



# PT Butler

## Bible Study Notebooks

### Study of ROMANS

prepared by P. T. Butler Th.D

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These Bible study notes are provided for your use in the preparation of teaching the holy scriptures. They were meticulously prepared over many years to serve the Kingdom of God and aid in the growth of Christians of any age. Please use them in combination with prayer and diligence to promote the clear and honest declaration of God's word.

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## TEACHER'S NOTES

prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

### ROMANS

#### Introduction

Paul was at Corinth in A.D. 55, (during the reign of Nero) in the home of a wealthy Corinthian Christian called Gaius (16:23). Paul had been a Christian himself about 22 years. He employed as an amanuensis (“secretary” or “scribe”) a fellow-Christian, named Tertius (16:22) to actually “pen” this epistle. Nero was emperor of Rome, Felix and Festus were procurators of Judea when Paul wrote the letter to the Roman Christians. The letter was taken to Rome by a wealthy widow, named Phoebe (living in Cenchreae—a suburb of Corinth), who went there on some personal business (16:1-2). Rome was about 600 miles from Corinth, “as the crow flies” but probably 700 miles overland and overseas. There was no postal service in the ancient Roman empire except for official business. Personal letters had to be carried by friends or chance travelers. Paul was in Corinth during the three months just preceding his visit to Jerusalem (Acts 20:2-3) when he wrote to the “church(es)” in Rome. We say “churches” (plural) to picture the situation in a 21st century frame of reference. There was only one Christian church in Rome composed of all the Christians in the city of Rome, but they met in various homes of the members (see Rom. 16:5). So far as we know, archaeologically (i.e., scientifically and historically), there were no Christian church “buildings” per se until after A.D. 200. Paul had planned to deliver the offerings made by the churches in Macedonia and Achaia to the poor Christians in Jerusalem and then to engage in missionary work in Spain (Spanian in the Greek text—Rom. 15:25-28) visiting the Roman Christians on his way. He hoped to gain as much for his own faith in visiting the Roman Christians as he would impart to them (Rom. 1:11-13), and he hoped they would support his intention to evangelize in Spain (15:24). The general theme Paul treats in this epistle is “What is the salvation God has revealed in Jesus Christ and how should it influence the way we live and understand our relationship with God?” So, the epistle to the Romans is emphatic that doctrine matters first because it is the impetus or motivation for living the Christian life. As Paul states it in Rom. 12:1-2, “I appeal to you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice...which is your reasonable (Greek, logiken, “logical”) service (Greek, latreian, “hired servant”). In other words, Paul “appealed” to the Roman Christians to use logic to conclude on the basis of (i.e., “therefore”) of what he had written in the epistle from chapter 1 through chapter 11 about the mercies of God that they should allow that doctrine to transform their minds and make them into holy servants of God so they might “prove” what the acceptable will of God was. **YOU SEE, CHRISTIANITY IS FUNDAMENTALLY--MENTAL! TRANSFORMATION AND SERVICE TO GOD RESULTS FROM PROVING TO THE MIND THAT THE WILL (DOCTRINE) OF GOD IS GOOD, ACCEPTABLE AND PERFECT!**

Paul had not gone to the city of Rome to do any Christian missionary work prior to his arrest and trial there. Visitors from Rome, in Jerusalem for the Passover were converted

at Pentecost (Acts 2:10), and evidently went back to the capital, carrying the seed of the Gospel, and established these new Christian “house-churches” in Rome. It is clear from Rom. 16:1-27 that many of Paul’s converts in other places had migrated to the city of Rome were very active members of the “house-churches” in that cosmopolitan capital of the ancient Roman empire (about 1 million population including its suburban areas)! More than half of that 1 million were slaves! From his personal experiences with many other churches throughout the “provinces” of the Roman empire Paul knew the Roman Christians needed to keep some things firmly in mind if they were to realize the fullest benefits of their salvation: (a) Who needs to be saved?—all human beings, Jews and Gentiles ; (b) What can a person do to be saved?—hear, believe, repent and be united to Christ in immersion (i.e., baptism); (c) What is the source of salvation?—the vicarious redemptive work of Jesus Christ in atonement for our sins and resurrected for our justification; (d) What is the practical result of salvation in Christian’s lives?—a continuing struggle against sin (even for an apostle, see Rom. ch. 7), trusting wholly in God to provide the “Spirit of life” in Christ Jesus making us more than conquerors over every obstacle to salvation; (e) Has God gone back on his promises to the Jews?—chapter 9-10-11 teaches a resounding, NO!—God’s promises to the Jews are all fulfilled in Christ’s redemptive work and in his “kingdom” (the church); (f) How then shall Christians live out their salvation?—by being “living sacrifices” to the glory of Christ in every facet of daily living—even in the area of civic behavior.

The New International Version, Disciples Study Bible (not “Disciples of Christ”), Holman Bible Publishers, 1988, outlines the book of Romans thus: I. Introduction: Qualifications & Reason for Writing, 1:1-15; II. Theme: The Power for Salvation and the Righteousness of God Are Revealed, 1:16-17; III. All People Need Salvation from the Power of Sin, 1:18—3:20; IV. God Provides Righteousness through Jesus Christ on the Basis of Faith, 3:21—4:25; V. Salvation in Christ Results in Victorious New Life, 5:1—8:39; VI. God is Faithful in All His Promises, 9:1—11:36; VII. The Saving Mercy of God in Christ Summons Christians to Obedience, 12:1—15:13; VIII. Conclusion, 15:14—16:27.

Most Bible scholars consider this epistle to the Romans, Paul’s masterpiece. John Chrysostom (means “golden-mouthed”) (A.D. 345-407), a matchless orator and preacher, born a Syrian at Antioch, patriarch of Constantinople (modern Istanbul, Turkey) preached to great multitudes in the church of St. Sophia, had this epistle read to him once a week. Samuel Taylor Coleridge (A.D. 1772-1834), English poet, considered it, “the most profound work ever written.” John Calvin (A.D. 1509-1564), Switzerland, theologian and one of the leaders of the Protestant Reformation in Western Europe said, “it opened the door to all the treasures in the Scriptures.” Martin Luther (A.D. 1483-1546), Germany, another leader of the great Protestant Reformation pronounced it “the chief book of the New Testament and the purest Gospel.” Philip Melancthon (A.D. 1497-1560), Germany, theologian, and Reformer with Luther, copied it in his own handwriting twice just in order to become more thoroughly acquainted with it. One of the most esteemed of the “Restoration Fathers,” J. W. McGarvey (1829-1911), upon graduation from Alexander Campbell’s Bethany College (WV) delivered his senior oration in Greek. He became professor and later, president, of the College of The Bible, Lexington, KY, where he made the epistle to the Romans, along with the epistle to the

Hebrews, required courses for graduation at that college. That curricular-concept was handed down to R. C. Foster, president of Cincinnati Bible Seminary, who in turn handed it down to Seth Wilson, Dean of Ozark Bible College. It is so to this day! Moses E. Lard, another of Alexander Campbell's stellar students, states in his masterful Commentary on Paul's Letter to Romans, "If we except...Jesus of Nazareth, it is not extravagant to say that the world is today more indebted to him (Paul) than to any other man that ever lived in it." Homer Halley says in his, Halley's Bible Handbook, the "Epistle to the Romans is Paul's completest explanation of his understanding of the Gospel." If one had only the Gospel of Luke and the Epistle to the Romans, and believed and obeyed them, he would have enough to know how God accomplished his salvation, when, where, why, what it means and what man must do to appropriate it.

This epistle written nearly 2000 years ago, was extremely relevant to Christians living in the philosophically heathen, and morally decadent city of ancient Rome of the 1st century (see the book of Revelation for a symbolic picture of ancient Rome). Homer Halley says the main purpose of this epistle was "the common Jewish belief in the finality of Mosaic Law as the expression of the will of God, and of universal obligation, and Jewish insistence that Gentiles who would be Christians must be circumcized and keep the Law of Moses. Thus the question whether a Gentile could be a Christian without becoming a Jewish proselyte was one of the great problems of the 1st century. Christianity started as a Jewish religion, and certain powerful Jewish leaders were determined it should remain so." But it is also extremely relevant to Christians living in the 21st century: (a) the righteousness of God, understood as God's love in action setting things right, summons us as Christians to realize that God's intention in declaring us righteous is that we become righteous; (b) the salvation that the power of God brought, through the redemptive work of Christ, to the ancient Romans is also operative in the world today providing Christians with a foundation of assurance, confidence and hope in a world dominated by insecurity and hopelessness; (c) the doctrine of the Holy Spirit in Romans summons Christians to a life centered in a declaration of war on sin in their lives and an unending struggle to achieve righteousness in terms of doing what God wants done—to be a Christian is not to achieve a certain level of morality coupled to faithful attendance at church services, but to go far beyond this; to be a Christian is to be in the struggle with the sin in one's life. The most crippling and common sin among many Christians is that they are giving their fiercest energies, prime time, and most creative thought to enterprises that they honestly know are not life's most crucial priorities. The "Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" calls us to live, to develop our life-styles, and to set our minds on what God desires to have us do in our world (Rom. 8:5-11). The Spirit leads us, through His word, to be concerned about this with commitment so that we pray "Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6:10) and then set ourselves to the task of trying to do it.

## TEACHER'S NOTES

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### ROMANS 1:1-32

Paul considered “the obedience of faith” his mission because that was the mission to which he was “called.” His mission was “to bring about” the obedience of faith...among all the ethnic groups of mankind (i.e., Jews & Gentiles). In the Greek text (1:5) Paul says, *elaboumen charin kai apostolen eis hupakoen*, literally, “We received grace and apostleship for obedience.” He says the very same thing again at the very close of this letter to Rome —“The gospel...now disclosed...to all nations...to bring about the obedience of faith” (Rom. 16:25-26). Obedience cannot be separated from faith. Obedience IS faith! A professed faith without obedience is a sham. Obedience is the fundamental virtue of the believer in God (see 1 Sam. 15:22; Jer. 11:7; Rom. 5:19; Heb. 5:9; John 14:15,23; 2 Cor. 1:5; 1 Pet. 1:22; Gal. 5:7; Rom. 2:8; 1 Pet. 4:17; 2 Thess. 1:8; John 3:36; Lk. 6:46; Matt. 21:28-32). The only way to love God is to keep his commandments (1 Jn. 5:3); that’s how Jesus loved God (Jn. 15:10)! Remember—all the statements in 1 John about “keeping his commandments”! The Bible is not afraid of the word “obey.” Acts 5:29,32; Eph. 6:1; Col. 3:20,22; Titus 3:1; Heb. 13:17; 1 Pet. 3:1. HOW MANY TIMES DO YOU SUPPOSE THE HEBREW WORD *shema* (“HEAR”) IS USED IN THE OLD TESTAMENT?—about 700 times—did you know the word *shema* is synonymous with “OBEY”! The word *shema* is interchangeable between “hear” and “obey.” The believing Israelite knew that if Moses said, “Hear, O Israel,” he meant, “Obey, O Israel!” Christians and the church must not be afraid of the word “obey”! It is a strong and repeated part of God’s vocabulary—the patriarch’s vocabulary, the prophet’s vocabulary, Jesus’ vocabulary, and the apostles vocabulary—and it must be a significant part of a Christian’s mentality and vocabulary. Christians should never be hesitant to think and speak obedience. OBEEDIENCE IS ESSENTIAL TO THE CHRISTIAN LIFE AND HOPE. “Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.” Heaven will be a place where obedience is the rule, not the exception! Christians should not be afraid of the word doctrine because doctrine is commandments!

Paul thought of himself “under obligation” because he thought of himself as the “bond slave” of Christ. Jesus had loved Paul and had paid the infinite price to redeem Paul from slavery to sin, therefore, Paul knew that he no longer belonged to himself, but entirely to Jesus who had sought him and bought him! Jesus purchased Paul (and you and me) when he “purchased the church with his own blood” (Acts 20:28). Just as Hosea went to the “slave market” and bought his wife back (Hosea 3)—just like God redeemed Israel from Egypt and from exile—Christ redeemed us from our slavery in sin to enter “bond-service” to him (Rom. 6:1-23). We do “owe” God! We are “beholden” to Christ! And it is a debt unpayable so we will always be obligated to God and his Son—we will always “owe” him (at the very least) our “bond-service.” If we are obligated to him, we are obligated to please him, serve him, love him and, obey him. Christ has absolute right to tell us what constitutes his pleasure, what constitutes serving and loving him! Paul wrote, “The love of Christ constrains (compels) us” (2 Cor. 5:14). Paul wrote, “I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your



bodies as a living sacrifice...which is your reasonable service..." (Rom. 12:1-2). Isaiah felt the obligation of God as a result of his cleansing (Isa. 6:1-12). AND IF WE ARE OBLIGATED TO CHRIST IN "BOND-SERVICE" WE ARE OBLIGATED TO ALL HUMAN BEINGS FOR WHOM CHRIST DIED—ONE CANNOT LOVE GOD WITHOUT LOVING HIS FELLOW MAN (1 Jn. 4:19-21). Let the church be more attuned to this. The church should never apologize for making members feel "obligated" to be missionaries, preachers, Sunday School teachers, or workers of good deeds toward their "neighbors." The Son, Jesus Christ, came to earth under "obligation" to the will of the Father (see Heb. 10:1-10).

The power of the gospel is in the promise of God because "in it (the written gospel) the righteousness of God is revealed from faith (Gr. ek pisteos) unto faith (Gr. eis pistin); as it is written, he who through faith is righteous shall live" (1:16-17). In the gospel is revealed (told us by God) the righteousness (justice) of God. That is, first God is absolutely true to his word. He absolutely keeps his word. What God promises never fails to come to pass. God is absolutely faithful. He may be absolutely trusted. That is the dynamic ("power") of the gospel of Christ (see Rom. 3:21-26 for the capsulated power of the gospel). The power is in that which God has demonstrated, unequivocally and unassailably—HIS FAITHFULNESS AND HIS MERCY. So, in the gospel man has not only the offer of mercy, he has the motive (power) that should draw him to accept the offer (see 2 Cor. 5:14-21). The experience of the prophet Habakkuk, from which Rom. 1:17 is quoted, teaches us what Paul means here. It was God's faithfulness that drew Habakkuk to steadfastness in the promises of God in spite of the circumstances surrounding him (read Habakkuk's book). Later in Rom. 12:1-2, Paul beseeches these people "by the mercies of God...to be transformed by the renewing of their minds" and told them that was the logical response to God's mercy. Second, God's faithfulness, when acknowledged, leads man to exercise his human capacity to believe ("have faith") in Christ. And that faith leads to salvation! "Salvation" is best defined as "wholeness" or "usefulness." The Greek word is *soterian*. Jesus used it when he said, "Go thy way, thy faith hath saved thee...or made thee whole." Man without faith in God is not a whole man—never can be! A human being without faith in God is useless (see Lk. 15). A person without faith in Christ is "dead"—he is not the "whole" person God intended!

The "righteousness (i.e., justice) of God" is the fact that God kept his word and punished sin in Jesus Christ and at the same time provided mercy (i.e., justified) for all sinners by accepting Christ's death in atonement for their sins (see Rom. 3:21-26). "Righteousness" simply means "rightness, correctness, justness, truthfulness." God is righteous (just, true, right). God is no liar. He is true to truth. He is true to himself and everyone else. He never misrepresents anything. He shows mercy to those who will receive it, but he extends wrath to those who spurn mercy. That is righteousness. That is justice. That is the way man is to behave in this world. God is absolutely "fair" or "equitable" (see Gen. 18:25). GOD WILL ALWAYS DO WHAT IS RIGHT—NEVER WHAT IS WRONG!

The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness in "the things that have been made." In other words, God's wrath is revealed in: (a) creation (see Rom. 8:18-25—in its "futility" and "decay" groaning under the law of entropy); (b) in history (see 2 Pet. 3:5ff

—in the geological record of the Noahaic “Flood”); (c) and in the human conscience (see Rom. 2:14-16—in “moral imperative and guilt”); (d) but most significantly and undeniably for reasonable people, in God’s propositional revelation, the written word, the Bible! The “futility” of nature—its dissolution (the death of the human body, for example) testifies of a Creator’s wrath. The second law of thermodynamics—that the universe is “running down”—testifies of a Creator’s wrath. Guilt (and every human being has some) testifies of a Creator’s wrath. History, the fossil record verifying Noah’s flood—the Jews—the fall of evil empires—all testify of the wrath of Almighty God. Even pagan religions, every one of which attempts to appease some “god,” testify of man’s innate concept of divine wrath.

Paul says that the “everlasting power” and “divine nature” of God may be plainly seen by all human beings! And these attributes of God may be seen in “the things that have been made.” In other words, humans may reason from effect to cause. From the glory of the natural order, man may reasonably conclude there is an even more glorious Being who made it as it is! That Glorious Being, as nature proves, has everlasting power, and is of divine nature(to be worshiped). Humans can know from “nature” (creation) that this Glorious (i.e., “out-Ranking-everyone”), Divine, and Omnipotent Being is to be worshiped—and, vice-versa, that “nature” itself is not to be worshiped. The histories of all races testify to this. Even the Greeks had an altar “to an unknown god” (Acts 17:23ff). Paul told the Greek philosophers at Athens that with their “altar to an unknown god” they were in fact seeking Jehovah-God. Some of the literature of nearly every society acknowledges the existence of this Glorious, Divine, Powerful, Creator.

God has shown his deity, sovereignty and eternity in “nature” (i.e., creation). Paul said, “And he did not leave himself without witness” (Acts 14:17). Paul said that man himself is evidence that men must not think of their Creator (the Deity) as something of gold, silver, or stone, a representation by the art and imagination of man (Acts 17:29). The cosmological evidence (from effect of “order” to an Omnipotent “Orderer”), the teleological evidence (the fitness of everything in the universe—design), the moral evidence, all proves the existence of an everlasting Deity. It shows there is Someone over and above creation and that HE is the Originator. It is indubitably logical!

Even those who do not have the Bible are without excuse before God for their sin. Paul insists in this passage (and his teaching is confirmed by other Bible passages, e.g., Psa. 19) that human beings cannot plead ignorance of God. They cannot even plead ignorance that they have sinned. For everywhere one looks in the world there is testimony that suffering follows sin. Break the laws of agriculture and the harvest fails. Break the laws of architecture (construction) and the building collapses. Break the laws of human health and the body suffers. When man looks at the world he sees how it is constructed and how it is governed. From this he sees what God is like! The sinner is left without excuse! The Creator cannot be blamed! He has made all this sufficiently clear. The Greek words of Rom. 1:20 are *kathoratai* “perceived, discerned clearly,” and *nooumena* “mentally understood.” All this is known with the mind—not with the feelings! God put his testimony in nature to be known and understood with the mind—which in turn produces the feeling (guilt). What God

has revealed to man is to be known—with the mind! There's no getting off the hook by saying, "Well, that is just the way some people feel about nature." If nature is to be known with the mind, then all capable minds are obligated to know and acknowledge what it says! Denying what it says is inexcusable! Peter has it right when he writes, "They deliberately ignore this fact..." (2 Pet. 3:5). Paul says it right when he says, "They exchanged the truth for a lie..." (Rom. 1:25), or "They refused to love the truth...but had pleasure in unrighteousness..." (2 Thess. 2:10-12). UNBELIEF IS ESSENTIALLY AN IMMORAL CHOICE—THERE IS NO LACK OF EVIDENCE!

God gives people "up" to do what they wish and believe what they wish because: (a) God freely created the world, not because he had to, but because he wanted to; (b) God created creatures like himself who could freely love him—but such creatures could also hate him; (c) God desires all men to love him, but will not force any against their will to love him—forced love is not love—it is rape; (d) God will persuade as many to love him as he can (2 Pet. 3:9) and will grant separation from him forever to those who despise him (Hell) for that is their choice; (e) God's love is magnified when we return his love (since he first loved us) as well as when we do not—it shows how great he is that he will love even those who hate him. Those not saved will be given their own freely-chosen destiny—this much of their freedom will be respected. And throughout all, God will be glorified in that his sovereign will has prevailed, his love is magnified whether it is accepted or rejected. He defeats evil by forgiving sin (through the cross of Christ) and by separating good from evil forever (through the final judgment) and he produces the best world achievable (where the most men possible are saved and secured from evil forever). God is a "soul-maker," not a soul-decider. He is not a cosmic behavioral manipulator who is programming people into heaven against their will. God operates with men only with their "informed consent." In "giving up" some to suffer the consequences of their sin in this world, he may salvage some in repentance for Paradise in the next world!

Homosexuality and lesbianism (Rom. 1:26-27) are sins! Impenitent homosexual behavior is unequivocally and undeniably condemned in scores of passages in both the Old Testament and the New Testament (e.g. Gen. 13:13; 19:5-11; 1 Kings 14:24; 15:12; 22:46; 2 Kings 23:7; Job 36:14; Hosea 4:14; Lev. 18:6,18,22; 20:11-14; Deut. 23:17,18; Rom. 1:26-27; 1 Tim. 1:8-11; 1 Cor. 6:9-11; 2 Pet. 2:6; Jude 7). Homosexuality is not a disease! Homosexual behavior is learned and chosen—not inherited—not genetically mutated! It is a moral aberration. It is a crime against "nature" (God). It is contrary to the law of the Divine Lawmaker. That is what the context of Rom. 1:18-32 is all about—CHOSEN SIN! Man is responsible to know from creation the wrath of God against disobedience to God's natural laws! It bears repeating—homosexual behavior is not irresistibly determined by genetic inheritance or mutation. The Divine Lawgiver would not make genes behave that way and then hold persons morally guilty for what is irresistible! Homosexual behavior is not the irresistible behavior resulting from social deprivation or conditioning. Abused children, traumatized as they are, are not forced to become rapists or homosexuals or murderers in their adulthood. Homosexuals can choose otherwise! They can behave differently! Their sin can be overcome just like any other sin. Some have! (See 1 Cor. 6:9-11). Adultery,



drunkenness, greed, etc., can all be overcome—and so can homosexual behavior! The church has a grave responsibility here. It must deal with impenitent homosexual behavior the same way Paul instructed the church at Corinth to deal with impenitent adultery (1 Cor. 5:1-3). And, the church must deal with penitent homosexuals the same way Paul instructed the church to deal with penitent adulterers (2 Cor. 2:5-11)—love and forgiveness. The answer to homosexual behavior is the gospel! It is the power to make people whole. It is the power to restore people to the personage God intends them to be. It is the power to transform, for God will show mercy to a repenting homosexual just as he does to repenting liars!

In Ephesians 4:19 Paul writes of men who have abandoned themselves to lasciviousness. Men give themselves up! Then God gives them up to what they have chosen! And when men “take pleasure in unrighteousness” 2 Thess. 2:12, and when they pay no attention to the “due penalty” they are receiving in their own persons (Rom. 1:27) for their errors, they literally produce the kind of society Paul describes in Rom. 1:28-32. Look at what such a society is:

|                             |   |
|-----------------------------|---|
| All manner of wickedness    | Evil  |
| Covetous                    | Malicious                                     |
| Envious                     | Murderous                                     |
| Strife-filled               | Deceitful                                     |
| Malignant                   | Gossipy                                       |
| Slandorous                  | Hateful toward God                            |
| Insolent                    | Boastful                                      |
| Inventing evil              | Disobedient to parents                        |
| Foolish                     | Faithless                                     |
| Heartless                   | Ruthless                                      |
| Knowing they deserve to die | Giving consent to everyone who practices such |

And this is a society that refused to acknowledge what it could have known about God from merely believing the testimony of nature! This is a society that did not honor God or give thanks to him but claimed to be wise. Society can be preserved from such utter baseness only if it will acknowledge the eternal power and deity of God from creation. But when it refuses to do so, it becomes this cruel, unjust, malicious, ruthless, untrustworthy, and heartless conglomeration of moral anarchy!

## TEACHER'S NOTES

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### ROMANS 2:1-29

The “O! Man!” of Rom. 2:1 is the Jew. Paul has just finished consigning the whole, impenitent Gentile world to judgment because they sinned against the truth they had in creation. The Jews had no trouble agreeing with Paul on that! They knew the Gentiles were going to receive God’s condemnation—just read the Talmud! But the Jews also knew that God was not going to condemn any Jew—also in the Talmud! Paul is forcing the Jew to look at his own standing before Almighty God. If Gentiles are judged according to the light they know and reject, the Jew will be judged according to the light he knows and rejects! Paul reminded the Jews of four things: (a) you cannot treat the kindness of God with contempt and escape his judgment; (b) God’s kindness (making the Jews the “chosen people”) is not an invitation to sin, but an incentive to repent; (c) there is no favoritism with God; (d) there can be no such thing as a faith which does not issue in good works. All this Paul teaches in Rom. 2:1-11. Paul accused the Jews of having “hard and impenitent hearts”! That would not have been easy for Paul to do—these were his kinfolk, his countrymen—some of them, no doubt, relatives and personal acquaintances. And why would Paul be so blunt, so tactless, so straightforward with his own people? To save their souls!

People who “presume” (the Greek word is *kataphroneis*, literally, “down-think, despise, think contemptuously of”) upon the “kindness” of God have to be talked to bluntly! The prophets of the OT faced the same kind of Jew Paul faced! And they talked bluntly! Jesus did, also (Matt. 23, Jn. 8, etc.). God had not withdrawn from the Jews (when Paul was writing) like he had from the Gentile nations—but God’s withdrawal from the Jews was only 10-15 years away from Paul’s writing here (i.e., A.D. 66-70 and the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans—see 1 Thess. 2:14-16; Heb. 8:13; 12:25-29, etc.). The Jews had gone through some difficult times, some chastening (from 600 B.C. to Paul’s day they had been put in subservience under successive foreign rulers except for about 100 years of relative sovereignty 165 B.C. to 65 B.C. under the Hasmoneans). But they had been preserved (see Daniel, Esther, Ezra, etc.) and gloriously blessed even in their exiles. Evidently many Jews thought that since God had not completely withdrawn from them, he would never do so. The fact that God’s withdrawal does not immediately follow sin is not a proof of the powerlessness of God—it is rather, proof of the patience and longsuffering of God. Almost everyone has a vague and undefined hope of impunity—a kind of feeling that “God will never withdraw from me.” Not even the church must get this feeling! Jesus made it very clear in the letters to the 7 churches of Asia Minor (Rev. chs. 2-3) that Christ’s withdrawal could come, and would come, upon impenitent members of Christian congregations! God is not “an easy touch” or a “push-over.” We had best not presume upon his goodness believing that he is a “push-over.”

The “gentleness, kindness, usefulness” of God is designed to lead men to repentance. Paul even preached that to the Gentiles (Acts 14:15-18; 17:22-31). God had

been longsuffering with the Jews (see Rom. 3:25; 9:22; Lk. 13:7-9, etc.). The Lord is not “slack” concerning his promises, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering toward us not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance (2 Pet. 3:9). If God had given the world of mankind what it deserved, he would have destroyed it all, completely, long ago! But he “forbore” all that sin and rebellion, preparing a great program of redemption. This all came to completion in Jesus Christ. It was the mercy of God at the cross that was intended to “draw” men to God (Jn. 12:32; 2 Cor. 5:14-21). God will not drive or force anyone to come to him in humble penitence—it must be by persuasion! He wants no kingdom in rebellion. Those who do not want to do his will may have a place all their own where they may have their rebellion—along with Satan—forever! If God cannot “draw” men to him by his “gentleness and kindness” God does not want them! Paul said, “I beseech, you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God...” (Rom. 12:1-2). No wonder Paul preached Christ and him crucified, and nothing else!

God shows no partiality (Greek *prosopolepsia*, from two Greek words meaning literally, “to receive the face of a person”). God does not look on the “outward” appearance but on the inner, real, person (1 Sam. 16:7). God is the same toward everyone—he makes his rain to fall on the just and the unjust alike—he makes his gospel available to all—not just a few. He also judges those who disobey, no matter who they are! Racial, social, economic, educational, or political “pecking orders” mean nothing to God. God flatters no one, fawns before no one, makes excuses for no one, slights no one, and forgets no one—not even a sparrow that falls! The kingdom-citizen is to be like God! Christians are to show no partiality (see Matt. 5:43-48; 1 Tim. 5:21; James 2:9; Prov. 24:23; Job 13:10; Deut. 16:19-20; Malachi 2:9; Deut. 1:17; Lev. 19:15). Partiality produces: (a) discord, Matt. 20:24; Acts 6:1ff; 1 Cor. chs. 11-14; (b) denigration of God, Jer. 18:13ff; Rom. 2:24; Gal. 2:11ff; (c) defiles the conscience, and; (d) destroys the soul. When Jesus said, “You, therefore, must be perfect as your heavenly father is perfect...” (Matt. 5:48) he was talking about this very thing of partiality. To be partial is to be imperfect! Perfect, in the Matthew 5:48 context, means to be impartial in one’s love toward others. We cannot pick and choose whom we shall love—we must love everyone. And we must love them without “being swayed or influenced by their “face” or position.” That is the way God is!

Yes! God will hold men guilty for their sins, whether they have ever seen a Bible or not, whether they have ever heard the name of Jesus Christ or not, whether they have ever believed in God or not—THEY ARE WITHOUT EXCUSE! Because what can be known about God’s wrath on sin, his eternal power and his deity, has been plainly made known to them in creation! Furthermore, when those (Gentiles) who have not the law (i.e., a written, propositional revelation from God like the law of Moses), do “naturally” (i.e., innately, inherently, constitutionally) what the law of God requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. NO HUMAN BEING COULD EVER MAKE HIS OWN LAW AND KEEP IT! That is proven by the multitude of “laws” devised by human philosophers, politicians, moralists, journalists, etc., etc., ad infinitum. When people act morally (and all people do) in the absence of the revealed word of God, they show that they have a “law” in themselves (inherent), for they demonstrate the effect of a law (guilt) operating in their own

hearts, souls and minds. Their consciences endorse the existence of a moral law, for there is “something” which condemns or excuses their actions. Every human being (able to communicate) shows he has a conscience. Every human being knows that he/she ought to do some things, and ought not to do other things whether he acts according to what he knows or not. And if our hearts condemn us, we know there is A Greater than our hearts (God) (1 Jn. 3:19-21). A man will be judged by what he had the opportunity to know. If he knew the law of Moses he will be judged as one who knew the law of Moses. If he did not know the law of Moses, he will be judged as one who did not know the law of Moses, but knew the law of the conscience. God is fair! He will judge people by their fidelity to the highest that was possible for them to know! BUT ALL HAVE SINNED AGAINST HIM—only those who have appropriated the grace that is through Jesus Christ will be excused from condemnation (Rom. 7 & 8).

Every human being (Gentile and Jew) has sinned against and has not been faithful to his highest knowledge! And how is every human being to find salvation? By “calling upon the name of the Lord” (Rom. 10:1-21). And how shall they call upon him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe if they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher (missionaries)? The requirements of the “law” written on the human conscience becomes: (a) instinctive knowledge that there is a right and there is wrong—i.e., sin; (b) instinctive knowledge there is Someone Higher than human beings to whom humans are responsible for such sin; (c) instinctive knowledge of guilt, culpability—every human has it—every human talks about, jokes about, and privately dreads to think about it; (d) instinctive knowledge that “Someone” Higher than self needs to be appeased, sacrificed to, and placated. The most “primitive” tribesmen have rituals about appeasing “God” or “the gods.” People know instinctively that humans must pay for “breaking divine laws.” Sometimes humans even try to make that payment themselves—in various ways such as penance, self-flagellation, philanthropy, suicide, even human mortal sacrifice. The trouble is that all humans refuse to live up to the standards of right and wrong which they know or “make-up” for themselves. All humans, at one time or another in their lives exchange whatever truth they have of God for a lie, and refuse to have God in their knowledge—even those who have God’s direct, propositional, written revelation! So all humans need mercy—need grace—need to know how the Loving God has provided for them to repent and return to covenant with him! And they will not know without missionaries—preachers—the word of God spoken and written in their native tongue. SO WHAT ARE WE DOING ABOUT THIS?

William Barclay says, “It is a simple fact of history that the Jews were, and often still are, the best hated and the most unpopular people in the world.” The Gentiles regarded Judaism as a “barbarous superstition.” It was said the Jews had originally been a company of lepers who had been sent by the king of Egypt to work in the sand quarries and that Moses had rallied this band of leprous slaves and led them through the desert to Palestine. It was said that they abstained from swine’s flesh because the pig is specially liable to a skin disease called the itch, and it was that skin disease that the Jews had suffered from in Egypt. Certain of the Jewish customs were mocked at by the Gentiles. Plutarch (A.D. 46-120) Greek historian and philosopher, said that the reason for Jewish abstinence from pork was

that the Jews worshiped the pig as a God. Juvenal (A. D. 60-140) Roman poet and satirist, said cynically, that swine's flesh was more valuable to the Jew than the flesh of a man. The Jewish custom of observing the Sabbath was regarded as pure laziness and indolence. There were privileges the Jews of the 1st century A.D. were allowed of which the Gentiles were jealous: (a) they were allowed to transmit their temple tax every year to their holy city; (b) they were allowed, to some extent, to have their own courts; (c) they did not have to serve in Roman imperial armies; (d) Rome respected the Jewish observance of the Sabbath—and if there were “doles” they missed because of the Sabbath, they could pick them up the next day. But the two most important Gentile accusations against the Jews were: (a) atheism (they refused to have any images and refused to worship other religions, including the Roman emperor); (b) misanthropia—hatred of their fellow-man, and (c) amixia—complete unsociability with anyone except Jews. Roman historian Tacitus (A.D. 55-117) said of the Jews: “Among their own people they were inflexibly honest, and impeccably compassionate—but to all other persons they show the hatred of antagonism.” Tacitus said that the first thing a Gentile who had been converted to Judaism was taught was to “despise the gods, to repudiate his nationality, and to disparage his parents, children, and brothers.” Juvenal said: “If a Jew was asked the way to any place he refused to give any information except to another Jew, and that if anyone was looking for a well from which to drink, they would not lead him to it unless he was circumcised.” The basic Jewish attitude toward other people was contempt! In our text, Paul accuses some Jews of practicing (probably on the sly) what they preached against in others! They preached against stealing and robbed widows of their houses, robbed parents of old-age support, and robbed in business deals by “swearing by the temple only” (see Matt. 23). They preached against adultery, and lusted in their hearts for women not rightfully theirs. The Talmud condones pedophilia for a Jew! That's hard to believe, but its there in the Talmud for anyone to read. They preached against idols, but would rob heathen temples and take their golden images and melt them down for their own treasuries—and they made the “traditions” of the scribes into an “idol.” They lived a double-standardized life, and the whole Gentile world knew it and thus scoffed at their God and their religion and them. Have Christians ever been guilty like these Jews of whom Paul writes?

An “uncircumsized” person could “keep the law” just like Abraham “kept the law” which he knew in his life-time or “believed the Lord” so that it was “reckoned (i.e., accounted by God) to him as righteousness” (Gen. 15:6; Rom. 4:1-15). Abraham was justified before the “law of Moses” was ever given. Any Gentile could have done the very same thing Abraham did! There were a few who did and they are mentioned in the Bible—there was Naaman, the Syrian army captain; the widow of Zarephath (Luke 4); perhaps Nebuchadnezzar; and perhaps some of the Persians in the days of Esther (see Esther 8:17; 9:27). There was the centurion who had such a marvelous faith in Jesus (Matt. 8:5-13); there was the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4); there were probably thousands more that no one knows of except God! After all, believing the Lord is what the “law” is all about! Believing the Lord is the only way human beings can “keep the law of God.” That is what this book of Romans is all about—justification by the grace of God accessed by “the obedience” of human faith. The law is fulfilled in the person who believes the Lord according to the revelation by which the Lord reveals himself at particular times and eras. In olden times, the Lord was mediated to man through nature and a law on tables of stone. In these “last days”



the Lord is mediated to man through his Son, Jesus Christ and the N.T. covenant scriptures. But, we repeat, with Paul, “he will render to every man according to his works: to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; but for those who are factious and do not obey the truth, but obey wickedness, there will be wrath and fury.” The faith that justifies is the faith that obeys truth and does well and seeks immortality!

Inward Jewishness is inward circumcision—inwardly having the “mark” of the covenant upon one’s well-spring of life—upon the heart (mind). Inward Jewishness is inward cleanliness (pure thoughts, pure motives, pure conscience). That comes by faith in Christ, not by works of self-righteousness—there is a difference between “works of righteousness” and “works of self-righteousness. Inward Jewishness comes by having the principles of the O.T. law within one’s nature (Jesus didn’t “destroy” the law, he fulfilled it—filled it up full). Inward Jewishness is inward repentance and inward obedience. One may obey outwardly, and go through all the motions of ritual-penance and still be rebellious and irreverent on the inside. Paul related that he laid aside his “outward” Jewishness as mere garbage, in exchange for the “inward” Jewishness which was a “righteousness not of his own, based on law, but that which is through faith in Christ (Phil. 3:4-11). Inward Jewishness is precisely described in Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount (Matthew, chs. 5-6-7). Jesus, himself, was the ultimate “Jew.” He was the true Jew. When we are conformed to Jesus—when Jesus “is formed within us” (Gal. 4:19)—then we are Jews “inwardly” and not impersonators!

## TEACHER'S NOTES

prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

### ROMANS 3:1-31

The “hypothetical Jew” of Paul’s letter to the Romans reasoned thus: (a) God has given the Jew a special position (covenant) which he has given no other race; (b) this means the Jew has a special privilege; (c) which means further, that the Jew could do what he liked and feel secure in his “special position.” The Jew deceived himself into thinking that “special position” was something he could take advantage of for himself. What God entrusted the Jews with was commandments,—these were their “privileges”—God’s law! God said to them: “You are a special people therefore you must live a special life and I will give you a law by which you may be special.” God did not say: “You are a special people, therefore you can do what you like.” God said, “You are a special people, therefore do what I like—for in so doing you will be blessed throughout your generations with a Savior who is yet to come.” Many Jews even advanced the extreme claim that it was not God who had chosen Israel, but Israel who had chosen God! Most believed that God would protect them and save them no matter what they did! They had this idea as far back as the days of the prophets (see Jer. 7:1-15; Micah 3:11; Isa. 48:1-2). The Jews wanted to unconditionally hold God to his promises to Abraham. They were like the spoiled “brats” of the rich and powerful who get the idea that they are beyond the restraints and moral standards under which others must live. They think their special (unmerited) positions relieves them from justice, right, fairness and equity. They assume they are immune from the judgments which come to others. They assume everything and everyone, even God, should be partial toward them. “Ugly Americans” sometimes display this attitude in foreign countries. “Ugly Christians” sometimes display this attitude toward brethren! God will keep his word (be faithful) no matter who and how many do not keep their word (are unfaithful). **GOD IS ABSOLUTE AND ABSOLUTELY FAITHFUL!**

Sinful people have ingenious ways of justifying their sin! Paul’s “hypothetical Jew” puts forth an argument that is repeated again and again, if not audibly, then silently but mentally. The “hypothetical Jew rationalized that since sin gives God a chance to show (often immediately) his justice and his mercy, then sin is a good thing, because it has good results (that’s pragmatism with a capital P!). Thus, they rationalize, humans are doing God a favor when they sin! So, God should not bring wrath upon them for doing him a favor! This is a perverse, twisted argument. A person might as well argue that it is a good thing to break a person’s heart, because it gives that heart-broken one a chance to show how much he or she loves you. A person might as well argue that it is a good thing to commit crimes against society because it gives the government occasion to function and puts lots of police, etc., to work! Further, if the Jew says he should not be punished for sinning, neither should the rest of the world, including the Gentiles! The Jew was not willing to go that far! Finally, Paul says, “You Jews consider me (Paul) to be an apostate to Israel, deserving to be punished by God. But in so stating you have done me a great wrong. For if the truthfulness of God has abounded all the more by my being false (apostate), why do you still condemn me as a

sinner? If, according to your reasoning, if you should not be punished, neither should I!" Have you ever heard anyone try to justify their sin this way? Is Paul raising an issue that has never been raised? I DON'T THINK SO! I have heard people in the 21st century use this argument—in reality a great deal of Calvinism espouses this argument—"once in grace, always in grace."

Paul quotes from Psa. 14:1-3; 5:9; 140:3; 10:7; Isaiah 59:7-8; Psa. 36:1. This was a method used by Jewish rabbis called charaz which literally means, "stringing pearls." Paul was "stringing pearls" of scripture together to prove his point. When Paul had said earlier that the Jews "had an advantage" (in having the "oracles of God"), some might have gotten the idea that the Jews were "out in front or ahead" of everyone else in relationship to God. But Paul says an emphatic, "No way!" Then he quotes scriptures to prove that all men, both Jews and Gentiles, were under the power of sin. Paul quotes from texts in the O.T. that all Jews should have known. Read the entire 59th chapter of Isaiah! And Psa. 14:1-3 makes it even more explicit! The Mishna says that "all Israel shall have a place in the world to come!" The Talmud says that no Jew is ever sentenced to more than a year in Gehinnom (Hell). To the Jew, sin consists entirely in overt action. The idea that it is possible to commit a sin in one's thoughts is foreign to Judaism. No matter what goes on in one's head, until one acts, no sin is committed. In chapter 2, Paul did not accuse the Jews of merely thinking sinful thoughts, he said, "You, the judge, are doing the very same things" (Rom. 2:1,3,8, etc.). It is still difficult to convince most people (both Jews and Gentiles) that all human beings are "under sin" Rom. 3:9 (Greek, pantas huph harmartian). Most people still attempt to justify themselves as "less" sinners than others (see Lk. 13:1-9).

No person is keeping or ever will keep every commandment of the Law of God (except the Perfect Person, Jesus Christ). For the law demands perfection. Not only in deeds, but also in thoughts, motives, attitudes. Remember—it says "no coveting." No human can ever match the Infinite Perfection of God, and that is what God's law demands, because the law of God is the very character of God. The law of God demands faith, love, honest motives, perfect attitude of willingness and perfect obedience. People of great power, wealth, knowledge, wisdom, opportunity and privilege have all sinned. But the law of God has "stopped every mouth" from boasting in the ability to be perfect in the eyes of absolute perfection! That is precisely the purpose of the law—to stop man's mouth from boasting in self—to stop man from being independent of God's grace. The law was given to make man aware of sin (see Romans chapter 7). It is only when a man knows what he ought to do that he can realize that he is not doing it! It is only when a man knows the law and tries to satisfy it that he realizes he can never satisfy it. The law is designed to show a person his own weakness and his own sinfulness. It is to make a person "open his mouth" in a cry of faith for mercy and grace, for that is his only hope of salvation. If we are ever to get men to cry out for grace, it will be because we have made them aware of the law of God and their failure to keep it! We hear people say quite often "We don't need to remind people of their sins—they know they are sinners." They may know it but I am not so sure they will acknowledge it! What was Paul doing to the Roman church and all other churches to which he wrote—reminding them they were still imperfect.

Paul uses a metaphor from the legal system of his day when he writes about God's "righteousness" which "justifies" us. He talks about the sinner as a person on trial before God. When any human being (other than the sinless Jesus Christ) appears before God he is anything but innocent—he is guilty. And yet, God, in his amazing mercy, treats any believer in Christ ("accounts him") as if he were an innocent man. God treats the bad man in Christ as if he were a good man! That is what justification means. To treat a bad man as if he were a good man shocks our sense of justice and fairness. But that is what God does, and Paul says it is right ("righteous") for God to do so! But how can I know God is like that? Because Jesus came and was the PERFECT human-expiation (Gr. hilasterion, i.e., "sacrifice, appeasement") for all the sin of human beings who trust in him. This expiation of sin, appeasement of God's wrath, was typified in the O.T. with animal sacrifices. But human's consciences told them that sacrificing an animal for their sins against God was inadequate. Human's consciences still bothered them (Heb. 10:1-10) after the animal was sacrificed. Jesus Christ, PERFECT MAN, became the sacrifice that would satisfy (expiate, propitiate) God's wrath upon sin "once for all time" (Heb. 10:12-14). We know that God accepted that as a substitute for all mankind, for all time, because Jesus was raised from the dead. That is our assurance—the knowledge of the resurrection of Jesus Christ is the one absolute essential to our belief that God has atoned for our sins. So, now we are conscious of our sin, but we are no longer in terror. We can have a cleansed conscience (1 Pet. 3:21) When we make Jesus' death our own, by faith, it changes our whole relationship to God. We understand when we believe Jesus how God could be right only if he demanded (and received) the PERFECT SACRIFICE.

If I died today, and went before God, and God said, "Why should I let you into my heaven?"—my total answer would be, "Because I have trusted in your grace and the vicarious atonement of Jesus Christ." THAT'S IT. Even my "obedience of faith" is far short of the absolute holiness of God's presence—so I couldn't even say I had kept Christ's commandments, perfectly! I would have to plead, "God, I am not worthy—you know there were plenty of times when I didn't even try to follow in paths of righteousness—and even my 'trying' is short of your mark." I would have to say, "God, you know that some of my 'good deeds' were for the wrong motives—that I have played the 'hypocrite.'" I would have to say, "God, not one day has gone by in my life, even after I professed faith in Christ, that I have been without sin on my own merit." And I would have to say, "God, I have nothing to plead in my case except the death of Jesus in my place." As the grand old song (which we never sing anymore, "Just as I am, without one plea, but that thy blood was shed for me....."). What my parents have done, what the nation I have lived in has done, what others say about me and think they know about me, what I know about myself, how I compare with someone (anyone) else—this is irrelevant! I would have to say, "God, have mercy on me a sinner, and accept me because Jesus died for me and because I want to live in his presence forever." I would have to say, "Even the times when I did make effort to follow Jesus' commandments, my efforts were inadequate and fell short of the mark—save me Lord, for I cannot save myself."

Rom. 3:25 which states: "...because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins" surely does not mean that God "winked at" sin in O.T. times, or that God merely

ignored or discounted the sins of the ancient peoples. In context, it means the belief in God's promises of a Messiah and redemption by those in the O.T. was counted to them for justification and they were saved by that belief. And "in the fulness of time" (Gal. 4:4) God proved his justness (righteousness) when he made Christ the atoning sacrifice for all sin. All believers who lived prior to Jesus' death, lived in virtue of the ransom which is in him. Sins could be remitted through his blood before it was shed! If Christ's death is efficacious for all time since it was shed, so is it efficacious through all time before it occurred. The vicarious death of Christ touches all human life, as well as all human sin, without regard to time—just as his resurrection touches all human life without regard to time. God remitted the sins of the O.T. believers (both Jew and Gentile) by reason of the retrospective efficacy of Christ's death (see Heb. 9:15). Some of those people believed God and obeyed him according to the revelation he gave them, and by obedience perfected (brought to completion) their belief. So great is the value and the honor inherent in the ransom of Christ, God can do all he does in the way of saving sinners, and still remain perfectly just. Neither his honor nor his justice is thereby tarnished or compromised.

There is hardly a more startling statement in the Bible than that in Romans 3:26! Someone has called it, "The supreme paradox." Think what it means! It means that God is just and accepts the sinner as a just man. How can that be? The reasonable thing to say would be, "God is just, and, therefore, condemns the sinner as a criminal!" But in Rom. 3:27 we have the great and precious paradox—God is just and the Justifier of sinners who believe in Jesus. How can God be just and let any sinner off? God maintained his absolute integrity and executed perfect justice on sin in the Perfect Man—Jesus Christ. Thus God's wrath was satisfied completely and made it possible for him to extend his mercy (i.e., to justify sinners) to all who, in faith and grateful obedience trust themselves to the gracious "shepherding" of Jesus Christ and his word: (a) "...one man's act of righteousness leads to acquittal and life for all men..." (Rom. 5:18); (b) "...by one man's obedience many will be made righteous..." (Rom. 5:19); (c) "...God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them..." (2 Cor. 5:19); (d) "...for our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God..." (2 Cor. 5:21); (e) "...Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us..." (Gal. 3:13); (f) "...sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh..." (Rom. 8:3). In doing all this God proved himself faithful to his word for he had promised in the O.T. he would do so (e.g., Isa. 53:1-12; Jer. 31:31-34; Dan. 9:24-27, etc.).

All human boasting is excluded (Greek, *exekleisthe*, "shut out"). There is no opening (not even the tiniest crack) for human boasting to enter into relationship with God (see 1 Cor. 1:26-31). "Nothing in my hand I bring, simply to Thy cross I cling..." The only way man could boast is if God is less than Absolute! But if God is Absolute (and he is), then our relationship to him has to be one of total grace and faith. Faith (trust) in God as the Absolute Being means we do not trust in ourselves! Faith excludes boasting. People must acknowledge they did not bring themselves into being—they cannot adequately discern their purpose for existence—and they have no ability to satisfactorily understand their ultimate destiny without God telling them and providing it for them. Even when we "leave all and



follow” Jesus, what have we to boast of? Does leaving all accrue some meritorious standing for us? It might be if we could control absolutely our “all” and keep anyone from taking it away from us. But we know that sooner or later we have to “leave it all” whether we want to or not—so what is there in leaving all for Jesus about which we may boast? What if a man renounces and rejects the warnings of God’s word all his life and prospers, never suffers persecution or sickness—what if he becomes famous and powerful and defies all the rules of decency and justice and morality—can he then boast, “I did it my way?” “So, you also, when you have done all that is commanded you, say, we are unworthy servants; we have only done what was our duty.” Lk. 17:10.

Paul’s hypothetical Jew will say, “If justification is by faith, then the law is struck down and useless.” Paul says, “No, by faith a man upholds (Greek *histanomen*, “establishes, makes stand”) the law.” How is that possible? Because faith was the intent of the law! When God gave the law (even the “law” in the Garden of Eden—“Thou shalt not eat of that tree...”), he intended it to elicit a response of faith, trust and obedience. God intended in any “law” (revelation) he gave to reveal to mankind his Divine Sovereignty and human inadequacy which would drive man to him in faith. That was man’s “fall” in Eden—he listened to the devil’s lie that man could be adequate if he renounced and disobeyed God. By the “law” God intended to show man he could not rule himself or save himself. By the “law” God intended to show man God’s holy character, God’s omniscience (absolute wisdom), so that man would turn to him in faith. God never intended the “law” for man to use as a vehicle to establish human autonomy or human righteousness! Human beings are righteous only when they have perfect trust and obedience to God. JESUS, AS THE PERFECT HUMAN, GAVE PERFECT TRUST AND OBEDIENCE FOR ALL MANKIND! Faith establishes the law in that when a man believes in God he testifies that the law is right in proving him to be a sinner! When a man believes in God he validates the revelation of the law which says: (a) God is absolutely Sovereign; (b) man is a hostile sinner, at enmity with God; (c) only God can make atonement for human sin—and that in a Perfect Human Messiah (which he did in Jesus Christ); (d) man, reconciled to God, is to be reconciled to his fellow man in a redeemed society (the church).

## TEACHER'S NOTES

prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

### ROMANS 4:1-25

Paul brings up Abraham in his dissertation on justification by faith because Abraham is the greatest Jew of them all! Greater than Moses or David. Abraham is the “great-grandfather” of them all! The Jews put their hopes in their descent from Abraham (Lk. 3:7-9; Jn. 8:39-59; Gal. 3:1-29). It is ironic (and Paul will state it later), that Abraham was a Gentile before he was a Jew! God made promises to Abraham which every Jew laid claim to by reason of genetic kinship, because God said those promises were to the “descendants” of Abraham (Gen. 12:2ff; 22:15-19, etc.). To Abraham God gave the most significant sign of Jewishness ever given—circumcision. “Circumcision” is what made Abraham a Jew—not his genetics! It was with Abraham that God separated a lineage by circumcision, not by race, from all the other peoples of the earth to be his own special people. If Paul can persuade the Jews that these promises were to be given only to those who did not trust in genetic descent or circumcision, but who trusted in the grace of God, he will be able to present to them Christ’s vicarious atonement as the means of grace. And if Paul can convince them that their standing with God is by Christ’s substitution, they will understand that it is appropriated by faith and not by works! So, Paul sets out to prove that even their “genetic forefather” was justified before God by grace through faith! If the very first Jew was thus accepted by God, it ought to be incontrovertible that all succeeding Jews are justified by faith and not by the “law of Moses.”

Abraham believed God! How much? In some things, completely—in others, not quite so completely! When it came to leaving his homeland (the land of Ur of Chaldea), Abraham’s faith was total. He obeyed God! When it came to believing that God would give him descendants, as he promised, Abraham’s faith faltered when his wife Sarah began to fret that she had no child, so Abraham took Hagar and conceived a son with her. When it came to giving up Isaac as a burnt offering, the only son he had through Sarah, Abraham’s faith was total and absolute. He obeyed God and prepared to kill his son as an offering! Many other examples of Abraham’s strong faith in God could be cited. Abraham believed the Judge of all the earth would do right about Sodom & Gommorah (Gen. 28:25). Suffice it to say, while Abraham’s whole life was not perfect and while his faith was less than total in some instances, Abraham demonstrated that at the very core of his being he trusted God (Heb. 11:8-19). Abraham’s faith was a growing, learning, and repenting faith. At the center of his being Abraham was certainly not trusting in his own self-righteousness. And that is exactly why Paul used him to illustrate that justification before God is a gift of grace and not one of works! While Paul does not mention the times Abraham’s obedience left something to be desired, his Jewish audience certainly would know of those times if they knew their “Torah” at all! Abraham had nothing to boast of before God—and the record (Genesis) proves it. Yet that same record (Genesis) says he was justified (Gen. 15:6) because of his obedient faith.

The word “reckon” in the English translation is from the Greek word *logizetai* which was used in the business world to talk about transactions, keeping of ledger accounts, etc. It might be translated, “calculated, counted, posted, credited.” Because Abraham believed God, and expressed thanks to God by his obedience, God “credited” Abraham’s account in heaven with “righteousness.” It was not Abraham’s obedience that earned him justification by God, for his obedience was short of perfection. Abraham’s obedience was not the cause of his justification, it was the result of his believing God! God will not justify an ungrateful, unloving, unbelieving person no matter how much they go through the outward motions of obedience (e.g. the parable of the Pharisee and the publican at prayer in the temple—Luke 18:9-14). Belief expressed by a grateful life moves God to “credit” a sinner with righteousness. This is the covenant God has made with mankind through Jesus Christ. It is the covenant of grace! Now if it is God’s covenant and it is by his grace alone, he certainly has the right to declare which mind-set and which actions of people are acceptable to him as manifestations of gratitude. And those who wish to have God’s grace “credited” to them have every obligation to express gratitude to God in precisely the actions he has decreed as acceptable. Any other action by human beings is manifest ingratitude!

God justified Abraham before he was circumcised to show that: (a) justification has nothing to do with racial or genetic partiality; (b) justification has nothing to do with works (circumcision); (c) justification is available to anyone keeping covenant with God as Abraham had. God could have waited to announce that Abraham was justified until after Abraham had completed the work of circumcision. But that would have given Abraham and his descendants cause to think their justification was due to works. Circumcision was, as Paul says, “a sign or seal of the righteousness which he had by faith.” It was not the cause, it was explicitly a sign of something that had already been “credited” to him. However, what would God have “credited” had Abraham refused to obey the covenant “sign” which God gave him? Had Abraham refused, Abraham would have been demonstrating a fundamental ingratitude, rebellion, hatred, and distrust of God. There would have been no alternative for God except to “credit” Abraham with “sin” had this been the case. Those religious teachers today who say that baptism is an “outward sign of an inward grace” and that baptism is not necessary for salvation, put themselves in the same position as the hypothetical Abraham we just presented! To refuse the clear decree of God for baptism demonstrates a fundamental distrust of God’s covenant-faithfulness!

The life of Abraham before he was circumcised—that is, before he was a Jew, is the life-example Paul declared the Jew (and Gentile) was to imitate! That is one of the most shocking statements a former Jewish rabbi (Paul) could make to his fellow Jews! Paul was ordering the Jews to imitate a Gentile! Mere circumcision was not the tie that was to bind Jews to Abraham. Imitation of Abraham’s faith was the tie that bound! Even the O.T. Prophet Isaiah told Jews of his day to “look to Abraham” (Isa. 51:1-2) and Isaiah did not mean genetically! Abraham is the spiritual progenitor (“father”) of all the justified whether Jew or Gentile (see also, Gal. 3:6-29; Rom. 9:6-8). Abraham is a significant figure throughout the Bible. Repeatedly he is held up as an example of faith at its best. To be honored with such intimacy with Abraham as to be “in the bosom of Abraham” was portrayed

by Jesus as the highest bliss (Lk. 16:22-23). When Jesus wanted to reward the faith and repentance of Zacchaeus, he said, “Today salvation has come to this house, since he (Zacchaeus) also is a son of Abraham,” and Jesus was not speaking of genetic relationship. When James needed an illustration that faith was perfected (i.e., brought to its goal) through works, he referred to Abraham (James 2:22-23). Paul wrote to the Hebrew Christians and used Abraham as a prime example of the faithful (Heb. 11:8ff). Jesus said, “Many will come from east and west and sit at table with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob” (Matt. 8:11; Lk. 13:28-30).

The promise was made to Abraham’s descendants through faith. The law which came 400 years later does not annul the promise through faith (see Gal. 3:15-22). Justification, righteousness and redemption cannot come through the law, because all the law could do was condemn men under sin. The law provided no sufficient sacrifice (Heb. 10:1-18). The weakness of human flesh-mindedness could not fulfill the law—only perfect humanity (Jesus Christ) could do that. But the law did serve a needed and indispensable purpose. The law had to be given, or people would not have recognized the pervasiveness of sin, and would not have acknowledged their absolute inability to make some claims on God through their own self-merit. The law had to come in order to glorify God (i.e., “give God his proper weight or rank”). The law had to come to drive men to glorify him—to lead men to cry out for grace—to throw men upon God’s mercy in trust and gratitude. The law had to come to reveal the character of God—his faithfulness, justice, purity, right-ness, mercy, love, power and wisdom. But the law could not guarantee the promises—the only thing the law could guarantee was wrath, judgment and punishment. It did, however, bear witness to the Gospel (vicarious atonement)—even Paul says that in Rom. 3:21ff.

Yes! The Jews should have understood that God’s promises to Abraham were to belong to Gentiles also! The O.T. prophets (esp. Isaiah) plainly predicted that God’s redemptive program would encompass all the “nations” (Heb. goyim, “Gentiles”) (see Isa. 2:1-4; 9:1-2; 19:16-25; 25:6-9; Joel 2:28 compared with Acts 2:16-42; Amos 9:9-12 compared with Acts 15:12-21; Hosea 1:10-11 compared with Romans 9:24-26 and 1 Pet. 2:9-10). Jesus expected the Jews to understand that Gentiles were to be recipients of the promises made to Abraham, and he said that one day many would come from “east and west” and sit with Abraham (in “covenant” with) Matt. 8:5-13; Isa. 49:8-13; 59:19; 60:1-3. When the apostle Peter “back-slid” on this very issue (Gal. Ch. 2), Paul faced him down about his error. Paul wrote voluminously on this point in all his epistles. It was sometimes difficult to get even Gentiles to believe that as Gentiles and not as Jewish proselytes they were to be recipients of the promises made to Abraham. Judaizers went about seeking to force Gentiles to become Jews (be circumcised and keep the law of Moses) in order to make claim on the promises made to Abraham. Paul says in Rom. 4:17, the very statement of God to Abraham, “I have made you the father of many nations,” should have clued the Jews that Gentiles were to receive Abraham’s heritage also! The word in Gen. 17:5 is goyim—so even Moses, who wrote Genesis, understood God’s promises to Abraham was to “nations,” i.e., Gentiles.

Abraham did not “weaken in faith” over the promise that he would produce a “Messianic child” even though Abraham was 100 years old when the promise was yet to come to pass!—and even though Sarah’s womb was barren! The Greek text reads, literally, *eis de ten epaggelian ton theou ou diekrithe te apistia*, or, “But against the good news of God (God’s promise), he did not decide by unbelief.” He did not waver! He decided for the promise of God by faith! FAITH, YOU SEE, IS A DECISION! Abraham presents a great encouragement to us! But at the same time, I for one, must admit there have been occasions where I did not decide by faith. Perhaps I’m being a little unfair even to myself, though, since it is not so much that my faith wavers, as it is that I would simply like (I think I would like) to “see” my Mom and Dad as they are, I believe, in the presence of the Lord; or I would like to “see” what the next life for me will entail, etc. Is that really a wavering faith? I am solely trusting the promise of God that Christ’s atonement assures me of eternal life. I have nothing else in which to hope! I think I would also like to “see” that God will take care of my family, should I precede them in death. This probably “worries” me more than anything! I would also like to know about the quality of life in Paradise. Will there be anything to do there? What sort of fellowship will I have with those I have known and loved here? How will I be a free-choosing individual there when there will be no more opportunity to sin? Is that a “wavering faith”? I hope not! Paul tried to deal with such querulous people in 1 Cor. 15 about what “kind of body” they would have in the resurrection. He told them, “Don’t fret about it—God fixes everything!”

The Hebrew word *kovoud*, and the Greek word *doxa*, both have to do literally with “weight” (ancient kings and potentates were ranked and honored when their subjects gave them gold and jewels “by weight”). Metaphorically, the word glory means “distinction, rank, praise.” When it says in Rom. 4:20 “...but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God...” it means that Abraham’s faith was strengthened in proportion to how Abraham “ranked” God. In other words, the more Abraham acknowledged and accepted and lived the sovereignty of God in his mind and actions, the stronger his trust in God became! This is what Paul wants to convince us of in his statement in 2 Cor. 3:18—“and we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another.” The more the apostles saw and were convinced of the “rank” of Jesus the more they trusted him—and the stronger their faith in him grew. It was when they finally saw Jesus’s “rank” by his resurrection from the dead that they were willing to trust his idea of Messiahship and his concept of “kingdom.” Until that time, they had their own ideas about all this. We are the beneficiaries of testimony from thousands who saw the glory of the Lord—from Abraham to Moses, to David, to the prophets, to John the Baptist, to Jesus Christ, and the apostles, and a great host of millions of saints through the centuries. We, therefore, may grow strong in our faith as we give Christ (acknowledge and act upon) his rightful rank. Our faith will be in exact proportion to the “rank” we give Jesus Christ!

The resurrection of Christ is the only thing in all the world that authenticates our justification! His death accomplished it, but we would never be sure of that had God not raised Jesus from the dead. Paul puts it this way in 1 Cor. 15:17—“If Christ has not been raised, then your faith is futile and you are still in your sins...” It is not any particular feeling



that authenticates our justification— it is the historical fact of Jesus' resurrection that alone gives us “a reason for the hope that is within us...” If man had only his feelings as proof of his justification, he would never have anything but doubts! Man's conscience accuses him— man's feelings are of guilt, fear, hesitancy, inadequacy—but God overcomes man's feelings by a historical deed which cannot be doubted or erased except by a perverse, deliberate, refusal to accede to it! Peter said it this way, “...by his great mercy we have been born anew to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead...” 1 Pet. 1:3. Our confidence in God comes because of what God has done, in history, not because of anything we have done or have felt, or ever will do or feel! And if God says he will justify us because we trust in Jesus, God will do it! He has proved it! All the promises of God find their “Yea!” in him (Jesus Christ) 2 Cor. 1:20.

## TEACHER'S NOTES

prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

### ROMANS 5:1-21

If we were not justified by faith, we would have to be justified by keeping some law (either that of Moses or one we make up ourselves). But then we would never be able to be justified, for “by the works of the law (any law) shall no flesh be justified” (Gal. 2:16)! We couldn’t even keep a “law” we made up for ourselves—no matter how simple we made it—sooner or later we would violate it! No person can be at peace with God without being justified before God! Before a person is justified before God, he is an enemy of God (Greek *echthros*, “hated one, hateful one” see Rom. 5:10; James 4:4). Read these scriptures to see that God considers those who do not believe in him through Jesus Christ to be his enemies (Matt. 13:25,28; 22:44; Mark 12:36; Luke 19:27; 20:43; Acts 2:35; Rom. 11:28; Phil. 3:18; Heb. 1:13; 10:13; Rev. 22:5,12; Luke 1:71,74; 19:43; Acts 13:10; 2 Thess. 3:15). There is a war going on inside every human being. It is a war of the flesh opposing the spiritual (see Gal. 5:16-17; Rom. 7:15-25; 1 Pet. 2:11). The only way that war can be resolved so that man can be at peace with God’s Spirit is to surrender his mind to be set on the Spirit of God (the terms of God for reconciliation) (Rom. 8:1-11). “God opposes (Greek, *antitassetai*, “is against, makes war on”) the proud, but gives grace to the humble....submit yourselves therefore to God...” (James 4:6-7). To become a “friend” of God, we must become enemies to world-mindedness! That is, we must renounce this world and all that is in it. We must understand that there can be no compromise between the flesh and the spirit. We cannot have heaven, and this world! We must turn loose of one or the other! The Christian’s covenant with Christ is to begin mentally and behaviorally to turn loose of this world—to “be crucified with Christ” (Rom. 6:6; 2 Cor. 5:14-21; Gal. 2:20; 5:24; 6:14)

An access (Greek *prosagogen*, literally, “to conduct to the presence of, to gain admission to”) is an opening unto, a way unto, an admission to something or Someone. The Greek verb *eschekamen* (Rom. 5:2) translated, “...we have obtained...” is in the perfect tense which means an action which has been accomplished in the past with a continuing action or result. In other words, our “access” into God’s grace was obtained at some time before Paul wrote these words and the result continues. Now we know when that access was obtained—it was obtained at the death and resurrection of Christ. That access is not our faith (for even our faith is imperfect). The access is what Christ worked out for us. But God graciously made the work of Christ available to us even if we exercise an imperfect faith! It was Christ’s faith (perfect obedience) as a human that earned God’s grace for all humans who believe in him. It is Christ’s perfect obedience as a human that opens the door to heaven for all human believers and allows them into God’s presence (Heb. 10:1-25). Christ the only access to God! Christ is the “Way, the Truth, and the Life, and no one comes to the Father but by him” (Jn. 14:6). Our peace is through him—our access is through him—therefore it has to be appropriated through faith in him. The phrase “by faith” is found in a number of ancient manuscripts, and omitted in a number of others. But since justification by faith in Christ’s work is the constant teaching of Romans, it would not be contradictory to understand that our

“imperfect faith” is implied here also!

Paul says our hope is of sharing the glory of God. What is glory? It is “rank, majesty, honor, reputation, acclaim, distinction, valuableness.” C. S. Lewis says, “The promise of glory is the promise, almost incredible and only possible by the work of Christ, that some of us, that any of us who really chooses, shall actually survive that examination (of God’s judgment), shall find approval, shall please God. To please God—to be a real ingredient in the divine happiness—to be loved by God, not merely pitied, but delighted in as an artist delights in his work or a father in a son—it seems impossible, a weight or burden of glory which our thoughts can hardly sustain. But so it is!” God will acknowledge us! He will applaud us! He will say, “You have made me happy!” Every Christian will be honored when God glorifies us (gives us rank)—not just a few. Men honor and praise only a few—often, the most deserving are never praised or glorified. Glory has more to do with character than any physical attribute. The “glory” of Christ when he was here on earth had to do with his compassion, his power, his purity, his wisdom, his truthfulness and faithfulness, and his “rank”. It was not in his physical appearance. We are going to be given some of the same kind of honor or acclaim which belongs to the Almighty God. We are joint-heirs with Christ. Whatever Christ is to inherit, we will have part of it! We will be “ranked” as “children of God” and there can’t be a higher rank!

Do you rejoice in your sufferings? What does “rejoice” mean? Does the word “rejoice” always carry the connotation of fun and gleefulness? Actually, the word in the Greek text (Rom. 5:2) is *kauchometha* and is often translated “boast.” It means “to value something as being worthy of honor.” It means to count something as valuable—to cherish and desire something. IS THIS WHAT WE ARE TO DO WITH TRIBULATION AND AFFLICTION AND SUFFERING?—COUNT IT AS VALUABLE—SOMETHING TO CHERISH? YES! Jesus told us to rejoice when men persecute us (Matt. 5:10-12). Paul said he “boasted” in things that showed his weaknesses (2 Cor. 11:30ff; 2 Cor. 12:5). Peter said to “rejoice” in so far as we share Christ’s sufferings (1 Pet. 4:13). What does it take to “rejoice” in affliction and suffering? Purely and simply, it takes faith! To try to reason out rejoicing in suffering is impossible. A world-mind-set rejects that proposition. The world says, “Avoid all affliction and suffering and despise it, abhor it, and if you are persecuted, try to get even!” Avoid suffering at all costs, says the world, even at the cost of reputation, moral integrity, the welfare of others, and godliness. We are to rejoice in suffering because it produces (Greek, *katergazetai*, “works”) endurance, and endurance produces character (Greek, *dokimen*, “experiential proof, validation” the usual Greek word for “character” is *charakter*), and testing produces hope! In other words, if there’s no suffering, there’s no experience of validation or testing, ergo no testing, no hope! We have need of endurance so we may receive what is promised (Heb. 10:36). SUFFERING IS VALUABLE!

If while we were “sinners” 5:8 (Greek, *harmatolon*) and “enemies” 5:10 (Greek, *echthroi*) of God, he gave his Son for our justification and reconciliation, for what should we hope in the matter of such a salvation? If justification and reconciliation is the bare minimum, what is the maximum? Doesn’t the concept of “salvation” hold out more glory than mere

declaration of “not guilty”? If we have escaped the gallows, where do we go from there? WE GO TO GLORY—THE DIVINE GLORY LAID UP FOR US (2 Cor. 4:16-18). Read Romans 8:31-39. “He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all, will he not also give us all things with him?” This is the answer to our hesitancy of last week where we discussed the “wavering moments of faith.” Paul’s argument here is that since we are justified solely by Christ’s merit, we are certainly to share in Christ’s glory! Had we depended upon justification by our merit, our expectation would have been judgment and wrath (Heb. 10:26-31). But we are saved from the wrath of God by perfection—and that perfection is in Christ. We, therefore, shall receive the reward that belongs to perfection (i.e., Christ, the perfect human). And that is difficult to believe! That is just the point Paul is making here. If Christ’s perfection brought us justification, then Christ’s perfection brings us the “whole ball of wax”—PERFECT GLORIFICATION! We are not justified and then told, “You’ve got the ball from now on—don’t fumble it!” Everything that belongs to God belongs to us from now on and forever (1 Cor. 3:21-23). We are more than conquerors through him who loved us (Rom. 8:37). We rule with him—the dominion lost in Eden is restored to us (Heb. 2:5-13).

The phrase “and death spread to all men” as a result of one man’s sin (Rom. 5:12) means more than the spread of mere physical death. The context shows that! But to say that does not mean that all men are sinners by inheritance. The doctrine of “total depravity” is not taught here. What Paul means, clearly from the context, is that Adam’s (and Eve’s) sin opened the door to sin to the human race—our first parents “invited” sin into the human experience. Adam and Eve became the instruments through which sin was introduced into the human experience. If they had not sinned perhaps sin would never have entered the human experience! Every person sins by individual choice. We do not irresistibly inherit Adam’s sin! Even the O.T. Israelites were wrong on that point. They put forth a humanistic parable, “The fathers have eaten sour grapes and the children’s teeth are set on edge” (Ezek. 18:2). In other words, we are sinners because our fathers were! But God said, “NO WAY, JOSE!” “Every man is responsible for his own sin.” It’s in Ezekiel chapter 18. We make our own choice to sin. We are no more automatic sinners than we are automatically saved-saints. We choose to sin, and we choose to be saved! Adam and Eve’s sin introduced sin into the world and made it available for the choosing. Jesus (the 2nd Adam, human) introduced righteousness into the world and made it available to be chosen! Of course, physical death on all human flesh was pronounced by God on account of Adam’s sin. But Paul is talking about more than that. He discusses the consequence of sin as being condemnation (5:16) and as being the “reign” of sin. The power of sin to separate, to enslave, to bring guilt, was made accessible to the human race by Adam. The power of grace, to be reconciled to God, to be free of guilt, to be justified was made accessible by Jesus Christ!

Romans 5:12-14 is all to prove that man is responsible for sin being in the world—God was not responsible for that! Man introduced sin into God’s perfect creation! Sin is not “technically” counted for death when there is no law that makes death the penalty for breaking it. But sin was in the world before the law of Moses. From Adam to Moses there was no written law—no verbalized penalty. Yet, during all this time, human beings were

dying! Humans died, therefore, because sin was present in the world. Therefore there must have been divine laws before the Mosaic law. And, there were—there was a law of God before there was sin—it was in the sinless Garden of Eden—“but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat...” Sin is defined as disobedience to any commandment of God—mentally or overtly. The attitude of “lawlessness is sin (1 Jn. 3:4)! J. B. Phillips paraphrases: “Sin, you see, was in the world long before the law, though I suppose, technically speaking, it was not ‘sin’ where there was no law to define it. Nevertheless, death, the complement of sin, held sway over mankind from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sin was quite unlike Adam’s.” Thus Paul proves that God’s law is not to be blamed for death. Sin is what brings death, and sin came by man—not by the law! Law came to increase the awareness of trespass (the law came to prove unequivocally and indisputably, that all people are sinners). But God’s law is holy—it did not force man to sin, it is not to be blamed for sin. There was sin and death in the world before the holy law in all its completeness had ever been revealed to man. There was no sin “counted” to Adam and Eve before they mentally and overtly disobeyed God’s command in Eden. This is what Paul is saying when he says, “But sin is not counted where there is no law.”

The sin of Adam was, in its effect, the diametrical opposite of the gift of God. The effects of the free gift of God’s grace reaches far beyond the effects of Adam’s sin! Adam’s sin brought death to the human body and also opened the door and introduced sin to the human race. Adam’s sin made it possible for people to choose to be separated from God forever. Christ’s free gift of grace and atonement brought the resurrection of the human body, and made it possible for people to choose to be forever joined to God and goodness. What the free gift brings in contrast to the sin is immeasurable! There is “an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison” prepared for those who, by faith, exercise the option of grace! Paul was caught up into Paradise and heard things that cannot be uttered (2 Cor. 12:1-4). Human language is inadequate to describe the glory of the free gift because there is nothing in human experience like it. All Paul can say in Rom. 5:15 is that “the free gift in the grace of that one Man, Jesus Christ, abounded (Gr. eperisseusen, “overflowed, more than enough”) for many. Everything that is good, true, lovely, satisfying, edifying—family relationships, friendships, creativeness, helpfulness, accomplishment—will be magnified a million times by grace! It would be wonderful just to have the effects of sin canceled out—but God’s grace goes incredibly beyond that!

Those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness will reign in life through the one Man, Jesus Christ. There is a sense in which saints now (presently) reign with Christ (see Eph. 2:6; Rev. 20:6, etc.). And there is a sense in which Christ has now (potentially) restored man’s dominion over God’s creation (see Heb. 2:5-18). In what sense does man “reign”? In the same sense that Adam and Eve were given dominion (Gen. 1:26-31) over all other forms of life and were given the mandate from God to subdue the earth. Jesus as the Perfect Man, demonstrated that God would give perfected humanity dominion over creation. Man “reigns” over the eternal death, over angels (1 Cor. 6:3), over other parts of creation because he accepts the imputed work of Christ to himself by faith. Just what will man have at his command in the next life as he lives eternally in the new



heavens and earth? It is mind-staggering to contemplate it! Jesus said, “You have been faithful over a little, I will set you over much...” (Matt. 25:21,23). To reign—is to have authority over, to exercise power over, to be served by, to be obeyed by. Reigning requires proven loyalty and responsibility. That is why we are disciples (learners) down here!

If one man can be representative of all humanity and in his disobedience “expose” (J. B. Phillips) the whole race of mankind to God’s judgment and condemnation, then one Man (Jesus Christ) can be representative of all humanity in obedience and “expose” the whole race of mankind to God’s grace and righteousness. God sent his own Son “in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, and condemned sin in the flesh.” (Rom. 8:3). Christ took the form of a servant and was found in human form, and became obedient unto death for all mankind (Phil. 2:5-11). Although he was a Son, he learned (experienced) obedience by the things he suffered...and being made perfect (having completed his mission) he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him (Heb. 5:8-9). By Christ’s willing obedience and vicarious death we are sanctified (Heb. 10:1-10). Since it was by man that mankind was condemned, it is by Man (Perfect Man) that mankind must be redeemed. And mankind can be redeemed only by a Man’s perfect obedience. That is what the absolute holiness of God demands! Anything short of human perfection is unacceptable to God. And anyone short of—or more than—human would not suffice. Christ obeyed, perfectly, as a human—equally human with you and me. His humanity was subjected to the same temptations, the same frailties, the same needs, as ours. And he fulfilled the will of God in every respect. God accepted his obedience as a cancellation not only of Adam’s disobedience, but that of every person who will unite himself to Christ by faith and love and loyalty.

## TEACHER'S NOTES

prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

### ROMANS 6:1-23

Paul had to remind Christians that it was wrong to advocate continuing in sin so that grace might abound because there are Christians who think that way! Why would a Christian think like that? Because they are “unsteady souls” and ripe to be enticed, exploited, and led astray by false teachers (see Titus 1:9-16; 2 Pet. 2:1-22; Jude 1-25; Rev. chs. 2 & 3). Someone has promised them “freedom” in such a philosophy of grace (2 Pet. 2:18-19) and they do not want to acknowledge that such “freedom” is really being “again entangled...and overpowered...and the last state is worse than the first.” Some Christians “have itching ears and accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own likings...” 2 Tim. 4:3. They are “lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, holding the form of religion but denying the power of it...among them are those who make their way into households and capture weak women, burdened with sins and swayed by various impulses, who will listen to anybody and can never arrive at a knowledge of the truth...like Jannes and Jambres...” 2 Tim. 3:4-9. They are “ungodly persons who pervert the grace of our God into licentiousness” Jude 4. They are Christians who “refuse to love the truth and so be saved...they do not believe the truth but have pleasure in unrighteousness” 2 Thess. 2:9-12.

“To die to sin is to be wholly disinclined (unwilling, averse to) in mind to commit it and consequently not (wanting) to do so. The expression is a bold one, and not to be construed too strictly; for no one in the flesh can be said to be absolutely ‘dead to sin,’ since no one lives and sins not (1 Jn. 1:8—2:6). To be dead to sin is to be so as a rule, but not to be so without exception. The comprehensive, prevalent fact of the Christian’s life is, that he is dead to sin; and so general (i.e., pervasive) must this fact be, that it shall remain barely not universal.” —Moses E. Lard, Commentary on Romans, p. 195. To die to sin is to be like: (a) David—“I have chosen the way of faithfulness, I set thy ordinances before me...incline my heart to thy testimonies and not to gain...behold I long for thy precepts...” Psa. 119:30,36,40; (b) Paul the apostle—“For I delight in the law of God, in my inmost self...so then, I of myself serve the law of God with my mind...” Rom. 7:15-25. (c) To die to sin is to “put to death what is earthly in you, immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire and covetousness...” Col. 3:5. (d) To die to sin is to “put off your old nature which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new nature, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness” Eph. 4:22-25. (e) To die to sin is to cease to function sin-wise—just like a dead body ceases to function, (to “die” as much as possible while trusting God’s grace for failures). There is only one way to “die to sin”—allow oneself to be “crucified” with Christ (by faith and obedience) Gal. 2:20; 6:14—and be mentally “born anew.” Sin is defined as “lawlessness” in 1 Jn. 3:4—an attitude of rebellion in the soul and spirit of the human. Therefore, to “die to sin” is to “die to the attitude of rebellion.” “No one who is born of God will continue to sin; because God’s seed remains in him, he cannot go on sinning, because he is born of God...” 1 Jn. 3:9 (see NIV on this verse, the Greek text has present tense, active verbs meaning “continuing action.”).

How, or what is the instrumentality by which the “nature (seed) of God remains” in the one not continuing to sin? The instrumentality is the knowledge of Christ—through his precious and very great promises (2 Pet. 1:3-4). The instrumentality is through “eating and drinking” Christ (his word) (Jn. 6:52-63). The instrumentality is through keeping his commandments (1 Jn. 2:24; 3:24)—by allowing the love of Christ to constrain us (2 Cor. 5:14-15) and direct our viewpoint (2 Cor. 5:16)—by cultivating self-control through the word of God’s Holy Spirit in our minds (Gal. 5:22; 2 Pet. 1:6). Dying to sin means we must have the character which is opposite that of question #1—we must not allow ourselves to be exploited by false teachers—and we must not be unsteady so as to be able to be enticed or led astray. Dying to sin takes place first and constantly in the mind. It is a converted mind—it is a mind surrendered to the perspective of God as revealed in the Bible. Then the mind controls the body and refuses to yield it as an instrument of sin (see Rom. 13:14). The human body itself is amoral (morally neutral). It functions only as the mind tells it! This is exactly what Paul is saying about himself in Romans ch. 7! We do have the power to direct (“set”) our minds (Rom. 8:5-8; Col. 3:1-4).

“You were immersed (i.e., baptized) into Christ, and in the act you were immersed into his death. If now you were immersed into his death, you are dead, dead to the world, dead to sin. The apostle conceives that by being immersed into Christ, we have become, as it were, one with him, so that whatever he did, we do. Consequently, when he died, we died in him (see Gal. 2:20; 6:14; 2 Cor. 5:14-15). We are, then, as he is, dead to our former state...”—Moses E. Lard, *ibid*, p. 197. In Rom. 6:5 the Greek word *sumphutoi*, translated “planted” in KJV and “united” RSV is an adjective most accurately translated as per RSV “united, grown together with.” By obeying in faith the commandment of Christ (Matt. 28:18-20) and the apostles to be immersed in water, the believer is counted (reckoned) by God as united or joined with, sharing with, partaking with, the death of Christ. And such a uniting is, so far as the Bible teaches, clearly NECESSARY to salvation! How could any person, with ability to read, deny that the sinner must be united to the death of Christ to be saved? Here’s a theological oxymoron for you: Church Member’s Handbook, by Joe T. Odle, pub. Broadman Press, Nashville, TN, (no date given), pg. 18, “The purpose of baptism is...obedience to Christ’s command, Matt. 28:19-20...Baptism is not necessary for salvation. There is not one passage in the Bible that teaches that baptism is necessary for salvation.” Have you ever heard anything more self-contradictory? And how can it be denied that immersion is that uniting? Why would anyone who professes to believe in Christ, resist immersion? Why would any believer think he should change God’s word as to the means of being united with the atoning death of Christ? What is wrong with the human heart that insists baptism (i.e., immersion in water) is not necessary to salvation or should not be exclusively by immersion? When God said “circumcision” what did he mean? When God said “lamb” what did he mean? So *baptisma* (immersion is the only proper translation of that Greek word) does save us (1 Pet. 3:21)! The Jews translated the Old Testament Hebrew language into the Greek language (i.e., the Septuagint ca. 200 B.C.). They translated the “dipping” of Naaman, the Syrian army captain with leprosy from the Hebrew word *toval* (“dipped”) with the Greek word *ebaptisato* (“immersed”). Why didn’t the translators of the New Testament translate *baptismos* (and derivatives) “dipped” or “immersed”? Because of their “sprinkling” bias!

We are to reckon (i.e., consider) ourselves (Greek *logizesthe*, “account, figure, mark down”) as dead to sin and alive to God IN Christ Jesus. How often did Christ die? ONCE! (6:9-10). Christians are to “figure” (mark it down in their little black books) that they can no more return to their former life of sin after having “died IN Christ” than Christ himself could return to his former life and die again! The Greek term *logizesthe*, “reckon, consider,” emphasizes the centrality of the human mind in the process of faith. We must be convinced, convicted, and persuaded in our minds that “one died, therefore, all died” before the word of God will work in us to bring about the “death to sin.” Christ’s death accomplished it—but we must “reckon” it. We must give in, surrender to, acknowledge mentally that it is so! We must “confess” it and the Greek word *homologeō* “confess” means literally, “to say the same as.” In other words, we must “agree with” or “say the same as” God says about the death of Christ and its vicarious nature for the believer. If a person refuses to acknowledge (“reckon”) that Christ’s death was a vicarious atonement on his behalf, he can never “die to sin” no matter how outwardly pure in living he may be! For it is impossible to repent when one refuses to unite with the death of Christ. God will not accept any other access into his presence! The very essence of dying to sin is dying to sovereignty of self! That is the death to self Jesus died on the cross when he expressed it verbally, “Nevertheless not my will but thine be done.”

Sin is personified as a tyrant (it is really Satan, see Jn. 13:27 where Judas allowed Satan to “enter” him) whose sphere of influence is the human body. This tyrant reigns in or rules over the body, but only as the desires of the body are given control by the mind (spirit/soul) of the person. When control of the mind is given to Satan, the body is used as an instrument of sin (see James 1:14-15). Objects of temptation act upon the desires and excite them. These temptations seek to be gratified. When the will yields the result is sin. Such is the process. But we are not to allow these desires to become so excited as to impel us to obey them! The human body is in a material (“futile and decaying”) world (Rom. 8:18-25). Being connected with this transient existence it is immediately acted upon by all those influences which tempt and induce the person inhabiting this body to gratification, and preservation at all costs. Being easily excited, easily fired up, it is the chief instrument of sin. Hence the necessity of subjecting it to the mind of Christ so as to render these influences inactive. How do we “subject” the flesh? By force of will power! Paul was not afraid to teach that very thing. He said the Christian is to “pommel” or “buffet” the body and subdue it, and to exercise a self-control motivated by the love of Christ (2 Cor. 5:14-15) with the same intensity that an athlete does in training (1 Cor. 9:24-26; 2 Tim. 2:1-7)! If athletes can do this—so can Christians! It all depends on our goals—it depends on what we aim to win! Make no provision (forethought) for the flesh Rom. 13:14; 1 Pet. 2:11). Sin is lawlessness. The very attitude of rebelliousness or lawlessness can so rule our minds that it rules what we use our body for! When rebellion becomes the focus of our thinking—when resisting God’s word controls our thinking, it will inevitably be expressed through our bodies. Notice how often the word obedience follows in this context!!! The essence of death to sin is surrender of mind and body to God’s will!

Are people able to keep from yielding to sin? YES! There would be no validity to

the Bible at all if YES were not the answer. God would have no right to declare human beings condemned and subject to judgment if they could not help from yielding to sin. But, unbelieving philosophies and psychologies are based on and preach that man is unable to keep from yielding to what God calls sin. They teach that man is “trapped” on the “biological freight-train” of determinism. Man, they say, is nothing more than a biological-materialistic animal and his every action is determined by predictable responses of the organism to its environmental stimuli. Human reflexes, they contend, are “conditioned responses” like Pavlov’s dog! Therefore, the human body merely responds to pre-determined behavioral patterns—and they prove their absurd theory by experimentation with mice and monkeys. That is why the Bible is so unpalatable to public school curricula—to a whole world which has swallowed the evolutionary lie in the news media (T.V. and motion picture entertainment, music, literature, and so-called “science”). However, apart from the Bible, there have been enough instances in history of people who have not yielded to environmental stimuli to prove that humans may, or may not, yield according to his own choices. People may keep from yielding to sin by valuing righteousness more highly! They do this by faith in what they consider to be righteousness. Some value this world and yield to it—others value the next world and yield to that (see Col. 3:1-4). Paul fought this battle within himself constantly (Rom. 7:13-25) and concluded that his victory over the temptation to yield to the flesh could only be found through faith in the vicarious atonement of Jesus Christ (Rom. 8:1-39).

That “obedience” which leads to righteousness is the obedience to God’s revealed will—the Bible. It is obedience from the heart (mind, soul). Peter wrote, “His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him (Christ) who called us to his own glory and excellence” (2 Pet. 1:3). And through obeying this we escape the corruption that is the world and are made partakers of the divine nature (2 Pet. 1:4). Paul wrote, “All scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work” (2 Tim. 3:16-17). Catch the emphasis on “knowing, teaching, training, reproof in the scriptures.” Men do not need to make up any more rules of behavior than those contained in the Bible! In order to produce righteousness in people all that needs to be done is to get them to believe and obey the Bible! Of course, what is to be obeyed and how it is to be obeyed, requires a proper understanding and that requires simply a common-sense hermeneutical (interpretation) approach to the Bible. No study and no teaching results in no righteousness!!! Righteousness does not come mystically, emotionally, by osmosis—men and women are not automatically righteous. The “obedience which leads to righteousness” is tough, difficult, narrow and costly (this is how Jesus said it would be). God does not deceive us about this. He declares plainly in the Bible that it is the “way of the cross!” Jesus also warns us to “count the cost” before we “sign on.”

The “standard of teaching” to which Christians become obedient is literally, in the Greek text, *tupon didaches*, or “model of doctrine.” This does not refer exclusively to baptism, but to the whole Gospel—the entire New Testament. That doctrinal pattern to which Christians become obedient is the “good doctrine” which Paul advocated that Timothy nourish himself with (1 Tim. 4:6). It is the “sound doctrine” which elders must be able to



instruct people in (Titus 1:9) and confute those who contradict it. It is the “sound doctrine” which evangelists must be able to teach (Titus 2:1). That “doctrinal model” to which Christians become obedient is “the faith once for all delivered unto the saints” Jude 3. It is the “perfect law of liberty James 1:22-25 (Greek *nomon teleion ton tes eleutherias*, or “the law as it has reached God’s fulfilled goal or aim—i.e., the New Covenant). The church must make no apologies for “indoctrinating” people with the Bible! That is the church’s business! “Indoctrination” is not a dirty word! Some of its synonyms are “education, instruction, training, development, preparation, teaching.” The church must not apologize that there is a “law of Christ” since that is what the New Testament says (1 Cor. 9:21; Gal. 6:2). The world of unbelief abhors the idea of anyone being “indoctrinated”—they do not want children in the schools to be “indoctrinated” and that is why they are graduating illiterates today! The church has only one reason for existence—indoctrinating people with the Biblical “model of doctrine” (i.e., the law of Christ) by precept and practice! It exists for no other reason!

Is righteousness slavery? YES! Paul says it is! He wrote that Christians have been set free from sin and have become slaves of righteousness (Rom. 6:18). Righteousness is something the Christian is to serve! It is not merely something to be enjoyed vicariously. Passiveness will not produce the kind of righteousness Paul writes about here. Righteousness has boundaries, limitations and parameters. Every “salve” is bound, limited, enslaved to serve. A slave’s life is not his own—he is bought with a price and belongs to his master. When slaves are released from one master, and become bound to another, the new master insists on the slave being obligated to loyally obey and serve him. Christians are bound to Christ because he purchased them (Acts 20:28; 1 Cor. 6:19-20), and thus they owe him their loyal, obedient service. But the crucial issue in Romans 6 is that men must acknowledge they will be slaves to either sin or righteousness! No morally responsible human being is free of slavery. All human beings are slaves of either Satan or Christ! The Bible consistently divides mankind into two classes: wise or foolish—sheep or goats—sons of God or sons of the devil—children of light or children of darkness—those on the right or those on the left—believers or unbelievers—saved or lost. Whose slave are YOU? Whose slave is your NEIGHBOR? If both sin and righteousness are slavery, what’s the difference and why choose one over the other? That’s for every human being to decide on the basis of the information he may have!

There are two ways people become convinced that the wages of sin is death: (a) by experience (guilt, or “suffering the due penalty of their errors,” i.e., suffering the consequences); (b) by Divine revelation from God—i.e., the Bible. Paul asks in 6:21, “But then what return did you get from the things of which you are now ashamed?” The word “return” is a translation of the Greek word *karpon* which literally means, “fruit.” Paul is saying that experience should teach men that there is no benefit (i.e., good “fruit”), either physical or psychological from practicing what the Bible delineates as sin! In other words, there are no good consequences to sin! But, ultimately, people must believe the revelation of God (the Bible) in order to be convinced that sin (one sin, or many sins, and all sin) pays wages of death. Some men seem to escape immediate consequences of wickedness (as Solomon observes in Ecclesiastes and David observes in some of the Psalms). Some are therefore



led to conclude they have escaped the wages of sin forever! Persuading men they are lost is the first and most significant part of the Gospel! “Be not deceived, God is not mocked— whatever a man sows, that shall he also reap” (Gal. 6:7-8). It is as Paul says here in Rom. 6:21, “The end (Greek telos, “the final goal, the completion”) of those things (sin) is death.” But to become slaves of Christ brings a return (Greek, karpon “fruit” or consequences) of sanctification, and its end (Gr. telos, final goal, or) is eternal life.

## TEACHER'S NOTES

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### ROMANS 7:1-25

The point of the allegory in 7:1-3 is that when a man is united to Christ it is as if he were freed from his first spouse (the Law) by death and is married to Christ. True marriage is a relationship experienced and lived on the level of love, fidelity, trust, loyalty, work and selflessness. True Christianity is on the same level! Of course, there are times in the best human marriage where feelings are hurt, where presumptions are made, but only occasionally and not as a rule. Loving spouses, do not, in their deepest beings, want to hurt one another—and when they know they have, they repent and seek forgiveness. So it is with our relationship to Christ. He cares for us more than our own wives and husbands. He does not “condemn” as the Law does. Our service to him, therefore, should be on the highest level of sensitivity to pleasing him. My wife’s slightest wish is (supposed to be) a task I do with pleasure and even seek ways to go beyond her expectations! I certainly do not want to be the kind of spouse that tries his best to get by with the least possible, or to seek ways to completely ignore her wishes! Yet, that may be our attitude toward God and Christ! That certainly was the attitude of those who sought justification by their legalistic traditions about the Law of God. The Pharisees spent their whole lives nit-picking with their “traditions” about how to circumvent the “letter” of the Law. The “spirit” of God’s law is obedience because of love and grace.

The law, itself, does not arouse sinful passions! Else the law is guilty of complicity in sin! Moses E. Lard, op.cit “Now, had this desire (to lawless-sin) never been in motion previously to the law? Had it remained latent in all human breasts prior to that time? No one can so think. It existed before the law as certainly as after it; nor was it less active then than subsequently. The law then neither created it nor excited it. The law merely declared it to be sin, or made it known as such...our sinful desires worked in our members when we were in (minded-toward) the flesh. Indeed, the proof of being under the flesh is the degree of activity of these desires. Many of them, it is true, are innocent, except when in excess; and all are harmless when kept dormant or under proper restraint. But whenever they are allowed to riot beyond bounds and over right, then they become deeply sinful and dangerous.” These desires still work in our flesh to a certain extent, otherwise we would be without sin. The difference between our former state and present (i.e. now that we are Christians) is—before, those desires ruled us; now we let God’s word (his Spirit) rule them and desire to be like Jesus. We are still in the flesh, but not ruled by it. The overall desire of our lives must be that with the fruit of the Spirit, self-control, we control the flesh. The exceptions are to be unpremeditated and unwilling. But without the grace of Christ, those in the flesh are sure to sin, and being under law, they are sure to be condemned, and without hope. The great IMPERATIVE—be released from the law, be “united” or joined to Christ and learn changed desires!

If we are “discharged” from the law, why can’t we do as we please? Because,

considering the scope of our deliverance it is not a question of pleasing self, but “How may I please the one who so graciously and perfectly delivered me?” I didn’t deliver myself—no reward is due for my deliverance, so why should I please myself? My deliverance is absolute, eternal, blessed, glorious and rich beyond comparison, so I have no need to add anything to it. My deliverance is from such a terrible and eternal bondage in torments, my Deliverer, Jesus Christ, deserves my life as an offering to please him (see Rom. 12:1-2). This is what Paul means in Romans 12:1-2 when he says, “I beg you, brethren, by (because of) the mercies of God, that you give your bodies to him as a living sacrifice, consecrated and acceptable by him as an act of intelligent worship. And do not let the world around you squeeze you into its own mold, but let God re-mold your minds from within so that you may prove in practice that the plan of God for you is good, meets all his demands and moves towards the goal of true maturity.” (J. P. Phillips). The love of Christ constrains us from pleasing ourselves (2 Cor. 5:14). We must feel deeply obligated to please our neighbor for his good, to edify him, for even Christ pleased not himself (Rom. 15:1-2). The refugee who comes to America, delivered from political bondage, desires to please America, not himself!

Throughout this text, sin is personified. SIN IS A PERSON (SATAN) WHO TAKES ADVANTAGE OF HUMAN BEINGS! It is Satan (remember the Garden of Eden) who excites wrong or excessive desires in human beings. The law says, “You shall not desire what God prohibits” and Satan takes advantage of this to excite in us the very thing which the law forbids. There is no “thing” that is sin—who then is it that performs the office here ascribed to “sin”? It is not human nature (God made that good)—it is not the law of God—that is holy. IT IS SATAN! Without law, “sin” is dead. Without law, Satan is powerless! The person who is “married” to Christ—who is delivered from the law—is one who resists being excited to disobey. The Christian is always excited to obey! His thrill, his obsession, his constant quest is, “How can I please my Master, Jesus Christ?” It is not the “commandment” (law) itself that deceives. It is Satan who takes advantage of the fact (or presence) of the commandment and he deceives. Satan does the deceiving—neither God nor his commandments are deceiving! The thread that runs through the whole Bible is that the only power Satan has is deception. And he takes advantage of every reality (God’s law, man’s nature) to accuse. But if Christ delivers us from the law, Satan cannot accuse—all advantage (his only power) is taken away (see Heb. 2:14-15; 1 Jn. 3:8, etc.). With deliverance from ignorance by the truth as it is in Christ, and from the incomplete revelation of the law of Moses, Satan’s power to deceive is broken!

YES! I have difficulty understanding my own actions! I do not have difficulty admitting them. I could not deny them if I wished—my conscience would not allow it! I may camouflage them from others, but I cannot hide them from myself (or from God). J. B. Phillips paraphrases Rom. 8:15, “My own behavior baffles me.” Moses Lard says in his commentary on Romans, “I am a compound of contrarities and conflicts. I have a nature without and a nature within that antagonizes each other. I sometimes obey this, and sometimes that, which renders my life abnormal and peculiar...the chronicle of my life is an enigma to all except my fellows in Christ. They alone lead this life; and they alone that live it understand it.” What is enigmatic to me is the same thing that baffled the apostle Paul. I do

believe in Christ and his word. I do thank him with all the sincerity I know for his gracious redemption. And I really do want to please him. So, why do I sometimes do those things I know, without a doubt, his word says displease him? Many is the time I have searched the depths of my heart and asked, “Do you really love God, or are you just playing at all this?” Lane Adams, in his book, *How Come It’s Taking Me So Long to Get Better*, says, “Conversion is like an invasion and the Christian life is like a war...the Spirit of Christ invades us and establishes a beach-head in our lives...there is a sincere but mistaken form of evangelism which gives the impression that the total conquest of the ‘island’ is accomplished by the mere invasion...the battle for the island called ‘You’ is the long-range process of maturing...the move for maturity involves the word of God helping us to expose and face the garbage in our unconscious minds—the more you advance the front line of God’s invading force, the broader the front gets...This means that the more we are occupied by God the greater our view is of the corruption that yet remains with us!...We get more and more of a revelation of what we’re really like on the inside as the invading force of God begins to penetrate the unconscious. It’s not a pretty picture that we find, but we are able to face it because of our position...the beach-head is secured, the enemy will be conquered, unless we totally capitulate.” Mr. Adams says the Christian life is an ongoing conquest of territory occupied by the “enemy—Satan” and God goes about it by first establishing a “beach-head” then comes the “break-out” and then the “slow advance” until that glorious day when Jesus comes and the conquest is completed!

Every time I commit a sin, I do what I do not wish to do. The law requires me not to do exactly what I do not wish to do. Thus the law and I agree—and by my desire to keep from doing what the law forbids me to do, I endorse the law as right. And that is the experience of most of the human race, whether they all admit it or not! People endorse the law as right simply by acknowledging guilt. How many times have you heard, or said yourself, “I didn’t mean to do that,” or, “I slipped or mis-spoke—I didn’t mean to say that,” or “I wish I had not said that”? We agree that God’s law is right even when we do what we regret having done! And those who have set their minds on the flesh, and do not submit to God’s law, by their very emphatic insistence in opposing it, endorse it! This is probably the most frustrating thing in a Christian’s life! Agreeing that the law of God is good—desiring to do it—and finding oneself, every day, doing just the opposite! If it is frustrating to one who has been a Christian a long time or to one called to be an apostle—think how devastating it could be to a newly converted adult who has gathered the impression (perhaps all on his own) that once one becomes a Christian the sin problem is all taken care of!

Paul does not mean that the flesh is no good at all—nor does he ever say it is altogether good. The flesh is neutral—amoral. The flesh (body) becomes good or bad according to how we allow it to be used. If we are willing for the devil to deceive us to use it as an instrument of rebellion and lawlessness toward God and man, it becomes bad. If we are willing to use it for God and Christ as an instrument of righteousness it becomes good. There is no blaming the flesh (body). Jesus said, “The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.” Jesus did not intend the blame to be put on the flesh, but on the spirit which should control it! But because the flesh is, in composition, earthly (i.e., transitory, passing away), of necessity

it has desires and demands which are constitutionally of the earth. The body focuses on material things for its gratification, satisfaction and survival. That is the way God made it. There is nothing wrong with the way the body was made—to serve the purpose for which it was made—so long as the body does not rule or enslave the person inside the body! That is what Paul (and all of us) finds happening on occasion. We find ourselves being ruled and enslaved by this thing in which we reside (our “tent” or “tabernacle” see 2 Cor. 5:1ff). It begins to take over our “life,” our “thinking or perspective,” and our “will.” We “will” to do one thing but we find our will lacking in the power to resist the pull of the body. And the pull of the body is very strong. God made it that way, too! Why? To form in us the beauty of self-control—to send us on our “shake-down” cruise and get us ready for heaven’s portals! When U.S. Navy ships are first built and “commissioned” to become part of the fleet, the first thing they do is take “shake-down” cruises to find all the faults and extraneous things on board the ship in order to get rid of them and make the vessel “ship-shape” and ready for action. All of life is our “shake-down” cruise.

When Paul said he found sin dwelling in him, he evidently did not mean that he was completely dominated by sin (Satan). He certainly did not live that way. But he was telling us he was still in the process of allowing Christ to “slowly advance and occupy” the territory held by the “enemy.” What Paul means is what he said in 7:21—when he wants to do right he finds it always the case that evil “lies close at hand.” And where does evil lie close at hand? In the very nature of the body’s disadvantages which the devil tries to exploit to his hateful cause of opposition to God and mankind. The earthly body is an “open door” for the devil through which to spring upon the “us” inside. The human body has no resisting power of its own against the deceit and cunning of the devil. It can’t resist on its own! It has to be made to resist by the person living in it. Thank God, the Christian is promised the assistance of a Paraclete (a “Helper”—the Holy Spirit of Christ). The flesh is not only weak—it is powerless itself! The flesh is not only powerless, it is oriented toward a destiny or goal that makes it extremely vulnerable to sin (vulnerable to being exploited in direct opposition to the unseen, untouchable, non-taste-able values of an unseen reality). But the Bible tells us that while God made the flesh vulnerable to being exploited in opposition to his will, at the same time God so constituted the spirit of man so that man could control the flesh and overcome this vulnerability and resist temptation to exploit the body. To do that, God offers man the aid of his Holy Spirit invested in us through the word of the Holy Spirit—the Bible! God allowed his Son to be incarnated, beginning as a baby, going through puberty and teen years and adult manhood, to prove that it could be done. And his Son did it as a perfect human being, earning the right to offer his victory to us vicariously through our faith in him! THAT IS THE GOOD NEWS—THE GOSPEL! We are “more than conquerors through him who loved us.”

If a person delights in the law of God, in his inmost self, why doesn’t he do it? Believe me, I ask myself that almost every day! This frustration, except for the grace of Christ, would be almost unbearable. I believe this frustration is the cause for many “cases” of psychological aberration, and perhaps even of suicide! Lane Adams in his book, *Lord, How Come It’s Taking Me So Long to Get Better?* puts it this way: “The deeper problem is that there is a great section of us with which we are not in touch, in the unconscious mind.

Until we get in touch we can't give that part of ourselves to God. Perhaps this is what Paul is talking about when he says, 'In my mind I want to be God's willing servant but instead I find myself still enslaved occasionally to sin...there is something else deep within me in my lower nature that is at war with my mind and wins the fight and makes me a slave to the sin that is still within me. So, you see how it is; my new life tells me to do right but the old nature that is still inside me loves to sin.' We can take comfort in the fact that that which is hidden to us is revealed to God and that too is already under the blood of the cross of Christ. The knowledge of forgiveness in that area of our lives is applied when we are enabled by the penetration of the word of God to see what is wrong, admit it, and claim the sweet forgiveness that has already been made available." I am, as a Christian, constantly wishing to do right. I read the word of God, delight in its purity and rightness, and desire to do it. But I find another "law" in my body, at war against the law of my "mind." Paul spoke often of this "war" within (see Rom. 8:5-8; 13:14; Gal. 5:16-18) and Peter spoke of it (1 Pet. 2:11), and James referred to it (James 4:1-10). The "law" which I experience in my body is the constant tendency or pull of the flesh to go out of control toward its earthly orientation. This tendency makes me captive, sometimes! I admit that I sometimes turn over the control of this body to its tendencies and am willing for it to be abused, exploited, even when I know it is contrary to that precious word of God! It is not what I want to do—but I am weak! I need help! I need help in the form of unmitigated, unlimited, unending grace! I admit I do not have unlimited power in myself. I admit that I am not my own Creator nor even my own Sustainer. I am dependent—not independent! Romans the 8th chapter tells me that is precisely why God subjected the creation (including my human body) to futility and decay, so I would cry out in hope for mercy as I await the redemption of my body. To have me respond to this futility ("war") as a depending, loving, undeserving, but believing and hoping prodigal son, pleases God! As one very perceptive man once said: "As I see it, God doesn't change me in order to love me. He loves me in order to change me."

How can Paul talk of being "delivered" and then say he served the law of God with his mind, but with his flesh he served the law of sin? He can say that because he trusted in the unconditional, unmerited, grace of God. It is crucial to the Christian life that we understand our position IN THE MIND AND EYES OF GOD is perfect from the moment we believe and enter into covenant with him! The work of Jesus Christ achieves or secures that position for us. The work of the Holy Spirit, in cooperation with our spirit, is to remedy our alienated position! Scripture bears this out. Hebrews 10:14 says, "For by that one offering he made forever perfect in the sight of God all those whom he is making holy." If we do not understand this crucial matter we shall be forever plagued by the impression that our salvation is going to be withdrawn for non-performance. We must trust that our security is based on what Jesus is and what he has done, rather than on what we are and what we have done, or left undone. Could it be that as human beings we have been so bound up in manipulative love that is always swapping things that we are dumbfounded when we are confronted with a Divine Love that can't be shut off by non-performance? True, we get more and more of a revelation of what we're really like on the inside as the invading force of God begins to penetrate the unconscious, and it's not a pretty picture—BUT WE ARE ABLE TO FACE IT AND GET THE VICTORY BECAUSE OF OUR POSITION!



## TEACHER'S NOTES

prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

### ROMANS 8:1-39

Yes! There is a “law of the Spirit of God.” It is for those who are in Christ. It is called “law” because it is Divine Fiat. It is God’s sovereign “law” in the truest sense of the word because it is a declaration of the divine will! Christians must not think they are free of all “law” for there is a New Testament “law of Christ” (see 1 Cor. 9:21; Gal. 6:2; James 1:25). The difference between the “law of the Spirit in Christ” from the “law of Moses” is the difference between a sovereign “administration” of death and a sovereign “administration” of life (see 2 Cor. 3:7-18). In the “law of the Spirit in Christ” God has decreed LIFE! In the law of Moses, God had decreed DEATH. Actually, in the law of Moses God decreed life for anyone who could keep it perfectly—but only One did, Jesus Christ. So, by the meritorious work of Christ’s perfect human-life keeping the law of Moses, God could justifiably decree (make an edict) of “LIFE” through grace! The “law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus” is a divine fiat abrogating the sentence upon human sin and at the same time enacting by divine fiat a “sentence” of grace. God made this decree when Jesus said on the cross, “It is finished!” It is God’s declaration that believers are free from all other “laws” (including the law of Moses) which ultimately declares all humans to be condemned to guilt and torments forever. The “law of the Spirit” is a declaration of grace. Therefore, it is not a “law” through which we must earn salvation by perfect obedience. Otherwise it would be a sham declaration, a false decree. God cannot be false! He means it! We are free from the penalty of sin in the new “law (edict) of grace.” Such emancipation demands the response of sincere, responsible, serving, and constraining love. **THE “LAW” OF LOVE IS MORE BINDING THAN ANY OTHER LAW.** This is typified in human marriage where the “law of love” is more binding than the “law of civil government.”

A person “walks” or “lives” according to the “law of the Spirit of life in Christ” by following the Holy Spirit’s directions! And where does the Spirit give directions? In the Bible! Presently, the Holy Spirit of God verbalizes no where else (unless one wishes to call “Divine providence” the directions of the Spirit of God and no one is able to discern the will of God in providential events without the guidance of the Scriptures). All the New Testament is a book of directions on how to love God and Christ. It can’t be said any plainer than John the apostle says it in his first epistle, “For this is the love of God that we keep his commandments” (1 Jn. 5:3). Human beings cannot, in the ultimate sense, define what love really is. Love is defined by God, in his commandments! This is essentially what Jesus was communicating to the apostles right before his death in John, chapters 14 through 17. He repeatedly said he would come back (in the Person of the Holy Spirit) to “guide” them in how to love him in return for his grace! Yes! Even the Old Testament law was a book of directions on how to love God. But it announced no provision for grace. Further, it provided no sufficient motivation (sacrifice of a Perfect Human Son, see Heb. 10) for a loving response. Its motivation was fear! That is why Paul says in the book of Hebrews that the New Covenant “is enacted upon better promises.” Both covenants were holy and righteous,

but the New Covenant is of the “law of the Spirit of life in Christ.” To walk or live according to the Spirit requires that people set their minds on the things of the Spirit (Rom. 8:5-8; Col. 3:1-4). God did not make us so that we can come under the “law of the Spirit” accidentally, or even incidentally. We are made so that we must give constant, specific, conscious, categorical attention of our minds to the word of God! To walk by the Spirit requires more than “being religious” or having a “holy sentiment.” God is the arbiter even of “sentiments” (i.e., feelings). The Bible tells us how we must feel (Num. 15:39; Deut. 8:17; Prov. 12:15; 14:12; 16:2; 21:2; 2 Cor. 5:16)

The mind that is set on the flesh cannot submit to God's law (8:7) because the two are opposed to one another. God is Spirit and Eternal, and flesh is earthly and passing away. Only the spiritual ultimately pleases God. “For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to prevent you from doing what you would” (Gal. 5:17; see also James 4:4). All that is fleshly and material—this whole universe and all other material universes, is are doomed to destruction (Rom. 8:18-25; 2 Pet. 3:8-13). Those who set their minds on the things of the flesh have a mind-set that contradicts God's word. All of us, even Christians, have to give some attention to the flesh while we are in this life. We are even exhorted to provide fleshly needs of others as a matter of spirituality! But the difference is in one's attitude toward these fleshly interests. Do we perceive them as indispensable? Do we devote all our best energies to them as if they were all we could ever have? Do they take precedence in our thinking and pursuit? If we lose them have we lost everything? No person can serve two masters! Masters demand absolute allegiance. Two masters give contradictory orders. Christians must give absolute allegiance to Christ and that which is spiritual. Even those fleshly necessities we have to engage in must focus ultimately on spiritual goals! We will set our minds on what we are convinced is most valuable. The task of re-directing one's mind-set is the task of convincing or persuading oneself (and others) that the next life is the most valuable goal!

We know we have the Spirit of God really dwelling in us or not according to the mind-set we have and according to the leading to which we have surrendered! If our minds and actions are led (guided, directed, focused on) by the desires of the flesh, we do not have the Spirit of God in us. If our minds and actions are led (guided, directed, focused on) the desires of God's Spirit (the Spirit's desires are delineated in the Scriptures), then we know we have God's Spirit in us. It is just that simple. It has nothing to do with miraculous manifestations, or “feelings” or “signs.” It has to do with what we think and do! If we sincerely, mentally, and practically, call upon God as “Father” then we have his Spirit in us. If God is our Father we will imitate him as beloved children, Eph. 5:1. We will seek his guidance, honor and praise him, and desire to please him at any cost to ourselves. When that is what we know about ourselves, then we know we have God's Spirit in us. Why do so many seek further proof (miraculous manifestations or “signs”) that they have the Spirit of God? (a) ignorance of what the Bible says; (b) seeking human glory (1 Cor. 12-14); (c) spiritual laziness; (d) spiritual immaturity—always wanting “instant holiness” without the endurance necessary to allow it to be developed. And anyone who has a Bible cannot put all

the blame for ignorance on some false teacher. Jesus placed a premium on “How you hear!” The responsibility for seduction by religious falsehood is at least half on the hearer!

God subjected (Greek *hupetage*, “ordained, assigned, disposed”) the creation to futility (Greek *mataioteti*, “vanity, void of result”) to induce a human longing for something abiding! God has certainly accomplished that! Just read Solomon’s frustration and futility in Ecclesiastes. All the serious and sincere expressions of humanity are toward a longing for something more abiding and more holy than this present creation. Man’s music, literature, art, even scientific endeavors, are the cries of the soul searching for “redemption.” The tragedy is that the huge majority of man’s searching has been futile (void of result) also! Most people have ignored (often deliberately) the revelation of God which alone gives the final and fulfilling answer to the futility of this world, and the promise of an eternal life beyond this earth which produces hope. God told Adam (Gen. 3:17ff) that the earth was cursed because of man’s sin. But at the same time God promised the defeat of Satan through the seed of the woman. Paul tells us here that the whole creation (which would include animal, vegetable and mineral worlds) will be set free from its bondage to decay (Greek *phthoras*, “corruption, rot, decomposition”). Everything we have good now is really rotting—but some day it will all be set free from its decay and it will be perfect. Isn’t that a blessed thought? God is going to create a “new heaven and earth in which righteousness alone will dwell” (2 Pet. 3:10-13).

The Spirit of God intercedes for us because we are so ignorant! We want many things. And we pray for them. But God knows that most of the things we want would prove to be extremely harmful to us. On the other hand, we never ask for many things which would be the greatest blessings we could ever have, so the Spirit asks God on our behalf. Furthermore, there are times when we groan (Greek, *stenagmois*, “grieve, moan, agonize”) in the deepest recesses of our souls for something from God for which we can find no expression—they are needs and wants for which human language is inadequate. I remember such a time when both my parents had died within 9 months of one another and I had to go into their empty house just across the street from me every evening (like I had done so often before when they were there) where I cried incoherent groans. And that was all I could utter. I could find no words to express my grief and loneliness. I can imagine that those who lose a child or a spouse find some relief in this promise! What a believer cannot express, the Comforter (the Holy Spirit) expresses for him, and God knows exactly what the Spirit expresses, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. Christ and the Holy Spirit are One and the Same Person. So Rom. 8:34 indicates that our intercessor is Christ. His earthly experience insures us that he is a faithful and merciful high priest (Heb. 4:14-16; 5:5-10; 7:26-28, etc.). This passage in Romans 8 teaches us that all praying is not done in a formal way of bowing the head, at a specific time of the day—some is even without words!

Yes! God does work in everything for good with those who love him.! That may be hard to believe at times—even for “believers.” But there are thousands of “case histories” to document this in the Bible! And the Bible is not myth, philosophy or romance. It is history!

Every human experience possible is experienced in the Bible, and for those who loved God, he worked it for good. Remember what Joseph said after having been assaulted, sold into slavery in Egypt, and sent to prison for something he did not do? He said to his brothers who had sold him into slavery, “As for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today” (Gen. 50:20). Paul said much the same about his persecutions and “near death” experiences in Asia Minor (2 Cor. 1:8-11). Every human circumstance possible is confronted in the Bible, and for those who loved God, he worked it for good. And do you know what God is doing in all these experiences and circumstances for those who love him? He is slowly, but surely, molding those who “experience” these circumstances into the image (likeness) of his Son Jesus. Do you want to be like Jesus? Wouldn’t it be the very ultimate happiness and blessedness to be like him? That is God’s purpose (Greek prothesis, “set forth, ordained, intention”). In every experience, in every circumstance in your life, it is God’s intention to make you to be like Jesus. But you notice, he is working with those who are called. We must participate in this molding process. Our part is to love God with all our being no matter what the experience or circumstance. No wonder that Paul said earlier in this chapter (8:18) that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. It will be a glory like that of Jesus! An article in the Joplin, MO, Globe newspaper, March, 2008, entitled Emotional Fitness, declared, “Sometimes, it seems, life can be best described as learning how to get from one problem to the next as gracefully as possible. For most of us, every day produces a variety of challenges. It’s not how you look at it or what your attitude is; it’s actually more about accepting that life is never going to be perfect...Whatever your issue...perhaps the best advice is to remember that a life without problems is one that is not being fully lived.” The Christian has a never-absent Helper, God’s Holy Spirit. When we do not know how to pray about our “problems” The Comforter (God’s Holy Spirit) intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words...according to the will of God” (Rom. 8:26-27).

Yes! We are predestined to be saved or lost! BUT NOT IN THE “PREDESTINATION” OF JOHN CALVIN! The “predestination” (Greek proorisen, “predetermination”) connects contextually to the purpose (Greek prothesis) of God for those who love him and with whom he works. Loving and cooperating involves freedom of will and freedom of choice. “Predestination” here does not mean God does something to suspend man’s freedom of choice. God does not save any who do not choose to be saved. What then has God “predestined”? God “predetermined” his purpose. His purpose was to conform men who love him and cooperate with him into the image of his Son, Jesus. God “predetermined” this redemptive purpose before he created the world (1 Pet. 1:20). God “chose us in him (Christ) before the foundation of the world” Eph. 1:4ff. God made a divine, absolute, immutable determination before he ever created the world that he would save all men “IN CHRIST.” All those “outside” of Christ would be lost. We choose to be “in” or “out.” The predetermining of God for salvation has to do with where and how—not who! GOD WANTS ALL HUMAN BEINGS TO BE SAVED (2 Pet. 3:9; Rev. 22:17). That is the issue we shall deal with in Romans chapters 9,10, & 11. The Jews thought God had “predestined” them to be saved because they were Jews by genetic descent. But God says (Rom. 10) salvation is by faith, and faith comes by hearing the word of Christ—not by some irresistible work of grace!

If God will give his Son for our justification, he will surely be able to work with us in all things to fulfill his purpose of transforming us into the likeness of his Son. If God will give his Son, he certainly will continue this transforming work in us until he glorifies us with Christ's glory! Nothing in all of creation can stop that! Not tribulation, not distress, not persecution, not famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword. Death cannot kill God's purpose in us. This fragile earthly life does not make it impossible for God to fulfill his work in us. Angels could not keep God from it! There is not a "principality" (Greek archai, "ruler") or power, present or future (communism, Islamic-terrorist, pornographic, nuclear bomb, holocaust, Satanic or demonic) that can stop God's purpose for you if you continue to love him and cooperate with him in his work in you. Go as high as you want (6 billion light years into space, on any planet, in any galaxy), go as deep as you want (into hell itself), go anywhere in that which has been created (and that includes everything and everyone), and nothing can separate us from God's purpose—EXCEPT our refusal to love him and cooperate with him (i.e., keep his commandments). So long as you love him and seek him, he will not quit on you! He will continue to fulfill his purpose in you every moment of every day of your life here—in every experience and every circumstance. He is always working to give you what you really want—to be like Jesus!

Being more than a conqueror refers to all these experiences and circumstances Paul has listed! Moses Lard writes, "Our sufferings are short-lived; they quickly end. We not only live through them; but we shall live forever beyond them. Nay, we are even crowned over them, with immortality and eternal life." In all these experiences and circumstances of life, God gives us not only victory, but sovereignty. All these things shall be worked together for good by God to serve us. Our "enemies" are not only defeated, but they become our servants, working to bring us to the glory of Christ. This is exactly how God made a remnant of the Jews "more than conquerors" of the hostile experiences and circumstances and including faithful people during the Old Testament times (especially in the exodus and the exiles). That is what the book of Revelation predicted for John the apostle and the churches of Asia Minor about the Roman empire. God would give the church victory over Rome and Rome would become their servant to produce the character and glory of Christ in those early Christians who believed the Revelation and "kept their first love," and had the "mark of God" upon them (Rev. 13:10; 14:12). It is our calling to believe that in all these things we are more than conquerors—that they are actually serving God's purpose for us!



## TEACHER'S NOTES

prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

### ROMANS 9:1-33

Attention! All the way through Romans chapters 9-10-11, Paul is discussing the sovereignty of God in the program of divine redemption. Paul is NOT discussing the alleged “last-days,” “rapture,” “millennium,” or return of the Jews to Palestine! Paul is so absolutely certain that Jews are lost without Christ he states that he is willing to be “accursed from Christ” for their sake! Would you be? Would it do any good? NO! That is unequivocally the point of these three chapters! No human relationship (family, race, culture) can avail for salvation. The reception of God’s salvation is absolutely a personal choice. It has to be accessed through new covenant membership made available through the covenant terms stipulated (i.e., by hearing the Gospel) by Jesus Christ and his apostles in the New Testament scriptures. The only redemptive-vicarious work acceptable to God is the work of Jesus Christ. No other being, human or angelic, can “stand in” or atone for another human being before God’s judgment. Baptizing for the dead, lighting candles for the dead, saying masses for the dead, are all to no avail for salvation. Salvation is decided by individual choice to accept the vicarious-perfect atonement of Christ by faith and loyalty to his word while living in this probationary life on earth! That is the doctrine taught from Genesis to Revelation! The closest physical or genetic proximity to hallowed places or people will not win us favor with God (see Luke 13:22-30). Even if Jesus walked in the streets of Joplin and ate dinner at your house, it would not make points with God for you unless you personally surrender to his vicarious atonement for you and repented of your unbelief and disobedience, and became a willing slave to righteousness as he has revealed it. Willing as we might be to go to hell for someone else, we can’t!

It is not God’s intention to save Jews simply because they were chosen by him in O.T. times. Granted, they had many blessings from God. They had many advantages that the other races of mankind did not have. They had a revealed covenant from Almighty God. God spoke directly to them sometimes audibly, but most often through human prophets in a human-language-revelation. They had been treated as “sons” in a special filial kinship. They had specific rituals and directions on how to please God in worship. Promises were made to them. Spiritual leaders were providentially given to them. And, above all, their race would have the unique privilege of bearing the Messiah (Anointed Savior) of all mankind into the world! But such privileges carried with them awesome responsibilities! Such privileges were not to be taken for granted! They were not to be presumed upon! Such privileges did not call for arrogance and self-righteousness, but humility, respectfulness, love, integrity, and faithful stewardship! God did not give them “rights”—but privileges! A consignment of gifts of this magnitude proves that the Giver is not assigning prerogatives, but liabilities! There was nothing in their Jewishness by genetic or biological make-up that prompted God to offer them all these privileges. It was only by the sovereign decision and choice of God in response to a “faithful family” of mankind (Abraham and some of his descendants) that God decided to give such privileges! American Christians had better take heed! American Christians do not have



“rights,” only “privileges”! They won’t go to heaven just because they are Americans! Even the “unalienable rights” (life, liberty and proprietorship) of Americans “endowed” by their Creator (and not the Declaration of Independence) are privileges and not rights!

Not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel, and not all are children of Abraham because they are his descendants (Greek sperma, “seed”). God “reckons” (puts on record) “the children of the promise” as “children” of God (i.e., “seed” of Abraham). It is God’s sovereign choice to place people in this world, with all attending circumstances, as he wills. God alone decrees the acceptable method or process of redeeming all creation. God proved that he makes arbitrary choices about men’s circumstances when he chose Jacob over Esau while they were still in Rebecca’s womb (Hosea 12:2-6; Malachi 1:2-5)—before they had done anything—good or bad. But at the same time, while God arbitrarily determines his plan of salvation, each man (even Jacob and Esau) must choose personally the promises of God on God’s terms, otherwise they will be lost even if God has chosen them (like Jacob) for special circumstances. We have already studied how to become children of Abraham (Rom. 4), heirs of the promise. It is by the same kind of faith Abraham had. What Paul is saying in 9:6-13 is that salvation is through faith in the promised Messiah, and not in the earthly circumstances of Jewishness (which was chosen arbitrarily by God without regard to anything Jacob or Esau had done). God alone chooses whether I will be born an American or Russian, with all the attending circumstances. But I must choose, whether American or Russian, to believe in God’s Son for my salvation!

God discriminates! Discrimination is not evil unless it is done for evil purposes. Everybody discriminates and they do it constantly (even “minority groups”)! Life consists of discriminating! But the word “discrimination” has come to be one of those words we use to defame and slander others. God discriminates, or chooses, according to his sovereign and arbitrary will. He does so in order that his “purpose” (Greek, prothesis—see Rom. 8:28-30—his “predetermined” plan—see Acts 2:23) to save those who become conformed to the image of his Son is carried out. God discriminates in order that the “purpose or work of Christ” which he “elected” (chose) might remain his choice and not that of human beings! In other words, God discriminates and chooses the circumstances of men in this world in order that men do not get the idea they can change God’s arbitrary plan of redemption for the next world! It is an imperative part of our salvation that we learn to trust in these sovereign choices of God in the circumstances of our lives. If we cannot trust him in these, how can we trust him in that which as yet is only in promise in heaven? God has revealed an arbitrary scheme of redemption. Men must get over the idea they have “rights” and that they can twist, change, alter, revise, update, make relevant, or improve God’s redemptive program! People must come to total trust in God’s word as it is—in human language in the Bible. God has made his choices about all that human beings need to know pertaining to life and godliness (2 Pet. 1:3-4). His word is able to equip all people for every good work, and to make them complete (2 Tim. 3:16-17). And it is all by God’s arbitrary discrimination!

God does not harden any human’s heart (including Pharaoh’s) by any direct exertion of divine power upon it. Quite to the contrary. As long as God operated on Pharaoh

him through the plagues, Pharaoh feigned repentance and granted Moses' request, or was inclined to do so! But when God ceased to chasten Pharaoh through the plagues, Pharaoh quickly relapsed into his former hardness of heart. God hardened him, but only by withholding the influences which softened him! In this God was perfectly just and demonstrated it so that all might see, precisely what Pharaoh was, when left to himself, and how justly he deserved the punishment inflicted upon him. There is clear distinction between hardening a person's heart by a direct, divine act, and not softening it when the person is determined to keep it hard. The former, God never does; the latter he may or may not do as he chooses! Furthermore, God's right to use wicked men to accomplish his purposes is as unquestionable as his right to use good men. A man, by making himself wicked, does not annul the divine right to use him. God used Pharaoh, and Christ used Judas, because each was worthless for any end except the one which they chose. God could do nothing better with them than what he did and no one can question God's right to do that. God's intends to accomplish his purpose (Greek, prothesis, 8:28; 9:11) whether people are good or bad, obedient or disobedient. God will be true to himself, if every man is a liar (Rom. 3:4)! If people choose to be obedient, that would be God's preference; but if they choose to be disobedient, still he will fulfill his redemptive purpose for the world. God will not go back on his word, lie, or be thwarted by any human failure. At the moment Christ was dying on the cross, all humans had chosen disobedience of one sort or another (even his 12 disciples). He is not defeated by the disobedience of men. He will work through those who choose to believe if he can—through those who choose to disbelieve if he must! Other examples of God's use of unbelievers to fulfill his redemptive program may be seen in people like the king of Assyria (Isa. 10:5-10), Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon (Jer. 27:5ff; Dan. Chs. 1-4), Cyrus of Persia (Isa. Chs. 44-45), Alexander the Great (Dan. 8:1-21).

No human or thing can ultimately and finally resist the will of God! In the end, God will have his way! And even the mercy God shows does not determine salvation! God's mercy still leaves every person free to access salvation by his own will and actions. God showed mercy to Jacob, but after he had done that, it was no easier for Jacob to be saved than for Esau. And after God had rejected Esau, it was no harder for Esau to be saved than for Jacob. When a person has so corrupted and hardened himself (like Pharaoh) that it requires the exertion of miraculous power to subdue him, and that power has been exerted time after time without repentance coming, and when after this, God withholds the power, and Pharaoh still remains hardened, let no one charge injustice upon God! If God was unjust at all it would have been in his excessive kindness to such a man as Pharaoh! Where, in all the annals of time, did God ever do so much to soften the heart of a person as he did to soften that of Pharaoh? God has both the power and the right over his "clay" to make from it one vessel which he honors and one which he dishonors. God has the right to honor Isaac, and dishonor Ishmael; to honor Jacob and dishonor Esau; to honor the Jews and dishonor the Gentiles—or to turn around and honor the Gentiles and dishonor the Jews. All this he has the power and right to do; and if he does, who can question it? Honoring them has nothing, ultimately to do with their salvation—salvation depends on their choice, not God's—God has already "chosen" his redemptive program—"the ball is now in man's court." The fact that Esau had been conned out of the birthright by Rebekah and Jacob did not overpower Esau's capability to repent and receive God's approval—Esau refused to repent.

God has always determined (planned) to display his final, perfect wrath upon impenitence. He has continually demonstrated his ability (power) to do so, but during all the time from Eden until now he has been patiently bearing with the wicked and has not destroyed them utterly, even though they have certainly deserved it. By this longsuffering of God (2 Pet. 3:9), during which he has held off his perfect punishment, and has instead sent his Son to accomplish for humanity complete forgiveness and make the promise of eternal salvation available, he has shown the riches of his glory! God has shown this longsuffering and the riches of his glory upon all mankind. He has called both Jew and Gentile to this glory through the gospel. **MANKIND MUST RESPOND ACCORDING TO THE PARAMETERS OF THE DIVINE INVITATION—HEAR, BELIEVE, REPENT, CONFESS (SAY THE SAME AS GOD SAYS IN HIS WORD), AND BE IMMERSSED UNTO THE REMISSION OF SINS.** In calling to salvation, God is equally merciful to all. He sends to all the same Christ, the same Gospel; sends the same influences (providence) and to them; and presents the same incentives to respond and repent. It is the privilege of the Lord's church (that is Christians), to proclaim the riches of God's mercy, "...warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man mature in Christ...for this we must toil, striving with all the energy which God mightily inspires within us..." Col. 1:28-29. But did you know there are now 200 less Christian Church missionaries than there were in 1977? **WHY IS THE CHURCH RETREATING? WILL GOD CONSIDER US "VESSELS OF DISHONOR"? WILL GOD "CUT US OFF"? READ ROM. CH. 11!**

God certainly predicted he would make the Gentiles become "vessels unto honor" by extending to them (when they responded) his mercy in the O.T. prophets. Paul quotes from Hosea 2:23 (but see also Hosea 1:10-11). Actually, the entire context of Hosea 2:16-23 is Messianic. Hosea talks about the establishment of the church at Pentecost (Acts 2) and its incorporation of both Jews and Gentiles. But Hosea is not the only OT prophet who predicted that God would honor the Gentiles by extending to them his rich mercy and calling them to him through the gospel of the Messiah. Amos predicts it in Amos 9:11-12 (see Acts 15:16-17 for fulfillment); Joel predicts it in Joel 2:28-32 (see Acts 2:17-21 for fulfillment); Isaiah predicts it in so many passages we could not list them here. Other prophets predict it as well. Jesus alluded to God's call of the Gentiles a number of times in his teachings (Matt. 8:11-12; Jn. 10:16; etc.). Paul clearly says the Jews "hardened" themselves against the O.T. prophecies so that God would honor the Gentiles (Rom. 10:21; 11:7,25,31). The Jews made themselves, in effect, what Pharaoh made himself... "a vessel of wrath." And when the Jews hardened themselves, God still used them to serve his purpose of bringing redemption to the whole world. He would have preferred to work through the Jews as "honorable vessels" but he worked through them as "dishonorable vessels" to show all the world that he is not defeated by their disobedience!

So, what is the conclusion to all Paul has been saying? It is this—The Gentiles who never had the O.T. revelation of God and never knew how to seek justification as God had promised it, have heard the gospel and seized God's justification by faith in Christ. But Israel, having a revelation of justification in the law of Moses, by faith, pursued it by self-righteous works and failed to reach it because their minds were fixed on what they thought

they had achieved instead of on what they should have believed! The Gentiles have pursued justification from a mind-set of crying out for mercy and grace. Most of the Jews pursued justification from a mind-set which boasted of meritorious achievement, or genetic descent! The Jews took God's law and picked at it, reworked it, revised it, and wrote voluminous human "traditions" to supplant it. Trying to find a "law" of their own making that they could keep and thereby claim self-meritorious justification, they lost the very God they professed to worship. That is why so many people today want to approach the Bible without a standard of hermeneutics! They want to "interpret" it autonomously—each man interpreting it according to his own standards. That way, each man can "make" himself a law and claim justification. What they are doing right, they will leave in the Bible—what they are not doing or are doing wrong, they will circumvent (by cunning and deviousness), thereby proving themselves to be meritoriously achieving. They will not let the Bible speak plainly and finally through correct hermeneutics because that would drive them to cry out for grace and mercy and make them depend, in faith, totally upon God for their justification!

The quotation from Isaiah 28:16 is used by Paul here because the refusal of the Jews to learn by rote (i.e., repetition) of the vicarious atonement for sin by the coming Messiah is exactly what Isaiah 28:16 is talking about. The behavior of the Jews did not "slip up on" God or take him by surprise! You see, the prophets (and especially Isaiah) repeatedly predicted that justification was by faith in the vicarious atonement God would make for man's sins (e.g., Isa. 53:1-12; 55:1-5). Substitutionary atonement is a concept that one does not learn by experience. It has to be learned through divine revelation. Isaiah says, "But who has heard our report?" Isaiah 28 is a description of the haughtiness, arrogance and rebellion of the Jews who rejected the "line upon line, precept upon precept" teaching of the prophets. The prophets taught over and over that mankind must throw itself upon the mercy of God and seek justification before him by faith in his Messianic-vicarious promises. The Jews could not bring themselves to such an humiliating posture before anyone, including God! God began laying that "stone" (the Messiah and his vicarious atonement) in "Zion" (the covenant people of God) long before Jesus was born. That "stone" of vicariousness was the very foundation of God's redemptive plan of the ages—and it was laid down back in the days of the Patriarchs—actually, clear back at Eden's disaster (see Gen. 3:15). It was typified in all the animal sacrifices! It was a doctrine that millions (including those who had the privilege of having it revealed to them) "stumbled" over and fell to destruction. And millions continue to "stumble and fall" over the "Stone" today! But those who believe (trust in) that doctrine (vicarious atonement by Jesus Christ) will not be put to shame—they will be justified and glorified.

## TEACHER'S NOTES

prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

### ROMANS 10:1-21

The focus of the Jewish zeal, as Paul said at the end of chapter 9, and says in 10:3, was their pursuit (Greek, diokon, “searching for like a hound”) of self-righteousness or justification by their “law-keeping.” Paul says of himself, before he became a Christian, “as to the law a Pharisee, as to zeal a persecutor of the church, as to righteousness under the law blameless” (Phil. 3:4-6). Whatever might be said about the Jews (especially, the Pharisees) it must be said they were zealous for self-justification. That could be said of a number of “religious” groups and individuals today! They have a great obsession to provide for their own justification by making their own laws, or by interpreting God’s revelation to fit their own pre-determined course of action. Paul calls all systems of justification by any law “unenlightened,” literally from the Greek text, ou kat’ epignosin, “not according to knowledge.” And when Paul says their zeal is not according to knowledge we must understand their ignorance to be, for the most part, deliberate. Paul has already stated the obduracy of the Jews in chapter 9—and he will continue to document it in chapters 10 & 11. Jesus made this accusation against the Jews all during his ministry on earth (see esp. Jn. chapters 8, 9, & 10). Paul found some obdurate Gentiles also (e.g., Acts 17:32). Legalism and/or religiosity, however zealous, will never justify anyone! One’s service which justifies is the service motivated by faith and love because one has already been justified!

Christ is the “end” of the law because he fulfills it. He was what the law was all about—not the Jews! The Greek word translated “end” is telos, meaning, “completion, reached its goal, fulfilled its purpose.” So, the law’s goal was vicarious atonement in “Christ” (Heb., Messiah, “Anointed One”). Without the “Anointed One” making vicarious atonement, the law was insufficient, and short of God’s goal for man! That is true of all “legal” systems of self-justification. God’s goal for human beings is not systematic-religion. God’s goal for man is not to give him a law he can keep and be justified! Because man cannot live up to any law—even one he makes up for himself. God’s goal was to develop people who would trust him for their justification. But it is a trust that will seek to give glory to God in every way God has revealed glory accrues to him. It is a faith that humbly and willingly obeys whatever the Bible has said pleases and glorifies God. There is a difference between keeping Christ’s commandments to earn justification, and keeping them because of gratitude for justification by grace. The OT law was given to show man he could not keep it! It was to drive even the “chosen” to their knees begging for mercy and help from the God who had already demonstrated his graciousness. And Christ was the “end” (goal, fulfillment) of the law!

The contrast between the law of Moses and the righteousness based on faith in Christ is the contrast between the impossible and the easily possible! Moses describes the justification which is based on law as: “The man who has done its requirements shall live (be justified) by it.” The only catch is, no one has done the law’s requirements! But the justification which is by faith in Christ says, “No one has to do the impossible and go up into



heaven and bring Christ (the Anointed One) down, or descend into the abyss to bring the Anointed One up. In fact, the Anointed One has already been here and in his life and deeds he has supplied all that which is essential to belief.” There is more than sufficient “word of the faith” near you (the whole New Testament) to produce a faith which justifies any and every man. That “the word of the faith” is the apostolic word (“which we preach”) nothing more, nothing less. We are translating, “the word of the faith” because the Greek text has the definite article ten (“the”) preceding pisteos (“faith”) signifying that Paul is not talking about an act of faith—he is talking about Christian doctrine—the word of the faith once for all delivered to the saints (Jude 3). To be justified by the law of Moses is impossible. To be justified by the word of the faith requires nothing either impossible or improbable. The word of the faith, i.e., the vicarious atonement has been accomplished. It is easily accepted, and within reach of all. Justification by the word of the faith (Christ’s atonement) is available to all who will confess (Greek, *homologeitai*, “say the same as” or “agree with”) Christ as Lord and believe “in the heart” that God raised him from the dead. Then they will be saved.

The Scriptures say in a few places that if a man believes and confesses Christ he will be saved. However, the Scriptures qualify both the words “believe” and “confess” by showing that he who does not DO what the Lord (or an apostle) has clearly commanded, he is not “believing” or “confessing” or “loving” the Lord (e.g. Lk. 6:46; Jn. 14:23; 5:10; 1 Jn. 2:4-6, etc.). Furthermore, this congregation of believers teaches that believers will readily submit to being immersed in water (baptized) because the New Testament clearly teaches that immersion in water is an essential act in “believing” and “confessing” Christ (e.g., Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 16:15; 16:33-34; 18:8; 22:16; Rom. 6:1-6; 1 Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:26-27; Col. 2:11-12, etc.). Immersion in water (baptism) is the act of belief which God has said (Romans 6:1-6) unites the believer to the death of Christ for remission of sins. Immersion in water (baptism) has both a literal and symbolic meaning. It is literally the point in time, i.e., physical point of reference, for the human being (a creature of time and space) to experientially actualize his relationship (in covenant) to Christ. Human beings need such an empirical actualization to satisfy the circumstances of their time-space-existence. Immersion in water (baptism) is highly symbolic in that it is the only human action (short of burial under ground) that adequately portrays the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. What else would a believer want to portray? What else is more significant in a believer’s justification than the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ? How may a believer “confess” or “believe” more graphically that “God raised Jesus from the dead” than by immersion in water? Jesus himself was immersed in water—so were the apostles! There’s much more to “confessing” Christ than lip-service!

Contextually, “calling upon the name of the Lord” is in opposition to seeking justification by self-righteousness. The person who expects to be justified by keeping the law is one who is “calling upon himself.” However, Paul writes, “By the law shall no flesh be justified” (Gal. 2:16). The only alternative is to “Call upon the name of the Lord.” Paul is pointing out to the Jew here that anyone (Gentile or Jew) who really calls (begs, beseeches, trusts in, relies on) upon the name of the Lord will be saved! To call upon the name of the Lord is: (a) to plead for his mercy; (b) to seek the Lord’s favor; (c) to admit one’s own



inadequacy; (d) to put all one's trust in the Lord; (e) to love, honor and obey the Lord. We call upon the Lord in the same way we "call upon" a doctor, a mechanic, our government, or anyone whose help we must have. That is, we first believe we can trust those upon whom we are calling. Secondly, we make every effort possible to meet the conditions prescribed by the one upon whom we are calling. Thirdly, we are grateful for the help received, and express our loyalty to the one upon whom we've called in various ways (and if the help is given free-gratis, we feel even more obligated to return the extended graciousness). Peter quoted Joel 2:32 in his sermon on Pentecost (Acts 2:21) and proceeded to tell his audience how to call upon the Lord. Peter told his audience to "repent and be immersed (i.e., baptized), Acts 2:38. Paul was told to "Arise and be baptized (immersed) and wash away his sins, calling upon him (the Lord) Acts 2:16. So, for the initial act of salvation and covenant entrance, the believer "calls upon the name of the Lord" by "repenting and being immersed in water" in grateful obedience to the command of the Lord and his apostles.

Anyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved! But how are men to call upon the Lord in whom they have not believed? We call upon those we trust! If we do not trust them we will not call upon them! And how do we come to trust them unless we learn something about them? ("How are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard?"). Why aren't more people calling upon Jesus Christ for salvation (help) today? Because they haven't LEARNED about him! Paul is not using the word "heard" here in the sense of mere acquaintance. He means a "hearing" that produces learning. Jesus' "Great Invitation" (Matt. 11:28-30) is to "learn of me (the Lord)." The same Greek word in this text translated "heard" (akouo) is also translated "obeyed" in Rom. 10:16. People have not "heard" the word of the Lord or called upon him until they are obeying him. And the only means, program, or medium by which men may be brought to hear and obey the name of the Lord (the Gospel) is preaching the word of Christ (Rom. 10:17). God has chosen the foolishness of the doctrine preached (1 Cor. 1:21) (the vicarious death of Christ and his bodily resurrection—see Acts 17:32; 26:24) to save the world. It is not preaching that is foolishness—the world of unbelief preaches (indoctrinates) all the time! It is the message of the cross and empty tomb that the world calls folly. But to those who believe the vicarious atonement of Christ and his resurrection, it is the power of God! Faith comes by hearing—hearing comes by preaching (teaching) "the word of the faith." No preaching or teaching—no hearing. No hearing—no faith. No faith—no salvation. Preaching the word of Christ saves—not just preaching. Certainly, false preaching will not save!

Preachers are "sent" (not "called")! They should be trained and supported. This has the sanction of Christ (as he trained apostles and disciples and expected those who heard to support them, (Matt. 10, etc.). It has the sanction of the inspired word of the apostles (1 Cor. 9:1-18; 2 Cor. 12:11-13; Gal. 6:6; Phil. 4:15-19). While there is definitely "a priesthood of believers," there is also definitely apostolic sanction for "a trained and ordained ministry of evangelists" in the church (see epistles to Timothy and Titus). Every Christian is not expected to be a "trained evangelist." Some Christians are expected to do the "training and sending" of evangelists. But one thing is certain—the church of the 21st century could train and send more evangelists than she is now sending! We know there are 200 less

Christian Church missionaries today than there were in 1977! A “fat” church is becoming complacent! We cannot even supply enough preachers to fill all the Christian Church pulpits in America right now, let alone 200 more missionaries. All the preachers are applying for the “big” churches because the “little” churches cannot pay them enough to live and support their families. So the “little churches” go without trained evangelists! Now who ever put the premium on bigness over littleness? Not Jesus! He was always interested in the one lost sheep, the one lost son, wherever two or three are gathered, the widow’s two mites, etc. The “little and poor” churches of Asia Minor (Rev. 2-3) received Christ’s encouragement, while the “fat and sassy” ones received his severe warnings! Yes! Our congregation could “send” more preachers! First, we must recruit our most committed and competent young people—and then we must finance them!

People “get” faith in Christ by hearing the Gospel (the facts about Christ’s person and work). The Greek text in Romans 10:17 is extremely significant! It reads like this: *ara he pistis ex akoes, he de akoe dia hrematos Christou*. The significant words are, *ex akoes*, and *dia hrematos*. *Akoes* is in the Genitive case and preceded by *ex* it means, “Out of the thing heard.” In other words, faith (*pistis*) emerges out of the thing heard as an effect out of a cause. Faith in Christ is caused by the thing heard (the word of Christ). Next, *dia hrematos Christou*, intensifies this interpretation by showing that “the word (*hrematos*) is the agent or instrument through (*dia*) which Christ is made known. There is no other way for people to “get” faith in Christ. It is not gotten by emotions, by zeal, by prayer, by toil, by tribulation, by osmosis, by inheritance, or by miracle! It is in direct proportion to one’s “hearing” (which includes obeying) the Gospel. But who can obey it until they learn it with the mind? Faith is in direct proportion to preaching/teaching and learning of the word of Christ! There are many ways to express faith, but only one way to “get” it! If our children grow up with no faith, it is because they have not “heard” the word of Christ. If our own personal faith is inadequate for our “problems,” it is because we have not “heard” the word of Christ!

Paul now turns from the exposition to the application! Everyone “gets” faith by “hearing” the Gospel. Some, to whom the Gospel is preached, refuse to “hear” and “obey” it. A better translation of 10:18 would be the rhetorical, “But I say, surely they have never heard, have they?” (NASV). Here Paul is using the word “heard” in the sense of having the gospel preached to them—of knowing its existence. Yes, the Jews had all heard the gospel preached—if not by the apostles, then in the OT (Gal. 3:8). Paul quotes from Psa. 19:4; Deut. 32:21; Isa. 65:1; 65:2 to show that God predicted the message of the Messianic redemption: (a) would go into all the earth (see Col. 1:23); (b) would give this message of the Messiah to the Gentiles even though the Jews would oppose such grace; (c) and the Jews would disobey it although having the privilege of centuries of proclamation about the Messiah. Paul is simply quoting God as proof that God is justified in his rejection of the Jews and his acceptance of the Gentiles in large numbers (as Jesus predicted, “the times of the Gentiles” Lk. 21:24) and giving to the Gentiles the privileges of working with God in delivering the message of redemption to the world! God is just. He is more than just, he is longsuffering! The Jews were given centuries and centuries of privileges. The Messiah was even born of their race, in their country, and went first to them with his miracles, teachings,

atoning death and resurrection. He came unto his own and his own received him not! And what if they had received him? That is for chapter 11!

## TEACHER'S NOTES

prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

### ROMANS 11:1-36

Although God has never finally, completely, and arbitrarily rejected any Jew, the Jews (for the most part) have rejected God because of “hardening.” The Greek word in Rom. 11:7, *eporothesan* (“hardened”) is from *porosis* which translated in English is, “calcified, calloused” (it is used in 21st century medicine as part of the word osteoporosis, “calcification of bones and joints” and used in other medical terms). When a callous grows on any part of the body, that part loses sensitivity, feeling, and becomes impenetrable. Minds can become calloused! Some minds (i.e., “hearts”) allow a “build-up” of layer-upon-layer of bigotry, hypocrisy, opposition, skepticism, self-justification, rationalization, and rebellion, until they are trampled down, set, calloused and become like the “wayside soil” (Matt. 13; Mk. 4; Lk. 8). The “seed” (the word of God) falls upon such calcified minds and never penetrates, and the devil comes and takes the “seed” away. This is exactly what the majority of Jews have done ever since the days of the OT prophets to this very day in the 21st century. They have calloused their hearts with self-justification, self-pity, skepticism, materialism and bigotry and their minds are impenetrable so far as the gospel of Jesus Christ is concerned (see John 3:19-20; 8:37-47; Acts 7:51-53; 13:46; 1 Thess. 2:14-16; 2 Thess. 2:9-12; Heb. 3:7-18, etc.). But not all Jews are hardened! Paul’s early life might have led many of us today to consider him an “impossible case” but he became a Christian. Many thousands of others did, also, and without seeing miracles (see 1 Pet. 1:8-9). Perhaps many would yet today if we were willing to sacrifice as much as Peter, Paul, and others were, to bring the gospel to them!

A “remnant,” as any seamstress will tell you, is a “little left-over-scrap,” or the “tail-end of a bolt of cloth.” Paul says that at the time he was writing Romans (about A.D. 58)—about 8-12 years before the siege and destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 66-70—“There is a remnant, chosen by grace.” Keep that statement constantly in mind as you interpret Romans ch. 11—“a remnant chosen by grace.” If God chooses any Jews from Paul’s day until the end of time, it will be by grace, and not by nationality or geographical location or by Jewish-religion! The New Testament is clear about how God chooses by grace—he does it exclusively, completely and finally, in Christ! The remnant of Jews, chosen by grace, encompasses all those Jews from Abraham to the 21st century who have had their faith reckoned unto them for righteousness. The New Testament unequivocally states that after the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ, faith that is reckoned for righteousness is that which responds by accepting the vicarious atonement of Jesus death, submits to immersion in water in the name of (by the authority of) Christ, and worships Christ as God-Incarnated and Glorified. Any Jew who meets those qualifications is a part of the “remnant chosen by grace.” Any Jew who does not, is not, and shall not be, a part of that “remnant”—no matter where he lives, who he is, or when he lives. Jesus will deal with sin (atonement-wise) never again (Heb. 9:27-28; 10:12-18, etc.). The next time Jesus comes to earth it will be to save those eagerly waiting for him. Any Jew, at that time, not “in Christ” will have no further opportunity! Only the “remnant chosen by grace” will be saved!

Actually, “full inclusion” as the RSV translated it in 11:12 is a little over-translated. The Greek word is *pleroma* (from which English *plethora* comes), means simply, “fulness.” Romans 11:12 is amplified by 11:15. In 11:12 Paul says, “if their falling away (Greek, *paraptoma*, see Heb. 6:6, “apostasy”) means riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their fulness mean?” “Fulness” is different than “inclusion.” In 11:15 Paul says, “if their casting away (Greek, *apobole*, “thrown from”) means the reconciliation of the world, what will their reception mean if not life from the dead!” (Greek, *proslēmpsis*, middle-voice means the subject—the Jews—are acting upon themselves, or in some way that concerns themselves). Note: Their reception, or their receiving is something they are acting or doing upon themselves! It is not about God “receiving” them, but about them “receiving” God! And that is exactly the point of this whole discussion in Romans chs. 9-10-11—God provided once for all his means of “receiving” human beings. It was the vicarious atonement of Jesus Christ. Now, the “receiving” of that grace is something people (including all Jews) do upon themselves. God will not act upon any Jew to “receive” him except as every Jew acts upon himself to receive God’s grace in Christ! Paul’s point is: If (and that’s a big “If”) the falling away (apostasy) of the Jews was a “mess” taken by God and turned into such a precious “jewel” as the pearl of great price (the Gospel) and became such a spiritual “enrichment” for the Gentile world—what a great spiritual transformation and enrichment might take place throughout civilization IF the majority of the Jews would ever receive for themselves God’s choosing them by grace? Into what great and important segments of civilization would such a transformation reach and how influential would it be?

The indefinite pronoun (11:14) in Greek—*tina*—may be translated, “certain ones” or “some.” We know that Paul means “certain ones” because he is talking about “a remnant chosen by grace.” Those are the “certain ones.” Paul does not expect all the Jews to be saved! Only “certain ones.” Paul “magnified,” or “glorified” (Greek, *doxazo*) his ministry so that “somehow” he might provoke to zealotry for Christ “some” of his Jewish brethren. Paul talked about and demonstrated his zeal for winning Gentiles constantly among Jews in every city he visited. He hoped it would make many Jews recognize and realize what they were missing! It resulted in a few of the Jews turning to God but not great numbers (1 Thess. 2:14-16). Perhaps we ought to try that approach more than we do in America. Let us turn to the “apostates” of society more than we do and spend less time proselyting those already “evangelized.” The “apostates” have “*nous-porosis*” (hardening of the mind)—would any of them realize what they are missing? We must remember that Jesus warned his listeners, over and over, “narrow and difficult is the way that leads to life...and few go that way”—or “many are called, but few are chosen...”—or “when the Son of man comes, will he find faith upon the earth?” Being realistic and pessimistic are two different things! Jesus and Paul were realistic but never pessimistic! Being realistic intensifies commitment, preparation and zeal. We must be careful of a false optimism or idealism which invites superficiality in commitment, preparation and zeal. Jesus does not try to fool us about the world. He is brutally frank about it!

Paul warns Gentiles that no person is invulnerable to the same arrogance and self-justification which brought about the Jewish apostasy! Yes! Even Gentiles can seek to

justify themselves by their own “systems” and “laws” and “comparisons.” Paul warned the Corinthian church against “measuring themselves by one another and comparing themselves with one another” in order to “commend themselves.” Such people are “without understanding” (2 Cor. 10:12ff). Gentiles might get the idea that since most of the Jews were rejecting God’s grace, absolutely no Jews could ever be pleasing to God! Gentiles might forget, in their arrogance, just how much in debt they are to a few humble, courageous and faithful Jews for the salvation that has come to the whole world (e.g. Jewish apostles and early Christian evangelists and Jewish-Christian martyrs)! Remember, it is the root (faithful remnant of Jews) that supports the branches (newly “grafted in” Gentiles). Gentiles, remember, that while millions of Gentiles have turned to God through Jesus Christ, billions more have arrogantly and presumptuously scoffed at him and rejected him (century after century for over 2000 years now)! Gentile rejection started with the Romans, followed by the Hindus, Buddhists, Shintoists, Muslims, Communists, atheists, liberal-Christians, etc. And millions of Gentiles, while nominally associating with Christ, have essentially denied him and defamed him by rejecting his gracious vicarious death and bodily resurrection. God chooses people according to their faith in his grace—not according to their ethnic, cultural, or geographical status—nor even according to their providential privileges. God chooses people to belong to him according to their serviceability 11:22 toward him (Greek, *chrestos*, is translated “kindness” but means “serviceable” see Mt. 11:30 where the Greek word *chrestos* means the “yoke” of Jesus is “good, serviceable”).

The “full number of the Gentiles” (11:25) simply means part, actually the majority, of the Jewish ethnic civilization will continue to be hardened during the time Gentiles are coming into the kingdom of God. The Greek word, *arti*, translated “until” may also be translated, “during the completing of...” Thus, what Paul is saying (and Luke records Jesus saying the same thing in Luke 21:24) is that most of the Jews will continue to reject Christ until the end of the world. “The times of the Gentiles” is from Acts 13, to the end of the world! **DON’T COMPLICATE AND CONFUSE THIS STATEMENT OF PAUL WITH DISPENSATIONAL-PREMILLENNIAL NONSENSE!** The Jews had their time! Daniel predicts the Jews would have 490 years from the time of the restoration of the Jewish commonwealth upon the return of the Jews from the exile, until the coming of the “Anointed One”—it is all predicted in Daniel 9:24-27! After the Jews “cut off” the Prince (Dan. 9:26) (i.e., “Anointed One”—Messiah), they and another “people” (i.e., the Romans) would destroy their city and sanctuary. **THAT TOOK PLACE IN THE FIRST CENTURY A.D. (A.D. 66-70).** The Jews had 490 years after their release from captivity to produce the Messiah and either accept him or reject him. Majority-wise, they rejected him! Actually, the Jews had over 2000 years from Abraham to Christ. God had laid in “Zion” a “cornerstone” (referring to the Messiah-in-promise) when he founded the Jewish people (Isa. 28:16—Matt. 21:42). Now, the Gentiles are having their time. But lest some Gentiles take “for granted” their “time” and think it will go on forever just because God gave them the privileges with the Gospel they now have, they had better remember what happened to the Jews! Jesus makes it plain in Luke 21, that Jerusalem will be trodden down until the “times of the Gentiles are fulfilled,” and that fulfillment takes place at the end of the world, immediately after which comes the eternity and judgment (not some “earthly 1000 years”). We must understand Jesus’ words in Luke 21 symbolically, not literally. Jerusalem is, today, as “trodden down by the Gentiles” as it ever



was or shall be—it is as heathen, unbelieving and apostate as if there were idolatrous temples there! Few of the present “Jewish” people in Jerusalem (and all of Palestine and the world) in the 21st century believe in God and the inspiration of the O.T.—and even fewer believe in Jesus and the New Testament! Non-Christian Jews today are, from God’s (and Paul’s) perspective, Gentiles!

“All Israel” will be saved when the world comes to an end—when Jesus comes the second, final, time. “All Israel” is composed of all those, both Jew and Gentile, who have accepted the grace of God through faith in Jesus Christ—AND NONE OTHER! Romans 2:27-29 and Galatians 6:15-16 clearly shows that the “Israel of God” is all those, circumcised or uncircumcised, who are new creatures in Christ (go back and read notes on Romans 2:27-29 and Galatians 6:15-16). Paul has already said in Romans 9:6-7, “...For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel...” Because of Christ’s redemptive work it is not genetic descent that makes one an Israelite—but faith in Christ. In fact, it never was simply genetic descent that made anyone an Israelite—it was faith in God’s promise of the “Anointed One” to come! So, when “all new Israel” (i.e., the church of Christ) is saved, then also will the “full number of the Gentiles come in.” Romans 11:32 makes it clear that Paul is talking about “all” (both Jew and Gentile) being saved together in one body. He “consigned” all men to disobedience. God revealed by the death and resurrection of Christ that Jews and Gentiles alike must be saved by his mercy, in order that he might have mercy upon all. Whenever all “Israel” is saved, that will be all the “Israelites” there are! But they will be “Israelites” (or “Abraham’s offspring”) because they belong to Christ (see Gal. 3:16-18)—not because they can trace their genetic descent from Abraham. Those in Christ are all the “Israel” there is or ever shall be! (Take another look at Romans 9:24-29!).

All that Paul is declaring in Rom. 11:28-29 is, “God does not go back on his promises.” The Greek word *ametameleta*, translated, “irrevocable,” is literally, “unrepented.” God’s gifts and God’s call in Christ Jesus are always (until the end of time) available. God does not repent of his words or his works. He does not change his mind. God gave the Messianic redemption to the Jews and then to the Gentiles. God calls Jews to his redemption through the gospel of Christ and God calls the Gentiles to redemption through the gospel of Christ! God predicted (through the OT prophets) that this would be his program for the redemption of all mankind—both Jew and Gentile. God has not “revoked” (or “repented of”) his program! It is still there! The Jews are still God’s “elect” (Gr. *eklogen*, from which we get the English word, “eclectic” meaning, “the best chosen, or elected”). But so are the Gentiles still God’s “elect.” The trouble is not with God. The trouble is that the majority of the Jews refuse God’s program of redemption as God has chosen to extend it. God “elected” them through the gospel of Christ—they do not want to be “elected” there. That would totally destroy self-justification. God “elects” by grace, by his own sovereign program. The “battle” in “election unto salvation” is in the area of sovereignty. Will man allow God to be absolutely sovereign and work-out and reveal the program of salvation, or will man autonomously oppose God and seek to work-out and devise his own program of salvation? God’s call, or “election,” to redemption is still there! But will the Jews be enemies or beloved? They are friends of God only in Christ!

Paul is still talking to the Gentiles about the Jews in 11:30-32. He is saying, “Just as you Gentiles were once disobedient to God but now have received mercy because of the Jewish disobedience, so the Jews have now been disobedient in order that by the mercy shown to you Gentiles, the Jews also may receive mercy.” Because of the disobedience of the Jews, God made the gospel abundantly available to the Gentile world (through the Jewish rabbi, Paul, and his missionary work). And after the gospel had permeated the Gentile world, it became the repository of God’s redemptive program. So, it is now the Gentile world that sends “missionaries” to the Jews! God has “consigned” (Greek, *sunekleisen*, “shut up, lumped together, pinned together” J. B. Phillips) all men in (Greek, *eis*) disobedience in order that he may show mercy to all. “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23). Not that God made any of them sin—but he has made it abundantly clear that all, both Jew and Gentile, have sinned against him. God has left no doubt in any human being about sin. Even those who had no revealed law (Gentiles) became a law unto themselves (Rom. 2:14ff). God wants to have mercy upon all. But he could not have mercy upon all if he failed to make all cognizant of sin. Furthermore, God cannot have mercy upon any, though cognizant of their own sin, who seek salvation by self-justification.

Yes and No! In one sense of the word, Paul is saying, we cannot give gifts to God! David said the same thing in 1 Chron. 19:14-19. We “own” nothing! We earn nothing! “Nothing in my hand I bring, simply to thy cross I cling!” or “Just as I am, without one plea!” So Paul is saying, “God is absolutely sovereign...no other person (angel or human) can fathom the wisdom of God. All man can do is cry out for mercy and then accept any mercy offered in precisely the amount and manner by which it is offered.” God has worked out his program of redemption for the world exactly and exclusively as he desired and planned. God has revealed his redemption to us in human language. It has been delivered to mankind through specially chosen men whom God anointed with divine inspiration in the Bible and may be translated into every human language. We cannot understand why he did it his way—we cannot understand all the “how” of it. We can only trust his promises and marvel at his wisdom and love. God never asked any advice or counsel from human beings, and never will. God gives advice—humans either take it or not. God owes nothing to anyone! It may be that God allows those who love him and trust him and obey him to be “co-workers” with him in his program to redeem the world, but even when we have done all that is commanded, we must still say, “We are unworthy servants; we have only done what was our duty” (Luke 17:7-10). But, of course, the love of God revealed to us, promised to us, and demonstrated to us in Jesus Christ, moves us to give gifts to God constantly reminding ourselves that God owes us nothing for those gifts. Such gifts belonged to God in the first place, and he has allowed us to use them so we can express our love to him.

CHART

“ALL ISRAEL SHALL BE SAVED”—Romans 11:26, by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

Jews

Jews accepting the grace  
of God through Christ’s  
vicarious atonement (on  
New Covenant terms)

Gentiles

Gentiles accepting the grace  
of God through Christ’s  
vicarious atonement (on  
New Covenant terms)

ALL THE NEW ISRAEL THERE IS!

“For neither circumcision counts for anything nor uncircumcision, but a new creation.

Peace and mercy be upon all who walk by this rule, upon the Israel of God.” Gal. 6:15-16

(see also Rom. 4:9-15; 9:6-8; Gal. 3:29; all of Romans chs. 9-10-11 as a unit).

Jesus, John the Baptist in the Gospels, Acts of Apostles and Hebrews, Romans, Galatians

1 Thessalonians 2:13-16 and many O.T. prophets like Daniel declare there is no hope

for Jews outside of Christ.

If Paul is predicting in Rom. 11:26 that by some coincidence all genetic Jews alive at Christ's second coming will have become Christians and thus all genetic Israel (alive at that time) will be saved, then he must also be predicting in Rom. 11:32 that by some coincidence all genetic Gentiles will have become Christians at the second coming and are expected to all be saved. The word all in these chapters is evidently being used qualitatively rather than quantitatively. In other words, all who are really "Israel," by being in Christ, will have been saved by the time the "full number of the Gentiles has come in." WHEN CHRIST COMES AGAIN, ARE WE TO EXPECT EVERYONE ALIVE AT THAT TIME TO BE SAVED? HARDLY!

As a matter of fact, Paul recognized that only some of his fellow Jews would be saved by God's making them jealous through sending the gospel to the Gentiles (Greek in Rom. 11:14 is *tinas ex auton*, literally, "some out of them").

Paul says, the "others" (referring to Jews) "if they do not persist in their unbelief, will be grafted in, for God has the power to graft them in again" Romans 11:23. Yes, God has the power to graft them in; but are we to expect not one Jew persisting in unbelief at the moment of Christ's return? I would emotionally like to expect it, but in my judgment (hermeneutically) I can't find such hope in the rest of the scripture anywhere. Rather, the declaration that the majority of the people all over the world and in every race (and Jews are everywhere) will be unprepared for Christ's second coming!

In addition to this, the book of Hebrews declares relentlessly and unyieldingly that the Old Covenant (propositionally and liturgically) is discharged by, effectuated by, completed by the New Covenant. So perfectly so, that it is "once-for-all" and never again will Judaism or any other "ism," or mixture of "isms," be acceptable with God. There is no Biblical sanction that any human being should look forward to some other final redemptive work apart from New Testament Christianity—and that includes the Jews!

## TEACHER'S NOTES

prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

### ROMANS 12:1-21

Paul appeals to the “mercies” (Greek, *oiktrimon*, “sympathy, pity”) of God which he has thus far enumerated from Romans chapter 1 through chapter 11. Mainly, the fact that while all men (including Jews) are “consigned under sin,” God has arbitrarily and sovereignly chosen to save all sinners through the grace that is accomplished by the meritorious redemptive work of Jesus Christ. Forgiven, redeemed and regenerated sinners are to be “constrained by the love (“mercies”) of Christ” (2 Cor. 5:14-21; see also 1 Cor. 15:58; Heb. 10:19; 1 Pet. 4:1). That one great revelation (redemption from sin) demonstrated historically (not subjectively), has the potential power to cause a “transformation” of the “mind” (personhood, self) of any individual who believes it and obeys it. Paul said at the start of this epistle, “The gospel is the power of God unto salvation,” therefore, “salvation” includes the “transformation” of the “mind.” The most significant implication of Romans 12:1-2 is that the church must understand, once and for all, its business or ministry has as its fundamental goal the “transformation” of human minds. The church must also understand that the God-ordained method of accomplishing that “transformation” is to teach or preach “the mercies of God” (i.e., the gospel). People cannot be “transformed” in their “minds” by manipulation, by genetic engineering, by regimentation, by cultural sophistication, by economic or material affluence, by science or by philosophy. We are “being changed into his (Christ’s) likeness from one degree of glory to another” by beholding the glory of the Lord. We behold the Lord’s glory (“rank” or “sovereignty”) in the New Testament (2 Cor. 3:18) and not in some inner, subjective feeling. A subjective feeling of relief, security, gratitude may come after we have beheld the objective “rank” (glory) of the Lord. It is as Alexander Campbell once put it, “No native of any country ever shed a tear over the death of Christ where it has not been heard.”

Presenting one’s “body” as a “living” (constant, continuing, functioning) sacrifice must be preceded by presenting one’s “mind” to the word of God for “transformation.” Man is a creature who becomes what he thinks! I remind you of Romans 8:1-17. The Old Testament even teaches this (Hosea 9:10; Psa. 115; Prov. 23:7). The battle of spirituality is fundamentally carried on in the mind (Gal. 5:16-17; Rom. 7:13-25; Col. 2:8; 3:1). Self-control is primarily mind-control. What we sow in our minds, we reap in our actions. But the significant point in this context, however, is Paul’s statement that the “presentation of our bodies as living sacrifices, holy and acceptable (Greek, *euareston*, “well-pleasing”) to the Lord, is our reasonable (Greek, *logiken*, logical, rational) service. Moses Lard, op.cit. says: “logiken here seems to have the force of logical or consequential, and to denote a service which results logically from what precedes—(which is the “mercies of God”)—in other words, it is a consequence from those premises, or it follows from them in accordance with the laws of reason.” God expects human beings to use their minds, to reason, to be logical, to make deductions from revealed premises. If God expects it, human beings certainly are capable of doing it! And when human beings don’t reason logically about God’s word, they are guilty of

opposing God's will!!! When preachers, teachers, personal evangelists, neighbors, friends, and relatives do not present the Scriptures in a reasoned, rational manner so that people can reason or deduce or think, they, too, are guilty of misusing the Scriptures!!! SO READ THE BIBLE AND USE YOUR LOGICAL MIND TO COMPREHEND IT!

“Transformation” is from the Greek word *metamorphousthe*, and literally is, “to change the form of a thing.” Since the mind has no form, we simply say it means “to change-over, to shift, to transpose, to convert, to alter” our thinking. The word “metamorphosis” describes what happens to a caterpillar when it becomes a butterfly! The Greek word *metamorphothe* was used by Matthew to describe in human language what took place on the high mountain (Matt. 17:1-8; Mk. 9:2-8; Lk. 9:28-36) when Jesus was “transfigured” before his disciples—Jesus became completely different from the Jesus the disciples had known! I think Paul describes in 2 Cor. 5:16 the “transformation” of the human mind that God desires when one becomes a Christian. In 2 Cor. 5:16 he says that when one becomes a Christian, he no longer “sees” (thinks of) anyone or anything any longer from a human point of view. Paul talks about the “transformation” of the human mind also in Romans 8:1-13; 13:14; Eph. 4:17-24; Phil. 4:8-9; Col. 3:1-2; 3:10, etc. In all these passages the main issue is that the mind of the non-Christian, the unconverted, is actually “hostile” toward God. It refuses to think about anything or anyone according to God’s revealed “mind” in the Scriptures. It resists God’s thinking (God’s thinking is revealed in the Scriptures and no where else, see 1 Cor. 2:1-16). “Transformation” or “renewing” of the mind is simply deciding to surrender one’s thinking (or mind) to begin finding out what and how God thinks (by reading and believing the Bible) and to decide to think that way oneself. Men are “renewed” (Greek, *anakainosei*) in the minds (Col. 3:10) and then “transformed” in all their actions! Being “born anew” takes place first in the mind in a new thinking and then results in a new behavior!

The Greek word *sophronein* is translated, “soberly” in Rom. 12:3. It is the same Greek word translated “right mind” in 2 Cor. 5:13—translated “sensibly” in Titus 2:2; “right mind” or “sane” in Mark 5:15 (see also Acts 26:25; 2 Tim. 2:9,15). The only way to think with a “right mind” or to think “sensibly or sanely” is to have one’s mind “renewed” by using the LOGIC God put in human minds, applying it to the premises in God’s word, and making logical deductions and decisions. When a person does that and trusts God’s word to be of more value than what anyone else (even one’s self) says or thinks, he is then able to “prove” (Greek, *dokimazein*, “judge, discriminate, decide) what the will of God is and what is pleasing to the Lord. Such is sober-thinking! Sober, sane, sensible judgment or thinking is described by Paul in Rom. 12:3-8. It is: (a) thinking humbly; (b) thinking, thankfully; (c) thinking functionally. To think “more highly” (Greek, *huperphronein par’*—“hyper-thinking-beyond”) than it “behooves us” (Greek, *dei*) is insanity! Arrogance, ostentatiousness, haughtiness, and pride is not sane judgment. How different Christian thinking is from that of the non-Christian world! The world thinks the only sane people are those who elevate themselves. God says the only sane people are those who do not elevate themselves! Ingratitude is insanity! Thankfulness is the only sensible attitude! To teach your children to be smart in God’s eyes is to drill into them an attitude of being thankful in whatever circumstance they find themselves.



Of course YOU have a gift! Every Christian has a gift by which he may function sensibly in relation to God! The only sober, sane and right thinking toward God is the thinking that acknowledges one's capability and obligation to function for God. The Greek word used in 12:4 is significant. It is *praxis*, translated, "office" in KJV, but more correctly "function" in RSV. It is the word from which we get the English words, "practice, practical, pragmatic" etc. Paul uses this Greek word in his discussion of "gifts" (Greek, *charismata*, 12:6). In other words, the charisma listed here in Rom. 12:6-8 are "functional, practical" gifts. They are different from the "spiritual" (Greek, *pneumatika*) gifts listed in 1 Cor. chs. 12-14. In one case, at least, we are to use the charisma (functional gifts) we have "in proportion to our faith" (12:6) (Greek, *analogian*, from which we get English, "analogy, analogous, rational-proportion"). Since our faith is in proportion to having gotten it from hearing the word of Christ, Paul is saying here that we are to use our functional gifts in proportion to the privileges or opportunities we have had to hear and know the word of God! He is saying we are to use our gifts in proportion to, or analogous to, the value of the Christian faith. The primary emphasis of Paul here is that whatever our charisma we must not grow "high-minded" over it, and at the same time we must sensibly estimate our gift at its true value and conduct ourselves or function accordingly!

NO! All professed "love" is not genuine! Paul uses the Greek word, *anupokritos*, a compound word of *anti* ("against") and *hupokritos* ("hypocrisy")—in other words, "away from, or absence of, hypocrisy." Genuine love is love without hypocrisy. Many people think it is not genuine love when some refusal is made or some disciplinary action is taken. But the sentimental, mushy feeling that indulges people to their own detriment is really a hypocritical love! "Hypocritical" means literally, "play-acting." There is too much "play-acting" love today and not enough genuine love. Paul genuinely loved the Galatians and the Corinthians, but he had to write them some scolding letters so they accused him of not loving them (see Gal. 4:16; 2 Cor. chs. 12 & 13). It showed their spiritual immaturity and that their values were fleshly and not spiritual. Genuine love is truthful! We know love is genuine when: (a) it hates evil and loves good; (b) when it is affectionate and zealous—and that does not mean just sentimental and fanatical—it means caring and concerned, intense and involved; (c) when it is patient and hospitable (see Heb. 13:16). The love that insists on spirituality, truth, self-control, involvement, concern when one does not want to be concerned, and on giving without anticipating getting—IS REVOLUTIONARY, GENUINE LOVE! That is being "transformed." Because the world is "conformed" to just the opposite kind of "love." The "love" the world idealizes and idolizes is fleshly, compatible to falsehood, self-indulgent, selfish, loves only those "worthy of love," and is looking for some personal benefit.

The "needs" of the saints (Rom. 12:13) is a translation of the Greek word *chreiais*, a word from the ancient Koine Greek business world, and is, in fact, sometimes translated, "business" or "necessities." In other words, the "needs" of the saints are "business-like necessities" and not luxuries or necessarily what the saints "want!" Of course, a "saint" (Christian) should have his mind renewed sufficiently so that he has been metamorphosed (transformed) from the fleshly world of desire, and luxury, to the spiritual kingdom of God where he has "learned, in whatever state he is, to be content" (Phil. 4:10-13). The "saint"

“makes no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires” (Rom. 14:14). The “needs” of the saints are: (a) necessities for the “business” of sustaining life on this earth until God calls him home, and, (b) necessities for the business of fulfilling his ministry (using his functional charisma or “gifts”) unto the glory of Christ. Beyond that, the “saint” has no “needs.” Within that framework the “saint” finds happiness, fulfillment, satisfaction, security, peace, favor with God and man, and above all, reality with hope. Paul says the renewed and transformed Christian mind will “pursue” (Greek, diokontes, “pursue, chase, run-after”) hospitality (Greek, philoxenian, literally, “love of strangers”—see also Heb. 13:2; 1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:8). Even “saints” are sometimes “strangers” to other “saints” so they need hospitality. Sometimes the church is like a home where members of a family are kinder to non-family than to family. “Saints” need to love one another as much, or more, than they do non-saints! (See Gal. 6:10; 1 Pet. 1:22).

To live in harmony with one another is stated literally in the Greek text as, ta auto eis allelous phronountes, and would be literally translated, “The same thing toward one another minding.” In other words, the way we live in harmony is: “Do not be haughty (Greek, huspsela phronountes, “high-minded”), but associate with (Greek, sunapagomenoi, “be led along with, or go along with”) the humble (Greek, tapeinois, “those classified by the world as lowly, second-class, weak”). There can be no hostility, rejection, disassociation between the “famous, high-and-mighty, rich, powerful” and the “poor, ignorant, unknown and powerless” within the kingdom of God. Furthermore, “saints” must minister, wherever and whenever possible to all human beings of every social stratum. Living in harmony does not require compromising the truth. It means, in fact, standing for the truth with everyone alike! Living in harmony does not require “peace at any price.” Living in harmony does involve “blessing those who persecute you, rejoicing with those who rejoice, and weeping with those who weep.” It requires patience, endurance, sympathetic understanding and empathetic involvement. It involves taking thought for (minding or providing for) the “things that are noble” (Greek, kala, “good things”) in the sight of all.” Sometimes people are hostile toward saints when they “provide noble (virtuous) things in the sight of all” but God will not have us do otherwise. A false harmony is no harmony at all!

First, Paul clearly assumed that it would be impossible for Christians to always and absolutely be at peace with everyone in this world! Others will force disharmony upon the Christian by circumstances over which he has no control. He is not responsible for peace in such circumstances. One cannot force peace upon another who does not want it. But the Christian must do everything clearly commanded and possible within his capabilities to maintain peace (wholeness, wellness, harmony, unity). He is to conquer evil, on a personal level, by doing good. The Christian’s responsibility is two-fold: (a) do not avenge (Greek, ekdikountes, “from justice,” that is, “exact justice” or “fulfill justice”) yourself. The Christian may not take the law into his own hand, personally. God will take care of justice (some by civil governments Romans 13); (b) overcome evil with good. The way to do that is to “feed your enemy if he is hungry.” In so doing, you may make him “burn” in his conscience and he will be “renewed in his mind to a right mind” and be “transformed” as you were. Merciful conduct on the Christian’s personal level is really the only way to gain the “ear” of an enemy,

which in turn may open up the enemy's heart to the Lord. Is there a difference between "avenging oneself" and "protecting oneself?" YES! The Bible mandates the sanctity of life and property as "unalienable rights" and allows protection of both (Jesus with the apostles, Matt. 10:17,23; Lk. 22:35-38, etc.). The NT would not contradict the OT which mandates the personal protection of life and property, as well as ordering civil authorities to that ministry (see Rom. 13:1-7).

Christians are not to administer justice personally for wrongs done to them. They may protect themselves, and their property, but they are to let the Lord execute vengeance (i.e., justice) on wrong-doers. God's mind is unbiased by passion, the human's attitude is almost always biased when he is personally injured. The Christian must, with self-control, wait for the Lord to make retribution upon those who do evil to him. The Lord takes care of that in this way: (a) first, God clearly ordains human governments (rulers, legislators, enforces, administrators, executors) for the specific purpose of administering impartial justice (avenging evil and rewarding good—see Romans 13:1-7); (b) second, God clearly promises (and has demonstrated historically that he will keep these promises) that he will at the end of time avenge (administer retribution for) all the wrong and evil done to his "saints." God will avenge evil perfectly, absolutely, completely, and eternally! God will show mercy where he decides mercy is to be—he will mete out torment where torment deserves to be. In this world there are millions of injustices every day which human governments either cannot or will not avenge. But, most certainly, some day, God will! This is the blessed hope and heritage of the Christian saint!

## TEACHER'S NOTES

prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

### ROMANS 13:1-14

Paul said (and this is with the inspiration and sanction of the Spirit of God!), “Let every person be in subjection to the authorities, or governing authorities (in Greek it reads, *pasa psyche exousiais hyperechousais hypotassestho*, literally, “every soul, to authorities superior, be in subjection”). Peter puts it, “Be subject for the Lord’s sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, or to governors as sent by him (i.e., “the Lord”) to punish those who do wrong and to praise those who do right.” (1 Pet. 2:13-17). No human being is exempt from subjection (with certain Biblical qualifications) to human governments and human institutions ordained by God for governing the human races. This apostolic commandment to be in subjection to “civil authorities” includes clergymen, policemen, presidents, senators, judges, little-old-ladies-from Pasadena, teen-agers, adolescents, blacks, whites, polka-dotted people, apostles, popes, “pacifists” and “peace-niks.” It makes no difference where you live or what form of government you have (monarchy, democracy, republic, tribe, dictatorship, empire). All human beings must be in subjection to governing authorities whether these authorities are heathen, Hebrew, Christian, Muslim, or Communist (so long as these authorities do not demand disobedience to God’s revealed will). Bad civil government is better than no civil government at all! Human beings may disagree with policies, programs, pronouncements, and penalties handed down by the governing authorities of their societies, but if such edicts are not in opposition to God’s revealed will, they are to be subject to it! **THEY MUST NOT USE VIOLENCE TO OVERTHROW GOVERNMENTS AND CREATE ANARCHY!** But we know from the Scriptures that God expects governing authorities to be just, honest, protective of human rights, guardians of peace, punishers of evil doers, rewarders of right-doers, and protectors of “unalienable human rights.” There is a difference between “civil” rights and “human” rights! Certain “civil” rights may be suspended by governing authorities for self-protection, etc., but “unalienable human rights” (i.e., life, liberty and proprietorship) cannot be suspended by any civil government without incurring God’s wrath (sooner or later).

YES! All governing authorities have been instituted by God. Even Russian! God ordained Babylonian, Persian, Greek and Roman governments in ancient times. Just because they opposed God and tried to thwart God’s redemptive program in the world is no sign that God could not and did not use them (see Isa. 10:5ff; Isa. chs. 44-45; Dan. chs. 7,8,9,10,11,12; Jer. 27:5ff). Of course, God wants human governments to function according to moral principles of justice, freedom, protection of human rights, etc. But God can take any “mess” human governments makes of divine principles and precepts and turn such a “mess” into victory and advantage for those who love God and are called according to his purpose. The ancient governments listed above are cases in point! God does not condone any evil practiced by any government! But Christians must recognize that all human governments are mere expedients. They serve only to maintain as much law and order as is humanly possible so that the redemptive message of God through Christ may be proclaimed to the

world (see 1 Tim. 1:8-11; 1 Tim. 2:1-4). Human governments are not ordained to do the work of the church! The church should not expect them to, nor campaign for them to do so. Some nations are closer to Biblical principles in governing than others, but no nation is a “Christian nation!” No human government can make spiritual matters its priority—only the kingdom of God can do that! But all human governments are responsible to God for applying divine principles in governing to the highest extent possible.

The only conscience a Christian is allowed to have is a conscience that conforms to the clear precepts and principles of the Bible! Conscientious objection to war or military service cannot be based on personal desires, or feelings, or reasons, but on the direction of God’s expressed will in all matters. Romans 13:1-7; 1 Pet. 2:13-17; 1 Tim. 2:1-4; Matt. 22:21, etc. are clear expressions of God’s will for Christians in regard to his ordaining human governments for the forcible (war, if necessary) control of evil actions. The Bible clearly shows God demanding human governments honor their treaties, stand with force against aggression, and, with force when necessary, protect themselves against aggression (Gen. 14:21-24; Josh. 8:1-29; Eccl. 3:8; 8:11; Jer. 48:10; Dan. 5:17-28; Obadiah vs. 10-14; Amos 1:9, etc.). No Christian has any Biblical authority to tell the state it must renounce the use of force in order to preserve law, or to demand that the law of the state be changed in order to disarm policemen or military forces. This would be in direct opposition to Romans 13:1-7 which says government authorities “do not bear the sword in vain.” The “sword” cannot Biblically be taken from the magistrate—bearing it and wielding it is ordained and approved by the word of God! This includes capital punishment for capital crimes. “Swords” were not used for “diplomacy” but for force and execution. It includes enforcing international law by war. Execution for capital crime is not “cruel and unusual punishment.” Nations enforce capital punishment on an international scale in war all the time! Execution by slow death, or torture during incarceration etc., would be cruel and unusual, but not swift execution for those deemed guilty by a jury of their peers or by international law. The killing of enemies of America’s War for Independence and those in rebellion against the “union” in its civil war was not a violation of America’s constitution which prohibits “cruel and unusual punishments.” The “American Revolution” was not a revolution—it was a defensive war against an aggressive British government suspending “unalienable human rights” by the use of military force. America’s “Civil War” was a defensive war against a rebellious government (the Confederacy) attempting by force to overthrow the United States.

Human government is one of three redemptive institutions ordained by God: (a) the home is first; (b) the church is second; (c) human government is third. Each of these institutions are to function within the limits of divine parameters prescribed by the word of God (the Bible)—their parameters can all be found in the Bible if people will simply take the time and energy, using correct hermeneutics, to search them out. I have written a book (now out of print) entitled, *What The Bible Says About Civil Government*, which was published by College Press, Joplin, MO, 1990. In my book, which took 20 years to research and write, I have outlined the purposes of human government: (a) as Romans 13:1-7 delineates the purpose, (1) to be a terror to bad conduct; (2) to be God’s servant for good to those of good conduct; (3) execute God’s wrath upon the wrongdoers; (4) be ministers of God supported in

their ministry by citizen's taxes; (5) be wielders of the "sword" to protect those who do good against those who do evil; (b) as 1 Tim. 2:1-4 delineates the purpose (1) that mankind may lead quiet and peaceable lives, godly, and respectful in every way; (2) that all men may come to the knowledge of the truth and be saved; (c) as 1 Pet. 2:13-17 delineates the purpose (1) to punish those who do wrong; (2) to praise those who do right. But nowhere in the Scriptures is there clear revelation that human governments are obligated or even ordained by God for (1) proclaiming the gospel; (2) financially funding any religious group; (3) purging society of any false religious doctrines or any other ideas or philosophies (so long as people do not act from an idea in a way that would destroy civil order); (4) sustain those who will not work; (5) coddle those who criminalize society.

When Paul writes, "He (governmental authorities) does not bear the sword in vain" he means that there is a God-ordained purpose in "sword-bearing" (i.e., use of coercive force) by governmental authorities! There is a definite, specific reason and there is a divinely-ordained goal for the use of force. This may mean punishment and even execution by "ministers of God" (government rulers). If it is divinely-ordained, if it is divinely-purposed, no human being has a right to protest it or resist it, unless it is being used to punish the good and reward the evil. From the very moment God started the human race over again (Genesis ch. 9:5-6) God ordained capital punishment by human beings upon fellow human beings who commit capital crimes (especially, murder). Even the apostle Paul himself was willing to suffer execution by government authorities if he had done anything deserving capital punishment (see Acts 25:11). This is the primary function of human government (i.e., punishing evil behavior and rewarding good behavior). But most human governments are so pressured to deliver a "great materialistic society" for every single citizen whether productive or not, they cannot focus on their primary function! This is precariously true in America! True Christians, when standing for what the Bible says about "sword-wielding," are made out to be "war-mongers" and "blood-thirsty" bigots, while the liberal-minded, Bible-despising are made out to be the only "godly" people on earth. It is a deception of the devil!

YES! A Christian not only "can" be a policeman, soldier, judge, or executioner, "many" have! And they have been the best (that is, if they are really serious about being a Christian). We have plenty of examples in the Bible. Abraham was a "soldier" of sorts—a general leading troops to fight the "kings of the East and rescue his nephew Lot who had been kid-napped (see Gen. ch. 14). Moses was a high official of the Egyptian political structure as a young man, and then a "political" leader of the Israelites in later life. Joseph was an official of the Egyptian empire. Samuel was an "executioner" for God, hacking Agag to pieces (1 Sam. 15:33). David was a "king after God's own heart" enforcing law and order with the sword. Solomon, Hezekiah, and many others were good kings of Israel. Daniel was a trusted and powerful official in the governments of Babylonia and Persia (both "heathen" empires). Esther was queen of Persia and gave orders for Haman to be hanged. Mordecai, her uncle, was an official in the Persian government. There is, in the NT, Cornelius, a Christian Roman centurion; some of Caesar's own body guard who became Christians; Erastus, a city official of the Roman empire; the Philippian jailer; Sergius Paulus, et. al. Neither Jesus nor John the Baptist ordered soldiers to be discharged from the army (Lk.



3:14) when they asked what to do to repent before God. Paul calls government authorities “ministers” (Greek, diakonos, “deacons” and leitourgoi, “servers”) of God for this very thing, attending to it constantly (Greek, eis auto touto proskarterountes). Soldiers, policemen, judges (who enforce the law of a nation, even if that law be lower than Biblical standards), are serving God. God does not want divorce but people divorce—but then God does not want anyone murdered either but there are murderers. Society’s standards will always be short of the kingdom’s standards.

Taxes are due to be paid to “Caesar!” Citizens are obligated to pay taxes to governments! The Greek phrase of 13:7 is: apodote pasin tas opheilas to ton phoron ton phoron, literally, “Pay all taxes to those to whom it is your obligation.” So far as can be determined from the Bible, taxes are the only God-authorized way to support human government in its “ministering” functions. There certainly is no Biblical support for “lotteries” to support the functions of human governments. Here is an area where Christians should make peaceful protest. There is indication in the OT that God approves of enough taxes to support rulers and armies necessary to protect and enforce law and order (Samuel warned the people when they asked for a king they would have to pay taxes and give their young people in civil service—1 Sam. 8:10ff). Jesus even commanded (Matt. 22:21, Greek, apodote, “Render” is imperative mood in both Matt. and Rom.) that taxes which belong to Caesar, be given to Caesar! And do you know how many taxes the Roman empire collected from its provinces? There was tributum soil (real estate tax), tributum capitis (poll-tax), annona (grain & cattle property tax) and publicum (“customs, sales taxes, etc.). In addition to this, the Jews had to pay taxes to their own government (the Herods) and religion (the temple tax, synagogue tax, etc., etc.). Now what did the Romans and the Herods and Jewish priests do with all the tax money they received? They certainly did not use it all to help the poor and down-trodden! They did not funnel it into educating the Jews and the Arabs and the Greeks! They used it to make war, to satiate emperors on every luxury and vice imaginable, to build personal fortunes, to build ornate and useless temples to “gods,” to promote the “gladitorial games” of blood and death in the arenas, to support an empire-wide slave trade and sundry other wicked and useless things. They used some of it, however, to promote law and order, to promote public works, and to institute a “government dole” (but this last is what got the empire into financial disaster).

The Greek verb, opheilete, is 2 person, plural, present, indicative, and imperative. That means it is a command translated thus: “Do not go on owing anyone anything!” It is not a prohibition against borrowing—it is a prohibition against continuing to owe. Very often Jesus used parables indicating that borrowing was within the approved actions of God for godly people. But social and fiscal responsibility to indebtedness is an imperative of the Bible also. The NIV translates it: “Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellow man has fulfilled the law.” The Christian is to be financially reliable toward all men (1 Tim. 5:8; 1 Thess. 4:10-12; 2 Thess. 3:6-15), and toward his obligations to governments. If he should have to borrow anything and repayment is required, he must meet his liability. If his government levies taxes, the Christian will not cheat—he will pay what he owes. Men judge Christ and the church by the faithfulness of

Christians in fulfilling their just obligations and in paying their “dues.” Part of “paying one’s dues” in some nations (past and present) has been military service, especially in times of national emergency, and in modern times to maintain a standing army because of constant threat of aggression. The debt of love, in whatever form it needs to be expressed, is a continuing debt for which Christians are continually obligated.

Romans 13:14 is a pivotal verse! It is a summation of all Paul has written in chapters 12,13, & 14. Yes! We should have a social conscience. We should be concerned about government, taxes, justice upon wrong-doers, rewarding the right-doers. We should use our gifts (ch. 12) to the best of our ability. We should be concerned to allow Christian liberty (Ch. 14) to “weak” and “strong.” But, the crucial issue in all of this is, “Put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.” Notice, the “flesh” (the animal nature of human beings) has “desires”—plural! The Christian is not to make social conscience or using his God-given talents or exercising his Christian liberty his first priority! The Christian’s first priority is to be clothed in the nature of Christ. Nothing in this passing-away-world is more important than that! Now, of course, the Christian is to do nothing that would be harmful to the flesh, but he must also have a conscience against pampering it and indulging it. Ultimately, there is no way the flesh can be perpetuated or saved. It is passing away! So “make no provision for it (Greek, *proionai me poieisthe*, literally, “forethought for it, do not make”). This is what the whole context of Romans 13:11-14 is saying. The Christian is wide awake to the reality of this world! He knows it is temporary. He is wide awake to reality and knows it is foolish to hope that it will abide forever. It is the unbeliever who is asleep—who is living in a dream world—who can’t face reality!

## TEACHER'S NOTES

prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

### ROMANS 14:1-23

The “weak” brother is definitely not one who is morally weak. Paul defines “weak” in 1 Cor. 8:1-13 and in 1 Cor. 9, and here in Rom. 14:1-9, as one who has scruples (“misgivings”) against things which are not wrong in themselves, and one whose conscience would be offended by taking part in things which they may have been taught to be wrong—but which things were not wrong from God’s revelation. “Weakness” has nothing to do with the absolutes of the faith such as the deity of Christ, the inspiration of the apostolic word, the efficacy of Christ’s death, the bodily resurrection, covenant relationship to Christ by baptism (immersion) in water unto the remission of sins, etc. No one is permitted to be “weak” in these fundamentals. Anyone who takes offence at these fundamentals is not to be counted as a brother. Paul’s “weak” brothers were mostly Jews. Those people who had very strict Biblical upbringing, had very strong moral convictions, had many, many scruples (“misgivings”) about engaging in things that, after Christ, were not “unclean” or “unholy” (i.e., certain foods, certain grooming, certain “unclean” objects, especially meat sacrificed to idols, see 1 Cor. 8-9-10). These scrupulous Jews who had converted to Christianity, and still had conscientious objections to the “unclean” things listed, were primarily the ones Paul referred to in his term, “weak brethren.” God had put them under the Mosaic law because they were “spiritually immature.” Their choices had been almost totally regimented by law and the traditions of the scribes and Pharisees. They were so “weak” they could not make holy discrimination without some definite law directing them. They could not decide on the basis of principles. Jews weren’t the only “weak” ones. Paul told the Corinthians that many of them were “babes” in Christ and spiritually “weak” (1 Cor. 3:1, etc.). The weak brother is to be received by the “strong” (not just “tolerated”) but not for “disputes over opinions.”

The Greek words are, *me eis diakriseis dialogismon*, literally, “not for critique of inner-uncertainties.” *Dialogismon* literally means “reasoning through.” In other words, the weak brother is still considering, still uncertain, still retaining some reservations about certain actions or things. An opinion, therefore, is simply that—an idea or judgment for which there is no absolute pronouncement from God! IF GOD HAS GIVEN A CLEAR, DIRECT, UNEQUIVOCAL COMMAND ABOUT SOMETHING, THE BELIEVER HAS NO RIGHT TO AN “OPINION”—THE BELIEVER’S ONLY “JUDGMENT” ABOUT A CLEAR COMMAND OF GOD IS TO DO IT! An opinion is a persuasion built upon sentiment, personal preference, personal impression, or estimation. The “strong brother” is to receive the “weak brother” and must abstain from “judging” or deciding (Greek, *diakriseis*) that the “weak” brother’s personal preferences exclude him from the fellowship of the saints. Personal preferences are to never exclude anyone from the fellowship of the church, unless the one holding the preferences makes his preferences into a “law” of God. The reason for that is, we all have personal preferences (i.e., opinions)! Even the “strong” brother has them! The issue is, there are differences of opinion! It is not wrong for either weak or strong to have opinions—what would be wrong is to hold one’s opinions as commands or revelations from God! Paul says, “Do

not exclude one another.” We must not despise any brother (Greek, *exoutheneito*, literally, *ex* “out” combined with *outheis*, “nobody.”). We must not be contemptuous of anyone. We must not consider anyone “no account,” because their opinion is different than ours. But remember, the Christian faith contains some propositions which are NOT in the realm of opinion!

NO! Just because a person is “fully convinced in his own mind” about an opinion, it does not make his opinion morally valid! Many people have had full convictions about their opinions and then found them to be in opposition to the revealed truth of God (when that truth was made clear). A case in point was the persecution of Christians by Saul of Tarsus (see Acts 23:1; 1 Tim. 1:13). Where God has clearly revealed and commanded in the Bible, many people still maintain they have a right to their “opinion.” Actually, when the truth of God is known, no man has a right to an opinion! Again, where God has clearly revealed principles and precepts, no person has the prerogative of having an opinion as to whether the principle or precept is right or not. For example, the principle of “not placing stumbling blocks in another’s way”—no Christians has a right to an opinion as to whether that principle is right or wrong. The only area where a person has a right to an opinion is whether certain foods are clean or unclean, whether certain days are to be observed or not, whether certain methods of carrying out the Lord’s expressed will are acceptable or not, and whether certain cultural traditions are right or wrong, etc. But remember, God has even commanded some of the methods for carrying out his word. And, even in these areas of “Christian freedom” we are under command of the NT to apply the principles of: (a) proper stewardship; (b) whether something is physically harmful; (c) whether something is edifying; (d) whether something is a stumbling block; (e) whether something violates one’s own conscience; (f) whether something glorifies Christ and the church; (g) whether something is motivated by love or not! YOU SEE, THERE IS A “LAW OF CHRIST”—IT IS THE MOST BINDING OF ALL “LAWS”—IT IS THE LAW OF LOVE (Rom. 13:8; 1 Cor. 9:19-23; Gal. 6:2).

No Christian lives or dies unto himself. That is clear because of two facts. One, the Christian is a created being, therefore, his total existence, life and death, is to have the honor, glory and purpose of the Creator as his goal. This belongs to God by right of creation and redemption (for the Christian). Two, he is a social being. His very existence is dependent on other human beings at one point or another, therefore, he is obligated to society, to humanity, in his life and death. Both of these are true of all human beings, whether all of them accept the obligations or not! But, of course, Christians are constrained by the love of Christ to make this principle a fundamental of their lives because they are redeemed (2 Cor. 5:14-21). This principle applies in everything the Christian thinks or does! Even in the areas of his opinions. The Christian will hold no opinion binding on someone else that disrupts his relationship to the Creator or to society (other human beings). “No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main; any man’s death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind; and therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee.”—John Donne. The Christian is a member of a “body.” When one member suffers the whole body suffers. Each member of the body must function in harmony, or the body becomes spastic. Each member of the body is related

(hooked into—inseparably connected—fastened to) to the whole body and all its several parts.

Yes! One person's "opinion" (or freedom in Christ) may become a "stumbling-block" (Greek, *proskomma*, literally, an obstacle against which a person may dash his foot and be wounded) and a "hindrance" (Greek, *skandalon*, "scandal" literally, a snare or trap which is baited in order to make someone captive). It is actually true that there may be some things or some actions, clearly not wrong in themselves, which may wound, hurt, imprison, or enslave others. What is the right action for the Christian in such situations? (a) walk in love; (b) do not pass judgment on one another; (c) do not let your "freedoms" ruin or injure anyone; (d) do not let your "freedoms" be spoken of as evil; (e) pursue what makes for peace and up-building the other person; (f) understand that it is right for you not to exercise any "freedom" of yours that makes a brother "stumble" (1 Cor. 8:13); (g) endure anything rather than put an obstacle in the way of a brother (1 Cor. 9:12); (h) die rather than offend with one's "freedoms" (1 Cor. 9:15ff); (i) make one's self a slave to all to win some (1 Cor. 9:19); (j) exercise self-control in everything (1 Cor. 9:25); (k) seek not your own good but your neighbor's good to edify him (1 Cor. 10:23-33; Rom. 15:1-3).

Yes! It is true, nothing is unclean in itself! When God created everything that exists, he made it good! (Gen. Chs. 1-2; 1 Tim. 4:1-5; 1 Cor. 10:26; Acts 10:9-16). But, for the sake of spiritually training mankind at a certain time (Mosaic dispensation) God declared certain objects and actions to be "unclean." In doing so, God was training people to have a conscience toward any and all attitudes and actions which God declared wrong. God wanted to develop a holy and righteous conscience (attitude) in human beings that would be tuned to the revealed will of God! The truth is, the human conscience judges, or discriminates, or is sensitive, to right and wrong only to the extent to which the human mind has been exposed to and believes in the revealed word of God as ultimate truth! In other words, the human conscience is only as good as one's faith in God's word! Some people's faith is very immature. Some are still unable to see themselves in right relation to God unless they are being told in minute detail, every right and every wrong. And why is that? Because their consciences have not been fed enough of the New Testament scriptures which frees a person from a religion of legalism! Some are unable to function within the principles of self-control, stewardship, edification, self-sacrifice. Some still must have every action legislated for them. Some of this immaturity may be their fault. Some of it may not. Regardless, those who are "strong" are not to despise them and cast them aside or lead them to do something which their immature conscience tells them is wrong, for in so doing the "strong" would sin against Christ and his brother!

This is where the "chips are down," where "the cards are on the table," where "the rubber meets the road." THIS IS THE BOTTOM LINE OF CHRISTIAN PRACTICE! When the "strong" Christian (the one mature in faith, who is able to understand because he has really absorbed the teaching of the NT that everything is clean so long as he approaches it within the revealed principles of Christ) actually, willingly, lovingly forfeits some of his liberties to keep from violating the conscience of a "weaker" brother. Then we know he has the Spirit

of Christ. Many are willing to be martyred for Jesus who are unwilling to give up one of their alleged “rights” in order to “pursue what makes for peace and mutual up-building” (Rom. 14:19). When a “strong” brother (advanced and mature in understanding the New Covenant relationship) lives or works in an institution (home, Bible college, church, para-church organization, etc.), or even in day to day relations with unbelievers observing his “walk”) and is willing to suffer the indignities and inconveniences of rules needed by the “weaker” brothers for the sake of mutual up-building, then we see that the brother is truly “stronger.” If he is not willing to do so, then he is a “weak” brother, no matter how “strong” he may think he is! The over-riding principle for which every “strong” Christian must be willing to forego any of his “freedoms” is: “It is right not to eat meat or drink wine or do anything that makes your brother stumble.” Pursue (go after) peace and mutual up-building.

The “strong” Christian, whose mature faith has freed his conscience to make decisions about things not specifically declared right or wrong in the New Covenant scriptures (those decisions based on his own judgment as it has been trained in the principles of the NT) is to serve his “weaker” brother by keeping his “mature faith” to himself! He is not to go around bragging about how mature he is and how weak and immature others are. He should not aggressively and arrogantly force the “weaker” brother into his “mature” position because of the danger of causing one of them to stumble. The “weaker” brother should be left to his own responsibility to grow “stronger” if he wishes—not forced into it! The “strong” brother is especially not to exercise his “mature actions or faith” in the presence of the “weaker” brother when that would cause stumbling or stricken conscience. The “strong” brother can exercise his “mature action or faith” when he is alone, with God. But he should be quiet about his superior faith lest by boasting or displaying it he tempt, wound or drive away the weaker brother. The mature brother who has cleared his conscience in accord with NT principles may “eat or not as he sees fit.” But let him not use his liberty to bring condemnation on himself by injuring a weaker brother.

In verse 23, Paul focuses his instruction upon the “weak” brother! Should the “weak” brother be tempted, or otherwise induced by shame or fear, to act against what his “immature” conscience would judge him as having committed wrong-doing or wrong-thinking, the weaker brother is condemned, not so much for his action, as for acting against his conscience. A Christian must not do a thing until he knows and trusts it is right to do. And why is this the case? Because an act against one’s own knowledge and trust springs from a faith denied in order to follow someone else in an action the rightness of which one questions—thus his conscience will condemn him as guilty! The danger of such a principle of action lies here: if we allow ourselves to act against knowledge, hoping that in the acting we will discover it to be right, we will find ourselves guilty almost all the time. Such a life is unbecoming a Christian! However, in other places in the New Testament, “weaker” brothers are admonished to develop “into mature manhood” (e.g., Eph. 4:11-16; 1 Cor. Chs. 8-9-10, etc.). This is a major function of the church’s ministry—maturing believers in the faith!

Paul is certainly not using the word “faith” in 14:22-23 to denote that body of doctrine of the New Testament which contains the clear, unequivocal commandments



concerning our becoming a Christian. It is clear he is using “faith” here to be synonymous with “conscience.” Every act of the Christian which is not from “faith” (i.e., knowledge and trust—a clear conscience) is a sin. Why? Because to act against conscience is presumptuous, reckless, rash, careless. It is an act performed as to God without conviction that it is right. Let us not presume against our consciences, or lead others to do so!

## TEACHER'S NOTES

prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

### ROMANS 15:1-33

Who are the “strong”? It is evident from Paul’s ethical principles (1 Cor. chs. 8-9-10 and Rom. chs. 14-15) that the “strong” are those able to function ethically and spiritually where the Bible is silent concerning a divine commandment or principle. The strong have “misgivings” (scruples) only about those things and actions specifically forbidden in God’s word. In other words, a “strong” Christian does not require Biblical legislation for every circumstance in life. He has enough of the mind of Christ directly from the Bible in him to function without rules where the Bible is silent. He knows that certain things and actions are clearly and strictly commanded or prohibited by the Lord and he abides by those. But he also knows that those things and actions not clearly commanded or prohibited are left to him to decide personally on the basis of divinely inspired principles in the NT. He knows that things are not sinful in and of themselves—they are all created by God and are good, when used within the revealed parameters of the will of Christ in the NT. Whether you are “strong” or not, you will have to decide. Remember, it is not whether you do as you please but whether you please Christ and live according to the apostolic principles of 1 Cor. 8-9-10 and Romans 14-15 or not. Christ was “strong” and kept God’s commandments (Jn. 15:10; Rom. 5:19; Heb. 5:8-9) but he did not please himself! Christians are expected to grow toward that plateau (see Eph. 4:11-16; 1 Tim. 1:8-9). That is what the ministry of the church is ordained to do! Growing “strong” Christians is what the ministry of the church is all about. It is accomplished by studying and applying the Scriptures—certainly not by reverting to legalism, or even to the opinions of others.

The “strong” are to behave toward the “weak” thus: (a) bear with the failings (Greek, *asthenemata*, “weaknesses”) of the weak—that is, “carry” or “endure”—not just “put up with”; (b) please the “weak” for his good; (c) edify or build-up or bring to growth the “weak”; (d) welcome the “weak” as Christ welcomes all men—with grace and mercy; (e) never cause a brother to stumble; (f) endure anything rather than put an obstacle in the way of the “weak”; (g) make oneself a “slave” to the weak in order to win them to mature faith in Christ; (h) exercise self-control on behalf of the weak; (i) do not raise questions, enter into disputes, with the weak; (j) give no offense to the weak by one’s liberties; (k) do not seek one’s own advantage with the weak; (l) do all to the glory of God and Christ! When the “strong” defers to the scruples of the “weak” the “weak” are best motivated to grow “strong” and that is the only thing that will produce harmony. The “strong” giving in to the “weak” until the “weak” grow “strong” is absolutely essential to Christian harmony and peace. Do not forget that the “weak” have an obligation to promote harmony, too, by keeping their scruples to themselves and not making divisive issues of them (see Romans 14:5-12; 1 Cor. 10:29-30). The “weak” Christian who has to have his ethical life regimented for him, is not, thereby excused from self-denying love! He should be as ready to defer to the “strong” brother’s liberty as the “strong” is to defer to the “weak” brother’s scruples!

Paul refers to the “Scriptures” right in the middle of this context discussing ethical behavior because: (a) the “Scriptures” were written for our instruction (Rom.15:4; 1 Cor. 10:11; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; Heb. 2:1-4, etc.). How else would human beings know what kind of behavior God expects of a kingdom-person unless God tells him? And, since “Scriptures” when Paul wrote Romans means OT Scriptures, it is evident that God expected the OT to teach this kind of behavior of the “strong” toward the “weak” and the “weak” toward the “strong.” And, did you know, that these principles may be found throughout the OT prophets and the Law of Moses?; (b) the “Scriptures” were written for our encouragement. The Scriptures not only guide us in specific behavior patterns, they also provide the motivation for us to so behave! They show us OT saints who behaved this way and pleased God (Gen. 15:6; Heb. ch. 11, etc.) and were rewarded by him for such behavior. They also show us that it is clearly possible for believers to behave ethically in the midst of all kinds of trying circumstances. So, it is only by the “Scriptures” that non-believers become believers, and believers become strong. People are not born ethically and spiritually strong! Furthermore, they are not suddenly and miraculously made strong the moment they become believers! It takes a Scripture-saturated and a love-constrained mind to break from the sin of selfishness and spiritual immaturity as a way of living!

God “fills” you and me with all joy and peace in believing! We are not filled by some miraculous outpouring. The source of our joy and peace resides in the miracle of the incarnation and redemptive work of Jesus Christ. But the access to it is “in believing.” Joy and peace are not passively acquired. Joy and peace come by the hard struggle of believing. Believing is not easy! Jesus once said it was “work” (Jn. 6:29). Faith tested in the crucible of trials of life, and in the warfare of mortifying the flesh is faith that brings joy and peace. Only faith that puts to death the pull of the flesh, and controls self, and clings to God’s promises in the face of incomprehensible trials, is faith that builds in us the character open to the filling of God’s joy and peace. Jesus made this clear in John 15:11 (see also Rom. 5:3-4; Eph. 3:14-19; 1 Jn. 1:1-4; John 3:29). The book of Philippians is often called the “epistle of joy or rejoicing.” But read it again! See how much it says about believing in the face of trials and death to self! We cannot be filled with the joy and peace of God and have our minds set on the flesh at the same time. IT IS IMPOSSIBLE! The apostle who wrote this letter to the Romans had to learn how to be filled with all joy and peace by believing (see 2 Cor. 1:8-11; 12:1-10).

Yes! Harmony within a congregation is in direct proportion to its being filled with the knowledge of the Lord and its ability to instruct one another. Paul writes that we are to “teach and admonish one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs” (Col. 3:16). The nouns “psalms, hymns, spiritual songs” are in the dative case in the Greek text. The dative case marks to object of the verbs “teach and admonish”. The object of Christian singing is to teach. There’s not much teaching of the word of Christ in Christian music anymore! Just look in the index of an old hymn book some day and see how many doctrinal subjects were taught in the old hymns compared to modern “worship choruses.” The disharmony, wickedness, chaos, anarchy and division of the OT people of God was directly due to the priesthood defaulting on its primary function for which God ordained it—the instructing of the

people in the knowledge of the Lord (e.g., Hosea 4:1-19). Jesus expected unity among believers on the basis of their knowing him and believing in him, and obeying him (see John 17), as he is revealed in the apostolic word. Paul's method of bringing about harmony in the first century churches was to instruct them (by epistles) in the knowledge of the Lord! A congregation of believers, to be a NT church, must be constantly maturing in the doctrine of Christ ("the faith") Eph. 4:11-16; Jude 3, etc. Just as physical maturation comes from "eating" and "exercising" so spiritual maturation comes from "eating" the word of God (Jn. 6:35-63) and "exercising" (doing) one's spiritual nature. Added to our knowledge of the Lord and ability to instruct, we must be "full of goodness." And, of course, we get "full of goodness" by knowing and doing the Lord's will. Harmony cannot come at the expense of compromising correct belief and right behavior. Christian harmony is not a facade!

Yes! Paul expected the church at Rome to "speed him on his way" to Spain. But, so far as we know, Paul never left Rome for Spain. His only trip to Rome was as a prisoner who had appealed to Caesar for judgment to clear himself of the false charges brought against him by the Jews. He was imprisoned once (during which time he wrote Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Galatians). Apparently he was then released, and imprisoned again (see 2 Timothy) and then martyred. If he ever got to Spain, it was between imprisonments. There were three years between Paul's incarcerations in Roman prisons (A.D. 63—A.D. 66). He apparently spent a year or more in the city of Rome after release from the first imprisonment because he wrote the Epistle to the Hebrews from Rome (Heb. 13:23) about A.D. 64. He could very well have gone to Spain in the years 64–66 A.D. Paul never demanded support from anyone (see 1 Cor. 9:1-18). But he always hoped that Christians would avail themselves of the privilege of sharing in the fruit of gospel workers by supporting him and his co-workers financially and prayerfully (see Phil. 4:15-18). On one occasion Paul implies that he did a church a "wrong" by not "burdening" them with asking for financial support (see 2 Cor. 12:13). We assume he was referring to his former statement to the Corinthian church (1 Cor. 9:1-18) about not claiming his right to be financially supported by them. When Paul discussed the "offering" from the Macedonians for the starving Jewish Christians in Judea, he repeatedly stated that by such giving the Macedonians were going to "prove their love" and their "obedience to the gospel" and thus, promote harmony within the world-wide brotherhood of believers (2 Cor. chs. 8-9). Yes! Putting our money into the Lord's work puts our heart there, and develops unity and harmony in the church. It is usually the "skinflints" who create disharmony and dissension!

We have already pointed to 2 Corinthians, chs. 8-9 to show that giving to help brethren in foreign countries instills a sense of unity with them. Paul stated that the Macedonians and those of Achaia (Rom. 15:26-29) gave to the brethren at Jerusalem, and were pleased to do so, because of a spiritual indebtedness to the Jewish Christians. You see, all Christians are spiritually united to one another and the more they share (of everything—money, talents, "ups and downs") the more harmony will be produced among them. Of course, unity cannot be bought with mere money. But, it can't be produced without money, either. The crucial issue is, what prompts the giving of money from one saint to another. That is precisely why Paul warned the Corinthians about their giving for the starving saints at

Jerusalem (2 Cor. 8-9). Giving that produces unity cannot be unwilling, of necessity, reluctantly, as an exaction, under compulsion, or not cheerfully. Giving done grudgingly and reluctantly could never produce harmony. Harmony can be produced by giving in the Spirit of Christ, even if what is given is not enough to supply the need (2 Cor. 8:12)! It is selflessness, and a giving spirit that creates harmony in a marriage, in a family, in a factory, and in the universal kingdom of God—the church. An Associated Press release March 21, 2008, points to a March, 2008, issue of the magazine, *Science*, reports that studies by researchers at the University of British Columbia and Harvard University, found “people who made gifts to others or to charities reported they were happier than folks who didn’t share,” and that “doing something for others made people happy.”

Paul appealed to the Christians at Rome to strive (Greek, *sunagonisasthai*, literally, “agonize-with”) together with him in their prayers to God on his behalf Rom. 15:30. Jesus taught us to pray for one another—especially to pray forgiving those who have sinned against us. Jesus taught us to pray for the unity of all believers, by praying for unity! The apostles (especially Paul) taught us to pray constantly for one another in everything that affects our lives. Praying is one of the important channels through which the individual believer becomes one with the Father and the Son. We are taught to pray, “Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.” Prayer solidifies our union with the will of God. Therefore, when we agonize in prayer with the saints, it solidifies our oneness with them! Praying intelligently, with the heart, sincerely, is like repeating in all sincerity the pledge of allegiance to the U.S. flag. It becomes a cohesive essence in our souls “gluing” us to God in total dependence and in submissive harmony with his sovereign purpose as it relates to us individually and collectively in his kingdom. Sympathetic prayer for the brethren is an essential ingredient to harmony.

Paul asked the Christians at Rome to agonize in prayer with him that “(his) service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints” Rom. 15:31. Paul was extremely sensitive and conscientious that his service be acceptable to saints everywhere. The Lord Jesus Christ is intolerant of irresponsibility. He warned all would be disciples to “count the cost” before joining up. Ignorance, mediocrity, mistakes, over-zealousness, low self-image, and a multitude of other human frailties the Lord can temporarily tolerate and wait for change. But irresponsibility is unacceptable with him (e.g., the church at Laodicea, and many of Jesus’ parables about irresponsible stewardship, etc.). Certainly ministers of the gospel and missionaries ought to agonize in prayer about their responsibility to the saints and they should ask the saints to agonize with them about it! Is it possible to overcome an attitude of irresponsibility? Yes! It is overcome by thousands of adolescents and teens all the time! It is done through the “school of hard knocks”! It is done by the sheer force of reality! (A man once wrote a book called, *Reality Therapy* on this very issue—read it some time!) Those who resist responsibility (especially those aiming at full-time service for the Lord) need some “hard knocks”! They should be taught before they start serving the saints that their service must be acceptable to the saints!

## TEACHER'S NOTES

prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

### ROMANS 16:1-27

It is apparent from the NT that there were no such things as “church boards” in the first century. That is not to say there were no elders or deacons! There were! And they were the servants and shepherds of the congregations. It is also apparent from the NT that women were not permitted to have authority over men (1 Cor. 11:1-16; 14:33-36; 1 Tim. 2:8-15, etc.). It is true that Paul calls Phoebe, in the Greek text, diakonon tes ekklesias, literally, “deaconess of the church” (KJV translates it “servant”). But is Paul using the word in the generic sense or in the specific sense? As a matter of fact, the Scriptures nowhere specifically refer to the diaconate as an “office” as they do the “office” of the bishop (elder). Paul’s letter to Timothy (1 Tim. 3:8) does not call them “officers.” His letter to Titus does not even mention “deacons.” Those appointed to “serve tables” in Acts 6 are not called “deacons” in the text! Should women be “preachers”? It depends on what we mean by “preacher”! If we mean by “preacher” a person who functions as a spiritual admonisher of a congregation—No! If we mean a person who talks to and teaches others about Christ—Yes! Philip had four daughters who “prophesied” (Acts 21:9); Priscilla helped teach Apollos; women are directed to do certain teaching (Titus 2:3-5). Phoebe was in some way a “servant” of the church at Cenchrea—but not its “preacher” nor a “member of the board” (Phoebe was not an “evangelist” Eph. 4:11; 2 Tim. 4:1-5; Titus 1:5; 2:15).

The Greek word Paul uses in 16:3 is *apasasthe*, and is translated “Greet.” It means literally, “to draw to oneself or to embrace.” It is the same word used in Heb. 11:13 to speak of those who “greeted” the promises from afar. They “took to themselves and embraced” those promises. Thus “greet” as Paul used it means far more than, “Howdy!” It means, as the context shows, “to receive, welcome, and help” one another whenever help is needed. This Greek word, *apasasthe*, from *aspazomai* (the verb), is also used to mean “fare thee well.” To greet, as the context shows, also means to show honor to one another. To give recognition to the service of one another (see also Col. 4:7-17). Paul suggested that the church at Rome honor a long list of people whom he knew personally and he told why they should be “greeted with honor” or “saluted.” There certainly is nothing wrong with public acknowledgment of good work being done that brings glory to Christ, so long as it is done humbly and with the right motive and for the right purpose, giving glory (first “rank”) to Christ. Paul acknowledged people by name all the time and told of their service to the Lord! And we ought to do it more often to all those who “risk their necks for the gospel” for those who “labor and toil hard” for those who have “proved their faith” for those who “mother” and “father” Christian workers. This would produce the harmony in the kingdom of God Paul sought in so many of his epistles to the churches so long ago!

Prisca and Aquila had a “church” in their house because in the first century, there was hardly any other place for the church to meet (see also 1 Cor. 16:19; Col. 4:15; Philemon 2). The earliest church building known is a second century (A.D. 100-200) church



uncovered by archaeologists in Armenia (what is now the western most part of Turkey—(Asia Minor in the 1st century). During the 1st century Christians had to meet in people's houses, or other buildings not built for Christian worship. Paul held "evangelistic" meetings in the "Hall of Tyrannus" (Acts 19:9). He preached in synagogues, in market places, at the "spit and whittle" clubs of philosophers (Acts 17:16-34)—anywhere he could get an audience. And the early church, when it "came together" (1 Cor. 11:18) as a congregation, met wherever they could find a place. All the Christians of one large city might not be able to meet together in one building. The "church at Corinth" probably met in many different buildings at the same time throughout the city—mostly in the "upper chambers" (Acts 20:8) of people's houses. Certainly God approves of "houses of worship" where many can congregate together in one place to worship him. God did not disapprove of the tabernacle, the temple and synagogues for the Jews. However, the "church of Jesus Christ" can still function as the church whether it has buildings or not—even if it has to meet in people's houses!

Indeed! Being a Christian involves "work"! First, Jesus said believing in him was the work of God (John 6:29). Second, Jesus said he was sent to do the work of the Father (Jn. 4:34). Jesus said, "We must work the works of him..." (Jn. 9:4). When Jesus went back to heaven, he left—"each one of his servants with his work..." (Mark 13:34). Work involves: (a) toil and struggle—are you struggling and toiling in your spiritual life—are you doing anything spiritual?; (b) production—are you producing anything (character, spiritual growth, other Christians—see Jn. 15:1ff) as a Christian? No one can produce unless he works; (c) spending energy—"work" in the physical realm is measured by amounts of energy ("ergs") expended. Are you "spending" yourself—are you exerting your strength toward spiritual matters? How much of your mind? How much of your body? There are at least 300 separate scriptural references in Cruden's Concordance to the words "work, working, works," etc. We are told we must "work out our own salvation with fear and trembling" (Phil. 2:12). There is no getting around it, Christians are to work at their faith! Paul said of his Christian friends, they were "fellow WORKERS...who worked hard...or were working hard in the Lord"—and don't forget, the only thing we take out of this world into the next is our "works" (Rev. 14:13). No Christian should be ashamed to say his Christianity involves holy "works."

Of course it is alright to give public recognition to people for their labors in the Lord. Paul told the church at Corinth to do so (1 Cor. 16:18). Paul also rebuked some publicly (2 Tim. 1:15; 4:10,14). Paul did so himself (Rom. 16; 1 Cor. 16; Eph. 6:21; Col. 4, 2 Tim. 1:16; Titus 3; Heb. 11) and so did the apostle John (John 12; Rev. 2:13). Telling of the faith and works of Christians (in biographies, etc.) has inspired many a person to imitate their good works and sacrifices. It also helps those who may be struggling to know that faithfulness in spite of circumstances will always produce much fruit for the Lord. But there are dangers! Flattery is never good for the soul—neither the soul of the flatterer or the one flattered! There is always the danger in praising some people that we might produce a Diotrephes, "who likes to put himself first" (3 Jn. 9). Jesus warned the 70 disciples who came back from a highly successful evangelistic crusade, expecting to be praised and elevated, "Do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you; but rejoice that your names are written in

heaven” (Lk. 10:20). Jesus also warned about those Pharisees who loved to be called “Doctor, Master, Teacher,” and who loved places of honor, best seats, and salutations in the market places—we are all simply “brethren” (Matt. 23:5-12). And even the apostles acted shamefully, arguing and vying for “first” place in the kingdom! (Matt. 20:20-28; Lk. 22:24-27). NOT MANY OF US CAN REALLY HANDLE CONSTANT PRAISE—ESPECIALLY FLATTERY!

“Greet one another with a holy kiss” is in Greek, *aspasasthe allelous en philemati hagio*, the Greek word *philemati* is translated “kiss” and *hagio* is “holy.” *Philemati* might also be translated, simply, “embrace.” There certainly would be nothing in whatever the “embrace” was which would be inconsistent with Christian holiness. W. E. Vine says in his book, *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, “In the *Apostolic Constitutions*, a writing compiled in the 4th century A.D. (A.D. 400-500), there is a reference to the custom whereby men sat on one side of the room where a meeting was held, and women on the other side of the room (as is frequently the case still in parts of Europe and Asia), and men are bidden to salute the men, and the women the women, with ‘the kiss of the Lord.’” It was probably a kiss on the cheek on both sides of the face, much like the French, Italians, Russians, Arabs, and others do (Pres. Jimmy Carter gave Russian Premier Breshnev a “holy kiss” at one of their meetings, Hillary Clinton gave Yassar Arafat one in 2001). The point was, for the Christian there was to be an absence of formality and hypocrisy, a freedom from prejudice arising from social distinctions and from discrimination against the poor and partiality toward the rich. In churches, master and servants would thus embrace one another without an attitude of condescension on the part of one, or disrespect on the part of the other. Whatever is necessary for us to “embrace” our brethren would be our “holy kiss” today. A handshake, a sincere conversation, a hug, a pat on the back, whatever—we are to count others better than ourselves (Phil. 2:3).

Paul used an interesting word in Romans 16:17 when he said, “mark those which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which you have been taught.” “Mark” is a translation of the Greek word *skopein* from *skopos* which means, “be a watchman.” That is the way this Greek word is translated in Ezekiel 3:17 in the Septuagint (LXX, the translation of the Hebrew text into Greek language about 200 B.C.). Now we know that a “watchman” according to Ezekiel is supposed to warn of any approaching danger—and if he does not the consequences will be upon his head! Thus, Paul is saying to the church at Rome (and to all succeeding Christians), someone (or “someones”) must take a firm stand in the church as “watchmen” and take note of those who create divisions (Greek, *dichostasias*, “schisms, partitions, divisions,”—it is the origin of the English word “dichotomy”). These watchmen are also to take note of “scandalous behavior that might cause others to sin” (Greek, *skandala*, literally, “traps, snares, stumbling-blocks”—we get the English word “scandals” from this Greek word). Both of these are symptoms of a much more serious problem and that is, “opposition to the doctrine which you (Christians) have learned.” We know from the rest of the NT that the elders have the primary responsibility in this (Acts 20:28-32; Titus 1:5-16, etc.). But Paul is writing to the whole church here in Romans 16! Every member is responsible to be a “watchman” about dissension, stumbling blocks and false doctrines.

Jesus never hesitated to call Peter, “Satan,” to point out Judas as the betrayer, to rebuke James and John for “thundering.” Paul often named those causing trouble in his work. John the apostle named Diotrephes.

Paul says when Christians become alert to someone creating division or a stumbling-block, contrary to the doctrine taught by the apostles, they are to “avoid” such a one. The Greek word is *ekklinete*, from *ek* “away from,” and *klino*, “bend, or turn.” Thus, “bend or turn away from them.” This is for two reasons: (a) these division-makers are not serving the Lord—but by flattering words they are deceiving the simple-minded into opposing the apostle’s doctrine; (b) to keep on associating with those who create temptations or divisions makes the Christian vulnerable to evil himself. See also 2 Thess. 3:6; Titus 3:10; 2 John 10. Division is a “work of the flesh” (Gal. 5:20) and is clearly condemned in the Scriptures. James says the “wisdom” that creates jealousy, strife, division and tumult is from the devil (James 3:13-18). We see many examples of this fact in the Bible—Abraham and Lot, Jacob and Esau, Joseph and his brothers, David and his sons, the prophets and their own families, the early apostles, the Judaizers and Paul, and some of Paul’s co-workers. We see it happening where we train young preachers in our Bible colleges. First comes the opposition to Biblical guidelines—then comes the gathering of others by deceiving the “simple-minded.” At that point, some “avoiding” has to take place. Such “avoiding” (turning away from, dismissal) will hopefully produce repentance. And a brother is regained! That is its primary goal. If the “brother” does not want to be “regained,” then the church is protected.

The “mystery kept secret for long ages” was the gospel. It includes the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ; the vicarious atonement by the Perfect Man, Jesus; the resurrection of the Messiah from the dead; and the institution of the universal covenant and a spiritual “kingdom of God”—the church-universal. The Greek word *sesigemenou*, is not the Greek word normally translated “secret” (the normal word for “secret” in Greek is *krptos*, English, “cryptic.”). The word *sige* or *sigao* means, “silent.” In Romans 16:25 *sesigemenou* is a perfect tense verb, indicating action in the past and continuing up to some point in time. But from whom was the gospel kept “silent?” Not from the Jews! The gospel, in germinal form, was in the Old Testament (see Rom. 3:21; Gal. 3:6-9). There was sufficient revelation of the “gospel” in the OT that Jesus expected the Jews to recognize him and acknowledge his message as that of Moses and the prophets (Luke 24, etc.). The “mystery” was “kept silent” as far as the Gentiles were concerned! The OT prophecies were not revealed to the Gentiles. God chose only one nation of people for the “gospel” in types and symbols—the Jews. All the rest of the world lay in darkness! But God sent the apostles with the “prophetic word” (the OT) to interpret for them by divine revelation this “mystery” which had been “silent” for them. He sent them into all the world—to all nations. Simultaneously, God had what these apostles saw and had revealed to them written down in New Covenant (Testament) Scriptures. After that, all Christians could reveal the “mystery” to others and all the world could know it! God’s “good news” (gospel) has not been a “mystery” since the day of Pentecost!

The purpose for making God’s “mystery” known is “to bring about the obedience of

faith.” The Greek word translated “obedience” is hupakoen, literally, “hearing.” In the Hebrew language, the word shema may be translated both “hear” and “obey.” We often use the English word “hear” to mean “obey.” There is no “hearing” if there is no “obeying.” There is no faith without obedience. Everyone acts upon his faith (no matter what that faith may be focused upon). A recent Gallup Poll showed 81% of Americans said they were “Christian,” but 51% of that number said they were making no conscious effort to obey Jesus Christ! Jesus said, “Why do you call me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not the things which I say?” (Luke 6:46ff). Anyone who goes about “preaching the gospel” and does not clearly direct people to obey the commandments of Christ and the apostles, he is not “preaching” according to the “command of the eternal God” (Rom. 16:26). “Obey” is a word that makes most people bristle! It arouses all sorts of antagonisms and rebellions in many people. But there simply is no relationship, discipleship, or fellowship with Jesus Christ without obedience. Assuming the name “Christian” without surrender to obedience is pure fantasy—totally unrealistic! The gospel is to be obeyed (2 Thess. 1:8; Rom. 2:8; 1 Pet. 1:22, etc.)

#### Introduction to Paul T. Butler Th.D

Paul was born in Springfield Missouri and graduated from Conway High School prior to enlistment in the US Navy. He began serious bible study with correspondence courses from San Jose Bible College. He later enrolled in Ozark Bible College and acquired his Bachelor of Theology degree June of 1961. He received a Master of Biblical Literature degree from Ozark in May of 1973. He received a Doctorate of Theology from The Theological University of America in October of 1990.

Paul taught at Ozark Christian College from 1960 to 1997. He also served many years as registrar for the college.

#### Introduction to the Sound Bible Study project.

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