

THE GOSPEL OF GOD



Meditations on
St. Paul's Letter to the Romans

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MEDITATIONS ON ST. PAUL'S LETTER TO THE ROMANS

James P. O'Bryan, S.T.



St. Joseph Society for Propagation of the Word
24 Boulder View
Irvine, CA 92603

www.invitetodiscipleship.org

FOREWORD

This work, *The Gospel of God*, is part of a larger Catholic Bible study, *Invitation to Christian Discipleship*, a seven year study which consists of lectures, summary of lectures, and worksheets. Letter To The Romans is the summaries and work sheets for the *Letter Of St. Paul To The Romans* lecture series.

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; and
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 lay person to present.

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CHAPTER 1

GOSPEL OF GOD

INTRODUCTION TO ST. PAUL AND THE ROMANS

Antioch in Syria became the first major center of Christian worship beyond Palestine. Here, for the first time, members of the Community were called Christians. To the newly established community at Antioch the Church leaders at Jerusalem sent Barnabas as an official representative. After Barnabas assessed the needs of the Church there, he went to Tarsus searching for Saul, a one-time great persecutor of the Church who had been converted to Christ Jesus some ten years earlier. *“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 11:26).*

The Holy Spirit destined Barnabas and Saul to become the first missionary team formally sent by the Church into a pagan field (See Acts 13:2-3). The newly formed missionary team went to the island of Cyprus, about a hundred miles west of the mainland. There Saul preached his first sermon to a Gentile pagan—the Roman governor Sergius Paulus. *“...He believed, so impressed was he by the teaching about the Lord” (Acts 13:12).* From this moment the author of Acts refers to Saul by the Roman name of Paul. This subtly indicates that Saul’s apostolate to the Gentiles has begun. The Risen Lord had revealed to Ananias about Saul: *“This man is the instrument I have chosen to bring my name to the Gentiles and their kings” (Acts 9:15).*

APOSTLE TO THE GENTILES

Now under the leadership of Paul, the missionary team returned to Asia Minor. Acts records the missionary activities of Paul and Barnabas in Pisidian Antioch, Lystra, Iconium, and Derbe—four cities of southern Galatia. The missionary technique used by Paul was to arrive at the synagogue service on the Sabbath. As itinerate preachers, Paul and Barnabas hoped for an invitation to address the congregation. In Pisidian Antioch the leaders of the synagogue sent this message to them: *“Brothers, if you have any exhortation to address to the people, please speak up” (Acts 13:15).* Acts presents a summary of

Paul's sermon in the synagogue.

Paul, like Peter, preached the remission of sins through Jesus, and the sanctification flowing from Jesus Christ as being beyond the sanctification of the Mosaic Law. 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 in that Paul emphasized salvation for Jew and Greek alike through Jesus Christ. Paul subtly lowers all barriers. Many Jews—Christian and non-Christian—were not about to accept Paul's teaching that *"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, but they rejected the doctrine of the universal salvific Will of God. They could not accept that the Messiah could bring salvation equally to Jew and Greek alike. Acts implies that this refusal of the Jews to share salvation with the Gentiles 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"* (Acts 13:46).

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. Jesus' first disciples experienced themselves as Jews. They intended no break with the Jewish religion. 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 wineskins.

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. Some among the circumcised took issue with Peter's actions. Certain members of the Pharisaic party who had converted to the Church maintained that a Jew who entered the Church must not only be baptized, but also circumcised in order to be

saved. This implied they must observe the Mosaic Law in order to be saved.

Paul considered this teaching to be heretical and he hotly contended against those who fostered it. Paul maintained that Gentiles had only to believe in Jesus Christ and be baptized in order to receive the grace of salvation. 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 base and evil motives to him for preaching the gospel.

Some men of the circumcision party even reached into the churches in Galatia. They won certain Galatians over to their cause. These disciples sought to "judaize" the rest of the Christian community. When the news reached Paul he immediately wrote a letter refuting the charges, and defended 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.

The 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: "*Our belief is rather that we are saved by the favor of the Lord Jesus and so are they*" (See 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. Only 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. Long before this would come to be, Paul had already given the theological reasons for the separation in his letter to the Romans.

LETTER TO THE ROMANS

Why did Paul write a letter to a Christian Community unknown to him? Paul recognized Rome as the center for world evangelization. He viewed his mission in the East as finished. His eyes now turned towards the West—beyond Rome to Spain. As Antioch had been his home base in the East—Rome would become his base of operation in the West. After a brief visit to Jerusalem, Paul intended to go to Rome. He desired to favorably influence the Church at Rome. Sending the Church a clear and concise explanation of the gospel he preached could possibly ensure a favorable reception. At least his position would be clear, and they would know where he stood.

In the relatively quiet and peaceful months around the year 57 A.D. in Corinth, 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.

In studying Romans it is important to know what Paul actually desired to express. We must remind ourselves that it was composed almost two thousand years ago—in a world of thought much different from our own. We have a two-fold work to do: to discover, as exactly as possible, Paul's own conscious awareness as 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 says: "*Seek ye first the original meanings—and all these things shall be yours as well.*"

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).

PAUL'S SELF-IDENTITY

As customary at the time, the author of the letter identifies himself and then the recipients of the letter. Paul's own personal identification is rather

lengthy. He projects a definite image of himself to the Romans. Paul declares himself to be the *doulos* (slave) of the king whose only crown had been made of thorns—Christ Jesus. Paul establishes his identity in relationship to Jesus Christ. By a picture of contrast—Paul the slave, Jesus the Lord—Paul humbly presents himself before the Romans to be nothing of importance in himself. What there was of importance and power within him was attributable—not to himself—but to his relationship with Jesus Christ. He quickly identifies his importance to the Church at Rome as *“called to be an apostle and set apart to proclaim the gospel of God...”* 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. Paul viewed 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 came directly from God—an authority recognized by the “acknowledged pillars” of the Church—James, Cephas and John (See Gal.2:8-9).

God called and set apart Paul as an apostle to proclaim the gospel of God. The Gospel means “good news.” Paul must proclaim God’s “good news” Who is Jesus Christ. This Gospel is not a new proclamation in the world. The Old Testament 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.”* Paul states the doctrine of the Incarnation and the Resurrection. as stated here it does not reflect Paul’s full understanding of Jesus. Paul believed Jesus to be the divine Son of the Father prior to the resurrection. To the Galatians he had said: *“But then 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.4:4-5)*. 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.

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 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 writes comes with God-given authority *“to all in Rome.”*

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.”* Faith for Paul implies obedience, and disobedience indicates disbelief. Those who truly have received in faith the Person of Jesus will consequently obey Jesus. Through obedient faith believers become the *“beloved of God.”* They have been incorporated into Jesus Christ of whom the Father said: *“This is my beloved Son on whom my favor rests” (Lk3:22).* Paul confirms that by saying each Christian—*“the beloved of God”*—has a vocation to be called a saint—*“called to holiness” (See Rm.1:7).*

THE SPIRIT OF PAUL

Paul had an eagerness to preach the gospel. No spirit of spiritual sloth possessed the soul of Paul. His words breathe his personal love for the Will of God. The love that consumed his life identifies him more than anything else as a disciple and apostle of Jesus Christ. One sees in Paul evidences 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).*

The genuineness of Paul’s love of God becomes evident in the love expressed for others. Respect is a genuine element of love, and Paul demonstrates his respect for the Romans. *“I give thanks to my God through Jesus Christ for all of you because your faith is heralded throughout the world.”* He does not intend to bring faith to them but to enrich their faith. Perhaps nothing better expresses Paul’s sensitivity to the needs of others as when he tells the Romans that he does not intend to come only to give, but to be enriched personally by his communion with them. People have an equal need to receive love and to give love. *“Rather what I wish,”* writes Paul, *“is that we may be mutually encouraged by our common faith” (Rm.1:12).*

The spirituality of Paul’s love is revealed when he tells the Romans that although he has never had the joy of meeting them and sharing with them in the body, nevertheless, he has been constantly united with them in prayer. Paul likewise prays about his own desire to go to Rome. He realizes that even holy and loving ambitions must be submitted to the will of God, *“always pleading that, God willing it, I may at last find my way clear to visit you” (Rm.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*" (Rm.1:15). Paul confesses that all men have a claim on his love: the cultured and the uncultured, the rich and the poor, the wise and the foolish, the intelligent and the ignorant, the good and the bad. Again he reflects the compassionate love of the Father who lets His sun shine and His rain fall upon all alike. Paul loved not only the lovable and the unloved—but much more—Paul loved the unlovable for such love alone is Christ-like.

CALL TO EVANGELISM

Christians today, through the encyclical on Evangelism by Paul VI, have been called to be modern apostles. The Bishops of our country have commissioned us to reach out to the millions of un-churched and fallen away Catholics of our land. Most Christians have not responded, nor will they. Spiritual sloth possesses so many of us. Spiritual sloth is a distaste and dislike for the things of the spirit. Where there is no active concern for the spiritual and temporal welfare of others—there is no love of God regardless of the number and frequency of our pious practices and exercises. Their Christianity is an illusion. Christians who heed the call of the Church and the Spirit within their hearts do well to learn from Paul—the greatest evangelist. Learn to pray ardently for those with whom you desire to share the "good news." Pray eagerly for the opportunity to reach them. Most of all pray that you will go forth only with a love that desires to share its gifts and be a source of strength to others—a love that knows it will receive more than it gives—a love that cannot discriminate.

LETTER TO THE ROMANS

INTRODUCTION TO PAUL AND ROMANS

SCRIPTURE READINGS AND QUESTIONS

With the exception of your introductory lesson you will be given Scripture readings and questions for six days. You should prayerfully meditate on them and seek guidance from the Holy Spirit in answering the daily questions. Do not worry if you cannot answer all the questions. The Holy Spirit may wait to give you the answer during communal sharing. Your daily meditation on these Scriptures is the important element. The questions are to aid and direct your meditation and your answers are to add to your communal sharing.

SCRIPTURE OF THE WEEK (PLEASE MEMORIZE)

“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)

FIRST DAY: Read Summary through “Apostle To The Gentiles”;
9:10-19; 2Cor. 11:22 through 12:6.

1. To what vocation did Jesus call Saul from the moment of his conversion?
2. What do Paul’s sufferings tell you about the cost of discipleship?
3. What message did Paul preach at Pisidian Antioch?
4. What was the effect of this sermon upon the Jews and upon Paul?

SECOND DAY: Read Summary: “Division in the Church”; Acts 11:1-18

1. What caused the first great internal crisis within the Church?
2. Why did Peter’s action scandalize certain members of the Church?

3. What do you see was the problem in the Church?

4. How did Peter answer his critics?

THIRD DAY: Read Acts 15:1-11; Acts 21:17-25

1. What was the argument between Paul and the “party of the circumcision”?

2. If you had lived at the time, which side would you have been on and why?

3. How was the problem resolved?

4. In your mind how does the expression “*you do not put new wine in old wineskins*” express the relationship between the Church and the synagogue?

FOURTH DAY: Read Summary: “Letter to the Romans.”

1. Why do you think Paul wrote a letter to the Romans who were unknown to him?

2. What do you think Luther meant when he said Romans set forth the Gospel clearer than any other writing in the New Testament?

3. What problems do we face today in trying to understand the true meaning of Paul’s words in Romans?

4. What does the theme of this letter say to you?

FIFTH DAY: Read Summary: “Paul’s Self-Identity”; Romans 1:1-6; Gal. 1:1 through 2:10

1. What kind of image does Paul project to the Romans?

2. What do you think being an apostle meant to Paul?

3. What did he believe to be the source of his authority?

4. Why did Paul feel he had a right and obligation to preach the Gospel in Rome?

SIXTH DAY: Read Summary: “The Christian Vocation through Call to Evangelism” and Romans 1:6-15.

1. What do you understand by “obedient faith?”

2. In what way does Paul’s spirit reveal Christian love?

3. Paul described himself in relationship to Jesus as a slave. How would you describe yourself in relationship to Jesus?

4. As a Christian in what way do you see yourself as being “set apart” by God?

CHAPTER 2

THE THEME OF ROMANS

INTRODUCTION

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, the 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’” (Rm.1: 16-17).*

Four very important concepts are expressed in the theme: gospel, salvation, justice 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 POWER

The English word “gospel” comes from the Anglo-Saxon word *godspell*, 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 evangelion. The Greek was a translation of the Hebrew word *baser* used in Isaiah in reference to the message of final salvation to come “in the end times” through the Messiah.

The gospel is an announcement of salvation that is actually occurring at the time of announcement. The gospel implies divine action and activity. When proclaimed, the gospel causes things to be. Just as people awaiting news 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. Paul rightly defines the gospel as “the power of God.” The gospel is therefore an active, dynamic presence of divine power operating in this world. We can simply say that the gospel is the “good news”--that God is now operating in this world bringing salvation to all men through Jesus Christ.

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. *Hosia* and its derivatives are often used in a military context. The verb carries the meaning of winning a victory for someone. A person victorious in battle was called a *mosia*--a “savior.” The victory itself was called “a salvation.”

The Greek translation of *mosia* (savior) was *soter*. The New Testament refers to God as *soter* or savior, but Jesus Christ receives the title of savior even more often. According to the New Testament what would be this “tight spot” out of which Jesus would rescue and save people? Matthew, in his gospel account, describes the essence of salvation as to be freed from sin—“...*he will save his people from their sins*” (Mt.1:21). Paul wrote Timothy: “*You can depend on this as worthy of full acceptance: that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners*” (1Tim. 1:15). He speaks to the Thessalonians of Jesus as the one “...*who delivers us from the wrath to come*” (1Thes.1:10). The positive aspects of salvation--life and a place in heaven—are emphasized in Ephesians: “...*because of his great love for us he brought us to life with Christ when we were dead in sin...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 (See Col.1:12-14). In II Timothy, we are told that salvation involves “eternal glory” (See 2Timothy 2:10).

THE GIFT OF FAITH

“Faith” is one of the most important concepts in Romans. Paul teaches that salvation “*begins and ends with faith.*” Due to our past training, we are inclined to view faith primarily as an intellectual assent to the facts of divine revelation. As for Paul and the Jews of his time, the whole heart and essence of faith went much deeper than intellectual assent. The Hebrew verb *he emin* (to believe) signifies “to hold as trustworthy.” Faith in the Old Testament is expressed by a loving and trusting confidence in God, that He will fulfil 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*”

(I Cor.1-9), "He who calls us is trustworthy..."(I Thes.5:24), "...God keeps his promise" (I Cor.10:13), "This great confidence in God is ours, through Christ"(II Cor.3:4).

Faith 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. It is the power of the gospel that creates this quality of faith in the believer that makes it possible for one to believe--to trust God. Faith is a divine gift imparting to a person the power needed to believe. For Paul the proof of biblical faith was the fact that one now belonged to Christ and through Him one participated in newness of life.

The quality of faith demanded by Paul finds beautiful expression in the 46th 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 it surging. The Lord of hosts is with us; our stronghold is the God of Jacob" (Ps. 46:2-4).*

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. Often for us, faith is no more than rarefied, God-given intellectual honesty. As we have demonstrated, faith in the biblical sense is a personal response, with complete confidence and trust in God. 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 are in a valley filled with dangerous ravines and treacherous rivers, and we desire to escape the valley and reach the safety of a lofty mountain top. But in order to reach that mountain top, we must close our eyes, put our hand into that of Another, and permit the Other to lead us. If we truly lacked faith in that Person we would be filled with anxiety and fear. We would be unable to keep our eyes closed. It would be necessary to take a reassuring peek from time to time. This is a representative picture of the faith of many people. This quality of faith stimulated Jesus to say: *"Oh you of little faith—why do you doubt?"*

THE JUSTICE OF GOD

One of the most difficult sentences to interpret in Romans is: *"For in the*

gospel is revealed the justice (righteousness) of God which begins and ends with faith...” (Rom.1:17). First of all we must understand that when Paul uses the word “reveals” he does not intend to imply an intellectual illumination taking place, but rather, an act of God now taking place. It signifies a process is in progress and not yet completed. The use of the present tense of the verb “reveals” signifies that the gospel continuously, day-by-day, 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.

We are inclined to think of “justice” or “righteousness” as a moral attribute or virtue by which one person renders to another his or her due—that which is another’s by right. In the Old Testament “justice” is a legal, judicial term, but with this difference: “justice” is not viewed as a virtue possessed by God or man, but as an act or activity of a judge. 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.

The Israelites, especially, saw Yahweh as their “justice,” or “righteousness,” the Judge Who would vindicate them before the world and deliver them from their enemies. 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’s, resulting from the Lord’s faithfulness to His promises.

For the Jews, the justice of God would be synonymous with God’s activity as a savior. 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.

This “*justice of God*” especially implied that Israel would be saved from its sins and their evil effects. 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 his sins have been forgiven.

Try to keep in mind the concept of justification or righteousness from the point of view of its being a free loving action of God that results in salvation. The effect of salvation within the soul is another concept entirely. At this point, Paul is teaching us how men are saved, not what the results of salvation are in the souls of men.

Paul maintains that this divine act of salvation--called "*the justice of God*"--occurs 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 say "faith saves" when we clearly understand that faith is a necessary condition for God's action in the life of a sinner. In itself--faith does not save. God saves. It is entirely right to confess: "Jesus Saves" those who put their faith in Him.

THE FRUIT OF IDOLATRY

With quick strokes Paul painted 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--in depth and length--a contrasting picture 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*."

Without relief, Paul presents a very dramatic picture of paganism. Paul's presentation, although a generalization, is no exaggeration. The 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 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 selfish 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*" (Wis.14:27), "...by the vanity of men they came into the world..." (Wis.14:14).

Paul begins by stating "*the wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against the irreligious and perverse spirits of men who, in perversity of theirs, hinder the truth*" (Rm.1:18). The recipients of God's anger are those who live life as if there were no God--without any true religious relationship, and against those who deliberately pervert the true spirit of religion.

Paul does not excuse idolatry as ignorance or intellectual error. *"In fact, whatever can be known about God is clear to them; he himself made it so" (Rm.1:19)*. Paul was familiar with the words of 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)*. Paul attributes idolatry to a deliberate perversion of the spirit of truth (See Rm.1:21-23). Such men deserve *"the wrath of God,"* and Paul sees evidences of this wrath in the moral rottenness permeating the Greco-Roman society. In the mind of Paul this was especially evident in the widespread practices of lesbianism and homosexuality.

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 secondly, the anti-social vices. In verses twenty-four through twenty-six, Paul describes the personality corruption symbolized by the perversion of natural sex life. The enslavement of men and women to these sins is seen by Paul as the penalty of 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 that society. Paul describes the Greco-Roman world as a temporary Hell on earth. Again, he holds them culpable. He maintains they knew these things to be evil. 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..." (Rm.1:32)*.

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 signified anger. Does Paul imply anger to be an attribute of God? If so, he implies that God is in a continuous state of anger.

We know the Old Testament is not shy in presenting pictures of an angry God. Even the New Testament speaks of Jesus being angry. The Scriptures tell us: *"Be angry but sin not."* One author has pointed out: *"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."* The biblical scholar, C.H. Dodd, is rightly very reluctant to speak of "wrath" or

“anger” as an attribute of God. He does not think Paul intends to say this. He points out that Paul never uses the verb “to be angry” with God as the subject.

Paul does not hesitate to attribute love, grace, and faithfulness to God. Dodd maintains the “*wrath of God*” appears to mean to Paul not a certain feeling or attitude of God toward mankind, but rather some process or effect now operative in the world. I am inclined to agree with this. Paul 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 an attribute of 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 “*the wrath of God*” 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 the evil consequences of their sins. 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 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 preached that when men deliberately choose alien gods, the true God abandons them (See Acts 7:41-42).

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, to be left to oneself in a world where evil choices bring eternal recompense.

THE THEME OF ROMANS

SCRIPTURE READINGS AND QUESTIONS SCRIPTURE OF THE WEEK (PLEASE MEMORIZE)

“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.’” (Rm. 1:17)

FIRST DAY: Read Summary through “Gospel Power”; Isaiah 40:9-11, 52:7-10, and 61:1-3.

- 1. When you hear the word “gospel,” what significance does it bring to mind?**
- 2. What does “gospel” mean in the context of the Old Testament?**
- 3. What do you understand by the term that the gospel is the “power of God”?**
- 4. What effect can the gospel produce upon its hearers?**

SECOND DAY: Read Summary: “Meaning of Salvation”; Luke 1:67-69; Col. 1:11-14.

- 1. What is the meaning of “salvation” in the Old Testament?**
- 2. What does it mean for you to receive salvation?**
- 3. In what way does Paul see Jesus as our savior?**
- 4. What are the effects of salvation in the life of a believer?**

THIRD DAY: Read Summary: “The Gift of Faith”; Psalm 46; Luke 7:36-50.

- 1. How does our normal understanding about faith differ from the Old Testament concept of faith?**
- 2. How do we show we have true faith in God or in Jesus Christ?**

3. How did the sinful woman come to salvation?
4. Why would you say disobedience shows disbelief?

FOURTH DAY: Read Summary: “The Justice of God”; Isaiah 61:10-11.

1. What do you understand by the term the justice of God?
2. What do you discover from Isaiah 61:10-11 about the nature of “the justice of God?”
3. How have you experienced “the justice of God” in your own life?
4. What do the words: “In the gospel is revealed the justice of God, which begins and ends with faith” mean to you?

FIFTH DAY: Read Summary: “The Fruit of Idolatry”; Wisdom 13:1-10; 14:12-14; 14:22-31; Romans 1:18-23.

1. Why did the Old Testament consider idolatry the source of all evil?
2. Why does Paul refuse to excuse the pagans for idolatry?
3. What can we come to know about God through human reason?
4. In what way today could we be guilty of the spirit of idolatry?

SIXTH DAY: Read Summary: “The Wrath of God”; Romans 1:24-32.

1. Why does God’s wrath come down upon men?
2. What do you understand by the term “the wrath of God?”
3. According to Paul how is God’s wrath manifested in this world?
4. Why do you think God abandons men in this world?

CHAPTER 3

UNIVERSAL NEED FOR SALVATION

INTRODUCTION

Saint Paul firmly believed that every human being needed the grace of God, coming through Jesus Christ, in order to escape the coming Wrath of God and come to life eternal. However, Paul knew many people had no awareness of their personal need for salvation. Many people considered their salvation guaranteed. Primarily these would be Jews who knew themselves to be the Chosen People. Paul's most difficult task was to convict men of sin who experienced themselves to be righteous.

Paul first presents to his readers the most obvious example of a people subjected to the wrath of God and in need of salvation. People who live outside the boundaries of socially accepted sins often feel themselves to be sinners, and experience a conscious need to be saved. Often people who are objectively worse sinners feel no guilt nor need for repentance because society condones their sins. Furthermore, such people can even have a sense of righteousness if they habitually do deeds considered "good" by society. To the Jews Paul was stating the obvious when he wrote "*the wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against the irreligious*" and those deliberately perverting religious truth (See Romans 1:18).

JUDGE AND JUDGMENT

Paul turns his attention toward men who would have been the first to hurl rocks of condemnation at those grossly immoral pagans. He says to them: "*That is why every one of you who judges another is inexcusable. By your judgment you convict yourself, since you do the very same things*" (Rm.2:1).

The idea of judgment plays such a large part in this section of Romans that we need to review of the concepts of judge and judgment as understood in the Old Testament. According to the Law of the Old Testament a person could possess a certain right or juridical claim called a *mispat*. The person who had a just claim to the *mispat* was called *saddik*, meaning righteous. It was the role of a judge (*sopet*) to decide who was the *saddik* (the righteous one) between

parties disputing over the mispat. No person was considered totally saddik (righteous) until declared so by a judge. One's right, or mispat, existed prior to the judgment but it must wait for the judgment to be fully established. Primarily, it was the role of the judge to defend and vindicate the rights of people. In other words, he was to declare who was righteous (saddik)--who possessed the mispat. The Old Testament considered Yahweh to be "the spirit of mispat." When Sarah felt unjustly deprived by Abraham she appealed her case to a higher court: "*May the Lord decide between you and me,*" she said to her husband (*Gen.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*).

Of necessity, a just judge must look two ways. Therefore, secondarily, a judge must also decree another person not to be saddik (righteous) and thereby subject to some penalty. In the case between Yahweh and Israel, many of the prophets--especially Ezekiel--emphasized the negative aspect of judgment. Because of the general rejection of Jesus as Christ and Lord, men denied Jesus his rights (mispat), and they became unrighteous and subject to condemnation before the Divine Tribunal. This negative aspect of judgment also plays a major role in Paul's letter to the Romans. Nevertheless, we need to keep in mind that the primary work of a judge and his judgment is to declare someone righteous. When men and women customarily judge others they usually condemn someone. Unconsciously they usually declare themselves to be "righteous." This is what is known as self righteousness.

PAUL ACCUSES THE JEWS

Paul demonstrates how those condemning others can have their judgments recoil upon their own heads. Every Jew would be one with Paul in condemning immoral pagans. Paul points out to them: "*By your judgment you convict yourself since you do the very same things*" (*Rm.2:1*). The first reaction to this accusation would be denial. However, Paul's accusation lies on a level beneath the obvious. The evil lives of the pagans were only the sinful fruits of a more fundamental sin--the refusal to live their lives in keeping with known truth. In principle, the Jews have acted in a similar fashion because they have refused to live their lives in keeping with their knowledge of God. In comparison with pagans, they look good. But that is not the point. God condemns the pagans because of their unfaithfulness to the truth they possess. Unfaithfulness to truth is a sin regardless whether the knowledge comes from the natural light of reason or through divine revelation. The Jews, therefore,

fall under the dominion of sin. Their verdict upon the pagans falls upon themselves: *"All who do such things deserve death."* Paul concludes with, *"Do you suppose, then, that you will escape his judgment, you who condemn these things in others yet do them yourself?"* (Rm.2:3).

PAUL ANSWERS THE OBJECTORS

No Jew would readily admit to Paul's thesis that all men were under sin and in need of salvation if "all men" included the Jew. Paul endeavors to answer his Jewish objectors.

The Jews considered God's blessings in their lives as God's approval of them. Paul argues that this is not due to the sinlessness of the Jews but to the faithfulness of Yahweh to the Chosen People. God chose to draw the Jews to Himself through merciful love. Through His kindness God was calling the Jews to repentance. Paul asks his objectors: *"Or do you presume on his kindness and forbearance? Do you not know that God's kindness to you is an invitation to repent?"* (Rm.2:4). Paul pictures the Jews as men taking advantage of the love and kindness of another. It is a terrible abuse of love, with drastic consequences within the souls of men and women, when people use the love of others to sin against them.

The lives of many Christians reflect this same situation. They are not in ignorance about the demands of the Christian life, but they also trade on God's love. God's love in their lives--evident from the many blessings--lulls them into a false sense of security. They delude themselves into believing they will be saved by their "faith" regardless of their unchristian lives. In their blindness they fail to realize that their lives evidence no true faith in Jesus or Christianity. Many Catholics use the sacrament of Penance as an excuse to sin. Since the tribunal to God's merciful goodness always remains open in this life, they trade and gamble on that merciful love. They sin deliberately, telling themselves, "I can always go later to confession." They often fail to realize that sin may be making them incapable of receiving this merciful love offered to the repentant. Sin can fix "a great abyss" between God and man. To all such--Jew, Greek, Christian alike--Paul says: *"In spite of this (the 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"* (Rm.2:5-6).

DAY OF JUDGMENT

Paul sees the day of Judgment as a day of equality. He tells the Romans: *“He will repay every man for what he has done.”* Paul contrasts the judgment and the rewards of those who in this life patiently do good with those who selfishly disobey truth in order to follow wickedness. The patient person is the one who refuses to permit evil in this world to make them sad or despondent; they overcome evil by doing good. The Greek word *eriheia* (to selfishly disobey the truth) carries the meaning of one who seeks selfish rewards in all one does.

Paul maintains that on Judgment Day, God will reveal what truly lies within the hearts of people--He *“will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and manifest the intentions of hearts.”* *“On the day when,”* Paul says, *“in accordance with the gospel I preach, God will pass judgment on the secrets of men through Christ Jesus” (Rm.2:16).* 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 natural law; the Jew will be judged according to the Mosaic Law and, we must add, the Christian will be judged by the Law of Christ--or in other words, the Law of the Spirit (see Romans 8:2).

FAITH AND DEEDS

Paul's teaching on the role of deeds at final judgment does not contradict his teaching on the role of faith in salvation, but rather, he clarifies the nature of faith. A person's deeds reveal the presence of faith or the absence of faith. Obedience to truth must issue forth in works in keeping with the truth--just as rebellion against truth must issue forth in deeds of disobedience.

This does not imply we are saved by good deeds. The condition of salvation must exist prior to, and at the time of the good works. The quality of one's faith will be manifested by the deeds in one's life. A life of good deeds proves one has come to faith and persevered in faith.

There is temporary salvation and there is permanent salvation. Recall what it means in the Scriptures to enter into salvation: to escape the power of darkness and dominion of Satan, to be freed from one's sins, to enter the kingdom of light and into the dominion of God—to become one of God's people. As long as we live on earth we can repudiate our baptismal commitment--revert to our old way of life. The Book of Hebrews (6:4-8)

warns of this terrible possibility. Remember: one must actually have mispat before judgment, but mispat only truly becomes juridically one's permanent possession when so declared by the judge. Therefore salvation will only become one's permanent possession when Christ the Judge declares a person to be saddik (righteous).

PRIDE IN THE LAW

Many Jews placed their spiritual security upon their possession of the Divine Law. Paul says to these: *"Let us suppose you bear the name of 'Jew,' and rely firmly on the law and pride yourself on God" (Rm. 2:17)*. The Israelites were commonly called "Jews" outside of Palestine. The word "Jew" comes from the Hebrew Yehudi, derived from the name of the patriarch Yehudah, translated into English as "Judah". The Hebrew name *Yehudah* comes from *hoda*, signifying "praised." "Jew," therefore means "praised." The Jews exalted in their superior position of possessing God's revelation to the world. Between verses 17 and 20, Paul enumerates what all the Jews justly pride themselves on. Paul suggests that with all these blessings come corresponding obligations. He maintains that they have failed to practice what they teach--they have caused scandal among the pagans with the result that pagans hold the name of Yahweh in contempt: *"On your account the name of God is held in contempt among the Gentiles" (Tim.2:24)*. Paul implies that this superior revelation of theirs has not saved the Jews from sin. Therefore, it will not save them from the wrath of God.

CIRCUMCISION OF THE HEART

Many Jews could argue with Paul at this point that only circumcision was necessary in order to be saved. Paul responds that it is not enough to be circumcised in the flesh--one must also be spiritually circumcised. The Scriptures spoke of this as being circumcised in the heart. Paul argues that God does not look at the external observance of the law, but at the internal motivation for keeping the law. Paul stands on firm scriptural foundation in this attack.

In Deuteronomy we discover what the spiritual effect is of being circumcised in 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)*. Jeremiah implies that men with uncircumcised hearts have given themselves over to evil deeds (See Jer.4:4). We also read in Jeremiah: *"For all*

these nations, like the whole house of Israel, are uncircumcised in heart.”(Jer.9:25).

Paul does not deny the importance of circumcision, but he maintains it cannot be separated from the observance of the law. From this point he proceeds to teach that external observance is not sufficient. God judges the hearts of men, and their motivation behind the keeping of the law. Paul makes a major point at this moment: *“Who is the real Jew? He is not the legal observer of the letter of the Law, but the person who fulfills the will of God 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.” In the eyes of God, the man “praised” (Jew) is not the man with the letter of the Law, but the man with the true spirit of religion. Paul knows that only the Holy Spirit is the source of such power.

THE ADVANTAGE OF BEING A JEW

From all this logically flows the question: *“Is there any advantage in being a Jew?”* The answer is: *“much in every respect. First of all, the Jews were entrusted with the words of God” (Rm.3:2).* This statement implied the Jews possessed a greater knowledge of God’s perfect will for mankind. They possessed the safe guide to lead them into a greater union with God. From this union would necessarily flow great spiritual blessings with concrete manifestations in the physical dimensions of human existence. Of all men, they were the most blessed on earth. Since the just God rewards men in keeping with their deeds and because they possessed God’s most perfect law, their deeds should surpass all others and therefore their eternal rewards are greater than all others.

Paul comes to the main point of his thesis: *“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” (Rm. 3:5).* Paul lists a series of quotations from the Old Testament substantiating the truth that all men are sinners. He implies the whole person to be under sin by associating the throat, tongue, lips, mouth, feet, and eyes with sin. His logical conclusion is that all of mankind is tainted by sin in the sight of God.

Paul concludes that even though the law reveals the perfect will of God, it does not give man the power to accomplish God’s will. In actuality, it serves to show how truly alien to the will of God is the life of man. It serves the purpose

of making man aware of his sins—*“the Law does nothing but point out what is sinful” (Rm.3:20). “If we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us” (1Jn.1:8).*

The hard reality of human existence brings to each the conscious awareness of a personal need for salvation. Everyone needs a personal Savior. The gospel proclaimed by Paul is every bit as vital today as in yesteryear. 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).*

UNIVERSAL NEED FOR SALVATION

SCRIPTURE READINGS AND QUESTIONS SCRIPTURE OF THE WEEK (PLEASE MEMORIZE)

“IF WE SAY WE HAVE NO SIN WE DECEIVE OURSELVES AND THE TRUTH IS NOT IN US.” (1Jn.1:8)

**FIRST DAY: Read Summary through “Paul Accuses the Jew”; Rm. 2:1-3;
Luke 6:36-38**

1. What do you understand to be the meaning of judge and judgment in the Old Testament?
2. What would be the primary and secondary work of making a judgment?
3. Why does Paul accuse the Jews of being as guilty as the pagans?
4. Why do you think the Scriptures encourage us not to judge others?

SECOND DAY: Read Summary: “Paul Answers the Objectors”; Rm.2:4-11.

1. According to Paul what does the kindness of God in one’s life truly reveal?
2. What does he accuse the Jews of doing in regard to God’s kindness?
3. How does Paul describe the just judgment of the Lord?
4. How can Christians “trade” on the kindness of God?

THIRD DAY: Read Summary through “Faith and Deeds”; Rm. 2:12-16.

1. In what way will the judgment of all men be the same?
2. In what way will the judgment of pagans, Jews, and Christians be different?
3. What role does one’s good deeds play in one’s final judgment?

4. How would you explain that the role of deeds does not contradict Paul's teaching of salvation through faith?

FOURTH DAY: Read Summary: "Pride In the Law"; Rm. 2:17-24.

1. What is the meaning of the word Jew?
2. Why does Paul maintain that the possession of the Law by the Jews offers them no security of being saved?
3. What caused God's name to be held in contempt among pagans?
4. In what way do Christians cause the name of Christ to be held in contempt by non-believers?

FIFTH DAY: Read Summary: "Circumcision of the Heart"; Deut. 6:17-18; Deut. 30:6-10; Rm. 2:25-29.

1. According to Paul when would circumcision be of value to the Jews?
2. What did Paul consider to be true circumcision?
3. What do you understand by the expression "being circumcised the in Heart?"
4. In what way could this teaching apply to Christian baptism?

SIXTH DAY: Read Summary: "The Advantage in Being a Jew"; Rom. 3:1-20.

1. What would be the advantage of being a Jew?
2. How would you answer the question "May we do evil that good may come of it?"
3. According to Paul who would be the real "Jew"?
4. What is the main point Paul makes in this section of Romans and what does that say to you?

CHAPTER 4

SALVATION THROUGH FAITH

INTRODUCTION

Paul had taken pains to demonstrate clearly that all mankind dwelt under the dominion of sin and was subject to the wrath of God--Jew and Greek alike. He makes it equally clear that God offers, through Jesus Christ, salvation to all sinners, Jew and Greek alike. Paul wrote to his disciple Timothy: "*God our savior...wants all men to be saved and come to know the truth*" (1Tim.2:3-4). Paul reveals that the divine universal plan of salvation lies beyond the observance of the Mosaic Law or of any law. "...*But now, the justice of God has been manifested apart from the law, even though both law and prophets bear witness to it*" (Rm.3:21). The Greek expression translated as "but now," signifies an era--a new age.

A door of salvation has been opened, not only to Jews, but to Gentiles. Paul asked: "*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...*" (Rm.3:29-30). Of necessity, the door to salvation must be other than the Mosaic Law. Paul already demonstrated that through that door no man could enter into salvation. Paul reiterates: "*All men have sinned and are deprived of the glory of God.*"

The word *doxa* (glory) signifies an external manifestation of the internal nature and essence of God. If God appeared in a room, the effects upon the room would be the external glory of God. "Glory" in a person's life would be the manifestation of the divine within their life resulting from their union with God. The Scriptures testify that God created all things for His glory.

CAUSE OF SALVATION

Paul tells us: "*All men are now undeservedly justified by the gift of God, through the redemption wrought in Christ Jesus*" (Rm.3:24). Paul declares men to be undeservedly justified--that is, being made righteous without personally having merited it in any way. Men are brought to salvation through no merit

of their own. Neither faith nor deeds can merit the grace of salvation (Council of Trent). In man, alone, there is no adequate cause for the grace of salvation. 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" (Rm.3:24-25). 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

The Greek word *apolytrosis* (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. It implied purchasing the freedom of a slave by paying the price of the slave. It conveys the concept of an enslaved person being delivered and freed from slavery.

The New Testament does not exactly convey this Greek concept. God is spoken of as the one redeeming mankind, and there is no mention of to whom a price is paid. The price is not being paid to God. Redemption carries more of the Old Testament concept of divine action, as when Yahweh freed the Israelites from enslavement in Egypt. Redemption signifies the freedom from the enslavement and power of sin. It would not alien to Paul's thought to also signify being freed "*from the dominion of Satan*"(See Acts 26:18).

The New Testament treats the redemption of mankind as a historical fact. It has already occurred. Christ redeemed mankind by His death on the Cross. Mankind has been redeemed. Will a person now be saved? In order to be saved one must be justified. That depends on faith. Keep in mind there is a distinction between redemption and justification. We know that Abraham Lincoln freed the slaves in the United States. Despite this fact, many former slaves remained in the environment of slavery because they feared the responsibility and price of freedom.

In Romans 8:23, Paul speaks about our awaiting the redemption of our bodies. This implies that the full effects of the redemption have not yet been fully experienced by the saved.

MEANING OF EXPIATION

Paul states: “*Through his blood, God made him the means of expiation for all who believe*” (Rm.3:25). The Greek word used by Paul is *hilasterion* (expiation or propitiation). This word rarely appears in Scripture and Paul used it only here. It is a derivative from the verb *hilaskomai*, meaning to expiate or to propitiate. In the classical Greek it often signifies “to placate” or “to appease” the anger of the gods or a conqueror. Likewise, it was used in reference to expiate or to wipe out a crime or sin. This Greek meaning could infer that Jesus died to placate the anger of the Father. It’s usage in the Old Testament does not warrant such an interpretation.

The Greeks often translated the Hebrew word *kipper*, where God is spoken of as the One who “wipes away” sin or guilt. *Kipper* can also denote the concept that God “covers over” the guilt or sin. In keeping with its Old Testament usage, the most probable interpretation of Paul would be not that the death of Christ appeased the anger of God, but rather that God Himself expiates, wipes out sin and guilt, through the means of Christ’s death on the Cross. Once again the love of God moves to the forefront in the Scriptures.

SEAT OF MERCY

There is also good reason to believe that Paul was implying that the Cross was the “mercy seat” in the New Covenant. *Hilasterion* was also used to translate the Hebrew word *kapporet*, translated as “propitiatory”, or the “mercy seat”. In this context it denotes “covers.” It referred to the pure gold lid that covered the Ark of the Covenant.

When Solomon constructed the temple, he placed the Ark in the Holy of Holies, and we are told the glory of the Lord rested upon it. It was a symbolic representation of Israel’s covenant with Yahweh, and God’s abiding presence among the Israelites. On the feast of Yon Kippurim, celebrated once a year, the high priest entered the Holy of Holies and sprinkled blood upon the propitiatory. This sprinkled blood purified the people, the temple, and the land from sin. It was called the Day of Atonement because the blood purified and reconsecrated the people, the temple, and the land to Yahweh.

The Jews believed that all life belonged to God and was, in some degree, of God. They believed blood to be sacred because it channeled the life of God,

and it therefore had the power to purify. The sprinkling of the propitiatory with blood represented the mercy of God purifying His people of sin, and symbolized the rededication of their lives to Him. Since Paul speaks in this section of the glory of God, blood, and remission of sin--particularly of sins committed in the past—it is possible he intends to bring to mind the Day of Atonement, and present to his Jewish readers the Cross of Christ as the symbol of the New Covenant. The Blood of Christ sprinkled upon the Cross--the new propitiatory--ratified the New Covenant and cleansed the people of their sins. The Cross becomes the new "Seat of Mercy." All who come to it in faith and look upon it in hope will have their sins wiped away. The Cross stands forth as the propitiator, covered with an element far more precious than gold: it is adorned and sparkling with the red jewels of Christ's Precious Blood.

Paul's teaching certainly implied that the Blood of Christ did more than "cover over" sins. The power of that Blood eradicates sins and utterly purifies the spirits of men, fulfilling the words of promise: "...*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).

There is no mention of Christ's death as a sacrifice for sins, but it is implied. When man offered sacrifice to God, it was not to fulfill God's need for sacrifice, but to fulfill man's need to acknowledge his sins, purify himself, and reconcile himself with God. In Christ's death on the Cross God provided the sacrifice by which man could return to Him, and through the Blood of that sacrifice be cleansed of sin. "*Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the World!*"

SOME EFFECTS OF SALVATION

Paul has begun to define the object of Christian faith and hope--the love of God the Father and the love of God the Son. Part of the content of that faith has also been revealed: the Father is reconciling sinners to himself through the blood of Christ shed upon the Cross.

According to Paul, there are certain universal results flowing from salvation through faith. First, it put an end to all human boasting, a boasting rooted in the spirit of pride that takes delight in self and its accomplishments. Here there is no glorification of man. All glory belongs to God.

Another result flowing from salvation through faith is that it opens the door of salvation to all mankind. Paul stresses that Yahweh is not God of the Jews only--but God of all. He selected Israel to be a Light to the Nations--to be the channel of saving grace in the world. 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”*(Rm3:29-30). Paul emphasizes that there is only One God whose merciful love embraces all creation.

Finally, Paul maintains that his teaching does not make null and void the Scriptures. It does not prove the Scriptures to be erroneous, but rather, it verifies the Scriptures. Likewise, the Scriptures prepare people to come to the acceptance of faith as a means of salvation by convincing them of their personal sinfulness. *“Indeed, the law serves only to bring down wrath, for where there is no law there is no transgression”* (Rm.4:15). Therefore the law serves the purpose of making man aware of his sins, and his need for the salvation that comes through faith.

THE EXAMPLE OF ABRAHAM

Paul’s next logical step will be to prove that the doctrine of faith does not discredit the Scriptures. Paul will use the example of Abraham. If Paul could prove that Abraham had been justified through faith, 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 by God. The whole nation had been embodied in Abraham. He symbolized and represented Israel before God long before Israel came to be. Abraham personified the “Jew”--praised of God. Paul asked his readers: *“What, then, shall we say of Abraham, our ancestor according to the flesh?”* (Rm.4:1). All Jews agreed that Abraham was righteous. If this righteousness came from works, Abraham had reason to boast and take credit for what he earned. Paul says, *“Now when a man works, his wages are not regarded as a favor but as his due”* (Rm.4:4).

Paul maintains that the Scriptures confirm just the opposite about Abraham: *“Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as justice”* (Gen.15:6). The verb *elogisthe* (credited, 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 due to his faith, and not because of what he deserved or earned.

It would be very far from Paul's mind to assume that Abraham's justification was a mere legal fiction. This would be the equivalent of a man having leprosy but a judge making a decision that legally he must be considered as a man without leprosy, despite the fact he is a leper.

Paul quotes one of the psalms, attributed to King David, to support his theological point: *"Blest are they whose iniquities are forgiven, whose sins are covered over. Blest is the man to whom the Lord imputes no guilt" (Ps.32:1-2)*. The three verbs in the psalm are three figures of speech used to express the single idea of the removal of sin. The only point Paul desires to make is that David also confirms the possibility that a person can become righteous without good deeds to his credit. Paul has two scriptural witnesses for his theological concept. Paul has made his first point: Abraham became righteous through faith. What has been—can be!

Paul moves to make his second point. This justification through faith is opened to both the circumcised and the non-circumcised. Paul urges his readers to examine the circumstances in which Abraham was justified. It was *prior* to his receiving circumcision. In fact Paul maintains that the covenant and the circumcision resulted from Abraham's state of righteousness. The covenant and circumcision were effects of Abraham's being a man of faith. Abraham was essentially a man of faith before and after his circumcision. His true descendants must be first and foremost children of faith. Without faith circumcision would be of no avail. Paul concludes his second point with: *"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" (Rm.4:11-12)*.

Abraham's righteousness did not depend upon his circumcision but on his faith. No Jew can expect his circumcision to do more for him than it did for his prototype--Abraham. He too can only come to righteousness through faith.

Paul turns his attention toward the Mosaic Law. Paul has already demonstrated that the law could not produce righteousness. His point now is that it was never intended to do so. God promised Abraham that: *"all the communities of the earth shall find blessing in you."* Paul equated *"blessing"* with *"justification."* In Galatians, Paul says no law that came four hundred and thirty years later could cancel that and make the promise meaningless (See Gal.3:17). Paul argues that as the result of a promise a *"blessing"* would

come to all the people. It would not be received as an inherited right. "*Hence all depends on faith, everything is grace*" (Rm.4:16). Paul holds it is impossible for the law to nullify God's promise to Abraham.

THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

The example of Abraham is applicable to the Christian situation. "*The words, 'It was credited to him,' were not written with him alone in view, they were intended for us too*" (Rm.4:23-24). Paul defines the object of Christian faith: "*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*" (Rm.4:24-25). Our faith is that the Father and the Son saved us through the death of Jesus on the Cross. Redemption and expiation flow from the death of Jesus. Our hope is Jesus raised from the dead.

As the Father brought newness of life to the dead body of Jesus who trusted in Him, we also trust that God will bring our lives into newness of life, through our confidence in the redeeming death of the Son of God, even though our souls may be dead through sin. We will be made righteous. Jesus--resurrected from the dead--stands ever before us as the reason for the hope that lies within us. We leave behind all the security found in our "good" works. We die to all self-confidence and self-righteousness. We place our complete confidence in the merits of Jesus to bring us to a life of grace, to righteousness before God--into the full effects of the redemption. Paul preached: "...*You are being saved by it (the gospel) at this very moment if you hold fast to it as I preached it to you*"(I Cor. 15:1-2). "*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).

SALVATION THROUGH FAITH

SCRIPTURE READINGS AND QUESTIONS SCRIPTURE OF THE WEEK (PLEASE MEMORIZE)

“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.” (Rm. 3:24-25)

FIRST DAY: Read Summary through “Meaning of Expiation”; Rm.3:21-31.

- 1. What do you understand by the word “redemption?”**
- 2. What do you understand by the word “expiation?”**
- 3. What would you say is the difference between redemption and justification?**
- 4. What do you understand by Rm. 3:24:-25?**

SECOND DAY: Read Summary: “Seat of Mercy”; Genesis 12:1-3; 15:1-6.

- 1. What does it mean to you to say that the Cross is the “Mercy Seat” of the New Covenant?**
- 2. What does God ask of Abram in Genesis 12:1?**
- 3. At this point of his life, how does Abram manifest his faith?**
- 4. What does Scripture reveal to be the object of Abram’s faith?**

THIRD DAY: Read Summary: “Some Effects of Salvation”; Genesis 17:1-8; 15-22; 18:9-15.

- 1. Why does salvation through faith destroy human pride?**
- 2. In what did Abraham put his hope?**

3. How did God use Abraham's hope to strengthen his faith?
4. What does this episode in the life of Abraham and Sarah teach you about faith and hope?

FOURTH DAY: Read Genesis 21:1-8; 22:1-18.

1. What is the danger of making a promise, rather than God, the object of hope?
2. In what way would you say that Isaac was Abraham's hope?
3. How does God reveal the great love of Abraham?
4. How does Abraham symbolize the love of God?

FIFTH DAY: Read Summary: "The Example of Abraham"; Rm. 4:1-12.

1. How does Abraham come to righteousness?
2. Why does Paul maintain that the non-Jew can also share in the promise made to Abraham?
3. What does Paul hold to be the necessary condition for Jews to share in the promise made to Abraham?
4. What is the main point Paul tries to prove in this section of Romans?

SIXTH DAY: Read Summary: "The Christian Faith"; Rm. 4:13-25.

1. What do you think is meant by the expression that Abraham was hoping against hope?
2. What do you think Paul intends by the expression "credited to him as justice?"
3. What does Paul reveal to be the content of Christian Faith in Rm.4:24-25?
4. What have you learned about faith from the example of Abraham?

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, along with a certain knowledge of religious history, is presumed. Paul has no intention of stating and defending the obvious. For example: repentance, sorrow for sins, and baptism are necessary for salvation along with faith. Also, it is being presumed that the Holy Spirit is received at the moment of baptism. On the other hand, Paul does have to go out of his way to demonstrate why circumcision and the Law are no longer obligatory for Christians.

SALVATION AS A PROCESS

In our former lesson we quoted Paul telling 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). Salvation is an ongoing process. Being justified or being made righteous does not necessarily mean being saved in the sense of an accomplished fact. Redemption is an accomplished fact. Salvation is a continual process in the life of a believer. Justification is the beginning of a continuum. 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.

Faith brings us to salvation, and we must continue to grow in faith. “*But you must hold fast to faith, be firmly grounded and steadfast in it...*” (Col.1:22). More than faith is needed in order to persevere in salvation; the soul must become “unshaken in hope.” Faith must produce Hope.

EFFECTS OF JUSTIFICATION

Paul 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...” (Rm.5:1).* Peace is the first fruit of justification.

Shalom, the Hebrew word for “peace,” is so rich in meaning that no single English word adequately expresses it. It carries the meaning of completeness, perfection; it implies a condition in which nothing is absent. The possession of peace in the Old Testament implied righteousness as well as prosperity and well-being. *“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 peace made between God and man by the blood of Christ, it implies that Jesus broke down the barrier, the wall of enmity, sin that separated man from 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. The grace of justification removes us from the state of enmity to one of friendship with God. This state Paul calls *“Peace.”*

Paul enumerates hope to be the second effect of the grace of justification. Within this spiritual continuum Paul sees the soul moving from faith to hope to love. These three virtues express the inner life of a Christian.

The Hebrew words used to convey the concept of hope expressed the idea of future expectation. In the Old Testament, Israel possessed a confident expectation of God’s future protection and blessing, based upon its covenant with Yahweh. In its expressions of hope, Israel acknowledged the faithfulness of God. Isaiah teaches that one must hope in Yahweh even when He hides His face (Is.8:17), or when He seems to withdraw his favor, or delays a long time (Is.26:8).

Hope calls to mind what the future holds for God’s People. Perhaps it is that future dimension that best distinguishes hope from faith. Faith brings us, here and now into possession of certain spiritual realities, such as justification and peace with God. Hope has as its object a future good, one not yet existing but viewed as obtainable in the future. An object of Christian hope would be the resurrection of the body from the dead.

The virtue of hope creates in a person an expectation of possessing future blessings. This expectation carries with it a sense of confidence and certainty.

It empowers the person to be patient and to persevere in patience. Because the future good is assured, the Christian whose patience is being tried and tested by present evil actually possesses joy in trial and test. Hope, rooted in faith and trust, dynamically elevates the spirit above the present evil. It refuses to be bogged down by sadness and despair. Hope enables the soul to cry, *"Damn the torpedoes!"* Hope empowers the spirit to move full speed ahead toward its future goal. Hope becomes not only the root of patience but of faithfulness. What is faithfulness but the perseverance in faith, hope, and charity.

HOPE'S FOUNDATIONS

Paul teaches that Christian hope finds a firm foundation in the presence of the Holy Spirit within the believer. Paul does not teach that the Holy Spirit is an effect of justification, but a cause of hope. The sign of the presence of the Holy Spirit within the soul of a believer is the presence of the love of God within the person. *"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).*

Paul proclaims the next cause of hope to be God's evident love for us. He maintains that while we were haters of God, the Father and the Son loved us. *"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" (Rom.5:8-9).*

These words of Paul imply that although 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. This is an object of our hope: we will be saved because of God's love. Paul goes on to say: *"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" (Rom.5:10).*

These beautiful Scriptures powerfully confirm the eternal love of God for mankind. One author has written that Jesus did not come to change the attitude of God, but to reveal what that attitude has always been. 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. The sins of men do not quench the love of God for sinners.

Here in Romans we catch a bright reflection of salvation as a divine operation of the Holy Trinity. The Triune God loves us. The Father gives us Faith in His Son. The Son, through His death and resurrection, gives us cause for Hope. The Holy Spirit, by His Presence within the soul, enkindles the Love of God.

CHRIST THE NEW ADAM

Within six verses Paul makes five references to the death of Jesus on the Cross and the salvation flowing from His death. Paul burns with zeal to manifest the glory he beholds in the death of Jesus upon the Cross, that precious deed that scandalized the Jews, and appeared so vain and foolish to the Greeks. With the pathos of a Greek drama, Paul depicts the effects of Jesus' death upon the history of mankind. 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 results of his life upon mankind. He desires that we recall those first chapters of Genesis.

On earth's stage Paul presents two alien characters: Harmatia and Thanatos. They appear as the handmaidens of the Prince of Darkness. 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 on earth because they were not part of the original creation. Paul presents them as personified evils that totally immersed themselves into human history.

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...*" (1Cor.15:56). 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 the initial feeling but the 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).

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, filled with the terrors of the "Night."

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 did not only 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).*

In order to grasp the significance of what is taught we must understand the Semitic mentality concerning the human being. Paul starts from the fact that man is bound up in a vast solidarity of historical existence. Human solidarity is the divinely ordained structure in which a person’s life must be lived. In this context of life, sin and death affect the freedom, the destiny, and the true end of all mankind. As one author confirms, *“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).* We, with our Western mentality, concentrate so much upon the uniqueness and individuality of each person that we are not psychologically prepared to appreciate what the Scriptures teach. It even somewhat outrages our sense of justice. *“We, in the West, must discover that the alternative to the ‘they’ is not ‘I’ but ‘we’!”(A.T. Robinson).*

Very few sections of the Sacred Scriptures have received an authoritative interpretation by the Church; this section in Romans is one of them. This means that, as Catholics, we are not free to give another interpretation. The Church teaches that the Scriptures confirm the doctrine of the unity of the human race: the human race descended from an original pair of human beings. It likewise confirms the doctrine of Original Sin: this original pair sinned and therefore all their descendants inherit the effects of that sin. From this flows the Church’s teaching on the necessity of Infant Baptism. The Council of Trent, echoing the Council of Carthage (418 A.D.) and the Council of Orange (529 A.D.), gave the authoritative interpretation of this section within Romans.

CHRIST AS ANTI-ADAM

Paul 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. It is a comparison of opposites. Christ is the anti-Adam type. In the case of Adam, one sin brought condemnation and death to all mankind. In the case of Christ, sin had piled up within the human race; death had an even greater claim upon

mankind. Then Christ died upon the Cross, and with his death came redemption and expiation of sin. Paul implies that the effects of Adam's sin did not depend upon the wills of his descendants--they inherited it. Because they were children of Adam they would die. In the case of Christ, it is suggested that the effects of His gift 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 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 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.

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!*" (1Cor.15:55).

Paul 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.5:19).

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. Before the death of Christ physical death symbolized eternal death. But now for the Christian, physical death is but a cause to strengthen faith and hope. Wherever Harmatia has been destroyed, Thanatos has lost his lethal sting. Now his sting is no more than that of the wasp that reduces the bodies of his victims to a catatonic state.

When Paul himself neared the end of his own life he expressed 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*" (Phil.1:20-21).

REASON FOR THE HOPE WITHIN

SCRIPTURE READINGS AND QUESTIONS SCRIPTURE OF THE WEEK (PLEASE MEMORIZE):

“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 TO HIM WILL BE SAVED BY HIS LIFE.” (Romans 5:10)

FIRST DAY: Read Summary through “Effects of Justification”; Colossians 1:21- 23; Romans 5:1-3.

1. What other works are required for salvation besides faith?
2. Can you quote any Scriptures to sustain this teaching?
3. What do you understand by the saying that salvation is an on-going process?
4. Describe two effects of the grace of salvation in the soul of the justified?

SECOND DAY: Read Summary “Hope's Foundations”; Romans 5:5-11.

1. How should Christian hope be demonstrated in the believer?
2. How would you distinguish faith from hope?
3. What are the causes for Christian hope in a believer?
4. What do these verses from Romans teach you?

THIRD DAY: Read Genesis 1:26-31; 2:15-17; 3:1-6; 3:17-19.

1. What does Genesis teach us about the original creation?
2. What was the essence of the first sin?

3. What effect did this sin have upon Adam?

4. What did you learn from these readings?

**FOURTH DAY: Read Summary: “Christ the New Adam”; Romans 5:12-14;
1Cor.15:20-26.**

1. What does Paul wish to show forth at this point in his letter?

2. Why do we say that Harmatia and Thanatos are aliens on earth’s stage?

3. What is the relationship between sin and death?

4. Why do you think Paul calls Jesus the New Adam?

FIFTH DAY: Read Summary: “Original Sin”; Joshua:7.

1. What do you understand to be the doctrine of Original Sin?

2. What does the reading in Joshua reveal about human solidarity?

3. Why do you think the Church holds up Infant Baptism?

4. Can you think of any Scripture to support this teaching?

**SIXTH DAY: Read Summary through “Death and the Christian”; Romans
5:15-21.**

1. In what way is Christ compared to Adam?

2. Why is the effect of Christ’s deed so much more powerful than the effect
of Adam’s sin?

3. What effect did Christ’s deed have upon death?

4. What should your attitude be concerning death?

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 returned to reside permanently within human nature. The immortality lost through the disobedience of Adam had been regained through the obedience of Jesus. 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 gift of the Holy Spirit, it would be in some way through a personal relationship with Jesus.

The death of Jesus on the Cross made this union possible by removing the obstacle to eternal life--sin. Prior to the reception of the Holy Spirit, there must be some identification with Jesus in order to share in the fruits of the redemption--to actually "experience" freedom from sin and its enslavement. Paul reveals that this necessary identification with Jesus occurs through faith that leads to baptism. Faith, through baptism, produces righteousness within the believer. The believer is justified before God, freed from sin but likewise placed in a state of grace that restores man to God's likeness and re-establishes personal friendship with God. Paul identifies this as a state of reconciliation. This sanctified state within the soul of the baptized occurs as an effect of the Holy Spirit's presence within the baptized.

PAUL MISINTERPRETED

By this time we may have personally experienced the fact that Paul's 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. There is evidence in Romans that Paul experienced the problem of having his teachings distorted, leading to the spiritual ruin of souls. Apparently, certain Christians maintained that since Paul taught that an increase of sin caused an increase of

grace, it was permissible to go on sinning in order to increase grace in the world.

Paul 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. 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?'*" Paul replies at once, "*Certainly not!*" (Rom.6:1-2).

THE EFFECT OF BAPTISM

Paul teaches what it means to live and reign through Jesus Christ. He reminds the readers of 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). He had identified the life of Jesus to be the opposite of the life of Adam. The life of Jesus is life without sin. Paul implies that baptism was death to the life inherited from Adam. Therefore, baptism was death to a life of sin.

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 is recalling the significance of the baptism rite in which the person was submerged completely under water, symbolizing death to the former life, and emerging up out of the waters 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. 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).

When Paul writes that 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 idea of a younger branch being grafted onto the branch of an older tree--the grafted branch now nourished to growth by the life of the older stock. Jesus expressed this degree of union when He said to His disciples, *"I am the vine, you are the branches...Live one in me, as I do in you"* (Jn.15:5a, 4a).

Paul teaches that the baptized person is now in Christ; the baptized is now a member of the humanity of Jesus Christ. Paul makes a distinction between being in Christ and being with Christ. In this world the baptized are in Christ but they are not with Christ. To be with Christ is a future hope. When we are with Christ we will share in Christ's glory. While here on earth, apparently, we are to share in another aspect of Christ's life.

LIFE IN CHRIST

Life in Christ seems to suggest that the baptized share in the earthly life of Jesus. His work continues upon this earth in the baptized, and this has been made possible by His death and by His sending the Holy Spirit upon the baptized. We cannot hope to identify with Jesus in glory if we have failed to identify with the Christ that lived in this world. *"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 also be united with Him in glory. In Paul's mind, a realistic identification with the crucifixion of Jesus could make possible the earthly life of Jesus in the baptized, and therefore a future identification with the glorious life of Jesus. Jesus confirmed that no disciples could be above the Master.

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. In the light of this we may better understand those words in Colossians, *"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 sin..."* (Col.3:2-5).

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. Because we are all in Adam, we all sin; because we are all in Adam, we all die. Paul teaches that Jesus is the New Adam, and through baptism the believer becomes identified with Jesus Christ as physically as he had been identified with 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. Through David and through Mary, Jesus is a descendant of Adam. Paul makes a general statement in Romans, *"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).* If we are going to interpret these Scriptures strictly, 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. He could not be the redeemer, but would be in need of redemption Himself. Here we see the importance of interpreting Scriptures according to the mind of the author, and not merely from the significance of the words. Paul never intended to suggest that Jesus was a sinner. A general rule has been stated. There are exceptions to the rule; the exceptions prove the rule. Jesus is an exception to the general rule that all descendants of Adam sinned.

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" (Acts13:33; Heb.1:5).* St. John tells us that *"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 consciousness of sinlessness when He hurled the challenge to the Jews, *"Can any one of you convict me of sin?" (Jn.8:46a).*

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 inherited the sin of Adam. Christian theologians have concentrated upon Mary in order to discover an adequate cause for the sinlessness of the humanity of Jesus. We know that the Catholic Church maintains that Jesus was not the only exception to the rule of being born sinless. It teaches that Mary had been designated by God to be the Mother of Jesus--Jesus who would be the New Adam. God designated Mary to be the New Eve--the Mother of the New Beginning. She was preserved from the stain of original sin by God. This the Church refers to as the privilege of the Immaculate Conception of Mary, 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, and because of the redemption. This does not mean that Mary was not saved by Jesus. She was saved by the merits of Jesus Christ through preservation from sin. She herself proclaimed, *"I rejoice in God my Savior."* As Gabriel announced at the Annunciation, *"Nothing is impossible with God."*

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 that a complete separation (a gulf) existed between the serpent and *"the woman and her offspring."* They would never be under the dominion of Satan. This could not refer to the first Eve who was a partner to sin. In the Book of Revelation, the last book of the Bible, the woman of Genesis appears again, *"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 his throne. The woman herself fled into the desert...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...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).

The angel's greeting to Mary, "*full of grace,*" implied a special relationship with God. Elizabeth, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit confirmed that Mary was an exceptional woman: "*Blessed are you among women!*" Mary acknowledged this fact with "*God who is mighty has done great things for me...*"

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.*" When the Church teaches the Immaculate Conception of Mary, it is defending the sinlessness of Christ—that the "Dayspring of Justice" flowed from a pure spring—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).* In baptism a Christian has crucified that self that lived in union with Adam. Crucifixion is an instrument of death. By a person's baptism into the crucifixion of Christ, the sinful body (meaning the sinful personality) has been put to death. The result of baptism is that the baptized person is freed from the enslavement of sin; freed from the power of sin; free to do other than sin. "*A man who is dead has been freed from sin" (Rom.6:7).* The baptized person is now free from sin and empowered to live the life of Christ.

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 sums up 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 for justice" (Rom.6:12-13).*

Paul conceived and experienced himself as a slave of Jesus Christ. He desired all Christians to come to such a surrender of heart to Christ that they could

only conceive of themselves as slaves of Jesus Christ--as men and women who had been dead and have been raised to a life of righteousness in Jesus. Paul reminds them of their former lives when they were free from righteousness--free from the power of the Holy Spirit. He reflects on the life of sin for them, its conditions, its essence, its reward, and contrasts it to the life of grace. In the light of what sin produces, Paul exhorts all to choose a life of grace. He knows we must choose one enslavement or the other. He closes the thought by describing the end of enslavement: "*The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord*" (Rom.6:23). For Paul, Christian life is a warfare in which Christians are soldiers of God, God's instruments to rescue souls from the kingdom of darkness and the dominion of Satan. In order to fulfill the Christian role, the baptized must remain free from sin.

CHRIST'S FAMILY

The Gospel of Luke describes an incident in the life of the Lord that indicates who Jesus truly acknowledges to be united with Him--who He acknowledges as His family, His clan, His tribe. "*My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and act upon it*" (Lk.8:21). Obedience is revealed to be the essence of the Christian life. It was the essence of the life of the Master. Luke presents the Mother of Jesus as the first among Christians, for when Mary heard the word of God, she said, "*I am the servant of the Lord. Let it be done to me as you say*" (Lk.1:38). Her last recorded words were: "*Whatever he tells you--that you do!*" (Jn.2:5).

FREE FROM SIN

SCRIPTURE READINGS AND QUESTIONS SCRIPTURE OF THE WEEK (PLEASE MEMORIZE)

“OFFER YOURSELVES TO GOD AS MEN WHO HAVE COME BACK FROM THE DEAD TO LIFE, AND YOUR BODIES TO GOD AS WEAPONS FOR JUSTICE.” (Romans 6:13)

FIRST DAY: Read Summary through the “Effect of Baptism”; Romans 6:1-5.

- 1. What error among Christians does Paul seek to refute at this point in Romans?**
- 2. Why does Paul maintain that a Christian has died to sin?**
- 3. What do you understand by the teaching: baptism into the death of Christ?**
- 4. What two effects does Paul see flowing from baptism?**

SECOND DAY: Read Summary: “Life in Christ”; John 15:1-8; Rom.6:1-5.

- 1. What is implied by the expression “have been united” with Christ?**
- 2. How would you describe the union that takes place between the baptized and Christ?**
- 3. Why is it necessary for a person to be personally united with Christ?**
- 4. What does the reading from John tell you about union with Christ?**

THIRD DAY: Read Summary through “The Immaculate Conception.”

- 1. What could be a possible implication from the fact that Jesus was a descendant of Adam?**
- 2. Why is it important to salvation that Jesus be sinless?**

3. How would you show from Scripture the sinlessness of Jesus?
4. What is the Catholic doctrine of the Immaculate Conception, and what is its significance?

FOURTH DAY: Read Summary: "Free from Sin"; Romans 6:6-14.

1. What do you think Paul means by "our old self" and "the sinful body"?
2. What does he mean by "freed from sin"?
3. In relationship to the power of sin over man, what is the difference between the baptized and the non-baptized?
4. What does Romans 6:13 teach you?

FIFTH DAY: Read Romans 6:15-23.

1. Why do you think Paul sees sin as an enslavement?
2. What in your opinion does he mean by the baptized becoming "slaves to justice"?
3. What would it mean to you to be a slave of God?
4. What would be your reward for being an obedient slave of God?

SIXTH DAY: Read Luke 8:19-21; Ephesians 6:10-20.

1. How does one become a member of the family of Jesus, according to Jesus Himself?
2. What is the role of a Christian in this world?
3. What are the means needed to fulfill this role?
4. What must you do in order to keep yourself "free from sin?"

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 Jews, and 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 civic lives. The Torah revealed Yahweh's unconditional demands upon each and every Jew. Chapters 19 and 20 of Exodus gives the account of Moses receiving the Torah from Yahweh. Especially in Psalms 19 and 119 we find expressed the ancient attitude of the Jews concerning the Torah.

The ancient devotion to these Sacred Scriptures was expressed in the words: *"I intend in my heart to fulfill your statutes always, to the letter."* This led the Jews of later centuries to develop a "hedge" or "fence" around the Torah. The hedge was built to ensure the perfect observance of the "letter" of the Law. It consisted of an authoritative interpretation of the Torah that advanced the legal observance of the Torah beyond the sense stated by the words of the Torah. The hedge became known as the unwritten Torah, and assumed an importance second only to the written Torah. 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 TOWARD THE LAW

When Paul uses the word *"law,"* he 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 are. These teachings certainly were calculated to produce violent reactions among pious Jews, and were indeed a conscience problem for Jews converted to the Christian religion.

In reading the text ascribed to Paul in 2Timothy 3:15-17, we probably have the best description of Paul's attitude towards the Scriptures. Paul sees the Scriptures as a source of wisdom and knowledge but not of salvation. When a person came to faith in Jesus Christ, in the of his faith in Jesus, the Scriptures then become a path leading to salvation, for the Law and the Prophets testify to salvation through faith in Christ.

When Paul makes a reference to the Sacred Scriptures, we must understand that the reference is to the Old Testament. As yet the New Testament had not been written; it was in the process of being created.

PAUL'S BATTLE WITH THE TORAH

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). Paul seeks to defend with his arguments that faith in Jesus Christ leads to salvation.

Let us take the ideas expressed by Paul concerning the Torah and weave them together with the hope of getting a clearer picture of his teachings about the Law. The Jews maintained that because they possessed the Sacred Scriptures and received instruction from them, they knew God's will. Paul responded to this:

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 (Rm.2:13).

Circumcision...has value if you keep the law... (Rm.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 (Rm.3:19).

It is written, "Cursed is he who does not abide by everything written in the book of the law and carry it out" (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" (Rm.3:10-11).

All who depend on observance of the law...are under a curse (Gal.3:10).

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).

Faith does not abolish the law but confirms the law (See Rm.3:31).

...The justice of God has been manifested apart from the law, even though both law and prophets bear witness to it... (Rm.3:21).

...A man is justified by faith apart from the observance of the law (Rm.3:28).

Sin is not imputed when there is no law (Rm.5:13).

...For where there is no law there is no transgression (Rm.4:15).

The law came in order to increase offenses... (Rm.5:20).

...The law serves only to bring down wrath... (Rm.4:15).

Is the law the same as sin? Certainly not! Yet it was only through the law that I came to know sin (Rm.7:7).

...At first I lived without law (Rm.7:9).

Then the commandment came; with it sin came to life, and I died (Rm.7:10).

I should never have known what evil desire was unless the law had said: "You shall not covet!" (Rm.7:7).

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! (Rm.7:12-13).

Sin found its opportunity... (Rm. 7:11).

Sin seized that opportunity... (Rm. 7:8) .

...and used the commandment: first to deceive me, then to kill me (Rm. 7:11).

LAW STIMULATES SIN

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; here may lie the grounds for deception. A person comes to see the commandments of God as an encroachment upon one's freedom of will. In actual reality the commands of God are loving directives to the will in order to aid the will in obtaining man's true goal. Too often a person erroneously sees obedience to God's commands as an obstacle to human freedom. A person seeks fulfillment of his life in a life of sin. The end achievement is not fulfillment but death--complete emptiness. *"When we were in the flesh, the sinful passions roused by the law worked in our members and we bore fruit for death" (Rm. 7:5).*

Paul implies a time existed that was free from sin. This probably does not refer to a time when his life was actually free of sin, but rather is a reference to the time before the command came--as in the Garden of Eden--or else in childhood before one had any conscious awareness of divine commands.

END OF THE LAW

Paul maintains that the Torah *"was to be valid only until that descendant or offspring came to whom the promise had been given" (Gal. 3:19)*. Paul pictures those under the Law as heirs, who while under the tutor, 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. The Law has been the tutor bringing the Jews to Christ. The tutor is no longer needed. As Paul says: *"Each one of you is a son of God because of your faith in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:26)*.

Paul proclaims: *"Christ is the end of the law" (Rm. 10:4)*. *"In his own flesh he abolished the law with its commands and precepts...reconciling us to God through his cross" (See Eph. 2:15)*. This means the Gospel is the fulfillment of

the Old Testament. In Christ it reached its perfection. During his earthly ministry Jesus Christ proclaimed, "*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).

THOSE DEAD TO THE LAW

Paul tells the Jewish Christians that the "*law has power over a man only so long as he lives*" (Rm.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 makes 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: "*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*" (Rm.7:4).

The Jewish Christian is no longer obliged to observe the precepts and commandments of the Old Testament. The Law 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!*" (Rm.6:15). The Christian is under the Law of Grace that brings to perfection the Torah. "*The whole law,*" says Paul, "*has found its fulfillment in this one saying: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself'*" (Gal.5:14; Lv.19:18b). Paul writes, "*Now that we have been released from the law...we serve not the antiquated letter but we serve in the spirit*" (See Rm. 7:6.)

Paul undertook this battle because he clearly understood what was implied by seeking salvation through circumcision and the Law. He expressed this 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 grace*"(Gal.5:4).

WHY THE LAW FAILED

Paul teaches that the Torah is holy, just, and good. He says, "*We know the law is spiritual.*" Paul is affirming that 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.

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*" (Rm. 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 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: "*I cannot even understand my own actions*" (Rm. 7:15). Paul explains what is meant, "*I do not do what I want to do but what I hate*" (Rm. 7:15b). This is the condition of slavery. He admits there is an inward attraction to the Law but still a refusal to obey: "*When I act against my own will, by that very fact I agree that the law is good*" (Rm. 7:16).

Paul identifies self with the will. If he wills one thing and yet he does another, he acknowledges that some other stronger power is at work within him. "*This indicates that it is not I who do it but sin which resides in me*" (Rm. 7:17). He sees the power to be Harmatia. He sees the actual human existence as bad--man has become flesh. "*I know that no good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; the desire to do right is there but not the power*" (Rm. 7:18).

Even though man is 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*" (Rm. 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*" (Rm. 7:22-23,25b).

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?*" (Rm. 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. 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 desires 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 because this is not the description Paul gives of the baptized, one who is the Temple of the Holy Spirit. Paul maintains that 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!*" (Rm. 7:25). 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...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).

THE LAW AND PAUL

SCRIPTURE READINGS AND QUESTIONS SCRIPTURE OF THE WEEK (PLEASE MEMORIZE)

“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.” (Romans 7:6)

FIRST DAY: Read Summary: “Introduction”; Exodus 19:16-20:21.

1. What is the Torah or the Law of the Old Testament?
2. According to Exodus, in what manner did the Torah come to the Jews?
3. What impression does this reading leave you with concerning the Law of God?
4. What do you understand by Moses’ words in Exodus 20:20?

SECOND DAY: Read Psalms 19:8-15 and 119:89-112.

1. According to Psalm 19 what are some of the effects of the Sacred Scriptures upon the pious believer?
2. What does Psalm 19:12-14 teach you?
3. According to Psalm 119, what are the fruits of loving God’s revelations?
4. In what way would you say the Scriptures are a lamp to your feet and light to your path?

**THIRD DAY: Read Summary through “Paul’s Battle with the Torah”;
2Tim. 3:14-17.**

1. What does the reading from 2Timothy reveal to you about the role of Scripture in your life?
2. What role do the Scriptures not fulfill in your life?

3. As a Christian why was Paul forced to argue against the observance of the Torah?
4. In light of the Gospel, how would you summarize Paul's argument against the Torah?

**FOURTH DAY: Read Summary through "Those Dead to the Law";
Romans 7:1-6.**

1. How would you say the Law could stimulate sin in the world?
2. What do you understand by "Christ is the end of the law?"
3. Why does Paul maintain that Jewish Christians no longer need to observe the Torah?
4. What do you understand by Romans 7:6?

FIFTH DAY: Read Romans 7:7-13.

1. What do you understand by "yet it was only through the law that I came to know sin?"
2. Why would you say that man rebels against God's commands?
3. How does Satan use God's Commandments to lead us into sin?
4. How would you explain that God's Commandments are not an encroachment upon the freedom of our wills?

**SIXTH DAY: Read Summary: "Why the Law Failed" and "Club 7:14-21";
Romans 7:14-25.**

1. What is Paul's final summary about the Law?
2. Why does he say the Law has failed to bring salvation into the world?
3. What is the condition of a man in the "flesh?"
4. What is the salvation for his problem?

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 Paul's Hebrew background, of one who is 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 sources 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.

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.

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. The 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 people. They become new creations: people "born again," 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.

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.

PSYCHE AND PNEUMA

If we confuse the two words soul and spirit, we can misinterpret Paul. This is easy to do since Christian theology makes little distinction between the two. In Romans, we seek to understand Paul's thought, which does not express the full maturity of Christian teaching. In Romans we are at the beginning and foundation of Christian theology.

In later years, Christianity will teach the spirituality and the immortality of the human soul. These later concepts can cloud and confuse the understanding of 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 the 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.

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 the spirit of man. It appears to be a distinction as to who is the source of the spiritual activity. The Holy Spirit is the Source of all pneumatic powers (here in Romans). 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.

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 baptized Christians remain *psychikon* persons. 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 does possess 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 Holy Spirit is the difference between the two. The descendant of Adam who possesses the Pneuma of God can overcome sin, use human life for the service of God, and through good deeds can sanctify his personality. This spiritual man will die physically because of the effect of sin. He goes into the grave as a psychikon person, but, because he “lives in the Lord,” he will not experience eternal death. He will rise from the grave completely *pneumatized*. He will come forth from the grave a *pneumatikon* person--as an Ikon of Jesus Christ.

What is psychic is natural. What is spiritual is supernatural. Let us not confuse the two. Psychic powers would not be supernatural powers but refined human powers. Many people cannot distinguish between the desire to live a better psychic existence and the desire to live a spiritual life.

It may help us also to keep in mind that when Paul speaks of “body” it is not a reference to a material being, but to a person. This person is conscious of self as a unique individual, a consciousness that will remain regardless of changes that may occur in the substance through which he realizes his existence, be it material or non-material.

NEW HEART AND SPIRIT

All that Paul describes he knew was 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).

IKON OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Fundamental to understanding the thought of Paul is 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 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 is truly possible to say 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, in the historical life of Jesus, we possess 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. When we see manifestations of a spirit within the lives of Christians that appear strange and bizarre, and have no recognizable reflection in the historical life of Jesus, they certainly ought to be called into question, and the spirit motivating them should be discerned by a person qualified to discern Jesus Christ from the “noontday devil.”

LIFE IN THE SPIRIT

In Chapter Eight, Paul announces: “*There is no condemnation now for those who are in Christ Jesus*” (Rm.8:1). Condemnation is synonymous with curse. The Law brought all but Jesus under a curse. The sin of Adam brought all mankind under the curse of sin and death. For all those in Jesus Christ, the curse has been removed. 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 Rm.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*” (Rm.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 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. 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.

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.*"

DISTINCTION BETWEEN FLESH AND 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*" (Rm.8:5). The flesh person is interested in self and a self-expressed, fulfilled will, according to the standards and values of this earth.

Such persons truly oppose 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*"(Rm.8:7-8). Here we have a reflection of the Church's teaching on mortal sin: 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 as 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.

SONS OF GOD

In Chapter Eight of Romans, we find that the man or woman "born again" obeys "the law of the Spirit," minds the things of the Spirit, is guided by the Spirit and walks according to the direction of the Holy Spirit. Such people become identifiable as "sons of God." They have truly been begotten anew, "*not by blood, nor by carnal desire, nor by man's willing it, but by God*"(Jn.1:13). They have been begotten by the Spirit of God. They inherit

God's life: *"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" (Rm.8:11)*. One does not receive eternal life as a reward but as an inheritance. Paul implies we receive all this as our just due.

All of this becomes ours only through our union with Christ, and it is all conditional upon our union with Christ. Paul becomes very concrete about this union: we are *"heirs of God, heirs with Christ, if only we suffer with him so as to be glorified with him" (Rm.8:17)*. Christ has marked the trail to glory. All who will share in that glory will walk the 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" (Rm.8:23)*. He sees the gift of the Holy Spirit as only the beginning of our redemption, the first fruits. Meanwhile we suffer and we may groan, but patiently.

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" (Rm.8:26)*. Paul implies that those inexpressible longings and desires for holiness and union with the Lord, where there is no speech in which to clothe them, are prayers rising from the Temple of the soul to the Father in Heaven from the Holy Spirit, on our behalf. These are 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" (Rm.8:27)*. What a Friend we have in the Spirit of Jesus!

NO CONDEMNATION IN CHRIST

Paul began Chapter Eight with: *"There is no condemnation now for those who are in Christ Jesus."* Paul tells Christians that God has called us, God has justified us, and God will glorify us. There is no reason to doubt, there is every cause to hope. Who, he asks, is going to bring charges against us? Who is going to condemn us? *"If God is for us, who can be against us?" "...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?" (Rm.8:31,33-34)*.

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).

CREATIONS OF A DIVINE ARTIST

SCRIPTURE READINGS AND QUESTIONS SCRIPTURE OF THE WEEK (PLEASE MEMORIZE)

“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.” (Romans 8:11)

FIRST DAY: Read Summary through “Men of Flesh and Spirit.”

1. According to Paul, what are the two basic human types?
2. How would you distinguish between these two basic types?
3. How would you explain the difference between the *pneuma* of man and the *Pneuma* of God?
4. What is the difference between a person being “in the flesh” and a person being “in the body?”

SECOND DAY: Read Summary “New Heart and Spirit”; “Ikon of the Holy Spirit”; Ezekiel 18:31-32; 11:18-21; 37:26-28.

1. How is the New Covenant described in the Old Testament readings?
2. What would you say is the outstanding element of the New Covenant from these readings?
3. Why can we say that Jesus is the Ikon of the Holy Spirit?
4. What is the importance of the identification of the Holy Spirit with the Spirit of Jesus?

THIRD DAY: Read Summary “Life in the Spirit”; “Distinction between Flesh and Spirit”; Romans 8:1-13.

1. What do you understand by “no condemnation now for those who

are in Christ Jesus?”

2. What does Paul see the Incarnation of Jesus accomplishing?
3. How is life in the spirit distinguished from life in the flesh?
4. What does this tell you about your own Christian Life?

FOURTH DAY: Read Summary “Sons of God”; Romans 8:14-17; Gal.4:1-7;
Mt.5:43-48.

1. What status does a Christian have before God through the Holy Spirit?
2. How is this expressed in our devotional life?
3. What flows from this status?
4. What conditions does Jesus make in order to have this status?

FIFTH DAY: Read Romans 8:18-27.

1. What do you think Paul means by saying that if we suffer with Christ, we will be glorified with Him?
2. What do you understand by Romans 8:23?
3. According to Paul, how does the Holy Spirit help our weakness?
4. How does the Holy Spirit help you in your weakness?

SIXTH DAY: Read Summary “No Condemnation in Christ”; Rom. 8:28-39.

1. What does Romans 8:28 mean to you?
2. What do you think Paul means by being “predestined?”
3. What are Paul’s arguments for “no condemnation for those in Christ?”
4. What does Romans 8:35-39 teach you?

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. 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.

As the Jews challenged the spread of the gospel, Paul was often brought into open conflict with them. Over the years he developed and refined his answers to the Jews' objections to the gospel.

PAUL'S FEELINGS TOWARD 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*" (Rm.9:1-3). Paul's acceptance of Christ comes from divine grace and not from natural preference. Only supernatural power united him with Jesus Christ at the expense of separating him from his natural family ties.

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*" (Rm.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)*" (Rm.9:4). Paul recalls the glorious history of the Jews, the decisive role Israel played in the plan of divine salvation. Israel has

possessed a starring role. She crowned her glory by bringing upon this earth the Messiah, the Savior of the World.

GOD AS CAUSE

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. 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.

Paul discovered that in God's dealings with man there has been a process of divine selection. 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"*(*Rm.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. As the Lord said to Moses, *"I will show mercy to whomever I choose; I will have pity on whomever I wish"* (*Rm.9:15*). God reveals His own sovereign freedom. Paul acknowledges God's right to use His creation freely. 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 pride will question the righteousness 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?"* (*Rm.9:20-21*).

Paul teaches: *"All Israelites are not true Israelites"*(*See Rm.9:6*). Israel means "God rules" or "may God rule." Only those could be true Israelites over whom Yahweh ruled through Christ. The Jews and the Gentiles who accepted Jesus Christ were truly Israelites. Paul demonstrates that the Scriptures

foretold the call of the Gentiles, and that Israel itself would be reduced to a remnant.

It was the Will of God that righteousness should come from God to man as a pure gift through faith. God selected faith in Jesus as the cornerstone on which would rise the New Israel of the Spirit. The Gentiles came to righteousness because they came to faith in Jesus Christ. 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’*” (Rm.9:32-33).

ISRAEL AS CAUSE

Paul 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. They established their own norm for righteousness: justice came from the fulfillment of the Mosaic Law, but they placed their faith in good works. God demanded they forsake their humanly acquired righteousness and put their faith in the Person of Christ. They rejected God’s Will in this matter.

The Law comes to an end in Christ. It 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*” (Rm.10:4b).

Paul quotes Moses to emphasize how difficult it would be to obtain righteousness through the observance of the Law (See Lv.18:5). He again quotes Moses using Moses’ words in Deuteronomy 30:12-14, as a description of the righteousness that comes through faith. Paul wants to contrast the two in order to show that righteousness through faith is so much easier, and that it is open to all.

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'' (Rm.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 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 to be saved: the external profession of faith in one's daily life leads to salvation.

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 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 Rm.10:14-15). Paul realized no one could preach the gospel with the power that produces faith unless they were empowered to do so by the Holy Spirit. The gospel is proclaimed by apostles. Apostles are those chosen by the Holy Spirit and empowered by Him. Apostles are God's ambassadors. God is appealing through them.

Has God sent His apostles to the Jews to preach the "good news?" Yes, the apostles 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..." (Rm.10:16-18).* The Jews have heard and have refused to believe in the gospel. Faith is a gift, but it is a gift that leaves men free to believe or disbelieve. 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 God would offer salvation to the Gentiles as well as to the Jews? In Second Isaiah, 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. 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

Despite the apparently hopeless situation, Paul still prayerfully hopes for Israel's incorporation into the divine plan. 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, Paul sees the evidence that God has not rejected His people. God has only temporarily rejected the Jews. In this rejection Paul sees a divine purpose unfolding for a greater good. 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-grape” 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 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!”* (Rm.11:15b).

Many scholars believe 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.

WARNING TO THE GENTILE CHRISTIANS

Paul moves to safeguard Christian humility by reminding the Gentiles that all their present spiritual enrichment has come to them out of the spiritual richness that belonged to the Jews. He 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 pride. Because of pride the Jews are in their present unfortunate state. The Jews were the natural branches upon the tree of Israel. 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. *"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"* (Rm.11:22). Paul's words confirm that no baptized person is confirmed in God's grace.

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: *"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"* (Rm.11:25-26).

For a 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"* (Rm.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.

Contemplating the infinite merciful love of God overwhelms the mind of Paul. Where the mind ends, the spirit begins. Paul's thoughts give way to his heart bursting forth in a hymn of praise to Divine Wisdom: *"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"* (Rm.11:33-36).

THE MYSTERY OF ISRAEL

SCRIPTURE READINGS AND QUESTIONS SCRIPTURE OF THE WEEK (PLEASE MEMORIZE)

“BLINDNESS HAS COME UPON PART OF ISRAEL UNTIL THE FULL NUMBER OF GENTILES ENTER IN AND THEN ALL ISRAEL WILL BE SAVED.” (Romans 11:25)

FIRST DAY: Read Summary through “God as Cause”; Romans 9:1-18.

1. How would you describe Paul’s personal feelings towards the Jews?
2. What do you think Paul means by saying that all Israelites are not true Israelites?
3. To what does Paul attribute the primary cause for the Jews rejection of Christ?
4. How does Paul demonstrate the sovereign power and freedom of God?

SECOND DAY: Read Romans 9:19-33.

1. What does Paul teach you in verses 19 and 20?
2. How do you feel about this teaching?
3. What truths are revealed in the Old Testament Scriptures quoted by Paul in 9:25-29?
4. Why did the Gentiles come to justice and the Jews not?

THIRD DAY: Read Summary: “Israel as Cause”; Romans 10:1-13

1. What reason does Paul give for the Jews rejecting the Gospel?
2. What is the difference between justice coming from the Law and justice coming from faith?

3. How would you explain the meaning of Romans 10:10?
4. What do you think it means to “call upon the name of the Lord”?

**FOURTH DAY: Read Summary: “Israel Rejects the Call of the Gentiles”;
Rm.10:14-21.**

1. What is the process by which one comes to a saving faith?
2. Why is it important “to be sent” to preach the Gospel?
3. What does Romans 10:17 mean to you?
4. What did Israel particularly resent about the Gospel message?

FIFTH DAY: Read Summary: “Good from Evil”; Romans 11:1-17.

1. Why does Paul maintain God has not rejected His people?
2. What good has come out of the Jews rejection of the Gospel?
3. How does Paul see the Gentiles influencing the conversion of the Jews?
4. What do you understand by Romans 11:15?

SIXTH DAY: Read remainder of Summary; Romans 11:18-35.

1. Why does Paul feel the Gentile Christians have no reason to feel exalted over the Jews?
2. What warning does Paul give to us Gentile Christians?
3. What does Paul reveal to be the final destiny of the Jews?
4. What does Romans 11:32 mean to you?

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” (Rm.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...”(Rm.1:7)*.

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.”* Paul makes it clear Christians are not freed from moral obligations. Their moral responsibility flows not from the letter of the law but from response to the Holy Spirit: *“We serve in the new spirit, not the antiquated letter” (Rm.7:6c)*.

Christians must be directed by the law of the Spirit. To all true Christians Paul writes:

You must consider yourselves dead to sin but alive for God in Christ Jesus (Rm.6:11b).

Offer yourselves to God as men who have come back from the dead to life, and your bodies to God as weapons for justice (Rm.6:13b).

You are now under grace (Rm.6:14b).

You became slaves of justice (Rm.6:18b).

Just as formerly you enslaved your bodies to impurity and licentiousness for their degradation, make them now the servants of justice for their sanctification (Rm.6:19b).

Now that you are freed from sin and have become slaves of God, your benefit is sanctification as you tend toward eternal life (Rm.6:22).

The gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rm.6:23b).

All who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God (Rm.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*" (Rm.12:1). Again we must remind ourselves that Paul means "*body*" as our entire being--the whole life we live on earth. Paul speaks of this as a spiritual worship.

There is a public worship which the Community as a body offers to God. This we call the liturgy, meaning a 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 public place called a church. Paul sees that every moment of a Christian's life could be a church-service. Wherever they are, whatever they do, could be spiritual worship of God offered by the priestly spirit of the Christian.

Paul advises us: "*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*" (Rm.12:2). The Greek word translated as "conform" comes from the root word *schema*, which conveys the meaning of a constant changing of the external surface of things. It carries the meaning of "fashion", and fashions change constantly. The morality of Christians is not to be measured by the moral-fashion of today. That is to "conform" oneself to this world. It means never knowing for sure what will stand tomorrow, yet being certain one will never live or die for anything not morally fashionable. Such behavior robs a person of his or her Christian identity.

Paul directs the Christian away from external conformity, toward inner change and transformation. Paul calls for a radical transformation of the human personality. He calls for changing our *morphe*--the unchangeable part

of our being that still remains as our fashions change. Paul calls for radical transformation. We must change from men and women of the flesh to men and women of the spirit.

To achieve this Paul calls for “mind renewal.” He demands that we completely transform our way of thought. The renewal demanded of us is as when winter changes to spring. A Christian must put on the mind of Christ. Paul knew the pattern of man’s thought controls the pattern of man’s behavior. It has been said that you are what you think. If you think about something long enough, it will soon clothe itself in feelings and emotions and finally express itself in human behavior.

HUMILITY IN SPIRITUAL WORSHIP

Paul instructs his readers in what should be the attitude and behavior of one who offers true spiritual worship to God. He first emphasizes the importance of humility. Humility is truth, and the foundation of Christian life and union with God. God is Truth. Humility is truth that incarnates itself in self-expression. It is to know oneself in the light of God’s truth and to live that truth in thought, word and deed.

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” (Rm.12:3a)*. He goes on to say: *“Let him estimate himself soberly, in keeping with the measure of faith that God has apportioned him” (Rm.12:3b)*. Christians do not measure themselves by the standards of this world or, for that matter, against each other. *“Do not be wise in your own estimation” (Rm.12:16c)*. They are to measure themselves with a 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.

Paul sees it as a sign of real humility when Christians recognize their places in the Community and the proper places of others in the Community. These places are in keeping with the charisms given to the members of the Community. 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 how he can build up the community by the contribution of the charisms given him by God. Paul says: *“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" (Rm.12:4-6a).

All charisms have a social purpose--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. The charisms within the Christian Community are but a rainbow of God's mercy descending upon the lives of all its members.

Such channels of the Divine Spirit should of necessity be exercised only in cheerfulness. Paul tells us, "*God loves a cheerful giver.*" We often become preoccupied with the work to be done, but so very often the spirit in which it is done is as important as the work. And at times the spirit in which a thing is done is even more important than the work or the gift itself.

AGAPE IN SPIRITUAL WORSHIP

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*"(Rm.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.

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*. The word hardly appears in secular Greek literature. Some see it as a word that was born in the Christian Community, coined by Christians, and flows from the Presence of the Holy Spirit to express a new quality and attitude towards others.

Paul describes the special relationship of love that ought to be present between members of the Christian Community. Paul tells us, "*Your love must be sincere*" (Rm.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 super-natural builds upon the natural. Paul goes on to say, “Anticipate each other in showing respect” (Rm.12:10b); “Look on the needs of the saints as your own; be generous in offering hospitality” (Rm.12:13); “Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep” (Rm.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” (Rm.13:8-10).*

Love cannot end in the Christian family because it is God’s love, and God’s love reaches out to all. 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” (Rm.12:16-17). Paul does not mean to imply that we should have the same feelings and emotions for all people regardless of their relationship with us, but he is speaking about good will. The Christian attitude towards all people ought to be one of good will. Good will can never be merely a nice feeling towards others. Good will implies good actions.

Therefore Paul tells us, “Bless your persecutors; bless and do not curse them” (Rm.12:14); “Never repay injury with injury” (Rm.12:17a); “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” (Rm.12:20). “Burning coals upon his head” has been difficult to interpret. Paul, who has encouraged that love should be sincere, and that 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 implied 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” (Rm.12:21). Let us so strive in our lives that the good always outweighs the bad.

OBEDIENCE TO AUTHORITY

Paul lived his life within the environment of the Pax Romana, a world at peace under the Roman rule. He experienced this peace as a means for spreading the gospel. At times he enjoyed the protection of Roman authority. Paul sees the civil government as a moral force in the world keeping order and peace. Even though the civil government is not under the order of God’s grace (within 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 a justice that guides things in the world but ought not to guide the life of a Christian. A Christian submits in obedience to the moral order of civil government but his own life ought to be directed by the higher principles of Christian love already illustrated.

Obedience to civil authority is seen as a form of obedience to God himself. *“For the ruler is God’s servant to work for your good” (Rm.13:4a).* Paul would have been familiar with the words found in Daniel: *“...The Most High rules over the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will” (Dan.4:29).*

There is always the supposition underlining Paul’s teaching 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 responsible for acting 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 to form, especially among the Jewish Christians, a right conscience in regard to one’s obligation to the Roman government: *“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...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. Owe no debt to anyone except the debt that binds us to love one another” (Rm.13:1,7-8a).*

Concerning this last debt, Origen taught that we must pay that debt each day at the end of the day--if it is still owed.

ARMOR OF LIGHT

Paul exhorts Christians to put these things into practice now. As encouragement, he reminds them that the day of the Lord fast approaches. *"...for our salvation is closer than when we first accepted the faith" (Rm.13:11)*. 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 are living in the *eschaton*--the end times. The countdown for the Second Coming of Christ had begun. With the coming of Christ the old order would pass away--only the new and eternal order would remain. He urges men to establish themselves within the kingdom of God before it's too late. With Peter he urges men to *"save yourselves from this generation which has gone astray" (Acts 2:40)*. A Christian could find himself still very much a part of this world and therefore perish with it: *"The night is far spent; the day draws near" (Rm.13:12a)*. Before the night has ended, a symbol of this world, a Christian must cast off all deeds of darkness and be clothed in the Armor of Light. *"Let us live honorably as in daylight; not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual excess and lust, not in quarreling and jealousy" (Rm.13:13)*. Paul tells us that Jesus Christ Himself is the Armor of Light and He must become our armor: *"Put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the desires of the flesh" (Rm.13:14)*.

CALLED TO HOLINESS

SCRIPTURE READINGS AND QUESTIONS SCRIPTURE OF THE WEEK (PLEASE MEMORIZE)

“DO NOT CONFORM YOURSELF 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.” (Romans 12:2)

FIRST DAY: Read Summary through “Spiritual Worship”; Romans 12:1-2; 1Thessalonians 4:1-7; 1Peter 2:1-10.

- 1. What do you think it means to be “called to holiness”?**
- 2. In what way can our lives be seen as “spiritual worship”?**
- 3. What does St. Paul mean in Romans 12:2?**
- 4. What does 1Peter 2:9 teach you about the Christian vocation?**

SECOND DAY: Read Summary “Humility in Spiritual Worship”; Romans 12:3-8.

- 1. What do you understand by the virtue of humility?**
- 2. What does the saying, “Humility is knowing your place and taking it” mean to you?**
- 3. How does humility direct the use of charisms in the Community?**
- 4. How should one look upon the charisms God has given him?**

THIRD DAY: Read Summary “Agape in Spiritual Worship”; Matthew 5:38-48; Luke 6:27-35; Romans 12:9-21.

- 1. What is the difference between agape-love and love as understood by the world?**
- 2. Which of these exhortations do you find most difficult to practice and**

why?

3. What reason does the Scripture give us for loving our enemies?
4. What do you understand by Romans 12:21?

**FOURTH DAY: Read Summary: “Obedience to Authority”; Romans 13-1-7;
1Peter 2:13-17; Matthew 22:16-22.**

1. Why does Paul hold we are morally obliged to obey civil authority?
2. What do we learn about our obligation to authority in the reading from First Peter?
3. According to the Scriptures, what should be the Christian attitude toward paying taxes?
4. When would a Christian be morally obliged to disobey civil authority?

FIFTH DAY: Read Romans 13:8-10; Mark 12:28-34.

1. What is the Law that must direct the lives of all Christians?
2. What does Jesus teach to be the fulfillment of the Old Testament?
3. Why has this fulfillment become possible in the New Covenant?
4. What do you think is the reason most Christians fail to love as they are commanded?

**SIXTH DAY: Read Summary: “Armor of Light”; Romans 13:11-14;
1Thes.5:1-11.**

1. What reason does Paul give for putting into practice the things he has taught?
2. How can one prepare for the Second Coming of Christ?
3. Why does Paul think it is important to be prepared?
4. How do you think one goes about putting on the Lord Jesus Christ?

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*"(Jn.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 come to be for the blessed in which nothing good will be lacking. 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, as was anything that disturbed or destroyed a person's welfare or the existing social order. 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 would cause peace to flow like a river in Israel (See Is.48:18).

The Old Testament foretold that the reign of the Messiah would restore *shalom* to Israel and bring peace to perfection. The Messiah would be the Prince of Peace (Is.9:5). Before departing from this world, Jesus Christ 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). Perhaps nothing expresses more clearly the spirit of Christian *shalom* than Jesus' prayer to the Father for His future disciples as recorded in John 17:20-23.

OBLIGATION TO CHRISTIAN PEACE

A Christian ought to be a cause of peace and its builder 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)*. Therefore, a Christian has a vocation to peace. To the Colossians Paul writes: *“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)*. Paul told the Thessalonians: *“Make it a point of honor to remain at peace and attend to your own affairs” (1Thes. 4:11)*. In Romans, Paul tells us: *“Let us, then, make it our aim to work for peace and to strengthen one another” (Rm. 14:19)*. In a very concrete way, Paul teaches the Christian Community in Chapters Fourteen and Fifteen of Romans how to *“work for peace.”* Christians must work for a peace that expresses itself in a personal interior calm and in harmonious relationship between members of the Christian Community.

From experience Paul knew the care needed by all in order for the Christian family to establish and preserve an environment of Christian Shalom. 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.

CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

Paul pictures the Christian Church 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 is indifferent to the demands of God in its life. They do 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. There will be many personality differences between members of the Community. All people, in some degree, are products of their environment. Much behavior is motivated by forces beyond conscious awareness. Human behavior is not entirely a product of formal education or the lack of it. Any Community with diversity of membership will possess 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.

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 regarded certain days to be holy, and those who considered all such practices as mere superstition. Paul saw the real division as one between those weak in the faith and those strong in the faith. Today perhaps we would see it as a division between conservatives and liberals.

The topics Paul deals with are rather unimportant in themselves, but the principles the problems produced certainly have value today, and need application in the 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).

Paul seeks to promote tolerance and peace within a divided Community. He desires to avoid 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.

Paul begins by encouraging Christians to welcome into the Community those weak in the faith: *“Extend a kind welcome to those who are weak in faith. Do not enter into disputes with them” (Rm.14:1)*. They are to be accepted as they are and not with the hidden intention of eventually “straightening them out.” One must leave time for growth in grace and nature. Only time and experience bring about certain changes. To 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 an unenlightened faith. They do not truly understand that their justification and righteousness come to them through the merits of Jesus Christ, rather than through their own good deeds. They feel they must earn their salvation by pleasing God in some way. They are unable to distinguish between being saved and perfecting oneself in salvation.

Some people are weak in faith due to a lack of proper catechesis and 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 always the fundamental cause for weakness in faith, and catechesis will not always remedy the situation.

Paul's first point for the acceptance of the weak and strong alike is the fact that the Lord has accepted both the weak and the strong. Their presence within the Church witnesses to the fact that God has called them. God accepts both, and brings their lives into harmony with His own. Therefore, the weak and the strong should accept each other, and live in Christian harmony. They must not only tolerate each other, but must also make each other feel welcome within the Community.

RASH JUDGMENT

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 and taking their seats upon the tribunal of justice, decreeing here and there that this or that Christian is unrighteous. He implies that such Christians usurp Christ's own role. The Father appointed Jesus Christ as judge of the living and dead. These Christians have assumed power that is not their own.

Jesus teaches us what His verdict will be when He comes as the true judge of the world. He says: *"I intend to judge you on your own evidence" (Lk.19:22), "If you want to avoid judgement, stop passing judgement. 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 the judgment that makes a decision concerning the internal motivation of another. One Christian decrees that another Christian has sinned. 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" (Rm.14:4). "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" (Rm.14:7-9).*

TRIBUNAL OF CONSCIENCE

There is one criterion to guide both the weak and the strong, each must act with a good conscience, *“Each should be certain of his own conscience” (Rm.14:5)*. Conscience (*synidesis*) lies at the heart of the person. The most important thing about behavior is its inner certainty and direction. Conscience is the internal awareness of the difference between moral good and moral evil. This awareness will be the foundation of Jesus’ just judgment.

What a Christian does or does not do should proceed from a desire and effort to give an obedient response to the will of God, as understood by the Christian. In this way the life of each person honors and glorifies God. Paul says: *“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” (Rm.14:6)*. Although men act in different ways, if they act from a good conscience--which we must presume--they are pleasing and honoring God.

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 urged Timothy to *“hold fast to faith and a good conscience. Some men, by rejecting the guidance of conscience, have made a 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--the revelations of truths that have come to us through the Church, the Scriptures, and Jesus Christ--ought to be the light that guides our lives and enlightens our consciences. Paul says, *“Use the faith you have as your rule of life in the sight of God. Happy the man whose conscience does not condemn what he has chosen to do!” (Rm.14:22)*. Paul warns us to live in keeping with our conscience: *“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” (Rm.14:23)*. This is but another way of saying that to act contrary to one’s conscience is sinful.

The Fathers of the Second Vatican Council have written: *“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” (Rel. Freedom 1:3).

THE RULE OF LOVE

Paul encourages Christians: *“Use the faith you have as your rule of life in the sight of God.”* It is that faith that reveals the “law of Christ.” It is that faith that teaches that a Christian life must be motivated and empowered by agape-love. It must produce good works or else it is a dead faith. Paul maintains that if love of Christ and neighbor guides the actions of a person, then *“...you should resolve to put no stumbling block or hindrance in your brother’s way” (Rm.14:13).*

A Christian is his brother’s guardian. Our enlightened conscience may give us freedom of 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 exercise our Christian rights. A person 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. *“Whoever serves Christ in this way pleases God and wins the esteem of men” (Rm.14:18).*

Paul tells us, *“Let us, then, make it our aim to work for peace and to strengthen one another” (Rm.14:19).* God works in the souls of all men. As Christians we must have special concern for His work in the souls of our fellow Christians. The life of the spirit of faith, hope, and charity may be only delicately budding within a soul. If it is to take firm root and grow strong, it must be carefully nourished. Christians strong in faith are encouraged--for the love of Jesus Christ--to have a tender care and concern for those still infants in the faith. Paul warns us: *“Take care not to destroy God’s works”* for the sake of some personal gratification. He goes on to say, *“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” (Rm.15:1-2).* Being patient, Paul implies, is more than tolerating their weakness and putting up with burdensome people. Being patient implies accepting their burdens as our own. Paul’s words, *“pleasing others,”* suggests

more than good example, but rather a personal involvement expressed in positive support and instruction.

We have a personal obligation to help others grow in the spirit. Paul maintains we must do this at the cost of self-denial and forgetfulness of self. *"We must not be selfish."* He encourages us to this manner of life by holding before our eyes the example of Jesus, our Lord. *"Thus, in accord with the Scripture, Christ did not please himself: 'The reproaches they uttered against you fell on me'" (Rm.15:3).* Jesus is the model of the peacemaker. By His life of loving self-sacrifice Jesus sought not selfish fulfillment, but the glory of God, and He achieved the union of Jews and Gentiles as one people 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.

Paul concludes his exhortation with the advice to all Christians to read and study the Holy Scriptures. The Scriptures will be a source of hope for the strong who patiently endure, and they will be a source of encouragement to the weak who are inclined to be anxious: *"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" (Rm.15:4).*

Paul ends with a beautiful prayer for Shalom: *"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).*

PRESERVING PEACE

SCRIPTURE READINGS AND QUESTIONS SCRIPTURE OF THE WEEK (PLEASE MEMORIZE)

“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 DEATH WE ARE THE LORD’S.” (Romans 14:7-8)

FIRST DAY: Read “Introduction” to Summary; Leviticus 26.

- 1. What is the meaning of “peace” in the Old Testament?**
- 2. What do we learn about preserving peace from Leviticus?**
- 3. What is the connection between obedience and peace?**
- 4. What does this tell you about peace in your own life?**

**SECOND DAY: Read Summary: “Obligation to Christian Peace”;
Jn.20:19- 23; 14:27; 17:20-23.**

- 1. What do you understand is Christ’s gift of Peace to His disciples?**
- 2. What do you see to be the connection between the Holy Spirit and Peace?**
- 3. What does Jn.17:20-23 tell you about the nature of Christian Peace?**
- 4. What does this tell you about peace in your own life?**

THIRD DAY: Read Summary: “Church Membership”; Rm.14:1-9.

- 1. What do you see to be a major cause of disturbance within the Christian Community?**

2. What do you see to be some of the things that divide Church membership today?
3. How would you define “weak in faith” and “strong in faith?”
4. What does Rm. 14:7-8 teach you?

FOURTH DAY: Read Summary: “Rash Judgment”; Rm.14:10-16.

1. What do you understand as the sin of rash judgment?
2. What does Paul tell us about this bad habit?
3. How do you see this habit as destructive of peace?
4. How would you handle a Christian who constantly judges others?

FIFTH DAY: Read Summary: “Tribunal of Conscience”; Rm.14:17-23.

1. What do you understand by Rm.14:17?
2. What is the ultimate criterion by which all men will be judged?
3. What do you understand by Rm.14:23?
4. How does a person arrive at an enlightened conscience?

SIXTH DAY: Read Summary: “The Rule of Love”; Rm.15:1-13.

1. What should motivate the relationship between Christians?
2. How can we personally work for peace in the Community?
3. What should be avoided as being destructive to peace?
4. How is Jesus the model Peacemaker?

CHAPTER 12

OBEDIENCE TO FAITH

INTRODUCTION

The Letter to the Romans draws to a close. Paul had delivered his gospel message. Reflecting back on what had been said, he realized he had spoken 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 a teacher par excellence of that gospel.

PAUL'S MISSION

Paul sees the work assigned to him by Jesus as having a two-fold dimension. First, 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'"*(Rm.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.

Paul 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)"* (Rm.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.

Paul recognized his vocation called him to more than evangelizing people; he must also be a teacher. It 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.

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?

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.

One thing the letters of Paul reveal about him 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 20:26,31)*. 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*" (Rm.15:14-15a).

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*" (Rm.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. He 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 he offers 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 PLANS

Now Paul looks westward towards Spain. He 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*" Rm.15:24).

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 Paul. He explains 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 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 (Rm.15:25-29).

Paul makes a plea for prayer. He realistically views the dangers ahead. He knows the power of prayer in the struggle against evil and he humbly seeks their prayers: *"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" (Rm.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. Paul would undergo many dangers and tribulations and ultimately he would arrive in Rome, but in chains. It pays at times to be very specific in one's prayer requests.

THE LAST CHAPTER

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 his 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 writes a later letter in prison to Timothy at Ephesus, Prisca and Aquila are still there.

WOMEN IN THE EARLY CHURCH

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*” (Rm.16:1-2). Two important words are used in the description of Phoebe: *diakonos* and *prostatis*. It is certain that the corresponding masculine nouns are official titles. The first signified the office of deacon in the Church. The second, *prostatis* (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.

Paul sends personal greetings to no less than twenty-six people and to two households. About eight of these people were 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*” (Rm.16:3-4). Apparently Paul could not praise this couple 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 the 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 is 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 his 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*” (Rm.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. Paul tells the Church there: *“Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ send you greetings”* (Rm.16:16).

WARNING AGAINST FALSE TEACHERS

Among his greetings Paul inserts a warning about an ever present problem in the Christian Community. He warns them 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”*(Rm.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)”* (Rm.16:18). *“...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.3:13-14). Paul’s advice still remains applicable: *“Avoid their company”* (See also 2Tim.3:6-8).

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”* (Rm.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: *“Now to him who is able to strengthen you in the gospel which I proclaim when I preach Jesus Christ, 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” (Rm.16:25-27).*

OBEDIENCE TO FAITH

SCRIPTURE READINGS AND QUESTIONS SCRIPTURE OF THE WEEK (PLEASE MEMORIZE)

**“BROTHERS, I BEG YOU TO BE ON THE WATCH AGAINST THOSE WHO CREATE DISSENSION AND SCANDAL, CONTRARY TO THE TEACHING YOU HAVE RECEIVED. AVOID THEIR COMPANY”
(Romans 16:17)**

FIRST DAY: Review Chapters 1 through 3:20.

1. Why does Paul teach God’s wrath is being revealed from heaven against certain people?
2. How would you describe the Wrath of God?
3. Why does Paul hold that all mankind is subject to the Wrath of God?
4. How would this apply to our own lives?

SECOND DAY: Review Chapters 3:21 through 5:2

1. What do you understand by redemption?
2. What do you understand by expiation?
3. What would you describe as a “saving faith”?
4. What do you understand by salvation being a process?

THIRD DAY: Review Chapters 6 through 8:39.

1. What is your understanding of a “man of the flesh”?
2. What is meant by “living in the spirit”?
3. What does Romans 6:13 teach you?

4. What do you understand by Romans 8:13?

FOURTH DAY: Review Chapters 9 through 11:36.

- 1. What does Paul hold to be the divine cause for Israel's rejection of the Messiah?**
- 2. Why did Israel herself reject the Messiah?**
- 3. What will be the final destiny of Israel?**
- 4. To what does Paul attribute this destiny?**

FIFTH DAY: Review Chapters 12 through 15:13.

- 1. What do you understand by Romans 12:1-2?**
- 2. How would you explain agape-love?**
- 3. What does Romans 13:8 teach you?**
- 4. What do you understand by Romans 14:22?**

SIXTH DAY: Read Summary; Romans 15:14-16:24.

- 1. How did Paul fulfill his mission?**
- 2. What do you understand by obedience to faith?**
- 3. What picture of the early Church has Romans left with you?**
- 4. What do you feel to be the most important lesson you have learned in the study of Romans?**

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