

# **Bible Studies**

**A magazine for the exploration of the Word of God [Acts 17: 11]**

**THE BOOK OF ROMANS  
PART I**

**VOLUME 54**

**Published by  
HAYES PRESS  
8, ESSEX ROAD,  
LEICESTER LE4 7EE.  
ENGLAND**



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# Bible Studies

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EDITORIAL

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"All roads lead to Rome". This famous expression in the English language is living evidence of one of the principal and distinctive features of the Roman Empire. No centre of population of any size or distinction was not readily accessible to the heart of the Empire. "All these cities were connected with each other, and with the capital, by the public highways, which, issuing from the Forum of Rome, traversed Italy, pervaded the province, and were terminated only by the frontiers of the Empire. The public roads were accurately divided by milestones and ran in a direct line from one city to another. They united the subjects of the most distant provinces... but their primary object had been to facilitate the marches of the legions.... Houses were everywhere erected at the distance only of five or six miles, each of them was constantly provided with forty horses, and by the help of these relays it was easy to travel a hundred miles in a day along the Roman roads". (Gibbon's *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* - D. M. Low 1960 p.26). We trust readers will not be offended by such extensive quotation from one of the greatest of secular authorities but it shows vividly how "natural" it must have been for the gospel to reach Rome at an early date so that a well-established assembly existed many years before Paul wrote his epistle to the church of God in that city (Rom. 15: 23). It should not surprise us, then, that Priscilla and Aquila were able to travel back and forward (Acts 18: 2, Rom. 16: 3) or that a woman, Phoebe, should be entrusted with the safe-keeping of the epistle (Rom. 16: 1). Neither should it surprise us that so many who had laboured with Paul (Rom. 16) in different parts of the empire should find themselves together in its capital city. By such means, too, it is extremely likely that the faith of the saints in Rome should in a short space of time be "proclaimed throughout the whole world" (Rom. 1: 18). Such ready ease of communication would make the sending of the various epistles to churches and individuals a very practicable proposition. Bearing in mind some of the lessons of last year's study (Josh. 22) we imagine that such ease of communication was important in maintaining the unity of the Fellowship.

To the natural mind Rome might thus have seemed the best place from which Paul should evangelize the world, but that was not the purpose of God. The divine movement was first centred on Jerusalem, then Antioch, and Paul was scrupulous in hearkening to the leading of the Spirit. So he never went near Rome and, even when he sought the Lord many times, the answer was "No" (Rom. 1:9-13). Thus at the heart of Gentile world-dominion there was a major work of God in which the apostle of the Gentiles played no direct part. We may not know the reasons for this but we can learn many lessons from it. First of all, no matter how great our achievement in the work of God there will be others whose work is equally precious to God. Secondly there is to be no central direction of the work of evangelism. The master-plan is decided in heaven and communicated separately to workers so that they may learn to be drawn together by the Holy Spirit to work in fellowship with one another. No one man is to dominate the Fellowship as Paul may well have done had the natural inclination of the human mind been followed (and as history testifies did eventually happen). Thirdly we learn that it is proper to support by prayer co-workers whom we may know only by repute (Rom. 1:8-9). In the end, however, all roads did lead to Rome for Paul but he did not enjoy the freedom of her vast highways. He was led there as a prisoner in circumstances that he could hardly have envisaged when he prayed (Rom. 1:10) to be prospered on his way. Surely we would all agree that what befell Paul has been the source of untold blessing to men. The way of God may seem difficult or beyond our understanding at the time but we do well to heed it and lean not upon our own understanding.

Alas, not long after the apostle's departure, all roads led to Rome for the early churches. There grew from that healthy, prosperous and substantial church of God in Rome, as wicked a religious monster as the world has ever seen. Like the woman it foreshadows (Rev. 17:1-6, Prov. 7:6:-27, 9:13-18) it devoured all in its path. But we may say, the faithful saints in Rome triumphed in the end for this very letter to them was one of the principal means by which, some 14 centuries later, a student of the Scriptures was led to nail his Bible Studies paper to a German church door. His studies in the book of Romans set in motion that movement of God which culminated in our day in the re-establishment of churches of God together forming the house of God to await, we believe, the return of the Lord Jesus Christ.

*I. E. P.*

**From Aberdeen:** Paul was separated by God to the gospel of God. Nevertheless he was not exempt from the need to obey his calling. In God's plan Paul had been separated from the day he was being formed in the womb; so also the day came when the Holy Spirit said "separate me" in relation to Paul's further evangelization (Gal. 1: 15; Acts 13: 2).

The "gospel of God" is also the "gospel of His son" (Rom. 1: 1; 1: 9) since God's Son is central to the good news. He was "declared to be the Son of God in power" (Rom. 1: 4, RVM). The word "declared" is given as "determined" in the R. V. M. and carries the thought of a boundary line marking out a field: The one who was born of the seed of David was, though man, "clearly identified" as the Son of God.

Paul's purpose in yielding to God's separated position for him in the gospel was with a view to obtaining a spiritual reward. He wanted to find "fruit" in the Gentile saints (Rom. 1: 13). This desire was not a selfish one but for the benefit of saints. He wrote to the Philippians,

"Not that I seek for the gift; but I seek for the fruit that increaseth to your account" (Phil. 4: 17). He wanted the Roman saints to be "established" just as he had desired the hearts of the Thessalonians to be "stablished" (Rom. 1: 11, 1 Thes. 3: 13). Abiding fruit was the end Paul worked for, because he saw the saints in the churches of God that he ministered to in the context of the one Body of Christ. His ministry and purpose was therefore according to Ephesians 4: 11, 12 in which apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers have been given "for the perfecting up of the body of Christ: till we all attain unto the unity of the faith . . . . unto the measure of stature of the fullness of Christ". Such an objective was the fruit Paul looked for in the saints at Rome. The objective is still the same today.

*James Johnson*

**From Ajara: Self Introduction:** - Paul as a servant of God, made himself known to the saints (verse 1). We also learn from this that it is also necessary for the believers, particularly the Lord's servants to make themselves known to the saints. This reminds us about what happened to Paul at Jerusalem in the book of Acts (9: 26-27).

**Commendation:** Verse 8. The commendation given by Paul to the saints at Rome is a challenge to every church or individual saint. This kind of attitude, if seen in a church, will encourage the Lord's servants to be visiting the church and share in fellowship with them as did Paul (vv. 8-12).

**Prayer:** Though Paul was occupied, yet he did not forget the saints in prayer (v. 9). This reminds us about the importance of prayer both individually and collectively as indicated in James 5: 16, and by Paul (1 Thes. 5: 25).

**Devotion:** The presence of the Lord's servants among the saints is stressed in vv 11-12. This is necessary in order to impart spiritual gifts among them, as we also enjoy the presence of the Lord's servants among ourselves today. Furthermore, Paul counted it as a debt, the non-preaching of the Gospel (vv 14-16), as the Lord Jesus Himself commanded "Go ye therefore and make disciples of all the nations" (Mat. 28: 19).

*P. Balogun, P. Poji*

**From Barrhead:** Romans deals with the doctrine of the gospel. It provides a remarkably clear statement of many of the things we stand for, so it is a very valuable letter. Its position as the sixth book in the New Testament is most appropriate particularly as it comes after Acts and before the other epistles. The content of the Old Testament is contained in writings of a type which one would expect to be used for communicating the word of God. However when we come to the New Testament it is surprising to find the foundation of our faith set forth in a collection of letters. Romans is, of course, one such letter and as Christianity was, and still is, very much a missionary religion the using of such letters by the Holy Spirit is not therefore too unexpected.

The first topic we considered was prompted by the question "In what way was the gospel promised in the Old Testament scriptures". In Gal. 3: 8 we read that the gospel was preached unto Abraham who, like the saved of the nations, was blessed through faith. The types of the Old Testament set out the truths of the gospel, and such events, as for example that concerning the serpent of brass, were direct foreshadowing of New Testament gospel truth. The prophets (e. g. Is. 53) brought tidings of a coming Messiah. So in many ways we can see that the gospel was promised in the Old Testament.

Coming now to the statement that Christ was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, we suggest that Luke 3 and not

Mat. 1 is the appropriate genealogy. Luke traces the family tree via Mary, whereas Matthew traces it through Joseph. What is according to the flesh stands in contrast to what is according to the spirit, described here as the spirit of holiness. We think that this refers to Christ's own spirit by which the characteristic of holiness was predominant in His life. Of course His own spirit was so close in character and essence to the person of the Holy Spirit that some might think that they were merged, but we see two separate entities, of the Holy Spirit and His own spirit.

The resurrection of the dead once referred to in verse 4 includes, in our view, the miracles in which Jesus raised the dead during His public ministry. It also embraces His own personal resurrection on the third day. His power extended to an ability to raise the dead by which He was declared (determined) to be the Son of God.

Next we addressed ourselves to the question "What is the 'obedience of Mth' referred to in v. 5?" We suggest that this is the obedience that comes from faith. In other words, it is the activity by which the believer shows his devotion and loyalty to Christ. When James declares that "faith, if it have not works, is dead in itself" he is referring to works of faith not works of the law. This is similar to "obedience of faith".

Just as Paul was called to be an apostle so he informs us that we are called to be Jesus Christ's. Therefore we are saved by calling. We were called by Jesus Christ and, since we responded, we now belong to Jesus Christ.

Paul often starts his letters by saying something of work and encouragement about the churches of God to which he was writing (v. 8). What would he say today if he was writing to our assemblies?

Lastly we comment on the spiritual gift referred to in v. 11. Paul was not the founder of the church of God in Rome but he wished to participate in the upbuilding and advance of the church. This would probably be done by ministry from Paul and this we understand to be the spiritual gift.

*D. J. Kerr*

From Birkenhead: In the opening verses of Romans Paul introduces the Gospel to us, and explains how it related to himself, to God, and to believers.

Introducing himself, Paul speaks of three ways in which he was related to the gospel. Firstly, he was "a servant of Jesus

Christ". **He had been bought with a price** (1 Cor. 6: 20), **the blood of Christ** (Rev. 5: 9). Secondly, **he had been "called to be an apostle"**<sup>11</sup>. **God had chosen Paul** to proclaim the gospel to the Gentiles, **and he had received his commission from the Lord Himself** (Acts 9; Gal. 1: 1). Thirdly, **he was "separated unto the gospel of God"**. **Paul had been separated from sin, rebellion and personal ambition** (Phil. 3: 4-7) **and set apart for salvation and service under God** (Acts 13: 2, 3)

Then **Paul** moves on to **speak of the place of the Gospel in God's plan** for mankind. **It was "promised afore", when the Old Testament prophets proclaimed the advent of a Messiah who was to provide a final and fully sufficient sacrifice for man's sin** (Act 26: 22, 23). **It also centred on God's Son. Without Christ there is no gospel of peace, no hope for everlasting life, no forgiveness of sins.** Furthermore, **Christ was born a descendant of David** according to the flesh (cf. 2. Tim. 2: 8), i. e. **He was truly man, but also He was declared with power to be the Son of God by His resurrection from the dead**<sup>1</sup> (Rom. 1: 4 NIV). This means **that His eternal deity was strikingly manifested through His resurrection** (Eph. 1: 19, 20) [Comment 1]. **Salvation can only be received "through Him"** (cf. John 14: 6 RVM)<sup>1</sup>. **It is interesting to note that Paul received "grace and apostleship": whenever God gives us a task He always gives the grace to perform it.**

Now **Paul** turns our attention to **the believers in Rome. They had been "called to be Jesus Christ's... beloved of God, called to be saints"**. They **had been accepted in Christ** (Eph. 1: 6), shown **the Fathers love** (John 17: 26) **and set apart at salvation to do God's service and will.** The Rome of Paul's day **has been described in secular history as the greatest metropolis in the known world and a supreme military power which displayed superb administration and control.** However **it was also renowned for its polytheism, corruption, violence, drunkenness and sexual vice.** None of this stifled **the growth of the church of God in Rome. Indeed, Paul thanks God because its faith was "proclaimed throughout the whole world".** No doubt this was **partly due to the fact that Paul was constantly offering prayer on their behalf. We should never underestimate the power of consistent prayer. Paul not only interceded for the believers but longed for an opportunity to visit them. He planned to do this many times, but had been hindered by other service which had been more pressing. Paul wanted to impart to the Romans "some spiritual gift"; to minister to them in order that they might be edified and established. He also hoped that he himself would be encouraged as they shared their 'mutual faith'**<sup>1</sup>.

**Paul felt obliged to present the gospel to all people and he**

eagerly anticipated preaching the gospel to "you also that are in Rome" Paul explains, in verses 16 and 17, why he is so ready to share the gospel with them, and the central theme of Romans is contained within these verses.

He says he is "not ashamed of the gospel: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth". It provides righteousness from God to sinners who place their trust in Christ as their Saviour and exercise faith that He can impart justification and righteousness.

*J. D. Williams*

**From Birmingham:** *How did the gospel reach Rome?* It seemed strange to us that Paul, writing in his Roman epistle to Christians should say that he was "ready to preach the gospel" to them (v. 15) [See question 2].

The "all that are in Rome" (v. 7) seems to indicate that those "saints" were well established as a Christian community at the time of Paul's writing of this epistle. There is little evidence of how the gospel actually reached Rome, but the crowd of pilgrims who were present in Jerusalem for the Feast of Pentecost (A. D. 30), and heard Peter preach included "sojourners from Rome" (Acts 2: 10). Some of those European visitors were most probably saved and took the gospel back to Rome. Again Paul met (Acts 18: 2) "A certain Jew named Aquila \_\_\_\_\_ lately come from Italy", as a result of the expulsion of Jews from Rome by Claudius. Aquila and his wife appear to have been Christians before they met Paul, but we do not know where or when they heard the gospel.

Paul's greetings (Rom. 16: 3-16) give us some interesting information. The list of the people mentioned includes "Andronicus and Junias" (v. 7) who were, as Paul says "in Christ before me". The "Rufus" of v. 13 may be the son of Simon of Cyrene (Mk. 15: 21). Thus we may ask if Paul was addressing a church of God when he wrote his Roman epistle? [Comment 2].

How is the Gospel "*The Power of God unto Salvation*"? Two views were expressed:

(a) It is the power of God in the sense that through the message preached which "to them that are perishing is foolishness" (1 Cor. 1: 18), God is able to save the person who puts faith in the message. Hence, God's power is demonstrated, in that man's great need of salvation is achieved by God through something considered weak by man.

(b) It is the power of God because of **what the message is**. The message of **the** gospel is essentially concerning Christ. It is **the** Lord Jesus Christ Himself who is **the** power of **the** message. Paul says **that** Christ is "The power of God" (1 Cor. 1:24); **the** gospel is **the** word of Christ (Rom. 10:17). Also Christ Himself is **the** Word, become **flesh** (Jn. 1:1, 14).

Christ is **the** 'dynamic' force **within the** message. Just as **He** upholds **all** things "**by the** word of **His** power" (Heb. 1:3), so **that** power of Christ is **in** His word, **the** message concerning Himself.

The "righteousness of God" (v. 17) is **that** righteousness which God imputes to **the** person who puts **faith in the** message. God considers one righteous who **has put faith in** Christ. It is a righteousness before God **and** from God. It is not of works **but** of faith. The **type** is **Abraham**, who "**believed** God, **and** it was reckoned unto **him** for righteousness" (Rom. 4:3).

The phrase "**by faith** unto **faith**" seems to **take** some effort to grasp. The **margin** of Rom. 1:17 **gives the** Greek, "from **faith** unto **faith**". It is **that**, **this** righteousness of God is based on **faith** and is revealed to **faith**. **Faith** unlocks it and **faith** receives it.

*J. Watts*

**From** Cowdenbeath: The **letter to the** Romans was **dictated by Paul** and **written by** Tertius (Rom. 16:22). **Paul** was **evidently planning** a visit there. As one has **said**, Paul's "**I must also see Rome**" was **the** "must" of **the evangelist** and not of **the** tourist.

**Helpful** comment on **the** origin of **the** epistle was **received** from **Needed Truth** 1974. It was **judged that the letter could have been written** about **the time that Paul** was **in** Corinth (Acts 19). **The** comparison of Acts 19:21 **with** Romans 15:22, 29 as **regards** those mentioned was **helpful**.

Certainly **the** apostle shared **great interest in the** saints at Rome. His unceasing prayers on **their behalf**, **that he might** purposefully **meet with them** (v. 10, 11) and **the fact that he knew** many of **them** by **name** (ch. 16) are evidence of this.

**In the** divine order of **things this** descriptive epistle concerning **the** gospel in all its implications stands **first**, **setting forth the** **great basic truths** of **man's ruin** and of justification by **faith in the** person and work of **the** Lord Jesus Christ. **In human terms** Paul, by **birth** a **Hebrew**, by **citizenship** a Roman and by **culture** a Greek was well equipped to **write**, **but his** sole qualification he expresses as **the**

**grace and apostleship received directly from Jesus Christ (v.5). God had given him grace for the ministry of apostleship which he was to exercise among men.**

**The greatest theme of the epistle is written in v. 17, "the righteous shall live by faith". Paul was writing to those living in a city opposed to the gospel. It was the centre of world power but Paul had proved the greater and more meaningful power of the gospel and was not ashamed of it. This, undoubtedly, would be a comfort and encouragement to the Roman saints.**

**That obedience is linked strongly to faith and results from it is emphasized by the fact that the epistle begins (v.5) and ends with it (16:26). Our attention was drawn to some of the great "therefores" of argument in the epistle. Firstly there is the "therefore" of justification in ch.5:1, then the "therefore" of sanctification in Christ Jesus in ch.8:1 followed by the the "therefore" of the application of the foregoing matters to daily life in ch.12:1.**

**As to the text of our passage we concluded that the "spiritual gift" of v. 11 was related to the impact of his ministry of the word of God though some thought that a particular apostolic gift was in view (e.g. pastor, teacher). V.12 we thought would indicate the former rather than the latter. We also agreed that the hindrance mentioned at v.13 stood in relation to Paul's busy life of testimony rather than to another occasion where "the spirit of Jesus suffered them not". Having discussed in what way Paul might be termed a debtor to the unsaved to whom he owed nothing naturally we concluded that what he had received from God he had received for the express purpose of making it known on God's behalf to all men. These, then, are delightful words in v.15, "I am ready to preach the gospel". It brought into focus our own responsibility.**

*R. I. Shaw*

**From Derby: The truths in this epistle have a special bearing on the profound truths found in the Gospel.**

**(1) The Gospel was promised. We get direct statements in the prophets about it. For that reason we conclude that it is its divine origin which gives it dignity. This fact should remove from us anything that would lower its dignity.**

**(2) It is a personal message. The Gospel was concerning His Son. It is not a theory. It is the power of God unto salvation unto everyone that believeth. It is an individual experience. Each person must settle it for himself after God has convicted and revealed**

His Son to **him**.

(3) It was a **preached** message. Paul was **ever ready to preach** the Gospel. In v. 9 "serve" is the service of a worshipping person. It is **due** to God and God alone. If it is **rendered** to anyone else it is idolatry [Comment 3].

(4) It is a powerful message. It is the power of God unto salvation. The **deepest dyed sinner can be reached** by Christ.

In v. 3 we read that the Lord Jesus Christ was born according to the flesh. This does not mean sinful flesh. He was in the line of David in His birth by incarnation but He is definitely identified as the Son of God. He had a Spirit in Him which was the Spirit of Holiness [Comment 4], He was perfect before God in all that He said and did. He was identified by the resurrection as the Son of God and in a wider way He is the resurrection of them yet to be raised. We have His humanity and His deity brought together.

The key words; **faith, salvation and righteousness** are found throughout this epistle and bring before us truths associated with them.

We can comfort each other by faith in our day by words of exhortation and cheer and we can be helped by observing the faith in God of people who are passing through severe trial.

*G. W. Conway*

From Hayes: What is the Gospel? It is bringing good tidings (eg. Lk; 1: 19); it is the word of the Cross (1 Cor. 1: 17, 18), it is the preaching of the message as in 1 Car. 15: 1-4. Some thought that the Gospel includes the whole revelation of God's will for man (1 Tim. 2: 4). We noted that Paul wanted to preach the gospel not only to the unsaved but to the church of God in Rome (v. 15). He intended to preach the truths of the gospel to them.

The gospel reveals a righteousness of God. This is a new widespread revelation. Previously, God did reveal to faith that there was a remedy for unrighteousness (cp. 3: 21) but it remained a hidden mystery until now. (We consider the cases of David and Abraham later).

It cannot be doubted that the righteous character of God is revealed in the gospel (cp. 3: 26). Is not the 'revelation' of v. 17, therefore, that mankind can come to be in the right with God purely

by faith? [See Comment 9].

By contrast Phil. 3:9 is the same imputed righteousness, but in context it is being rested on<sup>1</sup> by the apostle in his continuing faith so many years after his receiving it by means of his faith. Initially it is obtained by faith, then there is the realisation by subsequent and continuing faith that one is righteous (i. e. 'by faith unto faith'<sup>1</sup>).

The Law demanded a righteousness of man. This righteousness is not an adjusted or newly formed human righteousness, but divine righteousness reckoned to the account of individuals - we are counted in the right<sup>1</sup> as God is in the right<sup>1</sup>.

*D. Parker*

**From Kilmarnock and Galston:** As in his other letters in the Scriptures, Paul starts this letter by signing his name at the beginning instead of at the end, as we do.

He begins the introduction by stating that he is a servant (or bondservant), almost a slave, of Jesus Christ; although unlike other slaves he was willing to do his Master's bidding. He was called by God to be an apostle, i.e. an ambassador or delegate of Christ, and was separated to the gospel of God. Paul was equipped by God to do the work of an apostle, and he had the ability to do that work through the grace given by God. Through that same grace Paul still remained humble. This is the grace which is given for any work we may do for God today.

In the salutation he says, as he himself was called to be an apostle so we were called to be saints. He thanks God for them and mentions that their faith is known throughout the known world; probably because so many people travelled to and from Rome and took back to their home-lands stories of the great faith of the Christians in Rome.

Paul mentions his unceasing prayers for them; as he no doubt prayed for the other churches.

It is clear that Paul had not as yet visited the Roman saints. He says he prays to God to be able to go and impart a spiritual gift to them; i.e. a spiritual gift through Paul's ministry as he set forth to them the truths of the gospel.

Paul wanted to visit Rome for some time but was always stopped by something. In fact one of his reasons for wanting to go was

to see **fruit** in their lives as **he had** seen in **the** other Gentile churches of God. This is not **the** normal fruit given to **a church** of God (i.e. saved souls), **but the** obedience of **the** saints to **the** teachings **which were preached** to them.

Paul was **a** debtor both to Greeks **and** Barbarians. **He** was **a** debtor because of **what he had** received from God to give to mankind and not vice versa. **Paul preached the** gospel of God (which God **had given** him), both to **the learned and** unlearned (Acts 17: 16-34, 28: 1-10). **Paul** was also indebted to **them because** some of **them had** received **the** gospel willingly **and were** saved.

Paul wasn't ashamed of **the** gospel. **It is the** power of God unto salvation to both Jews **and** Greeks or Gentiles. Paul says **here that** it was to **the Jew** first. **After the** Jews in Rome **rejected the** gospel (Acts 28: 28) **we see that** this privilege no longer applies. The gospel now goes out to **Jew and** Gentile **equally** [Comment 5],

Paul concludes his introduction with **a** quotation from **Habakkuk**. "The righteous shall live **by** faith" **and** shows **that the** gospel **reveals that** a righteousness of God (i.e. provided **by** God for **men**) is offered on **the** grounds of faith (**apart** from **human** merit or works) to **men and** women who believe **the** gospel.

### *David Cranson, Drew Ramage*

From Kingston (**Jamaica**): These verses introduce Paul's attitude towards **the** gospel **and** his concern to **reveal** this good news to others (v. 13).

The book of Romans was **apparently** written from Corinth (Acts 20: 2). **It** is concerned primarily with **the** gospel **and** its implications towards **men** in **general, but** in particular **the** Roman disciples as saints (**separated** ones unto holiness, v. 7). **We** noted **that he gave** God thanks not so **much** about their salvation **but the** **fact that** knowledge of their faith in **the** Lord Jesus **was** known throughout **the then** world (v.7). The spiritual gift of v. 11 **we** perceive not to **be** a particular gift of **the** spirit, **but** to confirm in **them what really** is theirs **already, to the end that they may** **be** established spiritually.

Towards **the end** from v. 8 **we** noted **the** use of **I'** as being more frequent. **A** personal concern is shown **by Paul** in **these and** also his attitude of love.

### *Conclusion*

**Paul** was concerned about **the** preaching **and** subsequent

**practising of the faith among the nations (v.5).** This should always be the desire of the churches, we feel, as is shown so clearly by our Lord in **Mat. 28: 19-20.**

The environment in Rome was as corrupt as ours today and the word was not readily accepted (as is seen in historical records) yet the Faith went out even the more (v.8). This also applies to us today. We should not allow anything to stifle our efforts at presenting the word to a lost world.

*Rudolph Walcott*

From Ibadan: 'Apostle'<sup>1</sup> is not a ceremonial title. The Greek word '*apostolos*' confirms this, if one examines the meaning carefully. For instance some give the meaning as 'a delegate'; one sent with full power of attorney to act in the place of another, the sender remaining behind to back up the one sent.

In the light of the above, we see that Paul having been divinely appointed as an apostle separated unto the gospel of God to be preached both to the Jew and the Gentiles has now an arduous task. Spirit filled, he has been made to understand what the will of God is (v.9,10), the futility of earthly principalities and powers and ephemerality of personal and material aggrandizement (Phil. 3:7). To get this done, he has to mobilize other saints, hence the purpose of his visit to Rome to get the saints there established by imparting spiritual gifts to them (v. 11).

The man Paul, an apostle, has to seek the face of God in prayer on behalf of the Roman saints so that their inner man might be strengthened for the task ahead (v.9, cf. Eph. 3:14). In the same vein, we suggest, a purposeful evangelist of this present dispensation of grace must also be prepared to travail long on his knees making intercession for other co-workers and the ministry itself (2 Thes. 1:11).

His desire not to be ashamed of the gospel of Christ is seen to be another motivational incentive to get the brethren in Rome ready for the task (Rom. 1:16-17). Likewise any one wishing to make an out reach for God should cast aside every spirit and thought of fear and timidity (2 Tim. 1:7-8, 2:1-4; 4:2).

*Anon*

From Liverpool: *The Letter.* This letter of Paul's is unusual in being written to a church which he had neither founded nor visited despite the fact that it had been in existence for a long time (15:23). It was written it is suggested, from Corinth and

some, at least, of the recipients were already known to Paul (see ch. 16). This is **why**, we suggest, **he set out his credentials in the longer than usual introduction in vv. 1-7.**

***The Recipients.*** paul states that the Roman Christians were (a) loved by God and (b) saints. The former is a tremendous concept and embraces the whole gospel which Paul unfolds in this letter. In calling them *saints* Paul was issuing a challenge. In applying this to ourselves, first of course, we are *saints* by a calling from God at salvation, but secondly the word describes what we ought to be in our day to day lives. That is, we ought to be persons set apart, separated from the evil society in which we live by a way of life consistent with what we have been made by God.

Paul felt that there was a special bond between himself as the apostle to the Gentiles and these non-Jewish people whose faith was being reported all over the known world [Comment 6]. He was thrilled that there was a church of God at the centre of the imperial world and that it was known that there were people in Rome who belonged to Jesus Christ.

***The Gospel.*** This was the centre of Paul's life and the cause of the bond between him and the Romans. It had its origin in God and was about His Son. The power of the gospel is seen in its ability to change lives and in its universal application to people of faith. Any lack of power in our experience stems from faults or failure on our part and not in any diminution in the power of the gospel.

***The Resurrection.*** This is the keystone historically [Comment 7] for the Christian faith and is the point at which faith and historical fact meet. It brings into focus both the humanity and the deity of the Lord Jesus, and by it His claim to be the Son of God is vindicated. It is impossible to over-emphasize this fact and we felt we ought to give a more significant place to this in our meeting for worship. It is another basic idea laid down in this introduction to be taken up later by Paul in this letter.

David J. Webster

From Nottingham: Paul, the bondservant, claimed apostleship (vv. 1, 5). The apostles were those who had seen the Lord (Acts 1: 15-26) and been specially chosen by Him. Paul made his claim on the basis of his meeting the Lord on the Damascus road and the subsequent commission (Acts 9: 11-19, 1 Cor. 15: 8, 9). The signs of the true apostle were evident and confirmed the apostle's authority and veracity. The word apostle means 'one sent forth' so

**whilst there is none of the apostles alive today or anyone who could be one of them yet there are those within the churches who, like Tychicus, are "ones sent forth". We do not read that Tychicus was one of the apostles but he was certainly one sent forth (2 Tim 4:12). The service that Paul rendered in the gospel (Rom. 1:9) uses the same word as that of the service of priests to deity and brings to mind the services of the priesthood (1 Pet. 2).**

Paul's burden was God's gospel concerning His Son whose pedigree as to His humanity and His deity is given. The RV says that He was "declared (determined (RVM), designated (RSV) are more accurate) the Son of God with (in, RSV) power by the resurrection of the dead" (v.4). The final phrase "The resurrection of the dead" is a more literal rendering of the Greek than "His resurrection from the dead" found in the RSV and NIV. The Lord Jesus Christ was one of a number of people raised from the dead (and indeed "the first-fruits" (1 Cor. 15:20-23) but only He was and is "the resurrection and the life" and the One who speaks to the dead (John 5:19-29).

The introduction to the epistle comes to a climax with its major theme:

"The righteous (just AV) shall live by faith" (Rom. 1:17 RV, R SVM). What does this key verse of Romans and the cry of the Reformation mean? The above English translation skilfully preserves the meaning of the Greek which could mean: -

- (1) The just - by faith will live.
- (2) The just by faith - will live. (cf. "He who through faith is righteous will live" RSV)

Other scriptures show both to be true. Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus—through faith" (Rom. 3:24, 25) and He is the "Justifier of him that hath faith in Jesus" (3:26) and "being therefore justified by faith" (5:1); also in Galatians the quotation of Hab. 2:4 is used to contrast justification by the law against that by faith. In Heb. 10:38, however, the same verse is cited to do with on-going faith.

In the first part of Rom. 1:17 we read "therein is revealed a righteousness of God by faith unto faith"; literally - out of (cause, origin) faith into (direction, destination) faith. So the life of a just man springs from his faith. Yet, at the same time we are told "as therefore ye received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him" (Col. 2:6). We receive Christ by faith, let us walk the same way. Perhaps this hint of the ongoing nature of the gospel was the reason

why Paul was ready "to preach the gospel to you also that are in Rome" (Rom. 1:15) i.e. to preach the gospel to the saints in addition to the rest of the Gentiles.

#### *D. Rafferty*

From Paisley: The origin of the church of God in Rome is obscure, but at the time Paul wrote his epistle it was obviously well known throughout the Christian world (Rom. 1:8). The message could have been carried there originally from Jerusalem where, among those who heard the gospel message, were sojourners from Rome, both Jews and proselytes (Acts 2:10). Then, as the centre of the Roman power no doubt slaves were carried there in the course of Roman conquests. Chapter 16 mentions the names of various ones of Latin origin who were associated with the church and each one would have a story to tell of Christ's redeeming love.

Paul writes to them with apostolic authority (v.1) and as the apostle to the Gentiles. He refers to the call of God made known to him at his conversion (Acts 9:15) and later confirmed by the church at Antioch (Acts 13:2). He had not visited the church in Rome, but kept them constantly in his prayers, having the desire to visit them and establish their faith (v. 11). He proclaims his readiness to preach the gospel in Rome, knowing that the gospel has a dynamic power which Imperial Rome could not withstand. The righteousness of God revealed therein is further elaborated in chapter 3. This stands in sharp contrast to the sin of man which was in such evidence in Rome in those days; yet by the simple exercise of faith on the part of the sinner the two can be reconciled.

#### *J. Renfrew*

From Rhyl: The epistle to the Romans could be regarded as being the epistle to the Gentiles as Hebrews is the epistle to the Jews. It would appear that this epistle was written during Paul's third missionary journey (Acts 18:23 and following) from comparing Rom. 15: 25, 28 with Acts 19: 21. A further suggestion is that the epistle was written in the vicinity of Corinth. This is borne out by Rom. 16 which mentions Gaius, his host (v.23) who was baptized by Paul in Corinth (1 Cor. 1:14), Erastus the city treasurer (v.23) who "abode at Corinth" (2 Tim. 4:20) and Phoebe (Rom. 16:1) of the church at Cenchreae, a port of Corinth [ Comment 8 ].

A major theme of Paul's introduction is the gospel of God (v.1) He is its initiator and source. It is the gospel of His Son (v.9 and v.3); the Son fulfilled all that was required for the gospel and so is its principal subject. Finally it is the "power of God unto

salvation to **every one that believeth**" (v. 16). "Power" here is the Greek *dunamis* from which our English 'dynamite' is derived. This salvation through the gospel is threefold; from sin's **penalty, presence and power**. Paul wished to **preach to the church in Rome** (v. 15), not of salvation from sin's **penalty** (Rom. 15: 18, 21), but of salvation from **sin's power**. **By his teaching and ministry of the gospel he wished to establish them** (v. 11). The **gift spoken of here is not that** of 1 Cor. 12 nor 1 Tim. 4: 14, **but is the mutual comfort and encouragement of one another's faith**. Paul would **preach the gospel truths in faith to be received in turn by faith in the hearer**.

**Accepting the gospel is a matter of faith, and continuing in the gospel requires faith too**. The **faith of the Romans in accepting the gospel had been proclaimed throughout the world** (v. 8); Rome was a **great centre of that day and news would quickly travel far and wide**. Their **initial faith (as ours) brought an unmerited gift of righteousness and a promise of eternal life from God** (v. 17). **But those who have received this righteousness are required to live by faith** (v. 17) (cf. v. 5 and Heb. 10: 38). **It is truly a righteous life here on earth "by faith from first to last"** (v. 17 NIV) [Comment 9].

**Paul sets out his own position with regard to the gospel**. He is **"an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God"** (v. 1) This separation, **he says, was even from his mother's womb** (Gal. 1: 15, 16). Ps. 139: 15, 16 **explains that this could be so only because of God's own perfect knowledge of man's imperfect substance**. The **gospel which Paul preached** was "promised afore by His prophets **in the holy scriptures**" (v. 2) (cf. Gal. 3: 8) and was **revealed to him by the Lord Jesus** (Gal. 1: 12). His authority to **preach this gospel to the Gentiles** (v. 5) was recognized by **the other apostles** (Gal. 2: 7, 9).

Paul's **character as a man of prayer emerges**. He prayed correctly - **"through Jesus Christ"** (v. 8). **As in Eph. 1: 16 and Col. 1: 3, he gave God thanks for all the saints inclusively**. He always found something **in them to give thanks for despite any failings they had**. He calls God as his witness **that he constantly remembered them in his prayers** (v. 9). **It was not a momentary light thing with him**. He always sought **God's will for himself in all matters and to that end prayed for a way to be opened to enable him to visit the Romans** (v. 19).

*S. Allport, S. Peers*

**From Southport:** The **epistle is unique among the Pauline epistles in that it was written to a church he neither planted nor had visited**. Paul normally **preferred not to build on another's foundation, yet here is content to do so**.

**It was written after Paul had organized the collection for the relief of the church in Jerusalem and surrounding areas (Acts 24: 17) This was the end of his third missionary journey. It is likely that the epistle was written at Corinth or else at Cenchreae.**

**It was addressed to those in Rome who had accepted the gospel message. There is no justification for the Roman Catholic tradition of founding by Peter. He was still in Jerusalem 17 years after Paul's conversion, and a little later he was in Antioch (Gal. 2: 1-11). The most likely founders were those who had accepted the gospel either at Jerusalem at Pentecost, or travellers from the Asian or Greek churches. That the epistle is written to a properly founded church is not in doubt. Romans contains the only example of a letter of commendation in the New Testament. The composition of the church can be judged from the desire of the apostle to have fruit "among you as well as the other Gentiles", and by the strong argument against the advantage of the Jews. It would appear that both were represented in Rome.**

**The apostle probably heard of the Roman Christians through Priscilla and Aquila, who had been expelled from Rome (Acts 18: 2) Since Paul was not known to the Romans, he gives an account of his credentials as an apostle (Rom. 1: 1-7) and the reasons for his proposed visit (vv. 8-17). The whole of the epistle is summed up in verses 16, 17. God has given salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.**

*S. Henderson*

**From Wishaw:** The apostle brings in the matter of the gospel in the very first phrase. This is the subject matter for the epistle as a whole.

**He describes himself as one 'called'<sup>1</sup> to be an apostle and "separated" unto the gospel. In Gal. 1: 15, 16 he states that God had "separated" him from birth that Christ might be revealed in Paul, and preached through him. In a similar way he speaks of the believers as having been "called" to be saints (v. 7). There is a different aspect of the 'call' in v. 6 - "called to be Jesus Christ's". Here the meaning seems to be that of possession by the Lord.**

**The apostle quickly enlarges on the truth of the gospel. He describes it as the "gospel of God", showing that God Himself is the source or originator of the gospel. This message does not**

come from men. The sum **and substance** of the gospel is **that it concerns the Son of God - Jesus Christ.**

Two matters **are** brought before us **regarding the Lord.** One is **His** genealogies through **Mary and Joseph, tracing His lineage** to David. The second is the declaration or the **'defining'** or the **'marking out'** of **His deity and eternal Sonship.** This latter fact was borne out **by the power associated with His signs and miracles, the culmination of which was the raising of the dead.**

**Paul** was always pleased to **give some commendation to the saints regarding their progress in spiritual things.** It was no **mean thing** to state **that their faith was proclaimed far and near.**

We see from verses **9, 10** what a large part prayer played **in the life of the apostle.** Here he uses the word **'unceasingly'** to **describe his** continuing prayers for **the saints at Rome.** Paul was **certainly** not one to **preach the gospel in a place, and then leave any who were saved to the care of others.** Rather he **felt a deep** personal concern for **their welfare and** encouragement.

Paul's longing **was to be able to come and see the saints at Rome and know the mutual blessing that comes from the fellowship of like-minded men and women.** Had Paul been able to **reach Rome earlier, then we might not have received this remarkable epistle.** The writer seems totally absorbed with these **great truths, and feels he must impart what he had been given by the Spirit to the saints.**

**Paul** describes himself here as a debtor - in 1 Cor. 9: 16 he states **the necessity for him to preach the gospel.** He 'owed' **the gospel to all men.** They could be **denied this priceless treasure if he and other failed to preach.**

**Paul then** gives that marvellous description of the gospel as **being "the power of God unto salvation".** There are **two main** words for power in the New Testament: **this one is the word 'dunamis'** from which the word **dynamite** is derived.

The portion **finishes with the central fact that the "just shall live by faith"** which runs like a golden thread through the epistle.

*M. D. Macdonald, J. Shepka*

From Vancouver: **If the letters of Paul were arranged in chronological order the epistle to the Romans would probably be about sixth, but doctrinally it takes first place. It is a different and difficult book which is full of doctrine.**

**The Saviour.** **it is remarkable that this title is not used in this epistle. Yet Paul provides us with much information about Christ Jesus in a few verses. We see... (a) the MYSTERY of His person. We are told both of His deity as the Son of God, and His humanity as a descendant of king David (v. 3) (b) the MAJESTY of the Saviour as the powerful Son of God (v. 4) (c) the MESSIAH as promised through the Old Testament prophets (v. 2) (d) the MAJESTIC GLORY resulting from His resurrection from the dead (v. 4).**

**The Scriptures.** **These are referred to seven times in this epistle. The reference in verse 2 marks their integrity.**

**The Servant** **Paul, who had not visited the church of God in Rome (vv. 10-17), indicates this as his role in the service of Christ (v. 1). A servant or slave is the property of his Master.**

**The Saints.** **are described in a three-fold way. They were (a) called to belong to Jesus Christ (v. 6) (b) beloved of God (v. 7) (c) called TO BE saints (v. 7).**

**Saints by calling should be saints in character. This is suggestive of the work of the Holy Spirit.**

**The Saving Gospel.** **is of God (v. 1). It is God's glad tidings of promise and prophecy concerning His Son. It has the potential power to save all. The limiting factor is the free will of man.**

*Bruce. W. Robinson*

## COMMENTS

**Birkenhead:** **The NIV follows many commentators here and quite clearly interprets rather than translates the Scriptures. The RV is closer to the original words which mean "by" or "out of" resurrection of the dead. Thus the scripture does not necessarily restrict itself to the Lord's personal**

resurrection **and**, as outlined in Comments 3 & 6, the present writer's view is that more than that is envisaged. The unwary reader of the NIV, however, is shut up to a particular interpretation and is not free to weigh the matter up himself.

2. **Birmingham:** Romans 16:3-5 states that there was a church in the house of Prisca and Aquila and the same is implied at two other places in vv. 14, 15. Presumably the others listed in vv 5-12 met at one or more additional sites. Yet one letter is addressed to them all and assumes a unity of doctrine and practice throughout the city. A similar situation appears to have existed in Corinth from where, it is as certain as it can be without boldly stating the fact, that Paul wrote the epistle to the Romans. On such simple grounds we have no hesitation at all in saying that Paul wrote to the church of God in Rome. But consider other matters. To whom was Phoebe commended (Rom. 16:1-2) if the saints in Rome were not gathered together so that she could be "received in the Lord"? Paul commends the saints (Rom. 6:17) for their obedience to the teaching to which they had been delivered following their conversions. That form of teaching is so intimately connected with the establishment of churches of God that we read "I persecuted the church of God, and made havock of it" and "He that once persecuted us now preacheth the faith of which he once made havock" (Gal.1:13 & 23). A man may indeed write letters to saints who are not in churches of God (and nowadays many do) but can any one possibly imagine not only that the great Apostle of the Gentiles would do so but that he would actually *commend such for their obedience*? Again, consider Rom.14:13-17 for here is an argument based on the fact that those in Rome comprised the kingdom of God, the holy nation of which the Lord spoke (Matt 21:43) who were the successors of Israel. As we progress through the book of Romans we will see again and again, references and allusions which have no practical meaning if those to whom Paul wrote were not in the church of God in Rome.
3. **Derby:** This is a very important matter. It is that gospel service, though differing from service in the Holies, is just as much divine service. It is the work of the priesthood in its manward or royal priesthood aspect. In particular

the standards of behaviour as regards individual purity and collective separation are thus equally applicable to both spheres of service.

**Derby:** Is the "Holy Spirit" the same as the "spirit of holiness"? Where the scriptures use different expressions it is certain that a distinction is being brought before us that we ought to try to determine. In the case of Rom. 1:4 it is clear that the deity of the Lord is being contrasted with His manhood referred to in Rom. 1:3. Furthermore "according to the flesh" is the counterpart of "according to the spirit of holiness". We have therefore to see an attribute of the Godhead that is common to the Godhead just as the flesh is the common characteristic of the human race. We would not describe the Person in the Godhead as an attribute of the Godhead. Thus we conclude that the spirit of holiness is not the Holy Spirit but is that attribute of holiness which is equally common to Father, Son and Spirit and which is as we write and read these words being uttered in heaven "Holy, Holy, Holy" (Rev. 4:8). In confirmation of this we note a further contrast between weakness, which pervades the flesh and the life-giving power associated with the holiness of deity (Lk. 1:49). In passing, we note again that the unwary reader of the NIV would have no inkling that the scripture does not actually say "Holy Spirit".

**Kilmarnock and Galston:** What our friends say here is true, but without evidence that Paul was doing other than his usual practice of giving effect to the command "to the Jew first" we would not say that Acts 28:28 was the last time this was practised by him or indeed by any one in this dispensation. It is important to note how scrupulous Paul was in obeying this command, for the church of God in Rome had been established for years prior to Paul's arrival.

6. **Liverpool:** Scriptures such as Rom. 2:17-29; 4:1; 7:1; 16:7, 11, 13 show that the church of God in Rome contained Jews as well as, of course, Gentiles (Rom. 11:13).
7. **Liverpool:** Rom. 1:4 speaks of "the resurrection of the dead". This is resurrection in its widest sense. It is to be distin-

guished, for example, from "resurrection from the dead". The deity of the Lord was marked out when He who is Holy touched the bier and death departed (Luke 7: 14); it was most convincingly demonstrated in the days of His flesh by His ability to raise from the dead. It is demonstrated now by His raising Himself from the dead and will be demonstrated again when He comes to the air, and when He comes to the earth. Finally it will be demonstrated at *the* resurrection of the dead when every single person who has not been raised from the dead will be resurrected. It is the power to do this that is referred to in Rom. 1:4.

8. **Rhyl:** Sosipater (Rom. 16: 21; Acts 20: 4) appears to be another link with Paul's stay in Achaia at this time.
9. **Rhyl:** This is another case of the NIV incorporating exposition into the translation of the Scriptures and appears to follow those who would compare Rom. 1: 17 with 2 Cor. 3: 18. In the latter scripture, "from" glory means "away from" one kind of glory, the Greek preposition being *apo*. In Rom. 1: 17, however, the preposition is *ek* meaning "out of". The verse means, as friends in Hayes point out, that the sinner having been made righteous by or "out of" faith is then in a position to exercise that further faith that is necessary to have that fact revealed to him. This is to say, it is only in his new born state that a person is capable of seeing that he has been made righteous.
10. **Barrhead:** Since "belief cometh of learning, and hearing by the word of Christ" (Rom. 10: 17), the act of faith is an act of obedience.

/ . E . P .

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

1. **From Hayes:** What are the comparisons and contrasts in the citation of Hab. 2: 4 in Rom. 1: 7, Gal. 3: 11 and Heb. 10: 38?

The "righteous shall live by faith" is one of these statements, like "without faith it is impossible to be well-pleasing unto Him" (Heb. 11: 6), which is so simply put yet is so comprehensive of divine truth that description of its outworking would fill a book. In Habakkuk 2: 4 it concerns the life of the godly Israelite and its contrast with surrounding ungodliness. Similar living is in view in Heb, 10: 38. In Gal. 3: 11, however, it

is initial faith **that is in view**. The outstanding feature of Rom. 1: 17 is **that the scripture in Habakkuk is used to refer to both initial and continuing faith as the preceding statement "by faith unto faith" shows** (see Nottingham paper). Further contrasts were succinctly stated by Birkenhead (*Bible Studies* 1979 p. 154). "Rom. 1: 17 contrasts the *just* with the unrighteous, in Gal. 3: 11 *faith* and law are counterbalanced whilst in Heb. 10: 38 *living by faith* is the principle stressed".

2. **Wishaw: Why does Paul say (Rom. 1: 15) "I am ready to preach the gospel to you" if he was writing to saints?**

Romans 1: 17 gives an illustration of why it is vital to preach the gospel to saints. **Only saved persons are capable of receiving the revelation that when they were saved the righteousness of God was imputed to them. It is the same with all the truths of the gospel. Sinners, upon salvation, have the smallest grasp of truths of the gospel. After all they are simply babes in Christ. If saints do not hear the truths of the gospel preached they will never advance in the knowledge of them. Added to that, the gospel properly includes salvation from the power of sin in the life of the saint as well as salvation from its presence in the future. Thus it has intense practical application to the life of the saint as well as deepening his knowledge of God.**

3. **Wishaw: What is meant by "some spiritual gift" (Rom. 1: 11)?**

The unspecified nature of the gift shows that Paul was not referring to any miraculous gift for it is characteristic of miracle workers that their gift is subject to them even as it is written "the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets" (1 Cor. 14: 32). The object of imparting the spiritual gift was that the Roman saints might bear fruit (Rom. 1: 13) whence we deduce that this was the effect of the ministration of the word of God. Paul, himself knew the benefit of gift bestowed from above through the effort of the Corinthian saints (2 Cor. 1: 11) in prayer.

*/ . E . P .*

*Issued by the Churches of God and obtainable from Hayes Press,  
8, Essex Road, Leicester, LE4 7EE  
Also from the Church of God Literature Department, PO Box 125, Brantford,  
Ontario, Canada. Printed by the University of Nottingham.*

# Bible Studies

A magazine for the exploration of the Word of God [Acts 17: 11]

EDITORIAL

8602

**Like the opening chapters of Genesis, or John's gospel or the epistle to the Hebrews, Romans chapter 1 is one of the great introductory chapters of the Bible. Truth, foundational to that which is to follow, is given in unforgettable phrases which, if memorized, ensure that the reader is amply filled with the knowledge of God. If last month's study concerned the introduction of the book then this month's study is about the introduction to the subject of the book. The central place that the epistle to the Romans gives to the truth of the gospel is acknowledged by all believers. However unpleasant are the issues brought to the fore in Rom. 1: 18-32, they are absolutely foundational to the preaching of the gospel. The latter must begin with a true declaration of man's ruined state and how it merits fully, the unrelenting wrath of God. Men must be made to feel sickened with their sin as well as threatened by the wrath of God, else they will not find repentance. This chapter shows why this menacing of men by the gospel must precede its revelation of the love of God in the atoning death of Christ. Men are incapable of responding otherwise to the love of God. Their natural behaviour is to spurn the demonstration of the goodness of God; therefore God has, since Adam, had to reveal His wrath. Gospel preachers, like Paul in his letter to the Romans, should be under no illusion that they must not first preach against sin and reveal the extent of the righteous wrath of God prior to their unfolding of the love of the Saviour.**

The catalogue of sin makes unpleasant reading but its presence shows that if we are to be faithful to the gospel we need to be acquainted with sin yet not defiled by it or its denunciation. In this we have the example of the Lord (1 Pet. 2: 22; Heb. 7: 26). One way in which we can do this with profit is to consider the opposites of the things mentioned in Rom. 1: 29-32. Malignity, for instance, is that so-human trait that always looks for and thinks the worst of a person. It is exactly that attribute of the Devil who, despite the Lord's words to the contrary, insisted that Job's righteous behaviour was simply self-interest (Job. 1: 9-11; 2: 4-5). Job had no such malignity about his view of the Lord

for he said "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him" (Job. 13: 15 AV) and "He knoweth the way that I take, when He hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold" (Job. 12: 10). Consider, too, Joseph's words "As for you, ye meant evil against me, but God meant it for good" (Gen. 50: 20). Most enriching of all, however, is to apply the opposite of malignity to the Lord who "when He was reviled, reviled not again" (1 Pet. 2: 23). I. E. P.

### UNGODLINESS AND UNRIGHTEOUSNESS OF MEN (Rom. 1: 18-32)

**From Aberdeen:** The men of Romans 1: 18-32 are unregenerate [Comment 1]. Blatantly, such men refuse to have God in their knowledge; "... knowing God, they glorified Him not as God" (Rom. 1: 21). The context of the passage shows that "the truth" refers to the fact of One Divine Creator. The truth of "God" is contrasted with the lie of the "creature" in the matter of worship (Rom. 1: 25).

Refusal to have God in their knowledge had serious consequences for the men who suppressed the truth, because they were given up to ungodliness as a mode of living. The "error" began in the mind when they refused to have God in their knowledge: the recompense followed in their bodies with the ensuing deeds classed as "not fitting", "vile passions" and the dishonouring of their bodies. It appears from the passage that the recompense came in this present life. The wrath of God can also be translated as "a wrath of God" (Rom. 1: 18 RVM) indicating the specific judgement of God in this present world. Here "wrath" carries the thought of God stretching forth from heaven in His indignation; indeed, His wrath is manifest by the fact that "God gave them up". The "day of wrath" (Rom. 2: 5) has yet to unleash its eternal judgement on the unrepentant. In addition to "wrath of God" experienced during this life by the ungodly, is their fearsome eternal fate; "if the righteous is scarcely saved, where will the ungodly and sinner appear"? (1 Pet. 4: 18).

*James Johnson*

**From Ajara:** A disciple in the house of God should be spiritually conscious, looking always on the Lord Jesus for guidance. Furthermore, we have no excuse if, after knowing the way, we backslide like those mentioned (v. 20). We are also of the view that it is easy for a believer in the house of God to be unrighteous (v. 18) so therefore "let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (1 Cor. 10: 12) [Comment 2],

Christians nowadays need to be careful of the way in which we are being called so that we might not cause God to anger as the people in question did and fell under the wrath of God (vv. 26-28). It is also advisable to present ourselves as a living sacrifice, holy acceptable unto God which is our reasonable service (Rom. 12: 1), so

that scriptures such as 2 Pet. 2: 20-22, Luke 11: 24-26 and 2 Chr. 15: 2 might not come to fulfilment in our lives. P. Balogun, P. Poji

From Birmingham: Some thought Paul was speaking to all men, others felt Rom. 1: 18-32 referred primarily to the heathen; "they refused to have God in their knowledge". God's wrath is not reserved solely for the heathen, but tribulation and anguish may be upon every soul; the Jew first and also the Greek (Rom. 2: 9) [Comment 11.

The wrath of God is revealed. It is happening now ("is being revealed" NIV). We thought sexually transmitted disease to be an example of this for such as practise these sins of (v.27) receive in themselves the due penalty. Paul could also be alluding to times of potent revelation of His wrath as occurred upon Sodom and Gomorrah, (Gen. 19) where such things were practised openly (Isaiah 3: 9); and where there was fullness of bread, prosperous ease and abomination (Ez. 16: 49-50).

"For", connects v.18 with the previous verse. Many of the verses in this chapter are connected in this way, the preceding verse dependent or justified by the preceding verse, or vice-versa. Thus, it is to be noted that the gospel reveals a righteousness of God, whereas, ungodliness (Gk. *asebeia*, impiety, i. e. to lack reverence) and unrighteousness (i. e. injustice, wrongfulness) reveals His wrath.

God's wrath is revealed not just against ungodliness and unrighteousness but against the holding down of the truth. This may be a knowledgeable and deliberate suppression of the truth, or man's wickedness suppressing the truth without their being fully aware. This process began early in man's history and continues (Gen. 6: 5; 2 Thes. 2: 9-12).

These verses present a very dark picture of the depths of sin and perversion to which man can sink. Men are totally without excuse, because God reveals Himself in creation and also in man's conscience. The latter enables men to know right and wrong, the former giving the knowledge of the existence and authority of God (the truth referred to in 1: 18-25).

"God gave them up" is stated three times (vv.24, 26, 28). This would be to eternal damnation, though the glory of God's grace shone through at times through history to have mercy on some such as Rahab the harlot. Again His mercy upon the Gentiles in announcing the day of grace and the times of the Gentiles, show that God's wrath does not abide for ever [see question 1].

R. Woods

From **Birkenhead**: Before Paul elaborates further the way in which God's righteousness is made possible, he speaks of man's sin and shows why it is so urgently necessary that the way to get right

with God should be known. As things are, man is in the wrong with God, who must reveal His wrath against sin if He is a God of absolute purity, righteousness and perfection. God's wrath is not a sudden outburst of anger, but a constant condition of hatred toward everything that violates His moral standard.

People who refuse to respond in faith to the truth they know about God are objects of His wrath. They often convince themselves that they are denying God's existence for intellectual reasons, not realising that they are ignoring the truth because of their wickedness and immorality; for, if they admit God's existence, they must accept His authority in their lives [Comment 8]. Therefore suffer they judgement for their unrighteousness.

Paul says God's wrath has been revealed because God has made Himself known in His Word [Comment 1]. However we might argue that not everyone has access to a Bible or has heard about salvation through Jesus Christ. Paul answers this objection by explaining that everyone who has ever lived has had access to the same revelation of God through creation. Since man has so much clear evidence just from creation concerning God's existence and nature, he has no justifiable reason for rejecting God.

This argument that the visible creation is a source of knowledge concerning the nature of its invisible Creator is similar to Paul's declarations at Lystra (Acts 14:15-17) and especially at Athens (Acts 17:22-31) [Comment 3]. In the latter Paul says that God created man and determined their appointed seasons and the bounds of their habitation in order that men might feel after Him and find Him.

Thus it is not that man is ignorant of God; he knows Him, but he freely and deliberately refuses to give Him the glory and praise He deserves. Rather than submit to Him, he turns away from Him in disobedience. Rather than worshipping the Creator, man has turned to worshipping the creation. He has exalted the very things that God brought into existence from nothing above the One who is the eternal fullness of existence.

Paul speaks of the extent to which men have departed from God when he says "God gave them up". God has given men freewill, so His "Spirit shall not strive with men forever\*" (Gen. 6:3). Rather than imposing His will on the will of man, God abandons him to his own desires and ambitions in order that he might taste for himself the awful result of his evil.

We read in Gen. 2:20-24 that God created the woman from and for the man, and "therefore shall a man leave his father and mother and shall cleave unto his wife". Turning away from a natural relationship in order to indulge in an unnatural relationship is not only immoral, but those who do so "receive in themselves that recompense of their

error which was due" (Rom. 1:27). They not only suffer physical affliction, but also come to a point where they are no longer certain as to their role in society.

When people persist in casting God out of their lives and rebelling against Him, He gives them up to total depravity to do things which are not fitting. Paul's description of those who have a depraved mind is similar to passages in 2 Tim. 3: 1-5 and 1 "Cor. 6: 9. In the latter he reminded the saints of their past condition saying "such were some of you". Such people as are described in Romans 1 know that they deserve death for their depravity, yet persist in their evil, as well as actively encouraging others to do likewise. However, God's grace and forgiveness extends even to such as these, and they can receive His righteousness through faith in His Son Jesus Christ.

*R. D. Williams, J. D. Williams*

From Cowdenbeath: It seemed to us that Paul has brought before us the Gentile world in chapter 1 followed by the privileged Jew in chapter 2. No matter whom, all are under sin.

God has given to all men the consciousness of a Creator. This is expressly evident in the wonders of Creation and is intended to draw from the hearts of mankind a worshipful response. As a result of sin, however, men have wilfully restrained the spread of the knowledge of God. Moreover, sin breeds ingratitude and self-elevation, and their reasonings increasingly left God out of the picture to no useful result. Their hearts, in their own opinion, became void of discernment or understanding. Thus it became more convenient to worship idols than to worship the only true God. The consequences are extreme.

Men had given themselves up to vileness. That was bad enough, but their God gave them up. Three times this is reported in the passage and serves to underline the gravity of the matter.

The catalogue of evil is alarmingly parallel to the reported evils of our modern society such as child abuse, the breakdown of family life and sadism. The results of male promiscuity are mentioned in v. 27. How similar is this to the Aids virus which some believe is reaching epidemic proportions in certain corners of the world<sup>1</sup>.

Men may disapprove of the things of God through the darkness of their minds. What a tragedy, however, when God disapproves of the ways of men so that He rejects them altogether.

*R. I. Shaw*

**From Derby:** Many bad and deplorable things affect the world today but they are not new. They were here when Paul wrote this epistle. The true cause of them is sin.

In v. 17 we read of the revelation of God in connection with His

righteousness which is received through faith. In v. 18 there is the revelation of the wrath of God which is against sin. In the word truth, there is a special reference to God in creation. God gave out light and a revelation of Himself as to His existence, His attributes, His everlasting power and divinity. The word, divinity in this context means manifesting divine perfection. Instead of opening their hearts and minds to receive the revelation of God they held down the truth in unrighteousness.

Related to the truth of the manifestation of God in creation is the competency of men to receive this. Man was created very differently from the animal creation because of that God-consciousness that He had. The Fall brought total depravity to man but there survived in him the capability of responding to the light of creation. Man then realised that he was responsible to accept the light. That he did not resulted in idolatry, immorality and social disturbance. His mind devised certain things and his outlook deteriorated until he was prepared to get down and worship the creeping thing. We must be careful in our attitude to God. If we treat His truth lightly He may give us up. The only way we can have freedom from sin is to have forgiveness for our sins and then ask for grace to keep us daily.

G. W. Conway

**From Dulwich:** Our study in its full context is relative to the righteousness of God, as revealed in the gospel (Rom. 1:17). It includes the moralistic Gentile, the proud ritualistic Jew, and the wisdom-loving, but idolatrous Greek (Rom. 1-3: 18; Ps. 106: 19, 20; Acts 7: 39-42; Acts 17:16).

Our subject, "the Ungodliness and Unrighteousness of Men", is a very dark one. It has two characteristics, idolatry, and moral corruption. From Rom. 1:18-23 we have the reason for the revelation of the wrath of God. From 1:24-32 we have the fall away from idolatry, to the cesspool of moral corruption, and to a reprobate mind ("disapproved" - Dr. Young).

Ungodliness ("*asebeia*") is a word suggesting a form of behaviour which is a violation of the relationship of man to God. He displaces God by the worship of himself, and other crude idols (Rom. 1:25); images of the very creatures he had to rule over (Gen. 1:28). "There is no fear of God before their eyes" (Rom. 3:18); in his exaltation of self, he holds down the truth of God and is a hater of God (Rom. 1:30 RVM) and a lover of self (2 Tim. 3:2).

Herein we see the enormity, the falseness of idolatry, for they exchange the truth of God for a lie (Rom. 1:25); making God a liar (1 Jn. 5:10), and in their deliberate disapproval (Rom. 1:28 RVM), they reject the knowledge of Him. A sophisticated form of this in our day may be seen in those who consider creation by a personal Creator as repugnant to reason, so they make for themselves a godless alternative, a form of progressive humanism without God,

in His own universe.

There was no excuse, for the evidence was there, and the assurance was given to them (Rom. 1: 19) and if accepted, they only had to feel after God to find Him (Acts 17: 27). But, alas, they were blind to His everlasting power and divinity (RV) ("Everlasting" RV, "Eternal" AV). Creation had a beginning, but the One who brought it into being was eternal. "Divinity" (RV) as opposed to "Godhead" (AV) is to be preferred as the revelation is not to do with His being, but His character.

The shocking standards of the behaviour of men, is a fall away from the righteousness of God, and men will be judged accordingly (Rom. 1: 29; Acts 17: 31). Man having turned away from God is reduced to his own vain reasonings and senseless heart (Rom. 1: 21).

The fierce anger of God is contained in the expression, "wrath of God, revealed from heaven" (Rom. 1: 18). It applies to idolatry (Ex. 32: 10; Num. 25: 1-4) and moral corruption (Gen. 9: 24).

Wherefore ("on account of which", Dr. Young) God gave them up to uncleanness (Rom. 1: 24); to vile passions (Gk. "passions of dishonour" RVM) to a reprobate mind (v. 28); (v. 29) "being filled... full". These words give tremendous emphasis to the list of man's degenerate state, and behaviour, culminating in v. 32 with defiance, rebellion and contempt.

It is noteworthy that the different parts of man are involved in his decline - his conscience (Rom. 1: 19); his eyes (v. 20); his intelligence (v. 20); his spirit (v. 21); his mind (vv. 21, 28); his heart (vv. 21, 24); his body (v. 24); his appetite (v. 27); his knowledge (v. 28).

In contrast are some of the prominent features of God - His wrath (v. 18); His Creatorship (v. 20); His eternal power and divinity (v. 20); His glory (v. 23); His incorruptibility (v. 23); His blessed character (v. 25); Lawgiver and Judge (v. 32).

*W. Townsend*

**Prom Hayes:** Paul has introduced the subject of "the gospel" (vv. 15-17), as a gospel of power, a gospel proclaiming salvation to be received by faith and bringing righteousness. Such a great salvation indicates a desperate plight of those to whom the gospel comes. Thus in verses 18-32 the deep depravity of men who have turned their backs on God is recorded.

God's anger against sin is sometimes revealed directly as in the examples of the Flood (Gen. 7) and the fall of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 19), where the evil practices of Rom. 1: 27 were carried out. Sometimes God's anger is shown in a person's lifetime when the application of the principle "whatever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (Gal. 6: 7) has immediate effect. One example of this was

when Herod lost his life because he accepted without objection people's assessment of him when they shouted "The voice of a god" (Acts 12: 21-23). Another example would be the man to whom the Lord Jesus said "sin no more, lest a worst thing befall thee" (John 5: 14). Eventually there will come the day of God's wrath when His righteous judgement will be revealed, giving to each according to what he has done (Rom. 2: 5-6).

The apostle distinguishes between ungodliness and unrighteousness (wickedness NIV), the first being a lack of respect for God, a refusal to respond to the knowledge they had and the worship of the created rather than the Creator. Unrighteousness follows in the wake of ungodliness, for lack of respect for God generates lack of\* respect for fellow-men and women resulting in all the evil practices listed in Rom. 1: 24-32. It is worth noting that in the record of man's deteriorating character and action, the sins of the depraved mind (which include envy, deceit and boasting) result from a greater degree of Godlessness than the homosexual practices indicated in verses 24-27.

Verses 19 and 20 indicate that God's everlasting power, His divinity and necessarily His existence, are all clearly seen in the natural world so that the unbeliever, the agnostic and the atheist are without excuse. This seems to mean that at some time in the life of every mentally capable person there is an awareness of God and an appreciation of His person; those who respond in simple worship and faith receive further revelation, those who react in pride and self sufficiency drift further into the darkness.

#### *V. Matthews*

**From Kilmarnock:** Man's falling away from God is in spite of the testimony of "the invisible things of Him since the creation" and is a rejection of "His everlasting power and divinity" (Rom. 1: 20). The inference of verses 23 and 25 is that man, having such a testimony, irrespective of creed, and however limited in the knowledge of God, is without excuse. Paul's experience (Acts 17: 22-30) bears out that some had an appreciation of an unknown God.

Some of us, however, thought that the words 'changed' and 'exchanged' (vv. 23, 25) could mean 'make different' and 'transfer' respectively, having the thought of man completely conversant with God and His ways, casting aside his allegiance [Comment 4]. Verse 21 seems to confirm the thought of being fully acquainted with God. As a righteous God looks down on man He sees that man, in his defilement, has gone beyond his own limits and we see three restraints withdrawn as God gave them up (Rom. 1: 24, 26, 28). The chapter concludes with a warning that they which consent to such evils are worthy of death.

*J. M. R., Derek Cranson*

From **Liverpool**: God's anger is against godlessness and wickedness, which reveals itself in disobedience to the divine law. There are three ways in which God expects a response:

- (i) Creation reveals a supreme Being, what He is like and that He is worthy of our worship (see Ps. 19).
- (ii) Conscience has been put within each individual to respond to right and wrong.
- (iii) Christ has revealed God in the fullest sense to those who have heard the gospel [Comment 1].

Those who are disobedient suppress this knowledge. Men ought to have glorified God as God and given thanks to Him as the natural response of their inbuilt God-consciousness to such knowledge. Those who so refuse are open to divine wrath.

Outside the liberty which those in Christ receive there is no true freedom. There are, rather, people pursuing "their own thing", who find there is a price to pay for ignoring God's guidelines. This is evident today in the tragic and alarming spread of diseases linked to sexual abuse (cf. v. 27).

Intellectually mankind is in darkness, and this is so despite the tremendous increase in knowledge and intellectual debate, for men are "darkened in their understanding" (Eph. 4: 18) [Comment 5]. Thus so much of the wisdom of the world is suspect for the basis upon which conclusions are reached is other than that which God has revealed and has come from the "god of this world".

Likewise mankind is in a spiritual paralysis too, preferring idolatry in its various forms to the worship of the God of heaven. Verse 23 shows the downward spiral of such folly.

The penalty for sin is death. Punishment is stored up for those who refuse to repent, though this chapter shows that the pursuit of ungodliness brings punishment in itself. Such punishment derives from man being allowed to have his own way and suppressing the knowledge of God.

...  
D. J. Webster

**From Nottingham**: This passage takes us ever downward; vv. 18-23 shows how men get away from God and end up making their own gods; vv. 24, 25 deals with straightforward immorality; vv. 26, 27 with perverted immorality; vv. 28-32 with sins to do with man's inward nature and character.

In the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed (v. 17), but in v. 18 we have wrath of God revealed (cf. Eph. 5: 6; Col. 3: 6). Sometimes we read the words "the wrath" alone (Rom. 5: 9). Some say the wrath of God in this context is that which *will* be rendered by God on all who wilfully turn from Him, refusing His word and the Saviour, deliberately to follow their own sinful ways and instincts.

Certainly God's wrath will result in future action as the Scriptures tell us. However, here the wrath of God is revealed and this suggests a current application in addition to the future one, i.e. it is that which *shall* be rendered by God. How then is this wrath now shown? Is it not described in the phrases "God gave them up" in v. 24 "in the lusts of their hearts unto uncleanness"

- v. 26 "to passions of dishonour (RVM)... receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was their due" (v. 27)
- v. 28 "to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not fitting" [Comment 6].

God withdrew from them His preventing grace and left them to the evil which they had chosen (as with Israel Ps. 81:11-13). It may be considered that vv. 19-27 and vv. 28-32 expand the thoughts of "all ungodliness" and "unrighteousness" respectively. In v. 18 "hold down" is in the sense of "suppress" (RSV, NIV) the truth and it is done in "unrighteousness" (or "by their wickedness" RSV, NIV) suggesting that it is unrighteousness both as to their state and as to the means by which the truth is suppressed. Thus we can see that the knowledge of God has been communicated to men's hearts and minds but they have suppressed this truth.

Rom. 1:19-20, shows how this truth has been communicated. God, at the time of the creation, so created the world as to leave impressed on it a testimony to Himself. In man, as part of the creation, a light was lit in his heart, so that, by nature rather than by special revelation, he can know of God {cf. Acts 14:17}. Alas, man has chosen to suppress that witness and we see the effect.

Rom. 1:21-3, however, shows how this truth has been suppressed. Men knew God, as explained above, but failed to honour Him as God in worship and thankfulness (though there is no shortage of gods in paganism). Their hearts being foolish became dark while they had a professed wisdom. Finally, they "changed the glory of the incorruptible for... an image". What a poor exchange that was! What a loss was there. Yet this was just the first stage in a downward plunge. Hand in hand with idolatry goes immorality, first of a straight-forward kind (vv. 24-25) then of a perverted nature (vv. 26-27). In v. 25 they made another exchange; "the truth of (about) God for a lie" and the result was that they worshipped creatures rather than the One who made them, the Creator. This declining path seems to be the way of man as recorded in Bible history; a good start is supplied by God but then a falling away takes place {cf. the days of Noah, or the decline following those of David and of the early churches of God}.

The next stage is seen in the sins listed (Rom. 1:29-32). Some of these may be seen in the lives of disciples of the Lord today (to our shame) but there are qualifying words; "filled" and "with all manner

of". These speak of a lifestyle directly opposed to God's ways. Here almost every kind of destructive attitude or practice is listed and the effect on relationships and friendships can be traced.

The final stage in God's condemnation speaks of those who, knowing God's sentence against such sins, are happy to join and encourage others in practising them.

*David Rafferty*

From Paisley: This is a solemn passage, dealing with God's wrath on the nations who shut their hearts against Him. The law of conscience is still applicable to unregenerate man and in the created universe there is abundant evidence of the power and majesty of the Creator (see Ps. 19). Though there is no speech or language there is nevertheless the silent witness to the Creator's power. Men are left, without excuse.

The historical record is that when men refuse to accept the revelation of God's power they substitute their own ideas expressed in various images which seem to deify man or beast; images which incidentally are very much in evidence today particularly in Eastern countries. Instead of becoming wise, men became fools, thus fulfilling the words of the Psalmist, "The fool hath said in his own heart, there is no God. Corrupt are they, and have done abominable iniquity" (Ps. 53: 1).

The consequence of refusal to recognize the power of God is to incur the wrath of God, and three times in this portion the expression occurs, "God gave them up" (vv. 24, 26, 27). It is a serious situation when this happens. It results in the misuse of the human body, of abuse of the natural processes of reproduction and degradation of the human character. Every vile outcome of sin is evident here; affecting the individual, the family and the community of nations. Instead of man existing for the glory of God, his life is spent in destruction of the human race; a condition very much in evidence in the days before the Flood and to be repeated in the days prior to" the coming of the Son of Man. We do not need to look very far to see that such sins are abroad in the world today and men are reaping the fruits of evil in their own lives. Only the gospel of God can rescue men from such degradation.

*J. Renfrew*

**From Rhyll:** Every sordid sin recorded here is a direct consequence of Adam's sin (*cf.* Rom. 3). We suggest that Paul here is assuming the role of prosecutor on God's behalf showing, through the Holy Spirit's 'brief, the total depravity of man. He was also entrusted with the "gospel of God" which we see in the previous study as being the complete answer to man's desperate plight.

We thought that the passage spanned the whole of human history from the Fall, and that the wrath of God is displayed against the sin of every generation of the human family. "The wrath of God is

revealed..." (v. 18) suggests that such displeasure continues to the present, and that it extends beyond the time of Christ's return for His Church. Examples which may be cited are: (i) God's dealings with men at the Flood because of increasing sin and lawlessness: (ii) the punishment meted out to the cities of the Plain: (iii) God's punishment of the nations who were driven out of the Promised Land: (iv) the wrath of God poured out upon His Son on the Cross.

The current moral decline and sexual malpractices which are so prevalent in British society are a vivid reminder of the retribution which the passage predicts, "receiving in themselves that recompense of their error" (v. 27).

It was suggested that in man there is a recognition that he owes his existence to Another ("that which may be known of God is manifest in them"), and in this he differs from the animal creation. The passage reveals that, having consciously rejected God by refusing to have Him in their knowledge, man sank even below the animal creation. Man has deliberately chosen to reverse his God-given role to have authority over the animal world.

Together with this internal witness, God has also borne witness to Himself through creation (v. 20). Man's folly is that he has rejected this two-fold witness and as a result man, who in the beginning was made in God's image and likeness, sank into further depravity. Man stands condemned because he exchanged the truth of God as his Creator for a lie. Ultimately he will be judged not because he was born a sinner but because he rejects God's offer of grace and pardon through Christ's work on the Cross. When man responds to the gospel he receives a new nature "in Christ" which cannot sin, so that as the gospel is received by faith a division is opened up between those who believe and those who disbelieve and reject God's salvation in Christ.

We thought, too, that there are many others who cannot be placed in either of these groups because although they are by nature alienated they have never heard the gospel so that they will be judged at the Great White Throne [Comment 9].

We noted too the three-fold phrase "God gave them up..." as marking a downward trend and yet at the same time this also shows God's grace. He is willing to save the vilest of sinners.

*A. J. Maxwell, R. Hyland*

**From Surulere:** The evils of an irreverent attitude to God and insincerity manifest themselves in a number of unrighteous acts:

- (i) *Holding down the Truth.* We viewed this unrighteous act in three ways: one knows the truth but being insincere refuses to submit or act according to the truth (Js. 4: 17). Some by their manner of life render the truth of no effect (Mk. 7: 13), while others may even imprison the truth, refusing to pass it on to others. Whichever way one looks at it, the consequences of such acts are great.

(ii) *Failure to Glorify God as God.* In all dispensations God has not left Himself without witness (Ps. 19: 1-2; Acts 14: 17) but the blinding effect of rebellion against revealed truth leads on to this point of failure to glorify God for who He is. When God, the source of knowledge, is forsaken folly sets in, and when truth is forsaken errors multiply.

The words "wherefore God gave them up" are repeated three times, followed each time with a catalogue of evil things which are commonplace occurrences in the world today. The picture painted from vv. 24-32 is that of a man who has gone past feeling, whose conscience is seared and who is totally morally bankrupt (Éph. 4: 18-19).

*E. S. Okwong*

**From Vancouver, British Columbia:** Paul, writing to the Roman believers about the wrath of God, says it is directed upon men who are without excuse. There was plenty of evidence of a Creator, but instead of worshipping Him they made God jealous and angry by rejecting Him and substituting idolatry.

Man has a free will and can choose to obey or to disobey God's commandments. If man deliberately chooses to turn his back on God, then God can do nothing but give him up. God sent His only Son into the world to save mankind. If man rejects Christ as his only Saviour, then not even God can do anything about it, other than leave man to his own destiny. Three times in these verses it states that "God gave them up".

Sin and unparalleled immorality results when man is left to be controlled by the lusts of the flesh. There are over a score of acts of sins referred to, and the people thus involved seemed to feel no remorse, but rather found pleasure in them, and even encouraged others to do the same. The result is total depravity when man deliberately banishes God from his reckoning [Comment 10].

*Philip Sproul*

**From Wishaw:** The description of man's wickedness in these verses is not unlike that of the times of Noah and Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 6, 13). It is considered that ungodliness describes the attitude of mind towards God while unrighteousness is the doing of the things which are conceived in men's minds [and hearts - Eds].

Modern man might believe he is in control of his future through such things as science and technology. Such would consider the thought of a God of truth and righteousness entering their affairs to be irrational. The truth about God is deliberately and wilfully suppressed, for the truth would condemn their wickedness and immorality. Men love the darkness rather than the light because the light reveals the sinfulness of man. When God is ignored, man lives the kind of life that suits and pleases himself, resulting in the downward decline of the human race with devastating consequences. A body wasted through abuse is the consequence of the wicked acts

and immoral living of men which, in turn, are the result of the refusal to acknowledge God and His ways. This is seen as God's punishment and judgement upon man's wickedness. The phrase "God gave them up" occurs three times in this portion, further indicating God's wrath and condemnation upon men who are found as victims of their own doing.

God has designed in man a consciousness of a Supreme Being. This consciousness is aroused by the overwhelming wonder and majesty of the created world around us. No man or woman has any excuse to deny the existence of God with such a marvellous creation displaying His might. Yet it is possible for man to silence his conscience which would otherwise assure him of the existence of God. Indeed the fool has said in his heart: "There is no God". Creation displays God's everlasting power but how is His divinity seen? [Comment 7].

The knowledge of God ought to compel men to glorify Him and give thanks. Although they knew God, this was not the God they wanted or that suited them in their evil ways. Consequently their condition worsened until, in a sense, they exchanged the truth of God for a lie of the Devil. This showed how foolish they were.

Where there is idolatry there is usually immorality. In any part of the world, if men exchange the truth and worship of God in their lives for material things, they will be sure to sink to behaviour far from God's acceptable standard.

A unity in evil (v. 32) introduces the so-called permissive society. Not only are men unashamed of their unprincipled behaviour but, sadly, it is accepted by the public to be a fact of life. If God has power to create the world and man, He has power also to judge men when they refuse to accept the truth and instead turn to wicked unrighteous ways in direct opposition to the will of God.

*G. K. Schleyer, M. D. Macdonald*

#### COMMENTS

**1. (Aberdeen, Birmingham ft Others):** This is true but the point of Romans 1 is that it deals with men to whom God has not revealed Himself verbally. It is not clear who the latter included prior to Abraham's day for, in addition to the chosen line, men such as Job had direct dealings with God. When God chose Abraham He shut out the rest of the world (even as they shut Him out at Babel). So they were the men of Romans 1 of that day. In the days of Moses and afterwards, God shut out those who were not of the people of God. So from then it was the Gentiles, who were ignorant or would not follow the revelation of God to Israel, to whom Romans 1 refers. "In contrast, Romans 2 deals with those to whom the verbal and written revelation of God has come. Thus, applying the thing to our day, Romans 1 refers to those who are ignorant of the

revelation of God in His Word, and particularly in the gospel of His Son. That is to say, it refers to Man in his natural state.

2. (Ajara): What our friends say is true, and so much the more serious if believers resort to the behaviour described in this chapter but Romans 1 deals with the natural state of unregenerate and scripturally unenlightened men. See Comment 1.

3. (**Birkenhead**): Yes, this is exactly right. Those to whom the Apostle spoke had no verbal revelation of God and so the preacher of the gospel appealed to the testimony of creation exactly according to Rom. 1:19-21.

4. (Kilmarnock): "Change" in Rom. 1:23 means to "alter" or "make other" whereas in v.25 it means to "alter afterward" a meaning that is most clearly explained by its use in verse 26. Thus, as friends say, v.23 deals with a lesser evil, namely man's tendency to tamper with and modify the divine pattern whereas v.25 (as with v.26) deals with the more serious sin of perversion of truth. It is not correct to infer that the men of v.25 were *completely* conversant with God since that demands direct, verbal revelation.

5. (Liverpool): What friends say is true though we may observe that sin begins in the heart, not the intellect.

6. (**Nottingham**): The wrath of God was revealed when Adam sinned, and had been explicitly demonstrated from time to time according to the Scriptures. While agreeing with our friends that Rom. 1:18-32 speak of its continuous presence (such is the sinful state of men) what we may know of it today and in this life is as nothing compared with the awfulness of Hell and the Lake of Fire.

7. (**Wishaw**): Power may be impersonal but divinity is not. The living, personal, nature of the Creator was the line taken up by Paul at Athens (Acts 17:24-25).  
*I. E. P.*

8. (**Birkenhead**): People do reject God's existence or authority for intellectual reasons; they "refused to have God in their knowledge". Sin of the intellect is at least as serious as other kinds of sin, and Rom.1 indicates that it was because of rejection of the truth about Himself that God gave men up to physical defilement.

9. (Rhyl): The following paragraph (Rom. 2:1-16) indicates the basis on which God will deal with such people.

10. (**Vancouver**): The term 'total depravity' indicates that every aspect of man's nature is affected by sin, not that his licentiousness is as great as it can be. Hence it can be applied to any unregenerate man, even one whose manner of life is blameless by the standards of his fellows. It is not, of course, a Scriptural term, but a technical theological one.

*P. L. H.*

## QUESTIONS and ANSWERS

1. **Birmingham and Surulere:** Are those about whom it is said "God gave them up" totally forsaken and eternally lost?

It is true that the Scriptures teach that God will not strive with men forever but in each of the verses in Romans 1, God gave them up to a particular thing: "unto uncleanness" (v.24), "unto vile passions" (v.26), "unto a reprobate mind" (v.28), each being progressively worse states. As other papers say, the grace of God has reached and saved individuals who have sunk to the lowest.

2. **Nottingham:** In Rom. 1: 18 there is no definite article in the Greek text (*orge theos*) which is translated as "the wrath of God". Some have said that the omission of the definite article would lead to "GOD'S wrath" being a better rendering, emphasizing that it is God's wrath as against MANS' wrath. That is, it is *whose* wrath that is being emphasized. In Eph. 5: 6, Col. 3: 6 the Greek words contain the article (*he orge tou theou* ) and are translated as "the wrath of God". Some would go on to say that here it is the WRATH of God as against the LOVE of God or the PEACE of God; i. e. it is the particular *attribute* that is being emphasized. Could we have some guidance or opinion as to the importance or otherwise of articles in such expressions?

The words *orge theou* (Rom. 1: 18) are in the pattern of a noun in the Nominative case followed by a dependent noun in the Genitive case. Apollonius Dyscolus asserted that either both nouns have the article (as in Eph. 5: 6 *he orge tou theou* ) or neither (as in Rom. 1: 18). This balance is a Greek characteristic, and the presence or absence of the article is not normally used to demonstrate an emphasis on the possessive case on the one hand, or to point a contrast with other possible governing nouns on the other hand. It is not unusual for the word *theos* to have the definite article, nor for *orge* meaning "the wrath" to be without it.

This is altogether apart from the fact that the LXX of Ps. 78: 31 reads *orge tou theou* "the anger of God" following the practice of the Hebrew construct state which regularly has the governing noun without the definite article.

E. A.

*Issued by the Churches of God, and obtainable from  
Hayes Press, 8 Essex Road, Leicester, England, LE4 7EE  
Also from the Church of God Literature Department, PO  
Box 125, Brantford, Ontario, Canada. Printed by the  
University of Nottingham.*

# Bible Studies

A magazine for the exploration of the Word of God [Acts 17: 11]

EDITORIAL

8603

The argument of the Epistle to the Romans begins in chapter 1 with the expression of God's wrath against sin, and the apostle Paul catalogues the wickedness and perversions into which man has fallen. A moralist might say "Yes, I agree with you; such conduct is disgraceful. I condemn it as much as you do, and I wouldn't behave like that". Paul turns to such a man in chapter 2, and shows him that he who acknowledges a liability to law incurs an obligation to obey it all (Gal. 5:3). He cannot

"Compound for sins he is inclined to

By damning those he has no mind to"

The first part of the chapter applies to men in general, but perhaps even here the apostle has the Jew in mind to some extent, since some of their leaders were notorious for their hypocrisy, and were condemned by the Lord Jesus because of it (Mat. 23:1-36). The law was intended to point out sin (Gal. 3:24) and to lead to repentance, not to provide a basis for self-justification.

God's righteousness is demonstrated by the basis on which He judges each man: "according to his works". Any other basis would be arbitrary and unjust, but no-one can complain if he is condemned because of what he has done. If taken on their own, verses 6 to 16 might seem to indicate that the converse is true, and eternal life can be earned by "patience in well-doing" (v.7). This is dearly inconsistent with later stages of the argument (3:19-23). The explanation lies in the fact that obedience in practice to the law, whether it be the law of conscience or the written revelation of God, is founded in obedience of the heart, arising from faith in God. Hebrews 11:6 points out that "without faith it is impossible to be well-pleasing unto Him: for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that seek after Him". Those who sought God, such as Cornelius (Acts 10) demonstrated their faith by their works (Jas 2:18), and God, who is able to "judge the secrets of men" (v.16), dealt with them on the basis of that faith.

It is noteworthy that the Lord's response to the faith of Cornelius was to send a preacher of the gospel to him, so that he might believe in Christ. Where the revelation of God in Christ is known, there can be no refuge in behaviour according to conscience: men are responsible to accept God's message, and rejection of the Son brings condemnation in itself (John 3: 18). Nevertheless, there are still many today who have not heard the gospel, and this passage shows us the basis on which the Judge of the earth shall do right in their case (Gen. 18: 25).

P. L. H.

#### THE RIGHTEOUS JUDGEMENT OF GOD (Rom. 2: 1-16)

From Aberdeen: "Whosoever" of Romans 2 seems to have a particular application to the Jew, who knew the Law, and while he outwardly kept it, yet in reality practised evil. Nonetheless he judged others. The Pharisee was typical of this. However, Pharisaical attitudes are just as prevalent among Gentiles. "Whosoever" surely is applicable to all who judge yet practise evil themselves. Man in his fallen nature will judge others while he practises the same things in his heart (if not in deed). The "works" of verses 6 and 9 need not be actions - evil thoughts are counted as evil works in God's eyes. The Lord said "every one that looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart" (Mat. 5: 28). Again "whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer" (1 John 3: 15). No matter how a man may judge his fellow, if he himself remains in his natural state he will not escape the judgement of God. It is the goodness of God, and not man's goodness which leads a man to repentance.

The "heart" of verse 5 and the "secrets" of verse 16 indicate the fact that God's knowledge of the heart is the means whereby an accurate reading of a man's "works" will be obtained.

The main point of the argument in this portion seems to be directed at the Jew who was so possessive of the Law. The thrust of the message was, "For not the hearers of a law are just before God, but the doers of a law shall be justified" (Rom. 2: 13). The law was not given to make a man satisfied with his "works" but as the means whereby "sin might be exceeding sinful" (Rom. 7: 13). Hence the "work of the law" involved "accusing" thoughts as a necessary outcome for Gentiles who did "the things of the law" (Rom. 2: 14, 15) [Comment 1], Indeed, "the law hath been our tutor to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith" (Gal. 3: 24). Whether through law or through conscience Jew and Gentile are caused to realise something of the wrongness of their sins. In view of this, and in view of the "goodness of God" (Rom. 2: 4) towards all men, God's judgement of the impenitent man is righteous.

James Johnson

From Ajara: "For there is no respect of persons with God" (v. 11). From the above statement, one could be satisfied that God's judgement is based on love, mercy, righteousness, perfection and impartiality (Acts 10: 34-35, 2 Sam. 24: 14). All the above mentioned qualities are never found in human judgement [Comment 2]. Furthermore unlike human judgement which is full of envy, hatred, wickedness, human directive, corruption, "the judgement of God is according to truth against them that practise such things". In addition, anybody who hypocritically judges his brother and cleverly does the same thing will not escape the judgement of God. That is why Jesus said "Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgement ye judge ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured unto you" (Mat. 7: 1,2). God is the only perfect judge, and He needs no human assistance.

*Philip Poji, Paul Balogun*

From Ajegunle: It was generally agreed that since all men would come under the righteous judgement of God (v.16), the period would span the existence of man on earth after the Fall:

- (a) Those without the Law (vv. 12, 15)
- (b) Those under the Law (v. 12)
- (c) Those after the death of Christ (v. 16).

We suggest that from v.16, there would be different categories of men who would be judged on the basis of their refusal or acceptance of the gospel of Christ [Comment 3].

The period would include the time of grace till the rapture (2 Cor. 5:10); pre-millennial (Mat. 25:31-33); during the millennium (Ps. 32: 1, Mat. 19:28). The Great White Throne judgement will be the final judgement (Ps. 2:4, 5; 9:7, 8; Rev. 20:11). The judgement of angels (1 Cor. 6: 2-3) like that of men will be in truth (v. 2) and impartial (v. 11).

*G. M. Okwena, M.A. Imoukuede*

**From Barrhead:** In the development of his argument in chapter 2 Paul is going to show that the Jew is no better off than the Gentile, as far as the judgement of God is concerned. We suggest, however, that at the beginning of the chapter mankind in general is still in view. Men stand condemned but no other man can be the judge, far the one who would act as judge simply condemns himself in so doing. By way of contrast we are introduced to the righteous judgement of God which is based on truth. Therefore the man who acts as judge and the person judged by man are both subject to the overriding judgement of God - neither will escape.

The Lord in His lifetime encouraged people to lay up for themselves treasure in heaven (Mat. 6:20), but here in Rom. 2:5 we learn of some whose treasure is wrath in the day of wrath. God's righteous judgement has to be revealed and it will be revealed at the Great White Throne which for these impenitent people will be the day of wrath. These are persons who obeyed not the truth (v. 8), that is, the truth they knew. This has nothing to do with what is called "the faith". The judgement of the Great White Throne, like all other judgements of God on men is related to works. For those who were repentant and produced works worthy of repentance this day will be a day of glory and honour with its pronouncement of eternal life.

In v.9 we are introduced to the Jew and Gentile both of whom are about to be dealt with specifically. The Jew cannot plead protection as a result of the law of God because He has broken it, and the Gentile cannot plead freedom from the law because he has a law of conscience written on his heart. Both are going to be judged under the righteous judgement of God who knows the secrets of the heart.

Obviously the Gentiles did not have the whole law, with its statutes and ordinances, written on their hearts but the principles of the law as progressively revealed and understood made men accountable and their response either accused or excused them.

Finally, when Paul writes that God will judge men "according to my gospel" we suggest that he is referring to one of the great principles of the gospel which he preached [Comment 4]. This same principle applies to us as believers; "Wherefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and make manifest the counsels of the hearts; and then shall each man have his praise from God" (1 Cor. 4:5).

*D. J. Kerr*

From **Birkenhead**: After greeting those to whom he is writing, Paul gives a horrific word picture of the lives of those with whom the Roman saints would rub shoulders in their everyday life. Just as the Jewish leaders had been quick to condemn the Lord Jesus and pass adverse moral judgement on their Gentile neighbours so now it would appear that some of the company, who had the advantage of knowing the Old Testament scriptures, were setting themselves up in judgement against those who had no such advantage [Comment 5]. Paul sets out to show that God's righteous judgement covers everyone, Jew and Gentile alike, and that no mere man can question God's judgement, because it is based on the law and truth (Ps. 119:142).

There is no excuse for judging another for that only makes the judge self-condemned in that he practises like sin. There is no escape from God's judgement, for all have sinned (Rom. 3:9), but this same God is showing His goodness and forbearance and long-suffering so that these same sinners should be led to repentance, and not treat His riches with contempt.

The principle is laid down that men are judged by the light available to them. Those who had the law revealed by God will be judged thereby. Those who have no such revelation will still be judged because they have a revelation from God through creation (Rom. 1:20) and an innate knowledge of right and wrong "written in their hearts" (v. 15).

The criterion of God's judgement lies in man's reaction to the divine standard. If men remain stubborn and impenitent and continue to allow themselves to be governed by evil and selfish ambition after they become conscious of sin, either by knowledge of the law or by the witness of their own conscience, they are storing up for themselves wrath to be revealed in God's judgement day. If, however, they persist patiently in doing good their reward is honour, glory and incorruption to be enjoyed in eternal life.

God has set a day in which He will judge the motives of men's hearts by the standard set by Christ, the righteous lawkeeper. The Jews, who were favoured by God in having the law revealed to them, rejected the Messiah thereby providing an example of those who despise God's goodness. Job showed himself to be aware of right and wrong by God's standard (Job 34:4, 5) and the centurion of Luke 7 was considered a "good" man.

A third category of person presents itself in God's day of grace. We, who have heard the Gospel and responded in faith are no longer under any condemnation either by law or conscience (Rom. 8:1). Christ has died and been raised again and has thereby met the requirements of the law. No one can condemn us because Christ intercedes for us at God's right hand.

*J. D. Williams, G. H. Roberts*

**From Cowdenbeath:** Paul is addressing Jews although with Gentiles in view. This is borne out by verses 9 and 10. God's judgement affects all men because all are responsible to God. Paul emphasizes that the Jews are first to experience the judgement of God as well as first to receive the good news of salvation (1:16). Divine judgement is declared according to what men have done whereas salvation is by divine grace through faith alone. Judgement is an absolute necessity in the upholding of a standard and in our passage God's standard is in view. God's judgement is without respect of persons (vv. 3, 11) and self-justification by man is his downfall.

Men's **judgement** of one another results merely **in** self-condemnation since **it is neither** enlightened nor just. The narrative of the Publican and Pharisee **in Luke 18** is one illustration of this. The **judgement** of God only **is perfect** for **it is "according to truth"** (v. 2) and "righteous" (v. 5).

In our passage Paul indicates **that men are** responsible to God **apart from the law given** to Israel. The knowledge of God's **character** comes to **the heathen** both **by the** outward indications **such as the stars of the heaven and, inward, by a moral law, the law of** conscience. This brings a distinction **between right and wrong in** man's heart. **When the** conscience is smitten wrongdoing is acknowledged and **judgement** is anticipated. Doing God's **law is** more important **than** knowing it.

**Having studied** Ephesians, **and the wealth of divine riches enumerated therein, we are once again** confronted **in Romans with** God's riches. **Here there are** His goodness (kindness of **heart in** action) His forbearance (a holding **back of wrath which must eventually be** exercised) **and** His long-suffering (restraint **in the face of** provocation). These contrast **with the** poverty of **man's nature, having a** heart of hardness (**dry and difficult to work with**) **and impenitence (the opposite of repentance) which, as a result, lays up in store the wrath of God in the day of judgement.**

**It seems certain that the latter part of the** passage refers to **the final judgement of the Great White Throne** (v. 16).

*R. I. Shaw*

From **Derby:** The **judgement** of God on this world **has been** entrusted by God to **the Son (Jn 5:22)**. **Judgement in the hands of** this **One must be as He is, perfect, righteous, just and in** truth.

John 3:18 shows **that in the Son, judgement has already been decided and man cannot change what God has pronounced, yet mercy is found in Christ as** Saviour.

A **deep well from which to drink of the kindness of God, is** found at Calvary. Only **because of the Son can the riches of** God's goodness **and** forbearance **and** longsuffering **lead to** repentance. Repentance **requires the** acknowledgement of God as sovereign **and the acceptance of His right both to judge and to be** merciful.

Today\* **the Jew is not advantaged before** God. They **had His law, but God required** obedience **in love, in the spirit as well as the letter of the** law.

He judges the Jews in this respect and us as He reads our hearts [Comment 6]. The righteous judge sees the secrets of the heart; secrets are only secret to men.

The judgement of God covers every aspect of human behaviour and thinking as well as the "intents and purposes" of the heart.

S. Wymer, G. W. Conway

**From Dulwich:** This part of Paul's letter to the Romans outlines the just dealings of God with the Jew as under the law, and with the Gentile who was not under the law but who will be judged on how he reacted to the law of his own conscience.

The chapter is clearly addressed to Jews (see v. 17) who were God's chosen people through election and who had been given the law through Moses. They were without excuse if they failed to practise what they knew to be right.

The Lord taught David a lesson when He sent Nathan to him to relate the story about the two men; the one rich, and the other poor (2 Sam. 12). The rich man had everything. The poor man had nothing except one little ewe lamb which was treated like a pet in his house. When the rich man wanted to show hospitality to a wayfaring man, instead of taking one of his own flock, he took the poor man's lamb, killed it and prepared it for the traveller. David was so angry. "As the Lord liveth, the man that hath done this is worthy to die". Nathan replied, "Thou art the man". David must have been astonished, but he soon realised that his killing of Uriah was a sin against the Lord and it had found him out. He experienced the instant, righteous judgement of God for he lost the child that Bathsheba had borne.

In Mat. 7: 1 the good words of advice spoken by the Lord Jesus Christ "judge not" refer to hasty and unjust judgement. It is almost impossible for us not to form an opinion of conduct which we know to be evil. What we have to avoid is to *express* an opinion which is harsh, unjust and censorious. The Scribes and Pharisees, who thought that they were above reproach, were always quick and acute to pass judgement on the smallest offence in others, when they were for ever committing more serious offences themselves. The Lord rightly judged them as hypocrites. They deceived themselves. Alas, they will not escape the judgement of God for they will be called to answer for their abuse of great privilege having been peculiarly favoured with the presence, the preaching, and the miracles of the Lord Jesus Christ, God's Beloved Son.

The Apostle was anxious that the Jews, who were numbered with the church of God in Rome, would be wary of despising the kindness

and gentleness of God which had led them to repentance. He reminds them of a coming judgement day when the righteous God will judge *each person* as to what he or she has done. It is interesting to note that Paul emphasizes the fact that Jews will be given priority in judgement as they will be dealt with before Gentiles. Why is this? Because Christ came first to His own but they that were His own received Him not (Jn 1:11). Furthermore, even although the Lord was despised and rejected by His own people, He said to His disciples on Mount Olivet, "Ye shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea and Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8). As Jews were first to receive blessing so they will be first to receive God's righteous judgement.

It will not be a blanket judgement of nations for God will deal justly with *each Jew*, not on what he or she has heard but by what he or she has done under the law. Similarly, *each Gentile* will be judged under conscience, as to how he or she has eschewed evil and how he or she has behaved righteously; which will either accuse or excuse him or her.

*Mark McKaig*

From Hayes: In chapter 1 Paul has exposed the unrighteousness and ungodliness of men and God's wrath against them, revealed in that He gave them up to uncleanness, vile passions, and a reprobate mind. In chapter 2 he deals with the righteous judgement of God and God's goodness, forbearance and longsuffering, the purpose of which is to lead men to repentance if they will allow it to do so. Sadly men do not recognize God's goodness and forbearance.

Chapter 1 speaks of the wrath of God revealed now. Chapter 2 speaks of the future manifestation of it. This is the Great White Throne judgement of Rev. 20:11-15, and some, because of their hardness and impenitence store up wrath for that day. They have the opportunity to repent now but they reject it.

God could have destroyed mankind as He did Sodom and Gomorrah but He has not done so because of His goodness and longsuffering. His desire is that these should lead men to repentance. He wills not the death of any but that all should come to Him and live. The stubbornness of some hearts keeps them from this.

Vv. 6-16 sound like a gospel of good works and are in accord with Jn 5:28-29 where all that are in the tombs will be raised; they that have done good to the resurrection of life and they that have done ill to the resurrection of judgement. How does this accord with the words, "by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified in

His sight"? (Rom. 3:20). The answer is in v. 12, "as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law; and as many as have sinned under law shall be judged by law".

The principle runs through Scripture that judgement is according to works; what a man has done in relation to his knowledge of God works being the result of the attitude of the heart.

More than half the time spanned by the Old Testament had run its course before God gave the law to Israel. Nations outside of Israel had standards of right and wrong both before then and afterwards, as is borne out by many scriptures. Men had a knowledge of God and their consciences bore witness to them; but the Jews had a privileged position, extra light bringing extra responsibility.

*J. A. H. Robertson*

**From Ibadan:** The erring nature of man in passing judgement gives God concern in that the standard which man applies in passing judgement differs from that of God. While man judges action at times God judges motive. For example David and his men ate the Shewbread unlawful for them according to Mosaic law but he was not condemned by our Lord Jesus Christ (Mat. 12:3-5).

Since God is going to judge righteously, it is imperative to consider when, who, why and how He is going to judge. In the sequence, the raptured Church would first appear before the judgement seat of Christ (Rom. 14:10). The second to be judged are the nations of the world that will survive the tribulation, i.e. the suspended 70th week in Daniel's prophecy (Mat. 25:31-46). The last part of the judgement would be that of the Great White Throne. This is where all who have not appeared previously will be judged (Rev. 20:11-15).

Now comes the question of why God should judge. The secrets of the hearts of men are only known to Him alone, thus He is the best Judge to try the reins and the heart (Jer. 17:9; Rom. 2:16). He will judge believers to test how faithfully they have behaved to all that He committed to their care through His Son, Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 5:10; Rom. 14:12; Rom. 2:6). The nations will be judged righteously by Him because of their atrocity towards His chosen people (Joel 3:2-8). As regards the world, He will judge them on the ground of their indifference to His call (Prov. 1:24-31; Jn 3:18-19).

As to how God will judge His creatures; He will subject all that believers have done in the flesh to the test by fire (1 Cor. 3:13-15). Concerning the nations of the world He will gather them at the

valley of Jehoshaphat, after the battle of Armageddon, there sit to pronounce His Judgement on the nations (Zech. 14: 2-4; Joel 3: 9-19; Mat. 25: 31-32). The rest of the world will be judged according to what is written in the record books of God (Rom. 2: 12; Rev. 20: 12-15).

With the above programme of God in executing His judgement on His creatures, the rule to abstain from judging should be adhered to strictly (Mat. 7: 1; Luke 6: 37; Jas 4: 11).

*A non*

**From Nottingham:** One of the main points of interest in the passage (vv. 6-9) seems difficult to explain. While being consistent with a number of Old Testament verses as well as the Lord's own words (Mat. 16: 27), how does this passage fit in with our belief in salvation by faith in Jesus Christ?

It is appreciated that the context is to do with the Jews and to pre- New Covenant standards, but why is it presented in the present tense as though this criteria were applicable to those in Rome and indeed to us today? [See Editorial and other papers-Eds].

*C. Edis*

**From Rhyl:** This passage has the future judgement of God in view (Rom. 2: 5). God has appointed both a Man and a day when He will judge in righteousness (Acts 17: 31). The appointed Man is the Son, to whom all judgement has been given (Jn 5: 22). The particular judgement in view in this passage is that of the Great White Throne (Rev. 20: 11-15), although many of the principles can be applied elsewhere. Each person appearing before this throne will be judged according to his deeds (v. 6; Rev. 20: 13) and will be rewarded accordingly. Those in view in verse 7 who "by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honour and incorruption" are after the fashion of Cornelius (Acts 10: 34, 35). Perseverance in these things contains the underlying principle of faith or belief in reward. In contrast, verse 8 has in mind those who believe not (Jn 3: 17-21). Here the Greek has the meaning "refuse to be persuaded". Such stand judged already.

Needless to say, the true believer will not appear before the Great White Throne, although the principle of verse 6 can be applied to him also. All men will be judged by what is done, hence the believer coming before the Judgement Seat of Christ will be judged by his accomplished works and not by what he said, hoped or thought he would do in the Lord's service. This judgement, of course, relates to reward and not to the awarding of eternal life.

God, through the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, is the only one able to carry out righteous judgement; He knows all things and all thoughts and all motives (Heb. 4:13, 14). The book of Romans illustrates both God's righteousness and His grace. God's righteousness has demanded payment for sins committed but by His grace He has provided a pardon for the same sins through the gift of His Son. Man can now stand as a pardoned sinner clothed with the imputed righteousness of God. This is obtained solely by believing God, of which Abraham is an example (Rom. 4:3). Contrast, therefore, man's ability to judge his peers. He is not in a position to pass righteous judgement; he seldom knows all the facts and knows nothing of others' thoughts and motives. Equally, pardoned man cannot judge yet unsaved man; they are both sinners but one has been justified through the grace of God. Indeed the judgement of verse 1 means "criticism" or "belittlement", that is unrighteous judgement. One who tries to judge his fellow is being self-righteous and self-justifying. He is just as guilty (v.1).

Verses 3 and 4 imply that pardoned man cannot trade on God's grace. Because he has been forgiven, this man ought not to "despise the riches of His goodness and forbearance and long-suffering" (v.4) but contemplation of God's grace should lead to continual repentance. We should leave aside all self-righteousness otherwise we can only expect the judgement of verse 6. God is not partial in His judgement (v. 11). The words of Romans are written to the believer and contain this solemn warning.

Saved man is to carry out the judgements made in the context of church discipline (Mat. 18:15-17; 1 Cor. 5:12, 13). Mat. 7:1-6 warns against judging one's brother in any other context, but we each do need one who will show us our blind spots with words uttered gently in love (Tit. 2:1-15).

It is instructive to note that the preaching of God's judgement was an integral part of Paul's gospel (Rom. 2:16). He did not shrink back from declaring the whole counsel of God.

*S. Allport, T. Griffiths*

**From Southport:** The main point of the passage is that the judgement of God is absolute. He is above the ignorance and partiality that characterize our judgements. The opening words remind us of the visit of Nathan to David (2 Sam. 12:5-7), which led to the condemnation "Thou art the man". "Judge not that ye be not judged".

The argument of the next verses slowly leads the Jewish mind to accept the facts that having Abraham as father and carrying out the rite of circumcision, will not avoid the penalty of the Law, the law of sin unto death.

The natural law brought Gentiles into condemnation, how **much greater the law given** to Moses. The promise of verse 7 is **that if it were possible to keep the law, eternal life would be the reward.** Both **Jew and Gentile** stand convicted.

*S. R. Henderson*

**From Surulere:** Intrinsic in the nature of God are righteousness, holiness and judgement for the Psalmist said "Righteousness and judgement are the foundation of Thy throne: Mercy and truth go before Thy face" (Ps. 89:14). The mercy seat above the ark of testimony and the two cherubim with their outstretched wings epitomized these characteristics of God under the Law.

We noted that the manifestations of God's judgement, whether on nations or individuals, are never so sudden as to deny the judged an opportunity to repent. Whether it was in the world of Noah's days, the children of Israel, or in our own dispensation the principle is the same. God is rich in goodness. He is forbearing and longsuffering. This goodness should lead, not drive or force, but bring gently and tenderly in love to repentance.

Although God delights to show mercy, all who spurn the long-suffering of God treasure up for themselves wrath to be revealed in the day of judgement.

For both Jews and Gentiles, the basis of God's judgement will be given light or revelation. Three of such lights were noted:

- (a) *The Light of Nature.* "The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament sheweth His handywork, Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge", says the psalmist (Ps. 19:1-2). Paul also re-echoed this when he said "the invisible things of Him (i. e. God) since the creation of the world are clearly seen, being perceived through the things that are made, even His everlasting power and divinity; that they may be without excuse".
- (b) *The Light of the Law.* If the Gentiles had the light of nature and are responsible to God according to their response to that light, the Jews who had the law stand under the same degree of responsibility to God for the light given to them. To the Jews were given the covenants, the law, the services of God and the promises (Rom. 9:4).
- (c) *The Light of the Gospel.* Under the present dispensation, men will be judged according to their response to the gospel.

We also noted as a principle that the object of God's judgement will be works. These are good works and works of faith as against

**dead works. Such are works created in Christ for believers to walk in them as against dead works, works of the flesh from which the believer's conscience has been purged (Eph. 2: 10; Heb. 9: 14). God will render to every man according to his works (Rom. 2: 6). This will be true at the judgement seat of Christ for believers (1 Cor. 3: 14-15) and equally so at judgement of the nations and the Great White Throne Judgement (Rev. 20: 12-13; Rev. 22: 12).**

*E. Okwong*

From Vancouver: **In this section of the book of Romans, Paul contrasts man's judgement of man with God's righteous judgement of man. In order to appreciate better this section the context must be noted. In the first chapter, Paul has described the man who turns away from God. God could do nothing and thus allowed such to be controlled by their own desires [Comment 7]. Such a course led to horrible consequences as depicted by Paul in the latter part of chapter 1. In chapter 2, Paul changes the focus from "them" to "you".**

The chosen people of God thought **they were in a position where-by they could judge others and still engage in the same practices. Paul tells them that they cannot be excused. Within our human nature there exists a tendency to overlook our own failings and yet at the same time judge others. Clearly the Lord Jesus spoke of this when He talked about someone with a log in his eye attempting to remove a speck from another's eye (Mat. 7: 1-5). His instructions were that one should first remove the log from one's own eye before helping another with a speck in his eye.**

Do we follow **these instructions in our own daily lives or are we too quick to criticize and make assumptions in our judgements of others?** Most of us confessed **that we were often guilty of being prone to judgement. We explored the reasons for this and concluded it was pride, most of all.**

**After examining judging as applied to man versus man, it was wonderful to contrast this imperfect way of judging against God's perfect judgement. God's judgement is according to truth (v. 2), righteous (v. 5), according to each man's work (v. 6), according to privilege (v. 9), without respect of persons (v. 11), according to light (v. 12) and according to the Gospel (v. 16).**

**In conclusion, judgement must be left with God. Instead of judging one another we should accept one another in love in the same manner by which the Lord Jesus Christ loves us.**

*Stephen Sutherland*

**From Wishaw:** The apostle Paul continues in this chapter with his denunciation of the attitudes of men against their fellow man. In the ultimate, those who judge others, being guilty of similar error, can expect no mercy from God.

God's judgement is not based upon speculation or heresy, but upon His own omniscient character. He knows all things, and has decreed all things from the beginning. Prov. 16:4 (RVM) states that "the Lord hath made everything for His own purpose... even the wicked for the day of evil". The judgement of God is according to truth; the veracity of Deity is in no way comparable to what man may term truth.

The words "forbearance" and "longsuffering" used in verse 4 remind us of the days of Noah prior to the Flood, when God patiently waited for men to repent. We might ask how men may despise the goodness, forbearance and longsuffering of God. Possibly the answer may lie in man's wilful refusal to acknowledge God's very existence, living a life that denies divine revelation whether in creation or in the Scriptures.

The apostle makes frequent use of contrasts in the Roman epistle. One such example is found in verses 4 to 10. In contrast to the "riches" of God's goodness and forbearance and longsuffering, we see that men are "treasuring" up for themselves wrath in the day of wrath. To unregenerate man their sin is a treasure and a pleasure, but it is only building up for them the weight of divine displeasure, which one day soon will overwhelm them. God's wrath, against which there is no appeal, is righteous, unlike the wrath of man which is often born out of heat and passion. In v.7 Paul says that those who through patience in well doing seek for glory and honour and incorruption will receive eternal life. We suggest this is viewing men and women to whom the light of the gospel has never come. These persons have shown their faith in God by the works they have done.

In v.12 the apostle makes his first reference to the law. Again he contrasts those "under law" and those "without law". This latter statement is a relative one, and means they had no direct command from God. But this did not absolve them from their responsibility, for in v.15 the voice of conscience (i.e. their God-given sense of right and wrong) should be a deterrent against evil things. The Jews had the pure light of the law, and by that law they will be judged: we have the greater light of the gospel, and by a greater measure we will be judged. Finally there is a day when God will judge the secrets of all men. Nothing will be or can be hidden from the eyes of Him to whom all men must answer.

*R. Ure, M. D. Macdonald*

## COMMENTS

**1. (Aberdeen):** The "work of the law" is distinguishing between actions which are right and those which are wrong. When Gentiles, guided by their conscience, did "the things of the law", that is, the things which the law would have told them to do had they possessed it, their conscience would excuse, rather than accuse, them.

**2. (Ajara):** This is going too far. The light of conscience given to men in general ensures that in many cases men's judgement of others is just and fair, and we are thankful for a just judiciary, at least in the United Kingdom. This is not to say, of course, that there is any comparison with the judgement of God, since He can judge motive, as well as action.

**3. (Ajegunle):** This passage does not deal with time periods, but with the extent to which the will of God has been revealed to each man. There are still many today who have not heard the gospel of Christ, and God will judge them on the same basis as that on which those who did not have God's law in the past will be judged: obedience to the knowledge of God which they have. It is a general principle of God's dealings with men that men are judged according to their works and justified according to their faith. Obedience to the unseen and unenforced law of conscience manifests faith in the God who placed conscience in the human heart.

**4. (Barrhead):** The phrase "according to my gospel" refers to the fact that Jesus Christ will be the judge. This fact featured prominently in Paul's preaching, as can be seen from Acts 17:31, "He will judge the world in righteousness by the man whom He hath ordained".

**5. (Birkenhead):** One would think Paul to be developing an argument, and addressing an imaginary objector, rather than to be directing his words to those in the church in Rome.

**6. (Derby):** The primary reference of this passage is to Gentiles who have no written revelation from God, not to ourselves, who have received the gospel.

**7. (Vancouver):** Scripture does not present God as the helpless spectator of men's actions. The phrase "God gave them up" (Rom. 1:24, 26, 28) indicates God's judicial action in delivering

men to the consequences of their rejection of Himself. Even before He did this, before the foundation of the world, God had decreed a redemption and a redeemer. Everything that needed to be done was done, and the purpose of God has unfolded, and will unfold, in His own time.

*P. L. H.*

## QUESTION AND ANSWER

From **Rhyl**: It has been shown that there are judgements and that there are righteous judgements. Can righteous judgements be applied to such issues as fashion, appearance, pop music, the amount spent on purchase of a new car, and such matters? If so, what would be such judgements in these instances?

A semantic problem obscures the question here, in that the word "judgement" is used to mean both "discernment" and "censure". Discernment as to courses of action is necessary in all the above cases, based on the knowledge of what is right. However, in many cases there is no definite right or wrong. For instance, everyone wears clothes, and thus involves himself or herself in fashion of a sort. The only commands we have in relation to clothing are that it should be modest and not excessively sumptuous (1 Tim. 2:9; 1 Pet. 3:3), and opinions about such things vary between cultures and periods of time. All we can do is "judge" whether a particular item of clothing meets these standards. Other principles might also apply: one might give offence to someone who was weak in the faith by wearing clothing that he or she did not approve of, even though there was no command from God which affected the matter. In each case, one must ask if there is a specific command, and if there are general principles of scriptural teaching.

When "judgement" is used to mean "censure", more stringent criteria must be applied. We may only condemn what God has condemned; that is, we can point out that actions are contrary to the law of God, and will bring His judgement. In most cases the matters raised in the question are not of this type, and we should not take the place of God, in imposing our own opinions upon others. Scripture says "Who art thou that judgest the servant of another? To his own lord he standeth or faileth" (Rom. 14:4). Censure in such cases requires a knowledge of the condition of the heart, and only God has that. Righteous judgement should be left to Him.

*P. L. H.*

*Issued by the Churches of God, and obtainable from Hayes Press, 8 Essex Road, Leicester, England, LE4 7EE. Also from the Church of God Literature Department, PO Box 125, Brantford, Ontario, Canada. Printed by the University of Nottingham.*

# Bible Studies

A magazine for the exploration of the Word of God [Acts 17: 11]

EDITORIAL

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The condition "if thou be a doer of the law" (Rom. 2: 25) was seen by the apostle Paul to be crucial for Jews who rested their confidence in the law. The citation from Isaiah 52: 5 to the effect that the name of God was blasphemed among the Gentiles because of Jews (Rom. 2: 24) appears first in the context of God's judgement. The people whom God had placed in the land of promise, after delivering them from Egypt, had sinned against His law, and were carried captive. What ultimate solution could there be except the gospel of the Christ, the sinless One, who would suffer God's chastisement to bring peace to believing hearts? Even David, who in his generation had been a notable shepherd of Israel, felt in his failure that the righteousness of God was only highlighted, and the lie of hypocrisy could never stand before the truth of God (Ps. 51:4). With the privilege of being entrusted with the oracles of God went the responsibility to fulfil the law, and the chosen people stood condemned by it. Yet in the midst of Lamentations the faithfulness of God brought hope (Lam. 3:23). Nevertheless repentance was appropriate and not complacency. They ought to have a sense of the privilege extended to them rather than mere contempt for the Gentiles. To the apostle it was revealed that the Gentile, though in natural terms uncircumcised, could have in another sense that

circumcision **which** is of **the** heart. **Such a thing** would be impossible **whether** for **Jew** or **Gentile**, **apart** from **the** **grace** of **God**

*E. A.*

#### DOERS OF THE LAW (Romans 2:17 - 3:8)

From **Aberdeen**: To be a **Jew** in name is not to be confused with being a **Jew** inwardly. God looks for something **far deeper** than **the** outward actions of a man. The real **Jew** does not order his lifework before **men** **but** serves God from **the** heart. ". . . **he** is a Jew.... whose **praise** is not of men, **but** of God" (Rom. 2:29). The "**Jew**" who **was** one **inwardly** would not be bound **by** family traditions, or **by** traditions of **men**, **where** these **were** in conflict with **the** desires of **his** God. This same **pattern** applies to **the** <sup>1</sup>Christian<sup>1</sup>.

The **man** who bore **the** name of a **Jew** is presented in **the** way in which he saw himself. This **wise** in one's own eyes<sup>1</sup> picture of the **Jew** describes him as a **guide**, a **light**, an instructor, a **teacher**, a preacher. However, **Paul** points out **that** the person who **fills** such roles ought to **realise** that his message is **equally** applicable to himself as to those he communicates with. "Thou therefore **that** **teachest** another, **teachest** thou not **thyself**"? (Rom. 2:21). The pointed questioning **which** follows is **designed** to expose **the** **sinfulness** of **the** **human** heart: to **help** the "**Jew**" to see **his** real inner **self**.

**Paul**, being a **Jew** himself, **indeed** at one **time** a "**Jew** outwardly", **had** a **great** concern for **his** kinsmen and so he speaks **at** **length** to **the** **Jew**. This love for **his** brethren is later expressed in no **uncertain** terms (Rom. 9:3). **Paul** shared a similar background to **the** **Jew** and so **was** well suited to **present** the gospel to him. **It** **may** **be** that those who **are** **near** to **us** in regard to **their** background would **benefit** from a **similar** concern from **us**, for **their** salvation.

*James Johnson*

From **Ajara: Doers of the Law** - It is certain that **man** cannot be justified by keeping the law but by faith in the Lord **Jesus**, for it is written in **Gal. 3: 10, 11** "For as many as are of the works of the law are under a curse: for it is written, cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them". But that nobody is justified by the law in the sight of God, is evident, for "**the just shall live by faith**". Why then the Law? The law is given because of our transgressions until the coming of our Lord **Jesus Christ**. (See **Gal. 3: 24**).

**The Life of a Christian** - Considering critically **Rom. 2: 21, 22**, we Christians need to be careful on the way into which we are called, because we carry the names of God and Christ. Our behaviour, thoughts, conversation, character and way of life should be in accordance to what the Scriptures teach, so that the name of God should not be blasphemed among the Gentiles because of us (**Rom. 2: 24**).

**Circumcision** - was a sign in order to distinguish between Israelites and non-Israelites. What then is circumcision today? Circumcision today according to our opinion could be regarded as "**Baptism**" but one should not be baptized without salvation. However, salvation and baptism are not complete without doing the will of God (**Rom. 2: 26, 27**; **Mat. 7: 21**) [Comment 7].

Finally, we agreed that doing the will of God is the motto of both salvation and baptism.

*P. Poji, P. Balogun*

**From Barrhead:** Paul's address (vv. 17-29) is to the Jew; Paul was a man who knew the Jews better than anyone else. He could speak with absolute confidence as one who was well equipped to speak.

Everything he said was so true of the Jew. They were the one nation that God had selected from all the nations of the world. They knew the supreme will of God. In the law

**they had the form of knowledge and of the truth.** Israel **prided themselves in this, but herein lies the pitfall,** for **there is a similar danger** for ourselves today. This is **the Jew in natural characteristic saying to himself that he is better than anyone else.**

**In 2 Tim. 3: 5 we read "holding a form of godliness but having denied the power thereof".** They **had the form but did not have the** corresponding form of life. **So today the danger is that we say "I'm a house of God man", but the spiritual side does not correspond.**

**Rom. 2: 24 is the fulfilment of the prophecy of Is: 52: 5.** The Gentiles saw **this hypocrisy.** The **name of God was blasphemed when they saw what the Jews were doing.** The lesson is that people **can say of us "Is he supposed to be a Christian"?** The apostle **emphasizes that it does not matter what we show outwardly, it is what we show inwardly that counts** [Comment 1].

Circumcision **in the flesh is today seen in salvation, the cutting off of the old life (see Col. 2: 11).** **Spiritual** circumcision is only of **any value if it is in the heart** [Comment 2], **It is what God sees in the secret of the heart.** **Men may** praise outwardly, **but is it God who will assess inwardly.** Despite **all this there was a uniqueness about the Jewish people.** They **had all the jewels of Rom. 9: 4, 5 and in particular they were custodians of God's living oracles.** The complete **God-breathed character of these was beyond question in those days, yet Moses had described the nation as a people in whom was no faith.** This **in no way affected the faithfulness of God to the covenant.** **All He does is wrought in righteousness.** Nor **did we view the righteousness of v. 5 as restricted to what God bestows on the repentant unrighteous; rather, we considered with great delight the debating skill of this Spirit-led writer as he balanced out the faithfulness, righteousness and truth of God as attributes unaffected by any human failings as in "their want of faith", "our unrighteousness", and "my lie".**

**On the question of doing evil that good may come Paul seems to think of it as such a perversion of morality that he does not take time to answer the point in detail but dismisses the matter with "whose condemnation is just". In other words such a view brings just condemnation on those who hold it.**

*Robert Hawthorne*

**From Birkenhead: Paul is anxious to point out certain matters to the Jews who, by faulty reasoning, were liable to reach wrong conclusions. They were called Jews, were recipients of the law, knew God's will and thus were in a position where they should be able to guide and teach others, yet because of transgression so much had gone wrong. The Pharisee (Luke 18: 11) was thankful that he was not as other men, but Paul is clearly stating here that the opposite holds true. The situation was such that rather than God's name being exalted because of them, His name was being blasphemed by the Gentile nations - a salutary lesson for God's people today.**

Circumcision was linked with the carrying out of the law. Transgression of the law made circumcision a pointless exercise [Comment 3]. God looks down and sees the hearts of all; hence the apostle's reason for contrasting "outwardly" with "inwardly". The Lord when here on earth criticized the empty formalities of those who give honour with the lips whilst their heart is far away from God.

**If the reader of the letter to the Romans had by now reached certain conclusions about the Jew, Paul continues his exposition by pointing out that the Jews were in a favoured position in that they were entrusted with the oracles of God. The fact that some chose to turn away from the message did not change in any way the eternal purposes of God centred in His Son; God is faithful and must ever be so.**

The righteousness of God is imputed to the sinner by God's grace through faith, but no credit or praise attaches to fallen man in all this. Paul says this to dismiss the idea that man's sinfulness helps to show up God's righteous dealings with him in a favourable light and that it is thus unreasonable for God to act in wrath against a sinner who has served such a seemingly worthy purpose. The idea that evil should abound so that God's goodness shines more brightly must be rejected, and all must accept that God's judgement is according to righteousness.

*G. H. Roberts, R. D. Williams*

From Cowdenbeath: This passage of **the** epistle highlights **the** responsibility of privilege and **the** consequence of failure.

The Jewish nation **were** highly privileged. God loved **them** and had chosen **them** to be His own, entrusting to **them** the knowledge of His Will and His purpose for His people. They **were** well taught in the law of God **but that** was not enough. The value of the law to the Jew was in the keeping of it. **Indeed**, failure to keep it brought condemnation that could not be avoided by the outward expression of circumcision. **What mattered** to the God of Israel was obedience of heart and a Gentile whose heart was right with God condemned the Jew with all his privilege and outward appearance of piety. God's deliverance of His people into captivity was evidence that they were not in fact what they claimed to be and this led to dishonour of the name of God by the heathen. How careful the people of God must be in their testimony.

We recalled that the Jew derived his name from a word meaning "praise" and saw that true blessing comes from God who alone is worthy to be praised (ch. 2: 29).

In the opening of chapter 3 it would seem that Paul anticipated some questioning from the dispersed Jews regarding their advantage as Jews. Perhaps it seemed to some that their pedigree as members of the Jewish nation was open to question in the light of his arguments but Paul dispels their doubt categorically emphasizing their privilege. Central to it all was the fact that they had been "entrusted with the oracles of God". God in mercy had been pleased to reveal to them what His purposes were and theirs was a great responsibility to obey. Of course some were unable to respond in faith, but God's faithfulness is constant. He will carry out His purpose according to His Word. It is not possible to accuse God of falsehood, but against such a standard man is evident corrupt.

The message of justification by faith must have been a great stumbling-block to many Jews who had been brought up to acknowledge the need to do something in order to be accepted before God. It was a visual performance but now the message of salvation by grace through faith was being preached and they were apprehensive. To them it introduced the concept of non-accountability but the apostle was quick to point out the condemnation of the sinner, be he Jew or Gentile, who had not experienced faith in God.

*R. I. Shaw*

From **Derby**: Some of the matters that Paul was writing about in this epistle are so profound that even he may have been writing beyond his own full knowledge. God is self-revealing otherwise He would not be known. This revelation came to Gentile people particularly through His creative work. The revelation also came through the law that was given on Mount Sinai. In its detail it said what the response of the people to the character and the claims of God should be.

The Jews were in a favoured position. They had the law given to them that has been the model for many nations of the earth. It was a source of great enlightenment. The sad thing is that the Jews boasted that they had the law of Moses, but whilst they possessed it they did not practise it. God did not want the tablets to be kept only in the Holy of Holies. He wanted the Jews to have the claims written on their hearts. In general the Jews were not obedient to the light of revelation that came through the law but they thought that they could teach other people. In their attitude they felt that they had the knowledge of God and so they despised the Gentiles.

Josiah brought them back to God and to the Book. We will never have spiritual unity unless we have the basis in the word of God. We have the responsibility to be obedient to it. The Jews had great light but they caused God's name to be blasphemed among the Gentiles. Although they did not have the law of Moses the Gentiles responded to the law that was in their conscience and by responding to the light of their conscience did what the Jew should have done. The Jew boasted the rite of circumcision. They boasted but they did not keep the symbol of the covenant relation. They had the physical experience but they did not have the spiritual experience. The Gentiles did, in general, what God wanted them to do in moral matters. So the Gentiles were the true circumcision [Comment 4], In their lives they showed that the word of the Lord was written in their hearts. If we are to have a right conscience the knowledge of God must direct it.

In our position before God and man it is important that we live up to what we teach as we will be tested on what we minister.

*G. W. Conway*

From **Hayes**: Paul here examines with special reference to the Jew the thesis that the greater the knowledge the greater the responsibility (2: 17-29) and explores also in the opening verses of chapter 3 some consequential objections to this as a prelude to the demonstration in the later verses, that sin is universal. It

is evident that the Jews, as God's chosen people, were greatly privileged and yet, Paul argues, they had failed to live up to those privileges and had fallen prey to the sins of pride and formalism, the very sins so sharply condemned by the Lord Himself. It is easy to condemn in others racial and religious pride linked with moral failures; but could not similar accusations be made against our Christian claims and conduct? The crux is that being a true disciple is an inward rather than an outward matter (cf. Mat. 23: 27 & 28) and is true equally of Jews and Christians. J.B. Phillips<sup>1</sup> translation of v. 29 is "The true Jew is one who belongs to God in heart, a man whose circumcision is not just an outward physical affair but is a God-made sign upon the heart and soul and results in a life lived not for the approval of man, but for the approval of God".

In 3: 1-8 Paul asks and answers the questions that doubtless he had had to face from those opposed to the gospel. His defence rests on the fact that the failure of the Jews, despite their great privileges, did not and could not undermine the faithfulness and righteousness of God. Paul briefly develops but also condemns the argument that some slanderously and others seriously were deploying against him, namely that because God's goodness is seen the more brightly against the contrasting background of human weakness, why not then do evil that good may be the more evident? The unchanging truth is that, no matter how much God's goodness may be revealed in contrast to man's evil, divine justice is not compromised by its punishment. At the practical level the Christian is exhorted throughout the epistle to use his freedom to God's glory and not as "a cloak of wickedness" (1 Pet. 2: 15 & 16).

*A. C. Bishop*

**From Ibadan:** In stewardship, faithfulness is required (1 Cor. 4: 2) for this would be the joy of the Master. So also it is imperative on the part of those mandated to keep and teach the laws of God to be found practising what they teach; thus demonstrating their faithfulness to the One who gave them the mandate. Teachers who fail to perform would receive greater condemnation (Jas. 3: 1).

It is evident that piety does not necessarily go along with religious knowledge, in that those who profess to be well versed in the laws of God have been found wanting on the practical side of it, and in fact the day to day actions of men have proved that those who exhibit religious knowledge too much have little or none of it in them [Comment 5]. This is what Paul, in the epistle to the Romans is trying to emphasize so as to guard against being

hypocrites. The Jews were known for **their** knowledge of the laws of God **and they were** good teachers, **but** most of **them** failed to perform. For **their** non-performing **attitude**, **they** received condemnation from our Lord Jesus **Christ** **and they were** styled "whited sepulchres" (Mat. 23:27). **Christians** should not allow **themselves** to be **deceived** by **head knowledge of the Bible** because the "**letter killeth**" (2 Cor. 3:6) for the demonstration of our **faith lies in the practising** of what we preach. We should be doers of the law and not teachers only so that we **deceive** not ourselves (Jas. 2:12). As for Ezra "**he had set his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach it**" (Ezra 7:10). This is a very good **example**, for Christians. We should not be **in darkness** as regards the statutes of God, **neither should we** allow ourselves to be content with the knowledge of it alone, we should also **strive to practise it** before **teaching** it.

The outstanding **benefit** believed to be **derived** from being the doers of the law **will be a huge success** in our daily **endeavours** for the Lord's work especially in outreach **and will** equally **prevent** ourselves from **unwarranted embarrassment** (1 Tim. 4:16).

*M. O. Ajagbe, J. O. Oyekunle*

From Liverpool: *The Real Jew* Paul focuses on the reality **behind** a convenient label. Many **Jewish** people **had** come to **believe** that **being Jewish** was an end in itself. Paul points out that **this is** not so **and** an ungodly way of **life** **negatives** all outward **ritual**. **In fact**, someone not born into **this** position of **privilege** and without the outward **signs** and formalities who **seeks** to **live** a **life** which God could approve of is more of a **Jew** than any **descendant** of **Abraham!** God **will** not tolerate **hypocrisy** **and there is** no spiritual diplomatic immunity\*.

*Bringing Disgrace* People generally associated the God of the Jews with His people **and in the** context of **Isaiah 52:5** read into **their** misfortune an impotence **and** inability to **save** on the **part** of **their** God. Paul indicates that God's **name** is **blasphemed** day by day as people **see** in the people of God a way of **life** which is shameful, dishonest **and** insufferable. The Lord Jesus **presented** as **blind guides** and **whitewashed** tombs those in His day **living** like this, **and Malachi** accused his contemporaries of robbing God! We can see through them so easily from a **twentieth** century perspective, **but, bearing in mind** v. 24, could we in God's house today be guilty of similarly **bringing** **disgrace**? 2 Pet. 2:2 refers to those who follow **shameful** ways **and** teach **heretical doctrine** as **bringing** the way of **truth** into **disrepute**, **and** our behaviour is as important as our teachings. **In the first** century A.D.

Israel had set up its own system which superseded God's laws, God's justice and God's mercy. We must be on our guard! It is so easy and sometimes more comfortable to rely upon a system we have built up and dangerous when that system becomes paramount. It is equally dangerous as individuals to adopt a way of life out of character with our Master and to fail to see the incongruity of it. The disgrace upon our Lord may be as a result of a profoundly ungodly way of life or it may simply be a failure to live on the high plane and deal with life's ups and downs with the help of the Holy Spirit, causing people to say, 'If that's Christianity, forget it'!

**Circumcision** Circumcision, like baptism, is the outward sign of a spiritual reality [Comment 7]. In one sense it is purely a token having no intrinsic value. In fact, that is Paul's argument in this passage. Abraham was already right with God by faith, and had already been called to be 'special' for God before this rite was introduced (See Genesis 17: 1-4, Deut. 10: 16), just as today a wedding ring does not make a man or woman married, but indicates that they are. It was a sign of their separation and sanctification; between them and God presumably, as it was hardly an outward sign to other people [Comment 6],

However, in another sense as Paul states in 4: 11, it is the seal of the righteousness received from God, and as such is more than purely symbolic, and does have in itself a spiritual significance; to men of faith it is a seal of their faith; to those whom Paul has been referring to here it would be void of meaning.

**Whom Does God Praise?** Throughout Scripture God prefers obedience to sacrifice (cf. 1 Sam. 15: 22, Ps. 40: 6, 7), and there was no praise for the Scribes and Pharisees by the Lord Jesus. God's praise is reserved for those whose inward life is right and whose way of life is blameless (cf. Phil. 2: 14-16). Self-righteousness whatever form it takes is of no value in God's sight.

*David J Webster*

**From Nottingham:** The major difference between the Jews and the Gentiles was that the Jews were entrusted with God's law (Rom. 3: 2). They were God's chosen people, and thus God gave them His law. The reason for God giving His word and law to the Jews was so that they could see what His will was. God gave His law so that man could see exactly what

was **right and what** was wrong.

Romans **2** tells us of **the attitude that the Jews** took. They seemed to **have the idea that because they had been given** God's word, **they were** more important **than anyone else, and that** God's estimation of **them was greater than that** of the Gentiles. **This was a very dangerous attitude to take, because they knew what God's law and requirements were, so they had to obey it.** There was no excuse for ignorance.

The object of God's **law was** to show how **imperfect man** is. God's **law and word, is the way** to perfection **and if man** does not **live up to its standards, he** is imperfect.

God's **name** was blasphemed among **the Gentiles because** of **the Jews (Rom. 2: 24)**. **Because the Jews had not been acting out God's way and putting into practice** God's laws, so too **the Gentiles did** not.

Circumcision, **which is a practice of the Jews, was** done to **keep the covenant with God (Gen. 17)**. So **it was an important thing for the Jews to be** circumcised. It was to show obedience to God, **but they had to do God's will and keep** His laws. So circumcision was **a distinguishing mark of a Jew from a Gentile. But if the circumcised Jew failed to keep** God's laws, it would be as if **they had not been circumcised and were no better than the uncircumcised (Rom. 2: 25-28)**.

There **are two kinds** of circumcision mentioned. **One of them is the physical cutting of the flesh, and the other is** circumcision "of the heart" **which is done by the Spirit (ch. 2: 29)**. The circumcision of **the heart means that you** become **a new person. So this would appear to take place when we get saved. Old Testament people who were circumcised were also expected to be "circumcised in heart". They were expected to put their old ways behind them and become a new person, devoted to God's will. So it is with us, when we are circumcised "of the heart": our old nature has gone and a new way of life comes in. Now we must live up to God's law and do His will.**

So if God **had given this law to the Jews to live by, with such high standards, what advantage was there in being a Jew? It is in the fact that God had chosen the people of**

Israel as His chosen people to show to **them the way that He wanted** people to live. So **the Jews knew what** was God's will. They **knew what was right and wrong in God's sight**. **Despite the fact that the Jews failed to reach these standards, and they even, as a nation, rejected Christ when He came and lived on this earth, this did not change God's faithfulness towards them.**

The Jews **knew what God's laws were and if they broke them they sinned**. **But if any do not know what God's laws are and break them, despite their ignorance, they still have sinned and stand to be judged [Comment 8].**

So **why did God give this law, with such high standards, to the Jews to live by, if no-one can keep them and live up to its requirements? It is so that all may see that God has a righteous standard by which to judge the world. Everyone will be judged by that same law.**

*S, Greenwood*

From **Wishaw: In our twentieth century the name<sup>1</sup> Jew<sup>1</sup> is still full of significance**. Although those who **bear the name** do not dominate the world stage, **their influence on matters of international importance is much more than their numerical strength might suggest**.

The **law of God was given to these people and embodied in that law was the form of knowledge and truth (v.20) to which they ought to have given expression in their lives**. Although **they knew God's will and spoke of it to others, their lifestyle betrayed them**.

**Greater awareness of God's will carries with it an even weightier responsibility to practise it. As the unfaithful servant (Luke 12:47) who "knew his Lord's will" but did not respond to it, was "beaten with many stripes", so too these Jews who knew God's will (v.18) but failed in the keeping of it (v.23) shall receive greater condemnation.**

**It would appear that those who called themselves Jews were under the misapprehension that the physical act of circumcision was sufficient to classify them as Jews. But Paul explains such a stance is unreasonable and unjustifiable; for circumcision is only of value if the law is kept. If the distinct nature of**

circumcision was not capitalized on because of failure to observe the law, its meaning in the life of the individual concerned would be reckoned less than nothing ("thy circumcision is become uncircumcision" v.25). So Paul makes a distinction between a Jew, and the one who is merely known as a Jew because of circumcision; the distinction is a spiritual one and only he who has had such an experience may be properly called a Jew.

Stephen (Acts 7.32) spoke of the "living oracles". Paul in the role of the prosecutor condemns the Jews for their unfaithfulness towards the law embodied in the "living oracles". The words "first of all" in v.2 indicate the importance attached to the oracles of God: for Paul asks "Why was the Jew at an advantage<sup>1</sup>? First of all, Paul says, the Jew was entrusted with the oracles of God. If the advantage of the Jew was apparent, so too was his failure, which rather than undermining the faithfulness of God, enhanced it; for in spite of man's unbelief the faithfulness of God does not change.

*M. MacDonald, J. Shepka*

From Vancouver: Paul was concerned with the condition of the Jewish converts in Rome. They were a people who relied upon the law, were instructed in the law, and had the responsibility of teaching the law, but they brought dishonour to God by persisting in breaking that law. Their hypocrisy destroyed any potential for a vital and effective witness. Bequeathed to them was the embodiment of knowledge and truth; they were proud of this part of their heritage; but, despite the insight that such an understanding of the truth allowed, they failed to become *doers of the law*.

As a people who were already set apart because they possessed this written code, their unique position was further enhanced through the operation of circumcision, a symbol of God's covenant with them (Gen.17:11). Paul, however, realizing that the Jewish people were indulging in a selfish pride as the result of their privileged position, attempted to cut away the source of this hubris. He tried to make them understand that it was not their pedigree that made them special to God, but that it was their character. To be Jewish, according to Paul, meant nothing if it was only external: it must spring from what is internal, and obeying the law was the only way to reflect this. Paul even goes so far as to say that those who are not Jews will condemn those who are.

As Christians who belong to **the church of God we need to be constantly aware of personal (and corporate) condition.** **Having the advantage of certain purity of teaching we become responsible for preserving the integrity of God's truths.** Furthermore, **as these truths are meant to be applied in our day-to-day lives, it is imperative that, instead of being content as hearers and teachers of the word, we become doers of the word, for it is only then that we will be declared righteous in God's sight (Rom. 2: 13).** **And, indeed, what advantage is therein being a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ if we are not constantly attempting to put His precepts into practice?**

*Andrew J Robinson*

## COMMENTS

1. **(Barrhead):** **What we show outwardly is a vital part of the disciple's life.** How else do we bear testimony? See Jas. 2: 18. The apostle's point is that what is outward ought to match what is inward.
2. **(Barrhead):** Circumcision of **the heart is an act performed by God at salvation.** See Nottingham's paper.
3. **(Birkenhead):** **We can hardly say it was a pointless exercise. Friends in Birkenhead seem to be saying what Paul asks as a rhetorical question (Rom. 3: 1).** The point being made by the apostle is brought out in the paper from Hayes; namely that **increased privilege brings increased responsibility, which means greater judgement in the matter** of transgression

*I. E. P.*

4. **(Derby):** Not all **Gentiles by any means could be so regarded.** True circumcision, that "not made with hands", is possible for **Gentile or Jew as a result of faith in Christ.**

*E. A.*

5. **(Ibadan):** This is rather a **sweeping generalization.** It is not possible to **have too much knowledge, for knowledge**

is **truth**, although its display **may indicate a wrong attitude**. **What** is important, **as our contributors say**, is **that what** is known should **be put into practice**.

*P. L. H.*

6. (Liverpool): **It certainly was a sign to Pharaoh's daughter (Ex. 2: 6). Further, a thing does not need to be seen with the eye to be a sign. See for example Bible Studies 8503 p. 46, Comment 1.**

*/ . E. P.*

7. (Liverpool): The counterpart of circumcision, however, is not **an outward sign, but "the putting off of the body of the flesh"** (Col. 2: 11), **which is associated with the doing away of the body of sin** (Rom. 6: 6). This took **place when our old man was "crucified with Him", namely at the time of regeneration by faith in Christ.**

*E. A.*

8. (Nottingham): **This is rather an over-simplification. God expects men to whom His law has not been revealed in written form to acknowledge the law of conscience in their hearts (Rom. 2: 14, 15). However, the Scripture also says "where there is no law, neither is there transgression" (Rom. 4: 15). and "sin is not imputed when there is no law" (Rom. 5: 13) God is just, and does not hold men to be guilty of breaking a law of which they have no knowledge. The moral principles of the Mosaic law are of universal application, but many of its detailed prescriptions are not, and they have now been superseded. God will judge men in accordance with the law given to them. It is possible, of course, for there to be a culpable lack of knowledge.**

*P. L. H.*

## QUESTION AND ANSWER

From **Wishaw**: Romans 2: 19. **Who are the blind in this verse?**

The expression "**the blind**" would perhaps refer to those who were regarded by Jewish teachers such as the Pharisees as being unenlightened with respect to the law, and requiring to be guided. The Midrash to the Psalms commenting on Ps. 146:8 ask the question "Who are the blind?"<sup>1</sup> and supplies a very general answer: "These latter generations that walk in the law like blind men".

*E. A.*

See Ps. 119: 18. **Any who need to be taught are, by comparison with their teachers, like the blind in comparison to the sighted. Is it not the object of every teacher to make his pupil "see"? The teachers in Israel were meant to instruct the people. Alas both were blind (Mat. 15: 14). The nations, too, are blind (2 Cor. 4: 4) and any man in Paul's day bearing the name of a Jew, and instructed in the Law was "light-years" ahead of any Gentile as regards instruction in the knowledge of God. The portion under consideration, however, shows that that very advancement worked to his greater condemnation according to the principle stated in Jas. 3: 1. How thankful we are that a perfect Teacher has come "a light for revelation to the Gentiles" (Luke 2: 32).**

*/. E. P.*

*Issued by the Churches of God, and obtainable from Hayes Press, 8 Essex Road, Leicester, England, LE4 7EE. Also from the Church of God Literature Department, PO Box 125, Brantford, Ontario, Canada. Printed by the University of Nottingham.*

# Bible Studies

A magazine for the exploration of the Word of God [Acts 17: 11]

EDITORIAL

8605

**"What things soever the law saith, it speaketh to them that are under the law"** (Rom. 3: 19). Those to whom the scriptures cited in 3: 10-18 were familiar, might not ever have heard them being applied to themselves. It was perfectly possible to overlook and miss the impact of these verses by assuming that they described others, depicting people of a different race or generation, or perhaps reflecting only the occasional lapse: so extreme is the language, so complete the condemnation. Yet these are scriptures which must surely have exercised the young man, Saul of Tarsus, after his experience on the way to Damascus. 'How', we might ask, 'could every mouth claiming righteousness by the law be stopped, if his was not?'<sup>1</sup> A Pharisee, he was aware that his forefathers were entrusted with the oracles of God. But God who had written upon the tables of stone, began to touch Saul's own life and to write unmistakably on his heart. It is this dimension that gives the lie to any thought that Paul was writing merely to please influential Romans. His whole career and all preconceptions had been brought to a complete standstill by the bright dawning of faith in Jesus Christ, the righteous One. He realised that he was incurring the wrath of God by his actions and depended wholly on the righteousness of God for a propitiation. Faith took root in his heart. Then in His wisdom the divine Potter transformed the broken pitcher into a chosen vessel. The inescapable conclusion that God equally could bring the Gentile all the way through faith, imparted urgency to Paul's endeavour to reach out to the nations with the glorious message. When we appreciate that God views all as under sin, apart from Christ, even those under the law, we cannot but marvel at the sovereign grace of God especially towards the Gentiles. Also the scope of the revelation communicated to us in our day implies increased responsibility to hear His voice.

*E. A.*

## ALL UNDER SIN (Rom. 3: 9-31)

From Aberdeen: The charge or the previous accusations against both Jews and Gentiles is the charge of God against all men. These charges are recorded in the Old Testament scriptures from which Paul quotes: "There is none righteous, no, not one... There is none that doeth good, no, not so much as one... (Rom. 3: 10-18, which quote from Psalms, Proverbs and Isaiah). One of the charges against us is, "There in none that understandeth (v. 11)." Dr. Strong gives the meaning of "understand" as 'to put together (mentally), and this implies; to act piously, to be wise, to consider<sup>1</sup>. The actions and thoughts that we proceed with often show a failure to consider God, to be wise, to associate ourselves with the all-seeing eye of God. Apart from the moving of the Spirit of God within, we are shut up to the words of Isaiah. "And there is none that... stirreth up himself to take hold of Thee..." (Is. 64: 7). God looks for us to be stirred up to prayer.

Another charge is, "They have all turned aside" (Rom. 3: 12). Because we do not follow in God's way, He gets no satisfaction from our wrong pathway. God has a certain way, a standard, which He Himself adheres to but we all fall short of this standard. His standard is contained in the law but, "By the works of the law shall no flesh be justified in His sight" (Rom. 3: 20). God does not expect us to come up to His standard by "works of law". He wants us to see and admit our sinfulness as we measure ourselves against the standard of His perfect law. God provides us with His righteousness, because that is what the sinner needs, to be brought up to God's standard for men. This righteousness is only given to those who believe in Jesus Christ who alone is the righteous One.

The conclusion of the argument is that no man can glory in his own deeds, for such deeds will never reach God's standard. Men, prone to glorying in their own deeds, having no cause for boasting. "It is excluded" (v. 27).

Righteousness comes from God and we receive it by faith alone.

*James Johnson*

**From Ajara:** It is certain that we are all sinners (Rom. 3: 9). Human beings are full of wickedness, deceit, curses, lack of fear for God, bloodshed, hatred and selfishness. All these separate us from God; thus Christ came as the Mediator in order to bring us back to Him. However, bringing us back to Him is impossible except we give ourselves wholeheartedly to Him and accept Him as our personal Saviour. How do we accept Him? We accept Him by

(a) knowing ourselves as sinners (Rom. 3:23); (b) knowing that we cannot save ourselves (Acts 4:12); (c) believing in the Lord Jesus (Jn. 3:16); and (d) confessing our sins (Rom 10:9-10) [Comment 1].

Since Rom.3:28 says that a man can also be "justified" by faith without the deeds of the law, we are of the view that having faith in Christ cannot be over estimated when preaching about belief in Christ. It is by faith we are able to stand before Him in prayer to make our requests, because we believe that He hears us and is able to answer our requests. As soon as we know that He hears us, we must not do anything in haste but wait patiently for His appointed time to come.

Finally, according to Rom. 3:31, law is not made void by faith in Christ. We still uphold law because it is our guidance.

*Paul Balogun, Philip Poji*

From Birkenhead: In verses 9 to 20 Paul sums up the epistle so far. Resuming his familiar style of argument, posing questions and then giving answers, he asks: "What advantage then hath the Jew?" He may enjoy certain privileges and advantages as one of God's elect nation, but he is in fact in no better case than the Gentile. Both Jew and Gentile alike have sinned and are bound to plead guilty before God; both stand equally in need of His grace.

Indeed, there is no individual who can claim that he has not fallen foul of God's perfect standard. To establish this point, Paul alludes to six Old Testament quotations in which the general sinfulness of men is summed up. In their historical context, many of the quotations have a particular rather than universal application, but they serve the purpose of emphasizing the fact that all men are condemned, because there is none righteous<sup>1</sup>.

Many do not appreciate their need for salvation from God. In fact many do not acknowledge the existence of an all-knowing, all-powerful God to whom they are accountable. However, God has revealed Himself to man through His law, the Old Testament scriptures, and also through the witness of creation (Rom. 1:18-20). All men will be judged according to the revelation which they have received (Rom. 2:12). Thus no one can protest against unfairness.

All men have broken God's law, and so it is impossible to earn righteousness by observing the law. Rather, the law is meant to bring man to a realisation of his sin, and his need of a Saviour. In v.21 Paul begins to speak of the new way to acceptance which has been opened up, apart from that of observing the law, to

which the law and the prophets bore witness (Jn. 5: 46, Acts 10: 43).

This new way is through the work of Christ alone, and cannot be earned or achieved by our own efforts. We have received pardon and forgiveness by the grace of God, who has provided the sacrifice for atonement. Lev. 17: 11 tells us that it is "the blood that maketh atonement by reason of the life". Christ has averted God's wrath "by His blood". This does not mean that the blood itself atones for sin, but rather it is the life which has been given in sacrifice.

Since God has done everything to provide the means by which we can be justified, there is no reason for boasting. A new law of faith has been established, faith in God's Son as the sufficient payment for our sin. But what of the old law? The law serves the purpose of exposing our sin and our need for a Saviour. It directs us to Christ, who has answered the need of both Jews and Gentiles.

*J. D. Williams, A. Hyland*

**From Derby:** As we looked into the portion it was noted that vv. 10-18 describe our former state, prior to conversion. This brought to remembrance Rom. 5: 19, "as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners".

We then followed on by looking at three questions which are as follows:

- (1) How does knowledge of sin come through the law? (v. 20)
- (2) "Propitiation" (v. 25). What does it mean?
- (3) What is "the law" as spoken of in v. 31?

We then went on to look at the above questions in greater detail, from which the following conclusions were drawn.

- (1) The law lays down a standard, which is God's standard. In setting this standard, sin is disclosed. If the standard is deliberately ignored the law is transgressed.
- (2) "Propitiation" means 'to win or regain the good will of' [Comment 2], Judgement must fall upon the sinner. Something had to be provided in order that we might be brought back to God. This was the purpose of the propitiatory sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ. We have now been redeemed and reconciled to Him. We had brought before us by way of illustration, how that a charge sheet is read in court. Having had our 'charge-sheet' read out to us, we

stood condemned. The Lord Jesus stepped in, and bore the punishment instead of us.

- (3) The law spoken of in v.31 is to be understood as the "law of faith" [Comment 31.

*L. E. Foster, G. W. Conway*

From Galston and Kilmarnock: The quotations from the Old Testament clearly show (vv. 10-18) that the Jews were as unable as the Gentiles to justify themselves in the sight of God. They were "all under sin", and those who progress in sin finally lose the fear of God.

The Jews had the law of God, which brought to them the knowledge of sin. Instead of acknowledging this, the Jews in general misused the law as a means of trying to justify themselves by an outward conformity to the law. The righteousness of the law was too high for men to attain to, but the righteousness of God, provided by God for men, was witnessed to by the law and the prophets, for example, in the sacrifices and ceremonies of the Levitical priesthood. Every sinner without distinction who believes has received this righteousness of God yet God's own righteousness is in no way compromised.

All have sinned. We sin because we are sinners, we do not become sinners because we sin. We are justified freely (i. e. without a cause). It is the same word as in John 15: 25, "They hated Me without a cause" [Comment 4]. "By His grace" means by God's favour, which we did not merit. "Propitiation" implies the wrath of God.

*Drew Ramage, David Cranson*

**From Ibadan:** The universality of guilt is one of the central, cardinal doctrines in the Bible and has its root in the total depravity of men. Looking at this depravity, one might ask how human beings become in such a state.

Jews and Gentiles are alike condemned, thus elucidating the impartiality of God in bringing all men under the same umbrella, void of discrimination. From the time when Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3:2-6) man has descended to wallow in the mire of sin, thus falling short of the glory of God (Ran. 3: 23). This extends to all generations of men, whether we have sinned after the similitude of Adam's sin or not, because we share the earthly nature of Adam which is of corruption (1 Cor. 15:47-49; Rom. 5: 19).

**Viewing man thus, we could easily understand Paul's assertions on the broader characteristics of the unregenerate as manifested in this epistle (vv. 9-18).**

The attendant consequences of this depravity are the separation between man and his Creator God, the unending war between the spirit and the flesh (Gal. 5:17), and the inevitable death resulting from this (Gen. 2:17; Ezek. 18:4; Rom. 6:23).

Thanks to God man is not hopelessly left uncared for in this wretched position; but God has paved a way of escape through His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the whole world (Rom. 6:23; 3:24-25). God, having therefore saved us from our enemies, we are expected to bring forth the fruit of righteousness, which befits our calling, so as to make our calling sure (Lk. 1:74-75; Gal. 5:22-23).

*M. O. Ajagbe, J. O. Oyekunle*

From Liverpool: *From God's Point of View-* Verses 9-18 include a generalisation about evil in the world. From our perspective there are, of course, grades of wrongdoing and shades of sin. Not everyone sinks as low as the worst or is fully involved in wrongdoing at all levels. Yet here is mankind in the dock, with God as the Judge and the verdict is 'all guilty'. As God looks at the collective state of humanity He sees a common basic flaw: sin (cf. Jer. 17:9). This reveals itself in man's thoughts, direction, speech and pursuits which are, left to themselves, worthless, anti-God, deceitful and ruinous. The potential for sin is so great in each of us that God sees our lives in the light of the actions and words of the worst of criminals or the most dismissive of atheists. As believers we should thank God for the convicting power of the Holy Spirit and for keeping us from the worst excesses of our nature's capabilities.

*The Law is No Help* After emphasizing the worst that man does Paul, in verse 19, returns to the best, and for a fleeting second seems to hold out hope in observance of the law, only to snatch away again such comfort. Far from making a bad situation good, the law actually makes it worse by making the hitherto untroubled sinner conscious of his or her sin.

*Righteousness Through Faith* Righteousness ("The character or quality of being right or just" - Vine) is stated to be by faith and is illustrated by three terms:

(1) Justification: God declares us 'Not Guilty' and views us as if

**we were innocent.** Without **this** legal declaration **we** could not **be forgiven** or **find a place in heaven.**

- (2) Redemption:** This is **deliverance** or liberation **through buying back.** This declaration **from slavery** indicates our relationship **with God.** **We** were His **by right** of creation and now are His **again** by purchase.
- (3) Atoning Sacrifice (NIV)/Propitiation (RV)/Expiation (RSV):** This is to **placate, appease or make amends with a gift** [Comment 5]. The **death of Christ as the sacrifice** is **sufficient to satisfy fully** God's righteous requirements in respect of sin (1 John 2: 1-2).

*D. J. Webster*

From Paisley: **Jews and Gentiles are all alike under sin and we have all turned away from God.** Our attitude should be that of Phil. 2: 3 namely to consider **others better than ourselves.** We note the parable of the Lord (Luke 18: 10-14) where it was the publican who **humbled himself before God and went home justified.** We are to show **this humility** in our lives, as we look to the world and its **sin and thank and praise God for dragging us away from the pleasures<sup>1</sup> and deceit of the world.** Had we been the authors of our salvation then possibly we may have had something to boast about but as we consider, in particular verses 10-18, it may be seen that this could never be so. **Have we really committed our whole lives to God, not content with partial submission?**

**Israel, though entrusted with the oracles of God, did not recognize the Saviour of the world, although there was such explicit prophecy about Him.** Thankfully our righteousness, given by God, comes not by keeping the law, which we, like Israel, could never hope to achieve. Nor does it come by means of corruptible things such as silver or gold, but by the blood of the Lamb. Again we are reminded that we are all sinners and fall short of God's glory but we are all freely justified by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. Christ Himself was offered as a sacrifice for our sins. How much dearer this seems to us when we consider that it was while we were still sinners and at enmity with God that Christ died for us.

**Our God is the God not only of the Jew but of the Gentile; His love and promise extend to all.** We must watch today not to fall into the same trap as Israel. Our salvation is based wholly on faith and not on the observance of a certain lifestyle or set of practices. Indeed faith was at the basis of the law and now of

salvation. The law showed **Israel the way that they should have lived**, just as the Lord's commands to us show how **we should live, namely in faith**. Naturally **if we have faith, the desire to do the works should flow out from us as laid out by James in his epistle**. **If we do not have the desire, then we must examine our lives critically.**

*W. F. McKaig*

**From Rhyl:** This passage contains the concluding argument. In the previous chapters Paul has built up the case against man saying that all men are under sin (v.9). He uses scriptures (see Ps. 14: 1-3; Ps. 10: 7; Is. 59: 7; Prov. 1: 16; and Ps. 36: 1) to illustrate this final point. "There is none righteous, no, not one" (v.10). **Indeed every part of a man's being is shown to be unrighteous. Throats, tongues, lips, mouths, feet and eyes are all mentioned (vv. 13-18).**

Paul has laid this awful charge that all men are under sin (v.9) and no defence could possibly be raised against this. All are sinners by nature (v.23) if not by practice. **Babes who cannot yet differentiate between right and wrong, nevertheless, are still under sin.** There are no exceptions to this charge.

The law of verse 19 refers to the whole of Old Testament Scripture. Those under the law were the Jews, and although the law spoke primarily to them, Paul is still able to say, "that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may be brought under the judgement of God" (v.19). None is able to speak in defence.

Out of this picture of gloom and despair come words of great hope; v.21 begins "But now...". Verses 21-26 go on to tell of God's great intervention in this state of hopelessness. The charge has been laid, the defendant has to plead guilty, but now in place of sentence the Judge offers forgiveness and so much more! **Man has the opportunity of complete acquittal, justification (v.24), and the righteousness of God (Rom.4:5).** Ephesians 1 uses many superlatives to describe the wonder of this new position.

God revealed His righteousness in the law, but now apart from that, He has revealed it through faith in Jesus Christ (vv.21-22). He has demonstrated His righteousness by displaying publicly the Lord Jesus Christ as a propitiation for sins (vv. 24-25). **Under the law, God in His forbearance passed over those sins which were committed. That is, He withheld judgement until the appearing of Jesus Christ. At the cross He demonstrated His righteousness in this "passing over". Furthermore, He has demonstrated His righteousness for the present time, in order to be the Justifier of**

those who **have faith in Jesus (v.26)**. It can clearly be seen how **central the work of the Lord on the cross is to God's eternal purposes!**

**Jesus Christ was made a propitiation for those who have faith in Him (v.25)**. God has vindicated His holy and righteous character. **Jesus Christ was not an appeasement or placation for man's sin; He was the complete vindication of the righteousness of God. God has shown Himself to be just and has reconciled all things to Himself (Col. 1:20). He has never needed to be reconciled to man; man has needed to be reconciled to God. This is accomplished by faith in the great work of the Lord Jesus Christ; and even this faith arises from God (Eph. 2:8) [Comment 6],**

*S. Allport, S. Peers*

**From Southport:** Paul continues his argument that since the Fall, all men are equal; sinners of the vilest nature. There are no exceptions to this. The Jews, who should have been lights in the world, were lovers of darkness. Paul quotes the Old Testament scriptures freely, "the Law" in its broader sense. In this he followed the example of his Lord. John 10:34 and John 15:25 speak of the Psalms as "The Law". In some places Paul follows the exact wording of the Septuagint, in others he condenses it in a more or less free rendering. The sense is that it is not what goes in that corrupts but what the mouth speaks (see Mat. 15:11, 18).

It is always helpful to note to whom a passage of Scripture is addressed in order to understand its teaching. Paul here teaches us not to be too restrictive in our application. The law was to them under law (The Jews) that the whole world (including us Gentiles) might be brought under judgement.

The law could never take away sin (Heb. 10:1, 11); and so quite separately from the law the righteousness of God was manifested. "The law was given by Moses; grace and truth came by Jesus Christ" (John 1:17).

All have sinned (past) and fall short of the glory of God (present). The very act of coming short of the glory of God is sin, for we were made in the image of God. We continually come short of that glory.

Is place of propitiation or propitiatory sacrifice indicated in v. 25? Many scholars favour the former; for example, Calvin, Darby, Gifford, Grotius, Luther, Olshausen and Vaughan. There are difficulties in Christ being portrayed as a place (mercy-seat), and

the blood is usually associated with the sacrifice, not the mercy-seat. The idea of propitiatory sacrifice fits better with the passage [Comment 7].

*S. Henderson*

From Vancouver: This particular portion deals with the unrighteousness of all men. Verse 23 reads "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God". Eccles. 7:20 says, "There is not a righteous man upon the earth, that doeth right and sinneth not".

Sin is universal. So how can anyone get right with God? The Jewish people were proud that they had the law, and thus were better than the Gentiles. Paul investigates the purpose of the law; for it only makes man aware of sin, but can do nothing to remove it. Keeping the law, which is impossible, and doing good works cannot achieve a good standing with God [Comment 8]. There must be no boasting in the law. Righteousness is by faith alone. Gal. 3:21, 22 points out that faith is the key to our obtaining eternal life. It is by grace through faith that we are saved.

Paul poses three questions to the Jews.

- (1) Where is boasting then?  
If the way to God is by faith alone, then there is no point in boasting about the special privilege of having been given the law.
- (2) Is God the God of the Jews only?  
This was a humiliating thought equating the Jews with the Gentiles.
- (3) Is the Law made void through faith?  
Paul would have been expected to answer in the affirmative to this question. Instead by answering in the negative he confirms the importance of the law.

Although the Jew had fallen far short of the law's requirements, provisions were made for him to be accepted by God. So today the believer is accepted by God because of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, who fulfilled the law and was the atoning Sacrifice.

*Philip Sproul*

**From Wishaw:** Paul was a master at framing the rhetorical question, that is a question asked not for information, but to produce effect. The effect that it produced in this instance was recognition of the overwhelming proof of the guilt of mankind (v.9).

To set out the formal accusation of a prosecution a Bill of

**Indictment is drawn up by those prosecuting. Similarly Paul refers to a list of charges contained within the broad canvas of Scripture to prove beyond dispute that all are under sin (vv. 10-18). The evidence is so overwhelming no defence can be given to the charges so that 'Every mouth may be stopped' (v. 19).**

The scriptural indictment is as particular as it is broad for it touches on at least three areas where man's guilt is obvious:

- (1) in his mind (v. 11);
- (2) in his talk (vv. 13-14);
- (3) in his actions (vv. 12, 15-18).

Reference was made to the charge levelled at Israel (Is. 1:6) as an example of the extent to which sin had saturated every faculty of the human frame.

Briefly then, vv. 10-19 depict man in the dock. The charge is made to which there can be no reply. This produces the declaration 'Guilty'.

In v. 21 Paul by the inclusion of the word 'but' suddenly, although not unexpectedly, switches from the penetrating spotlight on the plight of mankind to the only remedy available for such a plight, the Person and work of Jesus Christ. It is because of the work of Christ that the believer through faith is now in possession of the righteousness of God. This righteousness which the believer has is equal to and is the same as Christ's righteousness, even as Paul stated to the saints in the assembly in Corinth "Christ Jesus, who was made unto us... righteousness" (1 Cor. 1:30). That is Christ Jesus is "our righteousness" (Jer. 23:6).

This righteousness is freely given to the recipient at inestimable cost, for it could only be given on the basis of God's own justice being upheld and honoured. This demand of God was entirely met when Jesus Christ paid the price to deliver man from the sentence of death. Jesus Christ came between God and man and took the full severity of God's judgement, thereby appeasing God.

With regard to propitiation, comparison was drawn to the role of the ark during the flood, which gave cover and protection to those inside. Likewise the wrath of God was spent on Christ, affording release to those who were formerly under it.

The truths unfolded in this chapter exclude any cause for human glorying, as Jonah said 'Salvation is of the Lord' (Jonah 2:9).

*/s. Gray, J. M. Shepka*

## COMMENTS

1. (**Ajara**): Rom. 10: 9, 10 refers to confessing (i. e. admitting openly) that Jesus is Lord, not to confession of sins to Him. We must, of course, acknowledge that we are sinners against God before we receive His salvation, but confession of sins is part of the process by which the believer maintains his fellowship with the Lord (1 John 1: 5-10).

2. (**Derby**): 'Propitiation'<sup>1</sup> signifies 'the removal of wrath by the offering of a gift'. The wrath of God is properly directed against sin (Rom 1: 18), but He forbore to display it against man under the Old Covenant, accepting the temporary covering provided by sacrifices of animals. These sacrifices foreshadowed the one sacrifice, which was able to put away sin (Heb. 9: 24-26). God's wrath was directed against His Son, who was "made to be sin on our behalf" (2 Cor. 5: 21), and He accepted for us the divine anger. Only He could offer a complete satisfaction for sin in this way.

Verses 24 and 25 present the work of Christ in three ways: as a sacrificial offering (propitiation); as a judicial acquittal (justification); and as a purchase (redemption). Our understanding and appreciation of His work can be enhanced by their separate consideration, followed by an examination of their interrelationships.

3. (**Derby**): Is not this God's law in general? Scripture says "There is forgiveness with Thee, that Thou mayest be feared" (Ps. 130: 4). Christ submitted Himself to the penalties of the law on our behalf and as we are joined to Him, His obedience is our obedience (Rom. 5: 19). The law is thus upheld, and having been justified through the work of Christ, we now acknowledge an obligation to fulfil God's law by walking "after the spirit" (Rom 8: 4).

*P. L. H.*

Since the impact of faith on the law is brought before us in Rom. 3: 31, the law in question cannot be the law of faith. The immediate context shows it to refer, in the first instance, to the Law of Moses. The latter forced its subjects to admit their sinnership and just condemnation, so acting as a school-master to bring them, as we now know, to Christ (Gal. 3: 24). In this context it is thus indispensable to the gospel and so is established rather than abolished by faith. Rom 3: 19-20

shows, moreover, that the Law of Moses spoke in this way in the long run to Gentiles as well as Jews and thus we agree with our co-editor that the law mentioned here has a general as well as a specific character.

I. E. P.

4. (Galston and Kilmarnock): It is quite true that the word *dorean* translated 'freely' in Rom. 3:24, is translated 'without a cause' in John 15:25. However, this latter would not be an appropriate translation in Rom. 3:24. There is a cause - the love and mercy of God expressed in the sacrifice of Christ. The emphasis is on the fact that no price is demanded from us.

P. L. H.

5. (Liverpool): It is safest to regard atonement as the Old Testament word and propitiation as a New Testament counterpart. Such a distinction has the additional merit of reminding us that under the Old Covenant sins were covered (*kapher*) but under the New Covenant they are taken away. Such taking away of course includes those sins "covered" under the Old Covenant (Heb. 10:11-12). These points have been well made in *Bible Studies* 1959, vol. 27, P. 41 in a paper from Liverpool! The definition of propitiation given by friends in the present issue is man's use of the word. It is not God's. This distinction has been made repeatedly in *Bible Studies*, for example 1959, vol. 27, pp. 41-2, 45; *Bible Studies*, 1983, vol. 51, pp. 119-120, 147, 163. See also Comment 2. Although *expiate* occurs in the AVM of Isa. 47:11, where it translates *kapher*, expiation is considered to exclude reference to the Person offended and therefore is not a synonym of propitiation.

I. E. P.

6. (Rhyl): It may well be that faith arises from God, but Eph. 2:8 does not say so. It is salvation, by grace, through faith, which is the gift of God in this verse.

P. L. H.

7. (Southport): The English word 'propitiation' does not of itself imply a place or a mercy-seat, and even with regard

to the Greek word which is here rendered 'propitiation' Leon Morris (N. T. Studies, 1955-6) does not incline to the view that in Rom. 3:25 it contains a specific reference to the mercy-seat. Certainly 'propitiatory sacrifice' appears to be a more sound interpretation here than 'mercy-seat'.

E. A.

The word *Hilasterion* is used in only one other place in the New Testament, where it refers to the mercy-seat (Heb. 9:5). In the Septuagint, it is used to translate Heb. *kapporeth*, referring to the mercy-seat in the tabernacle. This was the place of propitiation under the Old Covenant, where the blood of the sin-offering was sprinkled on the day of atonement (Lev. 16:15).

Nevertheless, comparing Rom. 3:25 with 1 John 2:2 and 4:10, it does seem more likely that the propitiatory sacrifice, rather than the propitiatory place, is in view.

P. L. H.

Rom. 3:25 deals with the individual sinner. There is therefore no thought implied of the mercy-seat. The latter is solely concerned with the sins of the people of God. In the present writer's opinion the muddle about these things that has plagued translators and commentators is an outstanding example of how an understanding of the scriptures may be defective without the knowledge of the truth of the house of God.

/ E. P.

8. (Vancouver): Human failure made the law impossible to keep. Yet we read in Is. 42:21, "It pleased the Lord, for His righteousness sake, to magnify the law, and make it honourable".

E. A.

## **SEEKING AFTER GOD: THE OCCURENCE OF EKZETEO (TO SEEK AFTER)**

**It may seem strange to read the condemnation "there is none that seeketh after God" (Rom. 3:11) when we are all familiar with the fact that one fifth of the world's population is embraced from birth by Christendom, a further one seventh by Islam, and numerous others make some profession of worshipping God. It is not so suprising, however, when we realise that Rom. 3:11 refers to Jews, men brought up under the instruction of the law of God, as well as Gentiles. From this we can deduce that the idea of seeking after God must refer to more than the innate tendency of man to be God-conscious and a worshipping creature.**

The word "seek after" (Rom. 3:11) is *ekzeteo* which is a compound of the usual word, to seek (*zeteo* ) and the prefix *ek* meaning "out" or "out of". Thus it will be seen that some diligence and thoroughness is implied in the seeking. The word is used in only six other scriptures (Lk. 11:50, 51; Acts 15:17; Heb. 11:6, 12:17; 1 Pet. 1:10) each of which reinforces the significance of the word that may be deduced from its composition. For example, it is used of the profane man, Esau (Heb. 12:17) who, having despised life's opportunity, found no place of repentance though his diligent seeking and sorrow was eloquently seen in his tears.

An even more impressive (and salutary) example of the nature of the seeking indicated by *ekzeteo* is found in its first New Testament occurences (Lk. 11:50, 51). It is used of God's acting in the judgement that He would "require" of the Lord's generation. Here is a seeking out that cannot be surpassed in its diligence, thoroughness and unflinching certainty of total discovery of the rights and wrongs of those hypocrites who embellished instead of repenting of the deeds of their forefathers who had slain the prophets of the Lord.

The behaviour of the prophets provides an equally clear demonstration of the significance of *ekzeteo* for this is the word used to describe their response to divine revelation (1 Pet. 1:10). They were men who had first been sought

out by God and, having been shown the grace of God, were shown things that were to come to pass. Their response was to take hold of these promises of God and to redouble their search into the significance of the revealed word. They did this, as the case of Daniel shows (Dan. 9: 2), by studying the Scriptures written by other prophets under the influence of the Holy Spirit within (1 Pet, 1: 10). In this we cannot fail to see the similarity with our own Spirit-prompted searchings of the Scriptures however modest by comparison they may seem.

In this process outlined in 1 Pet. 1: 10-12 we have specific applications of the generalised case described in Heb. 11: 6. The latter shows that there must be an initial exercise of faith by all men in approach to God. Such faith presumes an initial approach by God for "belief cometh of hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ". Such faith is rewarded and leads to further (and deeper) trust and so the process of seeking after God corresponds to what we have studied earlier: "by faith unto faith... the righteous shall live by faith" (Rom. 1: 17).

That such a process, previously largely confined to Israel, should be open to Gentiles today is expressly said to be one of the objects of the gospel (Acts 15: 17) An objective of the gospel is thus to put right the condemnation of Rom. 3: 11 which applies to both Jews and Gentiles by opening up the possibility of seeking after God to all mankind.

Finally we would point out that Rom. 3: 11 is of great value in that, containing quotations from Ps. 14: 2, 53: 2, it suggests that the Hebrew word *darash* may be the Old Testament counterpart of *ekzeteo*. We would encourage fellow-students to take their concordances and seek out the use of *darash* and suggest that they will find that the general principles about seeking after God which are outlined above will be found to exist in the Old Testament.

/ . E. P.

# Bible Studies

A magazine for the exploration of the Word of God [Acts 17: 11]

EDITORIAL

8606

Abraham's experiences illustrate the nature of the faith which leads to justification. Firstly, he believed in the promise of God. Faith in God is not simply an acknowledgement of His existence, for "the demons also believe, and shudder" (Jas. 2: 19 RVM). Neither is it a vaguely mystical perception of His benevolence, but it is a trust in the reliability of specific statements which God has made. In Abraham's case God had promised him an uncountable posterity, which he knew to be naturally impossible, but he trusted the God who promised, "being fully assured that, what He had promised, He was able also to perform" (Rom. 4: 21). Similarly, saving faith today must rest in the promises which God has given concerning His Son, that "whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3: 16).

Secondly, faith is not in itself a deserving act, which merits justification. The purpose of chapter 4 of Romans is to illustrate, by using Old Testament examples, the truth of the conclusion reached in the previous chapter, that righteousness cannot be obtained through obedience to the law. Since all have sinned, even an almost perfect life only fulfils a person's obligations to the law, and can never change his status from guilty to guiltless. Faith itself is not a meritorious act of obedience, but the means by which the promises of God are grasped. This is made clear in the phrase "it was reckoned unto him for righteousness" (v.3). The faith was accounted to be what it was not intrinsically, and God was able to regard Abraham as righteous. Such an act on God's part, of course, required a basis which was not apparent at the time of Abraham, otherwise the paradox of v.5, "Him that justifieth the ungodly", would become an antinomy. This basis was revealed when the Lord Jesus Christ was "set forth to be a propitiation" (Rom. 3: 25). Faith today accepts the objective fact of the work of Christ in propitiation, trusts in God's statements about its value, and receives justification as a consequence.

*P. L. H.*

## THE EXAMPLE OF ABRAHAM (Rom. 4: 1-25)

From **Ajara: Abraham's faith** Abraham was justified because of his **faith in God**. That is to say, **his belief in God** was also counted to **him** as righteousness (Rom. 4: 3-6; Gen. 15: 6). Today, however, **belief in the Lord Jesus Christ gives us eternal life** (Jn. 3: 16; 5: 24).

**No cause to boast** "But to **him** that worketh not, but believeth on **Him** that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is reckoned for righteousness" (Rom. 4: 5). According to the above statement, we are certain that nobody can be justified by works before God, but only by faith in Jesus. So also man cannot be saved by his works but by the grace of God (Eph. 2: 8, 9).

**Blessedness** As David pronounced, "Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered" (Rom. 4: 7, 8; Ps. 32: 1-6). It is also necessary for every Christian to confess his shortcomings to God, through the Lord Jesus, every day for forgiveness. Blessing and mercy also await anybody who confesses his sins to God (Prov. 28: 13).

**Steadfastness** The Scriptures say concerning Abraham that he was strong in faith, though stricken in years. They say how he wearied not in hope, and staggered not at the promise through unbelief. How many of us today are strong like that? It is a challenge to us that such faith be emulated. P. Balogun, P. Poji

**From Birkenhead: Justification by faith alone** (Rom. 3: 28) was a new truth to first century Jews, who had come to view works as the way to salvation and, no doubt, thought that Abraham gained righteousness by obedience to God. Paul, therefore, argues here (and in Galatians 3) from the Old Testament for the truth and antiquity of justification by faith alone.

Abraham may have been able to boast about his works, but not before God. None can achieve God's perfect standard; all have fallen short of it (Rom. 3: 10). Rather, Abraham was justified through his faith that God would greatly multiply his descendants, as He had promised. At that moment God imputed to him righteousness (Gen. 15: 6).

Paul then speaks of wages that are given to the employee as an obligation, in return for hard work and effort. These are contrasted with God's righteousness, which is for those who are totally undeserving. Paul supports this teaching by quoting David (Ps. 32: 1, 2), who spoke of the blessedness of the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works. When individuals seek God's forgiveness, He exercises His grace to cleanse them from all unrighteousness.

A Jew might well think that Abraham's circumcision brought him justification and righteousness before God, and not his faith. This,

however, could not have been the case, since Abraham was circumcised more than thirteen years after he trusted God to fulfil His promise.

If circumcision had nothing to do with his salvation, the question might still be asked 'What about observance of the Law?' Firstly, if the promise came by the law, then none could receive it, because all have sinned. Secondly, since there was no Mosaic law, it could be neither observed nor transgressed. Therefore, the promise did not come through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. Thus righteousness is by faith in order that it may be by grace, apart from works, and that it might be guaranteed to all, both Jews and Gentiles. This is to fulfil the promise made to Abraham that he would be the "father of many nations".

We can learn much from Abraham's faith. Firstly, his response to God's promise was against all hope: experience told him that he could not hope to have a child at his age, but he believed God anyway. Secondly, his faith did not weaken on account of the lapse of time, but grew stronger, because he was convinced that God was absolutely trustworthy. Waiting should strengthen our conviction that God will do what He has promised in His word.

The result of Abraham's faith was that God credited perfect righteousness to his account. This gift, which is secure and irrevocable, is also given to all those who believe that Christ died for their sins and rose from the dead for their justification.

*J. D. Williams*

**From Cowdenbeath:** The question asked in Rom. 4:1, "What then shall we say that Abraham... hath found?" must be a very important one, since Paul uses the whole of the chapter to answer it. In other words it means "What made Abraham a righteous man?". A righteous man means that he is right with God. He has entered into a new relationship with God.

Justification, or 'made righteous by faith alone', apart from any added works, is what Abraham found. Judaizers would have none of this. Their false doctrine was "Except ye be circumcised after the custom of Moses, ye cannot be saved" (Acts 15:1). Paul would have none of that.

Chapter 4 is one long, single paragraph. The word that Abraham was righteous through faith permeates the chapter. For example, in verses 2-8 Paul says that Abraham is righteous through his faith, and not through his works. No doubt Abraham had many good works, but not toward God (v. 2) [Comment 1]. In v. 6 Paul tells us that blessing is pronounced upon the man whom God reckons righteous apart from his works. In this context that man is Abraham, even though Paul borrows these words from Psalm 32. In verses 9-12 Paul says that Abraham is righteous through his faith and not because of his circumcision. He was the first bearer of the sign

which distinguishes **the** people of Israel from **all** other nations as God's chosen people, **but** it was not his circumcision **but** his faith **that** was "counted... to him for righteousness" (Gen. 15: 6). Circumcision justifies no one. **Indeed, there were brethren in the church** in Rome, Gentiles, who **were** righteous before **God** without circumcision, **but** not without faith. **In** vv. 13-17 **Paul says that Abraham** is righteous through his faith, **and not** as one who knows **the law**. **Abraham's descendants** are certainly **the nation to whom** God's **law** was given **and to whom** God's commands **were made** known. From Gal. 3: 17 **we learn that** the promise given to **Abraham regarding the land** was given by **Moses**. **Gal. 3: 24** points forward to **Christ**. **The law** was our **tutor to bring us to Christ** in order **that we might be justified by faith**. V. 16 tells us **that "it is of faith, that it may be according to grace"**. Neither works, **circumcision**, nor **law** played any **part in the matter**. **"Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned unto him for righteousness"** (v. 5).

(Extracted from notes prepared by beloved W. Beveridge, still a regular contributor at over 90 years of age).

*R. I. Stow*

**From Derby:** The **example of Abraham and the nature of his faith** is a **further** development of **the theme set before us in Rom. 3: 19-31**, namely **justification** by faith. **Paul clearly sets out the principle already operative in the Old Testament that Abraham's faith is a 'type' of Christian faith**. It involved his personal confidence and trust in God, **extended to a sure hope of the fulfilment of the promise which God had revealed to him**. **The law and the prophets bear witness to it (Rom. 3: 21)**. **The ground of the argument is in Gen. 15: 6. It was Abraham's trust in God, not any good works that he might boast of, which God counted as righteous. In our consideration of this, the chapter can broadly be divided into five sections:**

Vv. 1-5 **The righteousness of Abraham came from his faith. In vv. 4, 5 we have a contrast: wages and gift. A wage is something earned; it is given as one's due. A gift does not depend on works; it is something which is bestowed and freely given. Our approach to God can never be on the ground of working for a reward and receiving payment for what is our due. It is of faith that we accept by His grace the gift that He freely offers. Grace is seen in every part of God's saving activity; in justification and in the gift of His Son.**

Vv. 6-8 **David is another example set before us. His righteousness did not come from his works. He was reckoned righteous, which implies that he had no righteousness of his own. The truly blessed man (Ps. 32) is not the sinless one but the one whose sins God does not count, the man whose sins are forgiven.**

Vv. 9-12 **The righteousness of Abraham did not come from his circumcision, the account of which is recorded in Gen. 17: 1-14. Circumcision was given as a seal of his covenant relationship with**

God (Gen. 17: 11, Acts 7: 8). As we have seen, he was counted righteous many years before this (Gen. 15: 6). Circumcision was an outward sign, a symbol of cutting away uncleanness and sin. Clearly we see the application of the great truth that Abraham's righteousness was dependant on his faith and not on his circumcision or any other observance in respect of the law. The true children of Abraham are those who exercise faith (Gal. 3: 7).

Vv. 13-17 Abraham's righteousness did not come from his keeping of the law. Law can only bring a sense of sin, and transgression follows. God's wrath comes as a consequence of this.

Vv. 18-25 The nature of Abraham's faith is further developed in the remainder of the chapter, and the faith of all believers can be identified in this. On Abraham's part there was no weakening of his faith. He faced the fact of his and Sarah's impotence, but he never doubted God's promise (vv. 19, 21). These facts of Abraham's faith are further affirmed. He waxed strong in faith (v. 20) and he acknowledged the wonderful power of God, being certain that He would fulfil His promise (v. 21). Abraham believed God and thereby in his life experienced something of the great character and purpose of God. We see the evidence of the positive outworking of his faith in that he bore witness, giving glory to God (v. 20). The birth of Isaac to Abraham and Sarah saw their hope fulfilled. Abraham truly believed that God would bring 'life out of death'. The great truth of justification by faith, and the Christian's hope, are founded on Him who was delivered up to be crucified and was gloriously raised again from the dead.

*A. G. Willis, 6. Vv. Conway*

**From Dulwich:** Chapter 4 uses Abraham as an illustration of imputed righteousness, founded on the fact that he believed that God could quicken him (Rom. 4: 19-22). The divine blessing Abraham found was through the law of faith (Rom. 3: 27), extended to the Gentiles (Rom. 3: 29; 4: 9) by grace, freely accredited to Abraham by the God who was his shield and exceeding great reward (Gen. 15: 1).

The blessings of the justification of the ungodly by faith (Rom. 4: 5) and the forgiveness of sin and atonement (Rom. 4: 6) are to the circumcision by, and to the uncircumcision through faith (Rom. 3: 30). It is the principle of faith in both cases [Comment 2].

The sign of circumcision was the outward evidence of Abraham's faith, clearly established aforesaid, and his justification by works in the offering up of Isaac was before men, but not before God (Rom. 4: 2, 11) [Comment 3].

Abraham is both the father of circumcision and uncircumcision through the righteousness of faith (v. 13). He is the heir to the world (Gk. *cosmos* - the world of living beings), his seed through the righteousness of faith. Inheritance by the law would have failed

and incurred judgement, also it would have made faith ineffective, but grace through faith made it possible both to those under the law and those without it.

The One who framed the world ("ages" RVM) by His word, from nothing (Heb. 11:3; Rom. 4:17) is able, by grace, to quicken the dead (Eph. 2:5), of which Abraham and Sarah were types, and raise up those who He has justified.

The call of all believers was in the promise given to Abraham that in his "seed (Christ: Gal. 3:8) shall all the nations... be blessed" (Gen. 12:3; Gal. 3:8). So the fatherhood had its origin in Abraham's belief in the promise. He, having considered from a natural point of view the total impossibility of the promise to be a "father of many nations", believed and was made strong (middle voice) in his belief (vv. 17, 20).

Because of the revelation to him of the God of glory (Acts 7:2), Abraham gave glory to God (v.20), and like the people and the publicans he justified God (Luke 7:29). Note also the force of "he that believeth not God hath made Him a liar"(1 John 5:10).

The imputation of righteousness was by blood (Rom. 5:9). The judgement on sin was death, but sin had no claim on the substitute, to which fact resurrection was a witness (v.25).

#### *W. Town se nd*

From **Ibadan**: Salvation by grace through faith, and not of works, is the essence of the Abrahamic covenant. Abraham, being an uncircumcised Gentile prior to his call could not have been justified through the law, since it did not then exist. His justification by faith was perfected by corresponding action on his part through faith, culminating in his obedience to the divine call (Gen. 12:1-4). All other sinners, Jews and Gentiles alike, can be saved through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (Eph. 2:8,9).

Christians, as spiritual descendants of Abraham, are brought into relationship with God in the same way that Abraham was divinely called (Rom. 5:8; 1 Pet. 3:18; Col. 1:21). Before the physical circumcision of the flesh, Abraham experienced some of the benefits he was to enjoy under circumcision, in that he had regular communion with God, thus making manifest the pre-eminence of faith. In the same way a person who manifests faith in the finished work of redemption starts to enjoy some of the benefits and privileges which it brings without first going through any rites such as baptism (Eph. 2:8,9; Luke 23:42,43).

Was Abraham's faith not practically demonstrated? It was; for when he and his wife Sarah were in a despondent situation, he exercised his faith by reposing his confidence in all that God had promised to do for him. He was hoping against hope, and was fully persuaded that God was able to perform wonders (Rom. 4:18-21).

Faith is the key word in the gospel (1 Cor. 13:13). Faith and hope are interrelated, and those who have had faith in God should be Abrahamic in hope (Heb. 11:6; Rom. 5:5).

*M. Ajagbe, J. Oyekunle*

From Liverpool: *Appeal to Abraham* Having argued for the principle of justification by faith Paul takes his appeal to the very person to whom those arguing for justification by observance of the law, or by 'works', would have appealed, Abraham, the father of the Jewish race. In so doing, his argument takes the ground from beneath their feet.

Everything that Abraham did in obedience to God, from his leaving his original home to the intended sacrifice of Isaac was a result of his profound trust in God. This faith was 'credited'<sup>1</sup> (a commercial term) to his account with God, making it balance (i.e. righteousness). This happened long before he underwent the rite of circumcision, and had nothing to do with this, or his willingness to sacrifice his son in obedience to God's command. The argument James puts forward (Jas. 2:14-26), shows that such faith must express itself in actions, otherwise there is no faith there at all [Comment 4 See also Questions and Answers],

*Taking God at His Word.* Faith is a response to having heard God speaking (*cf.* John 17:8). It is not the nebulous concept of hoping for the best or, worse still, a leap in the dark. Abraham had a specific promise from God, and everything he did showed that he was convinced that it would materialize.

*Against all Hope.* Why did Abraham believe a promise which from a human viewpoint was impossible? Abraham knew his God. He was able to face both the fact that he and Sarah were beyond the age for conceiving and the fact that God had made a specific promise, by his conviction of God's power.

*Nothing material.* Abraham had nothing to see on which he could hang his faith or to which he could cling. Similarly we can have righteousness 'credited' to our account by faith in the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. There is nothing for us to see either; but that is the essence of faith.

*D. J. Webster*

**From Nottingham:** To the Jews in Paul's day the words in Romans chapter 4 would have seemed in marked contrast to the teachings they had been brought up with. In Rom. 4:1-3 the point is made that if anyone could say that he had received his justification by works it would be Abraham, but Paul shows by the use of Old Testament scriptures (Gen. 15:6) that it was through his faith that Abraham was declared righteous. Further, in Rom. 4:4,5 we see that righteousness, unlike the usual method of payment for work done, is a gift. Vv.6-8 illustrate this by the example of David.

Paul explains in vv. 9-12 that as well as being father of the Jews **Abraham is the father of all who receive righteousness by faith.** Reference to Genesis shows that **faith came before circumcision and the circumcision was a 'seal' on this righteousness.** Vv. 13-17 underline this. **Abraham's offspring are those who follow in his footsteps, that is those who possess faith, and not merely his physical descendants.**

**Abraham's act of faith** was belief in God's promise of a son, despite Sarah's barrenness. His **faith was such that it grew and did not falter.** Our act of **faith** is described in v. 24 as belief in **Him** who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead.

*D. Thompson*

From Paisley: In continuing the theme of justification by **faith**, Paul draws from the analogy of the Old Testament scriptures to show that this is not a new truth, but one that was exemplified in the life of **Abraham.** The Jews are very much influenced by **Abraham**, calling him **their father** (John 8: 39) or forefather (Rom. 4:1).

Justification before God by works, which reflected the prevalent mood of Paul's Jewish contemporaries, has no authority in the Scriptures. It reflects man's efforts to be his own saviour and to add to his own glory. Such an attitude was seen in the **Pharisee who went up into the Temple to pray, when he paraded his own virtues (Luke 18: 11).** This finds no acceptance with the Lord, either in that day or today.

Abraham's outstanding **virtue** was that he took God at His word, though outward appearances seemed to contradict the reality of the situation, and as a consequence **Abraham** was accounted righteous in the sight of God. This is the great principle of **faith**, applicable to both Jews and Gentiles. The quotation from Ps. 32: 1, 2 shows that **David**, held highly in esteem by the Jews, also embraced this same principle of **faith**, which brings blessing to those who accept God's word and experience the forgiveness of sins. At the time of exercising **faith** in God, **Abraham** was uncircumcised, and Paul uses this illustration to show that **uncircumcised** Gentiles also come within the pale of God's blessings. **Circumcision**, which came later to **Abraham and his seed**, was a token of God's approval of **Abraham's faith and the basis of the covenant which God made with him and his seed.**

It is helpful to see how that **faith** exercised by **Abraham** in the face of adversity and physical weakness, on his own part and that of **Sarah**, was not disappointed but found fulfilment and redounded to the glory of God. God is able, and the Lord Jesus reaffirmed this truth (Mat. 19: 26); "with God all things are possible". It is good for us when we put God to the test. The concluding verses of the chapter show that we also are reckoned righteous before God

when we exercise faith in Jesus and His resurrection. His death was necessary to bear our sins and His resurrection is a vindication of God's forgiveness.

*J. Renfrew*

From Surulere: Abraham, by his example, enabled us to answer the question of Job 4:17 (RVM), "Shall mortal man be just before God?". Abraham's faith in God, by accepting God's promise, was reckoned to him for righteousness (Gen. 15:4-6).

*The character of Abraham's faith*

- (a) It is not based on works (v.5).
- (b) In hope he believed against hope (v.18).
- (c) He put no confidence in the flesh (v.19).
- (d) He wavered not (v.20; compare with Jas. 1:6).
- (e) He gave praise to God (v.20).

*The consequences of Abraham's faith*

- (a) Mercy shown, and grace bestowed.
- (b) He was justified (the Lord will not reckon sin; v.8).
- (c) God's righteousness imputed.
- (d) Blessings given (v.6).

*Points of Interest*

- (a) Abraham received justification while in uncircumcision (vv. 9, 10).
- (b) The foreknowledge of God in the example of Abraham. The Gentiles are also sons of Abraham through their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (compare vv. 12, 18 with Gal. 3:8,9).
- (c) The promise of heirship came through faith, not through the Law (compare vv. 13, 14 with Gal. 3:18).

*G. Okwena, M. Imoukhuede*

**From Vancouver:** In the fourth chapter of Romans, Paul uses people who are loved and respected by the Jews as examples in his argument for justification through faith. He denies that the very statutes that the Jews believe make them superior have any power to make righteous; no longer will they be able to take refuge in the Law and circumcision. Instead, the Law becomes an indicator of how much distance separates man and God. The only way this relationship might be restored is through faith, unconditional and unwavering [Comment 5].

Abraham is chosen as an example because he is well known, he is the father of Israel with a reputation for being righteous, and therefore is close to God. It is stressed that Abraham was not considered righteous through circumcision and adherence to the Law, because neither were in existence at the time. But Abraham believe in God, and that was sufficient.

This fact is reinforced by the example of David's psalm, which states that a man is blessed if he is not punished for his sins against God. However undeserving we are, God gives righteousness

without requiring works. The truth is that we could never do enough to repay the great sacrifice that was made for us.

Paul continues to attack the barrier which the Jews had set up to protect or segregate themselves from the Gentiles by pointing out that Abraham was considered righteous by God while he was still a Gentile, making him the father of the Gentiles. He later becomes the father of the Jews through circumcision. It is important to note, however, that Abraham is not the father of all who are uncircumcised, only of those that "walk in the footsteps of... faith" (Rom. 4:12).

To attempt to get back into a proper relationship with God simply by following the Law is impossible. In fact, it only serves to push us further away. It points out our sin, but does nothing to get rid of it. If we break the Law we trespass against God, and therefore we should die; instead, God has provided a way out, a justification through faith in Christ's death and resurrection. This justification is far better than observing the Law, because it allows us to focus on God and not on ourselves. In being justified through faith we are not left to rely on our own abilities, but we can look to God for strength. In a sense, our faith establishes the Law, and our relationship with God can never be jeopardized because of our inherent sinful nature.

*B. W. Robinson*

From **Wishaw**: There was considerable discussion as to what it was that Abraham had found. It was felt that he received acceptance by God: this acceptance followed his willingness to receive the word of God and to believe it in the face of seemingly insurmountable difficulties [Comment 6].

V.3 contains a citation from the Old Testament which is of the greatest possible importance - "Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned unto him for righteousness". Here was the spark that kindled the flame of the Reformation. Here lies the failure of many of the modern cults and faiths that seek justification by works, and the apostle here argues the case against those Jews who would contend that circumcision was necessary for justification.

It is a profound statement that a man's faith in God can be reckoned for righteousness. It is not what a man does that brings righteousness, but rather his faith in the God who can justify the ungodly person and still remain righteous. In the quotation from Ps. 32, David brings out the point that sin was not being reckoned to him, even in the case of wilful sin. In such cases the law of Moses had no sacrifice to cover it. What a blessing indeed to know complete freedom from sin's guilt! The hymn-writer says

My sin, not in part, but the whole,  
Was nailed to the cross, and I bear it no more,  
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul.

Paul then brings out the important point that these blessings came to Abraham in his uncircumcised days. So this glorious truth of justification by faith reaches far beyond the minority of mankind who come under the sign of circumcision. Indeed, it is made abundantly clear that circumcision by itself is no guarantee of this justification, but rather that there is a need for an Abraham-like faith by both circumcised and uncircumcised alike to gain this marvellous blessing.

Following this is the matter of Abraham's being " a father of many nations". This was understood to mean that men and women from every nation under heaven would exercise a like faith in God as Abraham did; and this would receive a like blessing, i.e. justification such as Abraham received. Abraham was to be the fore-runner of millions whose trust would be in God. The apostle Peter seems to have this in mind when he writes "to them that have obtained a like precious faith with us in the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Pet. 1: 1).

COMMENTS      *D. Gray, M. D. Macdonald*

1. (Cowdenbeath): God does recognize good works, as the example of Cornelius (Acts 10:4) shows, but not as a ground of justification.

2. (**Dulwich**): This comment points to the use of two words, *ek*, out of, or by, and *dia* through, in Rom. 3:30. Is any distinction intended as to the mode of justification of Jews and Gentiles? One would think not; the whole argument is directed towards showing that there is no distinction, but both are justified in the same way. It is solely a felicity of expression.

3. (**Dulwich**): Abraham was justified by works in the sense that his works substantiated his claim to faith. Whereas in Romans the word 'justification' is used forensically, to denote freedom from liability to penalty, in James the usage is closer to the modern colloquial meaning, denoting vindication of rightness. Abraham's willingness to offer up Isaac showed that his faith in God was undimmed, even though it seemed that he should offer up the heir through whom the promise should come. In this sense, he was justified before God and the spiritual beings, as well as before men.

*P. L. H.*

"Toward God" (Rom. 4:2) is the counterpoint of "show *me* thy faith apart from thy works, and I by my works will show *thee* faith" (Jas. 2:18). It is a question of who sees what. Justification by faith can only be seen in the spiritual realm. It is invisible to men but not to God. On the other hand works are what men are able to see and are the only means by which men may detect what God has seen.

*I E P*

4. (Liverpool): James actually says **that** faith which does not result in works is "**barren**" or "**dead**" (Jas. 2: 17, **20, 26**). A faith of **a type** is **there**, in assent to **the truth** of certain statements, **but** it is not **a faith that can** bring life (Jas. 2: 14).

5. (Vancouver): Faith is **certainly** unconditional by its very **nature**, **but**, fortunately **for us**, it does not **have to be** unswerving in order **to** receive reconciliation **through the work of** Christ.

6. (Wishaw): The apostle's question **asks what Abraham had** found with respect to his justification. The **answer, expounded in the rest of the chapter**, is **that he had found that it came by** faith.

*P. L. H.*

#### QUESTION AND ANSWER

From Wishaw: Was **Abraham** justified by his faith **when he left Ur of the Chaldees, as well** as in Genesis **15**?

**We have a** specific mention of **the** imputation of righteousness in **Gen. 15:6**, **and** it is this **which the apostle Paul**, by the inspiration of **the Spirit**, **takes up to prove that Abraham was** justified by faith. However, Abraham's obedience to God's **call** to go out from Ur was "by faith" (Heb. 11:8), **and it would seem** difficult to contend **that** this faith was not of a sort which would **call out** God's justification. **One might suggest that Abraham's** faith expressed over **the** years was reckoned for righteousness, **and the incident in Gen. 15** was simply **an** outstanding expression of it.

*P. L. H.*

It appears **that** things **were** different in **Old Testament** times for Abraham's justification by faith clearly **came a long time after** he was saved by faith (as **we** would say in **New Testament language**). **The same** appears to **have been true** of Phinehas (Ps. 106: **30-31**) upon whom **a covenant of peace was conferred** immediately. There **are** blessings which today **we** may enjoy simultaneously, especially as **a result of conversion, that in the past were not so**. **Does this not demonstrate the superiority of the New Covenant?**

*I. E. P*

*Issued by the Churches of God, and obtainable from Hayes Press, 8 Essex Road, Leicester, England, LE4 7EE. Also from the Church of God Literature Department, PO Box 125, Brantford, Ontario, Canada. Printed by the University of Nottingham.*

# Bible Studies

A magazine for the exploration of the Word of God [Acts 17: 11]

EDITORIAL

8607

**We cannot fail to notice the sequence: justified or made righteous, peace and then joy, that is before us in this month's portion since much of it is concerned with joy, that fruit of peace. Aside from the repeated occurrence of this combination in the Scriptures it readily appeals to all as being so true to human experience. For example, we all know how warring nations or factions repeatedly speak about a just peace. There is an acknowledgement in this that there can be no peace unless the grievances which caused the strife are first of all put right. Further it is obvious that such warring nations or factions are not in a state whereby they have much to rejoice about nor can they obviously feel free to do so.**

The observant **believer cannot fail to notice how the order righteousness, peace, joy is so commonly reversed in the lives of sinful men. Thus much time, effort and huge sums of money are spent on trying to make people laugh or be happy. Although different people may rejoice in different things such worldly pleasures are, as a matter of common observation, easier to achieve than trying to get people to settle their differences. By and large, men adopt a policy of live and let live. If living in true peace is hard to achieve then few would disagree that trying to get men to deal righteously with each other is almost a forlorn hope. Men, for example, debate endlessly whether a thing is right or wrong having given up reference to external, divinely revealed standards.**

**It is with a sense of relief that one turns to the pure word of God and the way He has ordered things. He has dealt with the problem of unrighteousness by imputing or reckoning righteousness to all who believe that Christ died for their sins. Possessors of such righteousness are inevitably at peace with God and as a consequence will enjoy equally inevitably untold joy in a day to come and may do so now. How permanent and complete is the work of God for sinners, in contrast with the topsy-turvy world of men.**

**But the divine order, righteousness, peace, joy applies to other than the eternal blessings secured for sinners at Calvary. The**

kingdom of God is righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit (Rom. 14: 17). This refers to the daily practice of righteousness by saints in churches of God. If such happens then assemblies will know peace and joy. Such a state should be as natural to an assembly of God as eating and drinking were to divine service in the Tabernacle or Temple of the Old Testament. Alas, just as in the world, if there is no joy in assemblies we may trace that to division and its twin-brother strife, and we may further trace things back to failure in the matter of righteousness.

How are we to know what is right and wrong in assembly-life, both as towards God and towards each other? "These things write I unto thee... that thou mayest know how men ought to behave themselves in the house of God" (1 Tim. 3: 14-15). Only by diligent study of what is written in the word of God will saints be able to know how to behave. Superficial acquaintance with the word will lead to superficial knowledge of God and inevitably to casual and wrong behaviour. Here time spent in Bible study will prove its worth, if correctly applied, to the saving of the life. May it be so for all our readers.

I. E. P.

#### PEACE WITH GOD (Rom. 5: 1-11)

From **Aberdeen**: "Let us have" (Rom. 5: 1) has also been translated as "we have". The sense within the context of the passage seems to indicate the fact that "we have" peace with God. Why do we have peace with God? It is because we have been "justified" by faith. The N. I. V. gives the sense quite clearly: "Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ". However, since there is no conclusive evidence concerning the precise grammar, we dare not be dogmatic on this point. Nonetheless there is no gainsaying the doctrine of peace with God. "Our peace with God is through, by means of, our Lord Jesus Christ **and** not through our own efforts" (*Bible Studies*, 1954 vol. 22 p. 117). If the actual wording happens to be "Let us have" then it must be taken to mean - Let us *enjoy* peace with God. In other words we should enjoy the peace which God has given us as our possession [Comment 1].

"Christ died for the ungodly" (v. 6). Christ died for me. Saints living saintly lives must keep learning that the only thing that gives them a saintly walk is Christ. By nature, we ourselves are ungodly. Psalm 102: 20 (R. V. M. ) speaks of us as "the children of death". Romans 5 classes us as "sinners" yet *now* "reconciled to God"; rejoicing "in the hope of the glory of God"; and rejoicing "in God" (vv. 2, 10, 11). From being His enemies we are now called "friends" (Jn. 15: 15) [Comment 2]. We have been reconciled through the death of His Son and are saved in His life. It far surpasses all our comprehending that through the *death* of God's own Son we should be (not further alienated) but "reconciled" to God. The

peace which God gives us is indeed the peace which passes all understanding: the peace of God can only come from God; who is the God of peace (Rom. 16: 20).

*James Johnson*

From **Ajara:** We believe that saints are at peace with God only because of the suffering and the death of our Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 5: 10). That is why Isaiah says "But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed" (Isa. 53: 5). In addition, His suffering and death also give access to His grace, rejoicing in hope, and suffering. These are to produce endurance, and endurance produces experience, and experience leads us to hope which does not disappoint (Rom. 5: 1-5). Therefore, we must thank God for upholding us to be counted worthy for all these things.

The love of God to us cannot be over emphasized for while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us (v. 8, Jn. 15: 13). So also we need to love God in return: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself" (Luke 10: 27).

Reconciliation was also made between us and God, through the death of Christ, for we were formerly His enemies because of our sins. Not only are we reconciled but we are being saved and have joy in God which springs from peace with Him (vv. 10-11).

*Paul Balogun, Philip Poji*

**From Birkenhead:** Paul is keen that the saints in Rome should know peace with God experimentally. Through the death of Christ, God has already done all that is necessary for this to be possible, but the believer enters into "this grace wherein we stand" (Rom. 5: 2) by faith. The present experience of the believer includes the hope of glory, the contemplation of which is to fill him with joy.

Paul then moves on to point out that the true purpose of tribulation is to strengthen and stimulate hope, and if this is appreciated then it can be a joyful experience. Peter strikes a similar note in the first chapter of his first epistle.

The apostle then points to the fact that the Holy Spirit makes clear the extent of God's love. The divine initiative was taken in love without any move on man's part to prompt it. In human experience this would not normally be expected. God acted in love on behalf of weak, ungodly sinners whose position would otherwise be hopeless.

The believer is "justified by His blood"; that is, by the death of

Christ, **and** because this is sufficient to satisfy **any** righteous **claim** **that** God has against **the** sinner, **then** reconciliation is possible **and** man is able to "rejoice in God".

*P. E. Turner, R. D. Williams*

From Cowdenbeath: **We have** before us some of **the** blessings accompanying justification. Reconciliation has **been** accomplished through **the death** of **Christ**. **It is the** blessing of **man** to **accept** God's full salvation **and to be at peace**. The exhortation is: **Let us** continue **at peace** or let us **grasp the fact that we have peace**.

The blessings **we have** include a freedom of access to God. This access is **the** privilege of **being** introduced to **the presence** of **the** Almighty. Through **sin** **we have** fallen short of **the** glory of God **but** through Christ His presence is a **reality**. This is **high** favour **indeed**, expressed as "**this grace wherein we stand**" (v. 2).

**We** considered some of **the** blessings: **peace, joy and hope**. Joy, **in** particular, is mentioned **three times** in the passage under consideration:

- (a) "Rejoice **in** hope of **the** glory of God" (v. 2).  
The glory of God is **the** ultimate purpose of **man** **but** while **we** **are in** mortal bodies **that** ultimate purpose is a hope. **It is**, however, a sure hope confirmed to us through **the** indwelling **Spirit** of God. Thus **we** rejoice.
- (b) "Rejoice **in** our tribulations" (v. 3).  
Affliction is a normal **experience** of **the** Christian. Paul said **that the endurance** of affliction is an indication of **the** worthiness of **the** disciple (2 Thes. 1:5). **It** helps to mould Christian **character and, when endured in faith**, stimulates hope. This hope is based on **the** promises of God **and** cannot fail. **It will be fulfilled, unlike the hopes of men which often bring shame** because **they fail** to be realised.
- (c) "Rejoice **in** God" (v. 11)  
Reconciliation has brought God **and** **man** together. **When** reconciliation is mentioned **in the New Testament** God is always **the** Reconciler **and** **man** the object of it. This **brings** expression of **great** joy, **like the writer of Psalm 43**, "God my **exceeding** joy".

The expression "**in due season**" (v. 6) conveys **the** thought of **the** time of greatest **need**, i. e. **when** nothing **but** His **death** could help. **We were weak** (totally **unable to help** ourselves), sinners (our **nature**) **and** enemies (our **relationship** to God). Hostility **and** estrangement lay **in** **mankind** **but** God took **the** initiative, **as it were, in the death** of Christ.

The righteous man is one who lives by the cold accuracy of the law. The good man demonstrates kindness by his actions. Christ died for us while we were estranged sinners, laying down His life as a sacrifice. The life that saves us is His resurrection life.

*R. I. Shaw*

From **Dulwich**: In the first four chapters Paul has established that the active ingredient for the Christian in his justification before God is faith; and in order to convince Jews of this principle he has argued from Old Testament precedent. Now he turns to the blessings that go to those who have been justified by faith.

In the matter of justification faith is the quality which leads us to repentance before God and acceptance of His forgiveness which has been achieved for us by the death of Christ. Provision has already been made for the world, including the individual sinner to claim that reconciliation for himself. He has a hope of which he is sure and is certain of something he does not see (following the definition of faith given in Hebrews 11). The peace that Paul refers to is known experientially: it is the fruit of faith. Thus it does not really matter if we read that first verse "we have peace" or "let us have peace". In exercising the faith which leads to justification we are "grasping" the fact that we have peace with God. (This sense is given in the J. B. Phillips<sup>1</sup> paraphrase of the verse). The peace that we know is *both* the once-for-all and the constant access we have to the grace of God; His forgiveness through Christ. It is the pre-eminence of the cross and its message of forgiveness in our worship, meditation and confession which provides the continuing assurance that the practising Christian knows. If he has lost a sense of peace with God it may be because the vision of the cross is not sufficiently pre-eminent in this way.

Paul then refers to three inter-related joys of Christian experience: in the hope of the glory of God, in our affliction; and in God Himself (vv. 2, 3, 11).

The glory of God is the end for which God created man. While we are still tainted by sin in our daily lives we cannot know it fully but it is a real hope, to us by the resurrection (v. 10). This theme is expanded in chapter 8. The hope that springs from the resurrection is also experienced in the triumph over suffering in the Christian's life (vv. 3 and 11) (Does this mean that in a sense suffering, particularly in the form of persecution, is an essential part of the fulfilled Christian life?) [Comment 3]. Further, the Holy Spirit is an active factor in both hopes: His presence in our lives is a pledge of future glory and the inspiration to overcome suffering through love.

Finally, **we have joy in God Himself. We celebrate His love for us; His surprising love (v.7). The fact that He has brought peace, hope, joy and love means that we are happy - or should be - just to praise and worship Him for who He is.**

*Hugh Taylor*

**From Hayes: In its simplest form "peace" may be defined as the absence of war. It is possessed by those who were once at enmity with God but through Christ are no longer in a state of hostility towards God but have received peace through our Lord Jesus Christ.**

**Peace however has a wider and more positive meaning in that it relates to spiritual well-being (Ps. 85:8-10; Acts 10:36). It signifies that state of mind and heart at rest and serene in the knowledge of acceptance by God; not fearing Him and expecting punishment as once we did. The Lord promised peace to His disciples in the words "Peace I leave with you. My peace I give unto you" (Jn. 14:27). The apostle Paul reinforces the truth in Ephesians that He is our Peace and that barriers are all broken down (Eph. 2:14-18).**

**Peace means health and wholeness with no conflict or jarrings to disrupt the personality of man. In his new spiritual life man has become truly integrated, having confidence towards God and no longer hating Him or his fellow man (Tit. 3:2-5). The new man has the mind of the Spirit which is life and peace (Rom. 8:5). This should be a ruling passion in the life of the believer (see Col. 3:15; Phil. 4:7,9).**

**All this spiritual peace comes ultimately as a result of our justification by faith (Rom. 5:1). Our standing and our state is seen in verse 2 where we read that we have access to God and we should rejoice in God. In vv. 3-5 we are shown that trials can lead progressively to great spiritual blessings being given to us.**

**It was when we were helpless that God intervened in Christ (v.6) and as sinners we were unworthy of God's loving attentions (v.8). What we deserved was wrath, the full force of God's anger and judgement against us (v.9), but reconciliation and peace came as a result of His shed blood on the cross (see Col. 1:20). The reconciliation is entirely God's action in the death of Christ since we were powerless and dead in sin, being made alive in Christ (v.10) [Comment 4].**

**Man in a state of enmity cannot make peace and can only accept the peace of God offered freely as a gift. The reconciliation effected is described as something given (v. 11).**

In conclusion it could be said that verse 1 and verse 11 of this chapter, relating to peace and reconciliation, make the setting or framework for the many present and future blessings that are ours as Christians. If we have not received this peace from God then these blessings could not be enjoyed by us. We need peace to enjoy them, peace to savour them, peace to grow in these desirable qualities and state.

*R. F. Robertson*

From Ibadan: Unequivocally, peace with God is a direct result of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, King of Peace (Heb. 7:2). Christ Himself is central to all that is called peace (Is. 9:6; Luke 2:14; Jn. 14:27, 16:33; Eph. 2:14). The greatest achievement that can bring a smile of joy into the face of all living souls is peace, and no human being can be the architect of this, only the Lord.

There will continue to be wars and rumours of wars prior to the second advent of the King of Peace (Mat. 24:6) but, the moment He begins His reign, peace will flow like a river and nations will no more rise against nations (Isa. 2:4). More serious than earthly war is to be at war with God. A person continues in this position by refusing our Lord Jesus Christ who has reconciled us to God by His death (5:10).

For many reasons Christians should rejoice for being at peace with God. By this heritage they have been able to pass through difficult periods in their lives. Their hearts and minds have been safely kept (Phil. 4:7). They have been able to glory in tribulation (5:3) and hopefully put on bright faces at the time non-believers are losing their heads.

Considering such great love bestowed upon us by God in allowing Jesus Christ to be sacrificed for the remission of our sins, we should continually strive hard to be at peace with God, for this will also bring us good returns (Job 22:21). Since peace is linked with faith, we Christians should try and learn from those who walked with God by faith and standardise our lifestyle by their examples. By doing this (walking by faith and not by sight 2 Cor. 5:7) we shall be able to please Him and maintain our peace with Him (Heb. 11:6).

*M. O. Ajagbe, O. Oyekunle*

**From Liverpool:** *Peace.* This is a state in which communion can be enjoyed and entails far more than just an absence of hostilities. It involves the establishment of a harmonious relationship which is a work of God through Christ.

*Indicative or Subjunctive in v. I?* Scholars tell us that both renderings "let us have" (RV and similar in NEB, Barclay and Phillips) and "we have" (AV, RSV, NIV, GNB) are well attested, the

**difference being** in the long or short vowel in the **Greek**. Fortunately **we do not need** to agonize long over this point as both renderings express **truth**. Certainly **we do have peace but**, for example, Phillips<sup>1</sup> interpretation "**let us grasp the fact that we have peace with God**" indicates **a need** on our **part** to **enter into the fact of that** which is **a reality, and** is helpful **to us**.

*Cause for Rejoicing.* Firstly we rejoice in hope of **the glory of God**. **By sin we fell short of this great prospect (3:23)**, now it is ours again, **and we await with certainty the full manifestation of the grace** which we already know in prospect; **and** this hope is described in Heb. 6: 19 as **an anchor for the soul - firm and secure** [Comment 5]. Then **we rejoice in tribulations or sufferings**, because of **the positive characteristics they produce**. Finally **we rejoice in God who has done so much** for us in bringing about this reconciliation, **and** who manifested love to us in His ways which **far exceeds anything in the realm of human charity**. **It is shown in the sacrificial death of Christ and in the gift of the Holy Spirit**.

*The Transformation.* In v. 6 "powerless" (NIV) or "weak" (RV) stresses our inability to save ourselves [Comment 3]. "Sinners" (v. 8) stresses our constant missing **the mark and failure to meet** God's standards **and** "enemies" (v. 10) stresses our position before God. Now **we are justified, saved and reconciled**.

*Reconciliation.* **Our status before God is completely changed** through "His life" - i.e. **the resurrection life of Christ, and we are brought back to God, the Greek word indicating change or exchange**. The AV translation "atonement" is archaic nowadays **and** may mislead because it does not today **mean** at-one-ment. The process by which God disposed of our sins is more fully expounded by **Paul** in Col. 2: 13-15.

*D. J. Webster*

From **Newcastle**: Having spent four chapters discussing justification **we might expect it to be the culmination of our religious experience, our sole objective**. **We now find that it is just the beginning, a foundation**. The **argument** now turns to **what flows from our justification**.

The context would **lead us to consider the rejoicing in our future hope and present sufferings (vv. 2-4) are to be understood as** resulting from our **peace with God rather than** being essential to continuing in **that peace**. **It is unclear how specific is Paul's reference to sufferings**. **It could refer** either to persecution of Christians or thorns in **the flesh**. **We are told that suffering is a helpful discipline to the Christian life**. However if **we do not have it, it might be falsely pious to induce it**.

We are reminded that our hope can be firm because we already have the evidence of the Holy Spirit within us. Elsewhere the Holy Spirit is described as a seal of our hope (Ephesians 1:14). The use of the word 'ashamed'<sup>1</sup> indicates what a false hope would eventually do to us. It is used in a strengthened or intensive sense (v. 5).

To say that Christ died at a specific time appointed by God (v6) does not in itself contribute to the point that Paul is making. It is better understood as a reminder to us that the Lord did not look upon us in our justified state and decide **that** we were worth His dying for us. No, it was at the time before we were justified, when we were ungodly and neither just, nor good.

P. J. Stoner

**From Nottingham:** Surely the most satisfying condition in which any human being can be is that of being at peace with God. Then, whatever circumstances face that individual in life, he has the supreme comfort of knowing that all is well between himself and God. But when we read Romans 5:1 we have "let us have peace with God..." (R. V.). The A. V. and N. I. V. have "we have peace..". The first of these readings have the nature of an exhortation; the second is a statement of fact. R. V. margin indicates some authorities have "we have". However, the preponderance of manuscripts, we understand, is for the first reading, "let us have". This raises the question as to whether a state of peace with God is something for which we must strive in some way; a state which can be achieved only if we do some work on our part.

The question is answered clearly by the opening words of verse 1, "being justified". Those to whom Paul was writing were believers and, as such, they were justified, that is made righteous before God, standing before Him as if they had never sinned. So they were already at peace with Him; it was not a situation to be attained by human effort. The different meanings that can be given to the word "peace" require consideration. There is that peace which is a state opposite to warfare and enmity, as, for example, in verse 10 and Col. 1:21. Then there is that meaning of peace which comes with a knowledge of sins forgiven, and of the loving care of God for us as believers such as is alluded to in Phil. 4:7. One is peace with God and the other the peace of God. So, whichever reading one takes, the fact is that being justified we are at peace with God and should be enjoying the blessedness of the peace of God.

The portion under consideration details some of the blessings that are received by believers. We have justification, peace, access "into this grace", hope, rejoicing (even in tribulation), the

love of God shed abroad in our hearts, the Holy Spirit given to us, salvation from the wrath of God, reconciliation and salvation "through His life". If we accept the chronologists view that the epistle was written c. A. D. 58 then this was during the reign of the emperor Nero (54-68) when saints at Rome must have been experiencing the most severe persecution at his hand. So the apostle refers to their tribulations saying "Let us also rejoice" (v. 3) (R. V.) or "we glory" (A. V.) We understand the variation here does not rest on manuscript evidence but the Greek word used can be translated either way.

The thought here is that the tribulation should activate our rejoicing as we pass through a time of proving in the sense of being tested. The R. V. translation "probation" v. 4 meaning, in English usage, a trial period along with the A. V. translation "experience" and the N. I. V. "character" seem to fail fully to convey the precise meaning of the Greek word which, we suggest, in this context, has the meaning of approval. In the closing verse of our portion (v. 11), reconciliation is brought before us. This is another aspect of the Gospel in which we see the delightful picture of men being reconciled to God. God longed for men to be reconciled to Him but this could only be "through our Lord Jesus Christ". The theme of Romans 5: 1-11 is what we have through Christ while in chapter 6 we are taught what we are in Christ.

*R. Hickling*

**From Paisley:** The A. V. rendering of verse 1 is to be preferred to the R. V. - "therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ". Peace with God does not depend on the whim or passing moods of the believer. It is an established fact secured eternally to us by faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. Alford says of this passage. "The whole passage is declaratory of the consequences flowing from justification by faith and does not exhort, but assert".

That is not to say that circumstances may not disturb this peace; tribulations can bring grief to the believer, yet even in these the peace of God can be experienced, as verses 3 and 4 of the chapter show. Tribulations are like the refining process which eliminates the dross to give a purer metal. A similar passage occurs in 1 Pet. 1: 6, 7. It is all part of the development of the character of the Christian.

Hope of the glory of God should ever be a source of strength to the believer, who has tasted of the love of God revealed in the death of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is the portion of every believer; a further proof of the indwelling Holy spirit given to us when we exercised faith in the Lord.

Christ's death for the ungodly remains a proof of the magnitude of the love of God to men. In the annals of human conflict men have given their lives for others whom they have loved; witness David's three followers who hazarded their lives to give David a drink of the waters of Bethlehem (2 Sam. 23: 16). God's love extends to sinners: this is greater than the human mind can grasp. He is kind to the unthankful and evil (Luke 6: 35).

Verse 9 shows another aspect of justification: justified by His blood. This was seen in type in the passover; the Israelites were saved from death by the blood sprinkled on the doorpost and lintel. So we also are saved from the wrath of God through the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ [Comment 6].

The work of reconciliation having been accomplished we continue to enjoy the favour of God because the Lord appears for us in the presence of God. This is the present aspect of our salvation as compared with the eternal aspect secured for our future through the death of the Lord [See Comment 5]. The life of the believer should be one of continuous joy and gladness because of the blessings the Lord has brought to us.

*J. Renfrew*

From Rhyl: The passage opens with the words "therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5:1 A.V). The Holy Spirit has here, through the person of Paul, recorded so concisely some tremendous truths relating to our salvation.

"Having been justified" is in the past tense; it is an accomplished fact. We have been justified: that is, made righteous. Rom. 4: 23-25, considered in the previous study, plainly shows that this righteousness was reckoned to Abraham as a believer of God, and goes on to show that righteousness is also to be reckoned to us as believers in Him who "raised Jesus our Lord from the dead" (Rom. 4: 24). Verse 25 says that He was raised for our justification.

Rom. 5: 9, however, says that we have been "justified by His blood", that is, by His death. It can therefore be seen that our justification is totally tied in with both the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. 1 Cor. 15: 17 says that our faith is worthless if Christ has not been raised, for then we are still in our sins.

Rom. 5: 1 has said that we have been justified by faith; this is indeed so. But as God has completed the work of justification, and Himself is the Justifier (Rom. 8: 33), so is He the provider of our

faith. The faith by which we have been saved is not of ourselves, it is the gift of God. All things are of Him and to Him.

In this situation where we stand now justified, clothed with the imputed righteousness of Christ, where all things have come to us from God alone, we also have peace with God. Peace has been made through the blood of His cross (Col. 1:20). There is nothing that we can add to this peace; it has been completed by God and is not for us to seek to enhance. Instead we may now dwell in God's peace with God.

Christ has died for us and has risen for us that we should be saved from the wrath of God (v.9) which is to come (1 Thes. 1:10). No longer do we have the future prospect of facing God's wrath, for we have peace with God.

We have been made from from the law (Eph.2:14-16) by the One who established peace and put to death the enmity contained in it. Col. 2:13-14 tells of the decrees against us and which were hostile to us, but which now have been taken out of the way by being nailed to the cross. If "the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed" (Jn.8:36). We have been set free to serve Christ, and what freedom this is! How foolish were these Galatians who sought to serve under the law and who had fallen away from grace! (Our access to God is at all times by grace through faith (Rom.5:2), but these Galatians, having initially been saved by grace, were then seeking to serve under the law (Gal. 3:3). To serve under grace is a conditional thing, and it is possible for man to fall away from this and to seek to serve in other ways.)

At one time we were enemies of God, but were then reconciled by the death of His Son (Rom.5:10). Having been reconciled, we shall be saved through His life! How inextricably woven is our justification, salvation, and reconciliation with the death and life of our Lord Jesus Christ!

*Steve Allport*

**From Southport:** To be justified is to be made righteous by God [Comment 8]. Righteousness is a gift given to the sinner when he believes: his faith being reckoned for righteousness (Rom.4:5). As a result of being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. The believing sinner is incapable of doing anything himself. Peace was made by Christ through His death on the cross (Col.1:20). This peace is given to the believer and is his for ever. Thus, our peace with God is through our Lord and *not* through anything which we could do.

Just as we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus so it is

(v.2) through Him that we have access into this grace wherein we stand: being fully justified and accepted by God.

We stand upon His merit. We know no other stand. Our standing being in grace, we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God which is yet to be revealed. It is not easy for us to rejoice or glory in our trials and tribulations. These are to equip us with patience and endurance. Patience or endurance worketh probation. Probation is proof: approved by the test or trial. Probation worketh hope: it increases and renews the hope of the believer. This hope is sure because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who has been given to each believer. In v.6 we see the character of that love of God. Before acceptance of the Lord Jesus as our Saviour we were ungodly and void of any good.

Yet it was for such ungodly sinners that Christ died. Was not this love, the wondrous love of God towards sinful man?

In vv.7-8 Paul puts forth the argument that one may consider dying for a righteous or a good man. But in complete contrast to this, the love of God which is commended to us is that while we were hopeless, undone, ruined sinners before God, Christ died for us. How well does God show His love towards us in our desparate condition. In v.9 we learn that we are justified in His blood. Covered by the blood in the perfect sacrifice of Christ we are free from guilt and sin's condemnation. In vv.10-11 we learn that we were not only ungodly but we were enemies of God. Reconciliation means to change thoroughly. A complete change in our attitude to God is necessary. Those who are reconciled are saved by the life of Him who has been raised from the dead. We are united to Him in resurrection life. Christ is our life; our life is hid with Christ in God.

How safe this makes the sinner who is saved by grace.

*B. E. Scott*

**From Vancouver:** Paul wrote this section of the epistle to the Roman believers to tell them to rejoice because they had peace with God. Certainly this was a message that was needed as they were facing much persecution due to their belief in Christ. Some were wondering if all the suffering was worth it.

Paul's answer was that it was worth it, and in it all God's love was evident. He cares enough to put them through the refining fire so that they could emerge purer and more mature.

This section is very applicable to today. How often we dwell on the problems before us, or focus on the circumstances around us instead of having our eyes on the Lord and what He had done for us. In all situations we should therefore rejoice in our sufferings rather than become bitter and we should focus on the love of God.

Such love we cannot fully understand, especially that "while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (v.8). Thus we should always be thankful and rejoice that through our Lord Jesus Christ we have been reconciled to God.

We have peace with God because we have been justified. We can rejoice because of the blessings associated with peace with God which are:

1. Past - Christ has removed sin, the barrier to peace with God (v. 8)
2. Present - Access to grace; through Christ both the Jew and the Gentile have access by one Spirit to the Father (v. 2; Eph. 3: 12).
3. Future - Our sure hope of eternal life with Christ is something to rejoice in, regardless of suffering (v.2).

*Stephen Sutherland*

**From Wishaw:** The reconciling work of the Lord Jesus on the cross has enabled God, by grace to remove the enmity between Himself and the sinner, justified through faith, and replace it with a state of peace never to be ruined again. This glorious state in which the reconciled have been caused to stand is characterized by eternal security, blessing and heavenly care and love. It is now possible in this state to rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. The glory of God in this context is considered to be the glory associated with future events such as the return of the Lord, the hope of the Christian.

The writer links himself with the reader when he considers our tribulation in verse 3. This rejoicing in tribulation is something which the unbeliever cannot do because he does not have the hope of the Christian. Trials and tribulation are for the making of better Christians through patience and the proving of our faith as Peter also describes it (1 Pet. 1:6,7).

In verse 5 we have the first record of the Holy Spirit in the book of Romans. An important facet of the Holy Spirit's work is revealed here, namely the effusion of the love of God in our hearts. Could this be by the Holy Spirit ministering to us of the person and value of the Lord Jesus Christ [Comment 7]?

Despite what we were, weak, sinners and enemies, God still loved us with an unfathomable love which compelled Him to give His only beloved Son for a world of lost sinners. In verse 6 Paul uses the words "Christ died" in the development of his theme and repeats them again in verse 8. However in verse 10 Paul changes this to "the death of His Son" in order to indicate and emphasize, perhaps, the personal cost to God of His Son's death on the cross.

The apostle Paul commenced in verse 2 by saying that our access into a state of peace with God was by faith. He concludes in verses 10 and 11 that the Christian's present life is saved (salvation from the power of sin) by the work of the Lord Jesus' resurrected life.

G. K. Schleyer, T. Gray

## COMMENTS

1. (Aberdeen and others): Most contributors make reference to the different translation of Rom. 5:1 as between, for example, the AV and the RV. We commend to fellow-students, the way in which Aberdeen and Nottingham have handled the matter. We have to accept the state of the original texts as they are, particularly when perhaps through human weakness in the transmission of them, doubt or ambiguity exists. Translators are not entitled to say what they think the verse *ought* to say and neither are we. It is ours, however, to give the sense as guided by the Spirit of God (*cf.* Neh. 8: 8) and we are glad to see that that is well done in the contributions. We would suggest that this is a way in which God's power is made perfect in weakness (2 Cor. 12: 9).

2. (Aberdeen): A believer may not be styled a friend of God until his work shows that he has learned, like Abraham, to walk with God. See Jas. 2: 22-23, 4: 4. The Lord (Jn. 15: 15) spoke to those who had companied with Him and learned of Him.

3. (Dulwich): Yes, absolutely! Followers of the Man of Sorrows cannot expect less.

4. (Hayes and Liverpool): The word in Rom. 5: 6 is *asthenes*, without strength or weak; powerless is a different word *adunatos*, without power. A weak person may be powerful by having access to some source of power (see Comment 1) but those for whom Christ died are inherently or structurally weak, that is they have no power in themselves.

5. (Liverpool): The hope of Heb. 6: 19 has nothing to do with the sinner in his sins nor yet the believer either. It has to do with the people of God and the fact that their High Priest appears in the presence of God for them.

6. (Paisley): The Passover Lamb illustrates many things about salvation but we would be interested to see the evidence from friends in Paisley that justification by faith is one of them.

7. (Wishaw): We are possessors of the love of God because the Spirit of God indwells us. This is our state whether we are aware or not of His guidance. Because we are so blessed our failure to respond to the claims of the Spirit and the risen Lord is all the more serious.

*I. E. P.*

8. (Southport): Strictly speaking, to be justified is to be *declared* righteous by God. Justification is a judicial act of God, not an act which makes righteous: this is sanctification.

*P. L. H.*

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

**From Hayes:** It has been said by one commentator that the whole argument of the passage turns upon the words "and not only so" verses 3 and 11. It shows that the Christian has three grounds of confidence regarding his salvation: (a) present experience (b) God's love meeting us in tribulation and (c) God Himself (v. 11) or is it (as our group believed) but a literary device to amplify Paul's argument, re-inforcing what he is saying as regards Christian blessings?

Friends in Dulwich develop the three aspects of joy referred to in the passage. It will be seen that the phrase "and not only so" serves to introduce these. The argument of the passage, however, turns on verse 1 for joy cannot be unless peace is first established and peace cannot exist if unrighteousness has not been dealt with. We do not follow the breakdown given by the anonymous commentator because his subdivisions a) and b) both refer to present experience. Further, the joy he refers to as a present experience is actually in the light of a future event.

*/ E. P.*

*Issued by the Churches of God and obtainable from Hayes Press, 6 Georgian Close, Bromley, Kent, England, BR2 7RA  
Also from the Church of God Literature Department, PO Box 125, Brantford, Ontario, Canada. Printed by the University of Nottingham.*

# Bible Studies

A magazine for the exploration of the Word of God [Acts 17: 11]

EDITORIAL

8608

The Psalmist, in contemplating the immensity of creation and what it told of the majesty of God, was caused to utter the question, "What is man, that Thou art mindful of him? And the son of man, that Thou visitest him?" Yet God crowned the six day's work with the creation of man, and purposed that he should have dominion over the things which He had made. The sovereignty of God's purpose was accepted by the Psalmist, and earth was perceived as being the favoured place of the Lord's renown.

We are indebted to Moses as led by the Spirit of God for information of those early events which radically affected man's position before God; the sad record of disobedience, sin, and spiritual death. Life, righteousness and obedience would by contrast have given pleasure to the heart of God. In whom could these latter be restored, namely obedience, righteousness and life? The work of the divine Spirit in the prophets implanted the expectation of the One who was to come.

Saul of Tarsus asked, "Who art Thou, Lord?" and in a uniquely direct way received the revelation that Jesus Christ was that long-awaited One, largely unrecognised by those who were His own, unheeded by the world, yet exalted and mighty to save.

Here the apostle sets Him forth as the great Antitype of whom Adam was a figure. Partaking of manhood the sinless One had become the Sin-bearer, and by becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the cross, has restored life, brought justification, and even righteousness to believing sons of Adam's race. Where sin and death had held sway, grace was now to reign through righteousness unto eternal life through Jesus Christ.

Believing in our hearts that God raised Him from the dead, we await the day when He who is Lord of all will see His enemies made the footstool of His feet. "To Him be the glory and the dominion for ever and ever. Amen" (Rev. 1:6).

*E. A.*

## A FIGURE OF HIM TO COME (Romans 5: 12-21)

From Aberdeen: Adam is a figure of the Messiah who was to come after him because Adam is the head of the human family. They, however, consequent upon the Fall, are begotten in like nature (i. e. sinful nature) to Adam. But Christ is the head of a chosen race who have been begotten of God and so are of like nature (i. e. righteous) to Christ Himself. Adam is a figure in the sense of being the head, the generator.

Whether we are imprisoned as criminals, or whether we are honoured as noblemen we all come under the same sad truth that "all sinned" (Rom. 5: 12). We notice that Adam is the "one" man through whom grace and the gift of righteousness is made available to all men. The "one act of righteousness" was done by Christ alone and so the way is open for "the man" to "receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness" (Rom. 5: 15-17). The expression "the abundance of grace" indicated there is room for all men.

Adam's disobedience is contrasted with the obedience of Christ. One man only was obedient to God and so He is the sole speaker of "Lo, I am come to do Thy will" (Heb. 10: 9). On the merit of this "one" alone shall the many be made righteous. In Old Testament days God looked for obedience. He did not look for men to make great sacrifices. He never required great grievous burdens from any man. No, He was looking simply for obedience. Saul was asked, "Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord?" (1 Sam. 15: 22). God's thoughts have not changed, for the Lord said to His disciples "You are my friends, if ye do the things which I command you" (Jn. 15: 14). The great example of obedience is the Lord Himself, who as the rejected Messiah became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross (Phil. 2: 8).

*James Johnson*

**From Ajar a:** Adam was being referred to as the "figure" (Rom. 5: 14), because through him sin came into the world. Though sin was in existence before the law, yet it was not imputed until the arrival of the law (Rom. 5: 13; Gen. 2: 17). This sin, when committed by Adam brought death into the world (Rom. 5: 12, 18, 19; 1 Cor. 15: 21-22).

*Him that was to come:* The Lord is undoubtedly referred to as "Him that was to come" (v. 14). The coming mentioned above was that leading up to the work of our redemption on the Cross and does not refer to His future coming that we are expecting.

Unlike the effect of Adam's trespass, the grace of God passed to all men through the gift of God in Jesus Christ, and eternal life comes to those who believe in Him through His death (Rom. 5: 15, 17, 18; 1 Cor. 15: 21-22). Nevertheless the life-patterns of these two men namely Adam and the Lord Jesus, are similar but contrary. They are

similar in the sense that they are the founders respectively of the falling and rising of mankind. Contrarily, sin and death came into the world through Adam, and as a result, our fellowship with God was shattered, while grace, salvation, eternal life, and the shattered fellowship were restored by the Lord Jesus. Therefore, we need to be grateful for the work of salvation which He completed on the cross of Calvary, and now hail Him that blessing, glory, wisdom, thanksgiving, honour, power and might be unto Him for ever and ever. Amen (Rev. 7: 12).

*P. Balogun P. Poji*

From **Birkenhead:** Sin came into the world because of Adam's disobedience (Gen.2: 17) and through sin came death. Because of their natural affinity with Adam as father of the human race, all men suffer the taint of sin and spiritual death (Eph. 2: 1-3). Men are born sinners (Ps. 51:5) and each individual's life is sinful. From the time of Adam to the giving of the law through Moses men sinned and died. They were not, however, judged by that code of conduct which was outlined in that law. Adam disobeyed God's direct command. With the giving of the law sin became more evident creating a background against which God could show his abounding grace.

Adam is set as a type or figure of Him who was to come and this is shown through a number of contrasts. Through one man's sin, deserved death came to all, but through one man's act of righteousness, the death of Christ, the unmerited gift of life came to many (v. 15). Many were condemned to judgement through the sin of one but justification came to many through the free gift (v. 16). Death had complete control through the trespass of one, but those who received the gift of righteousness through the abundance of grace would reign in life through the One, Christ Jesus (v. 17). Through Adam's sin, many became sinners but through Christ's obedience many shall be made righteous (v. 19).

So Paul is able to conclude by declaring that grace reigns through righteousness; that the greater the sin, the more did God's grace abound; that as death gained control through sin, God's grace is shown up the more in that He can in righteousness justify the repentant sinner.

*A. E. Sands, R. D. Williams*

**From Derby:** There is no federal, head with the angelic creation. They fell because they each sinned. When Adam fell the whole creation fell because Adam was the head. What happened in Eden will never happen again and never again will there be a revolt among the angelic beings.

Eve was beguiled and accepted a suggestion she should not have accepted. As a result of her folly Adam was not beguiled but transgressed the word of God and sinned and fell.

The effects of Adam's sin extended to everyone. Death was a result of his transgression. Death is the penalty of sin, but sin was not charged to men's account until the law was given to Moses. We know it existed through this period because the result of it was seen. The infant in Adam sinned in the transgression of Adam and death passed to him.

Adam is a figure of Him that was to come. He was the head of a race. Christ is the last Adam. The blessings of Christ not only centred in Him but have passed through Him. They answer in the relation of Adam to the head of the family.

Adam sinned and spoiled his relationship with God. He affected all mankind. Everyone is born in sin and the end result of his action is death.

Christ by His one act of obedience accomplished the work of grace which is out of all proportion to the fall of man. He affected all mankind by offering Himself as the sin-bearer. Those who accept the free gift are justified and have a right standing with God. The end result of His action is life for evermore. We shall reign with Him and be victorious. Those things which lie in the future can be brought into our experience here and now. Whilst salvation is before us we can bring it into our present lives and know present joy and look to the blessings which will come to us in a future life.

G. W. Conway

**From Hayes:** 1. A figure of Him to come Adam is the only Old Testament character to be expressly stated to be a figure (type or counterpart) of Christ - though other characters are types by implication. See "print" (Jn. 20: 25); "pattern" (Heb. 8: 5); "figure" (Acts 7: 44) for similar uses of this word [Comment 1]. Christ is entitled "the last Adam" and "the second Man" in 1 Cor. 15: 45, 47. He is God's Man who is fulfiller of God's purposes {cf. Ps. 80: 17}.

Both Adam and Christ are heads of a race and both are prime causes, but by examination of the detail in these verses we see a sharp contrast of their characteristics. There is a corporate personality identified in both; for Adam is the old creation of mankind fallen in sin: Christ is the new creation of the redeemed.

Though not set out here, there is a further aspect of the type found in Eph. 5: 31, 32 where the first man of the earth united as one flesh with his earthly wife is contrasted with the second Man of heaven united with the heavenly Church.

2. *Reigns* The reign of death (v. 14) which started as a direct result of Adam's sin is the reign of spiritual death. Spiritual death is a state of existence in separation from God. Physical death also followed Adam's sin but this is not under consideration in this

passage (see 1 Cor. 15). "All sinned" (v. 12) is the sin of mankind identified in Adam. It is not the subsequent transgression of a commandment (which some commentators would say is envisaged in 3: 23), nor is it because Adam is the ancestor of the human race (else in the same way Abraham's faith would be reckoned on behalf of this descendants) [Comment 2]. Whilst sin did not show itself in the character of transgression during the time between Adam and Moses because there was no law to transgress (and consequently sin could not be laid to anyone's charge or account in this respect) it did not alter the fact that spiritual death reigned because all sinned [Comment 3].

The reign of death is a reign which has a defined beginning and has a defined end for those who believe. Spiritual death once reigned as a monarch over us, but we now enjoy the "reign of life" (v. 17) through Jesus Christ indicating the joy and fellowship of eternal life through Him.

The reign of sin (v. 21) has also been terminated for the believer, to give way to God's unmerited favour (grace) to reign in our lives through righteousness so that we may enjoy eternal life. It is in our control as to whether sin is allowed to have any degree of reigning in our mortal body which is still subject to the lusts of the flesh (6: 12) pending its redemption (8: 23).

Whilst we enjoy the reign in life now we strive to endure the suffering of Christ (2 Cor. 4: 10) knowing that if we endure we shall reign with Him (2 Tim. 2: 12).

*D. Parker*

**From Liverpool:** The theme of this passage is Sin, Death and the Law on one hand and Righteousness, Life and Grace on the other. The main point is the comparison between Adam and Christ.

**Death is a Penalty:** Death is separation and this is the divinely prescribed penalty for sin. But which sin? Clearly not the day by day sins that are the normal output of a race of sinners for v. 13 teaches that there are circumstances when sin is not taken into account and yet people still died! [Comments 2, 3]. It would appear that in some way because of our racial link with Adam each of us is technically considered to have sinned when he sinned and to have inherited not only a sinful nature from our remotest ancestor but also a real problem of guilt before a holy God. This is seen in the everyday observance of the truth that death reigns in the death of infants and those whose reduced mental capacity would render them otherwise innocent of any sins. Just as a diseased root affects the whole plant, so the disease of sin being contracted by the first man and woman has resulted in need of salvation and justification.

*A Series of Contrasts*

Persons of the action	<b>One man, Adam</b>	<b>One man, Christ</b>
The action	<b>One act of</b> transgression	<b>One act of</b> obedience
<b>Character of the action</b>	The initial <b>breach</b> of God's <b>law</b>	The accomplished work of <b>grace</b>
Persons affected	<b>All Mankind</b>	<b>Mankind</b> [Comment 4 ]
<b>Effect of the action:</b>	Condemnation	Forgiveness
The Ultimate:	<b>Death</b>	<b>Life</b>

*The Effect of Christ's Gift* The Lord Jesus was **proclaimed as the Lamb** of God who bears away the sin of the world. This sin was Adam's sin which has spread to **all mankind bringing death**. Now that has been taken away and no-one will suffer eternal separation from God because of Adam. **Rather each person will be charged with** his own sins unless he has personally received forgiveness by **faith and** possesses the **new birth**, Adam's legacy was a **fallen nature but** through Christ we can share in the very nature of God! The law only **magnified the injury by revealing the extent** of our sinfulness. The work of the Lord Jesus, however, is more than a match for sin for it has not just restored the situation to what it is in Eden but its **grace** has gone far beyond that in making children of God and granting them eternal life.

*F. L. Jones, D. J. Webster*

From Paisley: In the context of this portion, Adam is likened to Christ, only in so far as his conduct affected the whole human race. In another context in 1 Cor. 15: 45-49, the contrast is between the natural and the spiritual, but that is outside our present study.

The responsibility for sin entering into the world rests with Adam. By his disobedience to the word of God, he brought upon himself the judgement of God promised in Gen. 2: 17; but not upon himself only but the whole human race. This resulted not only in natural death, but also spiritual separation from God, unless the remedy for sin was availed of. It also brought a curse to the earth and sorrow to the woman. It soon found maturity in Cain slaying his brother Abel. Many are the consequences of disobedience to the word of God enumerated more fully by the apostle in Rom. 1: 24-32.

Death existed from Adam's time even though the law of God had not been given to Moses. The law of conscience still applied and the judgement on the world as instanced in Gen. 6 and 19 came as a result of man's refusal to have God in his knowledge.

In contrast to Adam's disobedience, we see the obedience of Christ who kept the law of God perfectly. The glory of God's grace so far exceed the sin and disobedience of man: where sin abounded,

grace overflowed (NIV). It is lovely to ponder the obedience of Christ. Tempted in His lifetime, yet He was without sin (Heb. 5: 8). The law of God was in His heart; none of His steps did slide (Ps. 37: 31). He was obedient even unto death (Phil. 2: 8). Acute physical pain and the sorrow of rejection -by His own people could not turn the Lord away from the path of obedience to the word of God. What blessings have flowed from His death on the cross!

The gift of righteousness in v. 17 is the gift of eternal life to all who believe on Christ. Thus the grace of God has triumphed over all sin of man and Christ is the Head of a new creation based on righteousness. This is an eternal work which will never again be marred by sin. To Him be the glory for ever. Amen.

*J. Renfrew*

**From Rhyl:** The verses under consideration form but a small part of Paul's overall argument and presentation of the Lord Jesus Christ. In previous chapters the case against mankind has been made; all have been found guilty (Rom. 3: 23). He has then gone on to show God's wonderful gift to man; justification and redemption in the Lord Jesus Christ. Justification has been proved to be by faith (Rom. 5: 1) and that faith too is the gift of God. In the present passage Paul lays emphasis on the free gift of God; the word "gift" occurs five times in just three verses (15-17). Adam was a figure of Him to come (v. 14) but Paul shows the vast difference between him and the Lord by contrasting the transgression with the free gift.

1 Cor. 15: 45-47 brings out two very important differences between the first Adam and the last Adam: firstly, the former was earthly and the latter heavenly, and secondly the former was natural, whereas the latter is spiritual. In this setting the work of the last Adam would make no sense if there was no *real* first Adam. The detail in the early chapters of Genesis records what actually happened and is not an allegory.

Verses 12 to 14 set the scene; sin entered the world through *one* man. Death came to Adam on the day he took of the fruit (Gen. 2: 17), although he physically died much later. Death spread to all men as a result; it is almost as though death were a disease or virus so contagious that none could avoid it. Paul raises a difficult issue in verses 12 and 13 by stating that death spread to all men and sin was in the world although sin was not imputed where there was no law. He appears to acknowledge this difficulty with "nevertheless death reigned from Adam until Moses" (v. 14), including those who had not sinned as Adam. We would question whether any man could have sinned after the likeness of Adam's offence; he was created in the likeness of God as a perfect man, yet wilfully disobeyed God's commandment [Comment 5]. No other

has since shared his circumstances. Paul states in Rom. 7:9 that he was once alive apart from the Law, and that he was slain by sin taking opportunity through the commandment (Rom. 7:11). The implication of these verses is that one is dead spiritually because of one's own transgressions, but that there is a time in one's life where one is alive because of not having knowledge of the law. It would appear, then, that those who have not yet reached an age of understanding of good and evil, for example children, are alive to God [Comment 6].

The vast contrast between the transgression and the free gift is seen in verses 10-19. The transgression of the first Adam led to the death of many (vs. 15, 17); it led to judgement resulting in condemnation (v. 16), and that to all (v. 18). Through his disobedience many were made sinners (v. 19). On the other hand the free gift of the last Adam is totally opposite; the grace and gift of God abound to the many (v. 15) and this leads to reigning in life through Jesus Christ (v. 17). The free gift results in justification for the many (v. 16) available to all men (v. 18). The obedience of the One has made many righteous (v. 19). The words "much more", "abundance" and "abounded all the more" relating to the grace (unmerited favour) and gift of God serve to illustrate the sheer difference in magnitude of the two acts, "where sin increased, grace did abound all the more" (v. 20).

*Steve Allport, Ralph Carr*

**From Southport:** Physical death eventually followed Adam's sin. Before it came he would have seen the decay and corruption around him due to his sin (thistles and thorns). Adam's legacy to us is seen around (Rom. 8:22) and in due course in us. We die physically. However we are dead spiritually, in trespasses and sins (Eph. 2:1) until by faith we are born again.

The arguments of imputed sin as compared with personal sin arrive by different routes, at the same point. We are sinners. We are totally unable to help ourselves. If Adam is a type of Christ, the argument requires that the sin of Adam is the cause of our death, not just that we have inherited his sinful nature, and then sinning ourselves, have cause to die. Adam is a type of Christ in that he is the head of the human race. Ps. 51:5 shows that we are inheritors of his nature. We are "in him" in the same sense as Levi was "in Abraham" (Heb. 7:4-10) and as we find in 1 Cor. 15:22. We see this usage as the originator of a tribe or race in Heb. 2:13, "I and the children which God hath given me".

Adam is the head of the human race and Christ is the head of those who have believed on Him (Eph. 1:22).

The word "many" in v. 15 has its usual meaning of many as opposed to one or a few, rather than many as opposed to all. The verse cannot be used to quantify the relative numbers saved and lost.

The importance of the whole passage is that the damage by Adam has been more than overcome by the work of Christ. In every act of comparison, the apostle brings out the overwhelming superabundance of the work of Christ.

*Steve Henderson*

**From Surulere: Adam was made a human being. "The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul" (Gen. 2: 7). He was created in perfection for "God saw everything that He had made, and behold, it was very good" (Gen. 1: 31). Jesus Christ also became man, He took upon Him "the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men" (Phil. 2: 7, 8). "For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one.... Since then the children are sharers in flesh and blood He also Himself in like manner partook of the same" for "not of angels doth he take hold, but He taketh hold the seed of Abraham". Through the prophetic words, He said "a body didst thou prepare for me.... to do thy will, O God" (Heb. 2: 11, 14, 16; Heb. 10: 5, 7).**

Just as Adam was created in perfection (before sin came into his life) so also our Lord Jesus came into humanity without sin. "And behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a Son, and shalt call his name Jesus.... The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee: wherefore also that which is to be born shall be called holy the son of God" (Luke 1: 31, 35).

"And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof... and the rib... made He a woman, and brought her unto the man" (Gen. 2: 21, 22). Referring to the woman, Adam said "this is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh". We agreed that this foreshadowed the death of Christ upon the cross through which we were redeemed and reconciled to God. "We are members of His body", of His flesh and of His bones. This mystery is great: but I (Paul) speak in regard of Christ and of the Church which is His Body" (Eph. 5: 30, 32; Eph. 1: 23). The Lord Jesus passed through the "sleep of death" so as to purchase unto Himself a people cleansed by his blood, justified and set apart unto God [Comment 7],

"Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it" (Eph. 5: 25). That was a voluntary act by Christ. He gave Himself up for us. He loved us unto death, yea even the death of the cross. "Adam was not beguiled, but the woman being beguiled, hath fallen into transgression" (1 Tim. 2: 14). This thought was taken up by the Holy Spirit in Rom. 5: 14 "... death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the likeness of Adam's transgression, who is the figure (an illustration) of him that was to come". We judge that just as Adam was not deceived but the woman being deceived fell into sin,

Adam's act was a foreshadowing of the love of Christ who knew no sin but was made to be sin for us\_\_\_\_\_ (2 Cor. 5: 21) [Comment 8].

We also noted the pervading influence or effect of one single act on the whole world. One act of disobedience by Adam brought sin and death through sin upon all men, "for all sinned", even so through one act of obedience by Christ, God's blessing is available to all men (Rom. 5: 12, 18, 19). "That as sin reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord".

*E. S. Okwong, S. O. Coker*

**From Wishaw:** The apostle Paul in this section looks backwards into the past and forward into the future. He brings in certain central fundamental doctrines of the gospel as he contrasts Adam with the Lord Jesus.

The first of these doctrines has been described as 'original'<sup>1</sup> sin. This teaching has been scoffed at by evolutionists, whose varied theories have led many astray. But no matter how many theories man may propound, apart from Adam as a real man, they can offer no real explanation for the origin of sin in the human race.

As suggested in the title, the main thrust of this study is a comparison between these two men, Adam and Christ. This should cause us to appreciate more the things that Christ has done in His work of redemption.

In v. 12 the apostle shows that the whole human race is subject to death because all are sinners, and this sin came in through Adam. It was thought that both physical and spiritual death were envisaged here. Adam seems to be a figurehead - for what he did has had implications for the whole human race (There is perhaps a parallel with Heb. 7: 9 where Levi before his birth, was reckoned to have paid tithes to Melchizedec through Abraham).

Adam is the figure of that which is natural and earthy; but the last Adam (1 Cor. 15: 45-47), the Lord Jesus, is the figure of that which is spiritual and heavenly.

There are two unusual comparisons in v. 15 and v. 16. In v. 15 we have many dying because of Adam's trespass; but we have God's grace abounding unto many through the grace of Christ. In v. 16 from one trespass the judgement of condemnation came to all men; but out of many trespasses the free gift came through Christ's single act of obedience.

Several times over the apostle uses the phrase "much more". In v. 17 he speaks of death reigning through Adam; but then he compares what Christ has now done. He says that those who receive God's grace and gift will much more reign in life through Christ. There was some discussion as to whether a present or future interpretation could be put on the expression "reigning in life". Help would be appreciated [Comment 9].

The comparison in v. 18 is clear. Through **Adam's** one trespass **the judgement came** to our condemnation. **In a similar way**, through Christ's one **act of** righteousness justification **came** to all. [Comment 10]. **Again in v. 19 we have the** disobedience of **Adam** on one **hand**, and the obedience of Christ on the other, and the consequence of each on the human race.

Paul mentions **that the giving of the law was only the highlighting of sin; it caused sin to abound; but then comes the remarkable statement "where sin abounded, grace did abound more exceedingly"**. The expression "abound more exceedingly" can be translated "super-abounded". The Greek prefix seems to be the word "hyper" from which we get "hyper-market" "hyper-active etc.

*R. Ure, M. D. Macdonald*

## COMMENTS

1. (Hayes): We would be interested to see friends in Hayes expand what they say here regarding the significance of the word "type". For example, Melchizedek is described as being "made like unto the Son of God" (Heb. 7: 3). Is this different from being a "type"? Similarly, the prophets are described by Stephen as "showing before of" the coming of the Righteous One (Acts 7: 52) where it is clear that Moses, in particular, foretold the life of the Lord in the events of his own life. Is such foreshadowing the same as being a "type"? Again we read "as was Aaron.... so Christ" (Heb. 5: 4-5) is such a simile the same as being a "type"?

*I. E. P.*

2. (Hayes and Liverpool): "All sinned" is an action which took place at the time of Adam's transgression. He stood in a relationship to the rest of the human race in which no other could stand, for he was its head; all men are naturally "in Adam". When he acted, he acted as mankind personified in a way which Abraham could not do. His act of disobedience changed the nature of the human race irrevocably, as far as the actions of men were concerning. Only Christ, appearing as a new head, could reverse the work of Adam, and similarly act for the new race of which He is the head.

*P. L. H.*

3. (Hayes and Liverpool): In the days between Adam and Moses men, because of their sinful natures, transgressed the law of Rom. 2: 14-15. I. E. P.

4. (Liverpool): The actual effect of the work of Christ in bringing forgiveness only applied of course to those who accept the work of Christ, not to all mankind.

*P. L. H.*

5. (Rhy): It is helpful to contrast the temptation of the Lord Jesus with the fall of Adam. Both were men without sin but the Lord had the harder temptation. It is well for all of us that the Lord, unlike Adam, was a match and more for the Devil.

*I. E. P.*

Adam sinned by direct transgression of a commandment of God. His immediate posterity could not do this because they had not received any such commandments. Following the giving of the Law, men could, and did, sin "after the likeness of Adam's transgression".

*P. L. H.*

6. (Rhyl): Young children who appear too young to be judged sinners by practice, are nevertheless sinners by nature. Their justification is in the mercy of God and is dependent on the work of Christ. As far as their conscience is concerned they may as yet be alive unto God in the sense that they have not consciously committed trespasses. *E. A*

7. (Surulere): The creation of Eve from Adam does indeed foreshow the relation of Christ to the Church which is His body. The "many... made righteous" (Rom. 5: 19), however, embraces believers of all dispensations and not only such as have, in this dispensation, been baptized in the Holy Spirit. *I E P*

8. (Surulere): Is the suggestion here that Adam sinned out of love for his wife, and voluntarily joined her rather than be separated? This speculation has been made before, but there is nothing in Scripture to suggest it. Adam's act only foreshadowed the love of Christ in that each acted as head of his respective race, and the act of each affected all within that race. *P. L. H.*

9. (Wishaw): In another sense we read (2 Tim. 2: 12), "If we endure, we shall also reign with Him". There the reigning with Him is future. In Rom. 5: 17, however, reigning in life is the experience of all those who are justified by faith. This reigning in life is not conditional upon the merit of the individual, and would appear to be co-extensive with the life, that is eternal life, granted on the basis of faith in the work of Christ in the immensity of the grace of God. *E. A.*

10. (Wishaw): "The free gift came unto all men" (v. 18) and so became available to any who, having been drawn to Christ, receive it.

#### QUESTION AND ANSWER

*E. A.*

1. Wishaw: Why does the apostle use "many" in v. 15 and "all men" in v. 18? Are all men automatically justified?

The free gift is provided as an opportunity for all men. This does not mean that all men are automatically justified, for not all men choose to receive the gift. But the many who receive it are justified.

*E. A.*

*Issued by the Churches of God, and obtainable from Hayes Press, 8 Essex Road, Leicester, England, LE4 7EE. Also from the Church of God Literature Department, PO Box 125, Brantford, Ontario, Canada. Printed by the University of Nottingham.*

# Bible Studies

A magazine for the exploration of the Word of God [Acts 17: 11]

EDITORIAL

8609

The apostle Paul, in his ministry among churches of God in his own time, had to contend with two opposite erroneous responses to the gospel. On the one hand, there were those who wished to reintroduce legalism. He had to write to the Galatians "Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?" (Gal. 3: 2), and to the Colossians "If ye died with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, do ye subject yourselves to ordinances, handle not, nor taste, nor touch?" (Col. 2: 20, 21). On the other hand, there were those who would use their freedom in Christ "for a cloke of wickedness" (1 Pet. 2: 16). For example, some in the churches in Pergamum and Thyatira were justifying sexual immorality (Rev. 2: 14, 20). These errors still recur in modern forms. Many will not accept a gospel which does not allow them to make a contribution to their own salvation, and many others will plead Christian freedom to justify indiscipline in life.

The apostle rebuts both errors with the same doctrine, both in the passage under study this month and in the letters to the Galatians and the Colossians. "I have been crucified with Christ; yet I live; and yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me: and that life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself up for me" (Gal. 2: 20). God sees the believer as joined to Christ in His death, burial and resurrection, so that he has died to sin, and died to the law (Gal. 2: 19). This spiritual fact must then be expressed in the believer's life, so that he must count himself dead to sin (Rom. 6: 11). The theme recurs again and again in Scripture, especially in the Pauline epistles; 'This is what you are: now be it'<sup>1</sup>. The spring of Christian behaviour is an appreciation of the work which God has done for us through His Son; if this is lacking life will be at best dully legalistic, and at worst dishonouring to His Name.

*P. L. H.*

## HE THAT HATH DIED IS JUSTIFIED FROM SIN (Romans 6: 1-14)

From **Aberdeen**: It is suggested **that the baptism of Rom. 6: 3 (when we were baptized into Christ's death) refers to the baptism in the Holy Spirit.** This passage from Romans opens **with three** questions, **and the final question is posed in v. 3.** The "therefore" <sup>1</sup> of v. 4 introduces us to the parallel of **water baptism.**

To be "**baptized into \_\_\_\_\_ his death**" (v. 3) would correspond with "**our old man was crucified with him**" (v. 6) and likewise **the fact that we died with Christ.** This **then** is the whole reason for baptism in water - "**Therefore we are buried with him by baptism (i.e. water baptism) into death**": (Rom. 6: 4 AV) - **that we might acknowledge the reality of that inward change; the death of our old man which took place when we believed.** In other words we acknowledge **what took place when we were baptized into Christ's death** [Comment 1].

The basic message of this portion is **that God reckons us as having died to sin and therefore we ought to reckon ourselves as having died to sin.** Knowing **that our "old man" has been dealt with once and for all at Calvary** should give us **a new outlook on living; a sanctified approach to living, walking in character with our new standing in Christ.**

Rom. 6: 7 speaks of "**He that hath died**", **which in its context indicates the old man; our corrupt nature which God sees as having died with Christ** [Comment 2], **Although we find sin marring our lives as Christians yet God has caused the "body of sin" to be done away**" (Rom. 6: 6). How else could **we be sure of eternal life, eternal security, here and now?**

**Once the basis of our freedom has been established, that is our complete justification from sin, we are entreated with the still small voice of the Spirit of God, "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body...".** Instead of manifesting **the ungratefulness of continuing in sin (v. 1) we are entreated to turn away from sin out of thankfulness for the complete justification which is ours through our Lord Jesus Christ.**

*James Johnson*

**From Birkenhead**: Paul having **made the statement that where sin abounded there God's grace abounded more exceedingly (5: 20),** quickly rejects **the line of reasoning which suggests that the saints are presented with good reason to continue in sin.** **He reasons that as by His death Christ dealt with sin and they are no longer in bondage to sin, they are justified from sin, and therefore to live sinful lives is a thing that is not to be contemplated.**

Believers' baptism by its mode pictures the fact that burial and a raising takes place [Comment 3]. There is an end of the old man with his activities, he is crucified and therefore rendered powerless. In consequence sin cannot reign in our mortal bodies [Comment 4]. There is to be a conscious presentation of our members as instruments of righteousness because we are raised to walk in newness of life. The life is ours in Christ.

Death no longer has dominion over our Lord Jesus Christ (6:9) and the believer who has been justified is viewed as dead to sin (6:7), therefore he does not have to answer any charge\* and cannot be found guilty.

The death of Christ has dealt with sin completely. There is no further need of sacrifices (6:10). Victory for the believer is secured. In God's reckoning the matter was concluded at Calvary; our old man is crucified with Him (6:6). Now the apostle seeks to establish in the hearts of the saints that they have a reckoning to do in this matter; "Reckon ye also yourselves to be dead unto sin" (6:11). The resurrection life which will be ours when sin no more surrounds us is to be experienced now because we have been baptized into Christ and the enabling Holy Spirit indwells us.

*F. Canning, R. D. Williams*

From Derby: Paul continuing his theme of justification by faith, reasons, "Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound". The answer must clearly be 'no'.

During the course of discussion we came to the conclusion that the baptisms spoken of in vv. 3 and 4 are two different things. In v.3 we have baptism into Christ (Gal. 3:27) which occurs when we are saved. V.4 speaks of the believer's baptism [Comment 1].

The principle here is based on an inward working of God's Holy Spirit, which then leads to an outward manifestation. This principle is to continue throughout the life of the believer.

We also thought how those who wish to follow the Lord Jesus Christ must (v. 11) "bury" former ways. Just as those who endured crucifixion suffered torment for long hours, or sometimes, days, so the disciple also suffers in this matter of crucifying self. For many it can be a painful experience, but we can say with Paul (Phil. 3:14), "I press on toward the goal unto the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus". See also Col. 3:1-7.

We concluded with the thought that we should not feed that which could destroy us, so that we can be, "dead unto sin, but alive unto God" (v. 11).

*L. E. Foster, G. W. Conway*

From Dulwich: The title of our subject is taken from verse 7, but who is the "he" of "he that hath died"? Is "He" our Lord Jesus

Christ? Or is "he" the believer in Christ? I think that it is the latter (Agreed - PLH). Is "he" not the old, corrupt, natural man of verse 6 that by being crucified with Christ is justified from sin? I cannot see how it could be the Lord Jesus Christ, for how could He be justified from sin?

Accepting that it is the believer who is justified, he has a new outlook in life and is in a happy condition, being freed from the law and no longer under bondage to sin. But it must be emphasized that he then becomes a bondservant of righteousness, a new type of service which should give positive application to his life.

The apostle deals a lot in this chapter with the operation of God's free grace and shows that the superabundance of His grace must never be regarded as an occasion for the believer to run riot. He is not to continue to sin and to allow sin to reign in his body like those mentioned in Jude, who turned the grace of God into debauchery and who even went to the extreme of denying the Master

The truth of water baptism is also aptly explained here. Baptism into Christ is baptism into His death, and as He was raised so the believer is raised for good works, to walk the paths of righteousness. The old paths are not to be walked over again by those who have put off the old man. "If we died with Christ" (v.8) points the believer back to the day of his salvation, and having died with Christ, as Christ lives, so he is to live unto God in Christ Jesus. Every day should be a new day.

Thank God that Christ died once and for all. He will never have to go through that awful death again for the sake of sin.

*Mark McKaig*

From Hayes: The question in the first verse refers back to 5:20. To continue in sin that there might be more grace would be the deduction of the mind of the flesh but to the mind of the Spirit it is unthinkable. Emphasis is laid on the life the believer should now live. Once a person has died physically it is impossible to live the life he lived before. No more should one who has died to sin live in sin.

Some thought that in the context of this portion death to sin for the believer took place when he was baptized into Christ Jesus in the Holy Spirit when he believed (1 Cor.12:13). In that sense he was baptized into His death and raised to walk in newness of life. It is in this newness of life he must live and walk. Baptism in water is a command of the Lord and should take place but it is an outward sign of what has already taken place within the believer. Not all agreed that baptism in the Holy Spirit is here envisaged, thinking it is baptism in water [Comment 1].

The death contemplated in verse 7 is not a death from natural

causes. It is a being put to death as one might be for a crime; being put to death as Christ was put to death. In that He has been put to death the believer has been put to death. This is his legal status before God once he has believed. He was a sinner because of his nature in Adam but is now dead to that. He still sins but by identification with Christ is legally free from the consequences. If a person is put to death for a crime against the law of the land he has paid the penalty for that particular sin as far as that law is concerned. If it was possible for him to become alive again he would be absolutely free in the eyes of the law with regard to that crime because he had paid the penalty for it.

Christ has paid the penalty for sin and therefore the believer is free, and is justified. Throughout vv. 1-11 there is a progressive amplification of what has taken place in the believer. The important thing is that the believer has this new life and should live reckoning himself dead unto sin, but alive unto God in Christ Jesus, and heeding the exhortation in vv. 12-14, "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal bodies".

*J. A. H. Robertson*

**From Ibadan:** The divine way of delivering people from sin is through salvation by the sacrificial offering of Christ on the Cross. This salvation is three-fold i.e. salvation from (a) the penalty of sin (b) the power of sin and (c) the presence of sin. Salvation from the penalty of sin is obtained absolutely by the grace of God through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and His atoning blood (Eph. 2: 8-9) and in no way connected with human endeavour.

The second aspect of salvation demands certain sacrifice from an individual believer. Paul in Romans 12: 1 enjoined upon believers total and absolute surrender of their bodies without any reservation. This means daily crucifixion of the body of sin in order to live with Christ and to serve Him. To be alive to sin means serving sin and the old man, thus allowing sin to have dominion over its victim (v. 14). In order to avoid this situation whereby sin will have domineering control, one has to have his mortal body mortified. Paul for his own part declared that he died daily (1 Cor. 15: 31; 2 Cor. 4: 16). Also our Lord Jesus Christ enjoins His followers to carry their cross after self-denial and then follow Him (Mat. 16: 24).

Jesus Christ died and He was buried and if we ourselves died to sin, it is of necessity that we should be buried, and this we have signified at baptism. The challenge of the glorious resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ is that we should walk in the newness of life. The manifest evidence of such new life is that the old style of living gives way to the new one. The new man in Christ is a light in the dark places of the world, and the fruit of the Spirit in that person's life (Gal. 5: 22), portrays him or her as a truly regenerated person.

*M. O. Ajagbe, J. O. Oyekunle*

**From Liverpool: *Trading on God's Grace* - It would appear that as the truth of what Paul had been saying about grace being more than a match for sin began to be appreciated there grew up a twisted and perverted reaction to it in the school of thought that saw sin as a means to increasing the glory of God; for the more we sin the more God has to forgive us and thus His greatness is the more evident! Paul counters this by an appeal to baptism as being symbolic of a real change and commitment to a new way of life and warns of the incongruity of trading on the grace of God.**

The key verse of this passage is v. 11 "**Reckon ye also yourselves to be dead unto sin**" and this is done by aligning our day to day lives with the spiritual realities accomplished for us by the Lord Jesus. The secret of this is identification with Him. **Death is seen as a final separation and we died to sin. Sin is all around us, to tempt us, and we have to live with it - but not in it. It must never again reign, and we must never again deliberately engage in sinful acts, or become slaves to sin. Rather, identification with Christ means lives which are alive and responsive in obedience to God.**

Baptism was the first act of the newly born Christian and was a public declaration of allegiance to Christ. In appealing to the truth of baptism Paul is going beyond the outward ritual to the act of conversion itself. Baptism is a symbolic dying, being buried and being raised up. It thus has two immediate significances: (i) identification with the Lord Jesus who died, was buried and rose again on the third day, (ii) the 'death' of the old life and its burial and the emergence of a new life. There is to be no going back to a previous way of life because anyone who has died is freed from all that went before.

*David Webster*

**From Nottingham: *Verses 1, 2.* Paul is continuing the argument. Why not sin more so that grace may abound? But Paul is saying that we in coming to Christ have died to sin and therefore if Christ lives in us there should be no sin.**

***Verses 3 to 5.* In baptism those who have received Him by faith are baptized into His death. Baptism symbolizes burial and resurrection. We should walk in newness of life having buried the old life and living a new life with Christ.**

***Verses 6, 7.* The effect of being crucified with Christ is to negate the effect of sin in that we are no longer doomed to death. Not only that but we are justified too.**

***Verses 8, 9.* It is important that we appreciate that we died with Him to enable us to live a full life of resurrection with Him.**

**Verses 10, 11.** Christ's cross work meant that He died unto sin and also died for sin. Although we, through His work are dead to sin, we still keep on sinning. We can never die for sins, unlike Christ who lived a perfect life. The only way we can be alive to God is through His work, not our own.

**Verses 12 to 14.** We still have sin in our earthly bodies and we are exhorted not to fall into temptation. We should live our new resurrection life obeying God. Sin no longer has dominion because of our belief in Christ.

*Derek Thompson*

**From Paisley:** Just as the Lord Jesus Christ died unto sin once, so the believer is reckoned in the sight of God to be dead unto sin, but alive unto God in Christ Jesus. Sin, which once dominated our lives, is rendered ineffective by the death of Christ; but that is not to say that the believer cannot sin: because the flesh is still with us, and the sinful lusts of the flesh must be put to death in our daily experience.

**Our identification is with the Lord Jesus in His death, and also, by water baptism, in His burial.** This signifies the end of the old life and the beginning of a new life which is identified with the Lord in His resurrection. This is a practical experience expressed elsewhere by the apostle in Phil. 3: 10 - "That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, becoming conformed to His death". This suggests that the more the life of Christ is manifested in us, the more we will experience His sufferings at the hands of men.

**It is important** also to know that the members of our bodies, i.e. our faculties, can be used of God in the furtherance of His purposes. This cannot be illustrated better than in the case of the apostle Paul, who, by his preaching and his writings, has transformed the minds of men and women and greatly influenced the world. The exhortation is to present ourselves unto God. This implies a willingness on the part of the believer to be used of the Lord, again illustrated in the life of the apostle at his conversion when he said "What shall I do, Lord"? (Acts 22: 10). Our members belong to Christ by right of purchase, and happy are we when His purposes in us are fulfilled (1 Cor. 6: 20).

*J. Renfrew*

**From Southport:** In verses 2 & 15, the words translated "God forbid" are in the original "Let it not be so". The title of Deity is not invoked [Comment 5]. The sense however is the same. The apostle is strongly condemning the idea that, once saved, we can continue in sin, that there may be yet more grace.

The whole passage becomes a problem to those sections of the Christian community who do not practise baptism by immersion. This

is well shown by the following extract from their writings concerning these verses '....the baptism of which he is thinking is baptism as administered to adults. All, or nearly all, of his readers must have been adult converts whose baptisms would be events not more than a few years old, events which they could vividly remember. Consequently, the apostle can appeal to their experience in baptism as a modern preacher cannot - for the modern preacher's hearers were baptised as unconscious infants.... It must be admitted **that St Paul**, like other N. T. writers, does not mention infant baptism\_\_\_\_\_'.

If we are "in Christ", and are abiding in Him (1 John 2: 28, 29), there is no place in our lives for the works of sin. We should not give ourselves to sin as slaves.

The Christian's parallel with the death, burial and resurrection of his Saviour is his death to the penalty of sin when he is saved, his baptism as public profession, and his changed lifestyle, living as a disciple. The similarities do not end there. Our dying to sin, corresponds to our taking our cross daily; no longer living for this world and the things of this world, but living for Him (Gal. 6: 14, 2 Cor. 5: 15, 1 Pet: 2: 24). Perhaps we may picture a person bearing his cross, surrounded by the baying mob, as being like the lone child at school continually subject to abuse by the whole class because he is different, whether it is colour, social background or because of profession of faith in Christ.

Baptism in the New Testament is seen to be much closer to the point of salvation than is generally the case today. Perhaps this is due to the greater change in lifestyle than is the case in nominally Christian countries now.

We understood that the term "baptised into Christ" refers to the occasion of water baptism not the occasion of placing faith in Christ. However, in an ideal situation the two would apply to the same group of people, at closely spaced times. Christ has been raised to glory, and we have been raised to glorify God in our bodies (1 Cor. 6: 20).

When a person is dead, he is no longer bound by the law, and so is justified from sin. So we also should be dead to sin, but living\* daily for God. In so doing we will put to silence foolish men (1 Pet. 2: 15). Sin shall not have dominion over us *now*; because He is in us, and will not let us be tempted more than we can bear (1 Cor. 10: 13).

In the future, we will be with Him where there is no sin, when we are passed out of the presence of sin.

*Steve Henderson*

**From Wishaw:** "Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound"? The apostle is enlarging on his previous thought that grace now abounds more, where formerly sin abounded. Many have taken up

the argument that the doctrine of salvation by grace only leads to an encouragement of sin in the life of the believer. However, this argument is denounced in no uncertain terms by Paul. "God forbid" or "May it not be so" he says; and those who fear God would totally agree with the apostle.

From verse 2 onwards in our portion the fact of death is brought in time after time. It is as though Paul is repeating himself so that the Roman Christians are in no doubt whatsoever that they must align themselves with the death and resurrection of Christ, and their lives must show their deadness to old ways, and this quickening to the ways that are in Christ.

There are several expressions regarding sin in the life of the believer in this portion which are worthy of note. Verse two highlights *living in sin* (v.12). So often we associate this expression with the immoral outcasts of society, and yet here it is seen as applicable to believers in the house of God. Shall we live in sin? Dare we live in sin? The answer must always be NO! Verse six seems to indicate the possibility of the believer being in "bondage to sin". This expression is indicative of slavery to sin. How easily sin can beset and overcome us! The final expression in v.14 is the possibility of sin having "*dominion over us*". The sense given by the Greek seems to be "sin shall not lord it over you"! Only one person should have the lordship over our lives, and that person is our Lord Jesus Christ.

There was a diversity of opinion as to the meaning of verses 3-6 in our portion. Some felt the baptism referred to here was believers' baptism in water; others could not see it in this way, feeling the tenor of these passages had to do with the new birth, and that baptism conferred nothing by way of grace upon us [Comment 1].

In verses 10, 11 we have the expressions used "died unto sin", "liveth unto God" and "alive unto God". The first two phrases apply to Christ. This is not Christ dying "for our sins" but refers more to the life of Christ as He resisted evil. Now He lives unto God, in a place untainted by sin. Then comes the Christian's vital reckoning - "even so reckon ye also yourselves to be dead unto sin, but alive unto God". This is surely the very heart and soul of victorious Christianity. Men and women living unto God, knowing that unique relationship which comes from fellowship with Him. ('Alive unto God' could have been an alternative heading for this month's study).

In v.13 we have the marked contrast in the members of our bodies; our tongues, our eyes, our ears, our hands, feet. These can be used as weapons of unrighteousness (e.g. much harm and damage can be done by the tongue) or alternatively as weapons of righteousness unto God.

M. D. Macdonald, G. K. Schleyer

From **Vancouver, B.C.:** Paul continues his legal argument from ch. 5:20. He asks the rhetorical question as to whether sin matters as God is going to forgive anyway. Surely if we sin it gives God's grace a greater chance to operate. Paul's answer is an emphatic No<sup>1</sup>. The lesson is that we cannot trade with the mercy of God; nor can we make the grace of God an excuse to sin.

The believer if compared to a criminal who has been executed for his crime can no longer be punished. He is dead and the case is closed. Legally he has been justified. So the believer has died (past tense) with Christ; and is alive (present tense) to God on earth. Life in heaven is not implied here.

The subject of baptism is introduced as a symbol of the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Some discussion was held on (a) Spirit baptism into His body (1 Cor. 12:13). (2) Water baptism into His death. Which baptism is Paul referring to here? Do we live the 'new life' following salvation, or following the obedient step of water baptism (v.4)?

The believer's responsibility is laid out in verses 11-14: (1) To live for God; dead to sin because Christ died on account of sin. (2) Not to allow sin to reign; by not obeying body lusts (within). (3) Not yielding to temptation by offering one's body (without).

This portion is important to remember for our everyday living. The stronger and more alive we become in Christ the more temptations Satan will put in front of us. Let us be encouraged by the example of our Lord Jesus Christ (Heb. 4:15) in resisting temptation and striving to be more like Him.

*Philip Sproul*

#### COMMENTS

1. (Aberdeen and others): A number of contributors record a difference of opinion in their study groups on the references to baptism in vv. 3-6. Some suggest that all references are to baptism in the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:13); others take all to refer to physical baptism in water, while Aberdeen suggest that v.3 refers to the former and v.4 to the latter. The matter is not easy to resolve. A similar expression to that of v.3 occurs in Gal. 3:27; "as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ". However, the reference in this verse too is arguable. It might be said that the phrase "as many of you" implies that some of those addressed might not have been "baptized into Christ", but this would surely not be true of those in the churches in Galatia (Gal. 1:2). The following verse "neither Jew nor Greek... bond nor free... no male and female", clearly refers to the Church which is Christ's body, and so it seems logical to say that baptism into Christ relates to entry into the Body. This then might be taken as the meaning in Rom. 6:3. However, Rom. 6:4 seems clearly to refer to the

symbolism of burial seen in physical baptism, as does Col. 2: 12. Are we then to accept the "Aberdeen hypothesis"<sup>11</sup>? It seems difficult to accept that the apostle Paul would have written about two different kinds of baptism in successive sentences without marking the transition explicitly.

One might suggest that a dichotomy between the two would never have occurred to the apostle. He would, of course, have recognized that one was physical and the other spiritual, but one was the immediate and natural corollary of the other. In all the scriptural instances of baptism in water (apart from Acts 19.5) it immediately followed faith in Christ, and it expressed what had already taken place spiritually, as the contribution from Aberdeen says. Paul wrote, one would think, with physical baptism before his mind in this passage, but he saw in it, by the Holy Spirit, the expression of the union with Christ in death and resurrection of which it was the symbol.

There is nothing in this passage to suggest that baptism 'confers grace'<sup>1</sup> (Hayes contribution). The RV text in v.5 might seem to imply that union with Christ is the result of baptism, but the argument here is that, if we have recognized our death with Christ in the burial of baptism ("united with the likeness of His death" RVM) we should also live a new resurrected life.

*P. L. H.*

How can "baptized into Christ" (Rom. 6: 3, Gal. 3: 27) refer to baptism in the Holy Spirit when we know that it is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself (Mat. 3: 11, Mk 1: 8, Luke 3: 16, Acts 1: 5) who is the Baptizer? How does He baptize a believer into Himself? The statement by friends in Hayes is incorrect when it cites 1 Cor. 12: 13 as saying that a believer is baptized into Christ Jesus when he is baptized in the Holy Spirit. The believer is not baptized so. He is baptized into "one Body". That is to say, the believer is baptized into a Church. Furthermore the baptism of Rom. 6: 3 is "into His death". It is hard to conceive a description more unlike baptism in the Holy Spirit. Indeed that the latter is contrasted with death is seen in the teaching of John the Baptist when he contrasted the Lord's baptizing in the Holy Spirit and fire. Help is given as to what is involved in being "baptized into Christ" in the New Testament interpretation (1 Cor. 10: 2) of that Old Testament parable (Ps. 78: 2) concerning the salvation of the children of Israel from Egypt. The Red Sea was the first crisis in the history of the redeemed people and it was a crisis involving their subjection to the leadership of Moses (Ex. 14: 11). The people subjected themselves to him as they were associated with Him in the cloud and in the sea. Indeed in so doing they are described as being led by

the Lord "through the depths" (Ps. 106:9). The parallel with our subjection to the Lord in the matter of baptism could hardly be plainer. See also *Needed Truth* 1969, vol. 76 pp 38-9.

In Gal. 3:27, being baptized into Christ is equivalent to "putting on" Christ. Who does the putting on? The change of voice of these verbs makes things clear. They were baptized. It was done to them. But the scripture does not go on to say, "were clothed in Christ". Those who were baptized did the putting on. Just as the believer's old man was buried in baptism so when raised he presents a new face and person to the world. (In passing we may say that this is the force of "as many of you". All these who were baptized, without exception, did the putting on. Compare "as oft ye drink it" (1 Cor. 11:25) where it is the doing of it and not the frequency that is meant). This active "putting on" immediately removes the action from what is done by God to the believer to what he does himself i. e. to the realm of working out his own salvation. There is therefore again no question here of baptism in the Holy Spirit being intended in Gal. 3:27. In the context of the chapter the uniformity of their practical behaviour and the nature of the One they "put on" is brought forward to convince them that they are Christ's and therefore not "in ward under the law" (Gal. 3:23). The present writer has difficulty in seeing any analogy between baptism in water and baptism in the Spirit because, for example, early believers in this dispensation were baptized in water before being baptized in the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38, 8:16). See also 1903, vol. 15 p. 96, 1949, vol. 56 p. 80.

I. E. P.

2. (Aberdeen): Is not the whole man seen as dying with Christ, not merely the old nature? Our union with him affects our whole being.
3. (Birkenhead): Baptism pictures the fact that a burial and a raising have already taken place.
4. (Birkenhead): Unfortunately, sin can reign in our mortal bodies: we are commanded that we must not let it do so (v. 12).

P. L. H.

5. (Southport) This matter is given fuller consideration in *Bible Studies* 1960, vol 28 p. 86, and is raised again in this month's correspondence.

/ . E. P.

## QUESTION AND ANSWER

From Wishaw: **Can a believer walk in newness of life if he has not been baptized?**

**Every** believer is "in Christ" and a "new creature" (2 Cor. 5: 17). Walking in **that new** life involves **repudiating sin** (Rom. 6: 11) and presenting **oneself** to God in obedience to Him (Rom. 6: 13). **One fundamental** point of obedience is **baptism**, but I would not think **that disobedience in that respect nullifies all else**. **Baptism is symbolic and declarative, but it confers nothing in itself on those who submit to it**. The **measure of walking in newness of life is likeness to Christ in behaviour**.

*P. L. H.*

The commandments of the Lord Jesus Christ **do not come to the believer in a random or higgledy-piggledy fashion**. There is **a pattern to them; the casting off point being baptism in water**. **Again the parable of the Exodus is helpful**. The **people had to be brought back to stand still before the sea and then to pass through it** (Ex. 13: 20, 14: 2). **Is not this true to our own experience following salvation? We would rush to go our way and do something for the Lord, perhaps to fight Philistines when He wants us first of all to stand still, learn and obey**. We would say unreservedly, **dogmatically and with all the force at our disposal that the Scriptures teach that an unbaptized believer has set off on the wrong course**. **Because of this, he may well see God's works but will not learn God's ways**. **Neither can he dwell with God or serve Him in the house of God**. **Great is his loss**. **Greater still will be his loss if, in this condition, he assays to preach the gospel for in so doing he will have to preach the judgment of God on sinners who are in breach of the commandments of God when he, an enlightened man, is in breach of one of the most elementary commands of the Lord**. **Greatest loss of all, however, may be to those baptized believers who fail to live up to the standards they professed when they were "raised to walk in newness of life"**. The **key thing is public profession**. **All believers are to die daily and daily to put on Christ**. **In baptism, however, a public declaration of the adoption of this new way of life is made**.

*/ . E. P.*

## CORRESPONDENCE:

### BE IT NOT SO (*me genoito*)

A striking feature of the epistle of Paul to the Romans is the occurrence of the phrase *me genoito*. It is uniformly translated in the Revised Version as "God forbid" and occurs ten times in this book; 3:4, 6,31; 6:2,15; 7:7,13; 9:14; 11:1,11. There are five other occurrences in the New Testament; Luke 20:16; 1 Cor. 6:15; Gal. 2:17; 3:21; 6:14 of which the latter is translated "far be it from me". In the Revised Version the same phrase is translated 20 times from the Hebrew words *chalilah* and *chaliylah* in the Old Testament. In the whole of the RV the phrase occurs 35 times. Of these, only nine have been translated into words which we now suggest to be the most acceptable.

Bible Studies has previously pointed out (1960 p.86) that it would have been better, in fact much better, if the translators had used the words of the RVM in the main text: "Be it not so". There appears to be no reason whatever for translating the phrase "God forbid" when neither the Hebrew nor the Greek originals contain a word for 'God'. Thus only the following nine instances may be considered as acceptable translation:

Gen. 18:25	that be far from Thee (twice)
1 Sam. 2:30	be it far from me
20:9	far be it from thee
22:15	be it far from me
2 Sam. 20:20	far be it, far be it from me
23:17	be it far from me
Job 34:10	be it far from God
Gal. 6:14	But far be it from me

In the other 26 occurrences it is translated "God forbid". These include the remaining Old Testament references Gen. 44:7,17; Josh. 22:29; 24:16; 1 Sam. 12:23; 14:4; 20:2; 24:6; 26:11; 1 Kings 21:3; 1 Chron. 11:19; Job 27:5. Both Dr. Strong and Dr. Young refer to the words as profanation and it is therefore one of the blemishes of the Revised Version. In both the RSV and NIV, however, only four out of 35 occurrences have been retained in this fashion.

As previously expressed, (*Bible Studies* 1960, p. 86) we suggest that the phrase "God forbid" should not at any time find a place in our speech especially as some may use it thoughtlessly. We recommend that in reading the Revised Version the marginal wording should be used (see Luke 20: 16; Rom. 3: 4).

R. A. Parker

The Hebrew word *chalilah* is from *chalah*, the verb to 'pierce' and signifies forcible entry. Accordingly the idea of 'profanation' was the background of the phrase, signifying that the action referred to would be a violation of the proper order of things by an unwarranted intrusion, the result of which would reflect on the person causing it. Thus *chalilah* itself was not a profane expression in the sense of a swear word but signified that were such and such a thing to happen then the outcome would be profanity. Thus it is not correct to say that the translation "God forbid" is a profanity in the sense of a breach of the third commandment. Further its use in the Old Testament could hardly be proscribed under a command (Mat. 5: 34, Jas. 5: 12) not then given.

The Greek words *me genoito* constitute a phrase containing the negative word *me* (not) and the verb to 'become' or 'happen', and simply mean "may it not happen". If we are to say that the translation "God Forbid" is unacceptable because there is no word for God in the original Greek or Hebrew then we must also conclude that the insertion of the word 'far' in the alternative phrase "far be it from" is equally unacceptable since there is no word for 'far' in the original Hebrew or Greek either. This is a case, however, where "literalness" is itself unacceptable because what we have is an idiomatic expression. The original words are strong language and a literal or matter of fact rendering is lame and does not do justice to the extreme forcibility of the original expression. In translation, therefore, we are faced with finding a suitably forcible English Language counterpart. Evidently translators have felt that so forcible is this expression that the Name of God has to be introduced to make this clear. They thus did not feel bound by the restrictions of Mat. 5: 34 and Jas. 5: 12 and of course, in the genuineness of the feeling expressed, are not at all in the breach of the third commandment.

One such translator was Wycliffe, the father of English Language translations. Two versions of his translation exist in one of which 'God forbede' and the other 'Fer be it' is the rendering of Luke 20: 16. It may help to give a perspective

to see **what** translators outside the **Wycliffe** tradition have done. Thus **the name** of God is not **given** in this verse in the **Latin** of the **Lindisfarne** gospels nor is it given in the **Anglo-Saxon** or Northumbrian translations. **On the other hand** it is given in, for example, **the French** translation (Ostervald 1878) of **Luke 20:16**, **Gen. 44:7, 17** but it is not given in **these verses** in **German** (Die **Zurcher Bibel** von 1531, **Herder**, 1980 or **Berlin** 1923).

**Before suggesting a ban on the phrase 'God forbid'** it might be profitable to see **what other** implications might be involved. For **example**, **the Name** of God does **not** occur in the **Hebrew** of **Num. 14:2**, **Num. 20:3** and more pointedly in **1 Sam 10:24** (also **2 Sam. 16:16**, **1 Kings 1:25**). **Is the expression "God save the King"** also unacceptable both in reading the **Scriptures** and in **everyday language** because it invokes the **Name of God** which is not **literally given**? A comparable problem may exist in singing "**Forbid that we should ever boast save in the cross of Christ, O God**" since **this** is evidently based on the occurrence of *me genoito* as translated in the **Authorized Version** of **Gal. 6:14**.

If a **literal** translation is insufficient to **give the force of the original idiom**, then **what English idiom can be used**? Many such colloquial expressions **spring** to mind. For **example**: '**Over my dead body**' or '**Never in a million years**' or '**Don't let it cross your mind**'. Perhaps readers conversant with other languages can cite similar idioms. None of these is sufficiently **serious** to be used in connection with **divine things**. A good and more serious **example**, however, is the use of the expression '**No, no**', in *Seeded Truth* 1974, vol 81 p.74. Again **this** fails to do justice to the force of the original expression were it to be used as an equivalent of *m' genoito*. **What** is needed is an expression that makes clear that the speaker is expressing an abhorrence of **what** would be a profanity. For **this** reason, we would suggest therefore that **the use of 'God forbid'** is allowable. That is to say **the Name** of God has to be introduced to **get over the idea of the opposite of profanity**. **Indeed** it may be that none other is suitable. **What** do others think?

I. E. P.

*Issued by the Churches of God, and obtainable from Hayes Press, 8 Essex Road, Leicester, England, LE4 7EE. Also from the Church of God Literature Department, PO Box 125, Brantford, Ontario, Canada. Printed by the University of Nottingham.*

# Bible Studies

A magazine for the exploration of the Word of God [Acts 17: 11]

EDITORIAL

8610

It is a matter of great rejoicing for every believer that he or she has been set free or delivered from the bondage of sin. It is something that he or she may know in individual, practical experience. It is, however, only half the truth of deliverance; and it is a measure of our self-centredness that it is that half of the truth of deliverance that tends to dominate our thoughts. Rom. 6: 17 brings the other part of it before us; for it is the purpose of God that the believer be delivered unto a "form of teaching". The use of the word form is important for it shows that this teaching is not a huge, impenetrable compendium of knowledge but that it has a form or pattern (*typos*) so that we might be able to have a grasp of it as Timothy was exhorted in similar language "hold the pattern (*hupotyposis*) of sound words (2 Tim. 1: 13).

In the earlier part of Rom. 6, the matter of baptism in water is brought to the fore. In the latter part it is the matter of obedience to the form of teaching. We can hardly fail to connect this with the sequence of Acts 2: 41, 42 where, again following baptism, the baptized believers, having been added together, continued steadfastly in the apostles' teaching. The same sequence was true of the children of Israel when they were delivered from Egypt. They were baptized in the cloud and in the sea (1 Cor. 10: 2) and afterwards were brought to Mt. Sinai to receive the commandments of God. They were thus delivered unto that form of teaching known as the Law of Moses. Since the Scriptures expressly say that their experience is a parable for our own time (1 Cor. 10: 11) we can hardly fail to admit that this is the Way of God for believers.

The simplest perusal of the remainder of the book of Exodus will show that the commandments which Israel received constructed two things: their national life and the house of God. The former depended wholly and completely on the latter, for the entire purpose of their constitution was that they might be fit to dwell with God. It is the same under the New Covenant. Adherence to the commandments of the Lord Jesus creates churches of God. This is what happened first of all in Jerusalem where the early disciples continued steadfastly in the apostles' teaching (Acts 2: 42). Later, others became obedient to that self-same teaching, called the faith (Acts 6: 7). It was this

group of believers that Saul of Tarsus persecuted (Gal. 1: 13); an act which he described as making havoc of the faith (Gal. 1: 23). Thus we see the close relationship between the doctrine and its effects on the believers who obeyed the teaching to which they had been delivered.

Together such churches form the house of God. But such churches are actually composed of people, living stones builded together, whose lives thus are ordered in continuous relation to and obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ, the Head of the Corner (1 Pet. 2: 4-10). It will be seen then that obedience to the form of teaching simultaneously builds the house of God and enables saints in churches of God to attain "unto the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a full grown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (Eph. 4: 13). We therefore say that the "form" of the teaching which the believer must grasp if he is to have a proper understanding of the commandments of the Lord Jesus, the 'law' of the New Covenant, is the pattern laid down in the New Testament scriptures for the building of the house of God. If the believer believes this and puts it into practice he will be a true servant of righteousness. "Ye shall be holy; for I am holy" (1 Pet. 1: 16).

*LE. P.*

#### SERVANTS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS (Rom. 6: 15 - 7: 6)

From **Aberdeen**: The possibility of being a servant of righteousness turns upon the change which takes place in a man's standing before God when he receives Christ as his Saviour; at which point he is "made free from sin" (Rom. 6: 18). In the eyes of God this freedom from sin is complete, indisputable and irreversible. Failure to act as servants of righteousness in no way lessens this fact that we have been freed from sin. Nevertheless, now that we may become servants to God it is fitting that we conduct our lives according to what God expects of his servants.

As sinners, we were servants of sin. In this state we presented our "members as servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity" (v. 19). The sinner can do none other than serve sin, just as the leopard cannot change its spots. But now we have been freed from sin "we are not under law, but under grace" (6: 15) and, if we are to conduct our lives in character with our freedom, we can no longer present our members as "servants to uncleanness", but instead as "servants to righteousness" (6: 19).

The truth of "being made free from sin" is given further confirmation in the analogy of the woman who is freed from her husband by death. Our freedom comes by death also; only in our case we are freed from the law. "Wherefore, my brethren, ye also were made dead to the law through the body of Christ" (7: 4). We are made dead to the law with the purpose of being joined to the risen Christ who dies no more, so that we are now enabled to "bring forth fruit unto God" (7: 4

Not only should our **behaviour** as servants of righteousness correspond to our **position** of freedom from sin, but in view of the **reward** of good fruit for God in our lives, we are encouraged to act as servants to God.

*James C. Johnson*

**From Birkenhead:** Paul has dealt with the matter of living under the law, which brought sin to light, and, by contrast living under grace, which we now do because we have died and are therefore free from the bondage of sin. Now he takes up two different illustrations in terms easy to understand, so as to make clear to the Roman Christians what their position is.

Firstly, he uses the picture of slavery. A slave is not free but is bound to be obedient to his master. One who enslaves himself to sin will earn the appropriate wages. By giving the parts of his body in slavery to impurity he would gather to himself only the shameful results of increasing wickedness leading to death. The slave to sin is not even ashamed of what he is doing.

By the same tie of slavery the Roman saints are shown that they are now bound to be obedient to the teaching of Christ, of which His earthly life was a perfect example. They are exhorted to present the parts of their bodies in complete obedience to righteousness because through Christ's death they have been delivered from the bondage of sin. Their complete surrender to a new master means they will live holy lives the result of which will be the enjoyment of that gift from God, eternal life. The righteous life under this new master will show up the shame of the deeds done under the old master.

Paul's second illustration is made to appeal to men who knew the law. Just as the law has no authority over a dead man, so the law of sin can have no authority over the believer, since he has died with Christ to sin, as outlined in the early part of chapter 6. The spiritual nature of the believer's position is highlighted by the picture of the marriage bond. Just as the law declares that a woman is bound to her husband as long as he lives, but his death breaks the bond, and she is free to enter into another marriage relationship; so we, through Christ's death, are free from the bond that tied us to sin and by which we stood condemned. Now we have the responsibility of bearing fruit to God. Our relationship with Christ is eternal because He will never die, and we can live the righteous life because the law of the Spirit has set us free.

*R. C. M. Bolt, R. D. Williams*

**From Derby:** A servant has 'time off', has his own life and is paid for his work [Comment 1]. A 'servant of sin' which we were, meant total dedication to our master and our time, life, energy, thoughts, desires, works, actions were all subject to this. This is genuine obedience. Why should we be different to our new master? "Ye are not your own; for ye were bought" (1 Cor. 6: 19, 20). Present your bodies a living sacrifice (Rom. 12: 1).

In theory we can choose between, for example, total obedience to Christ or, as maybe more usual, part for Him and part for ourselves [Comment 2]. We cannot serve two masters (Mat. 6: 24). Jn. 15: 15, however, gives a different slant on servants.

Law makes sin illegal, grace pardons sin (Rom. 6: 15). If we sin because we can be pardoned, we are choosing again to take sin as our master when we have been released from its total domination by Christ Jesus the Lord.

The teaching of verse 17 was delivered to us and we to it, to obey it. We are now bondservants to do righteous acts pleasing to God.

The fruit (v. 21) comprises bad experiences of living as servants of sin as known by people before salvation. Such things we now regret and are ashamed of, but have in Christ been freed from the necessity to do. Paul's argument is why go back to doing them just because under grace there is pardon and forgiveness? The ultimate fruit is death (v. 23). Death is just payment for sin and has been earned by the sinner; every pain, every discomfort, every thirst of hell is earned in life. God said it would be this way (Ezek. 18: 4), and will not ask for higher payment.

The gift of God is just as sure though the question of earning, or payment is not relevant. God's gift is without price. Eternal life and death here are both as long, though they are different in quality of experience.

We can only be servants of righteousness because of Calvary; because of His tears, His suffering and our burden of sin which He carried. The body of Christ (7: 4) here is His own body on the tree.

The Law cannot give peace: in striving to keep it men experience anxiety, inner conflict and troubled consciences, yet still the standard set is out of man's reach. This will continue until we die, but now we are 'born again'. We have new life, and being born of God there is pardon, forgiveness through grace and so peace with God.

Fruit unto God comprises holy living, pure action, right thinking motivated by love. Fruit unto death comprises crime, conflict, distress, jealousy. We are delivered from the Law as a covenant of works. We have a better covenant with God in Christ's blood.

We considered the rewards of being a servant of sin, whether as a

sinner or again by going back to being a servant of sin and decided they are very poor compared with the rewards now and still to come of being a servant of righteousness.

*Stanley Wymer, G. W. Conway*

From Liverpool: *Living under Grace*-Lest anyone think that living under grace gives one the liberty to commit sin, and having put the positive case for holy living, Paul now makes two further points:

- (1) Sin is addictive: 'casual' sin is not a realistic option, for sin is not a thing that can be taken up or put down at will. It is habit forming and conscience-blunting!
- (2) Sin enslaves: the Lord Jesus declared that everyone who sins is a slave to sin and Paul reminds them that when sin used to reign in their lives they were slaves to it. Sin controlled their behaviour and thoughts at all times and they knew no freedom of action.

Now that they have been freed from sin they have acquired a new Master and should be slaves to righteousness leading to holiness. Paradoxically true freedom is found in slavery!

*Holy Living:* This is a life of ever-increasing separation from the world to Christ. It is not static but is the result of a day by day struggle against sin and consists in commitment to the Lord in wholehearted obedience to the teachings entrusted to us. It is a result of the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives and is seen as the fruit of the Spirit. Essential to this is devotional reading and study of God's word together with meditation.

*A New Relationship:* Marriage is a good example of a binding relationship that can be broken only by death. Paul's point is that in Christ we have died and put an end to former unholy and unprofitable relationships to belong to Him who was raised from the dead. Only by dying to what once bound us can we experience the joy of service to our Master, such as Paul spoke of in Gal. 2: 20.

*David J. Webster*

**From Paisley:** The unregenerate man is shown to be under the dominion of sin and guided by the lusts of the flesh. The believer is released from the bondage of sin and henceforth should be guided by the law of righteousness and become a servant of God. The life of the unregenerate man can only result in death; the life of the believer is a fruitful life when he responds to the will of God. Rom. 6: 19 suggests a definite decision on the part of the believer to present his members as servants of righteousness. This leads to sanctification, and has eternal reward.

In John 15, the Lord emphasizes the need of abiding in Him so that fruit may result in the life of the believer. There is always the sad possibility that we may become unfruitful through failure to abide in the Lord and His Word; such a life ends in loss.

The law given by God could not be kept in its entirety. It showed man the sinfulness of sin in the flesh. However hard he tried to keep it, he failed. This is illustrated in the rich young ruler who came to the Lord and said he had kept all the commandments. When the Lord told him to sell his possessions and give to the poor, the ruler was sorrowful; he did not love his neighbour as himself (Mat. 19: 22). Only the Lord kept the law in its entirety.

The dominion of the law has been severed by the death of Christ so that the believer can now bring forth fruit to God. That is not to say that the believer can disregard the law of God. Chapter 8 of the epistle shows how the law can find fulfilment in the believer, because of the power of the indwelling Spirit of God. Fruit in the believer is shown in Gal. 5: 22 to be the fruit of the Spirit.

### *J. Renfrew*

**From Rhyl:** Paul in this passage vigorously refutes the suggestion that because the believer is now under grace he may continue to sin wilfully. Having shown previously that God regards us as being "dead unto sin" and therefore no longer in bondage to the law, we no longer have a "free hand" to live as we please.

Gal. 5:1 says "with freedom did Christ set us free... be not entangled again...". As "servants of righteousness" we do not have 'rights' of our own because through God's grace we have become His slaves, and as such are expected to be obedient to our new Master. The Lord's words teach us "if therefore the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed" (Jn. 8: 36) and should provoke in us a desire to be free from sin in our own lives. Paul argues that the responsibility to respond to this freedom in a positive way rests with us.

This seems to be the point he is making when he states that the believer can either present himself to one of two masters... "his servants ye are whom ye obey... of sin unto death,... of obedience unto righteousness" (v. 16). When God redeemed Israel in Egypt His purpose was that they should become His people and serve Him. From Egypt they went to Sinai: there was no middle or neutral ground where they could stay to enjoy their freedom. The Roman saints were a cause for Paul to say (v. 17) "thanks be to God ... ye became obedient from the heart". They are seen as having been delivered into a mould or pattern of teaching. Like Israel they, too, knew deliverance from sin which abounded in their lives; only their deliverer was the Lord Himself (Rom. 4: 25).

We noted the contrast in the various phrases Paul used to describe their condition before salvation e.g. "ye were servants of sin" (v. 17) and marvelled at lofty phrases such as "servants of righteousness" (v. 18), "servants to God, ye have your fruit unto sanctification" ... (v. 22).

The contrast in vv. 21, 22 is a stark one as Paul permits a backward glance: "the things whereof ye are now ashamed"! The end of those things is death. "But now", from the time of their redemption by blood... "ye have your fruit". This is something that should be seen continually in the believer's life. We noted the Lord's words (Jn. 10: 10) concerning abundant life, suggesting that, through holy living, this is a present enjoyment of the eternal life we have in the Son.

The early part of Romans 7 is a general statement regarding law and is true of the Mosaic law as well as English common law. The example of the wife who is joined to her husband, until freed by death, is cited to enforce the argument **that when** the sinner believes the gospel he dies to the law so that he is no longer under the law but grace. Verse 4 shows how this comes about "through the body of Christ" (Gal. 4: 4, 5). Christ was born under the law that He might redeem us. He alone could meet the full demands of the law so that we could be joined to Him for ever. This joining to another is also for the purpose of fruit bearing; "fruit unto God" and is contrasted with our previous lives again in verse 5.

The passage ends with the power of the Holy Spirit which enables us to serve God in newness of the Spirit rather than the deadness of the law. One leads to glorious freedom, the other keeps us in bondage.       A.       J.       Maxwell,       R,       Hyland

**From Vancouver:** Paul, in this portion of his letter to the Romans states clearly that we have only two choices of servanthood available to us. We can either be slaves to sin or slaves in obedience to God. These choices are made available to us because we are no longer restrained by the Law, and thus we may be tempted to do as we please in controlling our lives. We have freedom to choose either. Paul clearly and definitely states that to compromise is a spiritual impossibility (v. 16).

In Ex. 21: 1-6 the status of a slave was a full-time one. The slave belonged exclusively to his master. One cannot serve two masters. If we are slaves to sin, the resultant acts of which we would be ashamed lead to death. If on the other hand we are slaves to God and obedient to His word, then as we are justified by God we are holy in His sight and the resultant acts are righteous ones. The word "righteousness" crops up several times and refers to a correct way of life. The wages of sin are contrasted with the gift of God, as rewards of being a slave to either one.

Paul states that even though we are set free from the penalty and power of sin and have become slaves of righteousness, our old nature is ever present trying to make us revert to our sinful past way of living. Two examples are: Moses, whose temper caused an

**Egyptian to be struck and killed, and many years later, instead of obeying God by speaking to the rock, he struck the rock in the anger of his old nature. Then in the New Testament we have Peter, who when questioned at the trial of Jesus allowed his old nature to take control. With oaths and curses he denied his association with the Lord Jesus.**

To become a slave of righteousness there must be:

- (1) Conversion, thus being free from the power of sin. This is only possible under the dynamic power of the Holy Spirit.
- (2) Consecration, when many desires turn Godward. Man, having been justified by the grace of God through faith, now attempts to live a life obedient to God, displaying righteousness in conduct, character, conversation and a correct way of living.

*Bruce W. Robinson*

From **Wishaw**: Once more the apostle makes use of rhetorical questions, the answers to which are obvious with the context of the passage. The first such question: "Shall we sin, because we are not under law, but under grace?" demands an unequivocal 'No' for an answer. The indictment that Christians sin because they are not under law but under grace, has been laid at their door for centuries. Nothing could be further from the mind and will of our God. The word 'sin' here means deliberate and persistent sin, leading to a settled life of sin. Such a way of life is foreign to the healthy Christian doctrine which is found throughout the New Testament.

Paul repeats and indeed amplifies what the Lord Himself taught when He was with His disciples. In Mat. 6:24 the Lord said "No man can serve two masters...". We must either be a servant to sin or a servant of righteousness.

The servant character of a disciple is one of those traits that identify him with his Master. It demands total obedience to Him and will manifest itself in a righteous mode of conduct. This identification also helps the Christian to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly and righteously in the present evil world (Tit. 2: 11, 12).

The behaviour of God's servant clearly takes its shape from the mould into which he allows himself to be poured, called in this passage 'that form of teaching'. That form must be linked with the Lord's death and resurrection, since it forms such a vital part of the entire chapter. The Romans were to reckon themselves 'dead unto sin' but 'alive unto God'.

The apostle then poses another question: What fruit then had ye at that time in the things whereof ye are now ashamed? The answer is obvious: there was no fruit. How sad to think of lives on

this earth, and at the end there was nothing of value remaining! The words "fruit unto sanctification" (v.22) do not mean 'a feeling' nor 'an experience'; but they describe the practical outcome of a sanctified life. T. Gray, M. D. Macdonald

## COMMENTS

1. (Derby): The word used here is Gk. *doulos*, which means a slave. A slave is owned completely by his master, and has no life of his own; this leads to the results given in the next sentence of the Derby paper.

2. (Derby): We can only choose because of the kindness of our new Master. We have been bought, and we belong as fully to Christ as we did to Satan, but whereas Satan ruthlessly ensured that his service was done, Christ entreats us to present ourselves to Him in a voluntary slavery which stems from love.

P. L. H.

## QUESTION AND ANSWER

**From Derby:** Does "that form of teaching" (Rom.6:17) refer only to Romans 1 verse 16, the gospel, the power of God unto salvation?

The answer to this question is both yes and no! Rom.6:17 deals with the gospel to the saint. It is for those who have been saved. It is the teaching to which saved ones are delivered. It is the gospel of Hebrews 4:2. It is not the gospel to the sinner. It is not possible for an unsaved person to understand the teaching of Rom.6:17 because that teaching is about the kingdom of God (see editorial) and "except a man be born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (Jn.3:3). But Rom.1:16 is intimately linked with Rom.1:17 which says "the righteous shall live by faith" and therefore the gospel of Rom.1:16 embraces the gospel as it comes to the saint *as well as* the gospel as it comes to the sinner. It is well to notice that the gospel to the saint requires faith just as much as the gospel to the sinner. It is that teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ to which the faith of the believer subscribes. That is why, we suggest, the "teaching" of Rom.6:17 is elsewhere referred to as "the faith". Unlike the gospel to the sinner, however, the gospel to the saint requires both individual and collective adherence (Heb.4:2).

L. E. P.

## ERRATA

In *Bible Studies*\* 8608 p.120 paragraph 2, a line has been omitted after line 3. The second and third sentences should read: "We notice that Adam is the "one" man through whom sin entered the "world". By contrast Jesus Christ is the "one" man through whom grace and the gift of righteousness is made available to all men."

In *Bible Studies*, 8609 p. 142 paragraph 2, last two lines, the name of the journal to which references are made has been omitted. It is, of course, our companion journal *Needed Truth*.

*Eds.*

#### CORRESPONDENCE:

JESUS THE CARPENTER: (Mark 6:3)

Many hearing the Lord teach in the synagogue in His own country were astonished, saying, "Whence hath this man these things?... Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary?"<sup>11</sup> (Mk. 6:3). This differs from the expression "the carpenter's son", as in Matthew's gospel or "the son of Joseph", as in the gospels by Luke and John. It is very arresting to think of the young teacher and healer being recognized as the Carpenter in his own right. We may then wonder how the Craftsman would understand and treasure those passages of the Scripture He would hear and read that bore on the work of His hands. Of course, in Him are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge hidden. Yet just as He learned obedience in a special way by living, and dying, amongst men, so there surely was a distinctive relevance for Him in such descriptions as the work of Hiram and his carpenters on the beams of cedar, the doors of cypress, door-posts of olive, and cherubim of olive. Or in Isaiah 44:

"The carpenter stretcheth out a line; he marketh it out with a pencil; he shapeth it with planes, and he marketh it out with the compasses, and shapeth it after the figure of a man.. a graven image".

What sadness and righteous anger He would feel at the misdirection of such skill!

The question arises, however, as to whether the word *tekton*, and its Hebrew counterpart, were rightly translated 'carpenter', or could more justly be rendered 'craftsman'<sup>1</sup> or 'builder'.

The Greek word *tekton* is used only twice in the New Testament: Mat. 13:55 and Mk. 6:3. Confirmation of the senses suitable to so few occurrences is then usually sought from the Septuagint (the principal Greek translation of the Old Testament), and other texts from New Testament times. This yields the following general summary:

It is well known that in secular Greek, *tekton*, means a craftsman or builder in wood, stone or metal. In the Septuagint this word appears in its classical meaning and usually renders the Hebrew *haras*. This Hebrew word is used:

- (1) 14 times in contexts that do not specify the material used, or imply more than one - the word thus meaning 'artificer/craftsman/builder' (e. g. 2 Kings 24:16).

- (2) 7 times meaning 'skilled worker in wood': e. g. Isa. 44: 13.
- (3) 6 times meaning 'worker in metal', 'smith': e. g. 1 Chron. 29: 5.
- (4) Once where the material is precious stone (Ex. 28: 11).

The Hebrew would thus mean 'craftsman', unless the context implies skill in one particular material. This is reflected, of course, in the Septuagint use of *tekon*.

### *New Testament Usage*

"Though 'carpenter\*' is the common rendering... *tekon* could equally mean 'mason' or 'smith'... or it could mean that Joseph and Jesus were builders, so that both carpentry and masonry would have been among their skills" (Packer, J. I. 1975, in *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* Vol. 1).

Scholarly commentators on Mark usually accord with this, but are inclined to translate 'carpenter' in the New Testament because

- (1) the early Greek commentators explained the word thus,
- and (2) ancient versions of the New Testament in other languages translate by words that clearly denote a worker in wood.

A study of the Greek texts shows, however, that "*the most frequent usage of *tekon* is to denote a worker with wood*". This conclusion appears in an extensive footnote to an article, 'Is not this the carpenter?', in 'New Testament Studies' (Batey, R. A., 1984 Vol. 30). The writer adds the caution, that there is a need to collect and analyse the uses of the word in the Greek papyri.

### *Conclusion*

Present knowledge then confirms the normal translation 'carpenter' which appears in AV, RV, RSV, NAS, NEB, NIV and Rev. AV, without any marginal note. If the next most likely meaning, 'builder', were in fact more correct it would still include skill in carpentry.

*Martin Archibald*

### THE BLESSING AND THE CURSE: Deut. 27: 11-26

There must be a special reason why these six sons of Jacob were chosen to pronounce blessing upon the people of Israel upon mount Gerizim. We must also concur with editors that we would expect a consistent explanation necessary for the choice of those who were 'for the curse' upon mount Ebal but not necessarily so. Before offering a possible reason for the first grouping it may be profitable to make one or two observations in respect of the answer given by editors and the available statements of Scripture.

1. Those assembled on Gerizim were to *bless* the people in total; not for the reception of blessing themselves alone, i.e. they had to administer the blessing to the people as representatives.

2. Those on Ebal were **'FOR the curse'** and not to curse **the people in total**, i.e. as representatives of **the curse in the event of the people not continuing in the way** (Deut. 11:28) and continuing not in all things **that are written in the book of the law to do them** (Gal. 3: 10). The wording is important and for **this reason**, we suggest, **the criteria for the selection of those 'for the curse'** must **differ** from **that** used to select those **'to bless the people'**.
3. Seeing **that** Simeon, Levi and Benjamin were chosen 'to bless', it cannot **be** related to **the** personal characteristics of their forefather? since **they were characterised by fierceness, cruelty and violence and yet here all three are joined in action with others 'to bless'**.
4. **On the other hand**, Reuben's displacement into **the second group may suggest a result of personal behaviour (Gen. 49: 3-4) but a reason for the displacement of Zebulun on the same basis is hard to find.** So again, personal behaviour or characteristics **seem an unlikely reason for choice.**
5. Because Joseph's **name** is mentioned in **Deut. 27** and not Ephraim and Manasseh it seems clear **that the son of the birthright and double blessing is in view.**

We suggest therefore **the alternatives are that their selection was related in some way to:**

- (a) **What God made them to be by His divine sovereignty and grace.**
- OR**
- (b) **Their mother's experiences at their birth.**

Any study of Scripture will reveal **that the true blessings of Israel in association with the land 'flowing with milk and honey' come through Abraham's seed who is Christ (Rom. 4: 16-17).**

Perhaps **then we** must look for **the** answer, not in their precedence or relationship to **each other but in the way in which these sons and/or their relationship at birth to their mother's experiences projected the way in which the people of Israel will be blessed in the future day of Messiah's reign in the land. In that day, each tribe will receive their full inheritance.**

Two lines of thought spring to mind:

Either (a) **the** kind of sonship, or (2) **the** kind of leadership which these sons foreshadowed was in view by their selection through Moses in assuring blessing to **the** people of Israel. Readers **are** left to develop **these** ideas for themselves.

**R. A. Parker**

*Issued by the Churches of God, and obtainable from Hayes Press, 8 Essex Road, Leicester, England, LE4 7EE. Also from the Church of God Literature Department, PO Box 125, Brantford, Ontario, Canada. Printed by the University of Nottingham.*

# Bible Studies

A magazine for the exploration of the Word of God [Acts 17: 11]

EDITORIAL

8611

The question is asked in the book of Proverbs, "Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin ? "(Prov, 20: 9). The charge of being under sin is of universal application to the human race, apart from the redemption which is in Christ Jesus (see Rom. 3: 9). For even the law, perfect in itself, brings condemnation to those who wittingly or otherwise fail short of its perfect standard. With the insight of faith Paul realised that outward observance of the law, even were it completely attainable, would fail to take account of the law's spiritual dimension. Elsewhere we read that "the Scripture hath shut up all things under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe" (Gal. 3: 22).

To those "sold under sin" (v.14) the dawning of faith brings release from the power of darkness, and its enslaving dominion. Yet the nature which emerges at new birth has still to contend with the presence of sin within the body, as well as in the world around. The resultant conflict will continue to face the believer as long as he is in the flesh, with its inclination to follow the law of sin.

Nevertheless saved ones who are not yet at home with the Lord still have before them the promise of His coming, and the prospect of that blessed hope and appearing of our Lord and Saviour which will bring complete freedom from the presence of sin. This contemplation must surely occasion thankfulness to God, and cause each day by day to seek power from above, while awaiting His imminent return.

E. A.

## **SOLD UNDER SIN (Rom. 7: 7-25)**

**From Aberdeen:** To **the human** mind sin is unexposed **and** unknown until it is exposed **by the law**. Like furniture **affected by** woodworm in **a dark** room, **the** infestation only becomes **apparent when** light shines upon **it**. **The law**, like **the light**, **reveals the contents of the dark human heart;** **and** indeed through **the law we see that the contents of the human heart are** evil.

We cannot **blame the law** for disturbing **and** revealing **the sin** within. "When **the** commandment **came**, sin revived **and I** died" (Rom. 7: 9). To **the** question as to **whether the law** (which is good) brought **death**, the answer is plainly 'No'. **Rather** it is sin which brings **death**, **but the** point is **that we have** to **be** shown **the** sinfulness of our sin. This **can** only **be** shown to **us by the law** with its good **and perfect standard** which stands in contrast to our sin: "**that** through **the** commandment sin might become exceeding sinful".

The description which follows on from v. 14 is typical of **the** believer's desire to do good, yet **because** of sin within his **earthly frame** **such** desires **are** not worked out in practice. This is **a** distressing situation to which **Paul** confessed, "**O wretched man that I am.**" (Rom. 7: 24). **He** looked for **the** coming **day** of deliverance from **the** body. **Nevertheless**, against **the** tide of sin which **dwells** within is **the** true experience of serving God, contained in **the** words, "For **I** delight in **the** law of God **after the** inward **man**" (Rom. 7: 22). The **dual** conflict within **the** believer is **clearly stated**. The **result** should **be that** we long **the** more for deliverance from **these** bodies of **death**. We look for **the** coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

*James Johnson*

**From Birkenhead:** **Paul** has already spoken about freedom from **the** demands of **the law**, and **release** from **the** dominion of **the** sinful **nature** (6: 14) **and** this is **a** theme which is developed in **chapter 7**. Someone could **object**, however, to **the** teaching of vv. 1 - 6 on the grounds **that** it implies **that the law is sinful**. "God forbid!" **exclaims Paul**. **With the law itself he finds** no **fault: it is** "Holy, and righteous **and** good". **Paul explains his attitude by relating** how **the law had** proved to **be** a stumbling block.

The **law** did not **cause Paul** to sin; **rather it defined the sin which he had** committed **and** clearly established **what was wrong and right**. It declared **the** righteous standard of God **and** so exposed **his true** condition.

**Paul saw nothing wrong with his actions (Gal 1: 13; Phil. 3: 4-6) but the law pointed out his complete and utter sinfulness and helplessness.**

A realisation of **the force of the law** provoked Paul to further sin. **Once a prohibition had been placed, the desire was aroused to do the thing that was forbidden.** Paul who may in his early days have thought he was "alive" to God now realised that he was, and always had been, condemned by the law and "dead" to God. This passage is similar to Gal. 3, where Paul says that "no man is justified by the law in the sight of God" (v. 11); rather "the law hath been our tutor to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith" (v. 24).

In v. 14 the tense changes to the present, and we can sense an inward tension as Paul speaks of his struggle against wrongdoing. He writes of a civil war within himself between the law of his mind, which delights in God's law, and the law of sin which is bent toward turning against the Lord, both continually striving for his attention and obedience. Although he is a new creature in Christ, with a new drive to please God, he still has an old nature "in Adam", which is totally under the influence and dominion of sin.

Paul's inner being, guided by the law and enlightened by the Spirit, appreciates what is good, but the sinful nature, although it has no more valid authority over him, still vies for control by prodding him into unrighteous acts. The picture is that of a healthy mind inside a sinful, diseased body.

Paul often speaks of the struggle against sin as a battle in which we must "be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of His might" (Eph. 6: 10-18). In our own strength it is impossible to know victory: we must "put on the whole armour of God" if we are to "stand against the wiles of the Devil". Many times Paul feels exhausted and defeated, but he does not give up. He longs for release from his present struggles but realises that only at death, or the return of Christ, will he finally experience full freedom from the power sin tries to exert over him. *P. E. Turner, J. D. Williams*

**From Derby:** In this portion there is a further development of the life of faith and some of its practical outworkings.

**Chapter 5** sets before us freedom from death and sin, and chapter 6 freedom from self through union with Christ, and finally freedom from the law. The close association between law and man's sinful condition prompts the question, "Is the law sin?"<sup>11</sup> The argument seems to centre on this matter as to whether sin and law can be regarded as almost identical because of the way in which they sometimes manifest themselves. The law makes us aware of our sins and without the law sin could not exist. Although the law forbids sin it cannot of itself prevent sin. It was noted that in what follows Paul constantly uses the first person. (The word " I " is used some thirty times, and " me " and " my " about seventeen times.) It reflects his deep anguish of soul as he struggles against sin. We wondered to what extent this was autobiographical, depicting Paul's own personal experiences, or whether it could be considered in a wider context applicable to all those in Christ [Comment 1].

The law not only brings a knowledge of sin. It also stimulates a desire to have or to do what is forbidden. Sin finds occasion (Gk. *aphorme*), a base for operations, thus bringing about coveting (*epithumia*), an illicit desire, for apart from the law sin is dead.

The result is that sin sprang to life and that which was dormant and apparently dead revived and became alive. The living death of sin was now manifest. This is seen almost as a paradox ( v. 10 ) for God's law and commandments designed to bring men to life ( Lev. 18: 4-5 ) had now become the weapon of sin [Comment 2 ] .

Divine in origin and concept, the law is holy, just and good. Sin is personified as an evil power that enters a man's life and brings him under its influence. These fleshly (carnal) desires have their effect on the whole of man and not merely his physical nature. So there is manifest within this conflict which dominates

his life, a battle between opposing forces, the good intention of his better self and the evil influences of the flesh.

In the remaining verses of the chapter Paul's findings about the natural man are finally stated. Constantly aware of the battle within himself, he must wage a relentless struggle. As a prisoner of sin and almost impotent to fulfil the law of God, there is a note of despair. Helpless and miserable he cries out for deliverance. "Who will rescue me from this body that is taking me to death?" (Good News Bible) [Comment 3]. He casts himself on the mercy of God. The deliverance will be complete in a coming day by the transformation of the mortal body, changed and glorified ( 1 Cor. 15: 51-53 ).

There is a note of triumph in his final words. "But thanks be to God . . .". This theme is taken up and developed with added conviction in the next chapter. Romans 8 supplies the answer to the question of chapter 7.

*A. G. Willis, G. W. Conway*

**From Dulwich:** The passage may be divided into three sections.

- (1) "Alive apart from the law once" (v. 9)
- (2) Under law, under sin (vv. 7 - 13)
- (3) "I myself with the mind serve the law of God; but with the flesh, the law of sin" (vv. 14 - 25).

The change from the past tense to the present singular, emphatic, in v. 14 would seem to suggest this approach to our subject. Though Paul's natural bias was against God from his birth, he was reckoned to be alive (v. 9) until the law, as guide and monitor of his conscience, laid upon him the responsibility of keeping the law.

**In v. 7 and supplemented in v. 13, we have the question which leads to the subject of these verses. "Is the law sin?"<sup>11</sup> and "Did then that which is good become death unto me?" To understand these questions, we go back to v. 5, where it would almost seem to be that the law was the activator which wrought in our members to bring fruit unto death.**

The answer is threefold: -

- (1) From the law came the knowledge of sin (v. 7: Rom. 3: 20).
- (2) The law is holy, righteous, and good (v. 12)
- (3) The law is spiritual (v. 14)

**In these verses we have the letter of the law (v. 6) and the character of the law (vv 8, 12, 14). One is complementary to the other and both reveal the great Law-Giver.**

**In contrast, sin has its character in the one who said "I will be like the Most High" (Is. 14: 14). This is the very essence of sin, wilfully setting itself against and above every system of law and restraint (1 John 3: 4, 8; Luke 19: 14; Rom. 8: 7), hence its activity in Paul became exceedingly sinful (v. 13)**

**This sinful nature (1 Cor. 2: 14) the natural man, had its base ("occasion" Rom. 7: 11) in one who was born and Shapen in iniquity (Ps. 51: 5, Rom. 5: 12).**

**Though we cannot compute with certainty the years of Adam's life from the Creation to the Fall, its duration is long enough to emphasize the enormity of selling mankind into the captivity of sin (Rom. 5: 12, 19; Rom, 7: 14).**

**From Eve also Paul had inherited the sinful nature, with its weakness of gullibility: for sin finding occasion through the commandment beguiled him (v. 11).**

The subject in vv. 14-25 is one who has come to know that the law is spiritual (v. 14, 1 Cor. 2: 10-16). He is the inward man who delights in the law of God (v. 22), who by the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus, walking in the Spirit, fulfils the ordinance of the law (Rom. 8: 2, 4).

We note that the work of the Spirit in ch. 8 is complementary in its success against the law of sin that wars in our members (Rom. 8: 13). This activity of the Holy Spirit runs parallel with vv. 14-25 of ch. 7.

The inward man who delights in the law of God, has been created after God in righteousness, and holiness of truth (Eph. 4: 24), and is renewed in the image of Him who created him (Col. 3: 10). In contrast the natural man (1 Cor. 2: 14), cannot receive the things of God; they are foolishness to him. He is corrupt after the lust of deceit (Eph. 4: 22).

The conflict lies in putting off the old man and his doing (Col. 3: 9; Gal. 5: 17, 19, 20).

*W. Townsend*

From Ibadan: Christians of all ages pass through the same experience as this great apostle Paul. His experience can be categorised into three periods: (a) ignorance, (b) accountability, (c) deliverance. The Scripture makes it clear that God overlooked the period of ignorance. (Acts 17: 30 AV). This period denotes the time when one commits sins either unwillingly or unwittingly and without feeling any sense of guilt.

We presume that among nations where the Gospel of Christ has been preached, the only period of ignorance might be the period of infancy, which could range from the age of six and below. [This seems very young!-Eds ]. But in the nations where the doors are shut against the gospel, it could be held as covering all ages. Our conviction is that Paul's case in Rom. 7: 9 fails within the first category of ignorance. Paul himself at this period felt free and unconvicted of sin.

Paul became accountable for whatever sins were committed by him under the law when he came to the knowledge of it. Not that the law was non-existent before this time, but he was not yet aware of it. "Howbeit, I had not known sin, except through the law". However, as Paul was inexcusable after the knowledge of the law, likewise anybody that hears the gospel call and rejects it, would be without excuse. (Rom. 1: 16-20). Having had the knowledge of the law, Paul became incapacitated because that law that is spiritual cannot be perfected in the carnal man (v. 14). Thus a deliverer is desperately

needed.

**Deliverance from the penalty of sin can be miraculous, in that "it is not of him that willeth... but of God that hath mercy" (Rom. 9: 16). So, in the case of the apostle Paul, that is clearly manifested, for he was miraculously delivered while still persecuting the disciples of Christ preaching the gospel.**

However, God has many ways of manifesting Himself to the people He delights to save. Nevertheless, His greatest manifestation known to man is our Lord Jesus Christ who came to the world to seek and to save those that are lost (Luke 19: 10).

*M. O. Ajagbe, J. O. Oyekunle*

**From Liverpool: Is the law sin? So asks Paul, and, in answering his own question, he reveals that the purpose of the law is to make us conscious of our sin and to show the exceeding sinfulness of sin in God's eyes. The law and the commandments are holy, righteous and good, but gave sin the chance to spring to life. (v. 9- NIV preferred to RV) [Comment 4], to deceive and to produce death.**

***Struggling with sin.* We are not reading here the confessions of a backsliding Christian but an account of the day by day struggle of every sincere child of God. Paul was a spiritual giant, but he was also a realist and this portion is very practical because of our dual nature. Paul was alive once, before he reached the age of understanding, and was taught the law of God. As a Pharisee he had considered himself blameless and since the experience on the road to Damascus his Christian life was beyond reproach, yet he still experienced the temptations common to all and the exasperating tendency from our old nature to do and say what we know to be wrong. The closer we are to the Lord the greater the struggle we have for our consciences will be sensitive to the wrong of things formerly considered acceptable, and the more we will appreciate Paul's despair.**

***Liberation* "Who shall deliver me<sup>11</sup>?, asks Paul in despair, only to answer in triumph that God will "through Jesus Christ our Lord". Here he undoubtedly looks ahead to the completeness of his salvation from the presence of sin when he would be "at home with the Lord".**

*D. J. Webster*

From **Paisley**: Having asserted in the earlier verses of this chapter that the passions of sin in our members have been nullified by the death of Christ, the apostle goes on to relate his own experience in the days prior to his conversion. He was zealous for God, but unaware of sin lurking in his heart until the law of God which contained the commandment not to covet revealed the covetous nature of his flesh and, instead of the law leading to life, it exposed the sin in his heart and condemned him. The law is holy and good, but it showed the unholy nature of his flesh. And so, sin had dominion over the apostle and every other human being, reinforcing the words written earlier in the epistle "they are all under sin" (Rom. 3: 9).

This shows a conflict between the inner man (the soul or mind) and the flesh. The desire to keep the law of God is present, but sin in the flesh obstructs the observance of the law. The flesh is the source of all evil. The Lord spoke of the heart of man as being the source of evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, railing (Matt. 15: 19). Only by the delivering power of the Lord can the believer overcome the flesh and the lusts thereof. Chapter 8 of this epistle leads on to the victorious life through the power of the indwelling Spirit of God. Hence the constant need of the believer to walk by the Spirit and not after the flesh as exhorted in Galatians 5: 26. Though we are delivered from the bondage of the law, nevertheless the sinful desires of the flesh remain, and these must be subjugated by the power of the indwelling Spirit of God.

*J. Renfrew*

From Rhyl: In his continuing argument, Paul is very careful to ensure that the law and the commandment are shown to be completely above reproach (Rom. 7: 12). The law brought knowledge of sin, and sin took opportunity and sought to increase. Paul cites the example of coveting, which is seen both in Genesis at the fall of man (Gen. 3: 6) and in the last commandment (Ex. 20: 17). This shows the seriousness of the sin of coveting. Coveting increased because of sin using the knowledge gained from the law instead of the law bringing life as was its purpose, sin brought death in its place [Comment 5]. Paul clearly states that the law is holy and good (v. 12) and is not the cause of death (v. 13). Rather, he squarely blames the deceitfulness and utter sinfulness of sin for this result.

Gal. 3: 22, 24 show that the whole world is a prisoner of sin, and that the law was given as a tutor to lead us to Christ. The law and

commandments recognize the sinful nature and make us acutely aware of it. In so doing, they highlight the hopelessness of our natural situation. With greater knowledge of what not to do comes greater opportunity for sin (v. 8). An answer other than the law is required, and so we are led on to God's greater provision for us (Rom. 8: 3).

We believe that the conflict Paul speaks of in this portion was from his own personal experience. He gives a true assessment of himself by the power of the Holy Spirit. The old nature has been crucified with Christ (Gal. 2: 20), but the old nature is still there (v. 21). Verse 23 is a mark of one whose walk is close to the Lord and who has grown spiritually. A man of Paul's spiritual stature is far more aware of sin within than a man who has not grown much spiritually. This is borne out by Isaiah's experience when he could say in the presence of God, "Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts"<sup>11</sup> (Is. 6: 5). Whereas he had previously recognized the sinfulness of others, he now recognized his own sinfulness. A hymn says,

"And they who fain would serve Thee best  
Are conscious most of wrong within".

With this clarity of thought, Paul describes himself as wretched (v. 24). But what a triumph in v. 25! Thanks be to God indeed! In weakness God demonstrates His strength through us (2 Cor. 12: 10). As we decrease so He can increase. Living for God is not a matter of negative rules which lead to greater fleshly indulgence (Col. 2: 20-23), but a positive putting on of Christ. Only with Him in the first place will all other things be in order and the walk be by the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5: 16-24).

*D. Bartlett, S. Allport*

**From Vancouver, B. C.** In verses 14-25 one wonders whether the writer is referring to a hypothetical case or whether he is actually relating his own experience. If these verses refer to his own experience, do they indicate how he felt in his unregenerate days, or do they express his present inward exercises? [Comment i].

The man described is obviously not a prolific sinner but a God-fearing individual, who is endeavouring to gain divine favour and life everlasting by the deeds of the law [Comment 6]. Indeed this was how Paul lived when he was known as Saul. But he does not say, "O, wretched man that I was"<sup>1</sup>. (It is to be noted that verses 7-13 are in the past tense, and the verbs from 14-25 are in the present tense).

The phrase "inward man" which Paul uses is only found in two other scriptures in the New Testament.

In 2 Cor. 4: 16 the same apostle speaks of the "outward man" as perishing, but the "inward man" being renewed daily.

In Eph. 3: 16 he prays for his readers that they might be strengthened with the might of the Spirit in the "inward man". This phrase can only apply to believers. So it is difficult to interpret Rom. 7: 22 otherwise. Only the spiritual man delights in the Law of the Lord (Ps. 1).

Paul indicates that he had the flesh dwelling actively within him even after he had known salvation. This was Paul's normal experience.

The deliverance he cries out for is from "the body of this death". As long as Paul was alive the law of sin was continually active in the members of his body. It is only the coming of the Lord that would be the solution to this problem.

This portion cannot describe the experience of the unsaved person.

The conclusions that we as disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ can today draw from this portion are both humbling and salutary.

- (1) "In me . . . dwelleth no good thing". Peter could also say, "I am a sinful man, O, Lord". No one should fool himself, because the heart is deceitful.
- (2) "I find then the law<sub>f</sub> that to me who would do good, evil is present". There is a constant warfare between good and evil in each of us, with a bias towards the law of sin.
- (3) There is *no power* within us to do what is right. We may have the *will* but do not of ourselves have the power.
- (4) The flesh is always and continuously present, and it cannot be converted. The Lord said, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh". Only the power of God through the Holy Spirit can overcome.
- (5) The only way final victory will be achieved will be through the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We noted different contrasting laws mentioned in these verses; the law of sin and the law of God; the law of the renewed mind and the law at work in our members, the law of the Spirit and the law through Moses.

*John Robinson*

**From Wishaw:** Prior to our discussion of the subject, difficulty was expressed in understanding the seemingly complex issues presented here.

However, **it was understood that the experiences related by Paul were his own; but such experiences are also the lot of every believer to a greater or lesser extent. Each believer endeavouring to be an earnest disciple of the Lord will be subject to similar inward conflicts, as the hymn writer puts it: -**

**And all, O Lord, crave perfect rest,  
And to be saved from many a sin;  
And they who fain would serve thee best  
Are conscious most of wrong within.**

In Rom. 3: 20 Paul states, "For through **the law** cometh **the knowledge of sin**". This is **re-affirmed in Rom 7: 7** although **this time with reference to himself: "I had not known sin, except through the law"**<sup>11</sup>. The **law defines sin but is powerless to rectify it; in fact, the very prohibitions of the law are seized upon by sin, triggering off the sinful nature within.** The **fault does not lie with the law for "the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and righteous, and good". The fault lies with ourselves, for we are carnal i. e. sinful in nature, "sold under sin". Just as a slave is unable to procure his own freedom, so it is with us who are sold under sin; we are unable to secure our own freedom from the dominance of sin (without the intervention of the Holy Spirit).**

**It is evident that the sinful nature is not eliminated at the time of conversion; in fact its existence in the life of the believer, and the strife it causes is borne out by Paul's experience; because of sin dwelling in him (v. 17) he did not do the good he wanted to do. Instead the evil he did not want to do, he did. Such a confession should evoke the sympathy of every believer, for which of us has not experienced the potency of sin which resides within us all ?**

However, **Paul was not seeking sympathy, nor was he making excuses for his actions. What was uppermost in his mind, was the solution to the dominance of sin. He was also acutely aware that the solution could not be provided by himself. Hence the cry of almost total despair in v. 24. Such tones of desperation could only be alleviated by God through Jesus Christ. The sense of relief shown by Paul on his realisation of this is quite apparent: "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord".**

*D. Gray, J. Shepka*

#### COMMENTS

**1. (Derby):** This section of **chapter 7** certainly is autobiographical, but one would think **that most readers of this magazine would recognize this struggle as one which occurs daily within themselves. We are in the same**

situation as the apostle Paul, in that we still have a corrupt human nature co-existing with that which has been born from above.

*P. L. H.*

Our friends arithmetic shows clearly that this passage is autobiographical. We are certain, too, that each of our friends will find what Paul has written to be true to their own experience. We would, therefore, suggest that Paul, here, uses a proper teaching device, namely illustrating the working of sin by pointing at his own life rather than someone else's.

2. (Derby): We take it that "to life" here means "towards life". See Comment 5.

3. (Derby): There is no verb "to take" in Rom. 7: 24. The rendering quoted is an interpretation of a verse the sense of which is correctly given in the Revised Version. It is clear from the entire passage that death is something that is present, active and characteristic of the human body throughout the life of sinners, even saved sinners, and not merely a final state.

*I. E. P.*

4. (Liverpool): It will be seen from the following that the interpretation "spring to life" was not always favourably regarded.

"Sin is alive indeed, and vigorous among men ever since the fall of Adam; yet it is destitute of power in innocent children ignorant of the law; but when they come to a knowledge of the law, sin recovers its power in them also. Others less aptly explain *anezese* here began to live, sprang into life." (Greek to English Lexicon, J. H. Thayer 1890). See also Comment 5.

*E. A.*

5. (Rhyl): Rom. 7: 10 is very carefully put indeed and equally accurately translated in the Revised Version; It was not the purpose of the law to bring life. That is an impossibility for "if there had been a law given which could make alive, verily righteousness would have been of the law" (Gal. 3: 20). It was a means of preserving and sustaining life already given (Rom. 10: 5) as had been well said, 'it was a rule of life, not a means of life' (*Bible Studies* 1962, vol 30 p. 175). Equally the law was "unto death" (Rom. 7: 10) since it was a means through (Rom 7: 13) which death, already passed unto all men (Rom 5: 12), could be signified to them. So it was that the "letter killeth" (2 Cor. 3: 6) and the law was a "ministration of death" and "of condemnation" (2 Cor. 3: 7,9). The law, however, is "unto life"

(Rom. 7: 10) eternal, as the Lord, **Himself** showed (Jn. 5; 39) and is so in two ways:

- (1) It points men to **Christ, the** source of **eternal life**.
- (2) **It awakens men to their** sinfulness, so creating a sense of **need, especially in the matter** of righteousness, **that can only be met** in Christ.

**It may be that friends are misled by the NIV rendering of Rom. 7: 10 which incorporates without warning words which are not in the Scripture so making it say that the commandment "was intended to bring life"<sup>11</sup>. This, of course, is the opposite of the teaching of the Scriptures and shows the extreme danger of mixing explanation with translation, especially when the reader is given no indication of the incorporated words which are not in the Scriptures.**

*I. E. P.*

**6. (Vancouver):** There is no suggestion in the passage of seeking everlasting life through law-keeping; indeed, the whole epistle is a rebuttal of such a suggestion. **Rather, it is the *cri de coeur*** of one who knows what he should do, but finds himself **unable** consistently to do it. This accords with what Vancouver friends say **later in their** contribution.

*P. L. H.*

## **DID MOSES LOSE HIS TEMPER?**

Lack of space forbade comment on **an interesting matter** concerning Moses **raised by friends in Vancouver in *Bible Studies* 8610 pp. 153 - 4**. In giving examples of the power of sin in the life of the believer they cite the occasions when Moses struck and killed the Egyptian (Ex. 2: 12) and when he struck rather than spoke to the rock (Num. 20: 8 - 13) saying that these cases show his giving way to his temper and anger. The Lord swiftly condemned Moses for striking the rock, describing it as

an act of unbelief (Num. 20: 13) even rebellion (Num. 27: 14), and severely punished him (Num. 20: 12). Since Moses "was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth"<sup>11</sup> (Num. 12: 3) but had been severely provoked it is likely that friends in Vancouver are correct in their deduction that, on this occasion, Moses lost his temper. It is worth repeating and taking to heart, however, that it was not this but his unbelief that the Lord marks out as his point of weakness. As regards the matter of his slaying of the Egyptian, there are complicating issues which suggest that the two cases may not be so similar as at first sight appears.

On the day after the event Moses feared because the thing was known. He had taken pains to see that there was no witness. The act, therefore, cannot have taken place in the presence of the wronged Israelite. This delay and the pre-meditation of Moses show that the slaying was not done in a spontaneous fit of temper. Further evidence to this effect is given by Stephen who speaks of Moses defending the Israelite (Acts 7: 24) using a word for defend (*amunomai*) which means to "ward off". Thus his first action was one of defensive intervention, to be followed by later offensive action. The latter is described by the Israelite on the following day (Acts 7: 28) as killing, using a word (*anaireb*) which in almost every case of its use in the New Testament indicates pre-meditated slaying (e.g. Luke 22: 2, Acts 9: 23) and in some cases, judicial slaying (e.g. Luke 23: 32, Acts 13: 28, 26: 10).

Indeed, in the "Englishman's Greek New Testament"<sup>11</sup> it is rendered "put to death" in Acts 7: 28. This is very suggestive when we recall that the Israelite did not challenge Moses over his having slain the Egyptian but challenged his authority over Israelites. It is as though such action was acceptable from one with the appropriate authority. Although we do not know the extent of the authority of the one who was regarded as a prince and a judge over the Egyptians there is enough evidence in the behaviour of the Israelites to show that Moses' action was deliberate and not done in an intemperate mood.

In fact, the authority of Moses to slay the Egyptian derived from an altogether higher source than merely earthly dominion for

**"he supposed that his brethren understood how that God by his hand was giving them deliverance" (Acts 7: 25). We might suppose that he acted hastily but we would be wrong for it is the Israelites and not Moses whom the Lord condemns for their refusal of the Saviour (Acts 7: 25, 35). It would thus be wrong to say that Moses<sup>1</sup> act in slaying the Egyptian arose from a sinful act of temper for he was adhering to the word he had from the Lord. But there is an equally high, if not higher reason, for recognizing that the action of Moses was correct and that is that his actions pre-figure those of the Greater than Moses (Acts 7: 35-53) who came to "proclaim release to the captives" (Luke 4: 18) and was similarly rejected. Although the prefiguring is by contrast, for example, Moses judged the Egyptian but the Lord came not to judge but to seek and to save, we would not fault the action of Moses for fear of spoiling the type by prefiguring the sinless actions of the Lord by a sinful act of a man.**

Thus at several levels of consideration; by the careful reading of the Scripture in Exodus chapter 2, by examination of the choice of words in Acts 7, by consideration of the obedience of Moses and by contemplating his prefiguring of the Lord we conclude that Moses slew the Egyptian, not in a fit of temper, but in deliberate carrying out of the will of God.

Although not strictly relevant to the matter of pre-meditation it may be helpful to add that the reason for Moses waiting till no man was around before slaying the Egyptian and then hiding him in the sand does not, in this light, appear as an act of a guilty man but rather a matter of prudence prefiguring the One who did many things in secret (e.g. Matt. 8: 4, Mark 5: 43),

*/ . E. P.*

# Bible Studies

A magazine for the exploration of the Word of God [Acts 17: 11]

EDITORIAL

8612

We have now reached the halfway stage in our consideration of the epistle to the Romans, and we should, perhaps, review the stages of the apostle Paul's argument. He first shows that God has revealed himself in some way to everyone, and everyone has the duty to respond to what he has received. Following this, Paul demonstrates that all, both Gentile and Jew, have failed in their response and stand condemned as sinners before God. Then God's work of grace is presented, showing that God grants justification through faith, and chapter 5 shows that the basis for that justification is the work done by Christ on our behalf. In chapter 6, the apostle begins to speak of the consequences of all this for our conduct, and this theme continues to the end of the book, apart from the lengthy parenthesis of chapters 9 to 11 dealing with the position of the Jews.

This review is germane to the understanding of the first verse of chapter 8, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus". If this is taken to mean that there is no eternal judgement to those in Christ Jesus, it seems strange to place it at this point in the argument, because this conclusion was reached in chapter 3. Furthermore, it is set in the context of a passage dealing with the conflict between the old and the new natures, the work of the flesh and the work of the Holy Spirit. It is suggested that Gk. *Katakrima* can here be translated 'penal servitude' (see F. F. Bruce, *Romans* ); there is no life of bondage for those who are in Christ. Deliverance

from **the** conflict of **chapter 7** conies through **the work** of **the Holy Spirit**, **presented** in **chapter 8** [Comment 11. In **the** "Comments" section of **this issue** **there** is **some** discussion **on** **the** interpretation of **the references** to 'spirit' in **this month's study passage**, **but**, as is pointed out, **whatever** view is **taken there** is no difference in **the practical** result. Victory over **the flesh** comes **through the** leading of **the Holy Spirit** of those whom **He** indwells. **We can thus see the work of the Trinity** in **the** gospel unfolded by **Paul**. **The grace** of **God the Father** determined to **save us**, **the Son** suffered for **us**, and **the Holy Spirit** **bears witness to the** results of **the work**; **that we are** children of **God**, joint-heirs with **Christ**.

**At this stage** of our **study** of **Romans**, Editors would like to **thank** all who **have** contributed to **the** magazine **this year**. **Please** continue to follow **the subjects** and send **us** your **papers**. To **any** groups who **began** but fell **by the** wayside during **the year**, we send our encouragement to **start** again.

P. L. H.

#### THE MIND OF THE FLESH AND THE MIND OF THE SPIRIT (Rom. 8: 1-17)

**From Aberdeen:** A merciful **God** has **balanced** His condemnation of sin in **the flesh** with **the** sending of His own Son for sin **that** is, as an offering for sin (Rom. 8: 3, Heb. 10: 18). This is **the** reason **why** **the** apostle **can** boldly write "... no condemnation to **them that are** in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8: 1).

Doubt **seems present** in **the** Revised Version as to **the** meaning of **many of the** references to **the** "spirit". Believers **walk after the** "spirit" (v. 4). Is this not **the** Holy Spirit? The Authorised Version certainly indicates **the** Holy Spirit. **Of course** **there** is absolute clarity in **both** versions concerning **the fact** that it is indeed **the** Holy Spirit **who bears** witness with **our** spirit, letting **us** know **that we are** children of **God** (v. 16). In support of this understanding is **the** reasoning of **verse 9** that if **the** Spirit of **God** **dwells** in **us** we are "in **the** Spirit", as **opposed to** being "in **the** flesh". Moreover **the** "mind of **the** flesh"

is contrasted with the "mind of the Spirit" (v. 6). In harmony with this, verse 13 would show that it is only by the Spirit of God that we are enabled to make to die the doings of the body. Preceding this statement is the fact that our mortal bodies shall be quickened "through His Spirit" (v. 11). Proceeding from v. 13 is a continuing reference to the "Spirit of God" who leads sons of God. Having said all this, help would be appreciated on explaining the use of the word "Spirit" of adoption in v. 15 (Comment 2 ).

The thought conveyed in v. 17 (that we are joint-heirs with Christ) is the promise of a possession associated with Christ. Just what form this possession will take and how much it will involve will be influenced by that manner of our suffering "with" Christ: "If so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified with Him".

*James Johnson*

**From Ajegunle:** We referred to the flesh as the sinful nature of man. We agreed that the unregenerated man is controlled by this inherent sinful nature (Gal. 5: 19-21).

We also agreed that the spirit referred to in this theme is the Holy Spirit. The Spirit-controlled man is made manifest in his fruit as stated in Gal. 5: 22, 23.

It was suggested that obedience to the mind of the flesh leads to sin and death (v. 6); see also Jas. 1: 5, 15. The fleshly minded believer cannot please God (v. 8) [Comment 3]. To obey the spirit is life (v. 6) and peace, we suggest that this *life* is the abundant life (John 10: 10 AV), or full life (NIV) mentioned by the Lord.

We suggest also that if a believer obeys the mind of the Spirit, (vv. 13-17) the deeds of the body are put to death (v. 13) and the desire to sin is lacking. It is due to that fact that they obey the mind of the Spirit that the attributes of children of God are shown outwardly.

*M. Imoukhuede, G Okwena*

**From Birkenhead: God's word is that the wages of sin is death, but because Christ has died bearing judgement, the repentant sinner can happily rejoice in the fact that no condemnation is in prospect for him.**

**The believer in Christ Jesus is set free from the law of sin and of death, but the law of the Spirit operates in the new life and obligations associated with it are brought to bear on the enlightened mind.**

**"The law... was weak" says Paul. It is helpless to meet the need of the sinner seeking to fulfil its demands (Gal. 3: 21) but God was able to deal with the matter. He sent His Son and as sinbearer, sentence was passed and executed on Him. Jesus appeared as a man amongst men. His outward appearance was as that of other men, yet although He was in the likeness of sinful flesh, there was that inner purity so needful for the One marked out as the Lamb of God.**

**It is only the believer who is indwelt by the Spirit of God who is able to fulfil the righteousness of the law (v. 4). Paul writes of this matter in similar terms to the Galatian saints (ch. 5). Until an individual is born again he cannot 'mind'<sup>1</sup> or have an affinity with the things of the Spirit.**

**The mind of the Spirit in the believer consequent upon the possession of eternal life, the peace with God which issues therefrom and the glad subjection to the will of God stand in contrast to the state of the unbeliever with the mind of the flesh. The latter cannot please God, cannot be subject to the law of God, and is at enmity with God and in a state of death in God's sight.**

**The assurance is given that the believer is indwelt by the Spirit. Thus it is clear to the believer that he belongs to God. Whilst the body is still prone to sin, righteousness is imputed and the Spirit of life operates. Almighty power was manifested by God when His Son was raised from the dead, and that same power through the working of the Spirit is able to manifest itself beginning with the quickening to fruitful works of the believer. An alternative view was put that v. 11 had only a reference to the time of resurrection of the believer's body to immortality [Comment 4].**

**Paul, having spelled out the believer's position, now stresses that we are not beholden to the flesh, but rather there is an obligation to be led by the Spirit, living a life becoming to our new status. We are**

by adoption sons of God. This highlights for us the fact that we are what we are by divine choice, and the Spirit confirms the truth of it to our spirits. We are heirs by right to an inheritance, and whilst there may be present suffering there is assurance of future glory with Him who died to save us.

*R. D. Williams*

**From Derby:** Two contrasting states are presented to us in this portion, and as we examine them we find our former state is at enmity with God (v. 7).

The law given by God only showed the inherent weakness of the flesh, for the flesh could not itself ever achieve the righteousness demanded by God. Hence the apostle commences "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus".

The mind of the flesh puts us under condemnation, and the law could not bring about deliverance. If there had been a law given which could make alive, then righteousness would have been of the law. The natural mind is shut off and hates the Creator, and ever will, and it is only by divine intervention that this state of affairs can be changed. The basic doctrine is "Ye must be born again".

We see very forcibly the natural state of man's mind when we consider what took place in Jerusalem, for Satan was able to win over the people of Israel against the Lord, when they said "Crucify Him". They would have no dealings with Him, and as a result we see lawlessness prevailing and rebellion in the heart. Sin is lawlessness (1 John 3: 4).

In Eph. 2: 1-3 there is a brief description of the condition of the mind of the flesh. In Gal. 5: 19-21 we see all the things relating to the outworkings of the fleshly mind which are attributable to the way the natural mind operates.

We are therefore reminded in v.9 that we "are not in the flesh" for this epistle was written to those "Called to be Jesus Christ's", and

as such we should be walking guided by the Spirit of God, our minds being constantly renewed day by day. We are reminded (v.10), that if Christ is in you the body must be deemed dead to sin, and we should have the mind of the Spirit. For the Spirit is more powerful than he that was within us.

**Gal. 5: 22-24** describes those things which should characterize us in our daily living, not desiring the things of the world. Our walk is a constant daily denial of self in order that by our living others may see in us that we are a testimony concerning the revelation we have received. If we dabble in the things of the world our witness is of no avail.

There are two powers at work within us, the one 'the flesh'<sup>1</sup> and the other 'the Holy Spirit'. Have these powers equal rights? No! One is a usurper and the Other alone has the just claim to reign within us. The rights of the old ruler came to an end at the Cross, when we died in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. Nevertheless the old ruler will not give up the throne without a struggle, and so the flesh lusts against the Spirit and desires to gain our allegiance and to displace the rightful Ruler in our hearts. The fact that we know the flesh is a conquered foe, whose rights have been broken through the Cross, should give us triumph over it, and should enable us with rejoicing hearts to glory in the Lord Jesus Christ, who delivers us from the tyrant's grasp.

*E. W. Foster, G. W. Conway*

From Liverpool: *The New Relationship*. This is a passage of no compromise; those in Christ Jesus who know Him as Saviour, are absorbed into Him, are born again, made completely new and freed from "the law of sin and of death" are contrasted with those who live according to the sinful nature and who cannot please God. This is a new relationship, completely foreign to the natural man, which brings with it new obligations (v.12) and has a new source of power. Paul's confident assertion in v.1 stems from what God did by sending His own Son to be a sin offering and to be, in relation to the law, what we could never be.

*The Mind.* Two ways of life are contrasted and to each the mind is the key. It controls the input to the life in question and sets the tone for its behaviour, leading to death in one case, life and peace in the other. Although those controlled by the sinful nature can have no part in the things of the Spirit, sadly it is possible for those who should be living by the Spirit to have their minds turned into things which will ruin their lives and cause spiritual paralysis. What we think about and meditate on will be the key to our lives, so important is the mind.

*The New Life.* The new life is possible for us by the action of the Holy Trinity on our behalf; the Spirit of God (also called the Spirit of Christ and the Spirit of Him who raised Christ from the dead) is in us and Christ is in us and the Father gives life to our mortal bodies. We should live as sons of our Heavenly Father, so that in character we are like Him having received "the Spirit of sonship" (NIV) or "adoption" (RV, NIV margin). Sonship expresses the thought better; it is not adoption as in our 20th century use of the term that is intended but that of the first century when an adopted son 'was a son deliberately chosen by his adoptive father to perpetuate his name and inherit his estate; he was no whit inferior in status to a son born in the ordinary course of nature' (F.F. Bruce) [Comment 5]. Such is our privileged position in God's family and hence our obligations!

*D. J. Webster*

**From Newcastle:** Verse 10 "... the body is dead because of sin..." In what way is the body dead? (1) Is it that it is subject to corruption because of sin and *will* die? (2) Is it that, because of our sin and in order to be saved, we have had to renounce our bodies and God regards them as having been baptized into the death of Christ and buried with Him (Rom. 6: 3-4)?

The first view applies to the bodies of all sinful mankind. The second view indicates that the bodies of Christians are more dead than those of non-Christians. Moreover it implies that Christ dwelling in us is the reason that our bodies are dead [Comment 6].

Whatever is the cause of the death of our bodies this passage is less ambiguous about the means by which our bodies now live. Verses 2 and 11 indicate that it is the Spirit that gives us a resurrection, comparable to that of Christ [Comment 7].

A further way in which our bodies could be thought of as having been dead is that (3) the Spirit has now given new potential to our bodies. It was the Spirit that snatched Philip away from the desert and took him to Azotus (Acts 8). This was similar to the potential of the body of Jesus after he was raised but not before. "The likeness of sinful flesh"<sup>11</sup> (v. 3) of the body of Jesus at His coming into the world may indicate that, in His body, He took on all the limitations of our sinful and 'dead' bodies [Comment 8].

Life is far more than a natural, physical existence. Although human bodies have a legitimate function to play, they should be subservient to a spiritual outlook of life and peace, subject to the law of God (vv. 6-7). When the latter is lacking and the body has taken control there is only one course, death (v. 13). For the non-Christian this will culminate in the coming judgement and punishment (v. 8). For the Christian the corresponding death occurs now by the work of the Spirit (v. 13).

Only if we die now, with Christ in us, rather than later, without Christ, do we have the opportunity of the new life (v. 10).

"For whosoever would save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for My sake... shall save it".

*P. J. Stoner*

**From Paisley:** If there was nothing else than that laid out in verse 1 to commend the Christian life then it would still be well worth it "therefore there is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus", who do not live according to their sinful nature but according to the spirit. It is so precious to consider that, because of nothing that we have done, we no longer stand condemned before God. From the context of the verse it can only be concluded that it isn't simply God's desire that we live according to the spirit but that it is expected of us to do so [Comment 9].

The price for setting us free was nothing less than the sacrifice of **our** Lord (or is He just Saviour?) as a sin offering for us. We see in this the ultimate act of submission to God's will and as disciples of Jesus, following in His footsteps, we must seek to imitate fully this submission to God's will. This was painful for the Lord, as we can see from the prayer made in the garden of Gethsemane, but He submitted to His Father's will and if we also want to follow in the path of discipleship then there is no reason to think that life is going to be any easier for us. If we are disciples then it will be just as painful for us to be dedicated to following the Father's will.

The whole 'secret' of living in God's will can be brought down to our minds and what we have in them. In our lives our actions can be related to what we have in our minds and what we have fed our thoughts on. If we fill our minds with Christ then we will live in accordance with God's will, but if we allow impure things to enter our minds then this impurity will spill over into our actions and our way of life. If our minds are set on what the Spirit desires we will live in accordance with the Spirit.

Verses 6-8 present an interesting argument against those Christians who attempt to become involved in politics to bring about "world peace". The simple truth of the matter is that peace is the way of God but since the sinful mind is hostile to God and His will then it cannot fully attain peace. The best way we can help the world is by proclaiming the gospel and its message, because contained within the message of the gospel is God's peace and the equality of man, i.e. we are all sinners and none better than the other. However, in saying this we can never forget our obligation to help those in need, never forgetting our first priority to proclaim Christ.

We are now controlled by the Spirit and everyone who has accepted Jesus as Saviour has the Spirit dwelling within him. As those controlled by the Spirit we have an obligation to live according to the desires of this Spirit, namely the glorification of God's name. Considering just how much God has exalted us, how can we ignore His call for us to give our lives over to His service? We have been made co-heirs with Jesus, we who were rebellious to Him, and what greater stimulus is there for giving our lives over to His will than to consider what He has done for us. As sons of God we are expected to be like our Father in what we say and do. So let us ail with one accord cry "Abba, Father" and act as obedient children, with one spirit and voice saying 'Make my will Thy will'<sup>1</sup>.

*W. F. McKaig*

**From Vancouver:** The believer's **three great enemies are the flesh, the world and the Devil.**

**Just what is meant in the Scriptures by the term "the flesh"<sup>11</sup>? Is it a physical thing, as in Rom, 2: 28, where it indicates the necessity of circumcision? From the majority of scriptural references it seems to be a spiritual thing; a nature that is weak, impotent, and helpless; a nature that is vulnerable to sin and temptation, and controlled by inner lusts and desires that are contrary to God. Listed in Gal. 5: 19-21 are the works of the flesh. The occurrences of the word "flesh" in this passage in Romans are in reference to (1) the Lord (2) the Law (3) the unbeliever and (4) the believer.**

(1) The Lord was sent **in the likeness of sinful flesh.** His **true sinless humanity was a fact.** His temptation and ours are on a **different level.** We are **tempted when we are drawn away after our lusts but to the Lord sin did not have such an appeal.** He was **tempted in all points as we are...** without sin. God cannot be **tempted with evil, and so the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, could likewise not be tempted by sin** [Comment 10 J. **Satan tried very hard but failed.** He was without sin **in the flesh.** He became an offering for sin. **By His death sin was put away,**

(2) The Law **laid down strict rules of prevention but it could not make anyone righteous nor give anyone life.** The Law could condemn, **but it could not justify the sinner.** Scripture states **clearly that the Law is weak on account of the flesh.**

(3) The unbeliever is **"in the flesh", "after the flesh", "minds the things of the flesh".** This is **the realm in which the unbeliever lives.** Consequently **he cannot please God, for the mind of the flesh is enmity against God and this leads to death.**

(4) The **believer** in contrast, is not **"in the flesh", nor does he "walk after the flesh".** Instead the believer is **"in the Spirit", because of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.** So it is **by the Spirit's power that the believer is able to mortify the deeds of the body and the activities of the flesh through its members.**

The opposition of **the mind of the flesh to the mind of the Spirit is aptly likened to the record of the Amalekites in their opposition to the Israelite nation.** They **constantly sought to hinder their progress and**

later to prevent them from entering the promised land. Saul was commanded to exterminate them, but he did not do so and an Amalekite had a hand in his death. Later still in the reign of queen Esther the opposition came from Haman who was an Amalekite. In this case the Amalekite was defeated.

So the application to our lives is that the battle between the mind of the flesh and the mind of the Spirit goes on daily and continuously. It is very important that the mind of the flesh is totally defeated. There can never be any compromise.

*J. Robinson*

**From Wishaw:** This chapter begins boldly with a conclusive statement which declares the freedom of those who are in Christ Jesus. Following this declaration Paul speaks about two opposing laws and two opposing minds or conditions. The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus is understood to be the divine principles governing the spiritual regeneration of a person, while the law of sin and death refers to the Mosaic laws which pointed out sin and resulted in death not life. Although both laws are diametrically opposed and powerful the law of the Spirit has to be the more powerful of the two or else there would be no hope for the sinner. This is why Paul is so definite in verse 1.

To illustrate the interaction of these two laws the following example is given. The law of aerodynamics and the law of gravity may be likened to the law of the Spirit and the law of sin and death respectively. The force of gravity pulls an object down while the principles of aerodynamics cause a body to generate upward lift to overcome gravitational pull. The law of sin and death keeps the sinner away from God by condemning his sin, but the law of the Spirit overcomes the power of sin and death to make us free to rise above the degradation of sin.

Verse 3 touches on the humanity of our Lord Jesus Christ who, by being in the likeness of sinful flesh, could condemn sin in the flesh. There could be no pardon for the sinner without an offering for sin. The essence of the law of Moses can therefore be expressed in a way not possible before in the life of a disciple of Christ who is walking after the Spirit.

We know from Gal. 5: 16, 17 that the flesh and the Spirit are contrary the one to the other and that a conflict exists between these two minds in the believer. It is believed that Paul is generalising when he says

to the saints in Rome: "ye are not in the flesh, but in the spirit" because of what Gal. 5 teaches as indicated above [Comment 11 J.

Not only are believers <sup>f</sup>in Christ<sup>1</sup> but <sup>f</sup> Christ is in them<sup>1</sup> as Paul teaches here and as the Lord explained to His disciples in John 14: 23. It could be said that John 14: 2 speaks of mansions in Heaven while John 14: 23 speaks about mansions on earth.

There are two opinions whether this quickening in verse 11 has to do with (a) the believer's resurrection or (b) the work of God as taught in Eph. 2: 4, 5 [Comment 4].

G. K. Schleyer, M. D. MacDonald

## COMMENTS

1. **(Editorial):** Is the force of the "now" in Rom. 8: 1 not to emphasize that a dispensational change has taken place from the day of the law to the day of grace?

I. E. P.

2. **(Aberdeen):** As a comparison of various translations of this passage will show, it is not easy to determine whether Gk. *pneuma* indicates the Holy Spirit, the human spirit, or more abstractly a character or moral quality. In the original, of course, there is no capitalization to mark references to the Holy Spirit, and the use in translations of an initial capital simply indicates the opinion of the translators as to the interpretation of the passage. The context and meaning of the passage is the only basis on which a decision can be made. The conclusions reached in the Aberdeen paper concur with those of many commentators. J. Miller, in his Notes to the Epistle to the Romans, takes every use of the word in this passage (except, of course, "our spirit" in v. 16) to refer to the Holy Spirit. In F. F. Brace's commentary on Romans (Tyndale N. T. Commentaries) he comments "When 'spirit' is used in contrast to 'flesh' it might be natural to suppose that the human spirit is meant. Yet, so frequently in the following argument does the word clearly refer to the Spirit of God that it is better to take it as referring to Him throughout (even where it appears in antithesis with 'flesh'... ), except where the context rules this sense out. The human spirit is not excluded, however, where the divine Spirit is understood. For Paul, the human spirit is dormant or dead until it is aroused to life by the Spirit of God; hence to 'walk... after the *pneuma*

implies the action of the human spirit in response to the guidance of the divine Spirit<sup>11</sup>.

Notwithstanding these comments, there is something to be said for the interpretation represented by the capitalization of the RV. The Lord said to Nicodemus "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (Jn. 3: 6). He there presented an antithesis between all that was involved in natural generation and the inheritance of the fallen nature, and that which arises from regeneration, which is spirit, and free from sin (1 Jn. 3: 9). It does not seem unreasonable to transport this antithesis to Rom. 8, and see there the contrast between the works which proceed from the old nature (the flesh) and those which proceed from the new (the spirit). This naturally follows the previous chapter, which deals with the internal conflict which Paul himself felt. This explanation is at least as satisfactory as the alternative throughout the passage, and v. 9 would be almost tautologous if the first occurrence of 'spirit'<sup>1</sup> were to be taken to refer to the Holy Spirit. Of course, the fact that 'the spirit'<sup>1</sup>, in the sense of the new creation in man, arises from the operation of the Holy Spirit means that the practical teaching taken from the passage is not much different, whichever view is taken.

Gk. *pneuma*, like the English word 'spirit', expresses a wide range of meaning: Vine's Expository Dictionary distinguishes some fifteen different usages. In v. 15 the references are probably not to spirits as entities, but to feelings or emotions; Vine classifies them as "moral qualities and activities".

3. (**Ajegnle**): Those who are "in the flesh" (v. 8) are people who have never been regenerated (see v. 9), not fleshly minded believers.

4. (**Birkenhead and Wishaw**): Although v. 11 refers to the physical resurrection of Christ, this is mentioned to give point to the power of the Spirit to give life. A man before regeneration is dead while he lives; after his new birth he enters a new life, although his body is still subject to death (mortal). The reference is to the action of the indwelling Spirit in the living person.

P. L. H.

5. (Liverpool): This quotation does not **appear to give a clear account of adoption. Adoption means "son-placing". It does not mean "son-making". Though used only five times in the New Testament (Rom. 8: 15, 23; 9: 4; Gal. 4: 5; Eph. 1: 15) the word describes three different kinds of son-placing. Rom. 9: 4 refers to the position given to Israel, God's Son in a past dispensation (Ex. 4: 22). Gal. 4: 5 deals with Jewish believers, sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, and refers to their present, dispensational position in contrast to the position of Jewish believers of the past dispensation who, though believers, were still subject to legal bondage. Rom. 8: 15, 23; Eph. 1: 5 refer to what will happen to all those of this dispensation who are sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus when the Lord comes to the air.**

*J. E. P.*

6. (Newcastle): **"If Christ is in you" is the premise of the argument, and what follows must apply particularly to those of whom that is true. Paul wrote to the Colossians "ye died, and your life is hid with Christ in God" (Col. 3: 3). This accounting of our former selves as dead results from our union with Christ in His death, and is not a precondition of our salvation. The presence of the Holy Spirit means that the bodies of Christians are more alive than those of other people 1 Our mortal (i. e. subject to death) bodies are quickened (i. e. made alive) through Him.**

7. (Newcastle): **The quickening through which we now live is not a resurrection in the same sense as that in which Christ was raised; that was a reunion of spirit and soul and body.**

8. (Newcastle): **The words "the likeness of sinful flesh" show the inspiration of the Holy Spirit in the choice of words. "The likeness of flesh" alone would give the impression that the Lord's humanity was not real. "In sinful flesh" would say that He had sin in Him. The words show that the Lord came "in the flesh" (1 Jn. 4: 2), but only in the likeness of flesh which was sinful, not actually having that sin.**

9. (Paisley): **It is generally agreed by competent scholars that the second phrase of v. 1 in the AV does not form part of the**

original text, hence its omission in RV, RSV, NEB, NIV etc.

10. (Vancouver): It is certainly correct to say that the Lord's "true and sinless humanity was a fact", but is it true to say that "His temptations and ours are on a different level"? The whole point of the argument in Heb. 4: 14-16 lies in the fact that the Lord has borne the same temptations that we have to bear. If most of the temptations to which we are subject did not touch Him, or if He bore temptations of a different sort, these verses would be incomprehensible. The phrase "yet without sin"<sup>11</sup> (Gk. *choris hamartias* ) refers to the result of the temptation, not to its nature. Because the Lord Jesus was a man, he had all the natural (not in the word's pejorative sense) desires of a man, and the indulgence of these desires in the wrong circumstances, or in excess, would have been sin. For instance, when the Lord was hungry (Mat. 4: 1-4) the tempter said "If thou art the Son of God, command that these stones become bread". It was no sin to be hungry, or to make bread, but the Lord knew that it was God's will that He should depend on Him until the time for His fast had ended. Desire for food, legitimate in itself, could become gluttony, with which the Lord was falsely charged (Mat. 11: 19). Gk. *epituknia*, translated "lust" in Jas. 1: 14, 15, "denotes strong desire of any kind" (W. E. Vine), and this desire is not sinful, but "the lust, when it hath conceived, beareth sin". The Lord, resisting temptation, never permitted this step to occur, and "did no sin".

There was a difference, of course: the Lord did not have the hereditary depravity of the Adamic nature. However, this is obviously not necessary to temptation. Rom. 5: 12-21 contrasts the behaviour of Adam with that of Christ; neither had any depravity of nature, but Adam, in the most favourable possible environment, succumbed to temptation, while Christ, surrounded by a sinful world, was obedient and sinless. Our sinful nature in our unregenerate state makes it impossible for us to avoid sinning, but in essence the temptations to which we succumb are no different from those which the Lord overcame.

The effect of the deity of Christ must be considered. The Vancouver contribution, quoting from Jas. 1: 13, says "God cannot be tempted with evil, and so the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of

God, could likewise not be tempted by sin". This seems not to take account of the humanity of the Lord. We cannot understand fully the unique Person of the Lord Jesus Christ, but we can perceive from Scripture that He had two natures, but one personality. We must take great care in using such expressions as "as man... but as God..." relating to the Lord, because they may tend to divide His personality, but in this case we can see that the temptations appealed to His human nature. God could not be tempted, for the very entertainment of the idea would be a self-inconsistency, but Scripture specifically states that the Lord Jesus was tempted, so we must conclude that what made the temptation possible was His manhood. Scripture presents the Lord's temptations as real, requiring a real effort of rebuttal by Him. The reality of the choice was not diminished by the fact that the result was known; as needs to be pointed out in other connections, knowledge of the future is not the same as its determination. We are unable to analyse the relationship between the divine and human natures of the Lord, but must accept what has been revealed to us.

11. (Wishaw): Being "in the flesh" means being in the unregenerate state. The "flesh", the old sinful nature, is still present in the believer, but he is not *in* the flesh, in the sense of v. 8. As far as his status before God is concerned, any believer is "in the spirit", because he has the indwelling Spirit of God.

*P. L. H.*

## QUESTION AND ANSWER

**From Wishaw:** Would the condemnation of sin in the flesh (Rom. 8: 3) be futile and have no effect if the possibility to sin was not real in the Lord's life as Son of Man?

Verse 3 relates to the Son's being sent as a sacrifice for sin, and the condemnation of sin in the flesh refers to the fact that He "bare our sins in His body upon the tree" (1 Pet. 2: 24). The condemnation due to sin fell on the representative Man, in true human flesh. The possibility or otherwise of sin to the Lord in His life is thus irrelevant to the meaning of verse 3. The relative merits of *non posse peccare* (being not able to sin) and *posse non peccare* (being able not to sin) are most interesting to consider, but do not form part of an answer to this question!

*P. L. H.*