total response of the personality. It begins in the will and permeates the mind and heart--clothes itself in emotions and affections. Agape-love is a divine gift to the Christian but nevertheless it does not just happen within the heart; it is willed into expression by us. Agape gives the power and determination to love those we dislike. (Most of the people we don't like are those not like us or those like us but who don't like us.) Agape is the redemption of the weakened and fallen human heart. Humanly speaking it is easier to walk on water than to love others in the spirit of agape love. It is quite impossible without the operations of the dynamic love of the Spirit of Jesus within the spirit of man: "The love of God has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit which has been given us." (Rom.5:5.)

The environment for true Christian life is that of agape-love. Every human life carries with it its own atmosphere which radiates out from the person and permeates the space around it. Often Christian lives radiate depression, sadness, hostility, protectiveness, anxiousness, efficiency, manipulateness. Sometimes Christians radiate friendliness, serenity, hopefulness, peacefulness, joyfulness--lovingness. In our day, it is said that we vibrate; our spirits send out vibrations that are at least subconsciously perceived by the receptive bodies around us. People speak of good and bad vibes. Perhaps Our Lord would say today, "By their vibes you will know them."

Paul speaks of agape-love as being the Christian chasuble or cloak:

*...clothe yourselves with heartfelt mercy, with kindness, humility, meekness, and patience...Over all these virtues put on love, which binds the rest together and makes them perfect. (Col.3:12-14)*

However, we must never think that the New Testament concept of love is something soft and sentimental. Agape-love never makes the mistake of thinking that true love lets a person do what they like regardless of the consequences to self and to others. Agape-love "detests what is evil, clings to what is good." It is clear in the New Testament, especially in Galatians and in Corinthians, that there is a time when anger, discipline, rebuke, punishment, chastisement are all part of agape-love. It may even demand the excommunication of a trouble-maker from the Community as

Paul himself had to do. Even the Scriptures tell us that "those whom God loves He chastises."

Paul describes the special relationship of love that ought to be present between members of the Body of Christ. -The life of this Body is the Holy Spirit. If the life of the Holy Spirit flows through the members of the Community, it ought to create the environment of agape-love and bear its fruit. Paul tells us, -Your love must be sincere.- (Rom.12:91.) Love must flow from the spirit. There must be no pretense, no put-on, no simulation--nothing phony or hypocritical. "Love one another with the affection of brothers." Here Paul uses the Greek word -philia" which expresses genuine natural friendship. He emphasizes that agape-love must clothe itself in the beautiful elements of human love. The supernatural builds upon the natural. Paul goes on to say,

*Anticipate each other in showing respect.* (Rom.12:10b)

*Look on the needs of the saints as your own; be generous in offering hospitality.*  
(Rom.12:13)

*Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep.* (Rom.12:15)

*Owe no debt to anyone except the debt that binds us to love one another. He who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law. The commandments, 'You shall not commit adultery; you shall not murder; you shall not steal; you shall not covet,' and any other commandment there may be are all summed up in this, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' Love never wrongs the neighbor, hence love is the fulfillment of the law.* (Rom.13:8-10)

Precisely because it is God's love, love cannot end in the Christian family. God's love reaches out to all. Therefore Paul turns our attention to those outside the Church and he tells us, "Have the same attitude toward all...See that your conduct is honorable in the eyes of all." (Rom.12:16-17.) Paul does not mean to have the same feelings and emotions for all peoples, regardless of their relationship with us, but he is speaking about goodwill. The Christian attitude towards all peoples ought to be one of goodwill. Good-will can never be merely a nice feeling towards others. Goodwill implies good actions. Good deeds happen. Therefore Paul tells us:

*Bless your persecutors: bless and do not curse them.* (Rom.12:14)

*Never repay injury with injury [evil with evil-two evils cannot make a right].*  
(Rom.12:17a)

*Beloved, do not avenge yourself; leave that to God's wrath, for it is written: "Vengeance is mine; I will repay," says the Lord." But "if your enemy is hungry, feed him: if he is thirsty, give him something to drink: by doing this you will heap burning coals upon his head."* (Rom.12: 20)

The expression "burning coals upon his head" has been difficult to interpret. Paul, who has encouraged that love should be sincere and Christians should not seek revenge but rather truly bless and love their enemies, would hardly be encouraging an indirect method of revenge or of practicing "charity with a hook." Many interpreters see this as an expression of the times which implies that one's good deeds to an enemy would produce a burning or blushing shame within their hearts. Such love could cause the conversion of the sinner.

Paul gives Christians a great general principle for guiding their lives. This principle can be applied to the evil that comes from the Evil One, from the environment in which we live, and especially to the evil that comes from within our own mortal personalities--the evil that makes us "groan inwardly while we await the redemption of our bodies": "Do not be conquered (overcome) by evil but conquer (overcome) evil with good." (Rom.12:21.) Let us so strive in our lives that the good always outweighs the evil. As the Christian faces evil from without and from within, let them say, "Damn the torpedoes! Full speed ahead!" and continue to "rejoice in hope, be patient under trial, persevere in prayer." (Rom.12:12.) Paul realistically urges Christians, "If possible live peaceably with everyone." Paul's own personal career had been quite a stormy one--over the years he had fought with Jews, Christians and pagans. Peace is the tranquility that flows from proper order. If a Christian life is ordered properly towards God and neighbor, the heart will be at peace. As Paul wrote, "We are at peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." (Rom.5:1.) Because of the disorder in one's life and because of the disorderly lives around us a Christian may not be able to live in peace. Insofar as possible, the Christian ought not to be the cause of the disorder that destroys the environment of peace.

## OBEDIENCE TO AUTHORITY

Paul has lived his life within the environment of the Pax Romana, a world at peace under the Roman rule. The peace established by Rome had been a means of spreading the gospel. The civil authorities had at times defended Paul against Jewish antagonists. Paul sees civil government as a moral force in the world maintaining the order necessary for peace. Even though the civil government is not under the order of God's grace (within the scope of His redemptive love) it is not beyond the will of God. It is God's instrument for keeping moral order. Likewise Paul sees its juridical system as an instrument of God's Wrath in a world beyond



the grace of God. It is part of the natural order and is outside of the order of grace established in Jesus Christ. Part of this natural order being a system of justice that punishes criminals--"an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth." Paul says to Christians,

*Do you wish to be free from the fear of authority? Do what is right and you will gain its approval, for the ruler is God's servant to work for your good. Only if you do wrong ought you to be afraid. It is not without purpose that the ruler carries the sword; he is God's servant, to inflict his avenging wrath upon the wrongdoer. (Rom.13:3b-4)*

A Christian submits in obedience to the moral order of civil government but the justice of this world ought not to direct the life of a Christian. The life of a Christian must be directed by the higher principles of Christian love already illustrated. One obeys the government not out of fear of punishment but because one's conscience dictates obedience. Obedience to civil authority is seen as a form of obedience to God himself. Paul wrote:

*Let everyone obey the authorities that are over him, for there is no authority except from God, and all authority that exists is established by God. As a consequence, the man who opposes authority rebels against the ordinance of God; those who resist thus shall draw condemnation down upon themselves You must obey, then, not only to escape punishment but also for conscience' sake.  
(Rom.13:1-2,5)*

Paul was no doubt familiar with the words spoken in Daniel: "The Most High rules over the Kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will." (Dn.4:29.) Paul's teaching would have been in keeping with the orthodox Jewish doctrine as expressed in Proverbs: "By me kings reign and establish justice." (Pr.8:15.)

Paul expressed what ought to be the goal of civil government when he wrote: "For the ruler is God's servant to work for your good." (Rom.13:4a.) Underlining Paul's teaching is the supposition that civil authority conducts itself uprightly and seeks the interest of the community. As long as there existed no conflict of loyalties, Paul encouraged obedience as a moral responsibility. He was certainly prepared to disobey human authority if it conflicted with his obedience to God. When the Sanhedrin forbade Peter and John to proclaim the name of Jesus, they responded,

*Judge for yourselves whether it is right in God's sight for us to obey you rather than God. Surely we cannot help speaking of what we have heard and seen."  
(Acts 4:19-20.)*

Man is always morally 'obliged to act with a good conscience. As in the case of St. Thomas More, a man must at times, for conscience sake, refuse to obey the civil powers.

Paul desired that the Christians in Rome form a right conscience in regards to their obligation to the Roman government. Paul lived at a time when great hostility existed among Jews for the Romans. Paying taxes was particularly a painful affair for the Jews. A caldron of hatred was already boiling that would soon overflow in rebellion leading to national disaster. It was highly possible that Christianity could be caught up in this rebellious tide. Many converted Jews, no doubt, brought their old hatred of Rome into the Church. Paul probably had already experienced strong anti-Roman sentiments in the Church. To counteract any disastrous behavior on the part of the Christian Community, Paul defined a clear and definite doctrine toward civil government and the paying of taxes. Paul maintains that it is a matter of conscience to pay taxes: "Pay each one his due: taxes to whom taxes are due; toll to whom toll is due; respect and honor to everyone who deserves them." (Rom.13:7.) When the Pharisees confronted Jesus with the tax-question he responded: "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's." Even after the Roman persecution of the Church had begun, we still find the Church teaching:

*Because of the Lord, be obedient to every human institution, whether to the emperor as sovereign or to the governors he commissions for the punishment of criminals and the recognition of the upright. Such obedience is the will of God. You must esteem the person of every man. Foster love for the brothers, reverence for God, respect for the emperor.* (1Pt.2:13-15,17)

Paul has taught Christians they have been freed from the iron clad shackles of the Mosaic Law, but they are now bound in chains of gold by the Law of the Spirit. The chains of divine love bind their spirits to God, to their Christian brothers, to their enemies, to all who represent God or whomever the Lord permits to be in their lives. Chains of gold hold the Christian in bondage to divine love. Paul proclaims that such men should have only one debt in this world: "Owe no debt to anyone except the debt that binds us to love one another." (Rom.13:8a.) As Origen once said: "this is a debt we must pay each day and still will owe at the end of the day." Paul goes on to conclude: "He who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law." (Rom.13:8b.) Paul brings us to a complete circle; he brings us back to the fulfillment of the law. No longer a law of antiquated legal prescriptions but a law made glorious by the Holy Spirit of love.

## AMOR OF LIGHT

Paul believed a critical moment had come in world history. With the death and resurrection of Jesus, the final hour had come upon the world. Christians were living in the "eschaton"--the end times. The countdown for the Second Coming of Christ had begun. "The Day of the Lord" was fast approaching and it would bring judgment and wrath upon the world. In Jerusalem, Peter had preached, "Save yourself from this generation which has gone astray." (Acts 2:40.)

In the same spirit, Paul urges all Christians to embrace the administration of the Holy Spirit; To dedicate their lives to agape-love that renders them indeed as living sacrifices,

*You, however, are "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people he claims for his own to proclaim the glorious works." (1Pt.2:9a)*

*You too are living stones, built as an edifice of the spirit into a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. (1Pt.2:5)*

Paul refers to the reign of the Spirit as "the day" and "the light."

Opposed to the administration of the Spirit is the administration of the flesh under the power of sin. He speaks of the reign of Satan as "the night" and "the darkness." Just as love epitomizes the reign of the Spirit, selfishness, self-gratification, self-love epitomizes the reign of darkness. Paul speaks of carousing, drunkenness, sexual excess, lust, quarreling and jealousy as representative of the reign of darkness. Paul urges Christians to cast such things aside: strip themselves of these things as one would foul and dirty clothing. No one so clothed will enter the Kingdom of God. Only the Children of Light enter into the Kingdom of the Day. This reign of darkness is passing away and with it all its subjects. The reign of light rapidly approaches bringing a new and eternal order. Paul appears as one trying to awaken a man who serenely sleeps while his life is in mortal danger. Paul urges:

*It is now the hour for you to wake from sleep, for our salvation is closer than when we first accepted the faith. The night is far spent the day draws near. Let us cast off deeds of darkness [strip yourselves of those dirty clothes] and put on the armor of light. Let us live honorably as in daylight not in carousing [komos] and in drunkenness [methe] , not in sexual excess [koite] and lust, not in quarreling [eris] and jealousy [zelos]. [cast off self-indulgence, selfish behavior--self-idolatry!] Rather, put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provisions for the desires of the flesh. (Rom.13 : 11-14 )*

Paul encourages us to have great faith in the potential within our hidden selves--our spiritual beings. He desires us to have a tremendous faith in the presence of Jesus Christ within this hidden self. Into this hidden self we are to seek in prayer the measure of ourselves and our limitations. If we cannot put limits upon the power of Jesus, we cannot put limits upon the potential of a being rooted in Jesus and empowered by His Holy Spirit. In this epistle Paul speaks of the infinite power and love of God, and he speaks of this infinite power and love being applied to our lives. If there are limitations of what God can do in our lives, we are the ones who place all the limitations. There are no limitations on the goodwill that God has towards us. It remains only for us to "put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the desires of the flesh." (Rom.13:14.)

## CHAPTER 11

### PRESERVING PEACE

#### INTRODUCTION

The Risen Jesus greeted His apostles with the word "Shalom!". Twice He said to them: "'Shalom be with you!'...Then he breathed on them and said: 'Receive. the Holy Spirit.'" (In.20:21-22.) The gift of the Holy Spirit brings "shalom" within the Christian Community; His presence creates "Shalom" within the Church.

"Shalom" is a word so rich in meaning that the scholars of the Septuagint Bible used twenty-six different words to express its meaning in the Greek. They finally settled for the most part on the Greek word "irene"—later translated into the Latin as "pax" and into English as "peace."

The Hebrew root of shalom carries the idea of being complete, whole, and sound. As a greeting or prayer it carries the hope that an environment shall be created for the blessed in which nothing good will be lacking. In the Old Testament it implies not only material prosperity and physical well-being but also spiritual righteousness. If a person lacked righteousness, they possessed a spurious shalom--they lived in false peace. Socially, shalom expresses itself in good relationships between members of a family and different peoples. War was not itself the opposite of shalom but rather its antithesis. This was anything that disturbed or destroyed a person's welfare or the existing social order. The psalmist attributed shalom to a gift from Yahweh: "May the Lord bless his people with peace." (Ps.29:11.) Isaiah declared: "O Lord, you mete out peace to us." (Is.26:12.) Chapter twenty-six of Leviticus teaches the Israelites that obedience to the commands of Yahweh creates shalom in Israel and disobedience destroys it. Isaiah confirmed that obedience to Yahweh would cause peace to flow like a river in Israel. (See Is.48:18.)

The Jews believed the reign of the Messiah would restore shalom to Israel and bring peace to its perfection. The Messiah would be the Prince of Peace. (See Is.9:5; Zec.9:9-10.) However the prophet Joel foretold that the Messiah would bring strife to the world but peace to His people. (Joel.3:2f.) Jesus himself confirmed that He came to bring a sword of division into the world and not peace. "The path of peace is unknown to them" (Rom.3:17). Belief in Jesus would cause family, friends, nations to be divided one against the other (Lk.12:51). The holy man Simeon told Mary: "This child is destined to be the ( downfall and the rise of many in Israel, a sign that will be opposed." (Lk.2:34.) However, as the angels sang, the Messiah

would bring peace to the earth: "Peace on earth to those on whom his favor rests." Jesus Christ would "bring shalom to those who put their trust in Him. On the eve of His death Jesus said to His disciples:

*"'Peace' (Shalom) is my farewell to you, my peace is my gift to you, I do not give it to you as the world gives peace...(Jn.14:27)...I tell you all this that in me you may find peace..." (Jn.16:33)*

Perhaps nothing expresses more clearly the spirit of Christian shalom than Jesus' prayer to the Father for His future disciples:

*"...I pray also for those who will believe in me through their word, that all may be one as you, Father, are in me, and I in you; I pray that they may be (one) in us, that the world may believe that you sent me. I have given them the glory you gave me that they may be one, as we are one--I living in them, you living in me--that their unity may be complete. So shall the world know that you sent me, and that you loved them as you loved me." (Jn.17:20-23)*

Our union with the Father through Jesus Christ creates shalom in the Christian Community. Paul teaches the Philippians that peace comes through union with Jesus, and the peace produced surpasses all understanding:

*Dismiss all anxiety from your minds. Present your needs to God in every form of prayer and in petitions full of gratitude. Then God's own peace, which is beyond all understanding, will stand guard over your hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus.*  
(Phil.4:6-7)

Speaking of Jesus, Colossians tells us: "It pleased God to reconcile everything in his Person, both on earth and in the heavens, making peace through the blood of his cross." (Col.1:20.) We read in Ephesians:

*But now in Christ Jesus you who were far off have been brought near through the blood of Christ. It is he who is our peace, and who made the two of us one by breaking down the barrier of hostility that kept us apart...to create in himself one new man from us who had been two and to make peace, reconciling both of us to God in one body through his cross, which put that enmity to death. He came and "announced the good news of peace to you who were far off, and to those who were near"; through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father.*  
(Eph.2:13-18)

The life and death of Jesus is the meritorious cause of our peace with God: "We are at peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." (Rom.5:1.) However, it is the

**Holy Spirit that actually brings about our union with Jesus and the Father from which peace flows. The Holy Spirit is the "glory" given to Jesus by the Father. The Holy Spirit is the Glory Jesus shares with His disciples. Therefore we rightly hold that the Holy Spirit is the immediate Cause of Christian Peace. The Holy Spirit is the preserver and perfecter of Peace in the Church. Without the Holy Spirit there can be no union with Jesus, no union with the Father, no Shalom within the Christian Community.**

**Jesus granted to His disciples the power to produce peace in the lives of others. Their very greeting of peace would be a word of power producing an environment of peace in those whose hearts were open to reach the peace of Christ: "On entering any house, first say, 'Peace to this house.' If there is a peaceable man there, your peace will rest on him: if not, it will come back to you." (Lk.10:5-6.) The story is told of a priest who worked in an environment hostile to the Church and upon hearing of the sudden death of the husband of a non-catholic lady, he was moved by grace to briefly visit her realizing his presence would be resented by her non-catholic friends and neighbors. The lady later confessed to many people, "That day was the most shocking and confusing of my entire life, but suddenly when the Catholic priest came into the room and spoke to me, a great peace came over me that remained with me in all the difficult days ahead." "If there is a peaceable person there, your peace will rest upon the person."**

### **OBLIGATION TO CHRISTIAN PEACE**

**Paul tells us in Romans that a Christian should proceed "toward life and peace." (Rom.8:6.) A Christian ought to be a cause of peace--a builder of peace within the Christian Community. No one teaches this more forcefully than Paul. He told the Corinthians: "God has called you to live in peace" (1Cor.7:15c), "God is a God, not of confusion, but of peace" (1Cor.14:33a). It was this knowledge that directed Teresa of Avila to teach that all spiritual inspiration and experiences could be judged to be from God if they produced peace and from the Evil One if they destroyed, disturbed or weakened personal or communal peace. Paul told the Colossians, "Christ's peace must reign in your hearts, since as members of the one body you have been called to that peace." (Col.3:15.) He wrote to the Thessalonians: "Make it a point of honor to remain at peace and attend to your own affairs." (1Thes.4:11:5:13c.) Paul urged the Romans: "If possible live peaceably with everyone." (Rom.12:18.) We know that during much of his own life lived in the world, it had not been possible. Yet Paul still realized Christians have a moral obligation to "work for peace." He began his letter to the Romans with the reminder that Christians have been called to peace (1:7). He realized that this vocation to peace must be expressed quite realistically. Therefore, he told the Romans: "Let us, then, make it our aim to work for peace and to strengthen one**

another." (Rom.14:19.) In a very concrete way, Paul teaches the Christian Community in chapters fourteen and fifteen of Romans how to "work for peace"—a peace that expresses itself in a personal interior calm and in harmonious relationships among members of the Christian Community.

Remember the Holy Spirit remains the Source of Christian Peace. As the Source of agape-love, the Holy Spirit empowers a Christian to rise above self and unite in mind and heart with Jesus Christ. Each person possesses an individual will motivating and empowering them to obtain desired goals. When individuals, following their own heart's desires, express their wills, they often discover their lives are in conflict with the lives around them. We know that even in a family external peace comes through all accepting the will of the head of the family. As this often frustrates individual wills, internal peace is often lacking within the family. The true foundation of Christian Peace in the family and in the community is for all members to seek to know and accomplish the Will of God. When each member of the community loves and prefers God's Will above everything else, they find their individual wills united in their submission to that higher Will of God. It certainly does become divisive when certain members of the Community, or the family, seek to accomplish God's Will while other members selfishly disdain or ignore the Will of God. It is for this reason that Paul implies we may be unable to live in peace with all men--with all members of our community or family. This is the sword of division that Jesus promised to bring within society:

*"Do you think I have come to establish peace on earth? I assure you, the contrary is true; I have come for division a household of five will be divided three against two and two against three."*

(Lk.12:51-52)

When a person seeks to accomplish the Will of God, they establish the foundation for their inner, internal peace; a peace that nothing in this world can rob or destroy. Often the price for internal peace is external war!

From experience Paul knew the care needed by all in order for the Christian family to establish and preserve an environment of Christian Shalom within the Community. All members must be ruled by love and walk in the Spirit. Paul had only recently witnessed a distressing lack of internal and external peace in the Church at Corinth. In his letter to the Romans he mentions two contemporary sources of divisiveness within the Church. Though the problems dealt with by Paul would be no cause of division today, the principles enunciated, in order to establish peace in the Community, are timeless. There has always been, always will be, differences of opinions, customs and practices within the Church. Paul feels that if all Christians are guided by the highest principles of love of Christ and neighbor--



amidst all the differences, there can be shalom within the Community. When one studies the conditions and causes of the Protestant Reformation, one cannot but feel if there had been greater love on both sides, the Christian Church would not have suffered such divisiveness and become such a scandal within the world. It has been said that in the earlier days of Christianity, pagans threw Christians to the lions--in the later days, Christians threw each other to the lions.

## CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

Paul pictures the Christian Community as composed of men and women sincere in their acceptance of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. It is not a Community that gives mere lip service to religion and in its practice is indifferent to the demands of God in its life. The people seek to love and please God. However, the membership comes from different environments. They come into the Church with different cultural, religious, educational and economic backgrounds. Many converts came from among the Jews who had been trained in the Levitical laws concerning forbidden foods, the observances of certain holy day, and fast days. Many converts came out of pagan cults that likewise considered certain foods to be forbidden and certain days to be holy. There were ancient beliefs holding the stars to be angelic spirits who exerted control over the inhabitants of the earth. Then, and now, people believed the stars controlled their destiny. Certain formations of the stars and planets exerted particular influence. Certain days were considered favorable to good fortune and others to ill fortune. Many pagans as well as certain Jewish sects were vegetarians. The Jewish Therapeutae (described by Philo in his *Contemplative Life* 37), the devotee of Dionysus, the Orphics, the Pythagoreans and Neo-Pythagoreans (the latter two more philosophical schools) were all vegetarians.

All men, in some degree, are products of their environment. Much behavior is motivated by forces beyond conscious awareness. Human behavior is not always a product of a formal education or the lack of it. The Christian Community will always be composed of a membership possessing divergent opinions, ideas, and practices. Many religious ideas and practices never touch the essentials of the Christian faith, but they can become very divisive elements within the Christian Community, even to the point of destroying Christian faith in certain members. Christians have a command to love one another, not to analyze or judge one another. God called each one into the Church. The presence of others challenges the love of each. The imperfections of others challenges those around to perfect their love. If everyone around us would be perfect, how could we grow in love? How could we be patient, kind, forgiving injuries? How could we practice the charity of Christ who first loved us when we were enemies of God? God loves variety. He never made two things the same. We should be very godly and love the "different."

Paul enunciates certain prudent principles in Romans:14 in order to unite a Church divided (generally speaking) between those who abstained from various foods or drink and who regarded certain days to be holy, and between those who considered all such practices as mere superstition. Paul sees it as a division between the weak and the strong in faith. Today perhaps we would see it as a division between the conservatives and the liberals. We know the Church today, as an aftermath of the Second Vatican Council, experiences a great deal of division within its Christian communities. Some, rejecting liturgical reform, cling to the old Latin liturgy. Some resent the "kiss of peace," standing for communion, communion in the hand, lay people distributing communion. Many churches have what is called the "cross-overs." Those who on Sunday cross over to the line in which the ordained minister distributes communion. We live in a day in which wide and divergent theological opinions are being discussed and professed. Religious brotherhoods and sisterhoods are sharply divided over how their lives of religious dedication should be lived and expressed in the world.

As mentioned, the topics Paul deals with are rather unimportant in themselves but the prudent principles fostered certainly have value today and need application in today's Christian Community. Paul derives his principles from faith (14:22-23), love (14:15), the example of Christ (14:9,15;15:3,7-8), and from the loyalty a Christian owes to Jesus Christ (15:13). He ends with a plea for unity based upon the important religious truths expounded in Romans. Paul seeks to promote toleration and peace within a divided Community. He desires to avoid that offense and scandal that may force a weaker member out of the Christian Community. His aim is for each to respect the conscience of the other. He teaches how the strong and enlightened members within the Community ought to deal with those who are often scrupulous and ill-formed in the faith. Some have demonstrated the similarity of Paul's principles to certain Stoic principles that directed wise men to live self contained lives, unshaken in their inner moral purposes amidst the changing circumstance of life whether good or ill. Principles that urged wise men, who could see how crude and superstitious were many religious practices of pious people, not to upset or destroy their beliefs by ridiculing their behavior, but to seek to help them to conserve the true religious values underlining many pious customs and practices viewed as superstitious by the enlightened.

Paul begins by encouraging Christians to welcome into the Community those weak in the faith. He desires they be honestly and lovingly accepted as they are: "Extend a kind welcome to those who are weak in faith. Do not enter into disputes with them." (Rom.14:1.) One translation of the above statement reads: "Welcome the man who is weak in faith, but do not introduce him straightaway to the discussion of questions which can only raise doubts." One must leave time for growth in grace and nature. Only time and experience bring about certain changes.

**To impatiently hurry certain things only succeeds in destroying them. God plants the seeds. Who are we to impatiently hasten their growth?**

**The weak in faith would be the people whose religious practices and customs are based on a faith insufficiently enlightened. Many people have never accurately understood the doctrines of redemption, expiation, salvation, religious perfection. They do not truly understand that their justification and righteousness comes to them through the merits of Jesus Christ rather than through their own good deeds. They still feel they must earn their salvation by their own pious acts. The grace of justification cannot, as the Council of Trent has taught, be merited by us. It has been merited by Jesus Christ. It is freely bestowed upon all who come in faith to Jesus. Good works, done under grace, certainly aid, foster, and cause our growth and perfection. They cause us to persevere in salvation but they cannot cause our salvation.**

**Some people are weak in faith due to a lack of proper catechesis or because of erroneous teachings. They can reach greater spiritual maturity through proper education, but education does not solve all problems. Sometimes behavior has its roots in a person's emotional realm. Ignorance of the facts is not the fundamental cause for weakness in faith, and catechesis will not remedy the situation.**

**Paul's first argument for mutual acceptance between the weak and the strong is based upon the fact that God has accepted both the weak and the strong into the Church and brought them into communion with Himself. Their very membership in the Church verifies this truth. Therefore, the weak and the strong should accept each other and live in Christian harmony. Paul writes:**

***A man of sound faith knows he can eat anything, while one who is weak in faith eats only vegetables. The man who will eat anything must not ridicule him who abstains from certain foods: the man who abstains must not sit in judgment on him who eats. After all, God himself has made him welcome." (Rom.14:2-3)***

**The point being that if both the weak and the strong have been accepted by God, they must not only tolerate each other but they must make each other feel welcome within the Community.**

## RASH JUDGEMENT

Paul desires that neither side make a moral judgment about the other side. Paul sees the spirit of rash judgment among Christians as extremely detrimental to Christian Community life. We know judgment is a juridical term. A man appointed as judge sits upon a judgment seat and decrees who is right and who is wrong, who is to be declared righteous and who is to be declared unrighteous, that is, morally wrong. Paul pictures certain Christians as clothing themselves as Christian judges, taking their seats upon the tribunal of justice and decreeing here and there that this or that Christian has sinned. As mentioned before, there is always an implied verdict of self-righteousness on the part of the "judge." Paul implies that such Christians usurp Christ's own role. The Father appointed Jesus Christ as judge of the living and dead. We read in 2 Timothy 4:1 that Jesus Christ is coming "to judge the living and the dead." Jesus Himself testified:

*"The Father has given over to him power to pass judgment because he is Son of Man."* (Jn.5:27)

*"...an hour is coming in which all those in their tombs shall hear his voice and come forth. Those who have done right shall rise to live; the evildoers shall rise to be damned...I judge as I hear, and my judgment is honest..."* (Jn.5:28-30)

*"You pass judgment according to appearances but I pass judgment on no man."* (Jn.8:15)

*But the Lord said to Samuel: "Do not judge from his appearance or from his lofty stature, because I have rejected him. Not as man sees does God see, because man sees the appearance but the Lord looks into the heart."* (1Sam.16:7)

When Christians pass judgment on each other--in the sense of declaring someone to be morally wrong--they assume power that is not theirs to exercise. Jesus teaches what the verdict will be when He comes as judge of the world:

*"I intend to judge you on your own evidence"* (Lk.19:22)

*"Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned."* (Lk.6:37)

*"If you want to avoid judgment, stop passing judgment. Your verdict on others will be the verdict passed on you. The measure with which you measure will be used to measure you."* (Mt.7:1-2)

What is being discouraged by Jesus and later by Paul is that judgment which makes a decision concerning the internal motivation of another. One judges what is in the heart of another. One Christian decrees that another Christian has sinned. Speaking to the Corinthians, Paul says:

*It matters little to me whether you or any human court pass judgment on me. I do not even pass judgment on myself. Mind you, I have nothing on my conscience. But that does not mean that I am declaring myself innocent. The Lord is the one to judge me, so stop passing judgment before the time of his return. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and manifest the intentions of hearts." (1Cor.4:3-5)*

We know that criminals often sit in judgment on one another judging according to their own unique standards. These unlawful judging bodies are called Kangaroo Courts. Christians often do no more than hold a kangaroo court where one sinner convicts another of sin. The pot calling the kettle black. Such courts destroy the Shalom of Christ in the Church. Attacking this tendency toward rash judgment Paul asks:

*Who are you to pass judgment on another's servant? His master alone can judge whether he stands or falls. And stand he will, for the Lord is able to make him stand.*  
*(Rom.14:4)*

Paul perceived himself and all Christians as servants and slaves of Jesus Christ. Christians do not belong to themselves. They belong to the Lord. The psalmist says that "the eye of the maid servant is upon the hand of her " mistress and the eye of the man servant upon the hand of his master." Christians should live to please their Lord. Their eyes ought to be on the Lord rather than scrutinizing each other. As Christians:

*None of us lives as his own master and none of us dies as his own master. While we live we are responsible to the Lord, and when we die we die as his servants. Both in life and in death we are the Lord's. That is why Christ died and came to life again, that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living. (Rom.14:7-9)*

Paul rightly maintains that only the Lord has a right to judge His own servants. It is the duty of each servant to examine his or her response to the Lord. Paul maintains that regardless of how we see another, the Lord is able to keep the other faithful to him. "His master alone can judge whether he stands or falls. And stand he will, for the Lord is able to make him stand."

## TRIBUNAL OF CONSCIENCE

Paul teaches that the ultimate criterion for judging the moral action of any human being must be the conscience of each person. Conscience is the heart of the person. Paul says: "one man regards this day as better than that someone else considers all days alike. Each should be certain of his own "conscience." (Rom.14:5.) As mentioned earlier in our study of Romans, conscience (synidesis) is a word primarily introduced into the New Testament by Paul. It does not appear but once in the Old Testament--Wisdom 17:11. The Old Testament had no special word for conscience. The Hebrew word which best expresses the idea of conscience is the word for heart. The Jews possessed no well developed doctrine on an internal power within man that acted as judge concerning the right and wrong of human actions.

They possessed the revealed law, and man's action was judged in keeping with obedience or disobedience to the law. However, the Book of Genesis artistically deals with the "pangs of conscience" suffered by our first parents after their sin of disobedience. Paul adopted the idea from the Stoics who believed man's soul to be intrinsically united to the Deity that established the order and design of the universe; from this union came an internal power called the conscience that judged whether man's deeds were in harmony with the order and design of the universe. Generally speaking it can be said that conscience is an internal power within the spirit of man that judges man's moral acts as good or evil. When good is done the conscience produces peace and contentment; when evil is done the conscience produces sadness and remorse. In his letter to the Corinthians, Paul recognizes the possibility of an erroneous conscience but maintains that it must nevertheless be followed. A (Christian must follow his conscience in order to avoid sin. Paul writes:

*Happy the man whose conscience does not condemn what he has chosen to do!  
But if a man eats when his conscience has misgivings about eating, he is already  
condemned, because he is not acting in accordance with what he believes.  
Whatever does not accord with one's belief is sinful. (Rom.14:22b-23)*

Paul urged Timothy to "hold fast to faith and a good conscience. Some men, by rejecting the guidance of conscience, have made shipwreck of their faith." (1Tim.1:19.) It has been said that some Christians follow their consciences like the man who follows a wheelbarrow.

Paul teaches in Romans that our faith (and faith in this sense is meant the truths that have come to us through the Church, the Scriptures and Jesus Christ) ought to be the light that guides our life--the light of truth that enlightens our

conscience. Paul says, "Use faith as your rule of life in the sight of God. Happy the man whose conscience does not condemn what chosen to do." (Rom.14:22.) The most important thing about behavior is its inner certainty and direction. The Second Vatican Council clearly confirms Paul's teaching concerning conscience:

*In all his activity a man is bound to follow his conscience faithfully, in order that he may come to God, for whom he was created. It follows that he is not to be forced to act in a manner contrary to , his conscience. Nor, on the other hand, is he to be restrained from acting in accordance with his conscience, especially in matters religious. For, of its very nature, the exercise of religion consists before all else in those internal, voluntary, and free acts whereby man sets the course of his life directly towards God. No merely human power can either command or prohibit acts of this kind. (Rel.Freedom 1:3)*

What a Christian does or does not do ought to proceed from a desire and effort to give an obedient response to the Will of the Lord. In this way the life of each person honors and glorifies God. So Paul teaches:

*The man who observes the day does so to honor the Lord. The man who eats does so to honor the Lord, and he gives thanks to God. The man who does not eat abstains to honor the Lord, and he too gives thanks to God. (Rom.14:6)*

Although men act in different ways, if they act from a good conscience—which must presume--they are pleasing and honoring God.

Paul turns to the weak in faith and asks: "But you, how can you sit in judgment on your brother?" Then he turns to the strong in faith and asks: "Or you, how can you look down on your brother?" (Rom.14:10.) Paul tells us that all of us who judge and disdain each other will one day stand before the judgment seat of Jesus Christ. He writes:

*We shall all have to appear before the judgment seat of God. It is written, "As surely as I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bend before me and every tongue shall give praise to God." Everyone of us will have to give an account of himself before God. Therefore we must no longer pass judgment on one another. (Rom.14:11-12)*

Paul prudently directs our eyes away from the passing circumstances of human existence to the end of our earthly lives. How will all these things that we live so much concern and bother to appear to us when we stand on the shores of eternity. We ought to measure things today in light of eternity that will bring a final and

irrevocable decision. (Teresa of Avila used to say: "Let nothing disturb thee, nothing affright thee; all things are passing. God never changeth.")

*...When the just judgment of God will be revealed, when he will repay every man for what he has done: eternal life to those who strive for glory, honor and immortality by patiently doing right: wrath and fury to those who selfishly disobey the truth and obey wickedness. Yes, affliction and anguish will come upon every man who has done evil. ...But there will be glory, honor, and peace for everyone who has done good...With God there is no favoritism. (Rom.2:5-11)*

## THE RULE OF LOVE

Faith, we are told, must be the "rule of life." Faith reveals the "law of Christ" as agape-love. Paul stressed in chapter twelve and thirteen the absolute dominance of love in the Christian Community.

*Love one another with the affection of brothers (12:10)...Look on the needs of the saints as your own (12:13)...Owe no debt to anyone except the debt that binds us to love one another. He who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law (13:8)...Love never wrongs the neighbor, hence love is the fulfillment of the law. (Rom.13:10)*

If love of Christ and neighbor guides the actions of a Christian, Paul maintains, "We must no longer pass judgment on one another. Instead you should resolve to put no stumbling block or hindrance in your brother's way." (Rom.14:13.) "Stumbling block" refers to those unintended barriers resulting from our lack of sensitivity to the consciences of others. "Hindrance" (skandalan) suggests something deliberately and callously done that causes others to sin. One places an action with no consideration for the effects it will have upon weaker members of the community. A Christian is his brother's guardian. Our enlightened conscience may give us freedom of the spirit. We may have the right to do many things. However, in Paul's mind, it is more important that we fulfill the supreme Christian obligation of love of neighbor than exercising our Christian rights. A Christian must be willing to sacrifice the use of Christian liberty if its use should injure the heart and conscience of someone else. Before a Christian acts, he or she should ask: how will this action affect my own soul, and how will it affect the soul of my neighbor? "Love never wrongs the neighbor." Only then can we give our actions the green light of agape-love.

Paul places the greater responsibility to preserve the spirit of love within the Christian Community upon those strong in the faith. Paul applies the principle of agape-love to the present problem in the Church. Apparently certain members of



the community were being troubled and scandalized by other Christians eating meat. We know that most meat sold in the market place had previously been offered in pagan sacrifice. Eating this meat, in the mind of some, implied participating in pagan sacrifice. If they had such a mentality and ate the meat, it would be a conscience problem for them. It would be wrong. Paul writes:

*I know with certainty on the authority of the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself; it is only when a man thinks something unclean that it becomes so for him. [We need to realize here that the reference is to food and the abrogation of the Levitical laws concerning forbidden foods.] If, then, your brother feels remorse for, the food he has eaten, you have ceased to follow the rule of love. You must not let the food you eat bring to ruin him for whom Christ died; neither may you allow your privilege to become an occasion for blasphemy.*

*(Rom.14:14-16)*

*Take care not to destroy God's work for the sake of something to eat. True, all foods are clean; but it is wrong for a man to eat when the food offends his conscience. You would be acting nobly if you abstained from eating meat, or drinking wine, or anything else that offers your brother an occasion for stumbling or scandal, or that weakens him in any way.*

*(Rom.14:20-21)*

Paul emphasizes to be a member of the Church does not essentially consist in being free from the dietary laws of the Jewish religion or pagan cults. The very heart of our religion is life in the Holy Spirit: "The Kingdom of God is not a matter of eating or drinking, but of justice, peace and the joy that is given by the Holy Spirit." (Rom.14:17.) If we are truly part of that kingdom we ought to make whatever sacrifice is necessary to preserve justice, peace and joy--the fruits of the Holy Spirit within the Church. Paul confirms:

*Whoever serves Christ in this way pleases God and wins the esteem of men. Let us, then, make it our aim to work for peace and to strengthen one another.*

*(Rom.14:18)*

God works in the lives of all men. As members of the Christian Community, we must have special concern for His work in the lives of our fellow Christians. The life of the spirit--a life of faith, hope, and charity--may only be delicately budding in the spirit of our neighbor. In order that it take root and grow strong, it must be carefully nourished. We are encouraged, for the love of Jesus Christ, to have a tender care and concern for those still infants in the faith. Paul warns: "Take care not to destroy God's work" for the sake of some personal gratification. He encourages:

*We who are strong in faith should be patient with the scruples of those whose faith is weak; we must not be selfish. Each should please his neighbor so as to do him good by building up his spirit. (Rom.15:1-2)*

Being patient implies more than tolerating the weakness of others and bearing with burdensome people. It suggests accepting their burdens as one's own. Paul's words, "pleasing others," suggests more than good example but rather a real personal involvement expressed in positive support and instruction.

As members of one body, the Church, we have a personal obligation to help others grow in the spirit. Paul maintains we must do this at the cost of self--self denial is called for. Jesus Christ is placed before our eyes as our model for selflessness: "Though he was in the form of God he did not deem equality with God something to be grasped at. Rather he emptied himself and took the form of a slave." (Phil.2:6-7.) Again Paul writes: "Thus, in accord with the Scripture, Christ did not please himself: 'The reproaches they uttered against you fell on me.'" (Rom.15:3.) Here, Paul quotes Psalm 69:7 and it suggests that Jesus, out of love for sinful mankind, took the burden of our sins upon Himself. He died in order that we might live. Therefore, the strong in faith are encouraged, in a Christ-like fashion, to surround the weak with an environment of care and concern--an environment free of cold criticism, snobbish cynicism and aloofness.

Paul's concluding remarks on this subject have suggested to many that the disunity in the Church resulted from differences between the converted Jews and the Gentile Christians. They identify the Jewish Christians with the "weak" since their past religious history commanded abstention from certain foods, observance of certain festival days and days of fast. We have already seen in Acts that James, the Bishop of Jerusalem, commanded Gentile converts "to abstain from meat sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals" in order to preserve Christian unity. As James said: "After all, for generations now Moses has been proclaimed in every town and has been read aloud in the synagogues on every Sabbath." (Acts 15:20-21.) It would be understand-able that many Jews would have a real conscience problem concerning such matters, whereas the converts from paganism would have no conscience problems in regard to such matters.

Paul encourages the Gentiles to be patient, kind and considerate of Jewish converts. They must not let this greater freedom of conscience destroy the peace of the Community and perhaps even lead others to behavior contrary to their beliefs: "Whatever does not accord with one's belief is sinful." We have the example of the Lord before our eyes who by His life and death united the Jews and Gentiles into one body. Christ became a Jew in order to fulfill God's promise to the patriarchs, and in order that the Gentiles might experience the mercy of God. Even though

**Jesus Christ became a Jew, lived and died among the Jews, His life of utter unselfishness achieved the glory of God among Jews and Gentiles: among the Jews by revealing God's faithfulness and trustworthiness to the Jews, and among the Gentiles by leading them to experience salvation and to proclaim the merciful love of God.**

*As the Scripture has it, "Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles I will sing to your name." Again, "Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people." And, "Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles and sing his " glory, all you peoples." Once more, Isaiah says, "The root of Jesse will appear, he who will rise up to rule the Gentiles; in him the Gentiles will find hope. (Rom.15:9-12)*

**Seeking the glory of God in all things, Jesus overcame the separation existing between Jews and Gentiles. Jesus brought the Gentiles into the New Israel and therefore into union with God. He restored hope to their lives. Because of Jesus' gift to the Gentiles, Paul can now confidently pray, "So may God, the source of hope, fill you with all joy and peace so that through the power of the Holy Spirit you may have hope in abundance." (Rom.15:13.)**

**Jesus is the model of the peace maker. Jesus achieved the union of the Jews and Gentiles as one people of God by unselfishly seeking in all things the glory of God. If Christians, strong and weak alike, would follow the humble example of Jesus by seeking, not self-fulfillment but making the glory of God their rule of life, shalom would bloom and blossom in the Church to the glory of God and His Christ. That the flower of peace bloom in the Christian Community is the care of every Christian. "My peace is my gift to you." (Jn.14: 27.)**

**Paul concludes his exhortation with the advice that all Christians read and study the Holy Scriptures. The Scriptures will be a source of hope for the strong who patiently endure the weak, and they will be a source of encouragement to the weak who are inclined to be anxious. Paul says:**

*Everything written before our time was written for our instruction, that we might derive hope from the lessons of patience and the words of encouragement in the Scriptures. (Rom.15:4)*

**Paul ends with an accent of hope, and he concludes with a beautiful prayer for Shalom in the Christian Community--recalling once again to mind that the source of all peace and harmony is the Holy Spirit:**

*May God, the source of all patience and encouragement, enable you to live in perfect harmony with one another according to the spirit of Christ Jesus, so that*

*with one heart and voice you may glorify God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.* (Rm.15:5-6)

## CHAPTER 12

### OBEDIENCE TO FAITH

#### INTRODUCTION

We are approaching the end of our study of Paul's letter to the Romans. Perhaps now we can better understand Martin Luther's words concerning Romans: "Rightly the chief part of the New Testament and the clearest gospel of all." We do not have to agree with him, but we may be able to appreciate his point of view. Because of the immense theological insights gathered in Romans, it would be wise for us to briefly review the highlights of Romans in order to grasp a general, panoramic view of what we have studied.

It began with Paul's confession of faith in the Gospel: "It is the power of God leading everyone who believes in it to salvation." (Rom.1:16.) The proclamation of the gospel is producing righteousness in the lives of those who believe in Jesus Christ as Lord: "For in the gospel is revealed the justice of God which begins and ends with faith." (Rom.1:17.) First Paul pointed to the rainbow of hope in the heavens--Jesus Christ. Then like Jeremiah the prophet he next's points to the dark, ominous storm clouds gathering over the heads of mankind and proclaims:

*The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against the irreligious and perverse spirit of men who, in this perversity of theirs, hinder the truth (Rom.1:18). God's just decree that all who do such things deserve death.*

*(Rom.1:32)*

Paul teaches the "wrath of God" is presently being manifested in the world. Not because of sin itself, but because of a particular spirit within man that rebels against the truth--blocks the manifestation of truth in the world by living a lie--erroneous lives. The sins of men may be different but their spirits are the same. All possess the same perverse spirit and invoke the wrath of God:

*There is no just man, not even one; there is no one in search of God...All men have sinned and are deprived of the glory of God...This means that every mouth is silenced and the whole world stands convicted before God.*

*(Rom.3:11,13,19.)*

God's wrath expresses itself in this world through divine abandonment (paredoken). God leaves men to follow the perversity of their own wills and to suffer the bitter

consequences that sin brings into their lives and world. As we read in Acts: "God turned away from them and abandoned them." (Acts 7:42.) In actual fact men's lives become as godless as they have desired.

Once again Paul turns to point to a rainbow of hope, the righteousness of God is also being manifested in this world through Jesus Christ for all mankind--Jews People do not have to remain under the cloud of They can enter into a state of personal righteousness before God:

*All men are now undeservedly justified by the gift of God, through the redemption wrought in Christ Jesus. Through his blood, God made him the means of expiation for all who believe.* (Rom.3:24-25)

Jesus Christ appeared on earth's stage as Savior. A savior being a victor who wins a victory--a salvation--for another. Matthew in his gospel account, describes the essence of salvation:

*He will save his people from their sins.* (Mt.1:21)

Paul writes:

*You can depend on this as worthy of full acceptance: that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.* (1Tm.1:15)

Jesus is the one "who delivers us from the wrath to come." (1Thes.1:10)

Paul teaches all men are "undeservedly justified." This means no one claims salvation as their due. Jesus merited salvation for us by the redemption. Theologically speaking, the word redemption encompasses the entire life, death and resurrection of Jesus. Jesus' death on the cross merited all the grace necessary to bring all mankind into the fullness of salvation. However, under the overall title of redemption, we can distinguish certain aspects of the work of the redemption and attribute to them certain stages in the plan of salvation. in Romans where Paul appears to distinguish between redemption, expiation, and salvation. Studying these individual concepts enables us to grasp more completely the work of the redemption.

Redemption in the biblical concept means Jesus placed an act that freed mankind from the enslavement and power of sin. The act of redemption being the death of the sinless Jesus Christ. Jesus endured death rather than sin. His death on the cross broke the power of sin over human nature. Man-in-Jesus has the power of sin by the historical death of Jesus on the cross. The redemption of man is a historical fact. However, redemption in the biblical concept does not imply that each

individual is freed from personal sins and its evil effects. More is demanded. Personal sin must also be wiped away--expiated. God made Jesus the means of expiation. In the Old Testament, sacrifice, the blood of the victim being holy, purified all it touched. The Blood of Christ possessed power to purify persons of their sins: the Blood of Christ being the means established by God to expiate sins. From this aspect Christ's death on the cross had a two-fold effect: first, it freed man from the power and enslavement to sin~ second, it offered man the means to be, purified of sin. In this sense, we say redemption and expiation flow from the cross. Yet this does not equal salvation. It is something more. The story of redemption is not completed. Salvation means being saved from eternal death. This comes by man sharing in the life of God. In the mind of Paul, there is no life but eternal life. Continued existence--outside of God's life--is living death, the definition of Hell. Man enters into salvation through faith in Jesus. Saving-faith implies complete trust and confidence in the merits of Jesus for one's personal salvation. Paul writes:

*For our faith will be credited to us also if we believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead, the Jesus who was handed over to death for our sins and raised up for our justification.*  
(Rom.4:24-25)

This saving-faith receives concrete expression through baptism into Christ. Baptism initiates the process of salvation. A baptized person is not paved but is being saved. Salvation is a process. A person who is saved possesses permanently, irrevocably and fully, as humanly possible, the eternal life of God. In this life this can only be possessed through hope. Salvation comes in its fullness when Jesus declares--on the Day of Judgment--one to be "blessed of the Father." The baptized have presently entered the river of salvation but have yet to reach the ocean--complete union with God. In the meantime "you must hold fast to faith and be firmly grounded and steadfast in it." (Col.1:22.)

In our present condition, the grace of salvation brings peace: "Now that we have been justified by faith, we are at peace with God." (Rom.5:1.) Likewise it brings the gift of hope. Hope creates an expectancy within the baptized--filled with confidence and certitude--that one will possess those future blessings promised by God. Hope dynamically elevates the human spirit above the present evils experienced, to patiently endure evils without becoming bogged down in sadness and despair. Hope gives us the courage to remain committed to the way of Jesus regardless of the sacrifices demanded.

Hope in the Christian heart has a firm foundation doubly laid. The baptized actually experience the presence and power of the Holy Spirit within their lives. This presence of the Holy Spirit is a cause of hope. The presence of the Holy Spirit brings

us to the second cause for hope. The presence of the Holy Spirit is a witness to the fact that God loves us. Paul writes:

*And this hope will not leave us disappointed, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit Who has been given to US.*  
(Rom.5:5)

God loves us perfectly and when we come to experience the reality of this love in our conscious life, all fear is cast out and we can hope against hope for the impossible, "for nothing is impossible to God." God will accomplish the impossible in the lives of those Who love Him.

We learn from Paul that the human race is Composed of two types of human beings. Adam and Jesus are the prototypes of these two types of human beings. All the children of Adam are men and women "of the flesh." They are characterized as being slaves of Harmatia (sin) and belonging to Thanatos (death). As slaves of Harmatia they cannot please God. The wrath of God rests upon them. They are doomed to eternal death. The descendants of Jesus Christ are men and women of "the spirit." They are characterized as being free of the power of sin and empowered to please God. They belong to the Kingdom of God and live in His Holy Spirit.

Life in the flesh is expressed through a life of disobedience to God's commands. Such a person may be able to see the "right" thing to do, even desire to accomplish it, but lacks the power to do so. The power of sin in their lives dominates and renders impotent the desire to accomplish good. The life "of the spirit" is manifested by a blending of the human will with the divine will. Such a person not only "judges what is good, pleasing and perfect" (Rom.12:2) to God but possesses the power to accomplish it through the Holy Spirit.

Paul argues that those men and women of "the spirit" ought to live a sinless life. He maintains they have the power to do so:

*Through baptism into his death we were buried with him, So that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might live a new life. If we have been united with him through likeness of his death, so shall we be through a like resurrection.*  
(Rom.6:5)

Paul pictures a man of the flesh uniting with the dying Jesus on the cross at the moment of his baptism. In baptism this person dies with Christ on the cross. As God raised the dead Christ to life, He now raises the baptized who have "died with Christ" to newness of life. In baptism the man of the flesh dies and a new man rises



to life in Jesus Christ. The life of Jesus continues in the baptized. For this reason Paul argues for sinlessness:

*You must consider yourselves dead to sin but alive for God in Christ Jesus This we know: our old self was crucified with him So that the sinful body might be destroyed and we might be slaves to sin no longer No more shall you offer the members of your body to sin as weapons for evil. Rather offer yourselves to God as men who have come back from the dead to life, and your bodies to God as weapons for justice For our sakes God made him who did not know sin, to be sin, so that in him we might become the very holiness of God. (Rom.6:11,6,12-1; 2Cor.5:21)*

To live in the Spirit means to walk in the Spirit. This implies living life daily under the inspiration and the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. Since the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Truth and Love, the life of the Christian ought to image humility and agape-love. It is the glory of the Christian life to be an Ikon of the Holy Spirit. This implies the lived existence of the Christian expresses the personality of the Holy Spirit. Such are begotten by the Spirit of God and become sons of God. As such they become joint heirs with Christ. The life of God is their inheritance. Paul teaches:

*If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, then he who raised Christ from the dead will bring your mortal bodies to life also, through his Spirit dwelling in you. (Rom.8:11)*

Christians on the river of salvation will pass through the tunnel of death, but they fear no evil. They are certain the dark tunnel opens into the Ocean of Eternal Life.

Paul reminds Christians that we will share in Christ's glory "if only we suffer with him so as to be glorified with him." (Rom.8:17.) The path to eternal glory Christ trod in this life. There is no other path. The road to glory ascends the road to Calvary. Paul makes it crystal clear that suffering and death are part of the life in the Spirit: "Although we have the Spirit as first fruits, (we) groan inwardly while we await the redemption of our bodies." (Rom.8:23.) The gift of the Holy Spirit begins our salvation. We patiently await its completion amidst trials and hardships. We suffer with complete confidence for "there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." ( Rom.8:1)

Paul teaches us that the faith that leads to salvation must be expressed both internally and externally:

*For if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. Faith in the heart leads to justification, confession on the lips to salvation.* (Rom.10:9-10)

Faith in the heart means that one has complete faith and confidence in Jesus. Faith on the lips certainly does not mean lip service to the name of Jesus but symbolizes all the external manifestations of faith. In other words, we cannot believe one thing in the heart and do another in our actions. Our external deeds reveal our hearts. "What you are crying so loud I cannot hear what you, are saying!"

Paul beholds an idealized picture of Christians. They are living altars from which the deeds of their lives ascend as a sacrifice of sweet fragrance to the Lord. He writes: "Brothers, I beg you through the mercy of God to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice holy and acceptable to God, your spiritual worship." (Rom.12:1) This is a blueprint for holiness. Christians are asked to make their "bodies"--which means their very selves as human beings--completely available to God. A "sacrifice" (Lateria) suggests a complete offering, a consecration that removes the object sacrificed from the possession of the offerer. It is a living sacrifice because the Christian retains life; the sacrifice is not affected through the death of the victim. The Greek word "logikos" translated spiritual is literally "logical" or "what might be reasonably expected." Paul is speaking here of a divine logic that probes more deeply than human reason. It is the logic of faith that surpasses human logic. Spiritual worship consists in the deliberate sacrifice of one's own natural will in order to accomplish the Will of God.

This sacrifice is characterized by human consecration. The Christian is not to conform to this old age dominated by sin. They must conform to the new age already inaugurated in Jesus Christ:

*Do not conform yourselves to this age but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, so that you may judge what is God's will, what is good, pleasing and perfect.* (Rom.12:2)

A Christian achieves this by conforming to the Mind of Christ--another way of saying "putting on the Spirit of Jesus." The mind becomes aware of the will of God--becomes able to distinguish between good and evil--what pleases and displeases the Lord and wherein perfection of behavior lies.

In the mind of Paul a life of spiritual worship finds expression in humility:  
*I warn each of you not to think more highly of himself than he ought.  
...Do not be wise in your own estimation.* (Rom.12:3a,6a)

Spiritual worship demands a life of self-denial because it is impossible to practice agape-love without dying to self. "Do not be selfish," says Paul. (Rom.15:1) The spirit of agape-love fulfills the commandments of God in the, spirit: "Love never wrongs the neighbor, hence love is the fulfillment of the law." (Rom.13:10)

The letter to the Romans draws to a close. Paul has delivered his gospel message. Reflecting back on what has been said he realizes he spoke quite strongly at times. Paul had no desire to offend members of the Christian Community. Nothing had been written except with the purest motives. Paul had been called by Jesus Christ to be a herald of the gospel. Paul was teacher par excellence of that gospel. He had not taken this task upon himself. The Lord Jesus called him to it. The Letter to the Romans began with these words:

*Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart to proclaim the gospel of God...Through him we have been favored with apostleship, that we may spread his name and bring to obedient faith all the Gentiles among whom are you who have been called to belong to Jesus Christ. (Rom.1:1-5)*

#### PAUL'S MISSION

Paul sees the work assigned to him by Jesus as having a two-fold dimension. He must spread His Name. He writes to the Romans:

*It has been a point of honor with me never to preach in places where Christ's name was already known, for I did not want to build on a foundation laid by another but rather to fulfill the words of Scripture, "They who received no word of him will see him, and they who have never heard will understand."*

*(Rom.15:20-21)*

That declaration gives us a very graphic insight into the personality of Paul. He chooses to work in the most difficult section of the vineyard. Paul possessed great personal fortitude and zeal. Zeal has been defined as charity at white heat. The charity of Christ compelled Paul to seek those still lost in darkness and share with them the Light of Life. Only at great cost to self could this be accomplished. Love does not count the cost of the gift given.

We see, especially in the life of Paul, how the unique gifts of nature and a forceful personality were integrated into the apostolic life. There is an old spiritual axiom, "Grace builds on nature." In other words, God builds His spiritual friends upon the natural foundation He has already laid. Christian Spirituality is incarnational. God became man in order that man could become godly in Jesus Christ. This divining process continues through the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit

comes into the lives of people possessing unique natural powers and abilities. With the Holy Spirit comes supernatural gifts: faith, hope and charity; however, He does not by-pass the natural gifts. It is upon this natural foundation the Holy Spirit builds. He crowns this with the gifts of the Spirit. All gifts of the Holy Spirit express themselves through the natural human faculties. As we limit ourselves by failing to develop our own God-given abilities (this we do for many reasons) we limit the expressions of the Holy Spirit through our lives. We become poor reflections of His divine personality. We become a very poor Ikon of the Holy Spirit. There is hardly any resemblance to Jesus at all. This could never be said of Paul of Tarsus. In our own day it could not be said of Mother Theresa of Calcutta.

It is not easy to know where nature begins and grace ends. It takes real discernment to know so. It is a needed discernment, as human nature of itself no longer glorifies God. Regardless of how humanly noble an action may be, it still remains an operation of the flesh: "I know that no good dwells in me," writes Paul, "that is, in my flesh." (Rom.7:18) Paul knew from experience that he naturally excelled many men, but he knew only that what his life accomplished under God's grace had any lasting value. All such actions within himself Paul attributed to the power of Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit of Jesus motivated and empowered his natural faculties. These things, and only these things, were a great source of comfort and self esteem for Paul. He was not ashamed to glory in what God accomplished through his own obedience to faith, but he acknowledged it all to be Christ's glory shining through his life. To the Romans he wrote:

*This means I can take glory in Christ Jesus for the work I have done, for God. I will not dare to speak of anything except what Christ has done through me to win the Gentiles to obedience by word and deed, with mighty signs and wonders, [Paul speaks here of miracles] by the power of God's Spirit. As a result, I have completed preaching the gospel of Christ from Jerusalem all the way around to Illyria [part of modern Yugoslavia and Albania].* (Rom.15:17-19)

Here is a man with a sense of honor and dignity but not a prideful person. The proud attribute the source of goodness to self. The proud take the honor and glory due to God. When the young man called Jesus, "Good Teacher," the meek and humble Jesus retorted: "Why do you call me good? None is good but God alone." (Lk.18:18.) Therefore, God is the source of all goodness. When good is accomplished through our lives, the glory belongs to God.

Paul recognized his vocation called him to more than evangelizing people; he had a responsibility to those he evangelized. In The little Prince the fox said to the little prince: "You have forever a responsibility for those you tame." Paul recognized his obligation to bring the evangelized to "obedient faith." Besides being

an evangelist, he must also be a teacher. This may not require the same degree of fortitude, however it requires fortitude to teach the fullness of truth. Knowledge, wisdom and great patience are likewise required. Teaching religion is another dimension of apostolic love. Paul had his example in Jesus: "Upon disembarking Jesus saw a vast crowd. He pitied them, for they were like sheep without a shepherd: and he began to teach them at great length." (Mk. 6:34.) The name so often given to Jesus was Teacher.

Bringing Christians to belief is one thing: bringing them to obedience in faith is quite another. The difference is like giving birth to a child and bringing the child to maturity. Knowledge is certainly needed. The object of Christian faith is the Holy Trinity and the revelations that have come to us from the Triune God. Christians must have faith in God's Word as well as in God. The Word of God must clearly be known and understood. We discover the Will of God in the Word of God. Knowing God is the beginning. How does this knowledge affect one? The proper response to revelation is obedience, and obedience is inseparable from real faith. Disobedience is rebellion, and rebellion implies infidelity. Revelation calls for the submission of our lives to the Word. One who has the obligation to bring others to obedience of faith has the responsibility, not only to bring the fullness of truth to them but to motivate and train them to love God above all things. The reason so much Christian education has failed is because teachers fail to inspire love of God in their students. One often wonders, has the love of God grown cold in the hearts of Christian teachers who inspire others so meagerly to love God? Could the words addressed by the Holy Spirit to the Church of Ephesus be said of many? "I hold this against you, though: you have turned aside from your early love." (Rv. 2:4) Or perhaps those words addressed to the Church of Laodicea:

*I know your deeds. I know you are neither hot nor cold. How I wish you were one or the other--hot or cold! But because you are lukewarm, neither hot nor cold, I will spew you out of my mouth! (Rv. 3:15-16)*

Obedience to faith was expressed very simply in the old catechism: "God made me to know Him, to love Him, and to serve Him in this world..." It follows in that order. That is the complete task of the Christian teacher. A true teacher of religion must realize that to know God does not end with knowing facts about God. Knowing God implies, in some degree and manner, experiencing God. This will never occur when the teacher possesses no deep love of God and no true affection for the students. One thing the Letters reveal about Paul is that he never taught religion with a cold or indifferent spirit (perhaps he was a bit over-heated at times). Once more let us quote his words to the Elders of Ephesus for they reveal Paul the Teacher:

*I take the blame for no man's conscience, for I have never shrunk from announcing to you God's design in its entirety Do not forget that for three years, night and day, I never ceased warning you individually even to the point of tears.*  
(Acts 20:26b, 31)

Those are the words of a teacher who not only loved truth but loved his students.

This same spirit motivated Paul's letter to the Romans. He did not write as the evangelist but as the teacher. Paul tactfully tells the Romans:

*I am convinced, my brothers, that you are filled with goodness, that you have complete knowledge, and that you are able to give advice to one another. Yet I have written to you rather boldly in parts of this letter by way of reminder.*  
(Rom. 15:14-15a)

Here we see Paul the Teacher. In order for thoughts to forcefully motivate our lives, they need to be strongly present within our minds. Thinking affects our emotions and behavior. Paul seeks a more loving response to faith, a greater maturity in faith. He writes:

*I take this liberty because God has given me the grace to be a minister of Christ Jesus among the Gentiles, with the priestly duty of preaching the gospel of God so that the Gentiles may be offered up as a pleasing sacrifice, consecrated by the Holy Spirit.*  
(Rom. 15:15b-16)

Paul accentuates the holiness of his life's work. He sees an analogy between his work and that of the priest in the temple offering sacrifice to God.

In the Old Testament, a priest was a man set apart by God to serve as representative of the people in their public worship of God. We read in Hebrews:

*Every high priest is taken from among men and made their representative before God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins.  
...One does not take this honor on his own initiative, but only when called by God  
Now every high priest is appointed to offer gifts and sacrifices. (Heb. 5:1-4: 8:3)*

Paul often mentions he has been chosen by God. He wrote the Galatians:

*But the time came when he who had set me apart before I was born and called me by his favor chose to reveal his Son to me, that I might spread among the Gentiles the good tidings concerning him.*  
(Gal. 1:15-16a)

Paul views his life's work in priestly terms: priestly, sacrifice, and offerings. Paul beholds the preaching of the gospel as a priestly liturgical act itself. His life fulfills the priestly role: his gifts and sacrifices offered to God are the men and women he brings, through his ministry, to obedience of faith. Once again Paul attributes all human holiness to, the operations of the Holy Spirit. His offerings to God were "sanctified by the Holy Spirit."

### PAUL'S FUTURE PLAN

Paul confessed he had often desired to visit Rome but the demands of the apostolic life had prohibited it. He had to press on and reach areas untouched. He now feels that his work in the East has been completed. He broke the ground; the churches have been established; he will leave it to others to build on the foundations he has laid. Now Paul looks westward towards Spain. Many great men of the Roman Empire have presently come from Spain, such as Seneca, the great Stoic philosopher and prime minister of Rome under Nero. Paul views Spain as a fertile field for his future missionary work. He plans to spend awhile in Rome and, with the help of the Roman Community, launch his campaign into Spain. He writes,

*As soon as I can set out for Spain, I hope to see you in passing; I trust that you will send me on my journey only after I have had the joy of being with you for a little while.*  
(Rom.15:24)

Presently Paul plans to visit Jerusalem in order to bring a large collection of money for the poor Christians in Jerusalem. Paul felt very strongly about this collection. A lot of time and energy had been expended in its collection. It possessed great symbolic significance for him. This was not a journey to carelessly undertake. Jews in Jerusalem despised him as an apostate and even the Christians in Jerusalem held the orthodoxy of his faith in suspicion. Paul nevertheless decided to risk the dangers involved. It appears almost a point of honor with him that he personally take the collection to Jerusalem. The dangerousness of this decision had not escaped his attention. Paul preached at Miletus:

*I am on my way to Jerusalem, compelled by the Spirit and not knowing what will happen to me there--except the Holy Spirit has been warning me from city to city that chains and hardships await me. (Acts 20:22-23)*

Some years before the leaders of the Church--James, Cephas, and John—had approved Paul's vocation to preach to the Gentiles but with the stipulation that he be mindful of the poor. "The one thing that I was making every effort to do," says Paul. By personally bringing this collection to Jerusalem Paul would fulfill his promise to the authorities. Perhaps he hoped it would demonstrate his true love and

concern for his own people. Also, Paul had desired, through the collection, to emphasize among the Gentiles their spiritual ties with the Mother Church in Jerusalem and their moral obligation to support her. Paul writes to the Romans:

*Just now I am leaving for Jerusalem to bring assistance to the saints. Macedonia and Achaia have kindly decided to make a contribution for those in need among the saints in Jerusalem. They did so of their own accord, yet they are also under obligation. For if the Gentiles have shared in the spiritual blessings of the Jews, they ought to contribute to their temporal needs in return. When I have finished my task and have safely handed over this contribution to them, I shall I set out for Spain, passing through your midst on the way. I am certain that when I do visit you, I shall come with Christ's full blessing.*

*(Rom.15:25-29)*

Paul makes a plea for prayer. He realistically views the dangers ahead. He asked the Christian Community to come to his side with their prayers in the coming struggle. He knows the power of prayer in the struggle against evil and he humbly seeks their prayerful support:

*I beg you, brothers, for the sake of our Lord Jesus and the love of the Spirit, join me in the struggle by your prayers to God on my behalf. Pray that I may be kept safe from the unbelievers in Judea, and that the offerings I bring to Jerusalem may be well received by the saints there; so that, God willing, I may come to you with joy and be refreshed in spirit by your company.*

*(Rom.15:30-32)*

The Church at Rome, no doubt, heard this plea and they prayed to God to keep Paul safe from evil and to bring him safely to Rome. For that is what ultimately came to be. Many attempts were made upon his life. Romans took him into custody to save his life. He was saved from death on the boat by the Roman centurion. He was saved from drowning at sea. He was saved from the poisonous bite of a serpent. Two years later he arrived in Rome under police escort and received a warm welcome from the brothers in Rome. We read in Acts:

*Certain brothers from Rome who heard about us came out as far as the Forum of Appius and the Three Taverns to meet us. When Paul saw them, he thanked God and took fresh courage. (Acts 28:15)*

TWO years earlier he had asked the Romans to "pray that I may be kept safe from unbelievers in Judea...so that, God willing, I may come to you with joy and be refreshed in spirit by your company." (Rom.15:31-32) So it came to be, however Paul arrived in chains. It pays at times to be very specific in one's prayer requests.



Many scholars believe the letter to the Romans ends in verse thirty-three of chapter fifteen: "May the God of peace be with you all. Amen." However, as it appears today, the letter possesses sixteen chapters. The last chapter appears as a letter of introduction of the Lady Phoebe to the Christian Community in Rome along with a series of greetings.

Some who hold the chapter to be part of the original letter believe that, Paul had an opportunity of sending his letter personally through his friend Phoebe. When this opportunity afforded itself, Paul made an addition to this letter. However, others hold that the letter was originally part of a letter to the Ephesians. In their minds it was hardly possible that Paul would know so many people in a city he had never visited. However, he would have known many in Ephesus for he worked there three years. We also know from Acts that Prisca and Aquila lived in Ephesus; when Paul later writes a letter from prison to Timothy at Ephesus, Prisca and Aquila are still there.

Preceding these arguments, chapter sixteen does suggest that women did hold some recognized positions in the early Christian Community. Paul writes,

*I commend to you our sister Phoebe, who is a deaconess of the Church of Cenchreae. Please welcome her in the Lord, as saints should. If she needs help in anything, give it to her, for she herself has been of help to many, including myself.* (Rom.16:1-2)

Two important words are used in the description of Phoebe: "diakonos" and "prostatas." It is certain that the corresponding masculine nouns are official titles. The first signified the office of deacon in the Church. Acts 6:16 gives an account of the official establishment of this order in the Church. The second, "prostatas" (patroness, benefactress), signified the office of a president, patron, or legal representative in Jewish as well as Greco-Roman, religious organizations. Phoebe was certainly a prominent woman in the early, Christian Community. (Pliny the Younger, writing around 112 A.D. makes mention of Christian deaconess in the Church-Epist. X 96,8)

Paul sends personal greetings to no less than twenty-six people and to two households. About eight of these people are women. His first greeting is to Prisca:

*Give my greeting to Prisca and Aquila; they were my fellow workers in the service of Christ Jesus and even risked their lives for the sake of mine. Not only I but all the churches of the Gentiles are grateful to them.* (Rom.16:3-4)

Apparently Paul could not praise this couple highly enough. He had an outstanding affection and admiration for them. It is interesting that the wife's name comes before that of the husband. This would not be common protocol. We noted in Acts 18:1-3 that when the couple first appeared on the scene they were introduced as Aquila and Priscilla. Later in Acts Priscilla's name comes before Aquila and she was then called Prisca. This would indicate in Acts that Prisca was considered the more prominent member of the team. No doubt Prisca was a girl after Paul's own heart. Apparently she captured it "with admiration."

Paul also sends greetings to another couple, "Andronicus and Junias, my kinsmen and fellow prisoners; they are outstanding apostles, and they were in Christ even before I was." (Rom.16:7.) Junias is a woman's name. She is referred to as an apostle. This would have been an official title of one formally commissioned to preach the gospel. Having entered the Church prior to Paul suggests that they were part of the original Christian Community at Jerusalem.

All these greetings not only testify to Paul's own deep personal relationships with people but of the deep involvement of the members of the Church in the mission of the Church. It testifies to a very apostolic laity in the first century. We are left with the impression that, although many miles separated members of the Church, they were closely united in warm affection:

*Timothy, my fellow worker, sends you his greetings; so, too, do my kinsmen Lucius, Jason, and Sosipater. I, Tertius, who have written this letter [as scribe] send you my greetings in the Lord. Greetings also from Gaius, who is host to me and to the whole church. Erastus, the city treasurer, and our brother Quartus wish to be remembered to you.*  
(Rom.16:21-24)

Paul tells the Church there: "Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ send you greetings." (Rom. 16:16)

Among his greetings Paul inserts a warning about an ever present problem in the Christian Community--the presence of false teachers. He warns the Christian Community to be watchful and on guard against false teachers: "Brothers, I beg you to be on watch against those who cause dissension and scandal, contrary to the teaching you have received." (Rom.16:17.) His warning is against those who cause disunity and infidelity through their false teachings. The Lord knows they are legion today, making wise use of the medium of television. Paul says, "Avoid their company." Paul knew they were men who "preached Christ" but did not serve His interest and grew fat off the profits of their ministries. He writes, "Such men serve, not Christ our Lord, but their own bellies, and they deceive the simpleminded with

smooth and flattering speech [deceitful sermons]." (Rom.16:18.) A few weeks later Paul would preach in Miletus:

*I know that when I am gone, savage wolves will come among you who will not spare the flock. From your own number, men will present themselves distorting the truth and leading astray any who follow them. Be on guard therefore.*  
(Acts 20:29-31a)

While in prison he wrote Timothy:

*Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so these men also oppose the truth; with perverted minds they falsify the faith...They make a pretense of religion but negate its power...It is such as these who worm their way into homes and make captives of silly women, burdened in sin and driven by desires of many kinds, always learning but never able to reach a knowledge of the truth Evil men and charlatans will go from bad to worse, deceiving others, themselves deceived. You, for your part, must remain faithful to what you have learned and believed, because you know who your teachers were.*  
(2Tim.3:6-8,13-14)

He congratulates those to whom he now writes for their obedience to the faith: "Your obedience is known to all, and so I am delighted with you." He encourages their faithfulness to the true faith:

*I want you to be wise in regard to what is good and innocent of all evil. Then the God of peace will quickly crush Satan under your feet. May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.*  
(Rom.16:19-20.)

Paul reminded the Ephesians that it is our true faith that will always "extinguish the fiery darts of the evil one." (Eph.6:16b.) How true it is that those who imprudently drink from all springs will sooner or later be poisoned. Spiritual poison is so subtle the stricken rarely know they are ill and dying.

## DOXOLOGY

The letter fittingly closes with a doxology--a praise of God that expresses so much of the truth taught by Paul in the Letter to the Romans. Many of the thoughts expressed in the letter are gathered here in one great finale: the power of God's salvation; the plan of salvation revealed in the Gospel--salvation through faith in Jesus Christ and offered to all mankind; Paul's apostolic commission and the continuity of it all with the old Testament.

Now to him who is able to strengthen you [to persevere] in the gospel which I proclaim when I preach Jesus Christ [the same gospel preached by Jesus], the gospel which reveals the mystery hidden for many ages [the Incarnation] but now manifested through the writings of the prophets, and, at the command of the eternal God, made known to all the Gentiles that they may believe and obey--to him, the God who alone is wise, may glory be given through Jesus Christ unto endless ages. Amen. (Rom.16:25-27)

**END OF THE LETTER TO THE ROMANS  
DEO GRATIAS!**

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