

Bible Studies

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

THE BOOK OF ROMANS PART II

VOLUME 55

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

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Bible Studies

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

EDITORIAL

INTERCESSION

8701

In this month's study portion **the verb** "to intercede" (*entugchano*) occurs **three** times (Rom. 8: 26, 27, 34). It is especially noteworthy since it, or **the noun** intercession (*enteuxis*), occurs in only five other scriptures (Acts 25: 24, Rom. 11: 2, 1 Tim. 2: 1, 4: 5 and Heb. 7: 25). A good idea of its root meaning is indicated by its first occurrence (Acts 25: 24) **where** Festus, informing King Agrippa, of **the legal charges** brought against Paul by **the Jews**, uses **the word** *entugchano* which is well translated as **"made suit"** in **the Revised Version**. **Thus they** met with authority **and** made a formal presentation, in this case **an** accusation, about a third party. **It is striking that what they** brought was **an** accusation since this is **the** opposite of **what we are** accustomed to thinking of **as** intercession. A similar thing, though on a spiritual plane is recorded of Elijah (Rom. 11: 2), pleading or interceding with God *against Israel*. The noun *enteuxis* is **used of the prayer** of thanksgiving for daily food which, with **the word of God**, is said to sanctify it (1 Tim. 4: 5). **It is easy to see that food has been** sanctified by **what** is said in such scriptures as Mark 7: 1-23 **but** it is arresting to think of **the** seriousness and formality with which God must **regard such** giving of thanks. We would suggest **that such** "intercession" is to show our appreciation of **the fact that** our earthly food is not to **be** eaten for eating's sake **but that** it is specifically set **apart** for a spiritual purpose **such as that** outlined in Rom. 12: 1. Thus **the** prayer complements **at** points in time, **the** dispensational sanctification **made by the word** of God (Mark 7: 19, Acts 10: 15).

The remaining scriptures (Rom. 8: 26, 27, 34, 1 Tim. 2: 1, Heb. 7: 25) **are all** characterized by **the fact that** **the** word for making intercession is followed by **the Greek** preposition *huper*, which normally means "beyond" as friends in Bolton and Leigh aptly show by rephrasing **the**

the title of this month's subject to say "hyper-conquerors". Wherever it follows the word for intercession, however, the word to which it relates is always in the genitive case. When this occurs *huper* does not mean "beyond" but "on behalf of". Thus the Spirit intercedes on behalf of "us" (v. 26) and "the saints" (v. 27). Similarly the Son intercedes on behalf of "us" (v. 34) and the people of God (Heb. 7: 25) while those in churches of God are to intercede on behalf of "all men" (1 Tim. 2: 1). Here we have illustrated dramatically the character of New Covenant intercession: it is "on behalf of" others, never to their loss, unlike, for example the case of Elijah under the Old Covenant (Rom. 11: 2) or the Jews in their hatred of Paul (Acts 25: 24). This is what we normally understand intercession to be about. The power of this New Covenant meaning and doctrine is so great that this is the normal meaning of the word 'intercession'¹ as it is understood by the world at large.

Now the expression used concerning the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8: 26) is of surpassing interest because in addition to "maketh intercession" being followed by the all important word *huper* meaning ^fon behalf of^d we discover that the very word "maketh intercession" itself incorporates the word '*huper*'. It is *huperentugchano*. This repetition of the key word is in keeping with the extreme words which are used of the Spirit's work, "with groanings which cannot be uttered". It would appear, too, that the repetition drives us to the conclusion that the use of *huper* as part of the verb 'to intercede'¹ indicates **that** it means more than simply "on behalf of" as shown, for example in Dr. Young's concordance, for that is contained in the preposition which follows. Thus the word's double use emphasizes, by repetition, that the key fact of intercession under the New Covenant is that it is "on behalf of". It would appear, then, that we are returned to the more common use of *huper* as meaning beyond. That is to say the Spirit is described (v.26) as a 'hyper-intercessor'¹ and this, the permanent indwelling of Him, is at the root of all believers today being 'hyper-conquerors' "through Him that loved us".

While on the matter of these references to intercession we can hardly avoid observing that two similar things are said of both Spirit and Son in their intercessory roles. Thus their nearness to the Lord or to the knowledge of the will of the Lord (Rom. 8: 27, 34) is stated as the reason for their suitability, nay superiority, in this work. In addition the extreme effort of both in this work is also highlighted for the Spirit makes intercession "with groanings which cannot be uttered" (Rom. 8: 26) and the Son "ever liveth" to save "to the uttermost" (Heb.

7: 25). We can hardly avoid applying these lessons to that gathering of saints in a church of God, the prayer meeting, at which, the formal, legal business of intercession is to be made on behalf of all men (1 Tim. 2: 1). Such intercession is surely to be after the pattern of Son and Spirit, with all the force of nearness to God and close knowledge of His will as well as with extreme effort.

/ . E . P .

THE INDEX TO 'BIBLE STUDIES'¹

Readers will observe that this month's editorial contains a title related to its content. The reason for this is to aid compilation (D. V.) of any future index volumes for it was felt that the contents of previous Editorials could not be categorized without a huge amount of work falling upon the poor index compiler. This brings us to the fact that an Index to all the earlier volumes of Bible Studies (and Young Men's Corner) is now on sale from Hayes Press. We do feel, however, that we need draw but passing attention to its existence in these columns because those in possession of previous volumes will need hardly any persuasion to acquire the Index, so enhancing the value of their volumes.

Editors

MORE THAN CONQUERORS (Rom. 8: 18-39)

From Birkenhead: Paul was a man who had faced many hardships for the sake of the gospel (2 Tim. 1: 12, 2: 9; Eph. 3: 13). At the time of his writing to the Christians in Rome they were suffering persecution. He reminds his readers, however that present suffering is insignificant in comparison to the riches of future glory which awaits the believer in Christ.

Indeed, all creation is awaiting Christ's return, when God's glory will be fully shown in believers (1 John 3: 2, 1 Cor. 15: 50-54). As a result of Adam's disobedience, God has subjected creation to futility, decay, pain and suffering (Gen. 3: 17-19). While comment has been made that 'creation' here refers only to the animal world the thought was expressed that the curse in Gen. 3 would have extended beyond this. A day is coming when this curse will be removed. In the meantime that same creation lives in hope, i. e, the certainty, of a future deliverance. Those who are in Christ also groan because of indwelling sin (7: 24) anticipating the completion of Christ's redemption. This work was started when they put faith in Christ as Saviour to receive

their adoption as God's sons, which will be apparent in the redemption of their bodies (Phil. 3: 20, 21).

In vv. 26, 27 Paul speaks of the work of the Holy Spirit who draws alongside to help us in our weakness in prayer. The believer experiences many limitations because of his nature in Adam and he is often unable to express his true feelings or requests. Two points of view were expressed with regard to the Spirit's work in our prayer life: (1) His intercession is necessary to make our requests in such a way as to be acceptable to God, and (2) that the Spirit works in us to guide us in understanding God's will and to ask aright.

Paul then draws our attention to what God has done and will do. God has a sovereign plan and overrules all circumstances. From beginning to end everything is His work and according to His purpose. We need to see our present sufferings in the eternal perspective; we may never see a reason for them in our lifetime and may have to wait for a future day for the answer, remembering that God works for good in all things. We have cause to wonder that God has chosen and called us in His eternal omniscience. His doings are unchangeable and irresistible, nothing can alter their course. We should not lose faith when we go through bad times however much we suffer. Heb. 11: 25 shows us how Moses turned his back on Egypt's outward show and success realizing that present sufferings are not to be compared with the quality and quantity of the 'greater riches' that are in store.

No one can separate us from God's love. With God on our side no one can bring us down or detract from His purpose. We need have no fear of defeat since God has already won the victory in Christ. Accusations may be laid against us but we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ who dies for us, taking our penalty. God has provided every spiritual blessing in Christ (Eph. 1: 3-14).

J. D. Williams, A. Hyland

From Bolton and Leigh: The phrase "more than conquerors" (v.37), Vine informs us, signifies 'hyper-conquerors'; to be pre-eminently victorious. Viewing the entire portion under study in relation to this theme or title, we identified four ingredients which, as we contemplate them in turn, cause us to prove that our position is indeed one of being "more than conquerors". The four are: our hope; the Spirit; God's purposes of grace and Christ's love to us.

Our hope fortifies **us** in sufferings as it anticipates **the** revelation of **future** glory **and** of **the** sons of God, as **the** commencement of Christ's millennial rule, **at** His return to **earth** (2 Thes. 1: 10). This **event** is also **the** expectation of "**the** whole creation" (v. 22 *cf.* Gen. 1: 28; 3: 17... which seemed to us to imply **that** more **than** the animate creation was involved). Together with **the** creation which groans **that** it **may** be delivered from **the** bondage of corruption, children of God **are** also viewed as groaning whilst awaiting **the** final **aspect** of salvation, entailing **the** redemption of their bodies (*cf.* Phil. 3: 21) with **the** deliverance which **that** brings from **the** body's ultimate corruption. We **were** saved with this hope in view. This **we** **regard** as **the** sense of v. 24.

As **we** **turn** from sufferings to supplication, prior to **a** consideration of separation (or **the** impossibility of **such** from Christ's love) **later** in **the** paper, **we** focus on **the** Holy Spirit.

We understood **that** **we** **have** received Him as "**the** first fruits" (v. 23) in **the** sense of **an** earnest (Eph. 1: 14) or first instalment of **all** **that** is to come to **us** in **the** **great** goodness of our God. In addition to our groanings, and **that** of creation, **we** **are** given to understand in v. 26 that **the** interceding Spirit also groans. We rejoiced in **the** encouragement of v. 27 to **prayer** at times **when** **we** **are** unsure of **the** Lord's will. And **what** is more **we** noted **that** **we** **have** not one, **but** two, intercessors mentioned in **the** study portion (*cf.* v. 34).

Those whom **He** **has** **called** can **attempt** to plumb **the** **depths** of God's goodness to **them** in consideration of **the** eternal vista of God's gracious purposes given in vv. 29-30. The transforming process of our present experience will **be** consummated in complete conformity to **the** image of His Son **at** **the** **Rapture**. The "glorifying" of v. 30 is **yet** **future** (*cf.* v. 18).

There **was** discussion on **whether** **every** believer comes into **the** category of 'hyper-conqueror'¹ or could **be** considered **as** being pre-eminently victorious. **The** **general** mind **was** **that** **what** **we** **have** **here** could **be** aligned with **such** scriptures as Mat. 16: 18. Consideration of **the** context of Romans 8 shows it to **be** **that** of God's purposes of **grace** which **have** **the** justification, security and glorification of **every** believer **as** their object. **The** rhetoric of v. 34 **thus** finds its anticipated answer in v. 1 of this **chapter**. This is **a** **statement** which is **true** of **all** in Christ **Jesus**. However only those who **pass** through **the** experiences of vv. 35, 36 **test** and **prove** experientially **the** reality of being **hyper**-conquerors. An alternative view **was** **expressed**, namely **that** only those in **churches** of God could come into this category.

This viewpoint was based on such consideration as that those to whom the letter was written were in a church of God and that the original context of the citation in v.36 is of people of God in the Old Testament. We would appreciate further help on this point [Comment 1]

B. D. Johnston

From Derby: Our sufferings physical, mental, spiritual are real. Paul wrote of his sufferings (2 Cor. 11: 23-28), but there will be an end to the problems of this life. Then there will be no end to the glory which is to follow, our Lord's own glory. His presence and His home where He was rich, and where He is once again rich since Calvary^o will be ours to enjoy eternally. The exercise is to seek things above where Christ is (Col. 3: 1), and not let our sufferings take over as those who have no hope. The liberty of the glory will occur in a moment in the twinkling of an eye (1 Cor. 15: 52-58). The end product of Christ's work on Calvary will be people and their God together.

For this we groan with a deep desire which comes from the depths of our spirit to be released from the confines of these bodies (Rom. 8: 23). The Holy Spirit, too, groans and His work includes the following:

- (1) The Holy Spirit actually prays or intercedes for us.
- (2) His understanding of our feelings is taken up by Him and expressed in a way not possible by words.
- (3) He is constantly with us as we pray and is helping us to express the deep emotions and to live with those emotions which conflict. He also helpeth our infirmities. He understands our weaknesses of every kind and:
 - (a) encourages us to try harder;
 - (b) gives us strength to bear our struggles;
 - (c) consoles and chides our failures;
 - (d) teaches us to understand our privileges and responsibilities as children of God.

Our hearts belong to Him who redeemed us and purchased us by His blood (1 Pet. 1: 18-20). The Father searches our hearts and sees our response to Christ and knows the mind of the Spirit which is totally Christ-orientated and to this end helps us in all aspects of life and our relationship with God, It is clear comparing verse 28 with Rom. 5: 3-5 that we need to exercise constantly our faith in our God.

God 'calls'¹ people who love Him to follow Him. We can freely

accept His call, His invitation out of love. In another sense this call is our command, yet He does not use His almighty power to command an allegiance to follow His purpose or plan. Alas men can disobey God; since it is their choice, yet He showed such love to us, for God spared not His own Son. After such grace and such mercy He will freely give us all things. His greatest gift is followed by constant open handed, willing giving.

We are not worthy and yet, justified by God, we stand as His elect, His chosen ones. Our Lord Jesus Christ was dead (v.34), now He is in the highest place. He has all authority and all power. The triumphant glorious Lord is enthroned in heaven and we are under His protection; not now condemned by Him but protected by Him.

Thus, when our hearts sink, our eyes shall be opened to see that if God is for us who, since it is impossible to fight God, can be against us? The love of God in Christ Jesus is an eternal bond totally unbreakable. That same love binds us who are heirs, and joint heirs with Christ.

S. Wymer, G. W. Conway

From **Liverpool:** *Waiting for What?* Creation waits and we wait for liberation, freedom and salvation. Being more specific than that caused us difficulties. Some felt the creation includes the whole animal and vegetable worlds which in some way have also been affected by the sin of man, their head. Thus a revolution will take place during the millennial reign of Christ. Others could see no evidence of frustration in the vegetable kingdom and felt the reference is only to the animals. We know for certain, however, that when man is put right creation will revert to what it was meant to be. Of more difficulty, however, is v.19. What is so special about the revealing of the sons of God to creation? Surely it is Christ who will bring about change. In any event, we believe that for believers of this present age, the "redemption of our bodies"¹¹ will take place at the Rapture [Comment 2]

Help in Prayer: The Holy Spirit lives in us as a "first-fruits" or pledge, of something far greater to come. We do not know the mind of God well enough to pray as we ought, but the Spirit does and assists us in aligning our wills to the will of God. The Lord Jesus is also involved, searching our hearts and also knowing the mind of the Spirit (v.27) as well as interceding for us Himself (v.34).

God's purpose for us. Hope is the happy ingredient of our salvation. The Christian life should not be weary, defeated, waiting for release, but optimistic, looking forward to complete salvation. We rejoice in hope (12: 12); it is an anchor for the soul and it enters the sanctuary (Heb. 6: 19) where the Lord Jesus has gone on our behalf [Comment 3] It is the absolute assurance of the fulfilment of promises made to us by God. God wants us to be like Christ and, if we co-operate, will arrange the circumstances of our lives to work out His purposes to that end.

God works... for the good of those who love Him. This is the key, for it is only when there is love and therefore trust that we can accept circumstances which seem incomprehensible. It is only then that we can accept with peace and confidence those openings we would rather avoid. It is for this reason that we are described as "more than conquerors" [Comment 4]

D. J. Webster

From Newcastle **upon** Tyne; The splendour that will be revealed in us (v. 18) is something distinct from the present experience of the new life that we can find today if we live in the spiritual realm (v. 9). In the spiritual realm we find the freedom that has already been accomplished for us. One day that freedom will also extend to the physical realm. Whereas now there may be no physical evidence of our being sons of God, one day there will be.

At our conversion we repented of our sins. That repentance and trust in the work of our Lord Jesus caused the final consequence of sin, eternal death, to be lifted from us. For the moment we still suffer the consequences of the sinful world although we have transferred our allegiance away from it. Now we are in a similar position to creation which will one day be freed from the Curse but for the moment is the involuntary victim of the sinful choices of mankind.

The extent of the support that God gives us is illustrated in the matter of prayer. In our approach to God, God Himself provides the means of access, the Lord Jesus Christ. But because of our weakness more than that is required. We are unable even to form the words that could be transmitted. It would appear that the person receiving the prayer is also composing them. Do we play any part at all? Our only contribution is to consent to the thoughts placed by the Holy Spirit and to accept the consequences of them. It is marvellous to realise that such a contribution, of consent, can be made by everyone and it

allows no one, **by** his own contribution, to **detract** from **the** glory of God from whom all things, worship and **prayer** included, flow
[Comment 5]

Verses **31-39**, in demonstrating **the** certainty with which **we** shall enjoy **the** future splendour, include factors which might **act** on our minds in **the** list of things which cannot **separate** us from **the** love of Christ. People **have** said of John **10** **that** no one can snatch us from **the** care of **the** Lord Jesus **but that we** can walk out of **that** care if **we** choose. This causes concern in some **that** under persecution, hunger or other desperate circumstances **they may** desert and **be** lost. The verses **at** **the** end of Romans **8** assure us otherwise and **help us** to build **up** **the** case for **the** eternal security of **the** believer.

P. J. Stoner

From Paisley: Being heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ not only opens **up** a glorious vista of **future** bliss for **the** believer, **but** also means **that we** can **expect** to experience in our lives some of **the** sufferings **the** Lord Jesus endured while **He was here** upon this **earth**. There is, however, as **the** apostle points out little comparison between **the** sufferings and **the** glory: they **are** not worthy to **be** compared.

The entrance of sin into **the** world brought suffering in its entail, **a** suffering which **affects** **the** whole creation. The animal kingdom, over which man **was** given dominion, awaits its release from **the** bondage associated with man's dominion. A beautiful picture of this is given in Isaiah **11: 6** "**the** wolf shall dwell with **the** lamb, and **the** leopard shall lie down with **the** kid¹... ! Also in Isaiah **35: 1, 2** **the** Scripture states "The wilderness and **the** solitary place **shall** **be** glad; and **the** desert shall rejoice and blossom **as** **the** rose... **they** shall **see** **the** glory of the Lord, **the** excellency of our God".

While **we** await **that** day, **we** can know **the** **help** and intercession of **the** gracious Spirit of God, who knows our weakness and supplicates on our **behalf**. Whatever present experiences **we** **pass** through, **we** **are** **assured** that God's eternal purposes in Christ will **be** fulfilled in their own time, and **that** no power in heaven or **earth** can **alter** this.

The love of God in Christ remains unchangeable **in** spite of our changing experiences **and** instead of **the** believer becoming overwhelmed **by** his experiences, **he** **in** turn, becomes more **than** conqueror through **Him that** loves us. Nothing **in the** whole of creation can separate **the** believer **from the** love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

J. Renfrew

From Wishaw: This section begins **with a** comparison of **the** sufferings of **this** present time **with the** glory **yet to be** revealed. The coming glory will **far** outweigh **the** present suffering **the** Christian **may be** called upon to **endure**. **The** contrast is **further** seen **in** 2 Cor. 4: 17 **where the** "light affliction" is contrasted **with the** "weight of glory"¹¹, and **the** affliction **which** is for a "moment" is contrasted **with the** "eternal" **weight** of glory.

The matter of **the** fallen creation **is then** dealt **with**, and help would **be appreciated** as to **what** was involved **in "the** creation" subjected to vanity. Some felt **that** only **the** animal creation was **in view**, whilst others took **a** broader **view** of creation including inanimate **as** well as **animate** objects. We do know, however, **that the** whole creation is **in the** bondage of corruption and **that it is** groaning and travailing in **pain** until now. **The day** is coming when creation **will see** the sons of God and enter **the liberty** of **the** glory of **the** children of God. We felt **that this day** would **be the** time when **the** Lord **Jesus** would reign on **earth** for one thousand **years**, and **that the** sons of God would **be** those **in the** Church **His** Body.

Three times over "groaning" is mentioned **in the** passage. Firstly, **there is a** 'groaning' creation, occasioned **by the** fall of **Adam**. Then **there is the** 'groaning'¹ of **the** believer **as he** waits and longs for **the** redemption of **the** body. When **the** glad time of adoption comes then **the** groaning **will be** past for **ever**, and we **will not** need to say **"O wretched man that I am!"** (Rom. 7: 24). Finally, **there is** the groaning of **the** Spirit of God, **as He** intercedes for **us**, knowing **always the** perfect will of God. **This** intercessory work of **the** Spirit of God was taken to **be a** constant work, not linked **with the** individual **prayers** of Christians.

The promise given in v.28 was seen to be a most remarkable one, but it was also felt necessary to remember and realise that it is given to those who "love God".

It may very well be true that only as we look back on life, after we leave this scene, will we understand how God worked things together for our good.

In vv. 29, 30 we are dealing with what has been described as 'the chain of divine purpose'. When we consider the implications of the statements made here concerning foreknowledge, foreordination, the divine calling, justification and glorification we stand amazed at the sovereignty of God. In this passage we have God's dealings with us in eternity past, in the present, and in a coming endless day.

Finally, the apostle poses seven questions, and the answer to each is demanded by the passage itself. The believer can take strong encouragement from this portion, and be able to say in the face of death itself "we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us". He ends this chapter with a note of supreme triumph when he stated that nothing will separate the believer from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus.

I. Gray, M.D. Macdonald

COMMENTS

1. (Bolton and Leigh): A believer is a "hyper-conqueror" because he is inseparable from Christ and therefore from the love of God. Rom. 8: 38-39 show how this relationship cannot be broken. But a believer may be put out of a church of God therefore "more than conquerors" is not to be restricted to those in churches of God and applies to all believers. Accepting the argument put forth by friends in Bolton and Leigh concerning the four areas in which the truth of "more than conquerors" can be demonstrated then examination of each will show that each area applies to all believers. Since those who were knowing the troubles of Rom. 8: 35 were in churches of God then the citation of Psalm 44: 22 is, as friends say, appropriate.

The Devil has from the days of Abel, however, persecuted God's elect and always will (Luke 18: 7) and it is this wider grouping that is in view in Rom 8: 33-9.

2. **(Liverpool and Wishaw):** The revealing of the sons of God takes place when the Lord Jesus returns to the earth to reign (2 Thes. 1: 10). It is special because it signals the ushering-in of the Lord's millennial rule when creation itself will be delivered from the bondage of corruption. Perhaps the presence of saints in their glorified bodies may be seen as a token of the forthcoming transforming power which will result in scenes such as those depicted in for example, Psa. 72: 16, Isa. 11: 6; 32: 15; 35: 1-2; 35: 7; 55: 13. The present bondage of corruption results from man's loss of the dominion given him at the first (Gen. 1: 26; 3: 17-19). Instead of creation being wisely cared for and used, it has had no Lord. It has been subject to no one, to nothingness or vanity. Man struggles for existence, almost as though he were at war with the creation. All that will be changed when Earth's long-awaited, rightful Ruler will take His seat in Jerusalem. We would suggest that the transformation that the earth will then know will result from that wise rule and the instruction that will flow from it. Man's dominion will not break "Nature's social union" but will be truly in harmony with it as was intended at the first. The result of this will be the return to the King as the "wealth of the nations" (Isa. 60: 11). In the light of scriptures such as Gen. 3: 17-19, it is hard to see that "whole creation" (Rom. 8: 22) is restricted to what some call "animal creation".

3. **(Liverpool):** The hope of Heb. 6: 19 is the present possession of the people of God and concerns the work of their High Priest. The hope of Rom 8: 24 concerns the future prospect for all believers of the coming of the Lord to the air.

4. **(Liverpool):** It might be more accurate to say that this fact is one of the victories resulting from the all-conquering prospects of believers in Christ.

I. E. P.

5. (Newcastle upon Tyne): These comments go too far in the quietist direction; they remove the thought of the rational being pleading with his Maker. James says "The supplication of a righteous man availeth much in its working", and the example which he gives shows the connection between the discernment of the will of God, and fervent prayer. There are many instances in Scripture where a man is represented as influencing the course of events by prayer, and there is little doubt that it is *his* prayer, formulated in his mind, and expressing his spiritual desires. On the other hand, one must recognize the power of the Holy Spirit to work with our spirits, stimulating us to prayer. There are sometimes feelings and desires that we seem unable to put into words, and it is on these occasions particularly that the Holy Spirit expresses what we cannot.

P. L. H.

CORRESPONDENCE

Comment on Romans 7: 7-25

We are all agreed that we have within us the old nature - the flesh - which lusts after carnal things; and we also have a new nature, which longs after the things of the Spirit of God. This is clearly taught in Galatians 5: 16-26. Both Scripture and our own experience agree.

But is this the message of Romans 7: 7-25? Our worthy Editors and all the contributors to the magazine seem to be agreed that it is so. Not only so, most commentaries support this view. Yet there is still a lingering doubt in some minds, whether this is really the experience of Paul, the apostle and servant of the Lord. Was he actually in his heart a 'wretched man'¹? and was he continually striving to keep the law of God, and continually failing? If so, then there is little hope that we will succeed where he failed.

In Romans 7: 23 Paul writes **that he** is in bondage to **the** law of sin; while in Romans 8: 2 **he** writes **that he** is **free** from **the** law of sin. So evidently the experiences, in Romans 7: 23 and Romans 8: 2 **must have** been at different times in his life. When did **he** become **free**? Surely it **was** when **he was** born again, and received **the** Spirit of God.

What then is **the** teaching of Romans 7: 7-25? **It is a parenthesis, to ask and** to answer two questions. (1) **Is the** law sin? (2) Did then **that** which is good become **death** unto **me**? When **we read** Romans 7: 6, and **then** follow on to Romans 8: 1, passing over **the** parenthetical portion, then **Paul's message** is **clear**. How joyful it is. No **wretchedness** in Romans 8! **We are** more than conquerors through Him **that** loved **us**!

It seems evident **that** Romans 7: 7-25 is **Paul's backward** look to his old **days** as a young Pharisee, **always** striving, and never attaining. No wonder **he** writes **that he was a wretched man - then!** So would **we be**, if **we were always** striving to obey **the** Lord, and never attaining to it. **We are** not **there - are we**?

G. Jar vie

BE IT NOT SO (*me genoito*)

In response to **the** question "What do others think?"¹ (**B. S. 8609, page 146**) **the** following observations **are** submitted **for** consideration.

Firstly, may **I** correct **what are** either errors of **fact** or wrong impressions? The Revised Version does not **use** "God forbid" twenty times in **the** Old Testament. **If the Hebrew** word itself **was** intended, then it occurs **21** times (twice in Gen. 18: 25 and 2 Sam. 20: 20). **I** am not able to **read Hebrew** and therefore **make** my statements on **the** understanding derived from sources which **I have** no reason to **regard as** being **less** than authoritative. According to those sources

the phrases (**Hebrew and Greek**) occur **thirty-six times** in total. **The R. V.** translates the phrases **26 times** by the words "God forbid". The reference in **1 Samuel 14** should read 'verse **45¹** instead of verse **4**.

The statement that "**The Hebrew word *chalilah* is from *chalah*, the verb to 'pierce'¹ and signifies forcible entry**" is not **agreed by all Hebrew scholars**. I quote, "**The etymology and basic meaning of this root are not known**". **The Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament relates it to the theme of profaneness, and the word under consideration as an "emphatic substantive used as negative particle or interjection. (It) introduces a strong negation or deprecation of an act"**. In the **New Testament the Greek phrase is in the Optative Mood which expresses a wish. "The phrase *me genoito* is an Optative of Wishing which strongly deprecates something suggested by a previous question or assertion... it expresses the apostle's abhorrence of an inference which he fears may be (falsely) drawn from his argument"**.

For a very long time my personal preference and practice have been not to use the words "God forbid". In only four Scriptures may it be acceptable and they are **1 Samuel 24: 6; 26: 11; 1 Kings 21: 3** and **1 Chronicles 11: 19**. In the first three the speakers say "**Far be it from me, by Jehovah**" and in the fourth "**Far be it from me, by my God**". These four instances may carry the force of an oath.

It is not possible to translate the Hebrew word at all times by the words "God forbid", and therefore it should not be so translated at any time. In **Genesis 18: 25** it is twice used by Abraham to God. In **2 Samuel 23: 17** it is used by David to God. In **Job 34: 10** it is used by Elihu about God. And in **1 Samuel 2: 30** it is used by God. Also in **Genesis 44: 17** where Joseph is directing the course of events it is inappropriate, if not irreverent, that he should appeal to God to forbid a course of action.

I am wary about stating that phrases are "an idiomatic expression" as such an approach has become the basis for greatly departing from the God-breathed original, and much damage has been done by the N. I. V. to the purity of the Word of God under

this cloak of idiomatic expressions. The N.I.V. translates **the** originals by "**Far be it**" (12 times), "**Never!**" (4 times), "Not at all" (4 times), "**By no means!**" (4 times), "Certainly not!" (twice), "Absolutely not!" (twice), "**Of** course not!" (once), "**May** this never **be!**" (once), "May I never" (once **and** strangely "**I** will **never admit**" (once). **Such** inconsistencies **are** a nightmare for **the** serious student (**that** is **an** idiomatic expression).

However, in spite of its inconsistency of translation, **the N.I.V.** **may** help us **by** its introduction of **the** exclamation mark in many of **the** passages. This supplies **the desired** emphasis.

The Greek mood, as stated above, expresses **a** wish. The words "God forbid" sound more like **a** command to **Deity**. I personally **find them very** disagreeable. When reading the passages **publicly** from **the New Testament** I translate **them** "May, or **let, it not be**" and express **the** emphasis by **the** tone of voice. Not knowing **Hebrew** I am content to **read** "**Far be it**" in **the** Old Testament.

It is interesting to note how **the** Septuagint translated **the Hebrew** expression into **Greek**. Sometimes **it** used *me genoito*, but other times **it** used *medamos*, **which** means 'not once, **in no way**, not at all'.

The expression "God forbid" pre-supposes and **requires the** speaker's knowledge of God's **perfect** will on any occasion when **it** is used. This **asks** too much and **the phrase** should not find **a** place **in the** believer's vocabulary concerning **the** ordinary things of **life**.

G. K. Kennedy

It is intended to continue this correspondence **in a future** issue (DV).

Editors

Issued by the Churches of God, and obtainable from Hayes Press, 8 Essex Road, Leicester, England, LE4 7EE. Printed by the University of Nottingham.

Bible Studies

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

EDITORIAL

8702

ELECTION: ISRAEL, THE LORD AND THE GENTILES

The purpose of God according to election (Rom. 9: 11) is rooted in divine choice and is independent of human wish or privilege or endeavour. Like the word of God it is sure in its fulfilment. The majesty of its conception transcends the thoughts and ways of men, yet the work of Christ has brought about its nearness and immediacy for God's elect.

It was in the character of God as revealed to Moses that He should exercise His mercy according to His sovereign choosing. Thus He dealt first with the nation of Israel, and concerning the Christ, John testifies first of all that "He came unto His own".

The apostle felt a burden of sorrow and unceasing pain in his heart. Many of his kinsmen according to the flesh clearly failed to call upon the Lord while He was near. Yet he perceived that the purpose of God is unswerving, and that God made His choice for the line of faith, the children of the promise. While Isaiah cherished a glorious hope for the remnant of his nation, the scope of Isaiah's vision of the calling of God can be appreciated from Is. 56: 8, "The Lord God which gathereth the outcasts of Israel saith, Yet will I gather others to him, beside his own that are gathered"¹¹.

The conviction expressed by the apostle (Rom. 8: 33), "It is God that justifieth", helps to clarify the words of Is. 50: 8 "He is near that justifieth me". The latter verse appears in a context especially applicable to the Lord Jesus, as the One who is so justified, but, such is God's grace, this justification is seen in Rom. 8: 33 as applying also to God's elect. How thankful we who have trusted Christ should be to be counted recipients of God's mercy, and not

to come under the wrath of God nor figure as examples of His power in judgement. Hand in hand with such a realisation of His divine mercy towards us there must necessarily be a concern on our part for the unsaved, as we note how the apostle was concerned for his own kinsmen after the flesh.

E. A.

THE PURPOSE OF GOD ACCORDING TO ELECTION (Rom. 9: 1-18)

From Birkenhead: Throughout the epistle to the Romans, Paul has been telling us of God's purposes among His chosen people, all made possible through Christ. The immutability of God's purposes in all ages should confirm our faith in Him and result in our adoration and worship.

Paul expresses his deep concern for the Jews, because of their rejection of God's offer of freedom. Paul himself was a Jew, and his Master was also a Jew according to the flesh. He felt "great sorrow and increasing pain" at the decision of many of his fellow Jews to remain under the yoke of the law. Do we have a similar concern for our "kinsmen"?

In v. 5 Paul focuses our attention on Christ, first stressing His humanity (Rom. 1: 3) and then His deity. He refers to Him as "God blessed for ever", the One who is worthy of praise and adoration.

God's purposes for Israel have not changed. He is still working them out, and His plan will eventually come to fruition. God has not revoked His promise or taken back His choice in spite of Israel's rejection of Christ (Acts 2: 23). God's mercy and grace overrides all man's failures. Not all those descended from Jacob are true Israelites. The true Israelite does not despise Christ and His disciples and has followed Christ and His teaching (Rom. 2: 28, 29).

The teaching of election is not new. Paul confirms this by alluding to two incidents in the lives of the patriarchs - the conflict between Sarah and Hagar (Gen. 21: 9) and the birth of Jacob and Esau (Heb. 12: 17). Not all of Abraham's seed received the promise. God's choice is irrespective of human attributes: Jacob had done nothing to deserve special favour when chosen by God and Esau had done nothing to warrant rejection. God's purposes were settled before the world came into being. If works were taken into account, then the choice would not be by grace at all.

Predestination figures in Jer. 1: 5. God chose Jeremiah and graced him as a messenger to the people. Pharaoh also was chosen that God might show His power; judgement came upon him for his

opposition to God's purposes for His people. Questionings arose in discussion as to how, if Pharaoh had a free will God could step in and harden his heart, thus preventing Pharaoh from repenting of his folly [Comment 1].

The whole of God's plan was conceived in eternity past and no circumstance has arisen, nor can arise to make it necessary to modify it. All things will come to fruition according to God's plan in spite of man's freewill being in operation. The eternal glory yet to be revealed in the saints is an end to which God is working.

Paradoxically Rom. 10:14 shows us the element of human participation in God's plan. Men will not hear the message if no one is sent to preach it yet man has the free-will to accept or reject the message [Comment 2].

G. H. Roberts, J. D. Williams

From Bolton and Leigh: It was noted at the outset of our discussion that the subject matter of Rom. 9 was the special place that the nation of Israel occupied in the purposes of God. That Israel did have a pre-eminent place in God's purposes is witnessed by the fact that theirs were the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, the promises, whose were the fathers and most blessed of all, of whom is Christ as concerning the flesh.

We also noted the depth of concern that the apostle showed for his kinsmen according to the flesh. His love for them was such that he could wish that he himself were anathema from Christ for his brethren's sake.

Having expounded in previous chapters the doctrine of salvation through faith as it applied to both Jew and Gentile, the apostle tackles the question as to whether the purposes of God in Israel have come to nothing. In vv. 6-13 using two Old Testament examples, Paul presents two reasons why the purposes of God in Israel have not failed. The first reason is that it is a mistake to assume that the nation of Israel as a whole will always occupy a special place in God's purposes. Being a Jew by birth gives no automatic right to a place in the purposes of God, a fact that the Lord Jesus and John the Baptist had brought to Israel's attention in the past. The proof of this fact is drawn from the book of Genesis. Abraham had more than one son, but it was only through Isaac that the promises were to be fulfilled, so it would be that only those Jews who accepted God's salvation through faith would continue to have a place in God's purposes. This theme is developed further in the remainder of chapter 9 and in chapters 10 and 11.

The second reason given for not assuming a failure in God's purposes in Israel is that it is God's prerogative as God to choose whomsoever He wishes to fulfil His purposes and that choice is not influenced by the actions of men. The example of God exercising His prerogative is shown in the choice of Jacob over his brother Esau. Before the children were born, God had made known His choice to Rebecca, a choice which, since it was given before their birth, could not have been influenced by the works of Esau or Jacob.

At this juncture the apostle anticipates the possible objections that God is unjust in imposing His choice upon men regardless of their deeds. His answer to this charge is, that God as the supreme Being has the undisputed right to choose, since He indicated to Moses, He would have mercy on whom He would have mercy and whom He chose to harden, as with Pharaoh, He would harden. God's purpose in showing mercy is to encourage others to seek His mercy and in hardening to show His power, that all men might fear Him.

It was noted that the principles applied in Rom. 9 regarding God's choice in election to His purposes, could be applied to His foreordaining believers to eternal life.

Alex Reid

From Derby: In this chapter, and the two following, the apostle considers the reception of the Gentiles into the kingdom under the notion of 'calling*' which shows that he views the two parties in a light different from that in which he had before placed them. The Gentiles he considers as invited into the kingdom of God, and the Jews he considers as left out and rejected; for the main body of them had rejected the gospel of Christ. Thus he knew they would be accursed, or anathematized from Christ, and reduced to the level of the heathen nations [Comment 3].

The apostle in the opening verses is full of sorrow and remorse for the children of Israel, for God in His sovereign dealings was now turning to the Gentiles, both in connection with the Church (the Body of Christ) and insomuch that disciples are now of all nations (Mat. 28: 18-20). The first three verses could well be described as the apostolic solicitude (showing anxious desire) for Israel.

In vv. 4, 5 we see the sevenfold privilege of Israel [Comment 4]. The question may be asked, "Who are the Israelites"? They were the descendants of Jacob, a man highly favoured of God, from whom he received his name Israel (a prince of God), Their very name implied their very high dignity: they were a royal nation. As regards "the adoption", they were taken into the family of God, and

were called **His sons and firstborn** (Ex. 4: 22, Deut. 14: 1). This adoption took place when God made the covenant at Horeb (Deut. 5: 2) [Comment 5].

As for "the glory", this could be the manifestation of God among them mainly by the cloud and pillar of fire, and the Shekinah or divine Presence appearing between the cherubim and the mercy-seat. No other nation was ever so favoured.

"The covenants" were those made with Abraham. This relates to the spiritual seed, and that which was peculiar to his natural descendants (Gal. 3: 16, 17).

"The giving of the law" embraces the revelation of God by God Himself containing a system of moral precepts. This again was only given to the Jews.

"The service" refers to the particular ordinances and ceremonies of their religious worship, and especially the sacrifices, so expressive of the sinfulness of sin and the holiness of God. Regarding "the promises", they were promised the land of Canaan, and the blessings of the Messiah and His kingdom; promises which were often repeated to the patriarchs and prophets. "Whose are the fathers" alludes to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Joshua and others [Comment 6]. They were great and eminent men. "And of whom is Christ as concerning the flesh" indicates the line that the Messiah was to stem from as ordained of God.

In vv. 6, 7 we have the distinction between Israel after the flesh, the mere natural posterity of Abraham, and the Israelites who, through faith, are also Abraham's spiritual children.

In the history of Israel, a remnant may be discerned, a spiritual Israel within a natural Israel. In Elijah's time 7000 had not bowed the knee to Baal (1 Kin. 19: 18). During the time of the captivities the remnant appears in Jews like Ezekiel, Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, Esther and Mordecai. There are many more who could be cited [Comment 7].

Vv. 8-13 seem to deal with election, and this all goes back to the early days when, before the twins were born (Gen. 25: 23) God had said the elder would serve the younger, and so through the ages the line of Jacob remained the chosen ones. From this it can be seen that election is not of works, for they were chosen before they had done anything either good or bad. Thus election rests on the sovereign will of God. On the surface Jacob would seem to have been a schemer but we should never forget that he could not have done what he did had not God allowed him [Comment 8]. Some may

think he should have waited for God to act, then things may have come about in another way.

In the latter verses under discussion, we have the question, "What shall we say then?" What conclusion shall we come to on the facts as laid out before us? Shall we suggest God bestowed privileges in an unequal manner? By no means. Whatever God does is 'right' and He may dispense His blessings to whom and on what terms He pleases. The words of God to Moses show that God has the right to shew mercy as He pleases. This is clearly seen in salvation, for it is given in His own way and on His terms. "He that believeth on the Son hath eternal life; but he that obeyeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him".

We know that power and rule belong to the Lord, and Pharaoh was raised up so that God could display His power. He sent in various plagues and removed them, and hardened Pharaoh's heart, the object being that all mankind should know God, the "I AM".

Therefore hath He mercy on whom He will (v. 18). The apostle concludes from the facts that God according to His own will and wisdom, bestows mercy. The only way of escape in the day gone past was by the application of the blood of the lamb, and so today God shows His mercy in that He has paid the price of our redemption, by the giving of His Son and His death on the tree and not least by the resurrection from the dead, so that by believing we can go free.

E. W. Foster, G. W. Conway

From Dulwich: The purpose of God according to election is something contained in the mind of God, who in His eternal wisdom and knowledge ordains all things according to the pleasure of His own will, to the praise of the glory of His grace. The whole thing is unsearchable and past finding out (Eph. 1:5, 6, 11; Rom. 11:33-36).

In this we have a revelation of the goodness and severity of God (Rom. 11:22), making known the riches of His glory upon vessels of wrath fitted for destruction (9:22).

The particular purpose of election in our study would seem to be firstly sovereign grace, that is "not of works", and secondly, "of Him that calleth" (v. 11). Israel's privilege, as reiterated to us in 9:4, 5 was not merited by good works, but was of grace. This is obvious from their character, and sad history for they were stiff-necked, stubborn, and rebellious people (Deut. 9:6, 31:27) who always resisted the Holy Spirit (Acts 7:51). Likewise Jacob, the supplanter, who by his cunning and deception obtained the birth-

right, could hardly have merited election by good works {Comment 8}.

In the story of Joseph, Pharaoh had the right to execute both butler and baker as offenders, but in His sovereign clemency He spared the butler. Why we have been the subject of God's grace we shall never know (Rom. 5:6, 10). It was certainly not motivated from any response by man, foreknown by God whether of good works or of faith, but from God alone (Eph. 1:5,6,7; Rom. 3:10, Rom. 9:11).

The One who calleth is faultless (v.19), in His selective choice (Ps. 18:30), yet not at the expense of the free-will of the individual (Jn. 3:16; 1 Tim. 2:4). In Romans 8:29, 30 His call is preceded by His foreknowledge and His foreordination, yet in Mat. 22:14 His call preceded His choice.

In His knowledge from all eternity, He knows all the facts and controls all the factors, yet He does so in mercy (Rom. 9:16) and in righteousness (Gen. 18:20).

In the choice of Jacob, Israel was not only to rule over Edom (Gen.25:23), but also to be the head of the nation (Mai. 1:1-5; Deut. 28:13; Num. 23:9, 24:8).

The one who runneth and the one who willeth (Rom. 9:16) and Pharaoh are within the whosoever of John 3:16, and the all of 1 Tim. 2:4. It is noteworthy that it was after Pharaoh had hardened his heart (Ex. 8:32, 9:7), that God hardened Pharaoh's heart (9:12) [Comment 9]. The raising up of Pharaoh (v.17) must be in this context. The purpose of raising up Pharaoh in election was to show His power in judgement and also that His glorious name (Ps. 8:1; 99:3) should be published in all the earth (Rom.9:17).

Pharaoh was a man who defied Jehovah (Ex.5:2) as was Nebuchadnezzar (Dan.4) and as will be the man of sin, the son of perdition, who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is God (2 Thes. 2:3, 4).

The ultimate purpose in the election of all things is God (Rev. 4:11; 1 Cor. 15:28), and this purpose is in Christ (Eph. 1:3,10; Col. 1:16-19; Heb.1:2 RVM).

W. Townsend

From Liverpool: *Paul's Sadness.* Lest we should assume from what he has said in uncompromising terms about his own people that Paul has no time for the Jews, he clearly and emotionally exposes his longing that they, too should belong to Christ. His high peak of

joy and confidence, reached in the previous paragraph, serves to emphasize what they were missing out on and, despite their coldness and hostility, he is not prepared to write off the nation of Israel.

Cod's Promises Kept. There are three ways in which it can be seen that God has kept His promises and that His word has not failed:

1. True Israelites are not those who have set aside the commands of the Lord, despite being descendants of the man Israel, but rather are those who by faith believed the words of God.
2. Despite apostasy and national failure the promised Christ came.
3. Throughout the centuries there have always been those who remained true to God - a faithful remnant!

Is God Unjust? In the case of Esau and Jacob their election was to service; the quotation from Malachi refers, of course, to the nations of Edom and Israel not to the twins [Comment 10]. The case of Pharaoh presents, *prim a facie*, a more difficult problem for he is presented here as one whose role in life was to be destroyed by the might of God. The Exodus account, however, of how Pharaoh behaved is illuminating and it is clear that he himself hardened his heart (7: 14, 22; 8: 15) before the fearful day came when the Lord hardened His heart (9: 12; 10: 1-2) [Comment 9]. God is neither unjust in choosing one man rather than his brother for a particular form of service nor in taking up an unrepentant sinner and using him to declare His might.

The Purpose of Election. Paul is here arguing what God, as God, has a right to do; this is not necessarily what He actually does, and it is in this context that we understand the bald statement of v. 18 [Comment 11]. It is a legal argument, and we must take care not to get a wrong picture of God as callous and haphazard! Such a notion does not enhance His sovereignty. In practice God has revealed Himself not only as Sovereign of the universe with absolute power at His disposal but also as a loving and consistent God who is patient and does not wish men and women to be destroyed nor to live at less than full potential. In making His selections God has, of course, the divine advantage of being outside of time. The whole purpose of God in election was the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ. The nation of Israel failed to see this and ended up with the spiritually myopic view that *they* were His purpose!

David J. Webster

From Paisley: As an Israelite himself, Paul shews his love for his fellow-countrymen in his expressed desire to be anathema from Christ that his brethren might be saved. That does not in any way diminish his love for the Lord, but shows his zeal for the salvation

of his brethren. The record of Paul's preaching in the book of the Acts shows his intense desire to bring to the Israelites the fact of the fulfilment of Scripture in the birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth; and through faith in Him alone can the Israelite find justification in the sight of God. But, just as the Lord was rejected of them, so also was the apostle.

There was no nation on earth who were as privileged as the Israelites whom God chose to be His own people to the exclusion of other nations (see Deut. 4: 7, 8). Yet, in spite of these privileges, a veil of unbelief covered their hearts and prevented them nationally entering into the blessings of the New Covenant. There were those who individually believed on the Lord and were saved and this leads on to the purpose of God in election, illustrated in the births of Isaac and Jacob. God chooses us as individuals; whom He foreknew, He foreordained. This reminds us of His sovereignty and the fact that He bestows His grace on those whom He chooses. It is good to be reminded of this; that though we were sinners like the rest, He was pleased to bestow His mercy upon us.

It is salutary also to note that God hardened Pharaoh's heart after Pharaoh had hardened his own heart. In Exodus 5: 2, Pharaoh rejected the request of God through Moses and in Exodus 7: 3, God made his heart even harder that His power might be revealed [Comment 9]. Could not a similar situation be evident among the nations of the world today? Men are still accountable to God for their actions.

J. Renfrew

From **Wishaw**: In the first three verses of Rom. 9 we are given an insight into the heart of this great apostle so far as his Jewish kinsfolk were concerned. He states "I could wish that I myself were anathema from Christ for my brethren's sake". The word anathema appears to be a strong word sometimes translated 'accursed'. It was impossible that Paul could be accursed for the blessing of others, but it reveals his innermost desires for his fellow-countrymen, and that in spite of the bitter hatred many of them had showed against him. In a similar way, Moses (Ex. 32: 32) had asked that he be blotted out from the Lord's book if the Lord would not forgive the sin of Israel with the golden calf [Comment 12].

In the following two verses Paul outlines some of the marvellous spiritual blessings that belonged to Israel, and at least seven blessings can be identified [Comment 4]. These blessings may be grouped into three; firstly, the adoption, glory and the covenants; then, the giving of the law, and the service of God and the promises; finally, the patriarchs and the Christ. Without any

shadow of a doubt, Israel's greatest blessing was the Christ whom they rejected. This was the jewel that outshone every other jewel in the Jewish crown. The correct rendering of the latter part of v. 5 seems difficult to decide; yet in whatever way it is taken it serves to underline the deity of Christ.

In vv. 6-9 it is clearly shown that only the children of promise are the true Israelites, although many others could claim to be of Abraham's seed. Isaac was the child of promise, and God's purposes were bound up in Isaac. It was God's purpose that Jacob should be chosen rather than Esau, even before the two brothers were born, showing that election does not depend on works. Reference was made to the statement that 'grace does not run in the blood'. Eph. 1:4 seems to link with what the writer is considering in this passage, when he states we were chosen "in Him before the foundation of the world".

Verse 13 was found difficult to explain. It was felt that the Lord did not hate Esau with the bitter animosity that men associate with hatred. One possible explanation was that Jacob was loved more, and Esau was loved less; however, the actual words used in both Old and New Testaments did not appear to carry this thought. Another possible suggestion was that the Lord hated the manner of Esau's life, rather than Esau himself [Comment 13].

In the latter part of the portion Paul affirms in no uncertain way that God in His sovereign dealings with men cannot be charged with unrighteousness. His mercy, election, forgiveness and His salvation are all within the majestic, divine prerogative.

R. Ure, M. D. Macdonald

COMMENTS

1. (Birkenhead): The Lord Jesus told parables so that men might *not* turn again and might *not* have their sins forgiven (Mk. 4:12). We judge that Pharaoh was in the same position. There is a limit to how much rejection God will take.

/. E. P.

2. (Birkenhead): It may be helpful to consider the implications of the statement that man has a free will. Does a man have the complete and unfettered freedom to choose and act in any way that he wishes? This was true of Adam, who was made in the image of God in this respect, but he chose to exercise his will in opposition to the will of God, and so involved all his posterity in corruption of nature (Rom. 5:12). All subsequent men have

a will whose freedom of action is limited by their depravity. As an illustration of this, most of our readers are free to buy a new Rolls-Royce, in the sense that there are no external legal restrictions to prevent their doing so, but very few can do so in fact, since they have not the ability to pay. Similarly, although God places no barriers before anyone who will come to Christ, the Lord said "No man can come to Me, except the Father which sent Me draw him" (Jn. 6:44). A work of the Holy Spirit is necessary to overcome the inability of the natural man to discern spiritual things. However, having been granted that aid, it is the man's own will which makes the decision.

It follows from this that no unregenerate man has a truly free will, and even those who have the Holy Spirit within them as a consequence of the new birth have constant need of His help to be free; a paradox expressed in the words "Whose service is perfect freedom".

3. (Derby): This is going much too far. Israel's experience is described as "casting away" (Rom. 11:15), but the same chapter says of Israel "as touching the election, they are beloved for the father's sake. For the gifts and calling of god are without repentance" (Rom. 11:28, 29). The anathema was Paul's expression of what he would be prepared to give up to save his brethren; comparable with Moses' expression in Ex. 32:32.

P. L. H.

4. (Derby and Wishaw): There are eight items in this list of blessings.

5. (Derby): We agree with friends in Derby that the adoption of Israel took place at Mt. Sinai but draw attention to the fact that "Israel is my son" was spoken prior to this. Adoption or son-placing is not the same as son-making.

6. (Derby): Since Moses and those who succeeded him were Israelites they can hardly also be "the fathers". The Lord said that circumcision was not of Moses but of the fathers (Jn. 7:22) and it is in this sense that the word is used here to refer to the patriarchs as it is also used in Rom. 11:28 and 15:8.

7. (Derby): In the days of Esther and Mordecai, the remnant had returned to take their stand for God in building the house of God in Jerusalem. Esther and Mordecai did not do so and should not be reckoned with that honoured few nor with those of the earlier days of the captivity in whose hearts were the highways to Zion

but who, because of the sin of others could not realize their heart's desire.

I. E. P.

8. (Derby and Dulwich): Jacob, prompted by Rebekah, thought by cunning and deception to obtain the blessing, and despite this haste, in the grace and overrule of God, he was granted the blessing.

E.

A.

We take this opportunity to remind readers of the distinction between Jacob's obtaining of the birthright and his obtaining of the blessing alluded to in *Bible Studies*, 8301, p.2, 15, 29. Suppose Jacob had offered Esau all the money in the world, that still would not have been worth a fraction of a per-cent of the value of the birth-right. The Lord brooks no sympathy for Esau the seller (Heb. 12: 16-17) to whom He granted no place of repentance and neither should we.

9. (Dulwich, Liverpool and Paisley): Though this is so, we should perhaps observe that the first reference to the actual hardening of Pharaoh's heart is in the passive voice. Pharaoh's heart "was hardened" (Ex. 7: 13) and this follows two statements of the Lord "I will harden" (Ex. 4: 21, 7: 3),

I. E. P.

10. (Liverpool): Explicitly it has been referring to the brothers, but implicitly, also to the nations descended from them.

E. A.

11. (Liverpool): Surely the words "so then" show that verse 18 is not a legal hypothesis. It describes what He did to Pharaoh giving that as a real example of the principle.

12. (Wishaw): Although the heart's desire of Moses and Paul concerning the unbelief of their kinsmen is so similar and worthy of all emulation, it should be noted that what each said was different. Paul said "I could wish" for it was an impossibility for him as a believer to be anathema from Christ. Moses, on the other hand, appears to be offering his life of service in exchange for Israel's forgiveness. If this is so then he was, of course, wrong to do so but he appears to have been in a great state of agitation when appearing before the Lord in Ex. 32: 30-32.

I. E. P.

13. (Wishaw): If it was only Esau's manner of life which was hated by God, would this not imply that God's love for Jacob was the result of Jacob's works as foreknown by God? This would run counter to the emphasis of Rom. 9 where the apostle demonstrates that the intimation to Rebekah that the elder would serve the younger came prior to the birth of the twins.

Any misgivings that may be felt in regard to Esau's being rejected, is perhaps diminished by consideration of the sovereignty of God's choice in loving Jacob and by viewing the question of Esau's manner of life as another matter.

The usual words for "loved" and "hated" are used, but the idea of a comparative construction being placed upon them is explored in B. S. 1973 page 134.

E. A.

It might be of help to observe that when the Scripture says that Jacob "loved also Rachel more than Leah" (Gen. 29:30) this is described in the next verse with the words "the Lord saw that Leah was hated" and in verse 33 with the words "the Lord hath heard that I am hated". The verb is the same as that used in Mai. 1:3 though certainly we would wish in no way to diminish the force of this Scripture in respect to that profane man, Esau.

/ E. P.

THE SEALS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

Many old agreements were traditionally sealed by the common, but now almost non-existent, method using red sealing wax. The wax was applied from the outside in a soft condition by heating and while still plastic received the impression of a signet ring or seal-ring pressed into it. Others were sealed with red tape and some by the use of a seal which formed part of the document like the gummed flap on an envelope.

In the New Testament there are 19 different seals referred to, of which twelve are seals applied from the outside like the sealing wax and red tape. These are things or persons 'sealed up' (*sphragizo*) either by men or by God. The other seven seals are seals which form part of the thing sealed and are 'sealed down' (*katasphragizo*). This distinction seems to be confirmed by the use of the word '*Chatham*' in the Old Testament, meaning 'sealed up', and is confirmed by Dr. Young. When men seal things *up* the seal can be broken as was true of Pilate's seal upon the stone at the

mouth of the sepulchre. When God seals *up* the seal cannot be broken or removed except by His authority. The duration of the sealing *up* by God is determined by God Himself and under no circumstances or condition can it ever be broken during the intended life of the seal. Men's seals must have continued human support and ability to be maintained. Pilate said, "Take a guard: go your way, make it as sure as ye can. So they went, and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, the guard being with them" (Mat. 27: 65, 66 RVM). When God seals *up* He does so for man's happiness and blessing, but when He seals down it is against the day of destruction of ungodly men and the judgement of unrighteousness.

Having outlined the two methods and the principles of sealing we can now consider the 19 different references in the New Testament.

1. Pilate's Seal

Proceeding in the order in which they are found, only Matthew refers to the sealing of the stone. It was at the direct request of the chief priests and scribes that Pilate gave command for the stone to be sealed (Mat. 27: 62-66). This is the third of three important requests Pilate received immediately after the death of the Lord. The Jews¹ request in John 19: 31 to break the legs of the three men came first. The request of Joseph of Arimathea to take away the body of the Lord came next and the security of the sepulchre request came third.

We are only concerned with the last, but their significance to us today is worthy of close study. The sealing of the stone and the subsequent events demonstrate three major facts. First it showed how vain man is and the vanity of the threefold security applied by them to the tomb. The angel of the Lord rolled away the stone and sat upon it. For fear of him the watchers quaked and became as dead men. The seal of Tiberius Caesar, symbol of Rome's authority and might was torn apart by the angel. "Vain the stone, the watch, the seal". Second it showed that the days of His flesh were over. It did not need to be removed before He could come out. The seal remained in place until the angel broke it. His spirit, soul and body were reunited never to be made subject again to men and their customs. The third major fact is that in the raising of the Son, the glory of the Father was at issue. His word, His promises, His power were all under test. Rising without breaking the seal was to demonstrate to all believers the glory of the Father (Rom. 6: 4). Man's seal can be broken and even ignored by God.

The seal was intended to indicate *ownership* of what was inside. This was overthrown by the Lord without breaking the seal. It was intended to convey *security*, but Caesar's power was no match for God's. It should have indicated the *authenticity* of the guarantee that Jesus Christ was dead and buried for all time. His glorious resurrection made a mockery of its claim. The seal indicated *destination* of the body. The stone and the body were not to be removed, but the angel of the Lord altered that by breaking the seal and rolling away the stone.

2. The Believer's Own Seal

We have stated that the seal itself can have any one or more of four characteristics. These are *ownership*, *security*, *destination* and *authenticity* (see W.E. Vine, Seal). In this instance the seal is one which bears out *authenticity*. Much of John the Baptist's ministry concerned witness and in John³ he is challenged about his work by his own disciples (vv. 25, 26). Without hesitation he continues to extol the virtues of the Christ and the importance of receiving His witness saying, "He that hath received His witness hath set his seal to this that God is true" (v.33). When a person receives the witness of the Son they authenticate the fact that God is true. Other scriptures bear this out. "Let God be found true, but every man a liar" (Rom. 3:4). It is possible, however, for the believer to go back on what he has said and this seal be broken, though the result of faith in Christ can never be overturned.

3. The Father's Seal

In the sixth chapter of John gospel we read of the multitude who came to Capernaum seeking Jesus because He said, "Ye ate of the loaves, and were filled. Work not for the meat which perisheth, but for the meat which abideth unto eternal life, which the Son of Man shall give unto you: for Him the Father, even God, hath sealed" (John 6:27). The work of God is to believe on Him whom He hath sent and thereby receive the gift of eternal life from the Son. The Father in sealing the Son *authenticated* the fact that the Son is the giver of eternal life. He that hath the Son hath the life.

4. The Seal of Circumcision

In Romans 4:11 we are told, "**He (Abraham) received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while he was in uncircumcision: that he might be the father of all them that believe**". Here we have a seal with two of the characteristics. The seal *authenticated* the fact that he was righteous by the exercise of his faith and that he possessed or *owned* such righteousness as the father of all them that believe.

5. The Apostle's Seal

It was the apostle Paul's wish to take to Jerusalem a certain contribution for the poor among the saints there from Macedonia and Achaia thereby sealing to them or *securing* for them fruit before going to Spain. In so doing he ensured the wishes of the saints in Macedonia and Achaia were brought to fruition (Rom. 15:28).

6. The Seal of Apostleship

It is clear from Paul's writings in the epistle to the Galatians and his first epistle to the Corinthians that there were those in the churches of God who challenged his authority, especially as an apostle. His defence in 1 Cor. 9:1-2 rests upon the fact that he had seen Jesus our Lord, but his opponents only had his word for it. What they could not deny was the powerful evidence of his work as an apostle. Those who had responded to the preaching of Paul and who had believed and had been added to the church of God in Corinth *authenticated* the fact that he was an apostle, a sent one to the Gentiles.

R. A. Parker (Stoke-on-Trent)

To be continued

Bible Studies

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

EDITORIAL

8703

THE POTTER AND THE CLAY

Every age and society has its prejudices (usually most evident when it is inveighing against prejudice), and those of our present age are inimical to the recognition of the majesty and authority of God. Most people who believe in God will gladly recognize His goodness, and Christian preachers quite rightly emphasize His grace and love toward men in giving His Son to be the Saviour; but men are less willing to acknowledge the absolute sovereignty of God over the whole of His creation, including themselves. Each man wants to say

**'I am the master of my fate:
I am the captain of my soul.'**

The passage in Rom. 9 which is considered this month gives a salutary shock to the conventional modern reader. It asserts the right of God to do as He will with His creation. This doctrine was not newly propounded by the apostle Paul. Rom. 9: 20 includes a quotation from Is. 45: 9; "Woe unto Him that striveth with his Maker! a potsherd among the potsherds of the earth! Shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, What makest thou?". Jer. 18: 1-6 also declares God's right to make what He will. In consistency with the Old Testament revelation, Paul rejects the claim to cross-question God on His intentions.

How does God exercise His right? We should first notice that vv. 19-22 establish what He has the right to do, but they are preliminary to the statement of what He has chosen to do in mercy. Secondly, He may make "a vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour". Comparison with 2 Tim. 2: 20 shows that these relate to the purposes to which the vessels are to be put. God gives

men **different** gifts and stations in life: some **are** intelligent, some **are** dull; some **are** **rich**, some **are** poor; **but** none has **the right** to complain about his gifts. **Each** one must use **what he** has to **the** best of his ability, and God holds **him** responsible for **that**. Thirdly, some **are** called "vessels of **wrath**", and some "vessels of mercy". The latter **are** said to **be** "afore **prepared** unto glory", and **we** cannot escape **the** conclusion **that** these **are** the subject of **the elective grace** of God; **we** have not **the right** to ask **why** these should **be** chosen. Scripture does not say **that** God **prepared** the "vessels of **wrath**" for destruction, and it would **be** unwise for us to say so. God is **the** source of all rationality, and creation **with** the purpose of destruction would seem to **be** irrational. The "vessels of **wrath**" **are** *katertismena* (having been fitted) to destruction, and although **the** words do not say "fitted themselves", **the** inference of v.22 would **appear** to **be** **that** **their** own impenitence **made** **them** fit for destruction.

Is **there** any conflict between God's choices and His justice and love? The modern belief is **that** inequality is wrong **in** itself, **but** this derives from **the** assumptions **that** everyone is entitled to his share in **the** world's goods, and **that** this world is all **that** **we** can **be** sure of. **Scripture** presents this life as **a time** of probation (e. g. Mat. 25: 14-30), in **which** God, who gives existence to all, also gives **each** one talents **and** responsibilities, for **the** use of **which** **He** will eventually **judge** **them**. No—one can claim these gifts as **a right**, because **he** has no **right** even to exist! God will **act** righteously **in** judging **each** man's behaviour (Gen. 18:25), **but** His love goes beyond this, and gives freely **what** could not **be demanded** or even imagined. **If** **He** does not **give** equally to **all**, **the** recipient creatures **have** no **right** to complain.

When **we** consider these things, our response should **be** **that** of **humility** and thankfulness, **that** our **great** God has chosen to show His love towards us. **We** do not know whom **He** has chosen, **but** **we** do know **that** **He** will save **men** through **the preaching** of **the** word of Christ, and **that** those who **will** call on **Him** as a result of **the** preaching will **be** saved (Rom. 10:13-15). **We** have to **carry** out our part, and leave **the** results to **Him**.

P. L. H.

VESSELS OF WRATH AND OF MERCY (Rom. 9: 19-33)

From Aberdeen: "Why doth He still find fault? For who withstandeth His will?" (Rom. 9: 19). In such questions there is an implied defiance of God. Man, reasoning from the human viewpoint is just unable to match God's reasoning from the Divine viewpoint. Man is not God's teacher but God is the teacher of man. ("For who hath known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ" 1 Cor. 2: 16). Foolish and ignorant questionings are to be refused (2 Tim. 2: 23). In Romans 9 we have two questions refused. Evidently God does not want us to ask such questions for they reveal a lack of understanding of the mind of God. To the challenger God replies, "Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God?" God has a right over man, His creature, just as the potter has a right over the clay (v. 21).

Moreover, it is also shown that except for God exercising His mercy towards us individually we would everyone be justly condemned as vessels of wrath: indeed we would become as Sodom and Gomorrah very speedily unless God intervened in mercy. The primary application of "a remnant" being saved is to Israel for it is they to whom Paul feels so endeared to the point of having unceasing pain in his heart. Nevertheless we the Gentiles who were "no people" at one time are only saved due to God's intervention leading to them being called "My people" and "sons of the Living God".

Israel tried to seek righteousness by the works of the Law, yet this resulted in self-gratification (him that willeth, or runneth). How would they have found God's righteousness? Why did they fail? They never sought it by faith (Rom. 9: 32). Herein is man's part. God prepares vessels of mercy, but to man it is given to accept God's righteousness by faith.

James Johnson

From Birkenhead: Paul's teaching concerning God's choice presented us with many difficulties. The more we attempted to understand God's thoughts, the more overwhelming **our** study became. Rather than arriving at any satisfactory conclusions, we realised that it is impossible for us to comprehend God's thoughts (Is. 55: 8, 9),

Paul employs **the** image of **the** potter and **the** clay to illustrate God's sovereign right to **act** as **He** wishes. The potter uses **the** same lump of clay to **make** vessels for both honourable and dishonourable purposes. Paul has already outlined **the** advantages of **the** Jews; in **human** terms some individuals **may** consider themselves disadvantaged, **but we** must realise **that** God is prescient. **He** chooses individuals irrespective of works or position for "**if it is by grace, it is no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace**" (Rom. 11: 5, 6).

This presents **the** reader with a number of difficulties. **It** would **appear that** God is directing His favour towards some, **and** discriminating against others without reasonable grounds for doing so. **If** God is able to bring some to eternal salvation, then **why** not all? And if certain people **were** chosen in **Him** "before **the** foundation of **the** world" (Eph. 1:4), it would seem **that** human freewill is impaired.

We are in no position, however, to question God's motives; as **the** illustration shows, **much** interrogation is inappropriate. Although God's will sometimes appears strange, **He** knows **the** conclusion of **every matter, and** maintains complete control. The basis of God's choice is something **that we can** never **begin** to understand.

Although predestination and **human freewill** cannot **be** yoked together easily, **there are** many examples in **the** Bible which show **the** two forces working in harmony. Pharaoh **may have been** "**fitted** unto destruction", **but he** himself "**hardened his heart**" and refused to **let the** people go (Ex. 8:32). Judas was "doomed to destruction" (John 17:12 NIV), **but he** "**sought... to deliver**" his master to **the** Jews (Luke 22:6). [Comment 1]. Whilst Christ was "**delivered up by the determinate** counsel and foreknowledge of God", **the** Jews "**by the** hand of lawless **men did crucify and** slay" **their** Messiah (Acts 2:33).

Although **Israel have** rejected **their** Messiah, a small number of followers acknowledged **Him** as **their** Lord. In v.27, **Paul** shows us **that** God has before worked **with a remnant**. **Israel was a great** nation **but** God chose to work **with a small number**. God is often glorified **by the** service of a few. There **are** always those who continue to **trust and** obey God, and His plea can never be frustr-

ated. At the time of the flood, only Noah remained faithful to God; when Sodom and Gomorrah were steeped in sin, Lot alone continued to live a life which pleased God [Comment 2].

The Jews had rejected Christ, preferring to achieve salvation by works - which they could never do. Christ became a "rock of offence" (Is. 8: 14) to those who pursued salvation by works, but those who place their hope in Him will never be disappointed (Is. 49: 23). They have a righteousness which is by faith alone (Gal. 2: 16; 3: 13, 14).

A. E. Sands, J. D. Williams

From Bolton and Leigh: Paul, having established that God, in His just and sovereign will (v. 18), claims freedom to show mercy or resist as He pleases, now raised the third objection in the chapter. This is that if God acts just as He wills, man has no freedom. The assumption is that a plan or purpose of God *must* destroy man's freedom.

Rather than seeking to reconcile divine sovereignty and human freedom, Paul turns it aside by rebuking the irreverence towards God which this challenge of God's ways implies. As he traces God's dealings, he shows that it was no arbitrary power but longsuffering patience and human freedom, despite deliberate rebellion against the Most High.

Satan tried to usurp the place of God and was cast out of Heaven with his supporters (Is. 14: 13, 14; Luke 10: 18; *cf.* Rev. 12: 8, 9). Cain with the knowledge of correct approach to God by animal sacrifices brought, as an alternative, the fruit of the ground. Consequently, he was rejected (Gen. 4). Esau, who treated his birthright with the utmost contempt (Gen. 25) and deliberately took wives of the daughters of Canaan (Gen. 28: 8, 9) is mentioned earlier in this chapter. Pharaoh too, (Ex. 5) in spite of the revealed authority of God Almighty, wilfully opposed the release of God's people Israel, to his own destruction. In the desert journey

to Canaan, in spite of **the** Lord's wonderful provision, many **were** rebellious and **died** in **the** wilderness. Because of their hardness of **heart** and unbelief, God swore in His **wrath** that **they** would not enter into His rest (Num. 14).

In **New Testament** days, **the** Jewish rulers **treated** **the** claims of Jesus **with** contempt in spite of **the** wonders **He** performed **and** **the** words of **grace** that proceeded from His lips. They sought **the** righteousness of God **by** works **and** not **by** **faith** **and** stumbled **at** **the** stone of stumbling, **even** **their** Messiah. **Many** times **they** tried to kill **Him** and finally pursued **Him** to Golgotha to **crucify** **Him**, without **a** **trace** of repentance! **The** Stone **which** **the** builders **rejected** **became** **the** **head** of **the** corner, and it is marvellous in our eyes. Isaiah's prophecy regarding **a** **remnant** that would be saved **had** an application **at** Pentecost **when** **3,000** Jews **were** saved, and later **the** number **came** to be about 5,000. The prophecy will also **have** **a** **future** fulfilment. God **did** not, and does not, **make** men **wicked**; **they** are suited for **the** evil work because of **what** **they** **have** **made** themselves.

At **the** present **time** **there** is **evident** opposition to **the** authority of God. Atheists say "There is no God!" Agnostics say "**We** do not know **whether** **there** is **a** God or not!" Materialists say "**We** do not need God!" God does no injustice to **a** man **if** **He** leaves **him** to **take** his own course to ruin, and makes others, equally undeserving, recipients of His **mercy**. **Each** of us can say, **He** violated none of **my** rights **by** not conferring on **me** **the** talents of Newton or Edison; or **by** not placing **me** in circumstances like those of **Peter** and **Paul**. **I** must use **what** **He** has given **me** for His glory!

Hebrews 11 catalogues **many** men and women **in** various dispensations who acknowledged **the** sovereignty and will of **the** Almighty. Sinners all, **yet** in failure **ready** to seek forgiveness **and** manifest repentance. Hosea prophesied concerning **the** entrance of Gentile disciples **in** **the** category of "vessels of **mercy**"*, how **the** church **in** Rome would rejoice **at** such **a** glorious revelation. **We** should not, however, overlook **the** outstanding example of **the** 11 apostles **with** Paul, **that** earlier blasphemer **and** injurious to **the** saints, **having** obtained **the** **mercy** **we** are considering. Many other names readily come to mind with all those included in Paul's salutation in Romans 16.

Taking into consideration the potentiality of all the New Testament churches of God, in revealing the mercy of God to many others, shall we today magnify the great God of heaven, foreordained as we are, called, justified, to be glorified although a remnant testimony? We will gladly align ourselves with the Psalmist who wrote

"O give thanks unto the Lord;
For He is good:
For His mercy endureth forever
Let all the redeemed of the Lord say so
Whom He had redeemed from the hand of the
adversary" (Psalm 107: 1, 2).

Bill Patterson Jnr.

From Derby: The sovereignty of God is one of the great truths expounded in this portion, and this sovereignty is absolute. God as the great Creator of all things is free to do as He chooses. As sinners we deserve God's wrath and it is worthy of note that for the first time in this letter Paul uses the word "mercy". God is a God of mercy. He is perfectly just and no one can ever accuse Him of doing wrong.

In dealing with the purposes of God, Paul develops his argument in the form of questions: Why does God still blame us? Who withstands His will? Who are you to talk back to God? Why didst Thou make me like this? There are those who would always seek to question God's prerogative, and Isaiah could rightly say: "Ye turn things upside down! Shall the potter be counted as clay; that the thing made should say of Him that made it, He made me not" (Is. 29: 16).

No man has any right to argue with God. The analogy that Paul uses of the potter and the clay can raise some problems in that man is not clay but is made in God's image [Comment 3]. In some respects it can be said that it is only reasonable and rational that man who has a questioning mind should seek to probe into some of the deeper issues of life. Yet even so there may be times when it would be wrong to pose certain questions and expect to receive answers to them. One thing is clear, at no time should man put himself in the position of judge in regard to God's motives or

workings. The illustration of the potter and the clay is used many times in Scripture (Is. 45:9-10; 64:8; Jer. 18:6) and it would seem that it conveys the truth that it is the potter's prerogative to do as he wishes with the clay.

God's sovereignty in election is boldly asserted and any attempt to explain this to the satisfaction of mere human intellect is futile. For against this is the parallel truth of man's opportunity and responsibility.

Leading on from this is the main focus of our study - vessels of wrath and vessels of mercy. It was noted that Paul does not say that God created some people for destruction but poses the question "What if God...?" What is emphasized is not God's destruction of such people but His patience towards them. Evidence of this can be seen in such scriptures as Rom 2:4 and 2 Pet. 3:9. God gives those who are children of wrath the opportunity to become children of God (Eph. 2:3-5).

The word used (Gk. *katertismetia*) would suggest that they were fitted (fitted themselves) unto destruction [Comment 4]. The prefix (kata) signifies the intensity of the action of the verb. In contrast the vessels of mercy are prepared beforehand unto glory (Gk. *proetoimasen*). God is fulfilling His divine plan and His purposes are just and true. There is no warrant in Scripture for any dogma of predestination of men to destruction.

The remainder of the chapter introduces the theme developed in chapter 10, namely God's purposes with His chosen people Israel. Although the Israelites 'failed' in following after a law of righteousness and did not arrive at that law, yet God has not cast them off entirely. Through Israel's unbelief, salvation comes to the Gentiles. God loves His people still and will yet make them a blessing to all mankind.

A. G. Willis, G. W. Conway

From Liverpool: A Problem, Paul uses an illustration from everyday life - a potter who with the same material makes a pot for noble use and another for common use. It is a difficult illustration to understand for there is a fundamental objection: human beings are not like clay! (Except that we have come from the hand of God as the pot comes from the hand of the potter - Is. 64:8). Clay

has no feelings, no responsibility, and is not made in the likeness of the potter. Clay can be moulded and designed without any moral considerations. Clearly God does not regard mankind as mere lumps of clay! Nevertheless the illustration is useful for making the point that God has the right, as God, to do what He likes with us [Comment 3].

The Question in v. 19. Paul has been arguing that God in His sovereignty takes the initiative in relation to mercy and that there are those wicked persons of whom Pharaoh is the quoted example, whom He uses to display His might and power. "If God picks and chooses" the sceptic may well ask, "How can He then blame me for the outcome?" In answer Paul stresses God's patience and right to act set against the stubbornness of mankind.

The vessels. Having established what God has a right to do, that is to make what He wants out of any one of us, Paul goes on to write about what God has actually done. It is notable that he does not suggest that God has prepared the "vessels of wrath" for destruction - rather they have so prepared themselves by their sin and wickedness, and God has been patient [Comment 4]. On the other hand the "vessels of mercy" have been prepared by God for glory. Pharaoh could not blame God for his stubbornness, but God could reasonably take up that very opposition in a kind of 'If that's the way you want it' reaction, and make something for His own glory out of the situation without being in the least bit unjust.

"Even us". Hosea's love for an unfaithful wife speaks of God's love for His people, while his acceptance of the child who was "Lo-Ammi" (Not my people) as his own speaks of God's acceptance of us who were Gentiles. Paul encouraged the Ephesians to praise God for His purposes in adopting them as sons through Jesus Christ in accordance with His pleasure and will (Eph. 1:4-5) and we should join in that praise too!

Righteousness. In faithfulness to His promise God saved a remnant of Israel. Those who failed to find this salvation failed because their quest for righteousness was by works by which they were unable to satisfy their God, rather than by faith. The stumbling block is the Lord Jesus (1 Cor. 1:23) who is described by Peter as the chosen Corner-Stone against which the whole of the building is aligned. As a holy nation it is our responsibility to give to the Lord Jesus here and now the place that God has given Him.

D. J. Webster

From Newcastle: The argument continues. Salvation is by faith. Paul shows that the system God has established is faith although God treats different people in different ways. We cannot argue with God about the time and place of our birth or the events of our lives.

When Paul was writing, the great issue was the different treatment that the Jews and Gentiles had had. Today similar issues might be to suggest that people have a better opportunity to hear the gospel in some places rather than others. Why are some people born with Christian parents? Why do some people grow up under atheistic indoctrination? Why do we have a clear revelation whereas this was veiled in Old Testament times? Why did some people see miracles and other do not have them to help their faith? Why will some people born in the future have to go through the Tribulation for their faith? It seems unfair.

We are taught elsewhere that although God causes unequal distributions He judges us according to what has been allocated to us. What do we make of the circumstances in which we have been put? How do we use the abilities we have been given? Thus God is absolutely just. So much so that in the end Jews, who have been 'loved' may fail to attain the righteousness that is attained by 'hated' Gentiles [Comment 5].

Verse 22 shows us that although God has the power to shape our destinies He has relinquished that power to us [Comment 6]. This shows the patient tolerance of God! God's plan for us was that we should all be vessels moulded by Him for glory but He has sat back and watched while we have chosen to make ourselves anything but. We made ourselves good for nothing but destruction. However God in His mercy will restore us even from our degenerated state. The criteria for this restoration are that we *want* to be transformed and that, by faith we let *Him* not us, do the transforming. This offer is open to us regardless of the privilege and opportunities that God has given us either by birth or ability.

P. Stoner

From Paisley: The sovereignty of God is brought before us in this passage in the illustration of the divine Potter and His work. Israel in a past day were reminded of this through Isaiah (45: 9) and Jeremiah (18: 6). The potter fashions a vessel according to his will and purpose and the vessel has no power over the potter. So, in the matter of salvation, God's purposes in election are sovereign, and man cannot question His purposes. Nevertheless, man is accountable to God for his response to the message of

the gospel and will be judged accordingly. How thankful we should be that He has been pleased to reveal the riches of His glory to us!

The bringing in of the Gentiles to be numbered among the people of God in this dispensation is also a matter for rejoicing as the Old Testament prophecies are fulfilled. It will be recalled that when Paul spoke of this in the synagogue at Antioch of Pisidia, the Jews were filled with jealousy at the thought of Gentiles finding forgiveness and acceptance before God. Such is the glorious message of the gospel that through faith in Christ, both Jews and Gentiles are forgiven. The fact that so many of the Jews rejected this message was also in fulfilment of Old Testament prophecies, because these spoke of a remnant being saved. The trouble with the Jews was that they sought acceptance before God by works of righteousness and fleshly ordinances and thereby they failed to enter into the promises of God. The Lord Jesus was to them a stone of stumbling, because in the purposes of God, only faith in Jesus could lead to righteousness and acceptance. The Lord quoted this scripture to the people of His day and Peter also reminded the people of Israel of this in Acts 4: 11.

J. Renfrew

From Wishaw: In the section before us the apostle poses at least seven questions; and the first of these strikes at the very core of this matter of God's elective purposes "Why doth He still find fault?" In the example cited in Romans 9 Pharaoh had ample opportunity to obey the clear command of God. Had he done this, he would have saved both himself and his people from much trouble, which resulted from his hardness of heart.

The Lord had every right to be angry with such a one as Pharaoh. He was a vessel of wrath fitted unto destruction. This was the end that suited both his open defiance of God, and his treatment of the people of Israel. Other instances in Scripture could be cited, e. g. Judas Iscariot and Annas and Caiaphas. In all these cases God's patience is seen in operation. The verse says God "endured with much longsuffering" showing that the opportunity was given for them to repent and change their ways.

It was felt by some that there was a difference between "a vessel ... unto dishonour" and "vessels of wrath". In the former it was thought that a person's 'vocation' or 'calling' in life was being referred to, and this would mean a lowly or insignificant calling, so far as the world was concerned. The latter expression seems to describe the course and consummation of those lives which were lived in direct rebellion and disobedience to the will of God. Such a one was Pharaoh.

In stark contrast to the "vessels of wrath" are the "vessels of mercy" to whom God was going to make known the riches of His glory. In using that simple, yet expressive statement, "even us" Paul includes the Roman Christians with himself among that privileged group of "vessels of mercy". Jews and Gentiles together. What a marvel of the grace of God! That which had been a barrier for centuries has now been broken down; and this all in accordance with the sure word of prophecy. Hosea's word found its marvellous fulfilment in the new aspect of the kingdom of God in the days of the apostles "I will say to them which were not My people, Thou art My people; and they shall say, Thou art my God" (Hos. 2: 23).

T. Gray, M.D. Macdonald

COMMENTS

1. (Birkenhead): Here is another case of interpretation rather than translation. There is no verb "to doom" in John 17: 12. If there were, who would do the dooming? Judas was the son of perdition. It is the way in which his mature character matches his end that is brought before us in John 17: 12.

2. (Birkenhead): What about Lot's family? Note how Abraham, in his pleading, stops at the prospect of ten righteous in Sodom (Gen. 18: 32-3). Does this mean that Lot, in addition to his wife, two daughters and their husbands could not have had more than three sons (Gen. 19: 12)?.

3. (Derby and Liverpool): There is surely no need to be offended at this metaphor for it says that the difference between God and Man in this matter is so great that it is like the difference between animate and inanimate. In any case, any who have seen a real potter in action will readily observe that the clay starts to look like a living thing in the hands of the potter. Do not we read in this very passage of the Son of God being likened unto a Rock and a Stone? (Rom. 9: 33).

I. E. P.

4. (Derby and Liverpool): See the Editorial for a comment on this issue.

5. (Newcastle): It is not advisable to use the word "hated" in this context. Scripture uses it of Esau, but even when the Gentiles were "far off" and had no part in the covenants of God (Eph. 2: 12, 13), God had a purpose of grace toward them. Similarly,

although Israel was "broken off" (Rom. 11:20), she was not "cast off" (Rom. 11:2).

6. (Newcastle): This is only partially **true**. God **has indeed** given **us the** responsibility for decisions **in** our own lives, **but there** remains a purpose **which He has** for **each** one of **us**, and towards **which He** directs us **in** some way. "**We are His** workmanship, **created in** Christ Jesus for good works, **which** God afore **prepared that we should walk in them"** (Eph. 2:10). I do not think **it** is possible for **us** completely to clarify the interaction between God's will **and** our own.

P. L. H.

THE SEALS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

Continued from B. S. 8702, p. 32.

7. The Seal of the Holy Spirit

One of the most precious **truths which the** believer on the Lord Jesus **can** enjoy is **the fact of the** indwelling **Spirit**. It is mentioned **three** times **in the** epistles of Paul:

"Christ... **in** whom, having also **believed, ye were** sealed (*sphragizo*) **with the** Holy **Spirit** of promise, **which is the** earnest (**pledge**) of our **inheritance"** (Eph. 1:12, 13).

"And **grieve** not **the** Holy **Spirit** of God, in whom **ye were** sealed (*sphragizo*) unto **the day** of redemption" (Eph. 4:30).

"Who also sealed (*sphragizo*) **us, and gave us the** earnest (**pledge**) of **the Spirit** in our hearts" (2 Cor. 1:22).

This seal has **all** four **characteristics and** so is worthy of emphasis.

- (i) Ownership. When **the Holy Spirit** took **up** residence in our hearts **He** asserted God's **right** of possession. The **believer** is "God's own possession" as one **hymn writer** so **aptly** said, "They **that have My Spirit, these saith He, are Mine**". We belong to God.
- (ii) Security. The **presence of the Holy Spirit within** ensures **that nothing can change** or remove **us from being "in Christ"**. **In whom having heard; in whom having believed; in whom ye were sealed; a threefold security.** The **seal** guarantees our **security because we are sealed ^fin Christ¹.**

- (iii) Destination. The believer is travelling towards his inheritance; **we are moving forward to the day of redemption, the day of our loosing away from earth.** The seal guarantees **we shall arrive at** our destination.
- (iv) Authentication. The seal asserts **the truth of the fact that we are not imposters, we are true citizens of heaven.** The Holy Spirit authenticates **that we belong to Christ and hence have the right** to our inheritance, incorruptible, undefiled, **which fadeth not away and is reserved in heaven for us.**

8. The Seal of the Firm Foundation of God

The epistles of Paul to Timothy **were written** against a background of **departure** from **the** living God. They **are** therefore supremely relevant to **the days in which we live when men are** "lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, **haughty**, railers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy... holding a form of godliness, **but having denied the power thereof"** (2 Tim. 3: 2-5). The context of Paul's exhortation about this seal has reference to "**the truth**". The importance of **handling aright the "word of truth" in a day when men have erred** concerning **the truth.** Nevertheless or in spite of **that, the firm** foundation of God standeth, **having** this seal (*sphragis*): **the hidden side which is Godward, "the Lord knoweth them that are His:"** The side **which is seen manward, "Let every one that nameth the Name of the Lord depart** from unrighteousness" (2 Tim. 2: 19).

The **firm** foundation of God is **the Truth which** has its embodiment in our Lord Jesus Christ. The seal displays **ownership, the knowledge of who belongs to Him.** **It authenticates the truth by the believer departing** from unrighteousness. The word of Christ provides **the security** to those who belong to **Him** and our *destination* is assured **by the truth that "if we died with Him, we shall also live with Him"** (2 Tim. 2: 11).

9. - 15. The Seven Seals of the Book

So far, in our consideration of **the seals of the New Testament, they have been those which are applied externally and are sealed up.** In Revelation 5: 1 John says, **"I saw in the right hand of Him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the back, close sealed (katasphragizo - sealed doum) with**

seven seals (*sphmgis*). This is the only reference in the whole of Scripture which uses this manner of sealing. These seals, we suggest, are part of the book like the gummed flap on an envelope, as any seals applied from outside would cover up the writing "on the back". W.E. Vine sees the prefix '*kata*' as an intensification of the verb but Young gives it to mean 'to seal down'. The seven seals await the day when they will be opened by the Lamb standing in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders. The consequences of His action are described by John in chapters 6 and 7 and 8:1. The fearful judgements in the earth wrought by the white, red, black and pale horses and the great earthquake with the accompanying celestial catastrophes are vivid visual aids to assist those in churches of God in understanding the unsearchable judgements of God.

16. The Seal of the Living God

There has been much written by Bible students about the significance of the sealing up of the 144,000 out of every tribe of Israel (Rev. 7:1-8). The characteristics of this seal appear to be twofold, that of *ownership and authentication*. The seal will testify they belong to God and what they say is in the Name of the living God. John records this event between the opening of the sixth and seventh seals of the book by the Lamb.

17. The Seal upon the Seven Thunders

John, like Daniel, was privileged to hear some things from the mouths of God's angelic messengers which they were forbidden to write. They were commanded to seal up what they had heard and not to commit their experience to writing as a matter of *security*. Daniel had to "shut up the words, and seal {*Chatham*) the book, even to the time of the end" (Dan. 12:4). Whether the things which the seven thunders uttered will ever be revealed it is impossible to say. We do know that the duration of the seal is in the hand of the Almighty, Omnipotent, God (Rev. 10:3-4).

18. The Seal Over the Abyss

As we read the events of the closing chapters of the book of the Revelation we stand in awe of the power granted to

individual angels as **they** obey **the** commands of **the** Lord our God, **the** Almighty. In Revelation 20: 1-3 we see how **a single** messenger, having **the key and a chain**, commits **the** Devil to **a bound** existence in **the** abyss for **a thousand** years. Now **the tables are** turned. Through Tiberius Caesar **he** thought to **apply a seal to the stone** which would **keep the** Lord of life **and** glory in **the** tomb of Joseph of Arimathaea. The angel of **the** Lord proved otherwise. Now in his earthly prison, **the mighty** Satan has **placed** over **him** a seal from outside **which** seals *up* his exit. In this **very act** God signifies **that the mighty creature within is owned by Him** and will remain *secure* for however long **the Almighty** has decreed. There **can be** no doubt about **the fact that God everywhere** has sway **and** all things serve His **might** as *authenticated* **by the seal and He dictates the destination** of all His creatures, including **the fallen cherub that** covereth.

19. The Unsealed Book

Having completed his assignment, "**what thou seest, write in a book**", John **receives a final charge**, "**Seal not up the words of the prophecy of this book**", (22: 10) "**for the time is at hand**". To **the churches of God** has come **an end-time revelation which opens with a vision of the Lord Jesus walking among the churches**. The reason for this is **identical to that for which the Lord revealed Himself to Abraham**. "**For I have known him, to the end that he may command his children and his household after him, that they may keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgement**" (Gen. 18: 19). We in **the churches of God have in our possession an unsealed book**. It is our **privilege** to identify ourselves with **the angel and with John the writer** who said, "**I am a fellow-servant with thee and with thy brethren the prophets, and with them which keep the words of this book: worship God**" (22: 9). The Lord's last words to **the churches are**, "**he that keepeth My works unto the end, to him will I give authority over the nations**" (2: 26); "**thou... didst keep My word, and didst not deny My Name**" (3: 8); "**because thou didst keep the word of My patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of trial**" (3: 10). **Let us hear His voice again, "I Jesus have sent Mine angel to testify unto you these things for the churches"** (22: 16). As those who **are sealed unto the day of redemption and in response to His words, "Behold, I come quickly" may we say from our hearts, "Come, Lord Jesus"**.

R. A. Parker

Bible Studies

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

EDITORIAL

8704

ZEAL AND JEALOUSY

Some words have different meanings,
And yet they're spelt the same,
A cricket is an insect,
To play it - it's a game.
On every hand, in every land,
It's thoroughly agreed,
The English language to explain.
Is very hard indeed.

We need hardly be surprised to find that the Hebrew and Greek languages in which the Scriptures were originally written contain similar words whose meanings can only be determined from their contexts. Just such a case occurs in this month's study portion concerning the word, with its associates, which is translated "zeal" (Rom. 10: 2) but elsewhere "jealousy" (Rom. 13: 13). The same word (*zelos*) is used of the Lord in a scripture (Jn. 2: 17) which includes a quotation from Psalm 69: 9. Here the Hebrew word *qinah* is used and we conclude that it is the Hebrew counterpart of *zelos*. This may be confirmed by the way in which the apostle Simon is called the Zealot (Luke 6: 15, Acts 1: 13), a transliteration of the Greek word, but is called the Cananaean elsewhere (Mat. 10: 4, Mk. 3: 18). The latter is not a place-name as its rendering Canaanite in the Authorized Version would suggest but is a transliteration of a corresponding Hebrew/Aramaic derivation based on the word *qina*.

Saul in his unsaved days was a perfect example of the zeal condemned in Rom. 10: 2 for his zeal for the traditions of his fathers (Gal. 1: 14) which he thought was towards God (Acts 22: 3) found expression in the persecution of the church of God in Jerusalem (Phil. 3: 6). His zeal thus led him in the exactly opposite direction from that in which the zeal of believers in imitating their Lord ought to be directed

(Jn. 2: 17) for **Saul** sought to destroy **the** house of God. He, himself, became in turn a **victim** (Acts 21: 20) of those **in the church** of God in **Jerusalem** who hankered **after the old way** of life. It seems also **that there were** some (not all) of a **similar** persuasion in **the church** of God in Corinth, who **pursued a vendetta** against **Paul** leading to the statements of 2 Cor. 11 and 12 in which he speaks particularly of those who followed in his **unsaved** footsteps, **venting their misplaced zeal** for God on **him** (2 Cor. 11: 24).

In contrast, **Paul's zeal** for the **welfare** of those in **the assembly** in Corinth (rendered "jealousy"¹¹ twice 2 Cor. 11: 2) was reciprocated by others (2 Cor. 7: 7). **Here is the** outworking of **the great principle of zeal** enunciated by Paul to the Galatians, "it is good to be zealously sought in a good matter at all times" (Gal. 4: 18). But those in Corinth had great zeal (2 Cor. 7: 11) especially in giving to the need of saints in a neighbouring district (2 Cor. 9: 2) in fulfilment of good works for which the Lord redeemed the people of God (Tit. 2: 14). They had, too, a zeal for spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 14: 12) though Paul exhorted them to desire earnestly (be zealous) for them (1 Cor. 14: 1) especially for the greater gifts (1 Cor. 14: 39). Given that the house of God today is composed of people engaged in the service of God, these are ways in which zeal for the house of God, in emulation of the Lord Jesus, may be shown, as was well known by Epaphras (Col. 4: 13), Perhaps this is what is meant by the command "be zealous" (Rev. 3: 19).

Unfortunately, the Corinthian saints were involved in something else. There was among them jealousy (*zelos*) and strife (1 Cor. 3: 3; 2 Cor. 12: 20) as was also in prospect in the church of God in Rome (Rom. 13: 13). The word is again associated with strife (Jas. 3: 14, 16), lust and killing (Jas. 4: 2). No doubt it was this lust of the flesh (Gal. 5: 20 where it is again associated with strife) which motivated the patriarchs against Joseph (jealousy, Acts 7: 9), the Saducees against the apostles (Acts 5: 17) and the Jews against Paul and Silas in Thessalonica (Acts 17: 5) and against Paul (Acts 13: 45) in Antioch.

While we readily understand what "zeal" means it is harder to alight on a suitable word to translate *zelos* and its associates when it is clearly a lust of the flesh. Evidently the Revisers chose the word "jealousy" whereas the translators of the Authorized Version chose "envying" as did the Revisers in saying "love envieth not" (1 Cor. 13: 4). Since we have so far mentioned every occurrence bar two of *zelos*, *zelotes* and *zeloo* (though not their compounds) in the New Testament we may be in a position to gauge the sense of the words when used to describe a lust of flesh. In this connection we cannot fail to notice

the words¹ association with strife and faction or division. Given this and the fact that zeal as an admirable quality has to do with the enthusiasm that saints in the house of God are to have for each other and their service of the house of God (following the example of the Lord Jesus) it may be that the lust of flesh is that emotion that displays the opposite. That is to say, the sin is the perversion of what the Lord intends for His people. An analogous English word may be then "cleave" which can mean "to stick to" or the opposite. "to cut away from"¹ depending on the context.

The remaining New Testament occurrences are truly fearful (1 Cor. 10: 22, Heb. 10: 27) for they ascribe this same emotion to the Lord in pursuit of His judgement on the people of God. especially when their actions deny their very separated position as temple of God. It is easy to see that the word in this context, though directed to such an end, conveys the usual, first meaning of "zeal". It may be worth noting, too, that there appears here to be some similarity to what the unsaved Saul and the Jews conceived to be their duty towards the early disciples, and this may go some way to explain how Saul persecuted them in all good conscience.

We are not at present able to trace the same contrast in the corresponding Old Testament word and we invite others to pursue the matter. For example the word for "zeal" (Ps. 69: 9) is also translated "jealousy"¹¹ in such scriptures as Job 5: 2, Prov. 14: 30 (RVM), 27: 4.

I. E. P.

SUBJECTION TO THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD Romans 10: 1-15

From Aberdeen: Paul's great desire for Israel was to see them saved. Every child born to believing parents is the object of a like desire. What about this world's millions? God, Himself, desires that all should be saved.

The Jews had some knowledge of God but not a 'full knowledge'¹ (v.2) [Comment 1], First and foremost, God desires us to be saved but moreover He also desires us to come to the 'full knowledge' of the truth (1 Tim. 2: 4).

None could attain to the righteousness of the law for none could do those things (Rom. 10: 5) and this is why Christ was manifest as the object of the law "to every one that believeth"¹¹.

What exactly is the meaning of the speaking of the righteousness of faith when it says "Say not¹¹? The first ^MSay not¹¹ (Who shall ascend into heaven?) seems to depreciate the worth of Christ, What God wants us to say is Jesus is "Lord" and thereby acknowledge the person of Christ for who He is. The second "Say not¹¹ (who shall descend into the deep?) seems to deny that Christ died and rose again [Comment 2]. Not only does faith acknowledge the Lordship of Christ but it also believes that Christ **died** and rose again from among the dead. This is the faith expressed in Rom. 10: 9. Sadly the majority of the Jews did not subject themselves to confess these facts and instead desired to establish their own righteousness which, of course, is impossible.

The proclamation of the word of faith is a world-wide message and in order for the multitudes to hear, heralds are required. To evangelize, to be sent as a preacher, is a definite work requiring those gifted by God to enter the work. The public proclamation of the gospel is a work of God which He commits to men whom He gifts as evangelists. Paul had been given this gift and he has left an example of the manner of this work.

J. Johnson

From Birkenhead: Paul writes several times in his letters concerning his great desire for the salvation of the Jews. Paul not only desired this for his fellow Jews, but he took positive action by praying for them. It is essential that a deep concern for the salvation of others should be accompanied by earnest prayer.

Paul understood the Jewish religion better than most. Paul himself, before meeting Christ, had been motivated by "a zeal for God" (v. 2), but this was misplaced (Gal. 1: 3, 4; Phil. 3: 6). He had attempted to achieve righteousness by legal observance, and Christ had been a "stone of stumbling" to Paul until he realised the truth. His zeal was now given a new direction and his sole ambition was that Christ should be magnified through him (Phil. 1: 20).

The Jews sought to establish a righteousness of their own by obedience to the law. Paul, however, found that Christ had put an end to the law, since life and righteousness had been made available to all through Him. It was no longer necessary to win these blessings through keeping the law, for salvation is offered as a divine gift. Although Christ has rendered the law powerless, it has not been set

aside. Rather it is fulfilled in those who walk "after the Spirit"¹¹ (Rom. 8: 3, 4), just as it was fulfilled in the life of Christ, which was perfectly righteous, showing the law to be honourable and just (Mat. 5: 17).

Paul presents to us two means by which salvation can be obtained; through observance of the law (Lev. 18: 5) and through faith (Deut. 30: 11-14) [Comment 3]. No one has ever succeeded in observing the law, however, so no one has obtained life in this way. Paul takes Deut.30: 11-14 out of its original context and gives it a more meaningful application to show that God has brought salvation near to us, in Christ. We do not need to make any effort to procure it. All we have to do is accept it in faith, believing in our hearts that God raised Christ from the dead, and acknowledge Him as Lord (Phil. 2: 11, 1 Cor. 12: 3). Those who put faith in Christ will never be disappointed (Is. 28: 16).

Although the Jews had heard the Gospel many times, they freely rejected it (Lk. 4: 16-30; Mat. 23: 37). God had revealed His plan to them in the Old Testament scriptures; they were without excuse. Moreover, both Jews and Gentiles had violated God's perfect standard of righteousness (Rom. 3: 23); both were unable to gain favour in His sight. Just as condemnation was universal, however, so salvation has been made available to all (Rom. 3: 29, 30). Through Christ we have received many blessings (1 Cor. 1: 30, 31). Because of His obedient life and death, we have been restored to a proper relationship with God.

Once again, Paul takes an isolated text from the Old Testament (Joel 2: 32), and gives it a new dimension. "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved". He then points out that if a person is to 'call on the name of the Lord'¹, he must first hear this message. The person who has placed his or her trust in Christ is obliged and encouraged to proclaim Him to others.

J. D. Williams

From Derby: Paul makes a damning assertion (Rom. 9: 31-33) that Israel failed to attain the law of righteousness because they sought a righteousness dependent on the merit of their works. But before entering on the painful task of condemning his own nation Paul in effect is saying: 'Let me pause a moment, it is a serious accusation

that I am bringing against my fellow countrymen, but I repeat that I am doing it from no feeling of resentment. How great is my heart's good will for them. How earnest my prayer to God for their salvation. ¹

As a fellow countryman and one who was as they were Paul could testify that they were full of zeal for God. This is not the point at which the Jews failed. The point is that they had not guided their zeal by true knowledge which is the result of genuine spiritual insight. They strove after righteousness, there being two ways of attaining it. One was God's method of which they were ignorant. The other was their own method, to this they clung blindly and wilfully. They, in fact, refused to submit to God's plan of salvation.

Their own method was based on a rigid adherence to legal codes of practice; but that was ended in Christ. The expression "Christ is the end of the law unto righteousness" holds two main strands of thought: (1) that the law as a means of attaining righteousness before God (an impossible task for fallen man) was at an end in Christ and (2) that Christ was the complete fulfilment of the law both prophetically and in its inexorable demands concerning righteousness. Thus from now on only faith in Him is the basis of our righteousness.

Now that righteousness is based on the principle of faith in Christ it is open to all. The old method of righteousness by the law and the exact performance of legal rules was impossible to fulfil.

The matter has been put this way: 'In order to be saved, have I to bring the necessary manifestation of God's will from heaven or Hades? Have I to procure incarnation and resurrection? No, all is now done; the Person and the work are complete and ready. As at Sinai so in the Gospel, God has done His part unasked; and now your part is to accept and own His Son as your justification.' So we are offered something which does not require hard striving or painful labour on our part. All it says is that "if thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, and shalt believe in thy heart that God raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved".

Paul quotes from the prophets Isaiah and Joel and one common word is used, "whosoever"¹. This salvation is open to Jews and Gentiles alike because the same Lord over ail is rich unto all that call upon Him (v. 12). One is reminded of Peter's word to the Gentiles in Cornelius¹ house "He is Lord of ail" (Acts 10: 36).

This very freedom of the offer of salvation to every believer was a stumbling block to the unbelieving Jews (Acts 13: 45-47). Paul, however, argues for the evangelization of the Gentiles. How then, he says, if the prophets announce a salvation for all who turn to the Messiah shall they believe in Him? Gentile believers must first be hearers, therefore there must be preachers, missionaries sent out from the possessors of the faith. All this proves that a large proclamation of the Messiah to the Gentiles by Jewish missionaries such as Paul was in perfect accord with the prophecies.

Paul concludes this section of the chapter with the words of Isaiah as the sent ones are contemplated. The Father sent the Son and the Son had commissioned us to bring good tidings to others. How many throughout the centuries have been grateful for the 'beautiful feet'¹ that have travelled the world to preach the glorious gospel.

A. K. Smith

From Dulwich: One of the greatest concerns in Paul's life after his amazing conversion on the road to Damascus was for his own Jewish people. He had a great burden on his heart for them and longed that every single one of his fellow countrymen would not only be born again, but would be truly converted. He knew exactly how they felt about doing God's will. He had had that same passionate zeal as they had for God, and this comes out in his letter to the Philippians (ch. 3) when he wrote about his own burning zeal, about his pedigree, about his keeping the law, about the righteousness he had, summing himself up as one "found blameless"¹¹. But he recognised that he had been blinded, ignorant and completely misguided and had been heading in the way that leads to destruction. The things that were gain to him, these he counted loss for Christ. Indeed he counted all things to be loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord: for whom he suffered the loss of all things... that he would gain Christ.

He had become subject to Christ. Sadly his own Jewish nation did not know what the word subjection meant. They only trusted in themselves and in their own good works. They ignored and rejected the righteousness of God offered to them in Christ. The one and only door of hope still open to them was Christ, but alas they would not accept Him.

The law was given through Moses but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. The law was necessary but it could never give

anyone who **kept** it complete **acceptance** before God. **Only Christ kept the law and made it honourable, and thankfully for us He is the end of the law** unto righteousness to **every one that believeth**. It is only through His **death at Calvary and by the shedding of His blood that we are accepted before God**.

The Israelites **heard the law repeated and repeated year after year. It was in their mouth and heart. So we can understand what Paul means here when he says that the word was in their mouth and in their heart.** There was no **need** for anyone to **climb up to heaven** to bring Christ down again to **be born, or to go down into the deep** to raise Christ up again from **the dead**. Simple faith in Him is **all that is necessary**. The **weakest and most hopeless sinner** does not require to do **anything to be justified by faith**. **He has only to believe. How many there may be living around us today who have the word of God in their mouths but they do not have that faith to believe in their hearts!**

Romans **10 and 9** is indeed a favourite **verse of mine, and is perhaps one of your favourite verses too**. How many have put that **verse into practice!** The mouth confesses **and the heart believes**. We posed the question in our discussion, **'Is it essential to confess openly Jesus as Lord to be saved?'**¹ So often **preachers of the Gospel appeal for open confession to be made, and we agreed that it is good for the newly saved sinner to tell someone else about his or her salvation. We also agreed that it was good to hear an open confession which is made nowadays at some believers' baptism services. Not only does it give the saved sinner joy and assurance to declare it, but it also gives joy to those who are told. However, we came to the conclusion that it is not essential to confess openly for salvation because what about those who are dumb and handicapped? We felt that this verse had a particular relevance during Paul's time for it took a lot then for a Jew to confess that Jesus is Lord.**

From **verse 11 onwards the apostle Paul broadens his application of the gospel message to "whosoever believeth"**. There is no distinction now **between Jew and Gentile for the gospel is that "whosoever shall call upon the Name of the Lord shall be saved"** (Joel 2: 32). These **verses of course have also a future application, but they should concern us now. How shall our fellow countrymen believe unless we tell them the message of the gospel? How shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall we preach unless we are sent? It is our responsibility to make disciples and declare to them the whole counsel**

of God. Doing otherwise is not subjecting ourselves to the righteousness of God. Oh that we could have some concern and have a burden as Paul had, for his own people.

M. McKaig

From **Leigh and Bolton**: Our study portion opens in a similar manner to that of chapter 9, with the expression of **Paul's** passionate concern for the salvation of his compatriots. **How** sensitive the apostle must have been to their futile attempt to establish their own righteousness in misguided zeal. Once he himself had sought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth (Acts 26: 9) , being zealous for God (Acts 22: 3) but not according to **knowledge** (v. 2), and blameless concerning the righteousness of the law (Phil. 3: 6). Recalling no doubt the time of his own ignorance (1 Tim. 1: 13), he felt for the tragedy of the ignorance that now similarly characterized his kinsmen according to the flesh. Through ignorance they had failed to submit themselves to the righteousness of God, offered to them in Christ. They treated the law as an end in itself, rather than viewing it as their tutor to bring them to Christ, that they might be justified by faith (Gal. 3: 24). Viewing it in this latter way, believing Jews found Christ to be the outcome of the law in respect of righteousness (v. 4).

In verses 5-7 "the righteousness which is of the law" and "the righteousness which is of faith" are compared and contrasted. In the first case the law was a law of works; the law taught the '*doer*' how to live. However, by contrast, the latter involves not doing but simply believing. Both are compared in respect of the words (Deut. 30: 11-14) spoken by Moses to the second generation of the Exodus, as they heard the law repeated before the Jordan. They were told then that the law was in their mouth and heart so that no superhuman effort was required to bring it to them. After all, they ought to have been intimately acquainted with it already over the previous 40 years (hence it was said to be in their mouth and heart). Similarly, Paul argues that "the word of faith" was as accessible to the Jews of the present generation, for they were acquainted with the Old Testament Scriptures, which as already mentioned, were calculated to lead them to faith in Christ. In a further sense, the "word was nigh unto them" in that the divine work of the incarnation and resurrection was complete, and ready to be appropriated by simple faith. Only by bypassing this could they make righteousness still of works. One suggestion made was that the bracketted statements of vv. 6 and 7

were to highlight **that the** misguided notion of having to perform **the stated tasks** did involve **such a** by-passing. **It was** tantamount to nullifying **the work of Christ** - to **make out that Christ had never descended** out of **heaven**, for instance. **Verse 9**, however, continues **the thought of 'mouth and heart'** making **clear that the emphasis is on the message** of 'believe' and not 'do'. No **humanly impossible tasks** were **necessary**.

The prominence given to confession with **the mouth here was noted, and suggested to us that**, right down to **vv. 11, 12, Paul has primarily the Jews** in mind. This **then** is broadened out to show **the universal nature** of salvation. The need **for the Jew** to confess with his **mouth was seen as an additional element of the Jew, much as in Acts 2: 38; where immersion for the Jew was required prior to forgiveness and receipt of the Holy Spirit [Comment 4]** • **In neither case can we be dogmatic as to the reason** for this Jewish **penalty, but it is surely** worth bearing in mind **the innate hypocrisy, deep-seated unbelief, and bitter antagonism of the generation of Jews that put Christ to death.** Against **such a** background, **the bold outward acts** of confession **and immersion would leave** no room for doubt **as to genuine conversion.**

The passage under consideration concludes by dealing with the needs of the perishing (v. 14), and the responsibility of those entrusted with a ministry to them (v. 15).

B. D. Johnston

From **Liverpool: The Israelites.** **Paul** concedes their **zeal but** points out **the flaw** - it is not **based** on knowledge. **Such zeal** is misdirected **and can be a very dangerous thing, as Paul knew** from personal experience, **but he** is still not **prepared** to write **them off and yearns** for their salvation. **We noted that the one thing Paul did not give up** from his **old life was** his enthusiasm for **the things of God.**

The end of the Law. **In** both senses of this expression Christ is both **the 'goal' and the 'termination' of the law.** **He is the goal in that the law pointed to Him and found in Him its ultimate fulfilment, but He is also the termination in that the whole system became redundant with the coming of Christ (cf. Gal. 3: 15-25).**

Basis of Righteousness. Righteousness **based on the law meant** keeping **the law and that is the fundamental problem in trying to be right with God that way.** Only **the Lord Jesus kept the law.** **But** righteousness

by faith is (for us!) a very simple matter of confessing that Jesus is Lord and believing His victorious resurrection. The appeal to Deuteronomy in which faith is personified and voices aloud the objections of the unsaved to refute them is to show just how easy God has made it for sinful man to be righteous before Him.

Calling on the Name of the Lord. 'Lord save me'^{1,1} is the simplest and most direct way that men call on **the** Name of the Lord. It necessitates faith and trust and there are three blessings to the one who does this: he will never be put to shame. God is rich towards him, and he will be saved. Such is the powerful reaction of our God to one who calls to Him for help.

D. J. Webster

From Newcastle upon Tyne: The ignorance of the Jews is different from that of the Gentiles found in Romans 2: 14. Gentiles who did not have the law nevertheless acted according to a clear conscience. Jews, however, had consciously closed their minds to the righteousness of God and consequently had failed to recognize the Messiah.

Paul adds his comments to a quotation from Deuteronomy 30: 11-14 to emphasize the link between Christ and the fulfilment of the law. Christ, the fulfilment of the law, is not a remote possibility to be gained through great effort. Rather, He is the decision of our hearts and lips. An isolated quotation of Romans 10: 9 may suggest that it is necessary to do something. In its context it means quite the opposite. The Deuteronomy reference may help us to see that the fulfilment of the law is that which was latent within us, as in Adam, before the contrary *action* of sin.

Righteousness is associated with the heart and salvation is associated with witness. The heart is not an agent of action. Righteousness is a passive state. However speech will lead us into controversy and we will gain the present experience of being saved from the power of sin by the power of the name of Jesus [Comment 5].

It may be that the mention of witness in connection with salvation, is intended specifically for the Jews, for whom, in the early spread of Christianity, there were extra requirements. The explanation of salvation, given here in the context of the Jews may be contrasted with the requirement of the Gentile jailor which was for faith and was

without the mention of a requirement to witness (Acts 16: 30). This matter is however a technicality because it should be an inevitable response to our salvation that we want to confess "Jesus is Lord".

P. J. Stoner

From Nottingham: During our discussion of the passage we were immediately struck by the depth of feeling expressed in v.1. We asked whether or not there was the same determination and heart-felt desire in our prayers and whether a lack of zeal is something peculiar to the Christian faith. [It isn't - Eds.] We realized that the Devil laughs at half-hearted Christians and that there is a real need for more supplication.

While considering v.4 it was thought that, by comparison with the New Testament revelation, the law of Moses was 'rough and ready'¹ but was perfected by the Lord Jesus, who said Himself that He had come to fulfil the law and Prophets (Mat. 5: 17; see also Gal. 3: 24) [Comment 7].

We found vv. 5-8 quite difficult to grasp although it was thought that Deuteronomy 30: 11-14 offered a helpful explanation. We also had an exchange of ideas as to the true meaning of "believe in thine heart" (v. 9). We realised that "heart" could not be equated with the mind, but that a more likely explanation would involve the role of the soul [Comment 8].

C. Edis

From Paisley: There was nothing that would have brought greater pleasure to Paul, and to the Lord, than the salvation of his fellow-countrymen.. Verse 2 is a reflection of Paul's own experience: zealous for God and seeking to conform to the law of God. In Philippians 3: 4-6, Paul enumerates his own qualifications as a Jew, having every advantage that natural birth and upbringing could confer. Nevertheless he remained ignorant of the righteousness of God in his hatred of Jesus of Nazareth and his persecution of His disciples. Like the Pharisee in Luke 18: 9-14, he sought to establish his own righteousness, but this was not acceptable in the sight of God. It was impossible for man to keep the law of God in its entirety and Paul confessed to this (Rom. 7: 10). The purpose of the law was to show to men the sinfulness of sin and point them to Christ as the only answer to man's need.

In contrast to the works of the law is the response of faith. Moses spoke of **this to Israel (Deut. 30: 11-14).** The word of **God had been brought within their reach: it was not necessary for them to go to heaven or over the sea to find out the mind of the Lord. It had been brought within their reach as they traversed the desert of Sinai. Similarly today, it is not necessary to go to heaven to see Christ there; nor is it necessary to go to the abyss to find out whether Christ has been raised from the dead. All that God requires of men is that they accept His word and that will bring them salvation and righteousness in the sight of God. Faith is a matter of the heart; it should be followed by the confession of the mouth. This applies in the present purposes of God to both Jew and Gentile, and God is rich to all that call upon Him wherever they may be. Oh that men understood this!**

Human instrumentality also plays a part in the salvation of others insofar as the proclamation of the gospel has been entrusted to men. It should be a matter of concern to us that in this day of modern communications, which were not available to the apostle, there should be men and women who have not heard the message of the gospel and are unable therefore to believe on the Lord Jesus. The preacher, or herald of the gospel has a vital work to do which has eternal consequences. But the preacher, himself, must be sent of the Lord or his work will be ineffectual. How needful it is that we should wait on the Lord for His guidance in bearing the glad tidings to those who are without Christ and without hope in this world.

J. Renfrew

From Wishaw: Much debate centred around the question 'What is the righteousness of God referred to in verse 3?• At least two suggestions were given:

- 1. The righteousness of God is that righteousness obtained through faith (Rom. 3: 22): "The righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ". The people Paul is speaking of refused to submit themselves to the righteousness of God obtainable through faith and were instead actively involved in securing their own righteousness, as the words "going about"¹¹ in verse 3 (AV) imply.**
- 2. The righteousness of God is Jesus Christ who is the complete expression of the righteousness of God. To Him the Jewish nation showed utter rejection. Complete refusal to submit to Him showed a total misunderstanding on their part of the righteousness of God.**

It was generally felt of the two explanations given the first was likely to be the more accurate, however it would be interesting to hear what editors think on this matter [Comment 6].

Paul, in verse 4 categorically states that "Christ is the end of the law unto righteousness"¹¹ i.e. Christ has brought the Law to an end, having cancelled the written code and its regulations which stood opposed to us and which we were unable to maintain. Christ's death on the cross was the means whereby the "bond written in ordinances that was against us" (Col. 2: 14) was dealt with.

The law stood opposed to our nature but the nature of Christ was at one with the law (Ps. 40: 8) "I delight to do Thy will, O my God; yea Thy law is within my heart. "

Paul contrasts verse 6 with verse 5 by the injection of the word "But". The righteousness which is of the law (v.5) required the precise performance of the law in every detail, whereas the righteousness of faith demands no such observance but is dependent upon confession and belief. The one who explicitly trusts in Jesus Christ "shall not be put to shame". The marginal reference with regard to verse 11 is Is. 28: 16 where we read "He that believeth shall not make haste". For the believer in Christ there is no need to 'make haste'¹ or hurry about in the quest for peace or faith in Jesus Christ provides perfect rest.

The universal application of the Gospel is here envisaged in the ability of the Lord to save everyone who calls upon Him in faith. The offer of the gospel of God's grace is not limited to certain groups of people whether culturally or morally but is all embracing in its design. The need of the disciple to evangelize is seen in a world-wide context (Mat. 28: 19) and is part of the general vocation of every disciple although there are certain occasions when the call to preach is particularly specific as was the experience of Paul (Acts 16: 9, 10).

J. Shepka, I. Gray

COMMENTS

1. (Aberdeen): Yes, the word here is *epignosis* indicating "knowledge" built "upon" earlier knowledge.

2. (**Aberdeen**): The words "Say not^M are directed to the attitude of the questioner not the content of the question. Deut. 30: 12-13 gives excellent help as to the meaning of Rom. 10: 6-7 in that it shows the importance of faith over sight. In New Testament application, the rich man's attitude (Luke 16: 27-28) is the kind of attitude that Horn. 10: 6-7 is directed against.

3. (**Birkenhead**): "My judgements: which if a man do, he shall live in them" (Lev. 18: 5) means that the law was given to sustain life already given. It could not give life and hence salvation could never be gained by the keeping of the law.

I. E. P.

Scripture says "if there had been a law given which could make alive, verily righteousness would have been of the law" (Gal. 3: 21). If a law could have led to life, the sacrifice of Christ would not have been necessary, and God would have used this alternative way. However, the weakness of fallen humanity made obedience to the law impossible, so no man could be justified by his own actions. When the Lord spoke to the rich young ruler (Mat. 19: 16-23 *et al*) he quite genuinely answered the enquiry "What good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?" with "If thou wouldest enter into life, keep the commandments". The young man had to learn that he could not keep the commandments, and so there was no way to eternal life through his own deeds.

P. L. H

4. (**Leigh and Bolton**): It is true that the Jews at that time had to be baptized in water before receiving the Holy Spirit but they had had their sins forgiven *before* being baptized in water. See, for example, those of Acts 19: 1-7. Note that the Lord baptized disciples (Jn. 4: 1-2).

5. (**Newcastle upon Tyne**): Observe that righteousness is obtained by belief not confession (Rom. 10: 10-11). Confession of Jesus as Lord was something that no Jew could bring himself to do without having had direct dealings with God to the saving of his soul. Thus the utterance of the words proved to the Jew that he was indeed saved. No doubt it did to others too, but the trouble with speech as proof is that the listeners have no way of telling that what the speaker says is true (though of course the speaker himself will know). Faith can only be made known to men by works or deeds (Jas. 2: 18-19) even as the Lord said "By their fruits ye shall know them" and "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy by Thy name... then will I profess the parable unto them, I never knew you" (Mat. 7: 20-3).

The Lord then spoke the parable of the house on the rock and the house on the sand to show the importance of doing. The believers being saved from the power of sin has to do with deeds rather than words. It should be noted also, as friends in Leigh and Bolton observe, the believing Jew's first act of witness was to be baptized. So it should be for all believers' ere they go in for preaching and controversy.

6. (Wishaw): Both explanations are correct and complement each other. The Lord *is* the righteousness of God and is "made unto us... righteousness"¹¹ (1 Cor. 1: 30) by faith.

/ . E. P.

7. (Nottingham): Scripture says "The law of the Lord is perfect, restoring the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes"¹ (Ps. 19: 7, 8), and in the New Testament "The law is holy, and the commandment holy, and righteous, and good" (Rom. 7: 12). It is thus very far from 'rough and ready'¹, but is an expression of God's own righteousness. It has Christ as its goal and consummation, because all its objectives are personified in Him.

8. (**Nottingham**): Scripture uses the term 'heart' to refer to the centre of the personality, so that something believed in the heart becomes part of the psychological make-up of the person. In some cases 'heart' could be replaced by 'mind', but we tend to think of belief held in the mind as purely intellectual and rational, without any necessary effects on our motives. On the other hand, belief 'in the heart'¹ does involve a rational assent to ascertainable facts; it is not simply emotional. The 'heart'¹, in this sense, cannot be associated with any single physical element of man, and probably not with any single spiritual element.

P. L. H.

Bible Studies

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

EDITORIAL

8705

A NAME AND A PRAISE

Concerning Israel the apostle says, ^MBy their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles" (Rom. 11: 11). His purpose in writing these things to the Romans was not only to glorify his ministry in the capacity of "apostle of the Gentiles" but was as stated in v. 14, "If by any means I may provoke to jealousy them that are my flesh, and may save some of them". Paul knew how hard it was for Jews to admit that divine revelation could be received by the Gentiles, whose idolatry they were warned against. We read for example in Jer. 10: 2, "Be not dismayed at the signs of heaven; for the nations are dismayed at them". Yet the wonder of God's everlasting power and divinity was there to read both for Israel and the Gentiles. For the testimony of the heavens, though silent, was eloquent of the glorious power and immensity of the Creator (Psalm 19). To the people of Israel, however, there was a close and most direct revelation through the Law, and this also formed the meditation of the psalmist's heart. Nevertheless Moses and the prophet Isaiah both record the unresponsiveness of Israel in general to God's message. Even if they missed the word of Christ in the law and the prophets, how could they miss it when He Himself came unto His own? Had God now cast off His people?

Elijah in his day felt like the sole survivor of the faithful, whereas the utterance of God gave intimation of a divine purpose and choice in the reservation of those seven thousand men who had not bowed the knee to Baal. It was these words, "I have left for Myself" which gave the apostle confidence in God's purpose of grace towards the elect of his own nation, to open the eyes of the blind and raise up them that are bowed down (Ps. 146: 8). God would not cast them off for ever.

Moreover such blessing for the Gentiles had attended the setting aside of unrepentant Israel that the return of an obedient Israel to their God

in true repentance must open up the prospect of an even greater measure of enrichment. The Romans, therefore, **had cause to feel gratitude for divine favour in being brought into the counsel of God, and indeed today sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus are similarly recipients of this grace.**

E. A.

THE FALL OF ISRAEL (Romans 10: 16 - 11: 12)

From Aberdeen: **Why was Isaiah regarded as being "very bold"¹¹? It was the fact that he spoke a message which was against his own people. To be "bold"¹¹ means to venture plainly (Strong), and Isaiah's plain speaking concerning the fall of Israel required courage on his part. Israel fell because they were a disobedient and gainsaying people. They gainsaid their God, and because this was characteristic of Israel, they gainsaid their Messiah and killed Him. These same people are presented to us as examples, as Romans 11 goes on to point out in the figure of the olive tree, and its natural branches being broken off. The letter to the Corinthians gives an admonition that the greater part of Israel were strewn along the wilderness way (1 Cor. 10: 5). In one example idolatry is presented as a chief hazard to God's people. But whatever form unbelief takes, the fact that Israel's failures are recorded "by the way of example" (1 Cor. 10: 11), is a warning of the reality of hazards to the disciple. So real in fact, that the warning given in this dispensation is, "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (1 Cor. 10: 12).**

The fall of Israel was not because they did not hear, nor was it through lack of knowledge of God. This is backed up by Old Testament scriptures through David, Moses and Isaiah (Ps. 19: 4; Deut. 32: 21; Is. 65: 1, 2). Moses spoke of a "foolish" nation being used by God to anger the Israel nation. "Foolish" referring to the Gentiles, means a nation without an understanding of God. By contrast Israel did have an understanding of God; they were not in ignorance. Although the gospel was declared to Israel, not all believed the report. However, just because the major part of Israel did not obey the gospel does not mean that God cast off His people. What was true in Elijah's time of a remnant left for God is also true now: "there is a remnant according to the election of grace" (Rom. 11: 5).

Israel did not purposely stumble. They just fell. No one purposely falls. Each one lives his life and makes his decisions for good or ill. It is God who confronts us for such decisions in relation to Himself and His Son.

James Johnson

From **Birkenhead**: The earnest desire of Paul's heart was that his fellow Israelites should know the salvation from God that he himself enjoyed. He continues to consider their history and the way in which they have had ample opportunity to see how gracious God has been over many hundreds of years in His dealings with them. Many times they could have exercised faith in God as He had brought the message of His long-suffering, grace and love towards them through His servants; yet they turned away from His message. His care for them was shown in their rescue from Egypt, the manifestation of His power in taking them across the Red Sea, and in making them a nation to be reckoned with; but they continued to turn their backs on God's pleadings and His desire to have pleasure from His own people. It was not that they did not hear (v. 18) or that they did not understand, but that they deliberately rejected the message and its warnings that God would take up people who had no nationality to make Israel realise what they had spurned (vv. 19-21).

Paul, however, could relate to his 'brothers' in that he himself was one of those Israelites who rejected God's plan for His people. He could see clearly now how God had brought in that 'other nation'¹ to benefit from Israel's rejection. The Gentile who did not seek after God (10: 20) was presented with the opportunity to be reconciled to God, thereby provoking Israel to jealousy and anger. Paul could also appreciate the wonder of the fact that in spite of their attitude, God did not cast off His people. Even in their darkest hours a faithful remnant was preserved. Elijah had reason to feel that from man's standpoint, Israel's conduct was such as to warrant God's rejection of His people, and he pleaded with God to dissociate Himself from such widespread, open sin, but God revealed to Elijah the existence of 7000 men who had remained faithful. Paul was very much aware that because God always had a faithful remnant he himself was able to experience God's grace and mercy in salvation.

Paul brings us up to the present dispensation by pointing out that the faithful ones are elected by God's grace and not by their works

(11: 5). The Jew who seeks God's favour by works fails. Jew and Gentile alike are faced with the Gospel concerning Jesus Christ as the only way to acceptance by God. Besides not hearing, the majority of Jews do not see (i. e. understand), and therefore they stumble at the news. It is not God's purpose that the stumbling should lead to a fall (11: 11) but the opportunity for spiritual riches has come to the Gentiles and happily by grace the Jew can have the same standing in God's sight.

F. Canning, R.D. Williams

From Bolton and Leigh: In considering the fall of Israel as detailed in this month's study portion, we could relate verses 16, 17 and 18 to the questions raised in Rom. 10: 14. The first question, "How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed"¹¹? finds its answer in v. 18, where testimony is borne to the existence and power of God, citing Psalm 19, which speaks of the inaudible voice of creation bearing witness to God's being and might. To this we could ally such scriptures as Rom. 1: 20. The second question is, "And how shall they believe in whom they have not heard"¹¹? This question is related to verses 16 and 17 where God is seen to be bringing His word, report or message to the ears of Israel, clearly bringing before them the word of Christ. Thirdly, "and how shall they hear without a preacher?"¹¹, is related to v. 16, where Isaiah is cited as a preacher bringing the word of Christ via his report. Isaiah was of course only one of many preachers and prophets sent to Israel. So the word of Christ was presented to God's ancient people, and with it their opportunity to hear and believe.

We felt that the point outlined above applied to Jews of both Old and New Testament times. The Jews from Christ's day forward were especially responsible to obey, as they had seen the reality. Some felt that the Jews of Old Testament days were at a disadvantage, since they did not have Christ clearly taught and explained to them from the Scriptures, as did the eunuch in Acts chapter 8. The general mind, however, was that Christ was clearly presented in the Old Testament, and that Israel was to look for a personal Messiah. Such scriptures as Acts 10: 43 and 1 Pet. 1: 10, 11 were cited to support this view [Comment 1].

In dealing with the fall of Israel, the apostle brings before us certain possibilities as to why they fell. He poses certain questions

to **which** he supplies the answers. The **first** question, "**Did they not hear?**"^M (v. 18) is answered by the quoting of **Psalm 19**, the implications of **which** have already been considered above. We understand that the message of **Psalm 19** would encompass the nation of Israel within its broad appeal to the nations of the world, **but what specific** application would it have to the Jews? Help on this point would be appreciated [Comment 2]. The second question, "**Did Israel** not know?" that is, **did they** not understand the purposes of God, is answered by citations from Deuteronomy and **Isaiah**. These scriptures seemed to indicate to us that Israel **failed**, in taking too narrow a view of the purposes of God. They **did** not see that the Gentiles were to be part and parcel of the blessing given to their ancestor **Abraham** (Gen. 12: 3; Gal. 3: 8). Having adopted an insular attitude, seeing themselves as having a monopoly on the blessings of God, Israel's familiarity led to contempt, and thus the charge of being a disobedient and gainsaying people is laid to their account.

The rhetorical question, "**Did God cast off His people?**" that opens chapter 11, bring us to the truth of an elect remnant of the nation of Israel, those who like **Paul himself**, were chosen in the grace of God to have a part in the blessings of the new covenant. Verses 6 and 7 stress again, that election is a result of grace on God's part and has nothing to do with human merit. Alas for those who through their disobedience and gainsaying hardened their hearts, only to be overtaken by blindness, deafness and a spirit of stupor.

As we considered the illustration of an elect remnant, drawn from the experience of **Elijah**, we thought what an encouragement it must have been to **Elijah**, to know that he was not the only one who had remained faithful to God. Likewise, it must have been a comfort to **Paul**, whose kinsmen were never far from his thoughts, to know that there were those of the nation of **Israel** who were embracing the faith of Christ.

The question, "**Did they stumble that they might fall?**" (v. 11) introduces us to the inscrutable wisdom of God. God, using the occasion of the fall of Israel, through it brings blessing to the Gentiles, which in turn is designed to provoke Israel to jealousy, to the end that they might turn back to Christ. The apostle leaves us in v. 12 with the wonderful thought that, if the fall and loss of Israel is gain and riches to the nations of the world, what will their fulness be? The day will come when all Israel shall be saved (v. 26) and in the wake of that event will follow a time of blessing such as this earth has never seen.

From **Derby**: The opening verse shows the importance of preaching which leads to hearing and belief.

The majesty and the greatness of God is seen in creation. Men filled with the Holy Spirit were to be His witnesses to the ends of the earth and not just to a small chosen race.

Moses warned Israel that God was going to choose a nation that had no previous understanding of Him in order to make His own people so jealous that they would seek Him again.

Isaiah contrasted the position of the Jews, who were continually favoured by God, with the position of the Gentiles who had not even looked for Him. Even so God did not reject His people completely. The evidence for this was seen in Paul himself. He belonged to the tribe of Benjamin, the ^fson of my right hand¹. Perhaps he had been given the name Saul after King Saul - the first king chosen by God. He was part of the remnant that received Christ as their Saviour and Lord.

Elijah did not know that there was a remnant of the people who had not bowed the knee to Baal and were following God when he pleaded against Israel. Paul did not plead against Israel. Rather he was unceasing in his prayers for their salvation. As there was a remnant in Elijah's time so there was a remnant in Paul's time. The people composing it were there through grace, God's unmerited favour. God is sovereign and we are in no position to challenge what He does. It is our responsibility to plead for sinners to come to repentance and salvation. "Him who knew no sin He made to be sin on our behalf; that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Cor. 5: 21). Israel's backsliding continued until their eyes were blinded. Their continual sin separated them from God until, in their sad state, they crucified the Lord Himself having given Him an unjust trial.

Israel's rejection brought blessing to the Gentiles. As the Jews watched the Gentiles entering into their privileges some were roused from the state of apathy to repent.

The Israelites have stumbled but they have not fallen. They will be completely restored (Is. 19: 24). Then there will be countless blessings for the Gentiles also.

We looked at Jeremiah 2 to see what God remembered about Israel. In v. 2 they went after Him but in v. 13 He said, "They have forsaken Me the fountain of living waters, and have hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water".

What will He remember about us as a people? May we learn from Israel's failure and serve the Lord whole-heartedly.

G. W. Conway

From Dulwich: It would not be unreasonable or incorrect for the Old Testament scholar to argue that Israel failed God through sin and disobedience. That is surely a fact. But the picture of the ^ffail of Israel¹ which we see emerging in the book of Romans is something quite different, for it illustrates how Israel, and, for that matter, the Jew, failed to grasp some of the profound truths which form the bed-rock of the Christian faith and service.

Why then did Israel fail? What caused her to fall from a position of privilege and promise?

In chapter 9 the writer of the Romans tackles the matter of salvation through faith; not through deeds, nor, for the Jew, a ritualistic adherence to the word of the Law. In chapter 10 the author seeks to show, by a series of questions and answers, that the responsibility for the ^ffall of Israel¹ lies with the Jews themselves. Their position, which they claim is one of ignorance and neglect, cannot be defended in the light of what has been revealed to them in the past.

Some familiar verses appear in this chapter, but the essence of the argument is found in verses 14 and 15. In response to these questions, the writer claims that the Jews have had the opportunity to hear the gospel, but they failed in their response to it. They chose not to believe the message. He further rejects excuses that they would not have been able to understand what they heard. One by one the author sets out to combat by reasoned argument and evidence from Scripture the list of objections in defence of the Jews¹ position. He concludes that we should have expected more of Israel and highlights their failure by pointing to others (the Gentiles) who responded positively to God's word without in some cases any of the advantages that came Israel's way.

The opening verse of chapter 11 poses the question as to whether God has totally rejected Israel because of her unfaithfulness and unbelief. The writer is swift to point out that this is not the case. On the contrary, there are Jews (and the writer is one) who have accepted God's word and believed in His promise, and God's provision for them finds expression in 'the remnant'¹ of those who have believed. In the midst of an unfaithful nation there is a core of believers who might be described as the real and true people of God. As for the remainder, it says of them that they have become hardened or 'blinded' to the call of God. It is ironic that as a result of their insensitivity, others were given the opportunity of salvation which Israel was unprepared to accept. Moreover, salvation is achieved not by a nation but by the trust of the individual.

D. D. Fullarton

From **Liverpool: Opportunity Offered:** We have already seen that Israel was the first nation with opportunity to know the ways of God, and they had all the advantages of being entrusted with the very words of God (*cf.* Rom. 3: 1-8) and it was to his fellow Jews that Paul took pains to explain the gospel (Acts 28: 23-28). Paul now seeks to answer the questions - perhaps they never heard, or if they did, perhaps they did not understand - by affirming positively that this is not so. In applying the verse from Psalm 19 in this context the Holy Spirit is teaching us that just as the knowledge of God's creation is universal so too is the gospel of Jesus Christ. Man's responsibility is to listen and obey or be punished (2 Thes. 1: 8).

Position of the Gentiles' Israel regarded the Gentiles as "no nation"¹¹ and a people of "no understanding" and the shocking revelation to them from Paul is that it is these very people that God had taken up (*cf.* Eph. 2: 11-13), who previously had no national relationship with God.

God's Patience: Rom. 10: 20-21 is a beautiful picture of the patience and love of God and suggests a mother holding out her arms to embrace her rebellious child; despite His people being 'unpersuadable' God continued to hold out hope and offer mercy as in Malachi's time when God promised abundant blessing if only the people would behave properly towards Him. Stephen refers to this same evil trait in his speech before his martyrdom (Acts 7: 39).

Rejection: Those who remain disobedient and obstinate will be rejected

by God; but Paul makes it clear that God has not rejected and will not reject his entire people out of hand. On each occasion when the rebellion passed the point of no return for the nation as a whole God reserved for Himself a remnant. Thus there is a division between those who will accept the mercy of God and those who continue to reject it.

D. J. Webster

From Nottingham: Rom 10: 14, 15 are verses relevant to this month's study portion. There the apostle asks four questions and answers them by using words from the book of Isaiah to illustrate the fact that good tidings had been preached and also the value of those tidings. Isaiah 52: 7 refers to that future day when the Lord will come to Zion bringing perfect peace in contrast to the false peace which is the product of men (*cf.* 1 Thes. 5: 3). How beautiful, too, were His feet as He proclaimed His message in the days of His flesh. Yet in principle these words can be applied also to those who have carried God's word in a past day, as well as to those who testify for Him now and will do so in that dreadful time of the antichrist.

In v. 16 of Romans 10 the apostle turns his attention to the effects of the proclamation of the glad tidings. They did not all hearken, that is in the sense not just of hearing but of heeding and obeying. There had to be preaching ("our report" v. 16) before there could be obedience to the message. There could be no question that they did not have the opportunity to hear as demonstrated by the quotations the apostle makes in verses 18, 19 and 20. If any Israelite had considered the words of Moses (Deut. 32: 21), he would have gathered from them that God was to extend His dealings and His mercy to a people who were no people. Yet Israel had failed to heed as is shown by such incidents as that recorded in Acts 13: 44, 45. Many of the Jews shut their ears to the message of the Gospel, while many Gentiles listened, heeded and believed resulting in the envy of the Jews. The quotation from Isaiah 65: 1 aptly describes our attitude by nature. We did not seek God, yet in His mercy He was found of us by His gracious working through the Holy Spirit. Yet the same merciful God had spread His arms out in loving entreaty to a "disobedient and gainsaying people" (v. 21) in vain.

From what the apostle had written it might be concluded that God cast off His people, but Paul shows this is not so, using his own experience to illustrate the fact. There was a remnant according to

the election of grace. These were those who believed in Christ and submitted themselves to the righteousness of God (*cf.* v.3). This was not the result of any merit on their part, but it was all of grace and by the exercise of faith in the message that had been proclaimed.

What had Israel sought (v. 7) ? Some had sought the Messiah (Luke 2: 25, John 1: 45) and many had sought a kind of external, showy righteousness. Many had looked for a Messiah who would come in conquering glory to rid them of the oppression of Rome. They rejected the One who came to be born in humble circumstances and live as He lived and, in so doing, they failed to find the true righteousness, but those who accepted Christ obtained it (11: 7). Against this background of rejection it is refreshing to read of the many among the Jews who believed (Acts 21: 20), and that "a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith" (Acts 6: 7).

The Jews had advantages; "... much every way...". They were "intrusted with the oracles of God..." (Rom. 3: 2). They had heard the message of John the Baptist, "after me cometh a man which is before me...", "I ... have borne witness that this is the Son of God ... " (John 1: 30, 34). Yet, except for the remnant, Israel disbelieved, and the result of their sin of unbelief was that God gave them a "spirit of stupor" and their hearts were hardened.

Even so, God had not cast off His people. His purposes in Israel (Rom. 9: 4, 5), will be fulfilled. They stumbled (11: 11) at the Lord, the Stone of stumbling (Is. 8: 14), but they will be restored. Their defection opened the way of salvation for the Gentile and, in this period of grace, there is a remnant of Israel "according to the election of grace" (11: 5), but there is to be a time of restoration in the future when Israel will have its rightful place in the midst of the earth and be a source of blessing to the nations (Is. 19: 24, 25).

R. Hickling

Paisley: As the coming of Christ was foretold by Isaiah the prophet (ch. 53), so also was His rejection by God's people Israel. Indeed, even in Isaiah's day, when the Lord commissioned Isaiah to speak to the people, He warned the prophet that the people would not hear his words (Is. 6: 9, 10). Israel were too complacent; they knew they were the people of God and thought they could walk in their own ways with impunity. That was their downfall as a nation, and even Moses fore-

saw the day when God's purposes of **grace** would **extend** to the Gentiles also. **And yet**, within the nation of **Israel**, **there** was a remnant who responded to the word of God. **It must have** come as a revelation to Elijah that **there were 7000** in **Israel** who **had** not bowed the **knee** to **Baal**. Elijah thought **he** alone in **Israel** **had** remained faithful to the Lord. So too, in **Paul's day** **there was** a remnant according to God's election in **grace**, who **were** willing to believe on Christ and did not **seek** salvation by works.

Israel's rejection of Christ **was and** is a national **tragedy**, yet out of it blessing has come to the Gentiles. **Yet**, the Lord **has** not cast off **Israel** entirely. **He** is seeking to bring **them back** to Himself **and** will do this in a marvellous **way** in a coming **day**. What riches **have** come to the Gentiles through the **fall** of Israel; **but** this **pales** in comparison with the blessings **that** will follow the restoration of Israel, **when they will be** a blessing in the midst of the **earth** (**Is. 19: 24**). Brighter days lie **ahead** for **them** when they acknowledge their **Redeemer** (**Zech. 12: 10**).

J, Renfrew

From Wishaw: There is a **marked** difference in the **second part** of this well known portion of the Scriptures. Earlier, **Paul had** described his **fervent** desire for the salvation of his kinsmen, the **Jews**. Then **he** speaks in rich, lofty **terms** of the marvellous **results** to people who simply believe this **message** of the cross.

In the portion before us, **he** looks **at** the Israel nation, and grieves because, on the whole, **Israel rejected her** Messiah, **and** Messiah's God **rejected** Israel.

Verse 16 states "**they did not all hearken**" (or obey). As the disciples journeyed around with the Lord, going on His **way** through cities **and** villages teaching **and** journeying on to **Jerusalem**, one said to Him "**Lord, are they few that be saved?**" (**Luke 13: 23**). Although at times it **appeared that** the Lord **had** a large following of people, **yet in general** it is **true that** only a few "**enter in by the narrow door**". Also, **1 Cor. 1: 26** states "**not many wise... not many mighty, not many noble, are called**".

In this **paragraph**, the apostle is contrasting the revelation (**largely a written one**) to **Israel** with the silent testimony of creation to the

remaining nations of the world. Both Moses and Isaiah speak of apostate Israel and of the contrasts in those from the nations who found the Lord although they did not seem to be looking for Him.

Paul clearly shows in ch. 11 that although the nation of Israel by and large rejected the Lord, yet in His sovereign mercy and grace, a remnant had been preserved. In God's inscrutable wisdom, He had chosen to put a veil over Israel's face.

We see in this portion, something of the majesty of the great God of the ages as Israel 'stumbled'¹ from her glory and was replaced. Her fall brought riches to the Gentiles. Paul argues that if this is true of the fall of Israel, tremendous blessings will result from the realisation of Israel's re-instatement.

M. Macdonald, G. Schleyer

COMMENTS

1. **(Bolton and Leigh):** It is worth noting that the word "bear" in Acts 10: 43 is in the present tense, and in 1 Pet. 1: 12 we read concerning the prophets, "To whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto you, did they minister these things".

Israelites of the Old Testament dispensation were responsible to hearken to the word of the Lord through the law and the prophets and to await God's time when He would reveal the personal Messiah. Simeon (Luke 2: 26) was prepared of heart when the day came.

2. **(Bolton and Leigh):** The message of the heavens told Israel of the immensity of God, and was bound to make the man of faith more conscious of the preciousness of God's word, the communication of which implied the desire for true worshippers.

E. A.

3. It is perhaps surprising that no-one has commented on Rom. 11: 2, "God did not cast off His people which He foreknew". The verse is worth a comment, because it illustrates the fact that 'foreknew'¹ does not mean 'knew about beforehand'. It contains the reasoning which rebuts the suggestion made in the previous verse, "Did God

cast off His people ?" God had promised that He would not cast off His people (Ps. 94: 14), because He had determined that His purposes would be fulfilled through them, and He had set His love on them from the beginning. The foreknowledge¹ was thus the formation of an intention to bless, which could not be retracted because of God's own constancy. 'Know'¹ is used in this sense in Deut. 2: 7 and Hos. 13: 5, and 'foreknew' in Rom. 8: 29 has the same import. In this latter scripture, God took knowledge of those He was to call, to the end that He might forordain them.

P. L. H.

BE IT NOT SO (*me genoito*) Continued from BS 8701 pp. 14-16

The original statements concerning *chalilah* and *chahal* (*Bible Studies* 8609 p. 145) were based on Gesenius, *Hebrew and Childee Lexicon* translated by S. P. Tregelles 1895, pp 280-1, Bagster and Sons, London; Davidson, B. *Analytical Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon*, Bagster and Sons, London, p 259; Brown, Driver and Briggs 1907, *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, p. 321, Clarendon Press, Oxford. From the last we learn that the root itself has a certain range of meanings the main ones being (i) to perforate, pierce through; (ii) to loose, lay open. Two similarly sounding Arabic verbs bear these meanings. The particular form of the root verb *chahal* to which Gesenius refers when dealing with *chalilah* means "to profane, as the sanctuary (things counted holy not being open to public access)". It would appear from this that profanation involves laying open what is holy to intrusion by the unholy. Thus we must disagree with the unnamed authority, whom our brother from Sydney cites as saying that the meaning of *chalilah* is not clear.

Despite the citing of this authority, however, it appears that the quotation from the Bible Handbook really says the same as I. E. P.'s account in *Bible Studies* 8609 pp, 145-6. The latter account was written to show that there are situations where the Name of God does not appear in the Scriptures yet it is legitimate, perhaps necessary, to invoke it. It has never been claimed that the occurrence of these words in the Hebrew should be uniformly translated "God forbid". Indeed we could not agree to this as a general proposition at all. Words in one language are not necessarily "substitution-cyphers" for those in another and commonly the context of their occurrence must

be considered. (See *Bible Studies* 8012 pp 186-7 for such a case involving the Greek word *pneuma*, Spirit, as well as last month's editorial, *Bible Studies* 8704, p 49). Thus we agree heartily that the use of the words "God forbid"¹¹ would be absurd in Gen. 18: 25 and 1 Sam. 2: 30. In ail the other verses cited (Gen. 44: 17, 1 Sam. 2: 30, 24: 6, 26: 11, 2 Sam. 23: 17, 1 Kings 21: 3, 2 Chron. 11: 19) the Name of the Lord is specifically mentioned and, therefore, no reader of the Scriptures is permitted to omit it.

We do not understand the expression "God forbid" to be a command to deity. We understand it to indicate that the speaker is expressing the wish that God *may* forbid and not a command that God *should* forbid. It is shorthand for "May God forbid" and we suggest it is exactly analogous to the wish "(May) God bless". It is instructive to see the seriousness of the situations in which the words are used. For example in the possibility, anathema to David, of raising his hand against the Lord's anointed (1 Sam. 24: 6, 26: 11) or of Naboth's horror at the thought of parting with his inheritance from the Lord (1 Kings 21: 3). The case of Joseph is most impressive. He was horrified at Judah's suggestion that he, Joseph, in making bondmen of the brethren would act in a way which Judah would accept as the Lord's appropriate punishment for the iniquity of the brethren in selling Joseph as a bondman. Such a course would have been a gross violation of the truth that Joseph had learned and later expressed (Gen. 50: 19) "Fear not: for am I in the place of God?" Hence Joseph's revulsion at the thought.

We agree with the view that the use of idiomatic expressions can be dangerous in the translation of the Scriptures and concur that the NIV in particular, in places takes liberties in translation because of a desire to explain things. When such a thing happens, then the preacher has a duty to expose it when he 'gives the sense' of the Scripture. He is not, however, at liberty to insert, in reading, his own translation and we must confess that it does seem inconsistent of our brother to deplore a translation which makes things up for the sake of explanation without alerting the reader to this practice yet, at the same time, to confess to inserting his own translation instead of reading what the Scripture says. If everyone were to resort to this course we would soon all be reading different translations and be at the mercy of an even greater range of competence in translation than is the case at present.

We think **that** this point is so important **that** we should give some simple illustrations in order of increasing spiritual complexity. First of all, the NIV says (Mat. 5: 18) "the smallest letter" for the Greek word *iota* which is translated "jot" in the AV or RV. It is quite plain **that** the NIV gives an explanation of **what** *iota* is **presumably** in case readers do not know for **there** is no word for "small" or "letter" in the original. We note **that** the NIV does not say "the first letter of the alphabet" for *Alpha* in Rev. 1: 18. We would expect, however, **that** anyone reading the NIV in public should read **what** it says **and then** give the "sense". Again, the words "one and only son" in the NIV of John 3: 16 **are** so obviously wrong **that** we would **never** expect other **than** its marginal reading (which says "only begotten Son") to be read in public meetings conducted by those in the house of God. **Were there** no marginal reading, however, we would expect the reader to read **what** is written **and then** explain how it is wrong, in giving the sense. Thirdly, as we have already alluded to in our studies in Romans (*Bible Studies* 8609 p.142) the NIV is emphatically **and** misleadingly wrong in its translation of Gal. 3: 27 where it says **that** those who were baptized into Christ "**have been** clothed with Christ". It is not a passive act which happens to the believer, it is something the believer does. The words say literally "Christ ye did put on". Again, we say, a speaker reading the NIV here is expected to read it as it is given **and then**, in preaching, to "give the sense" which of course will be the opposite of **what he has just read**. In passing we would say how diligent we must all be in ensuring **that** **what** we are presenting to men as the word of God is **exactly that**.

We agree **that** translations of the Scripture may be idiomatic to the point where the true word is lost **but** the fact **that** that idiom may be wrongly used is **hardly** a reason for denying its existence or attempting to eradicate it by some kind of uniform literalness. We think **that** in reality our brother is **really** in agreement with **what** we have written **because** he confesses to reading the words in a particular tone of voice **and** commends the use of the exclamation mark in the printed word. This is **surely** an admission of his treating the expression as idiomatic!

Editors

CORRESPONDENCE

GOD'S ELECTION

Many godly men and preachers of the Word have differed on the question of God's election to salvation. Though they differed on this

yet when they preached the Word, many were saved. In our consideration of this subject, as Bible students, it is good for us to consider this with humility and reverence, knowing that it is God's way with men, that we are searching out.

The statements of Scripture stand out clearly. Such as:

1. "As many as were ordained to eternal life believed" (Acts 13: 48).
2. "God our Saviour; who willeth that ail men should be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. 2: 3-4). And again "For the grace of God hath appeared, bringing salvation to ail men" (Tit. 2: 11).

These scriptures seem to differ. And as one contribution on Romans 9 says, "God's sovereignty is boldly asserted, and any attempt to explain this... is futile". God is sovereign we know. He sits as sovereign on the Throne, and ruleth all things well. He can put men in whatever place He chooses, as Romans 9 so clearly states. And "His way is perfect" (Ps. 18: 30).

But as far as eternal life is concerned, God's election is not based on His sovereignty, it is based on His foreknowledge. 1 Peter 1: 1, 2 is helpful in this: "To... the elect... according to the foreknowledge of God the Father...". The God who wills that all men should be saved, knows who will believe on His Son, long before they are born. These He ordains to eternal life, and to be conformed to the image of His Son (Rom. 8: 29).

We are saved by grace, through faith (Eph. 2: 8). This is God's grace, and our faith. If God had not come out to us in His grace, in sending His Son to die for us, we could not have exercised faith in Him. To Him be all the glory.

G. Jarvie

We print this letter as a contribution to discussion on this subject, but find difficulty in accepting the argument of the penultimate paragraph because it appears to make the exercise of God's sovereign will depend upon man's exercise of his free-will. A short discussion of the meaning of 'foreknowledge' is given in Comment 3 of this issue, where it is contended that to 'foreknow' is not the same as 'foresee'¹.

Editors

Issued by the Churches of God, and obtainable from Hayes Press, 8 Essex Road, Leicester, England, LE4 7EE. Printed by the University of Nottingham.

Bible Studies

A magazine for the exploration of the Word of God (Acts 17: 11)

EDITORIAL

8706

MERCY UPON ALL

The passage studied this month concludes the development of the doctrine of the gospel, which forms the major part of Paul's letter to the Romans. It is followed by the application of that doctrine to the way in which Christians should live, both individually and as a community. This in itself is worth noting: Scripture never teaches doctrine *in vacuo* but as a means to the end either of a greater appreciation of God or of an influence on conduct. However, we should consider the point reached at the end of the exposition of doctrine.

The apostle contemplates the wonder and glory of the purposes of God. His exposition had necessarily to start with the depravity of mankind in general, showing that they had "refused to have God in their knowledge"¹¹. It continued with an indictment of the chosen people, the Jews, and so concluded that "all the world" was "under the judgement of God". This opposition of the human will might have been thought fatal to the purpose of God to "sum up all things in Christ" (Eph. 1: 10), but it was not so. "God hath shut up all unto disobedience, that he might have mercy upon ail". That mercy is now available to all who will call upon Him, through the work of Christ, for it was the Father's good pleasure "that in Him should all the fulness dwell; and through Him to reconcile all things unto Himself, having made peace by the blood of His cross" (Col. 1: 19, 20). His intention could not be frustrated by human opposition, for before the physical universe was created the course of man's history was known to God. That He decided to create at all, knowing its consequences, is beyond our understanding: we have to say with Paul "Who hath known the mind of the Lord?".

One is impelled to suggest that the scope of the reconciliation brought about by the death of Christ may be far greater than we usually imagine. The agnosticism which we see in Britain today and the apparent lack of response to the preaching of the gospel may induce a pessimism which leads us to think that only a small fraction of humanity will be saved. Yet is this consonant with the triumph of the mercy of God? Is it to be thought that the crowning work of God through all ages, "God... in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself" (2 Cor. 5: 19), will only save a minority of men? One would think that it is owed to God's own glory, and the value of the work of Christ, that those dragged down by Satan's rebellion will be comparatively few, who have resolutely and overtly rejected the Son. Unfortunately, many of those may be members of our present society, who have opportunities for the knowledge of God's will: "to whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required" (Luke 12: 48).

P. L. H.

ISRAEL AND THE GENTILES (Rom. 11: 13-36)

From Ajegunle: The Greek word *ethnos*, which is an equivalent of the English word 'Gentiles'¹ or 'heathen'¹, has many shades of meaning. In the context of this passage the term "Gentiles" applies to those nations who are not of the commonwealth of Israel [Comment 1].

Paul at the outset tells us that the purpose of his ministry, to and among the Gentiles, was to provoke Israel to jealousy (vv. 13-16). The rejection of Israel due to their own unbelief made it possible for the world to be reconciled to God. Paul asserts that if part of a dough is holy, it is also natural that the whole batch is holy.

The branches (v. 17) which were broken off as a result of unbelief refer figuratively to the nation of Israel. To suggest that Abraham was the root spoken of in the passage, leads to inevitable incongruities. So in line with other scriptures, and, having in mind that the root serves as a nourishing sap to the branches, we suggested it either refers to Christ or God (1 Cor. 10: 4; Rom. 11: 17; Ps. 78: 23-29) [Comment 2].

The Gentiles were sternly warned by Paul that they should not

be high-minded as a result of their ingrafting, but should fear, lest the fate that befell Israel befall them.

God's abundant kindness was unreservedly showered upon the Gentiles, whereas His severity or displeasure was towards Israel, who still persisted in unbelief. Yet it is possible for the true branches to be grafted into their own olive tree again, if those grafted in quite contrary to nature fail to consolidate and utilise their position (vv. 22-24).

Israel has always been a controversial nation in world affairs, and recently there has been an intense concentration of political issues on the land of Palestine. Israel was temporarily set aside as a result of unbelief and still persists in it.

It is very significant to note that, in spite of the assurance of the possibility of Israel's restoration in v. 24, God will only resume intimate relationship with them after the full number of Gentiles has come in (v. 25).

A terrible hardening of heart (in part) has come upon Israel. A dark veil of unbelief has been cast over their minds.

The "all Israel shall be saved"¹¹ of v. 26 should not be taken to mean literally that all the Jews will be saved after that still future great tribulation. God will be dealing with them on a national basis, which excludes all individuals. Note that in Ezra 2: 70 the remnant was called "all Israel".

As concerning the gospel, in this present time of grace, the Israelites are enemies on our account. Yet they are loved on account of the Patriarchs. Verses 20-32 appear a little difficult to understand. Is it suggesting that Israel disobeyed God, that they may receive mercy? So it seems, but it should be noted that the disobedience was Israel's while the showing of mercy is God's, as a result of His mercy shown to Gentiles (Comment 3].

M. Imoukkuede, G. Okwena

From Birkenhead: Paul unfolds to his readers the 'mystery' of God's plan for the Jews and Gentiles. He reminds the Gentiles of their background - 'disobedient to God'⁹, rebellious and spiritu-

ally barren (Eph, 2: 1, 2, 11, 12). In such a miserable state the Gentiles had only one hope: the mercy and compassion of God. They were included in God's plan of salvation because the Jews had rejected God's appointed Messiah. Since the Jews sought to earn salvation by works, rather than by faith, God had hardened them against the truth and set them aside.

Although the Gentiles are now enjoying salvation, this is no excuse for them to think lightly of their Jewish brethren, nor to despise those Jews who have refused to accept the Gospel. Since they have received new life as a result of the rejection of unfaithful Israel, they are indebted to the Jews for their salvation.

Paul illustrates his teaching by telling us the parable of the olive tree, which represents Israel (Jer. 11: 16). The 'thriving olive' had grown so weak and unproductive that some of the branches were broken off. Wild olive shoots were grafted in amongst the remaining branches of the cultivated olive tree, and made to share the nourishing sap from the same root.

Israel had once feared God and lived in a way which pleased Him, but now they were a failure and disappointment. God had taken away his kingdom from those who refused to accept the gospel, and offered it instead to all those who exercised faith in Him (Mat. 21: 43) [Comment 4] • Paul now issues a warning against complacency, reminding his readers that they stand in faith (*cf.* 5: 2).

God has not abandoned the Jews; they are the eternal objects of His electing love because His promise, once made to Abraham, is irrevocable. Israel's blindness is only partial and temporary. If those Jews who lost their status as belonging to the true Israel come eventually to faith in Christ, they may be incorporated afresh in the people of God. Indeed, Paul desired to provoke his fellow Jews to jealousy, for a privilege which they had not known.

God's plan is that once the elect Gentiles have been reconciled to Himself Israel will be restored as a holy nation with Christ as her ruler. This had been foretold in prophecy (Is. 27: 9; 59: 20, 21; Ezek. 37: 1-14). In the meantime the Jews will remain insensitive to the claims of the Gospel, even though they are beloved of God.

Why will *all* Israel be saved, if they have been unfaithful? The promise was secured to Abraham's descendants, not because of their own merit, but because God is always faithful to His word. Paul reinforces his point by taking an illustration from Num. 15: 17-21. The Israelites were commanded to offer to God a cake from the dough of the first ground flour, fresh from the threshing floor. The first cake of the batch, Abraham, has been presented to Him and its consecration means that the whole batch is holy [Comment 5 L

Paul then uses another illustration, that of the root and the branches. Since the tree is of one character throughout, the holiness of the root sanctifies the branches. Blessings have come through Abraham, the physical father of the Israelites, and the spiritual father of those who live by faith (4: 11-16).

Paul praises the infinite mind of God. He admires His boundless understanding and immeasurable wisdom. God is omniscient, and applies His knowledge with perfect skill and precision. No one can ever comprehend His thoughts or act as His consultant. Since He is the Creator, the Sustainer, the Redeemer, **and** the Provider of all, no creature could ever give Him anything that would **put** Him into debt. God is the ultimate source, the perfect channel and the final goal of all good things (Jas. 1: 16, 17; Rom. 8: 28). As Paul contemplates the power and magnificence of God, he is caught in an outburst of praise: to Him be the glory for ever!

J. D. Williams

From Bolton and Leigh: Paul, the apostle of the Gentiles, though himself a Jew, contrasts law and grace as he deals with God's judgement of his nation. In the portion before us, we have the grafting in of the Gentiles, those of a wild olive, into a good olive tree.

Differentiation must be made between "cast off", v.2 (previous portion) and "casting away" in v.15. The latter gives the thought of being laid or set aside rather than thrust out. The failure and rejection of the Jews was the result of their unbelief. Nationally, unbelief is a characteristic of the Jew. They were not able to enter into the promised land because of unbelief (Heb. 3: 19) **and** in v.20 Paul says that by their unbelief, they were broken off.

The reconciling of **the world (v. 15)** does **not refer** to individual believers being reconciled **through the death of God's Son (Rom. 5: 10)** but now **God** is dealing directly with **the world without Israel** who **had been "intrusted with the oracles of God" (Rom. 3: 1, 2)**. The receiving of **them back** will be as in the vision of the **valley of dry bones (Ezek. 37: 1-14)** and so the life from the dead (a great spiritual revival and awakening for Israel) will be fulfilled in a **future day**.

The firstfruit **and the root (v. 16)**, mean the same; being a repetition of **the parable**, metaphorically meaning **cause, origin or source**. This refers to the beginning of **God's purposes with the Jewish nation**. **God's promises to Abraham and the patriarchs of old; the lump and the branches** refer to those who followed after with similar **character**.

The bringing in of the Gentiles is foretold in the **Old Testament Scriptures and also in the word of the Lord Jesus in the Gospel accounts (Isa. 42: 6; Mat. 21: 41)**. We are told in **Eph. 2: 14** that **"He made both one and brake down the middle wall of partition, ••«"**. The universality of the gospel is seen in the promise of God to Abraham, as well as in the **New Testament Scriptures**. Salvation is by faith in Christ to all who believe.

As **an apostle of the Gentiles' Paul** glorifies his ministry and in his ministry, his desire was to **provoke jealousy, to stir up a sense of their needs and an earnest longing to obtain the blessings of the gospel**. This is in keeping with the words of the Lord through Moses (**Deut. 31: 21**). How the apostle provoked the Jews to jealousy in his ministry (**Acts 13: 45; 22: 21**)! Clearly he was in a **strong position, a true example of having been "broken off" and "grafted" (v. 23)**.

However, there is a warning to the Gentiles (not in terms of their salvation) that there is no room for pride, but a need to stand in faith, realising that as God had broken off the unbelieving Jew so also if unbelief were found in them, they, too, could be set aside from the main stream of blessing. The breaking off of the branches is different from the branches being removed from the vine in **John 15**.

The Gentile who was grafted in, would derive nourishment from the root as though it were a natural branch. The Gentile believer

had become a sharer of the blessings bestowed upon Abraham and his seed, the root and fatness of the good tree.

The fulness of the Gentiles is different to the times of Gentiles. The former, which commenced after Pentecost will end with the Lord's coming for the Church (Eph. 3: 2-8; 5: 22-33), whereas the latter commenced with Nebuchadnezzar and ends with the Son of Man coming in judgement and deliverance of Israel (Luke 21: 24-28). Israel's fulness in v. 12 is in the Millennium (Eph. 1: 10); the fulness of the Gentiles is in this day of grace [Comment 6 1 •

So then are all Israel to be saved? Not as a nation. Many had rejected and put to death the One who was sent to them and in the time of trouble, in tribulation, after the rapture of the saints, there will be those deceived by the Antichrist as foretold by the Lord Himself (Jn. 3: 43). The portion from which Paul quotes (Is. 59: 16-21) shows that in a future day Israel will know a great restoration when again taken up by God. Repentant, believing Israel will know deliverance from enemies, ungodliness and sin. The divine Redeemer shall come out of Zion to deliver [Comment 5]•

In v.32 Paul takes us back to Ps. 14 and Ps. 53 with the words "shut up all unto disobedience". God's desire is to have mercy on all (see 1 Tim. 2: 3-6). It is of grace and mercy, not merit. Then follows God's great plan and Paul answers his three questions in v. 36 which we can link with Col. 1: 16, 17: "He is before all things ... in Him all things consist... Of Him, and through Him_f and unto Him, are all things".

W. Paterson

From Derby: Initially we found this portion hard to read but we did find the following tip to be a help.

Plural words: "Them" and "their" refer to Israel, a nation or people.

Singular words: "Thou", "thee", "thy", and "you" refer to believers in Christ, individuals saved by grace [Comment 7].

We also found it much easier to talk about 'Israel*' than 'the Gentiles' perhaps because it is easier to see God's working, almost from Eden with His people Israel in mind. They have a long

history and a fascinating future. God requires fruit from His people, worship, open ears, humble hearts and faith in Him. God found His people barren and unbelieving as a nation.

The illustration of the Olive Tree: How else could God help us to understand His desire toward people whom He made? The roots and the promise of success go together. God spoke to Abraham to come out, then to Isaac and to Jacob and made with them a covenant with many, many promises and warnings. What better start could any relationship have with the eternal God? This relationship with God grew, but if it had been later cut down, the growth rings would have shown times of good growth, times of little growth and times of sickness.

God remained true to His covenant with the fathers. A tree in this state must be pruned and because men in their unbelief care nothing for God then God must do the pruning, and He broke off in judgement branches which were dead through the disease of unbelief.

In fact to this end God pruned away almost all of the original branches. Because of the type of tree (His desire is always towards men) and the sound root system, He grafted in new shoots. Grafting is quite a severe treatment. Thank God His only begotten Son was willing to take the brutality of men and the judgement of God. These new shoots both of Gentiles and Jews have an abundant supply of good things to feed on and every opportunity to grow and give pleasure to God and know the security and joy of this relationship. But the warning is given that God will not tolerate unbelief (Rom. 11: 20-21) [Comment 8].

We noted that God's people were outwardly religiously active with sacrifices, public prayer, dress and diets having a high profile. God sent His Son to His own people (Jn. 1: 11) who as a nation said "away with Him"¹¹ and refused to have Him as King (Jn. 19: 15). John 1: 12 and Luke 2: 25 make it clear that individual Jews did receive Him.

God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved (Jn. 3: 16, 17). He chose His people (Deut. 14: 2) then He loved them, but He loved the world and chose us "in Him"¹¹ (Eph. 1: 4) whom He loved with an eternal love.

The times of the Gentiles will end with the coming of the Son of Man (Luke 21: 27, 28). The fulness of the Gentiles (Rom. 11: 25) will end when we meet the Lord in the air (1 Thes. 4: 17). God must remain faithful to His promises (Gen. 17: 7, 8; Jn. 10: 28-30; Rom. 11: 26-28).

What an amazing day will be the Rapture, and also the day of the Lord's return to earth and Israel, (Luke 21: 27, 28; Zech. 12: 10) when a whole nation will turn to God, the Gentile nations will acknowledge Him and the great military powers of that day will be subject to the Man on the throne in Jerusalem.

S. J. Wymer, G. W. Conway

From Dulwich: In this month's study we have both the conclusion of the treatise on election, (chapters 9 to 11) and the doctrine of the Gospel of God (Rom. 1: 1) to Israel and the Gentiles.

Though Paul had turned from Israel to the Gentiles (Acts 18: 6) yet it was his heart's desire that Israel should be saved (Rom. 10: 1) and so he magnified his office, through the preaching of the Gospel to provoke Israel to envy, that some might be saved (Rom. 11: 13-14).

The goodness of God flowed from the rich cultivated olive tree (v. 24), the source of promised blessing, through the sanctified root. This was also illustrated in the cake of firstfruits (Rom. 11: 16; Num. 15: 17-21). Both descriptions were fulfilled in Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, (Deut. 9: 5, 27; Gen. 12: 3; Rom. 11: 28).

The goodness and severity of God is unchanging and impartial to Israel and the Gentiles, for God had concluded them all in unbelief, that He might have mercy on all (Rom. 11: 32).

Though it has been suggested that the seemingly peculiar, unnatural process of grafting wild branches into a cultivated olive was to re-invigorate its growth, yet in Paul's parable it is the richness of the olive flowing into the wild grafted branches which enables them to bear sweet fruit. Because of unbelief the natural branches had been broken off and Gentile believers grafted into the place and source of fruitful blessing.

It seems incredible that Gentile dogs (Mat. 15: 26), now believers grafted into the place of blessing by sovereign grace, should high-mindedly boast against the natural branches, seeing that it was God

alone in His over-ruling purposes who introduced the Gentiles, because of the disposition of Israel.

Yet it is conceivable: either because of anti-Jewish feeling in Rome or because of appreciation of the truth of the Church which is His Body, that Gentiles might depreciate the past privilege and wondrous future of Israel.

Paul cautions fear lest the impartial God should, in His severity, cut these Gentile believers from the place of fruitful blessing (Rom. 11: 22). The two activating keynotes in all this are belief and unbelief (Rom. 11: 20) , faith being the simple and passive acceptance of the word of God (Gen. 15: 6) who is the source of all fruitful blessing.

Blindness or hardness due to unbelief has happened to the nation but, just as through the fall of Israel salvation came to the Gentiles (Rom. 11: 11), so because of the "fulness" of the Gentiles, the "fulness¹¹ of Israel will follow on. "Out of Zion shall come a deliverer, who shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob" (Rom. 11: 26) and so ail Israel shall be saved. In the mosaic of God's election, both Israel and the Gentiles have their place consistent with the unchanging gifts and calling of God. In conclusion Paul's mind takes flight into the vastness of God's treasures, lost in wonder and worship, as he identifies it with the mind of Jehovah. w. Townsend

From Ibadan: Ali is of God and God for all (v.36). But Israel through God's covenant with Abraham, became the first chosen generation, sanctified, given the law and the service of God. However, through the same covenant the whole nations of the world were promised blessings (Gen. 12: 3) so it would be erroneous to think that the Gentile nation would be saved only when Israel stumbles and falls. Paul in his writing endorsed this (Rom. 11: 12). If we could patiently follow the analyses of Paul, we shall all come to the conclusion that the fall of Israel is a tragedy to the whole world (v. 15). Had the Israelites walked perfectly before God, they would have been shining examples, drawing people to God through their steadfastness.

A very good example of this, is that of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. Their actions preached God to ungodly Nebuchadnezzar. This is also a challenge to Christian preachers. Actions speak louder than words (Dan. 3: 28-29).

Men the world over are the same and the same Lord is over them all; but we are all children of hereditary circumstances, and environment. We have all inherited Adam's sinful flesh and are subject to Adam's temptations. Through the foreknowledge of God, however, some people are brought to the light and become partakers of heavenly callings. Of such people Israel is first on the list, and that is why Paul refers to them as the good olive branch and the Gentiles as the wild olive branch grafted in among them (v.17).

The Gentiles finding themselves in the new environment should not boast or be high-minded. The rejection of our Lord Jesus Christ is the greatest sin of Israel, The Messiah they expect is one that would deliver them from their worldly enemies, one who would carry physical battle to the Gentile nations and win empires for them. They do not see that our meek and gentle Saviour has come to battle with Satan and his angels, free men and women from bondage, and give them life eternal.

The sin of unbelief that caused the fail of the natural branch is a thing that can befall the grafted branch and that is the more reason why New Testament saints should be more careful.

Unbelief on the part of the saints can come in different forms. As new generations of Christians are springing up, new doctrines are also arising. Some have already left the spiritual warfare and are fighting the physical battle. They believe that miracles and signs are the true revelation of God's salvation. Their teaching is that if you are in abject poverty, oppressed, depressed or you are sick and not healed it is because of your unbelief. The question that comes to mind is whether worldly achievements are the hope of those who are saved? On this, Paul dropped a hint when he said that we are the most miserable of all men if in this life only we have hope (1 Cor. 15: 19).

The timely warning from Paul is that the saved Gentiles should be cautious because the mystery of God is that grafting, degrafting and regrafting can take place in both the Gentiles and the Israelites and of course Israel's assurance is doubly sure (w.21-24).

Moses Oyetunde Ajagbe, John Oyekunle

From Liverpool: *Paul's Ministry*. Although his apostolic ministry was predominantly towards the Gentiles, Paul continued to hope that the work of God among them would have a provoking effect upon the Jewish community with the result that some of them would be saved.

The works and words of the Lord Jesus Himself can be viewed in a similar light; on many occasions also they were a direct provocation to the entrenched Jewish position.

Two Pictures. Paul seems to be pinning hope for the future of the Jews on the fact that the "firstfruits"¹¹ in the dough illustration and the root in the tree illustration (presumably those who accepted the Messiah) were holy and so the people as a whole were in this way holy, and would not suffer outright rejection [Comment 9].

The Olive Tree. Paul is not giving a horticultural lesson and the illustration does not work if subjected to such analysis. Rather the point is powerfully made that if some of the branches were broken off and others, Gentiles_f were grafted in there is no room on the part of those grafted in for complacency or arrogance. If the Jews forfeited their position because of their rejection of Christ the Gentiles can forfeit theirs too if they stop 'bearing fruit'¹. Finally, the illustration is stretched to allow the grafting back of severed branches to emphasize Paul's hope for Israel's restoration. The fact that the rejected branches are broken off and not pruned shows the severity of falling under God's judgement.

A Mystery is a purpose formerly concealed but now made known. Is it the fact that despite God's dealings with Gentile nations, the nation of Israel will be saved, or is it the new concept of Jew and Gentile associating together as God's people? [Comment 10]. In either interpretation it involved a period of time during which Gentiles will be saved until the "fulness" (RV) ('full number' NIV) has come in. This involves oneness in Christ portrayed in the picture of His Church as a body whose members are both Jew and Gentile. It will conclude at the return of Christ for His Church [Comment 6] •

Israel: Now and Then. In stating that all Israel will be saved (v.26) Paul cannot mean every individual of the nation. Rather he points to a time when after the present working of God among Jews and Gentiles is finished the nation will be rescued by their Messiah. Paradoxically their present position is that they gave the world the Christ yet remain enemies of the gospel.

God's Mercy. V.32 is difficult to understand in the more literal translation. J.S. Phillips translates it: 'God has all men penned together in the prison of disobedience, that he may have mercy upon

them all¹. God sees the potential for evil in all and in that respect we are all on the same level [Comment 11]• Equal to that is His love, which goes out to ail without racial distinction. After ail the theology and mind-searching there follows a hymn of praise to God for His wisdom and mercy.

D. J. Webster

From Paisleys While Paul deplored the unbelief of God's ancient people, he recognised that in this dispensation of grace God was reaching out to the Gentiles and in so doing was seeking to provoke Israel to jealousy. Echoes of this are seen in Old Testament scriptures such as Isaiah 65: 1 and Malachi 1: 11. Paul's apostleship was to the Gentiles (Gal. 2: 7) as Peter's was to the circumcision and Paul's aim was to glorify his ministry. He recognized that, in the present time, Israel were brought into the stream of divine blessing.

The analogy of the olive tree is instructive. This tree was renowned for its fatness (Judg. 9: 9) and its beauty (Hos. 14: 6). The product of the olive tree was widely employed in the preparation of food and as a fuel for small lamps. It had an important part to play in the offerings and at the consecration of priests (Ex. 29: 2) and kings (1 Sam. 10: 1). The good olive tree was to be distinguished from the wild olive tree which was worthless. By the process of grafting, the wild olive was able to partake of the root fatness of the good olive tree. Thus Gentiles were brought into the blessings which were formerly Israel's, while Israel, like the branches of the olive tree were broken off. In this was demonstrated the goodness and severity of God. But the goodness of God should not be despised, otherwise we may cease to enjoy it. That is not to say we can lose eternal life, but we can cease to function as the people of God (see Revelation 2: 5).

However, in the purposes of God, the fulness or times of the Gentiles will be fulfilled (Luke 21: 24) and Israel will again dwell in safety in their own land [Comment 12]. This is graphically described in Zech. 12: 9, 10 when they acknowledge that they crucified their Messiah. This will lead to a time of national mourning. Then the Lord will go forth and fight against their enemies and return to Jerusalem to reign as King over ail the earth. So, both Jew and Gentile have been shown mercy by God. To Him be the glory for ever, Amen. As the apostle contemplates these things, his heart rises in a paean of praise to God for His inscrutable wisdom seen in all His ways.

J. Renfrew

From Wishaw: Paul's unique calling as the apostle to the Gentiles was first spoken of in Acts 9: 14-16, and Paul himself spoke of God's remarkable revelation to him of the Lord Jesus, and his subsequent ministry to the Gentiles (Gal. 1; 16, 16). The matter of Paul's glorifying his ministry was discussed and it was felt that Paul did this by living out what he preached in a full and evident way. However, there were those who both vilified him and his ministry because of his fervency.

The apostle's desire to provoke his fellow-Jews to jealousy because of his Gentile ministry demonstrates what efforts he would make to cause his brethren to return to their God. Paul reasons that if the casting away of the Jews has brought such spiritual blessing to the Gentiles, then what will be the result of this people being brought in again to the great purposes of God? Surely it will be like life from the dead! It was felt that the root in v. 16, 18 spoke of Christ, whether with reference to Jew or Gentile [Comment 2] •

Paul refers to the Gentiles as the wild olive, in contradistinction to the Jews who are the natural olive (Eph. 2: 12) and this wild olive has replaced the natural branches, to enjoy the fatness of the olive root. This may give rise to spiritual pride: but Paul utters words designed to bring into our hearts extreme caution to guard against unwarranted glorying and high-mindedness (11: 22).

It was felt that the teaching in 11: 21, 22 was similar in nature to what the Lord spoke of in John 15 concerning the vine and the branches. These portions deal with the life and service of the believer, not with the matter of eternal salvation: they are judicial portions comparable to the judgements to the seven churches in Rev. 3. "The severity of God" is a very strong statement, and speaks of the 'national' fall of the Jewish people from God's goodness; those of us who have been brought in, will only continue in this goodness if we keep ourselves "in the love of God" (Jude 2: 21).

This rejection of the Jews is not final; for they shall again be grafted into their own olive tree. There is a future glimpse of God's great purposes given here. Israel's present blindness will one day be taken away; "for God is able to graft them in again". Israel is destined for greatness. In the concluding verses of this chapter, Paul not only sums up the argument of the chapter but also the whole of his brilliant exposition of gospel truth in his epistle from the start. "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgements and His ways past tracing out!" (v. 33).

COMMENTS

1. **(Ajegunle):** As Ajegunle friends point out, the meaning of Gk. *ethnos* has to be determined from its context. In current English usage, ^fGentile¹ and 'heathen' are not interchangeable, nor were they even at the time of the production of the RV. The former means simply a non-Jew_s and the believers in Home are thus addressed in **the passage under** consideration. The latter has the connotation of a worshipper of false deities, and is not used in the RV to translate *ethnos* **although** in **the AV** it is **used in, for** example, Gal. 1: 16. The O. E. D. does not support Vine's suggested derivation of Eng. 'heathen' from Gk. *ethnos*.
 2. (Ajegunle, **Wishaw**): The figure presented is that of Israel as an olive tree, drawing its sustenance from the promises of God, and intended to bear fruit for Him. It seems logical, therefore, to regard Abraham and the patriarchs as the root, since they were the progenitors of Israel, and they received the promises in faith (Heb. 1: 1; 11: 17).
 3. **(Ajegunle):** The force of the passage is that the efficient will of God can², not be thwarted by the disobedience of men. If men appear to disrupt His intentions by their actions, He uses these actions to bring about His purpose; the original sin of Adam is itself an example of this. It was not Israel's intention to be disobedient in order that mercy should come, but God used it that way.
 4. **(Birkenhead):** The kingdom was to be "given to a nation" (Mat. 21: 43). That nation is indeed composed of believers in Christ, but the individuals must take up a place in a people under God's government before this promise can be taken up.
 6. **(Birkenhead, Bolton):** F. F. Bruce (*Romans*, Tyndale N. T. Commentaries) comments "All Israel" is a recurring expression in Jewish literature, where it need not mean "every Jew without a single exception" but "Israel as a whole". Thus "all Israel has a portion in the age to come", says the Mishnah tractate *Sanhedrin* (x.1), and proceeds immediately to name those Israelites who have no portion therein'. Scripture says "they are not all Israel, which are of Israel... but the children of the promise are reckoned for a seed" (Rom. 9: 6, 8). There will be a believing nation, acknowledging their Redeemer, the full inheritors of all the promises of God, but it will not comprise all Jews.
P. L. H.
- Mat. 2: 3 shows that "all does not mean "every single person" for one cannot imagine that worthy citizens of Jerusalem of the kind that we read of in Luke 2 were 'troubled' along with Herod at hearing of Messiah's birth even though that event had taken place some time earlier **than the** events of Mat. 2.
I. E. P.

6. (Bolton and Leigh, Liverpool): The view of "the fulness of the Gentiles"¹¹ proposed here agrees with that expressed by J. Miller (*Notes on the Epistles to the Romans*). However, it does not seem that the "until"¹¹ of v. 25 marks a point in time at which the hardening of Israel ceases. If the whole of the present era constitutes the "fulness of the Gentiles", then one would expect that the "hardening" would already have ended, and one would not think that it has. It would seem more consistent with the facts to equate "the fulness of the Gentiles" with the end of the present era, when the Lord comes for the Church. The NIV interprets the passage in this way, saying "until the full number of the Gentiles has come in", and 'complement, **full extent, full number**¹ is recognized as a possible translation of Gk. *pleroma*. Gal. 4: 4 illustrates its use in this sense. P. L. H.

The image of the olive tree (Rom. 11: 13-24) shows that there is more to the "fulness" of the Gentiles than that large numbers of them will be saved. Surely the controversy raised here is more apparent than real for how can a "fulness" be "come in" till, like a harvest, it is completed? j £ p

7. (**Derby**): The distinction is rather between those written about, and those addressed. As to the grammar of the passage, 'thou'¹, and 'thee'¹ and 'thy'* are second person singular, but 'you' is second person plural. The latter distinction is often missed by the modern reader, since current practice uses 'you'¹ for both singular and plural, and a differentiation possible in older English usage (and, of course, in Greek) is thereby obscured. An instance of its usefulness is seen in Luke 22: 31, 32: "Simon... Satan asked to have you (plural, meaning all the eleven disciples)... but I made supplication for thee (singular, meaning Peter)". NIV has overcome the difficulty of expressing this in current English by translating "you all" in the first case.

8. (**Derby**): The conclusions drawn by Derby friends are sound, but one must be wary of extending scriptural illustrations beyond their designed purpose, for instance in comparing the suffering of the Son to the grafting process.

9. (**Liverpool**): Since both the tree and the lump of dough refer to Israel, the root and the firstfruit refer to the founders of that nation, i. e. Abraham and the patriarchs (see Comment 2).

10. (**Liverpool**): The mystery is that a partial hardening has fallen on Israel. This could not have been known except by revelation, for a human assessment would have thought Israel's attitude due to mere natural stubbornness.

11. (**Liverpool**): God sees the actual evil of disobedience in all, not merely a potential for evil.

12. (**Paisley**): The "fulness of the Gentiles" and the "times of the Gentiles" are not identical. See Comment 6 above and the comments by J. Miller cited therein.

P. L. H.

Bible Studies

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

EDITORIAL

8707

THE MIND

The opening verses of this month's portion are a well defined link between the doctrinal principles presented in the first eleven chapters of the book of Romans and the practical precepts of the following five. The "therefore"¹¹ of Rom. 12: 1 shows that what follows arises from the preceding doctrinal positions defined by God. As has been said many times in these pages, though doctrine and practice are to be two sides of the same coin, doctrine must precede practice. Paul elsewhere wrote "thou didst follow my teaching, conduct"¹¹ (2 Tim. 3: 10) in which teaching comes before conduct. Now the linking portion (Rom. 1: 1-2) opens with matters which cannot be understood without a clear appreciation of the doctrine of the Lord as regards the way of truth for the disciple. The language of Rom. 12: 1, "present... sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God... service" is house of God language. Each of the expressions may be traced throughout Scripture (and can scarcely be understood without doing so) and come to joint fruition in the matter of behaviour in the house of God. Thus, this ail-important matter is at the heart of the Roman epistle. It ties together the believer's responsive behaviour towards God and God's gracious and merciful dealings with him. Having fallen heir to the blessings described in chapters 1-11, the only reasonable thing for the believer on whose heart God has put and on whose mind God has written the laws of the New Covenant (Heb. 10: 15-16) is to obey them consciously to the full. Such commitment to God in the house of God is said to be "reasonable" service. Here "reasonable" is the word "*logikos*" from which we get our word logical. It indicates the deliberate working of the reasoning, intelligent mind.

This stress laid on the believer's mind forms the second half (Rom. 12: 2) of the link between the doctrinal and practical parts of the

book of Romans because the mind is the only vehicle by which the believer, no matter how sound his heart, is able to understand and put into practice the doctrines of the Lord. The importance of the mind is well known in every area of human activity. Whole nations and governments readily recognize this and spend large sums of money on the training of the minds of their peoples. The mind of the believer, however, is to be subject to a totally different form of training from that of the unsaved person. This could hardly be made plainer than in Rom. 12: 2 when we are instructed that our minds have to be renewed so that the believer as a whole will be transformed.

Some of the things with which the believer's mind has to be occupied are indicated in vv. 3 and 16 by the occurrence of the word for 'think' (*phroneo*) and its compounds, so connecting Rom. 12: 2 with the ensuing verses. Thus the word 'think'¹ occurs four times in the RV of Rom. 12: 3 (as opposed to three in the AV) beautifully drawing our attention to the four-fold occurrence of *phroneo*. Twice it is translated by the verb 'to think', but it is also used twice in a compound fashion. Of the latter, "think more highly" is a compound of *phroneo* and *huper* (from which we get our English word hyper meaning beyond) so defining the exaggerated opinion of ourselves that is condemned in the verse. Similarly "think soberly" is a compound of *phroneo* and *sozo*, the latter meaning to 'save', thus indicating that control of the mind which is both desirable and necessary to the believer who would be a disciple. Again, *phroneo* occurs twice in Rom. 12: 16 where it is in the exhortation to be of the "same mind"¹ and not to be "high-minded". It is concealed, however, in the word "wise" of "Be not wise in your own conceits" that is, in one's own, self-generated opinions.

We cannot fail to notice that the attention paid to the word "mind" in this chapter which is at the outset of the many precepts later given is primarily aimed at the importance of the believer rooting out pride and self-exaltation from his being. This is where the Devil fell and where we, too, are most prone to err. It may be said that it is the premier lesson to be learned by the believer in the matter of renewing his mind. Consider the mind of Christ (Phil. 2: 5-8). Renewal does not enter into His case. Consider, by contrast, ourselves and we see how readily dealing with pride is essential.

/ . E . P

**PROVING THE GOOD AND ACCEPTABLE AND PERFECT WILL OF GOD
(Rom. 12: 1-21)**

From Aberdeen: We have a God who knows our frame and will not exact from us a burden greater than we are able to bear; so when we are besought to present our bodies as "a living sacrifice"^{1*} (Rom. 12: 1)_f such sacrifice is all bounded by the "tender mercies" of God. It is interesting to note the linking of chapter 12 to the previous chapter. Chapter 11 ends with mercy being shown to both the Gentiles and to Israel and following that passage on the mercy of God the saints in Rome are besought through the tender mercies of God to present their bodies in living sacrifice, holy, and well-pleasing to Him. Thus the mercy of God is coupled with the sacrificing of our lives. God indeed looks more deeply than the sacrifice made; He looks deep into the heart, searching for love towards Himself. The Lord said "I desire mercy, and not sacrifice" (Mat. 9: 13 and 12: 7). David learned something beyond the sacrifice and said "... thou delightest not in sacrifice ... the sacrifices of God are a broken spirit" Psa. 51: 16-17). He also spoke about the "sacrifices of righteousness" and elsewhere we read of the "sacrifice of thanksgiving" (Psa. 116: 17). The point is therefore that we are to present our bodies as a living sacrifice *through the tender mercies of God* [Comment 1].

Practical ministry on how to give effect to this living sacrifice immediately follows in verse 2. Our minds have to be renewed. Just as the cells of the human body are being continually renewed during our lifetime, so our minds require the same continual renewing. The thoughts of the flesh are to give way continually to the thoughts of God found in His written Word, and brought to our minds by His Holy Spirit. Continuing on the theme of the mind, we are to "think soberly", according to the measure of faith dealt by God to each individual. The implication seems to be that each saint has a particular responsibility within his particular office in the "body": to act for good towards his fellow-members in the Body of Christ. So what we each do, whatever the special gift (of verses 6-8) or the all-embracing manner of service (verses 9 onwards) we have our part to play for the good of the Body: for the good of fellow-members [See Comment 2].

One final point we are to remember is to leave recompense of evil to God. "Give place unto wrath" (Rom. 12: 19). The place of wrath against evil is not for us, but belongs alone to God. "Vengeance

belongeth unto Me" (Rom. 12: 19). Instead of taking such a matter into our own hands we are exhorted rather to counter evil done towards us with "good" and this is given as the only way to overcome such evil.

James C Johnson

From **Birkenhead**: Paul has outlined in great detail the unfolding of God's purposes of grace and graphically spelled out the varied response by Jew and Gentile with the consequences of each choice.

He is now anxious that those who have received Jesus Christ as Saviour and acknowledged Him as Lord should live according to God's will. This means devoting their bodies to God so that He may work out His purpose in them. Those who are wrought upon by the Spirit and do this, will approve God's working of His will as good, acceptable and perfect.

Man's will is controlled by the mind. The mind can, when influenced by the world, be "fashioned according to this world", but the apostle is anxious that by an inner working (the renewing of the mind) there should be a transformation which results in the individual being like Christ in a godless world: someone who stands out as being in a world apart.

In a fellowship of believers God provides richly for their spiritual well-being. For this fellowship to be well ordered it is vital that each individual should have a correct view of himself and an understanding that gifts are bestowed according to divine wisdom and that each gift is to be exercised for the good of others and duly recognized [Comment 2].

The conduct of believers is to be Christ-like and Paul in terse but telling statements shows how antipathetic it is to that which is seen amongst the unregenerate. There is need for constant vigilance that worldly attitudes are not absorbed by the follower of Christ. The world's view is that self-assertion is the only wise course for self-preservation. Paul points to the fact that it is God's prerogative to avenge and that the believer should recognize this fact. By treating in a kindly way those who are enemies they will be painfully made to realise that their behaviour towards the believer is wrong, and that they should repent. Thus it is that evil is overcome with good.

A consideration of the outline for Christian behaviour makes us view Christ and long to be

'Like Him in all those lovely traits,
which in His lowly, earthly days
So beautiful we see¹.

A. E. Sands, R. D. Williams

From Derby: The chapter may be split into three parts.

- (1) vv. 1-2: call to dedication and service;
- (2) vv. 3-8: usage of gifts;
- (3) Our attitude to others (a) in the Fellowship (vv. 9-16) and
(b) in the world (vv. 17; 21).

(1) vv. 1-2 The chapter shows a shift from the previous chapter which dealt with the contrasting of Jew and Gentile, and the fact that both are saved by divine grace, through faith (Rom. 3: 21-24). On the strength of this Paul says (v.1) "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. It may be suggested that this refers to Holy Priesthood Service, not Royal Priesthood Service [Comment 3].

Being 'transformed' is to be done by the renewing of our mind. The phraseology used here would suggest this to be a constant daily renewing i.e. 'keep on being renewed'. In this process of renewing our mind we "prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God¹". Prove in this instance we take to mean 'try¹ or 'test¹.

(2) vv. 3-8 The central point in this section is that we are "members in one Body¹¹, and as members of the 'one body' we are not to think of ourselves more highly than we ought. Jude writes that we "contend earnestly for the faith¹¹ (Jude 3). This evokes the thought that we need each other and the gifts that each of us has (1 Cor. 12: 12-31). We have to remember that in exercising the use of a gift, it is to be used in the context of v.1, "present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God".

(3) vv. 9-21 In considering both sub-sections (vv. 9-16 and 17-21) we need to keep before us the thought expressed in the final verse of this chapter "overcome evil with good".

(a) vv. 9-16 It may be a sad state of affairs when we have to be exhorted to be "tenderly affectioned one to another"¹¹ in brotherly love. Oftentimes, brothers in the flesh *do* have arguments, *but* they defend each other vigorously before other people. It is good to argue a point through, but we are not to bear malice toward another brother or sister who does not necessarily agree with us. The overall conclusion is that we are to support each other, perhaps by ^flending an ear¹ privately to someone in distress or, in a public way, in ministry meetings.

(b) vv. 17-21 The key to this sub-section is to be found in v. 18 "If it be possible, as much as in you lieth, be at peace with all men". This would include, for example not getting involved in political arguments. The only time we should speak out is when witnessing, either privately or publicly, for the Lord. It would seem that to those who are without, our attitude should be one of grace. If someone does wrong we have to remember the words of v. 19 "Vengeance belongeth unto Me; I will recompense, saith the Lord"¹¹.

L. E. Foster, G. W. Conway

From Leigh and Bolton: The first eleven chapters of the book of Romans have sufficed to present the great truths of the gospel. Therefore, in the light of this, the apostle begs believers to respond in the yielding of their bodies as living sacrifices. This was observed to be similar to the exhortation of Romans 6: 10-13. There, as those who are dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus, believers are exhorted to present themselves to God as alive from the dead, and their members as instruments of righteousness. In such sacrificed lives, where the practical outworking is daily dying (Luke 9: 23), Christians are viewed as having given themselves wholly up to God (Gal. 2: 20). In a very real sense this is the very least the Christian can do in response to God's grace unfolded in earlier chapters. Hence it is 'reasonable service' where "service"¹¹ is a translation of the highest of three words used by the apostle for worship in the New Testament. Such yielding is an acceptable expression of worship.

Exhortation to separation in verse 2 follows from the exhortation to surrender in verse 1. Separation is seen here as essentially associated with an attitude of mind. The link back to the first verse is reinforced if "reasonable service" is understood as 'intelligent service'¹. The yielding of the body springs from the mind, the renewing of which is in view in verse 2.

The distinction between inward and outward related actions was noted. The Christian is not to be outwardly conformed (AV) to the things of this age (in view of his or her destiny to be conformed to the likeness of God's Son Rom. 8: 29). In contrast, the believer is to be inwardly transformed (or transfigured) by the renewal of the thought process through the Spirit's power. This renewal of the mind has in view the adjustment of the moral and spiritual vision and thinking to the mind of God. It is designed to have a transforming effect on the life.

Elsewhere Scripture speaks of knowing (Col. 1: 9) and understanding (Eph. 5: 17) the will of God; here it is proving. This was largely taken to mean the believer proving to himself or herself what the good, acceptable and perfect will of God is. Progress in this is dependent on the believer's surrender and separation to God.

The verses following verse 2 were regarded as revealing, in a general sense, God's will. The truth of the Church the Body is presented (v. 5) with God the Father seen dealing to each member a measure of faith resulting in gifts differing according to the proportion of faith (vv. 3, 6). This was compared with 1 Cor. 12 and Eph. 4 which emphasize respectively the role of God the Spirit and God the Son in the distribution of gifts to the Body. In this distribution of gifts there is something for all. By proving God's will the believer can discover his or her gift.

The commands of verse 14 onwards will, if practised, reveal an entirely different attitude to that of the world, and were in this sense viewed as proving God's will to others.

B. D. Johnston

From Liverpool: *The Christian's Responsibility for His Body.* In turning from doctrinal matters to practical exhortations, Paul concentrates first of all on what we all have to offer God: our own bodies! In thinking of the possibility of offering them as a sacrifice we noted that an acceptable sacrifice could only be made from that which is clean. The Old Testament sacrifices, when offered, were dead and were other than the offerer himself; the sacrifice envisaged here is both living and is the very self of the offerer (cf. 2 Cor. 8: 5). The sacrifice envisaged is a "spiritual act of worship" (NIV)

[Comment 4]•

The Christian's Responsibility for his Mind. Within the mind are the seeds of all our actions and what we think decides how we behave [Comment 5]. There are only two possibilities for us: (1) Conformity to the ideas, norms and attitudes of the age in which we live so that we become indistinguishable from the ungodly, and (2) Transformation, by which our whole attitude of mind is changed and we take our cue from the word of God and the prompting of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

The Picture of the Church as a Body. This illustration enables us to see the relationships we have with one another and with Christ, the Head (Eph. 5: 23). Self-centredness is completely ruled out, for each member depends upon the other and each has its own role to play. Just as the parts of our bodies become useless if not regularly exercised so it is with these gifts to the members of Christ. The parable of the talents (Mat. 25: 14-30) teaches what the Lord thinks of the servant who hid his talents in the ground!

Acceptable Living. The three imperatives in v. 9 concern the struggle in our Christian lives towards perseverance and sincerity; it is no easy thing to hate what God hates and cling to that which is good. The commands in vv. 10-21 present the ideal life lived to the honour and praise of our God. Only the Lord Jesus completely lived this way but we are duty bound to attempt to put these commands into practice.

David J. Webster

From Paisley: Consideration of the mercies of God in choosing Gentiles to be His people, should provoke a grateful response in our hearts, which will find expression in presenting our bodies to the Lord as living sacrifices for the furtherance of His will. That will mean a ceasing to fulfil worldly desires and ambitions and a transformation of our minds through the operation of the Spirit of God in our lives: see 2 Cor. 3: 18. It follows the theme already expressed by the apostle in Rom. 6: 19 of ceasing to present our members to uncleanness and instead presenting our members as servants to righteousness unto sanctification.

The gifts enumerated in verses 6-8 do not contain the miraculous gifts mentioned in 1 Cor. 12, such as gifts of healings, working of miracles and divers kinds of tongues, but refer to gifts which lead

to the building up of the Body of Christ. Prophecy, ministry, teaching, exhorting, giving, taking the lead and showing mercy are domestic matters which affect our relationship one with another. There must be scope within the assemblies of God for the exercise of these gifts as they are given for the edification of the Body.

Then, as pointed out by the apostle in 1 Cor. 13, love must be the motivating force behind the exercise of the gifts. This will regulate our attitude one to another and to others where persecution may be experienced. Many of the things enumerated in verses 14-21, follow closely the teaching of the Lord in Luke 6: 27-38. Just as the disciples experienced persecution at the hands of the Jewish leaders, so also the saints at Home suffered greatly at the hand of the Roman rulers. We can only acknowledge our failure to live up to the high standard the Lord set His disciples and we should seek His grace that the injunctions set forth in this chapter will find expression in our lives. They were so nobly expressed in the life of the Lord.

J. Renfrew

From **Wishaw**: Paul does not need to look far for sufficient grounds on which to base his plea for commitment from the disciples at Rome. The basis of the plea is 'The mercies of God¹'. In the previous chapters Paul highlights in numerous ways God's mercies and the manner in which they have affected the lives of various groups of people. The Christians at Rome were left in no doubt as to the extent God's mercies affected them, so in the full glare of God's dealings with them Paul directs his plea for an acceptable response.

The word 'beseech' in v.1 is the Greek word '*parakaleo*' which denotes 'to call to one's side' so that although Paul was not present at Rome he nevertheless draws alongside the disciples there, to encourage them in the service of God. There are certain conditions to be met if our service is to be acceptable unto God. Verse 2 stipulates one of those conditions and as in other conditions of God's service there is a negative and positive side. 'Be not conformed' is contrasted with 'but be ye transformed'. To many well-meaning Christians the line of demarcation is one of confusion, but however ill-defined the line may appear it is the duty of each Christian to establish what characterizes this age and avoid its influence. The transformation in view here can be best illustrated by the experience of the motionless and dormant chrysalis when its form is changed

to that of a butterfly. Such a transformation is in view here for conforming to this age may render the Christian inactive and non-productive, but the renewing of our mind by the application of the word of God, sound teaching, prayer and meditation will dramatically alter our form of discipleship from one of mediocrity to a level where we will be able to approve the good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

Timothy was instructed by Paul to 'Study to show thyself approved unto God... rightly dividing the word of truth¹'. Likewise the renewal of our mind will be best advanced if we properly apply the word of God.

As always, to prove the will of God is intensely practical and so Paul gives wise counsel on such matters that affect the lives of saints in all ages. For example (v. 16) he exhorts the saints to be of the same mind, to live in harmony. Disharmony or any kind of conflict, if not dealt with can at the least blunt and at the worse destroy an assembly. So Paul in a manner befitting a wise counsellor presents those elements of the will of God that must be exhibited in the lives of God's people if God's will is to be known and expressed.

G. Schleyer, J. Shepka

COMMENTS

1. (**Aberdeen**): While we agree with what friends in Aberdeen say, it should be noted that the "tender mercies" of Rom. 12: 1 refers to Paul's beseeching.
2. (**Birkenhead**): We take fellowship here to mean "the Fellowship" and commend to readers, the way in which this reference to fellowship applies the practical teaching of being members one of another to its proper, earthly sphere, namely churches of God.
3. (**Derby**): Friends in Derby are right to see that the service of Rom. 12: 1 has to do with the house of God. It is true that there is an application of the teaching of sweet-savour offerings to the life of the believer. For example, the "even" of Eph. 5: 2 may show

this in its Burnt Offering aspect and Heb. 13: 16 may show it in its Peace Offering aspect. Similarly the emphasis on "bodies¹¹ in Horn. 12: 1 may indicate a Meal Offering aspect. We must remember however, that such an application can only be seen in the light of "we are a sweet savour of Christ unto God" (2 Cor. 2: 15). However, the work of the holy priesthood has to do with the offering up of spiritual sacrifices, the fruit of lips (1 Pet. 2: 5; Heb. 13: 15) and so we would be hesitant in saying that the sacrifice of Rom. 12: 1 showed the work of the priesthood. Rather, we would suggest, it shows the work of the offerer.

4. **(Liverpool):** The present writer feels that the use of the word spiritual here and in the RVM for *logikos* which basically means 'rational' (see editorial) reflects uncertainty about the significance of *latreia* and *latreuo*. Study of these words will show that they refer to spiritual service, or divine service, i.e. that carrying out of divine ordinances, since Sinai proper to the house of God, which constitutes the worship of the people of God. Thus to translate *logikos* by the word spiritual is repetition of the same thing, i.e. it is tautologous.

5. **(Liverpool):** Sin arises in the heart (Mat. 15: 18-19).

I. E. P.

QUESTION AND ANSWER

From Derby: Does the phraseology (Rom. 12: 4-8) suggest one person, one gift? Does this mean we expect too much of brethren in respect of one brother having a multiplicity of gifts?

Generally speaking, multiplicity of gifts is viewed on an assembly basis (1 Cor. 1: 7; 1 Cor. 14). A verse such as 1 Cor. 14: 13 shows beyond a shadow of doubt that more than one gift may reside in one person. Further, an individual such as Paul was an apostle, a pastor, a teacher, an evangelist, a healer and so on. All pastors must be teachers (1 Tim. 3: 2). Further, in remnant testimony such as we have in the house of God today brethren must, as in Nehemiah's day, put their hands to things for which they may not be most suited (Neh. 3: 1-32). *I. E. P.*

From **Leigh and Bolton**: Help would be appreciated as to whether the presentation of the believer's body as a living sacrifice (v.1) is a once for all act, which is to be seen as continuing, albeit with some fluctuation in its practical daily outworking. This view was put forward as conveying the sense of the aorist imperative ("present"). Others thought a believer could fulfil the exhortation of v.1 many times. Is this what rededication means? Clearly some believers at Rome had never known such an experience, and this is a possibility today also.

In Rom. 12: 1 the verb "to present" is in the Aorist Infinitive, implying one act of presenting. A similar construction is used in Eph. 4: 1 "to walk worthily", with the thought of putting such a walk into effect. The Present Infinitive in Phil. 4: 2 has in view a continual being of the same mind. Rom. 12: 1 is not denying the necessity for rededication, but is simply not making reference to continuance, fluctuation and so forth.

E. A.

Rom. 12: 1 is the mature act of a person having grasped and having some experience of the importance of the house of God. Compare Jacob (Gen. 28: 20-22). It should not, therefore, need repeating. As to the use of the aorist imperative, the contrast between "Give us this day our daily bread" (Mat. 6: 11) when it is used as opposed to the present imperative "Give us day by day our daily bread" (Luke 11: 3) is very helpful. See also John 2: 16 "Take these things hence; make not my Father's house a house of merchandise" where "Take" is aorist denoting a single action and "make" denotes continuous action.

I. E. P.

CORRESPONDENCE

We print the following article, with the intention of commenting on it at a later date. We invite others to do so, too.

Eds.

SONSHIP

For many years during the publication of *Bible Studies* and *Needed Truth*, space has been devoted to the answering of questions. As is true of any topic under discussion, there are always identical questions which arise over and over again and teachers recognise these as 'hardy perennials'. One such question is about the kind of baptism referred to in Romans 6: 3-6 and Galatians 3: 27. These scriptures were the subject of editors' comments in BS 8609 pp. 140-142. The expressions "baptized into Christ Jesus" and "baptized into Christ" were fully explained to be referring to the baptism of the believer in water. By this act of obedience the believer "puts on Christ".

Whereas the great majority of disciples in churches of God have accepted over the years that water baptism is in view, there has always been the difficulty at the back of some minds when editors and teachers among us have insisted that Galatians 3: 28 refers to the Church the Body. The logical question arises, 'How can the apostle be dealing with a conditional matter of obedience to Christ in verse 27 and then immediately switch to an unconditional status of the same persons in verse 28 in which they played no part'? This then puts doubt in the mind of the student whether the baptism in verse 27 is really "in water".

In the present editorial comments that position was outlined. "The following verse... 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". Herein lies the problem. May we suggest, the solution may be found by reconsidering what verse 28 means and to what it refers, with the greatest respect to those who consistently have taught that it refers to the Church the Body.

Guidance from the Context

Very few, if any, will disagree that the subject matter of Galatians 3 and 4 is sonship. It has frequently been stated that sonship involves birth plus behaviour showing likeness to the Father. For the sake of clarity of argument, the steps are suggested as follows:

1. The receiving of the Spirit is based upon faith vv, 2, 5, 14;
2. The exercise of faith brings a reckoning of righteousness v.6;
3. Those who exercise faith as Abraham did, are *sons* of Abraham v.7;
4. Those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham v.9;
5. Workers of the law are not justified because the law is not of faith vv. 11, 12;
6. Christ redeemed us from law-doing to bestow on Gentiles the blessing of Abraham *in Christ Jesus* v.14.

The term "in Christ Jesus", we suggest, gives the first indication that the apostle is dealing, not only with sonship but also, with service. The purpose of the promise of the Spirit is not, in this instance, focussing our attention on a place in the Body of Christ but rather of leading faithful sons into divine service for the blessing of themselves and others.

7. The promises were given to Abraham and his Seed, Christ v.16;
8. The law was added until the Seed should come v.19;
9. The law is not against the promises of God v. 21;
10. Scripture condemns all under sin so that the promise of the Spirit can be given to all believers v. 22;
11. The law trained the believing Jew as a minor (*nepios* - not child) until the Faith (3: 23 RVM) was revealed and so brought them to Christ v. 24;
12. A tutor is no longer needed because faith *in Christ Jesus* made them sons of God vv. 25, 26;

Here, the term *in Christ Jesus* gives the second indication that sonship with a view to service is being taught.

13. The first step of an obedient son is baptism under the leading of the Spirit v.27, and in so doing "many of you" put on Christ.
14. In consequence of *being sons*, there is neither Jew nor Greek, nor bond nor free, and there can be no male and female v. 28.

This is a statement, we suggest, showing the status of sons. It has nothing to do with a place in Christ in the Church the Body as members nor a place in churches of God as sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty. Both brethren and sisters lose their sex identity in sonship. It is the inclusion of 'no male and female'⁹ in verse 28 which indicates what is being taught. Such a phrase is not included in 1 Corinthians 12: 13.

15. The togetherness of sons in divine service is contained in the statement "*ye all are one in Christ Jesus*" v. 28. The word 'man'¹ is not in the original text. The Jew, reaching majority and sonship in Christ Jesus, is one with the Gentile as sons of God in divine service.
16. Belonging to Christ is the same as being Abraham's *sons* (not children), and as heirs we have inherited the Spirit by faith according as God promised v.29*
17. Chapter 3 shows that out of the old system of the Law came Jewish believers (in their minority status and taught by the Law) to be reckoned with Gentiles as a new nation in divine service, reaching their majority as sons *by faith in Christ Jesus*.

Chapter 4 goes on to show that as sons through faith they (the believing Jews) have been adopted, that is, placed as sons, together (Jews and Gentiles) God has sent the Spirit of His Son into *our* hearts crying the cry of grown up, mature sons, "Abba, Father" (4: 5-6);

18. Paul's deep desire is that those who know God (4: 9) should also be those in whom Christ is formed (4: 19). Thus the process of putting on Christ is continued throughout the lifetime of the Son of God;
19. Finally, the use of the words "child" and "children" needs to be carefully considered in chapter 4.

- (a) "So long as the heir is a *child*, he differeth nothing from a bondservant" (v.1). Here the word is *nepios* meaning minor and not one of birth.
- (b) "So we also, when we were *children*, were held in bondage" (v.3). The word again is *nepioi* meaning minors.
- (c) "My little *children*, of whom I am again in travail" (v.19). In this case of an expression of affection, the word used is *tekna*.
- (d) "One from mount Sinai, bearing *children* unto bondage, which is Hagar" (v.24). The topic of this verse is bearing or giving birth to bondage, so appropriately the word is *gennosa*.
- (e) "For she is in bondage with her *children* (v.25). In this case it is a birth relationship so *teknon* is used.
- (f) "Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are *children* of promise" (v.28). Here again the relationship is of birth based upon promise and is expressed by using *teknon*, as also in v.27.
- (g) "We are not *children* of a handmaid" (v.31). As motherhood is in view the word used is *teknon*.

The above study is submitted in the hope of helping to solve, what has been over many years, a difficulty to students of Galatians 3 and 4.

R. A. Parker

Bible Studies

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

EDITORIAL

8708

IN THE **WORLD**, BUT NOT OF IT

How were those in Rome, beloved indeed of God, and called to be saints, to regard the claims of civil order in the Empire? Were they for instance to withhold tribute on the basis that they owned Christ as King? The Master Himself had said, "Render therefore unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's", and again, "My Kingdom is not of this world". The apostle reminds them that while others might pay the tribute out of fear for the consequences of refusal, they themselves should willingly acknowledge the responsibility carried by the authorities. Such authorities were responsible to see that justice be maintained, and in doing so were answerable to God for their actions. To resist recklessly and treat the higher powers with dishonour where they were exercising authority within their proper sphere was to invite deserved judgement. One could not with a pure conscience allow debt to accumulate where it was within possibility to clear it.

Fundamental and reaching beyond the matter of legal restrictions was the intent of the law, namely, that an individual should love his neighbour as himself. The example of Christ is without compare, and our appreciation of His example will influence our appreciation of the debt of love we owe to one another.

The dangers of Rome at night with all the attendant strife are well attested in ancient secular writings. Far from being confined to those times and that place, such circumstances can be all too prevalent in society where the fear of God is cast to one side.

Moreover the obscurity of night is sought as cover by those walking dishonestly, if by any means they might escape the judgement of men.

In this world the presence of sin is still felt like darkness of a spiritual sort. The daylight of salvation from sin's presence alone will bring complete release. Meantime the lives of saints are in danger of insidious ensnarement from a world which lieth in the evil one, unless they avail themselves of the armour of light for their defence. Also, if the closeness of the Lord's coming could be reckoned in terms of the experience of Paul and the recipients of his letter, we should take stock likewise, so as to be watchful, and the more so as we see the trend of world events today.

E. A.

WALK HONESTLY, AS IN THE DAY (Romans 13: 1-14)

From Aberdeen: The powers which be are ordained by God. Authority and order in society can be traced to God. It is of God that the nations of the world are ruled by rulers. God has His ministers whom He uses to execute wrath upon evil-doers (Rom. 13: 4). Titus was to speak the same message, ^M"Be in subjection to rulers, to authorities" (Titus 3: 1). Romans repeats the point about God's ministers, ^M"he is a minister of God to thee... " (Rom. 13: 4). An account of how order was preserved in society is recorded in the book of Esther. God had His public ministers then. Memucan counselled king Ahasuerus to issue a royal commandment throughout the Medo-Persian empire to the end "that every man should bear rule in his own house" (Esther 1: 22). In this way God's order in the family was preserved, and thus was avoided "much contempt and wrath". It is interesting to note that Memucan's name means "having authority" (Newberry). Authorities should be respected. We are in the world to love our fellow-men and not to cause trouble by being disrespectful to the powers that be.

"The day is at hand" (Rom. 13: 12). For long centuries the darkness of night has been an apt description for unenlightened mankind. When the Saviour appeared, light appeared. As God looks down He knows when that date for the new heaven and new earth will be. He also has set a date for the return of His Christ

for the church. Since each day brings us nearer this appointed date, we ought to get ready for our new home and surroundings. Prepare for the "day". In 1 John 2: 8 there is a similar thought, "the darkness is passing away, and the true light already shineth".

It is possible for us to sleep, i.e. to be inattentive to God's speaking to us. He doesn't want sleepers, He wants watchers. "Let us not sleep as do the rest; but let us watch" (1 Thes. 5: 6). Nevertheless it is a comfort to know that the constancy of God is such that "whether we wake (watch) or sleep, we should live together with Him (i. e. Christ)¹¹ (1 Thes. 5: 10). Clearly, "sleep" here is not the same as having "fallen asleep in Jesus" but rather describes a living believer who has become inattentive to the Lord. •Let us not sleep, says Paul.

James C. Johnson

From Birkenhead: The disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ lives in a world where rule and government is vested in individuals who may not be believers and consequently not be in sympathy with the Christian viewpoint.

Paul sets out the pattern of conduct and outlines the attitude of the disciple to such powers. We see world government in a new light when we learn that those who hold office are ordained of God, and are furthering His purpose. It might be natural to think that individuals can be brought into power by human endeavour who will act according to God's laws, but Scripture declares that those who resist any government in power are viewed as resisting God. It is vital that the Christian remembers the heavenly message to Nebuchadnezzar that "the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will" (Dan. 4: 32). With this firmly in mind world affairs take on a different aspect.

The only circumstance when a Christian has ground for disobedience to ruling powers is when the human law conflicts with the divine law - such as when apostles were forbidden to preach the Word to which they replied "we must obey God rather than men" (Acts 5: 29). There is evidence that God uses world rulers for the advancement of His work; e.g. Cyrus, king of Persia (see Ezra 1: 1-3; Isa. 44: 28) was moved to issue an edict for work at Jerusalem to commence.

It is the Christian's responsibility to render to all their dues, both to pay the set taxes and duties, and to hold in esteem those whose position demands it (Tit. 3: 1). The Lord gave direction to those who would have tried to trip Him up when He told them to give to Caesar... and to God (Luke 20: 25). Suffering may be experienced under the hand of hostile rulers, but this is according to God's purpose and must be accepted as such (Comment 11 •

It is required of us, amongst other things, to pray for and give thanks for kings, and all that are in high place (1 Tim. 2: 1, 2).

In our everyday dealings with others we are never to accumulate debts of money or goods [Comment 2]. We are however to remember that we are required to love our neighbours as ourselves, and since we cannot consistently reach to the high standard here stated we are constantly 'owing' love to others.

As we travel along the Christian pathway we need to be alert, not slothful. The time of the Lord's return moves nearer. The Christian's life therefore needs to be Christlike, an honest life which on inspection is commendable, and the works of darkness (v. 13) are to be cast off. This can only be achieved by us putting on the Lord Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit operating in us helps to this end. The work of the Devil will be frustrated as we make no provision for the flesh, i.e. do nothing to feed the evil thoughts which can develop into wrong actions.

P. E. Turner, R. D. Williams

From Bolton and Leigh: When questioned as to whether or not it was lawful to pay tribute to Caesar, the Lord Jesus, establishing that the coinage of the day bore Caesar's image and superscription said, "render therefore unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's" (Mat. 22: 21). He was teaching that taxes and other things due to the government of the day could be rendered in all good conscience.

In verses 1-7 of our study portion, the apostle not only enumerates the things to be rendered to the powers-that-be (v. 7), but also gives us the reason why; namely, that such powers are ordained of God. Having understood this principle, it becomes a Christian to submit himself to the established authorities of his day. To do otherwise would mean that he was in opposition to the **will** of

God. By obeying the rule of law established by the ordained powers, the Christian shows himself to be a law-abiding citizen, an attitude that can draw praise (v. 3). As ever, the Lord Jesus is a prime example, in subjecting Himself to the authority of His parents when a boy, and to God's will even unto death.

Two questions arose out of our discussion of verses 1-7, which were: (1) If the ruler or government under which a Christian lived was manifestly evil, could he really say **that that** power was ordained of God?

(2) If the established authority passed a law or laws that were clearly against the revealed will of God, would a Christian have to obey because the power was ordained of God?

Help on both points was derived from the book of Daniel. With regard to the nature of the established government or ruler, we noted what is written in Dan. 4: 17 "The Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will, and setteth up over it the lowest (basest A.V.) of men". Nebuchadnezzar was a cruel despot, yet he was God's chosen instrument in carrying out God's purposes in that day. So even if an established power is in our eyes undesirable, we are not to fear but, realise that through that power, God is working out His sovereign will, even though His purpose may not be clear to us.

With regard to the second question, we turned to the experience of Daniel. During the reign of king Darius (ch. 6), the king had passed a law that Daniel knew to be contrary to the ordinance of God. The prophet chose to obey the law of God rather than the law of the king, giving us clear guidance that the law of God must take precedence over the laws of men. We are to obey man's law only as long as it does not contravene the law of God. We also noted the manner of Daniel's conduct; it was not violent and noisy protest but a quiet continuance in that which was right. The words of Peter, John and other apostles in Acts 4: 19 and 5: 29 also show that the will of God must supersede the laws of men where the two come into conflict.

Having considered in verses 1-7 what is due from the Christian to the authorities of the day, the apostle now turns in verses 8-10 to what the Christian owes to those among whom he lives, **that** is, his neighbours. The Christian must refrain from doing anything

that would harm or offend his neighbours, as enjoined upon him by the law of God. To adopt an attitude of love towards one's neighbour gives perfect expression to what is written in the law (v. 10). In teaching these things the apostle is again following the example of the Lord Jesus, who taught that the law and the prophets hung on two commandments, the second of which was, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Mat. 22: 39, 40).

Verses 11-14 teach the Christian to order his behaviour in the light of the return of Christ for His own, when the Christian's salvation will be completed by his deliverance from the very presence of sin (v. 11). The imminence of our Lord's return is given as the reason why the Christian is to put on the armour of light (v. 12). Walking honestly as in the day (v. 13) is a way of life that could be contrasted with those who love the darkness rather than the light; for their works are evil (John 3: 19). The manner of life is accomplished by the Christian, by imitating the character of Christ, which we took to be the meaning of the words, "But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ"¹¹ (v. 14).

The present time is as night to the believer as he looks forward to the dawning of the day but, to the unbeliever, what seems to be an age of light will soon turn to eternal darkness.

Alex Reid

From Derby: The Christian's duty and responsibility within the framework of a social community is dealt with in the earlier part of this chapter. This doubtless had a very relevant application to the believers in Rome both Jew and Gentile. The Roman Empire at this time was a civil power exerting considerable demands upon the people. Yet to a large extent its laws were just and fair. Paul himself received protection at the hands of impartial justice to claim his rights as a Roman citizen (Acts 22: 25).

It could well be that some were strongly opposed to the governing authorities, resisting the obligations laid upon them, and withholding payment of tribute and taxes. In many cases this brought about hostility and even rebellion, especially among the more extreme nationalist-minded Jews. The Christian's conduct towards the powers-that-be is clearly stated by Paul. These are ordained of God and it is his duty to give obedience to them. The magistrate

is God's servant, and we noted the expression, repeated **three times in this portion**, "for he is a minister (servant) of God" (vv. 4, 6), **Those that act with honesty and right conduct have nothing to fear. Punishment is directed to those who are in conflict with the law by their wrong doings, and if they persist in this they will incur judgement.** 1 Pet. 2: 13-17 is a relevant scripture in regard to this. **Governors are appointed by God to punish evil-doers and maintain law and order, and the Christian's duty can be rightly summed up in the words, 'Fear God, honour the king'. We are to pray for those in authority (1 Tim. 2: 1, 2).**

Our citizenship is in heaven (Phil. 3: 20), yet the fact that we are also citizens of a country also carries certain privileges and with these certain duties and responsibilities; we cannot entirely dissociate ourselves from the community in which we live and the State. This should not be a merely passive acceptance, but the positive outworking of it should be manifest in our lives: to do that which is good (v.3), to lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and gravity (1 Tim. 2: 2), to be in subjection to rulers, to authorities ..., to be ready unto every good work (Titus 3: 1).

We discussed the question of civil disobedience and if this at any time could be justified. It has been said that the obedience which the Christian owes to the State is never absolute, but at the most is partial and contingent. It follows that under certain circumstances disobedience to the commands of the State is not only a right but also a duty.

Throughout history, **and in more recent times, examples of Christians who have sought to withstand laws or policies which they felt were in conflict with God's higher laws could be cited. In many cases they had to pay dearly for their actions. Suffice it to note the principle firmly established in Scripture. When Peter and the apostles were brought before the council of the chief priests and charged not to teach in this Name, they were bold in their witness, as they replied, "We must obey God rather than men"¹¹ (Acts 5: 28, 29). This surely is the pattern for us today.**

Our obligation to appoint rulers takes on a wider application in the verses which follow. The demands for payment of tribute and taxes due must be met. How much more so the debt of love which we owe to all men. Love is the one obligation which fulfils all

obligations for love works no ill to one's neighbour. "Who is my neighbour?" asked a certain lawyer of the Lord. The story of the 'Good Samaritan' leaves no doubt as to the extent compassion and mercy should be shown in a positive way to all those who may be in need.

The remaining verses of this chapter bring before us a challenge to walk honestly, as in the day. The working out of our salvation is of prime importance, and the approaching return of the Lord is a strong motive for Christian living. We noted the stark contrasts - darkness... light, night... day. Paul goes back to some of the great truths enunciated in chapter 6: "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that you should obey the lusts thereof... but present yourselves unto God, as alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God".

A. G. Willis, G. W. Conway

From Liverpool: *The System:* A Christian has dual citizenship; that of his country by birth and that from heaven by the new birth. Paul is examining the obligations and privileges attached to the former but always seen in the light of the latter. We must submit to the civil authorities because God established and authorized them. Rebellion is thus more serious than breaking the law for it is a direct challenge to God and will incur judgement. We noted that Paul is stating the ideal and that is the system of authority which we are to respect and submit to. Many rulers do, of course, go beyond their God-given rights and become a terror to the good. But this does not annul the principles stated here. An analogy is to be found in the English legal system when barristers bow to the judge and address him respectfully even when they feel he is wrong.

Model Citizens: The people of God ought to be model citizens applying in their lives the principle laid down by our Lord in Mk. 12: 17, our obligations to the state being perfectly balanced and complemented by our obligations to God. Daniel in his refusal to eat the Babylonian diet is a good example of how to keep them in balance. Not only are we to pay the legal requirements but beyond that we are to treat people in authority with the respect and honour due to them because of that position, being prepared to be respectful even to overbearing policemen.

The Principle of Love: A model citizen will always promptly settle his accounts but the continuing debt of love can never be finally settled and must always be attended to. Love will always seek the highest good of the one loved and the degree of love expected of us in that we love our neighbours as ourselves. That is why all the commandments are summed up in this one, and why love is the fulfilment of the whole law.

Temporal and Eternal: Time belongs to God and is a resource for which we are accountable. But it is a finite resource, and because of the human tendency to exaggerate the time left to us, Paul reminds us that it is later than we are inclined to believe, with a warning against wasting our spiritual lives for there are things to be done. The night always speaks of evil and here means the present evil age from which we will soon be saved. Rather we are to live victorious Christian lives, positively clothing ourselves with Christ (with all the implications of such an act) and refusing to gratify the desires of the old nature.

D. J. Webster

From Newcastle: The subject of state authorities is introduced as part of a wider theme of our personal conduct. According to the Christian nature within us, we should be law-abiding. Lawless activity such as revelling, drunkenness, and the like is excluded.

We should not be surprised to find that we have similar objectives to the state authorities, in so far as the institution of government is primarily to keep law and order. Both we and the state are committed to law and order. The alliance of church and state might appear to be a logical progression from this passage, but this should not be so. Although the state authorities are instituted by God and have a divine brief it would be incorrect to conclude that they are necessarily absolutely controlled by God or that their every action is approved by Him [I Comment 3].

If we have cause to criticize or disagree with the actions of authorities we may use channels laid down by the authorities to express our point of view. However to physically resist authority or incite rebellion would be contrary to behaviour that "befits the day".

It can be noted that to be employed or involved in the process of government is a very honourable occupation, a divine service. It is the problems of being aligned with a political party and the compromise of view that may be entailed, that we need to be aware of. Our identity must primarily be that of a Christian.

Paul does not question institutionalised violence for keeping law and order and for a system of punishment. Since the rights and wrongs of state violence are not his main theme we could hold the view that a system of prison sentencing is more desirable. Such punishment, exclusion from the community, is that which operates in the churches I Comment 4].

P. J. Stoner

From **Paisley**: In the previous chapter, the apostle exhorted the saints in Rome to be at peace with ail men if this were possible, and this particularly affects our attitudes to rulers.

In times of Gentile rule, the over-ruling hand of God is still in evidence, as the great king Nebuchadnezzar learned to his cost: "He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest Thou?"¹¹ (Dan. 4: 35). The Lord Jesus re-affirmed this truth when speaking to Pilate, "Thou wouldest have no power (authority) against Me except it were given Thee from above" (John 19: 11). Even where, as in Rome, the authorities were hostile to the Christian, it was nevertheless the duty of the saints to be subject to the authorities, and to pray for them that they may be saved and that we may lead tranquil and quiet lives (1 Tim. 2: 2).

Subjection to authorities also involves honesty in material matters, such as payment of rates and taxes, and avoidance of failing into debt, which could have an adverse effect on the testimony.

The Christian also has a duty to observe the law of God as well as the laws of men, and this is summed up in the word to love our neighbour as ourselves. The conduct of saints must also be without reproach in the sight of men. Rome, at the time the apostle wrote, was given over to revellings, drunkenness, illicit

sexual intercourse, **and the saints were** to avoid these things, together with strife **and jealousy**. **Instead, the nature** of Christ should **be seen** in our lives **and the evil lusts of the flesh kept** in control. **The soon return** of our Lord Jesus should **have a sanctifying** effect on our lives.

J. Renfrew

From **Wishaw**: The apostle opens this section with **the** all-embracing command **that "every soul" must be subject** to **the** higher powers. **It was** understood that these powers **were the** rulers or authorities in **any given place**. Whether **we** might consider **them** to **be** good or **bad**, subjection to **them** is to **be** observed, **and** especially by those who **are** known **as** Christians. **It was** envisaged **that** circumstances could arise **when** our obedience to **the revealed** will of God must take priority over **any man-made** decrees which **clearly** opposed **the** will of God.

These powers **are stated** to **be** "ordained" or chosen **by** God. This being so it should **be clear that the** Christian cannot **take part** in **the** choosing of a country's **leaders** since **we have** no **way** of understanding **what the** will of God is in **such a matter** [Comment 5]. **Our** prime responsibility in this **matter** is **that** of constant **prayer**.

In many places **anarchy** is gaining **an ever-stronger** hold; **but** this **runs** totally contrary to **the** will of God. We **read** in this portion that those resisting the powers-**that-be** withstand **the** ordinance of God. **Such a** course of action is not to **be undertaken** lightly. Those following **such a** course will find **themselves** in serious trouble both from **the** authorities **and** from God Himself.

We need not **fear** the authorities if our lives **are exemplary** so **far** as **the** civil **laws are** concerned, **and** this is what should **be** true of Christians - walking honestly **as in the day**. **Fear** comes in **where** righteousness is discarded. We wondered if **the** apostle **had heard** of things among **the** Christians in Rome **that** caused him to write in **such a** strain?

The matter of Christians subjecting **themselves** to civil authority seems **necessary** on two **separate** counts; firstly, **because of the fear** of punishment, **and** this applies to **all men**. Of greater importance is **the** matter of a good conscience. **Acts 24: 16** states

"I also exercise myself to have a conscience void of offence toward God and men alway".

The very heart of the commandments was summarized in this; to love our neighbours as ourselves. If this was carried out, what a transformed place this world would be! There would be no need for police and such like authorities.

Finally, the apostle brings in the stark contrast between the "works of darkness" which we must cast off, and the "armour of light"¹¹ which we must put on. This shows a disciplined spirit in the casting off of the one, and the putting on of the other. In Gal. 5 we have the "works" of the flesh contrasted with the "fruit" of the spirit. How significant that the Spirit of God shows the Christian as a person who demonstrates a wholeness or integrity of lifestyle. How good if saints were to be seen as conspicuous because they had put on this armour of light. It is said that in olden times the armour was brightly polished to reflect the light and blind the enemy.

D. R. Gray, M. D. Macdonald

COMMENTS

1. **(Birkenhead):** Perhaps this statement is going a little too far. God gives rulers the responsibility of power, and they are accountable to Him for their exercise of it. If they are unjust and oppressive they will be condemned by Him, for He does not desire that anyone should do evil. To say that "suffering... is according to God's purpose"¹¹ seems to imply that He has planned the suffering for His children, but one would think that the will of God in this matter is a permissive rather than an efficient will (see 1 Pet. 4: 12-19).

P. L. H.

2. **(Birkenhead):** Debt in itself is inescapable. For example, a man usually has to work a week before he receives his wages. His employer is thus in his debt. When that employee hires a tradesman to do a piece of work, he is in the tradesman's

debt when the work has been completed. What the Scripture is strong on is that we are not to defer payment of debts. In particular, the believer is not to get into a position where he will be unable to pay. We take it that this is what friends in Birkenhead mean by "accumulate" debts. When that sorry state of affairs is transferred to the second part of the statement in Rom. 13: 8, it heightens the significance of "save to love one another". Here is a debt, the debt of love, in which it is all to the good for the believer to be "in over his head" and not have the wherewithal to pay. The continual repayment of instalments of the debt of love leads to the accumulation of treasure in heaven.

I. E. P.

3. (Newcastle): Although the power of God over the nations is undoubtedly sovereign where it is His will to exercise that power, the immediate direction of them is committed to the responsibility of those whom God has permitted to be raised

up*:

B.

A.

4. (Newcastle): Expressions such as "institutionalized violence" and "state violence" are very unfortunate since they appear to be used by many, in the UK at least, to make a political point namely that the state is not entitled to use force to restrain and discipline its members. In particular, it is sometimes argued that since individuals have not the right to take life, neither has the state. The word violence has two senses in the English language:

(i) the quality of being violent in the sense of using great physical force and

(ii) the quality of being violent in the sense of the unlawful exercise of force.

That states need to use physical force to protect their citizens is beyond all possibility of denying else the Lord would not have given it to men to so do as He did, for example after the Flood (Gen. 9: 5-6), amongst his earthly people (Ex. 21: 12 *et seq*) and as He will do Himself in the Millennium (Ps. 2: 7-12). This is violence in the first sense of the word. That those in authority have misused that authority is also

beyond question else we would not have scriptures such as **Dan. 3, 6; Acts 5: 29, 41.** This is the second sense of the word violence.

The implication that the use of violence by the state is in itself unlawful is achieved by failing to make it clear in expressions such as "state violence" that the first meaning of the word is intended. In the present dispensation, violence in any sense of the word is not to be used in rule in the kingdom of God (e. g. **Jon. 18: 36**). The kingdom of men is, however, vastly different for believers are to have no part in its rule and government other than as the ruled as opposed to being rulers. Since believers are so to separate themselves that it follows that those who are left are even less likely to conduct themselves properly than would otherwise be the case.

Further, since this is the day of grace and God, waiting with patience, does not visit sinners with immediate wrath then it is more likely than ever before that men, if they do not follow the example of godly living set by believers as the salt of the earth, will need to be policed with force by the state.

I. E. P.

5. (Wishaw): Without advocating political participation, which is a different matter, one might question the validity of this argument. There are very many matters in this life (e.g. our employment) in which we have to make decisions without knowing what the specific will of God is; we have to work on general Scriptural principles. In these matters we believe that God overrules for our good, but we cannot refrain from decision because of our lack of specific knowledge of God's will. God has chosen to ordain the rulers of the U. K. by means of the popular vote, and He must do this by influencing in some way unknown to us the way in which people cast their vote. This surely does not imply that those who vote for candidates who lose are opposing the will of God; this would only be the case if they sought to subvert the elected Government. Another illustration might be the expression of our wishes to God in prayer. We often request things which God refuses to give but there is no fault in the expression of the desire which is not granted.

P. L. H.

WALK HONESTLY, **AS IN THE DAY** - LATE PAPER

From **Ajgunle**: It would appear from the passage that disciples in the church of God in Rome needed guidance on Christian conduct towards constituted authorities and their agents. Paul touched on this matter in the preceding chapter and now gives fuller details. Verses 1-2 enjoin upon Christians to be subject to authorities, for there is no recognized authority but in the permission of God. The sovereignty of God and His rule in the affairs of men are to be acknowledged by obedience in this injunction (Prov. 8: 15; Dan. 2: 21). The Christian's allegiance is first to God where the regulations of his home country run counter to the revealed will of God (Acts 5: 29). The question was asked as to the role of the Christian in the matter of election of citizens into political offices. Guiding principles were seen from 2 Cor. 5: 20; Phil. 3: 20; John 17: 16. The Christian's position in the society where he belongs is clearly stated in Scripture.

Verses 3-5 call for acknowledgement of the role of rulers in the purposes of God among men in general. The Christian disciple, as he pursues the course of good works in a good conscience, should have no fear of the ruler's terror.

Verses 6-7 outline the will of God that disciples pay taxes, have regard to accepted customs in society so far as they do not negate a stand for the truth, honour and respect persons in position of authority. The Lord's example in this matter is noteworthy (see Mat. 17: 24-27; 22: 19-21). The spirit of love should pervade the disciple's relationship with others. There should be that sensitivity to owe no one anything. The whole Law of Moses is summed up in this one law: to love our neighbour as ourselves. Paul had earlier pointed out the Christian's indebtedness to all men in living out and communicating the gospel of Christ (Rom. 1: 14). This is an aspect of debt the disciple should endeavour to pay.

Paul fittingly concludes this matter by stating the great objective in vv. 11-14. The appearing of our Lord Jesus at His coming is a necessary reason for the Christian to walk honestly as in the day. The imminent appearing of the Lord must have effects which could be seen: casting off the works of darkness and putting on the armour of light.

F. Ntido, G. Okwena

POSTSCRIPT: THE "CHRISTIAN VIEWPOINT"

This or similar expressions occur from time to time in *Bible Studies* and may be found in the current issue. We will all be familiar with the importance of the first occurrence of a word in the Scriptures. Almost alone amongst words, however, the Lord pin-points the entry into human speech of a word that has never been lost since: the word "Christian" (Acts 21: 26). This entry, therefore, must be of the greatest importance particularly since this was not a name given by the Lord to the disciples nor even a name invented by the disciples. In every case in the Scriptures it was a name used by those apart from or even opposed to the disciples (Acts 26: 28; 1 Pet. 4: 16). It is worth noting that it was a name given by Gentiles for it is beyond belief that the Jews would have given what they considered to be a heretical sect the very Name of their Messiah. Thus the invention of the name shows that by the times recorded in Acts 21: 26, the churches of God had become sufficiently distinct from their, to human eyes, Jewish origins that a new name was deemed necessary. It says a lot for the disciples' doctrine and practice that they were given the Name of Christ by those Gentiles at Antioch. It cannot be without significance that Antioch became a new centre of development from which the churches evangelized a predominantly Gentile world nor that at that place the Apostle of the Gentiles becomes so prominent.

Alas, like many other words, "Christian" has deteriorated with time so that nowadays almost anyone professing the teaching of the Lord is called a Christian. Strictly speaking, the title refers to disciples in churches of God and, while it would be foolish nowadays to attempt to revert to the original use of the term, it is of interest that some gesture in this direction is made by those who use such expressions as "born-again Christian" or "committed Christian". The same difficulties arise with such expressions as "the Christian viewpoint" for they beg the question of exactly what is meant by the word "Christian". We would suggest that what we seek to find in the Scriptures is not this ambiguous entity but rather the Lord's viewpoint which will be unchanging. We seek not so much Christian teaching as the Lord's teaching. That is to say we do not seek the accumulated doctrines of Christians or Christendom but the doctrine of the Lord. We seek the contents of the Faith which the Lord has delivered to be kept by those in churches of God, forming the house of God.

LE. P.

Issued by the Churches of God, and obtainable from Hayes Press, 8 Essex Road, Leicester, England, LE4 7EE. Printed by the University of Nottingham.

Bible Studies

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

EDITORIAL

8709

MATTERS OF JUDGEMENT

This month's study passage requires clarity in analysis and precision in application to avoid false conclusions in doctrine and practice. If it is misinterpreted, it can lead to the attitude known as antinomianism, which is "the doctrine which maintains that the moral law is not binding upon Christians, under the law of grace" (OED). On the other hand, it may simply be ignored, which is just as serious an error. Criticism of the conduct of others is a vice in which we too frequently indulge, and the apostle Paul unequivocally condemns it.

It should first be recognized that (apart from v.1) the passage is addressed to individuals. Its primary message is that each individual is responsible to God for his own behaviour, for which he will give account, and therefore he has no right to criticise the decisions of others, who have a similar direct responsibility. This is in accord with the teaching of the Lord Jesus in a similar context, "Judge not, that ye be not judged" (Mat. 7: 1). Each man has to make his judgements about what he should do, being "fully assured in his own mind" (v.5), and these judgements must be based on the revealed will of God. It is misleading to say, as some of our correspondents have said, that Christian maturity leads to freedom from rules and regulations. Each person should in time, with growing understanding of the will of God, express that understanding in his own rule of life, the settled convictions by which he lives. The important point of this passage is that such rules should not be imposed on others.

Arising from **this** passage, one **might** consider **the larger** point of **the** existence **and** enforcement of **any** rules for Christians. There **are many specific teachings in Scripture** which constitute **the Rules'** for the people of God; **for instance**, it is **quite clear** that consenting **believers** should **be baptized by immersion**, and that **this is a prerequisite** for entry into **a church** of God. This is **not a matter** for **individual** conscience; **the Lord's will is clear**.

Similarly, **there are rules** for behaviour; **the man in Corinth** who **"hath his father's wife"** was plainly wrong, and **the church** was instructed by **Paul** to **judge him and put him** away from among **them** (1 Cor. 5: 12, 13). The **general principle** is that **where there are specific scriptural instructions** **the church** collectively, through its **elders**, is **responsible** for **ensuring** that they are **carried out**, and **judgements** must be **made** on **this basis** about the **conduct** of others.

A difficulty **arises**, of course, **when some contend** that **there are scriptural requirements**, and others do **not agree**. The **scriptural procedure** for **dealing with this** is that of Acts 15, where **elders came** together to consider such a **matter**, and **discussed it on the basis** of the **revealed will** of God. We have more of the **written word** of God than they had, and **no direct apostolic voice**, but the **same principle** still applies. They **laid on others** **"no greater burden than those necessary things"**, and **this is a wise precedent** for the **people of God**; we should **not legislate** where God has **not legislated**.

Returning to the individual matters with which Romans 14 deals, the **importance** of **individual** responsibility should **be re-emphasized**. This **extends not only to the individual's own behaviour**, but to **the influence** of his behaviour on others, as the **latter part** of the chapter makes **clear**. **Much damage** can be **done to churches of God** both by the **self-opinionated** and by the **self-willed**, and we need to **avoid falling into either** category.

P. L. H.

TO HIS OWN LORD HE STANDETH OR FALLETH (Romans 14: 1-12)

From Aberdeen: The RV margin gives the "servant of another" of verse 4 as the "household servant". Thus we are challenged by the question "Who art thou that judgest the household-servant of another?" (v.4). In other words, we are all fellow-servants under one Master. The Lord taught this also; "But be ye not called Rabbi: for one is your teacher, and all ye are brethren" (Mat. 23:8). We do not have the right to put ourselves in God's place, since we shall each be judged individually by Him.

In the matters of faith described in Rom. 14, morality is not in question. If moral sin is indulged in by a saint, this is to be recognized and dealt with by the church's carrying out God's judgement, as occurred in Corinth (1 Cor. 5:3). The nature of the problem in this portion is connected with deeds which in themselves are not immoral. Some Jews still had a conscience about eating "unclean" meats (which the Lord had cleansed) due to previous upbringing under the Law. Likewise some days, perhaps feast days (Lev. 23:37, 38) were still held by some as having special significance. Today there is still the matter of the significance of the Lord's Day. However we each perceive the Lord's Day in relation to the other days of the week, the important point is not to get into strife about such things, but rather to view the matter as "unto the Lord". Whatever stance we adopt we are to remember that we are the Lord's and so none of us lives to himself or dies to himself. Since we are God's purchased "household-servants" whatever we do is to be done with our Master in mind. The great thing about God is that though His standards are so high His mercy and grace take account of His imperfect saints. He does not cut off the "weak in faith" from His kingdom, but rather, as Scripture assures us, they "shall be made to stand" (v.4).

Therefore, in these matters of conscience and faith we are each individually accountable to God. Since we have each to stand before the judgement seat of God we are neither to despise nor judge our brother. We are reminded of individual accountability in the coming day.

James Johnson

From Birkenhead: Paul, in writing to the church of God in Rome, recognizes that the saints have come from various backgrounds, and therefore will have developed attitudes which may not always blend. Paul exhorts each to consider the other, that each one shall be left free to act according to his conscience before God.

There were individuals who were "weak in faith"; i.e. their consciences were influenced by their Jewish background, and they were liable to sit in judgement on those who felt free to partake of certain types of food. In reverse, those who ate could despise those who felt obliged to refrain. Similarly, some had a special regard for certain days, whilst others had not.

Paul points out that in a number of cases the individuals were servants, and they had a responsibility to their masters [Comment 1], but above all each individual saint has a responsibility to the Lord to be untroubled in his or her conscience before Him. "We are the Lord's" (v. 8) and "Let each man be fully assured in his own mind" (v. 5) are basic guide points. Paul in his written ministry deals with the issue of judging and offending in other passages. 1Cor. 10: 23-33 and 1 Cor. 4: 4, 5 are scriptures to help highlight the issues worthy of consideration in making a wise decision.

In human affairs relationships change and attitudes change, but Paul reminds the saints that theirs is an abiding relationship with the Lord, whose judgements are right. If love pervades all areas of our lives then in matters such as these there will be a desire to maintain unity, which will influence conduct. Those inclined to judge, and those who may offend by taking liberties (see 1 Cor. 8: 11) are alike solemnized to realise that when all is said and done "each one of us shall give account of himself to God" (v. 12).

G. H. Roberts, R. D. Williams

From Bolton and Leigh: The nearness of the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ was prominent in Paul's thoughts as he exhorted the saints, "put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 13: 14). Such exhortations would intensify the zeal of these early saints in their work for the Lord.

However, Paul, continuing straight into this portion, deals with the conflicts creeping in between Jew and Gentile in the church at Rome [Comment 2]. Whatever guidelines they had, whether from conscience or otherwise, Paul definitely sets out the word of the Lord on the matter of eating. 1 Cor. 8:7-13 may be helpful on this point. The Gentiles with a pagan (idolatrous) background were possibly sensitive to eating meat of doubtful origin, whereas the Jews had no such sensitivity. On the other hand, we could see the possibility that with their background the Jews were particularly sensitive to Sabbath observance, whereas the Gentiles would have no such inhibitions; this despite the teaching of the principle by the Lord Himself that "the sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath" (Mark 2:27). In general, the word of the Lord on any issue is all-important, and supercedes anything that they (and we today) might think.

Today we might argue that these particular issues are no longer relevant to us, because of differing times and change of circumstances. Nevertheless the principle expounded here is relevant to issues today; the same principle as given in the conference decision of Acts 15:28, 29 (which has never been revoked) and which Paul expanded in 1 Cor. 10:23-33 [Comment 3]. It was suggested that issues of today may include our activities on a Lord's Day and our attitude to drink and entertainment.

The idea was put forward that in this context the major principle is one of relativity; i.e. an action can be right for one person but wrong for another, depending on circumstances. Paul argues in v. 23 that all things are lawful, but not necessarily advisable or edifying. The test (see v. 6) is essentially (for each individual in his own circumstances) 'Can I give thanks to God for what I do?' and 'Can I do it to the glory of God?'

Thus the question becomes one of individual moral responsibility. We are not to analyse one another critically but differences are to be respected, the differentiation being between the weak and the strong in faith. Unity, not uniformity, is the keynote.

Verses 7-9 stress that we are to live our lives with constant reference to the Lord; the Lordship of Christ should dominate our lives completely. We are the possession of Christ, bought with a price to be His own. Christ's humiliation was with a view to His exaltation. The Lordship of Christ is connected with His risen, and not His earthly, life.

The passage ends with the very sobering thought of the reality of the judgement seat of God. The Father and the Son are so closely related to one another in Paul's thought (see 2 Cor. 5:10) that the judgement through Christ is the judgement of God. It is before this judgement seat that all believers will stand to give account of their works to God.

God has universal sovereignty over man, and man is accountable to God alone. Hence judgement of others is usurpation by man of God's prerogative. Each of us must be fully assured in his own mind before the Lord in such matters. The matter of paramount importance is whether we have fulfilled the principles given in the apostles' teaching.

W. Paterson, Jr.

From Ibadan: Whatever the circumstances man is bound to fulfil God's mission on earth before parting. "The way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (Jer. 10:23). So, if a man thinks he stands, he should be careful lest he fall (1 Cor. 10:12) and if a man falls God is able to make him stand (v.4) [Comment 4].

Rules about eating and drinking should be scrutinized in an attitude of love, to avoid imposing inessential regulations on others. Observation of special days by some people should not engender any bitterness. We should bear in mind that each one of us shall give account of himself to God (v.12, 2 Cor. 5:10).

Our primary concern should be the welfare of other believers. If the taking of herbs is for another's health he or she should not be discouraged, or if meat serves him better let no-one grudge it. Love should be the parameter applied to measure believers' actions. We should remember that Paul was not encouraging drunkenness when he advised Timothy not to drink only water but to take a little wine for his stomach's sake and for his infirmities (1 Tim. 5:23). Whatever is not of faith is sin (v.23, Tit. 1:15), so each believer should be persuaded in his own mind. One thing we must be careful about is not to put a stumbling-block in another's way.

Abiding by the commandment of Christ, that is living in love, is the only solution to this controversial issue. If love is without dissimulation each one will be able to bear with others, and so any believer should be left to the care of God, the Almighty Father, before whom there are no secrets.

M. O. Ajagbe, J. O. Oyekunle

From Liverpool: *The weak brother.* It is not one who is weak in the faith in the broadest sense whom Paul mentions here, but one who is less emancipated and had not discovered the meaning of Christian freedom. According to the Lord Jesus the truth will set us free, and the weak brother is one whose Christianity is immature and uninstructed. He has genuine difficulties and "hang-ups" about things which the stronger knows are of no consequence [Comment 5].

The Problem. There are two: food and observance of certain days - obviously learned before embracing the faith and not easily jettisoned. Some ate anything and gave to all days the same significance, while others abstained from certain foods and had special days of observance. Difficulties arose when **both** types were within one assembly.

Paul's advice. Paul is not neutral in the matter, making it quite clear that those who were emancipated were **right** and **the** more restrictive were the weak ones [Comment 6]. However, fully aware of the relative unimportance of these issues and the danger of their causing division and even spiritual loss, he advises the strong to accept the weak "without passing judgement on disputable matters" (NIV) or "without attempting to settle doubtful points" (NEB). Both of these are helpful translations compared with the obscure AV and RV [Comment 10]. In support of this apparently compromised position Paul cites three arguments:

1. God has accepted the weak brother, and he will account to God for his opinions.
2. What the weak brother does is done, even though misguided, to the Lord.
3. The weak brother belongs to the Lord, as does the strong! Both will have to account for their behaviour [Comment 7].

*Principles for today*¹? This is where we divided. Some felt there were principles which could not be applied to our different issues of contention and that it is still the duty of the strong to accept the weak without imposing specific attitudes on them. Others, however, said that this only related to the particular Jew/Gentile problems of that day and resisted attempts to draw our grey areas into it, preferring to take the view that we *know* what is wrong. Christians who feel free to eat black pudding, visit the cinema on occasions or do their shopping on the Lord's Day should be told they are wrong and brought into line. Perhaps this only indicates how relevant Romans 14 is, and how much easier it is to be gracious and considerate when the issues are not live ones upon which we have strong feelings [Comment 8].

D. J. Webster

From Newcastle: The passage concerns the exercise of tolerance over points which are debatable. There is a problem over what are debatable points. Many debatable points are such because one party thinks that the point is not open to an alternative opinion.

In this passage Paul is not being as neutral as might initially be supposed. While he is against judgement, he nevertheless makes it quite clear that he views the path to Christian maturity as one of becoming free from regulations, even if the expression of such freedom may need to be toned down out of regard for the attitudes of those around us. Support for such a view comes from, for example, "God... giveth us richly all things to enjoy" (1 Tim. 6: 17) [Comment 1].

On the other hand it is from the writings of Paul that some of the fiercest current debates arise. What are we to make of this? A difference can be noted between the style of letters to the church in Corinth and the church in Philippi. There are many more detailed instructions and regulatory matters contained in the letter to the Corinthians. We could say that Paul's opinions, for example, on the role of women in the churches were just expedient action for that day, the spelling out of detailed instructions for the immature Christians in Corinth (or the young disciple, Timothy). The alternative is to say that such issues are beyond

the limits of this **path** to freedom from regulations, and **that** Romans 14 does not **apply**. **If we take the latter view then the** proponents of a more **liberal** position **may think us 'weaker persons'** (15: 1) [Comment 9].

It should be the objective of **each individual** to understand **all the** contentious **and difficult** issues **and** come to a personal decision. **The ideal** is **that by all** of us **acting** according to our **Spirit-led** consciences, **we will be led** to a **unity** of action, **free** from rules and regulations, **which is like the** functioning of a body.

Unthinking adherence to **the** practices of **the** past [**and the** present - Eds.] **is** not desirable (v.5). Motive and **attitude are** **the** important criteria. **We are free** from **the rigid law** of regulations **and** should **be** aspiring to a relationship **with the** Lord Jesus in **which we are able** to **anticipate** His wishes. A **balance** needs to **be** found between taking liberties too **early**, before our consciences **are fully** open to **the** mind of Christ, and, in **the** opposite direction, elevating rules **and** regulations or hanging on to **them** to **guide** our convictions when **we** should **be** maturing to a more **flexible** conscience-**guided** Christianity.

It is unclear **whether Paul** is advocating rules and regulations for **the** new Christian. **It** is possible to see **the** comfort of regulations as a problem only of **the** convert from Judaism. There was no agreement on **whether it** was desirable to **lead** today's converts through a tunnel of regulations before, through Christian **maturity**, these regulations can **be** dispensed **with**. Without such regulations **we** would **have** to **accept a wider range** of behaviour from new converts until **their** consciences **were** more **attuned** to **the** mind of Christ [See Editorial].

P. J. Stoner

From Paisley: The distinction **between a believer weak in faith** and a **weak believer** was **made at the outset**, and **the parallel** drawn **with** those who **were babes requiring spiritual milk** and those who **had** progressed to **spiritual meat**. This **assisted** us in **the matter** of those who **ate** herbs only **and** those who **ate all** things (v.2). Thank God **we are not barred** from **His ability and** power to **make the individual stand** (v.2) if we are weak in **faith**

or are of lesser spiritual ability. He graciously accepts us because of the all-encompassing work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Surely our individual attitudes of doing things "as unto the Lord" must be challenged by verses 5-8. We were pointed to examination of ourselves in the light of v.5, to be "fully assured in our own minds" in our approach not only to the Lord's Day but also to every action and decision of our lives. Verse 10 was a powerful disincentive to wasting valuable time in our short lives judging others. Is it not enough to know that we shall all stand before the judgement seat of God? Even if our lives ended today we could not start to imagine how we should answer the righteous Judge whom we will face on that day, to give account of ourselves (v.12). In the light of this, what manner of people ought we to be?

F. J. Reilly

From Wishaw: The portion in view has to do mainly with the matter of personal choice and the exercise of the individual conscience.

The AV rendering in v.1 was felt to be the more helpful where it states "Him that is weak in the faith" rather than "weak in faith". Certain matters of a practical nature, some of which were dealt with by the Lord and the apostles, are touched on in this section, and this would make the AV rendering more acceptable.

In the matter of eating or not eating certain foods, it is possible that Gentile and Jewish believers are in view. The former group, perhaps aware of Peter's connection with Cornelius and the statement in Acts 10:15 "What God has cleansed make not thou common", would feel free to eat all meats. The latter, the Jews, may still have had reservations in case they stumbled some, and so would refrain from eating certain food [see Comment 2].

Although guidance was given by the apostles in such matters, there was no instruction not to refrain from eating certain foods, and those who did were to be respected by those who ate all foods. Similarly, those who refrained were not to judge those who ate. The same attitudes were to hold good with regard to observing one day more than another. The important thing was to be assured in our own minds that what we were doing was correct.

Importance was attached to the expression "unto the Lord". This attitude of mind can extend across many of life's boundaries; e. g. "eating" or "eating not", regarding a day as "unto the Lord", and perhaps most markedly "living unto the Lord" and "dying unto the Lord". The apostle Paul was certainly one who lived "unto the Lord", and it is interesting to see here that when he looked forward to the end of his life, he was determined that what he was during his life after his conversion, so he would be at the close.

The apostle finally deals more fully with the matter of our lives' judgement. From v. 10 and 2 Cor. 5:10 we conclude that the two judgement-seats are the same. If we lived more fully in the realization of this truth then we would be less prone to judge one another. Schofield states in his annotated Bible that in certain questions of personal liberty the church has no authority to decide in things not expressly forbidden in Scripture.

M. D. Macdonald, J. Shepka

COMMENTS

1. (Birkenhead): This is a misunderstanding of v. 4. Paul is using the analogy of an earthly servant, who is not accountable to anyone other than his own master, and applying it to each Christian's personal accountability to his Lord. No-one else has the right to criticize his performance.

2. (Bolton and Leigh): The passage does not explicitly refer to conflicts between Jew and Gentile, and although others have also advanced this hypothesis it should be treated with caution. Similar attitudes are encountered today, not traceable to such a background.

3. (Bolton and Leigh): These are not quite examples of the same principle. Acts 15 gives specific instruction to abstain from the things listed, and 1 Cor. 8:1-13 and 10:23-33 give some expansion of that command. It is apparent that what was forbidden was partaking of the food in any way which signified communion with the idol. There was no necessity to make special enquiries about the origin of that which was

simply bought in the shops, unless its origin was pointed out. Such a matter of obedience to a commandment is slightly different from the exercise of judgement in matters in which there is no commandment.

4. (Ibadan): One must beware of too fatalistic a view of these scriptures. It is true that God's purposes cannot be thwarted by man's actions, but men can fail to fulfil God's will for themselves in their individual lives. The spirit of the Jeremiah scripture is that of a man who seeks God's direction, as the following verse implies: "O Lord, correct me, but with judgement; not in thine anger, lest thou bring me to nothing".

5. (Liverpool): People who are "weak in faith" are those who are easily swayed by the actions of others. Some may hold their scruples strongly, and be grieved when others do not observe them (Rom. 14: 15). Others may not hold them strongly enough, and be too readily led to disregard the promptings of their conscience (1 Cor. 8: 10-12). A strong faith will include strong personal convictions, but will include the grace not to impose them on others unnecessarily. Christian liberty must not be allowed to degenerate into antinomianism.

8. (Liverpool): This is not a helpful way of putting it. The whole point of the passage is that no-one should claim to be "right", for this would imply that those who did the opposite were "wrong". In this instance people could eat or refrain from eating with equal acceptability to God. The weakness did not lie in the restrictiveness as such (though it was wrong to attempt to restrict others), but in the liability to be stumbled.

7. (Liverpool): This summary of the arguments misrepresents them in the first two points. In the first, it is the one who eats, i.e. the "strong", whom God has received. In the second, the specific point is that both men do what they do "unto the Lord"; there is no mention of one's being misguided.

8. (Liverpool): There is nothing in the passage to indicate that it only applies to special circumstances at the time when it was written, and one of the issues mentioned, that of

observing a special day, is clearly still a live one. The scripture is intended to enunciate principles of enduring application. Any other view of it would tend to undermine the authority of Scripture by permitting arbitrary selection of passages thought to be relevant, and rejection of others.

The root of the difficulty was that there were people who were sure that they knew what was right, and were not prepared to tolerate deviation from it. If we believe in the authority of Scripture, we can only say what is right with certainty if we have a specific statement, or a general principle clearly applicable to the case. The three examples given are of different sorts. The first is a matter of specific instruction (Acts 15:29), and anyone who contravenes it is wrong. The second and third are matters of judgement, similar to those raised in the passage under consideration. However, the caveat given later in Rom. 14 should be observed in relation to them: "Happy is he that judgeth not himself in that which he approveth" (v.22).

P. L. H.

In matters of individual conscience, we do well to remember the words said to be spoken by John Knox to the Roman Catholic Mary, Queen of Scots. She protested that Knox would have her worship against her conscience. He replied to the effect that "conscience needs right knowledge; and right knowledge you have none". In Romans 14, however, a very specific case of the application of individual conscience is brought before us. All parties were in the faith. None was sinning either in action or in motive. Thus any attempt at reconciling their differences could only result in an unprofitable, doubtful disputation or decision based on human assessment of the balance of doubt. It is worth pursuing the two cases mentioned as requiring judgement because it will be found that in both doubtful disputation really is only peripheral to them. The observance of the Lord's Day is a matter of correctly keeping the fourth commandment in this dispensation of grace.

If those under the Law were required to put their legitimate earthly pursuits on one side on the Sabbath in order to devote themselves to the service of God, how much more should believers in this day of grace be similarly exercised.

That precise regulations are not given today does not absolve the believer today from being even more rigorous than the Jew was in carrying out the spirit (in this day of spiritual rather than carnal things) of the fourth commandment. The wisdom of not specifying individual activities becomes apparent when we consider the fact that the nature and service of the house of God today is spiritual. They thereby cross international frontiers and customs, some of which may make it impossible to carry out specifications as detailed as those of the Law. For example, the Lord's days of the first church in Jerusalem would be normal working days in that Jewish run society.

Two key things in observing the fourth commandment are forethought and preparation as demonstrated by the Lord's giving of the Manna and by the Lord Jesus providing the Remembrance. A minimum of comparable forethought on the part of believers should save any of us from transgressing the fourth commandment. On the other hand, unavoidable situations may arise (e.g. Luke 4: 15) and no transgression occurs. Similar considerations arise in the matter of cinema-going. A believer may find himself unavoidably in such a place or even be there in some act of mercy but if his purpose is merely earthly pleasure then he comes under the wrath of such scriptures as 1 John 2: 15-17.

LE. P.

9. (Newcastle): Neither of the alternatives given in this paragraph is a satisfactory statement of the teaching of Scripture, for both rest on the assumption that "the path to Christian maturity" is "one of becoming free from regulations". This is an oversimplification of the case. Any community or organization must have its rules, or it will disintegrate into anarchy. Paul wrote his letters under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and embodied in them instructions which had the authority of the Lord, relating to the government of churches of God. Titus, for instance, had to appoint elders who met certain criteria, reprove those who taught wrong doctrine, and teach those in the churches in Crete about their behaviour. In the instance given, Paul's statement "I permit not a woman to teach" (1 Tim. 2: 12) was not simply a statement of personal opinion, but an instruction in pursuance of his apostolic appointment (1 Tim. 2: 7). A mature Christian accepts the "regulations" which are laid down in Scripture as the framework of order within which he is called to operate.

The message of Romans 14 is that we should not seek to impose regulations where God has not done so. In matters of individual conscience each has his own responsibility to God. In these matters it is true that increasing maturity will lead to decreasing reliance on externally imposed rules, and a greater sensitivity to the mind of Christ.

P. L. H.

As our co-editor has been at great pains to show in his editorial and in several of his comments, the issues of conscience in Romans 14 refer to particular situations where diverse, unsinning practices may be carried out by those in churches of God each with equally sound motives. To generalize and apply the principles of Romans 14 to all aspects of individual or even collective conscience is turning the Scriptures inside out as it seeks to justify every man doing what is right in his own eyes.

We are glad to see friends presenting their alternatives as possibilities and not as beliefs actually held by them. The whole tone of what is presented rather smacks of the view held by sinners and worldly men that Man has advanced in his knowledge and wisdom to such an extent that he has "come of age" and therefore needs no instruction from any outside himself. This is no new thing for twice the Scripture declares "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Prov. 14: 12, 16: 25). It is the Way of Cain and characterizes the human race.

In contrast, the mature believer, the nearer he is to God the more he will be conscious of his own sin and his need of searching out the commandments of the Lord (see e. g. Psalm 119: 97-104 and many other scriptures).

10. (Liverpool): It is hard to imagine that the majority of people who have a sufficient grasp of English to understand a verse like John 3: 16 will not know what a "doubtful disputation" is. Alas, the Devil being who he is, there cannot be many newly come to the faith who have not been caught up in the same. The real beauty of the AV and RV is that they **draw attention to the fact that the word "doubt" again occurs at the close of this passage** in a verse

which reveals **the real** basis of **the teaching**. The **teaching** of **the Lord** is **the opposite** of **the Englishman's vaunted** maxim of **giving** someone or something "**the benefit of the doubt**". Believers **are** to proceed on **the** basis of **faith**, **be it** little or much. **If** doubt **enters** into **the issue** then **the thing** is sinful **in** itself. Thus **there is no such thing** as **the "benefit of doubt"**¹¹ for **that presumes** a doubtful disputation into **which** believers **are not to enter**.

11. (Newcastle): The **present writer** has heard **1 Tim 6:17** used **as a justification** for adultery. The **point of this** scripture is not **that we can do what we like** but **that those things which the Lord has given us to enjoy** He has given us richly.

/ . E. P.

Bible Studies

A magazine for the exploration of the Word of God (Acts 17: 11)

EDITORIAL

8710

PROVERBS IN ROMANS

The first part of the book of Romans is usually thought of as being largely doctrinal in character and the second part as being of a more practical nature. This month's scriptures are by that reasoning well and truly in the practical portion of the book. Yet how many of the practical instructions touch on matters of the greatest doctrinal significance: for example, judgement with respect to one another, discriminating between clean and unclean, the nature of the kingdom of God; edifying one another, faith and doubt, the reproach of Christ, the nature of the Scriptures, unity of mind, worship and so on.

Another feature of the portion that catches the eye is the way in which it is written. There is an overall point being made about the mutual relations of saints which leads on to the relationship between Jews and Gentiles and their relation to Christ. Although this is so, it is striking how almost every verse stands alone. That is to say, almost every verse may be taken out of its context in the line of argument in this passage and contains a statement of great wisdom and universal practical instruction, as well as touching on many of the great doctrinal themes of the Scriptures. In this we suggest there is great resemblance to the way the book of Proverbs is written. There, too, each verse can usually be taken and made to stand on its own to demonstrate some pearl of wisdom which the reader needs to absorb and observe.

We have before commented on more than one occasion on the order of things in the kingdom of God (Rom. 14: 17) **but the** following verse equally contains a matter of great truth. That is, if we are well-pleasing to God we will also be approved of men. Such a thing was true of the child Samuel (1 Sam. 2: 26).

The same was true of David and his victory over Goliath and the Philistines but, of course, it is truest of all in the case of the Lord Jesus Himself (Luke 2: 52). Men in general see the need to live in harmony and peace with one another. Indeed they strive after this but, as we have said before, they are so at sea in matters of righteousness that peace among men is unattainable for any length of time. Valuing such a thing, they are not slow to recognize it in operation amongst believers and exceptionally quick, too, to recognize its absence amongst believers.

In what has been said many will recognize something of the proverb "When a man's ways please the Lord, He maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him" (Prov. 16: 7). Applying this in reverse we see how pleasing the Lord is taken up in the New Testament scriptures to refer to the behaviour of saints in churches of God (Rom. 14: 17-18). We would suggest that it will be well worth pursuing the instructions of the Proverbs and seeing how they are fulfilled in the commandments of the Lord as given to be kept by those in churches of God.

In saying above 'men in general'¹ we allow for the fact that the scripture does not say 'approved of *all* men'¹ (Rom. 14: 18) for the portion goes on to say "the reproaches of them that reproached thee fell upon Me" (Horn. 15: 3). Here again the example of the Lord is to the fore. In speaking to please God we are bound to incur the wrath of those who are opposed to Him, as the apostles themselves found (Acts 5: 41), but that does not last forever even though the enmity of the enemies of God is unremitting. In the councils of the Jews was found a man, Gamaliel, whose wisdom prevailed though he was not a believer himself. He was the means by which the enemies were persuaded to live at peace, though for a season, with those early disciples whose ways so pleased the Lord.

/ . E . P .

RECEIVE YE ONE ANOTHER (Rom. 14: 13 - 15: 13)

From Ajegunle: Paul at the outset puts it explicitly, that the propelling force in our call to receive one another, is the love of Christ in receiving us in our wretched state. The main purpose is to perpetuate the unity in an assembly and to build up one another in good works. The sacrifices to be made are

enumerated in vv. 14-19. These include among others, (1) conceding of already held practices, such as eating of certain foods; (2) the thought that God's house is a place of righteousness and peace which must be prized above all other things, and (3) the walking with one another in love and mutual understanding.

The exhortation to the strong, to bear the infirmities of the weak is in accordance with the principle stated in Gal. 6:2. Our supreme example, Christ, who pleased not Himself, but sought the good of others at His own expense is further mentioned to give credence to the fact that no sacrifice on our part is too much.

The tremendous selflessness displayed by Him and His awe-inspiring silence in the midst of fierce opposition, should be an incentive to the strong to receive the weak gladly (15:2-3). The Holy Spirit is indispensable in granting us the enabling strength to carry out this task fully. The Gentiles (ourselves) in all their depravity, have now become beneficiaries of the mighty work wrought by Christ, when He stooped to receive us (vv. 9-12). Therefore, we are encouraged to emulate Christ in receiving one another that God might be glorified (v.7). It is only in so doing that we can give full expression to the divine unity of the Spirit among us.

F. Nūdo, G. Okwena

From Birkenhead: Paul is anxious that all the saints should prosper spiritually. He acknowledges that different views exist on such matters as the eating of meats, but he exhorts each saint that no one opinion should be the cause of hindrance to the outworking of the spiritual life of another. He is saying that it is acceptable to eat all meats but points out that there are factors which make it wrong to do so:

- (a) my brother may be stumbled. If that is so I do not act in love if I eat and cause spiritual ruin; and
- (b) what seems good to me may be criticized, and eating and drinking are unimportant in comparison with living a righteous life, knowing peace with God and appreciating the joy of justification.

By refraining from eating in consideration of my brother,

God is well pleased, my brother is not offended, peace is preserved and there is mutual building up rather than the breaking down of his spiritual wellbeing.

Paul states that I am committing sin if I eat meat and do not have a completely clean conscience on all counts, toward God and my fellow saints, for Christ as my supreme example did not please Himself.

The Scriptures are given to us that we should have teaching to guide us in the disciple life. We are to appreciate that we have countless blessings in Christ. By His death Christ has united Jew and Gentile and thereby made it possible for differences in outlook to be overcome so that by the operation of the Spirit, God will receive the glory in the obvious unity of purpose lived out in the saints.

There is also a strong exhortation to receive (welcome, accept) one another as Christ has accepted us. There is no reason for us to be worthy of acceptance by Christ, but in grace He has done so. Because of this wonderful fact it is inconceivable that we in turn, for such comparatively trivial reasons, should fail to act in similar fashion, and thus fail to bring glory to God.

Paul continues to draw from the Scriptures to confirm that Jew and Gentile have equal standing in God's sight and that it is unthinkable that any action by either party should divide those who are united in Christ.

R. D. Williams

From Derby: The title comes half way through this portion, unlike the previous one where "Him that is weak in faith receive ye" occurred at the beginning.

The things we do in this life are not just ruled by our knowledge of God, but also our conscience. Indeed there is a certain uselessness about 'knowledge of God¹' unless that knowledge has a great effect on how we feel towards God. A point here is that God put man under 'conscience¹' before He put him under 'law¹'. Righteousness, peace and joy are begun by the entrance of the Spirit but will only **grow** in us as we draw close to God and away from **the world; as we**

live as citizens of His kingdom things which make for peace matter more and more. Mat. 5:9; Jas. 3:17; Heb. 12:11 show another way in which peaceable fruit will come.

Edifying (building up) can only be done properly in times of peace (Acts 9:31) when our energies are not being wasted in doubtful disputations (Rom. 14:1) judging others (v.4) living to ourselves (v.7) stumbling-blocks (v.13) grieving or offending (v.15) and more besides.

Peace in a church makes it possible to edify each other to the end that we are "builded together for a habitation of God in the Spirit"¹¹ (Eph. 2:22) [Comment 1]. With this aim, what others eat, what others wear, how others sing is of very much less importance. Romans 14:1 says weak in faith but chapter 15:1 does not say strong in faith. Strength in argument (Rom. 14:1) may be used to persuade others weak in faith with devastating results (Rom. 14:15, 20). Christ had perfect knowledge of every aspect of teaching and practice of the mind of God yet He pleased not Himself.

At best we can only know 'in part': be it Christ, our brother or even ourselves and in all our relationships the greatest need is that of love (1 Cor. 13:12-13).

"Each one of us shall give account of himself" (Rom. 14:12).
"The fire itself shall prove each man's work" (1 Cor. 3:13).
"The proof of your faith... proved by fire... unto praise and glory and honour at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 1:7) who is Lord of the dead and the living. "We are the Lord's" (Rom. 14:8) "redeemed... with precious blood (1 Pet. 1:19) but this will bring reproach on us from the ungodly (15:3). These reproaches also fell on Him so we must ever be ready for them if our attitude is to please Christ as He pleased His Father (Mat. 3:17).

We were dead in trespasses and sins, under sin (Rom. 3:9-18) but Christ received us like this. Is our brother worse than this or are we better than he? We can each thank God He did not ask us to be better than we were before He received us individually to the glory of His faithfulness and mercy (Rom. 15:7).

Verse 8, God always longs for the Jews to follow Him and glorify Him and His mercy is shown fully in the acceptance and salvation of the Gentiles so fulfilling the many promises given long years before the fathers and Christ **the Messiah**, their Minister.

We fill ourselves **with wrong thoughts** but Paul longed we would let ourselves be filled by **God with joy and peace** in believing. The **God of patience, comfort, hope** (v. 13) and of peace (v. 33) is our God.

S. J. Wymer, G. W. Conway

From Dulwich: In the previous section Paul describes how Christian liberty is exercised in subjection to the Lord. Now he deals with the other side of the coin; the need for this freedom to be limited by concern for one another. In 1 Corinthians 9 he applies this principle to himself. "Am I not free? am I not an apostle? have I not seen Jesus our Lord?" he says, but later in the chapter he puts this in perspective: "I have used none of these things¹¹ and "I brought myself under bondage to all, that I might gain the more" (vv. 15, 19).

The problem is, if I have a clear conscience about doing things which some have doubts about, should I go ahead regardless of the feelings of others, or should I have to put seemingly artificial restrictions on my behaviour? Paul goes right to the heart of the matter. It's a question of love: "Thou walkest no longer in love. Destroy not with thy meat him for whom Christ died" (Rom. 14:15). So it is possible by a thoughtless action to destroy a brother, overthrowing for meat's sake the work of God.

This is not a question of whether the thing intrinsically is right or wrong, but of what effect it has on other disciples. There has to be self-denial: "It is good not to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor to do anything whereby thy brother stumbleth".

Perhaps we can get this matter into its proper perspective if we understand that the sphere of our spiritual activity is the kingdom of God, in which eating and drinking are of little moment. Our main concerns should be about righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. We are engaged in divine service, edifying the saints in love, not instigating problems, which are the result of acting selfishly.

Paul's objective is that the church of God in Rome, and other churches too, should attain to the ideal where all the saints work together in harmony, the strong helping the weak, each pleasing others rather than himself, so glorifying the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Christ received

us with all our faults, so we should receive others overlooking their shortcomings.

The traditional antagonism between Jew and Gentile was never far from Paul's mind, especially as here, where he is dealing with saints living in harmony. So in the closing verses of this section he balances the promises given to the patriarchs against those other prophecies of specific blessings for the Gentile. Each has an equal share in divine blessing.

L. Burrows

From Leigh and Bolton: In the first twelve verses the apostle has dealt with an individual in relation to his Lord; in the portion under consideration the subject is the individual in relation to others. (We thus find such injunctions as not to judge, stumble or destroy, but rather edify, please and receive one another). The principle of individual accountability to the Lord having been established, a second principle is now introduced, namely that of so conducting ourselves as to avoid stumbling others.

Early on in the portion the teaching in this dispensation relative to meats is stated, namely that all meats are clean (*cf.* Acts 10:15; 1 Tim. 4:4). However, the conscience of anyone who deems the meat unclean will nonetheless be defiled if he or she eats; the problem being not with the meat, but with the weakness of the conscience; "whatsoever is not of faith is sin" (v.23). This situation could easily occur, and result in the weaker brother being destroyed by following the example of the stronger brother. The latter is to avoid causing stumbling by viewing the weaker brother as the one for whom Christ died.

Those to whom Paul was writing were in a church of God, among those churches which, as a unity or fellowship, give expression to the kingdom of God in this dispensation. The kingdom of God is the rule of God among the people of God; it is the sphere of service to Christ, and hence is the context for the behaviour discussed. Rom. 14:17 indicates that we can serve Christ in a well pleasing manner either by eating or abstaining, but not by conduct exhibiting indifference to righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit (*cf.* Luke 17:20, 21). Meat is not a big issue. The Lord, who spoke of the kingdom of God being given to the little flock of

disciples had said previously, "be not anxious... what ye shall eat... but seek ye first His kingdom, and His righteousness" (Mat. 6: 25, 33). This is righteousness as moral rectitude, not imputed righteousness, since we are here dealing with the kingdom of God and not the Church the Body.

We are to follow after peace. The word "follow" means to "run swiftly so as to catch". This is so that we might not, by our public actions, overthrow the work of God in terms of the character and testimony of a Christian brother. In peace (harmony) we are called upon to edify one another, not to overthrow; to build up, not to destroy. In verses 22, 23 the apostle deals with private actions, and appeared to some to be clearly indicating that different behaviour might be appropriate in private and in public. Behaviour in private must be governed by ensuring that all that is done is done in faith and in a good conscience. Public conduct must not violate the additional principle relating to stumbling. This will have a further moderating effect. "If in doubt, don't" is the message of verse 23.

In chapter 15 the stronger are exhorted to bear with the weak, looking to the example of Christ Himself. In glorifying God, and in seeking man's good. He bore the reproaches of them that reproached God. As those with one mind, accord and mouth, the saints are encouraged to receive one another; thereby recalling the opening exhortation of chapter 14. Bearing in mind the suggestion that the content of these chapters may have been initiated by existing criss-crossing Jew-Gentile tensions, this concluding appeal was largely viewed as directed at Jew-Gentile relations. Therefore concluding verses, and the Scriptures cited in them, refer to the purposes of God with both Jew (v. 8) and Gentile (vv. 9-12).

B. D. Johnston

From Liverpool: *Vie Strong Brother.* Having attempted to define the weak brother last month thought of the strong as being a balanced and well-disciplined, 'spiritual*' (Gal. 6: 1) person, fully emancipated yet prepared to forego his rights to save a weak brother from distress by acting in love rather than in strict pursuit of right or wrong.

Effect upon the weak. Any hard-line attitude towards the weak

will be tempered by realising that he is (i) a brother (vv. 13, 21), (ii) one for whom Christ died (v.15) and (iii) the work of God (v.20). It is possible by insisting on being right to put obstacles in the way of the weak, to make him distressed and ultimately to destroy him by causing him to fall.

What are we talking about? The matters under discussion this month and last cause difficulties for a people like ourselves who are strong on doctrine and uncompromising on principles. It is important, therefore, to discover that there are issues which, though there is a right position (the Lord Jesus declared all food clean in Mk. 7:19), are not of importance, and other 'Wrong' points of view can be tolerated and even adopted for the sake of unity and peace [Comment 2]; for the Kingdom of God consists of much more important and fundamentally positive matters: righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. The churches of God today will not stand or fall on some of the trivial matters of prejudice and disagreement about which we may be in danger of arguing but should be expressed in the lives of those controlled by the Holy Spirit and producing the fruits thereof.

The Word of God. The Scriptures were written to teach us about Christ and to give us hope. They are our guide and they will resolve our difficulties. Significantly for our consideration here the wisdom that comes from heaven is described by James as pure, peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere.

Acceptance. The standard by which we receive one another is extremely high being "as Christ also received you". This is not an official receiving but a social acceptance or welcome (RSV) (Comment 3]. There can be no higher standard and vv. 8-12 describe what Christ has done to raise our thoughts and draw us out in praise resulting in an overflow of hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

David J. Webster

From Paisley: The main theme of this portion is that judgement of saints belongs to God, and it is not given to any one of us to judge our brother. Each one of us will give account of himself to God. In the preceding verses, the apostle refers to those who are weak in faith and care is needed lest those who are stronger in faith offend the weaker members of

the Body of Christ particularly by excesses in eating or drinking. (It should be remembered that riotous feasting was a common occurrence in the Roman Empire where the saints lived).

It is a serious thing to put a stumbling block in the way of a brother or sister and those who do this will incur the judgement of God. Paul elsewhere (1 Cor. 8) shows the need for care in regard to eating things sacrificed to idols. The presence of both Jew and Gentile in an assembly was bound to lead to a conflict of cultures, hence the need for saints to show care and consideration in their dealings with one another. A parallel exists today in the different life styles of Eastern and Western cultures and there is a need to mould believers into the teaching of the Lord. Righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit should be the outstanding features of the Kingdom of God and anything that mars this state of affairs should be abandoned.

Love to one's neighbour will find expression in the desire to please our neighbour, rather than ourselves. The apostle shows this to be in keeping with the life of Christ. The over-riding aim is for unity in the assemblies of God and this will find expression in thanksgiving and praise from both Jew and Gentile. The apostle to the Gentiles thus glorifies his ministry and shows the purposes of God in bringing together into one a people for His praise. A further gem of scripture is found in Rom. 15:13: this surely must be the ultimate aim of all believers.

J. Renfrew

From Wishaw: The apostle continues his discourse on this crucial matter of judgement, that is, judgement in respect to saints judging one another's actions or motives e.g. in the matter of eating certain foods. Paul's main concern was that those saints called by God from all walks of life, and from differing social customs, should blend together in their witness for God, and not allow themselves to be side-tracked by obstacles put in their way, whether intentionally or otherwise.

The over-riding principle in the subject matter before us is love. This was the common denominator used by Paul, and it should be the touch-stone of our Christian experience with one another. Indeed, Paul writing to the Corinthians states, "If meat maketh my brother to stumble, I will eat no

flesh for evermore..." (1 Cor. 8:13). The apostle puts his finger on the pulse, as it were, in v. 17 of our portion, when he shows that eating and drinking are secondary things to the main thrust of Christian living which is "righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit". Paul exhorts his fellow believers to follow after things which make for peace, and nurture each other. Much damage can be done, if saints ride rough-shod over one another causing some to stumble.

Discretion and sanctified common sense must be exercised in such as eating and drinking, remembering that the Lord said we were to be "wise as serpents, and harmless as doves" (Mat. 10:16). He who has faith to eat should eat, but if someone has a doubt then he should refrain from eating, because if he cannot eat in good faith then it is sin.

In chapter 15 Paul strengthens his argument about considering one another by referring to the perfect example of our Lord Jesus, who pleased not Himself. We ought to follow that example. The things written in the Old Testament were written for our help, and from these things we ought to learn. We cannot have too much of patience and hope; it is only as we grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus that these beautiful traits shine out in us. How necessary it is for us to be like minded; can two walk together except they agree? It was Paul's desire that there should be harmony and unity of mind among the saints; in this way God would be glorified through their testimony.

In v. 7 Paul reaches the high watermark of his discourse on this particular issue, when he draws the parallel of saints receiving each other with Christ receiving us. This particular receiving is not dealing with the matter of receiving into fellowship, but rather with the personal dealings of saints one with another.

The prayer of Paul in v. 13 is not for himself, but for the Christians at Rome that they will be filled with joy and peace in believing. God is both the object and source of our hope. True spiritual joy and peace wrought by the Holy Spirit fill the soul and satisfy us as no earthly pursuit possibly can.

R. Ure, M. D. Macdonald

COMMENTS

1. (Derby): Eph. 2:22 deals with positional matters though, of course, they are always organized so as to promote a right condition before God.

2. (Liverpool): We are intrigued to see that friends in Liverpool put the word "wrongⁿ" in inverted commas for it draws our attention to a distinction to be made between sin and weakness. Where a thing is sinful it cannot be tolerated let alone adopted. The very verses we are considering say that the kingdom of God is *first* righteousness. It is worth noting that these verses are for the "strong" to carry out. It may be taken for granted that such a one can distinguish between weakness and wilfulness or weakness and wickedness. Such a one will be well able to answer the test questions "Will what I do result in the brother's edification? Will the result be the betterment of the assembly's worship"? (Rom. 14: 19; 15: 2, 6).

3. (Liverpool): The fellowship of saints to which Rom. 14: 1 and Rom. 15: 7 refer is a profoundly deeper matter than mere social acceptance. We get a good illustration of some of the carnal matters raised here in Luke 7: 36-50. The Pharisee's social rudeness to the Lord was merely the outward symptom of his inner spiritual state and refusal to receive the Lord into his heart and life.

/ . E . P .

CORRESPONDENCE

Only Begotten

I read with some surprise Editors' opinion that the NIV translation of John 3: 16 is "so obviously wrong"! (8705 p.79). Why is it so obviously wrong? Even RV translates *monogenes* as 'only' in Luke 7: 12, 8: 42 and 9: 38, and I understand

that in Greek literature it indicated 'peerless¹', 'matchless¹', 'unique¹', 'of singular importance¹' or 'the only one of its kind¹'. Begetting has to do with generation and attempts to explain the word away as an eternal begetting which never took place and leave the word devoid of meaning. Vine says of *monogenes* that "it suggests relationship.. • but must be distinguished from generation as applied to man" and that it is used of the Son in the sense of unoriginated relationship. According to Longenecker "Contemporary Greek usage allows for *monogenes* to be understood more broadly as an adjective stressing quality **rather than derivation** or descent.... We must conclude, therefore, **that** the translation 'only begotten Son¹', though venerable, fails to capture adequately John's point" (*The making of a contemporary translation*).

We are entitled to prefer one translation above another, even to feel strongly that one rendering carries the thoughts of the original language better than another, but it is a pity that editors choose to use such dismissive language on a subject which they are fully aware is not so clear-cut. It is similarly a pity that such phrases as "which makes things up" are used of the NIV, which do not help us to understand the complex problems associated with translating the sense of one language into another. I rather suspect that if it had been the NIV which had introduced the translation "only begotten" it would have been accused of undermining the deity of our Lord! Please Editors, continue to express your thoughts positively but don't be so hostile to the NIV!

David J. Webster

The root meaning of *monogenes* is not hard to grasp since it comprises two parts each of which has its counterpart in English. Thus *monos*, meaning "alone" occurs in monologue, monotone, monopoly, for example, and *genos* meaning "offspring" with its associated verb *gennao* (to beget) gives rise to such words as genesis and genetic. Indeed, in today's speech so many scientific words have percolated into everyday use that it is possible that many readers will be aware of a word like monogenetic, meaning of singular origin. This last word is simply the Greek word lifted bodily into English unlike only-begotten which, it will be evident, is almost an exact equivalent of *monogenes*.

This year's studies have brought out the point more than once that in the translation of the Scriptures the same word in the original may be rendered by different English words depending on its context. Thus the mere citation of different possibilities of translating *monogenes* into English is no basis for saying that any one is to be preferred although, it is safe to say, if we have a clear conception of the root meaning of a word we are less likely to be led astray than if not. Thus it matters not how many authorities of whatever vintage give however many possibilities of rendering *monogenes* into English if they do not make sense in the place in which they are found.

The word occurs nine times in the New Testament. In Luke's gospel it is used of the Widow of Nain's son, of Jairus' daughter and of the son who was healed immediately following the scene on the Mount of Transfiguration (Luke 7: 12; 8: 42; 9: 38). In each of these cases there is no ambiguity as to the meaning of *monogenes*. The unique origin of each arises from the fact, which heightens the force of the Lord's compassion as seen in the miracle, that each was an only child.

Of course each could have been described as "only begotten"¹ but the word "only" is used (in the AV and RV) because each parent could say of each child that he or she was (to coin a phrase) 'my one and only child'. The word is used of Isaac (Heb. 11:7) concerning a time when Ishmael was alive so Abraham could not say 'he is my one and only son'. In this scripture it is easy to see the value of the transliteration of *monogenes* into "only begotten" since something different from ordinary human generation or begetting is intended. What the something different is is neatly explained by "the children of the promise are reckoned for a seed" (Rom. 9:8) for it refers to Isaac's unique birth from one as good as dead. The remaining occurrences of *monogenes* are all used of the Lord Jesus (John 1: 14, 18; 3: 16, 18; 1 John 4:9) by the apostle John.

It will be well known to readers of *Bible Studies* that God has many sons of differing begettings (Job 1: 6, 2; 2: 1, 38; 7; Acts 17: 26-9; John 1: 12-13; Heb. 2: 10; 1 John 5: 18). Thus, following the example of the case of Isaac, the Lord cannot say that the Lord Jesus is His "one and

only Son". There is therefore, something unique about this begetting.

Within the Godhead, patriation or being a Father is the personal property of the Father and correspondingly filiation, or being a Son, is the personal property of the Son. Yet both are eternal, therefore the nature of the begetting (Psalm 2:7; Heb. 1:5) is beyond our human comprehension. In such a situation it is vital to stick to the exact words of the scripture lest we be led into sin. Herein lies the merit of words like "only begotten". It is such an accurate equivalent of *monogenes* that we can* not be wrong in using it in our speech even though we may not understand fully its meaning. We need to be particularly cautious about using 'synonyms' which may convey a false meaning.

Straying beyond such caution has repeatedly led to heretical teaching concerning the eternal Sonship of the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus at the beginning of the fourth century it was held by those of whom Arius is the most prominent name that 'begotten' shows that the Son has a beginning. Hence the words of the Nicene Creed, *begotten not made* were used to deal with this heresy. Then there were those, the Socinians of the late sixteenth century, who went beyond this and held that the begetting refers to the Incarnation: That is to say, it was at that time the Lord "became the Son of God"¹¹. A subsequent version of this, in the Unitarian movement has slid further down the slope and says that there is nothing divine about the begetting at all: that the Lord is merely a man. They have thus swung full circle to the unbelief that the Lord encountered in the days of His flesh.

The point in mentioning these is that they all have in common the attitude which refuses to accept a place of humility before God and reasons that because a thing is *beyond* human understanding it must be *against* reason, and is therefore to be rejected. Therefore we value highly faithful adherence to the precise words of Scripture especially when they bring before us matters that are beyond our comprehension.

It must by now be apparent that the NIV does not follow this maxim closely in practice. The very fact that it does not use italics in the same way as the AV and RV bears this out. We give three examples in BS 8705 p.79 and more could be cited. We have to point out to the reader of the NIV that he must be aware, especially in public meetings, that what he reads and quotes may not correspond closely to the words of the original. Consider, for example, 1 Cor. 1:9. What is the unsuspecting reader of the NIV to do about this? It says "God who has called you into fellowship *with His Son Jesus Christ*" rather than "the fellowship of His Son". It is probably true to say that none of the translators of the AV or the RV had any true understanding of what is meant in this verse but at least by being faithful to the words of the scripture they were able to put into English an expression whose meaning the Lord has graciously opened the eyes of many subsequently to see and obey.

It is inherent in the nature of a translation which seeks to recast the thoughts of a passage of Greek into modern English phraseology that if some nuance of the original escapes the translators it will not be detectable in the translation. A studied variety in renderings also means that if some lack of perception is noted at one point it gives no guide to readings elsewhere. Similarly, the introduction of words not in the original in the interests of clarity can mislead if the teaching of the original has not been completely understood, or could give rise to accusations of tampering with the Scriptures to support particular views (even if the views themselves are sound). To warn against this, we used the rather facile expression "which makes things up". It is ironic that Editors, in warning of the pitfalls of colloquialism, should fall into the trap themselves in using this phrase. We apologise for this, but reiterate the warning!

Editors

Bible Studies

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

EDITORIAL

8711

TEACHING AND FELLOWSHIP

The apostle after many chapters of exposition and teaching reverts to a personal note. He asks the Romans to bear with his admonition, as he is reminding them of what they themselves know, but he reasserts the charge he is seeking to fulfil, and brings to their notice the evidences that he is in line with God's purpose, these evidences being derived, both from the working of God and from the word of God.

Further to the work already accomplished through him, he is at last seeing his way to visit those saints in the capital of the Empire and more than that to move on to its further side and visit Spain. His hope and vision form a striking example.

Meantime his concern was that they should understand the special importance he attached to the gift from those other Gentile churches for the need of saints in Jerusalem, constituting as it did a token of the grace of God among the Gentiles. He desired to be supported in his prayers to be well received by his own brethren, and so, God willing, to come to the Romans in the joy that unity and the blessing of fellowship must bestow.

The Greeks had a custom of calling upon men of note to devote largely of their time and resources to the fulfilment of some public duty. Such men felt loyalty to the State, and esteemed their duty sacred. Hence the word *leitourgos* has been taken up and invested with the meaning of one ministering in divine things. Paul was conscious of the burden laid on him regarding the Gentiles, to bring from thence an offering to God

consisting of Gentiles actually obedient to the gospel. To this end he directed his endeavours to present the gospel, and regarded this work as truly sacred.

E. A.

THE OFFERING UP OF THE GENTILES (Romans 15: 14-33)

From Aberdeen: The picture of a priest offering an offering to God is seen in the apostle Paul offering the Gentiles up. The application of "offering"¹¹ here seems to relate to the 'character'¹ of the Gentiles. When Paul says he is "ministering in sacrifice" (Rom. 15: 16, RVM) the gospel of God, it is suggested that the aspect of "sacrifice" here relates to what God receives as a gift and not to Paul sacrificing in the sense of self-sacrifice. The "offering up of the Gentiles" implies that the Gentiles were to possess the characteristics of the offerings of old, namely to be "holy" and "without blemish". The means of developing holiness in the Gentile character was the Holy Spirit. He is the Sanctifier.

As a point of discussion it is suggested that the 'sanctifying'¹ of verse 16 includes the once for all sanctification of the believer's soul and also the continuing sanctification of his manner of life (Heb. 10: 14, Heb. 12: 14).

The question of what Paul's ministration to the saints in Jerusalem is, appears to differ in v.25 and v.31. The first is the material benefit for the poor. The second is evidently a spiritual ministry for the saints in Jerusalem. This being the case, Paul's attitude towards his spiritual ministry for others is worthy of note. One might have thought that a man of Paul's authoritative stature would not have asked for the striving prayers of the Romans nor felt vulnerable about his ministry being "acceptable" to the saints (Rom. 15: 31). Lowliness marked out Paul (2 Cor. 10: 1) as he moved among the saints, and so he was sensitive to their needs when he ministered to them of spiritual things.

James Johnson

From Bolton and Leigh: In v.14 Paul expresses his confidence in the saints at Rome and in their ability to admonish or put each other in mind regarding spiritual matters, especially those important principles of godly living which he had been laying before them from chapter 12 onwards.

What then was **the** purpose of his writing to **them**? **His** purpose was to **put them again in remembrance** of **the things** outlined in **his epistle**. The word "**again**" in v.15 is **the** apostle's acknowledgement of **the fact that the saints in Rome had** knowledge of **the things he was writing about**. Peter expresses **the same** thought in **his second epistle (2 Pet. 1: 12)** where **he is** reminding saints of things **they already knew**. The purpose of both **Peter's** and **Paul's** writing was **that the saints should be stirred up by the remembrance** of **the things they knew**. A **similar** responsibility falls upon **ministers** of the word today **that**, saints should **be** encouraged in **their service**. **Paul** also saw **his** writings to **the saints as part of the ministry** that God **had** given **him as the apostle to the Gentiles**.

In **discussing the main theme** of **this month's study**, there seem to **be** two possible **meanings** of **the expression "the offering up of the Gentiles"**. These were

- (1) That **it referred to the fruits** of **the apostle's work among the Gentiles which he was offering to God**.
- (2) The presentation, **by Gentile saints to God, of the fruit of their own lives and service**.

A study of the context of v.16 made us feel that the former thought was the correct one [Comment 1]. We examined various renderings of the words "ministering the gospel of God", noting that the Greek word translated "ministering", is not used anywhere else in the New Testament. The alternative renderings were as follows:

- (a) **Ministering in sacrifice (RVM)**
- (b) **Ministering as a priest (Newberry Bible margin)**
- (c) **Administering in sacred service (The Englishman's Greek New Testament).**

All these renderings present the sense of 'a priest ministering in sacrifice'. We therefore felt that, the apostle was representing his ministry among the Gentiles as a priestly work, and the sacrifice he was offering to God was the fruit of his work among the Gentiles. We also felt that this conclusion was supported by the principle of a people being seen as an offering to God, as expressed in Is. 66: 20 which refers to Israel in a future day.

Another question arose out of our consideration of **Paul's priestly work in the offering up of the Gentiles**. The question was, does this **priestly work of the apostle in the offering up of the Gentiles, fall within the bounds of the Royal Priesthood service of 1 Pet. 2: 9?** Also, **were Peter, John and other apostles engaged in similar priestly work?** We would **appreciate** comment on **this point [Comment 2]**.

Verses 18-21 give us some idea of Paul's vision of his work. He saw it as the things that Christ had wrought through him, thus showing his humility. He also saw himself as the spearhead of the gospel, carrying its message to parts as yet untouched by its power. The breadth of his vision is reflected in his desire to visit Rome and Spain, despite having already covered many miles in his journeys.

In the matter of the ministry of the Gentiles to the poor saints in Jerusalem (v. 26), we felt that the Gentiles were giving a small practical acknowledgement of their great spiritual indebtedness to the Jews, for had the Lord not said, "salvation is from the Jews"? (John 4: 22).

In requesting prayer for His mission to Judea, the apostle brings two things to the attention of the saints; first that he might be delivered from them that were disobedient in Judea, then that the ministrations might be acceptable (v. 31). Regarding those who were disobedient, were they Jews who opposed the message of the gospel or, were they Jewish believers who were still holding to the traditions of the law? Help on this point would be welcome [Comment 3].

Verse 33 is the closing salutation of the practical part of the epistle.

Alex Reid

From Derby: Although Paul had not yet visited Rome he knew that goodness and knowledge were to be found in the saints there. While possessing these attributes they were well qualified to admonish and to be admonished. He had a high regard for them and felt at liberty to remind them of what they already knew.

Christ Jesus had appointed him to be a minister. He ministered in priestly service the gospel of God. This involved presenting the saved Gentiles themselves as a sacrifice to God. So he had to ensure as far as he was able, that they would be fit for such a sacrifice. The Holy Spirit sanctified the offering thus making it acceptable to God.

Paul said he would only speak of the work of Christ in which he had been directly concerned. He gave the two limits of the broad sweep of land where he had worked, preaching and performing miracles in the power of the Holy Spirit. He desired to do pioneer work and go to places where the inhabitants had never heard of Christ so that he could lay the foundation and build upon it.

This had taken so much time that he had not been able to visit the Romans although he hoped to visit them on his way to Spain. As the Gentiles owed a spiritual debt to the Jews they generously gave

money to help the Jews with their physical needs. When Paul had delivered the gift in Jerusalem he looked forward to seeing the saints in Rome and imparting an abundant measure of spiritual blessings to them.

Having outlined his plans he entreated them to pray to God for him. He needed their prayers when he faced his unbelieving countrymen and the Judaeans Christians so that he might come to Rome "in joy". He desired that the God of peace be with them as that peace would permeate all their lives and lead to harmony in the church.

G. W. Conway

From Dulwich: Though Paul was quite convinced of the goodness, knowledge and ability of the brethren at Rome to admonish one another (v. 15) and that he had no desire to build on another foundation (v. 20), yet the grace of Paul's priestly commission would include the offering up of the Gentiles as a complete entity, and therefore would include the Roman assembly.

The title of the subject is taken from Rom. 15: 16 and would seem to be built up from three Greek words:

- (1) *Leitourgos* - a public worker (Rom. 13: 6) or a priestly minister of the sanctuary (Heb. 8: 2).
- (2) *Leitourgeo* - a priest ministering in sacrifice (Heb. 10: 11 RVM)
- (3) *Prospora* - what is brought forward or toward (Young) - an offering.

So it may be rendered literally "a priest ministering Christ Jesus unto the Gentiles - ministering in sacrifice (RVM) the gospel of God, that the Gentiles might be offered up as an offering, made acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Spirit" (Comment 2] •

Though as Gentiles we were separate from Christ (Eph. 2: 12) yet from Rom. 15: 9-12 we see that God included the Gentiles in the Messianic blessing. In Paul's offering up of the Gentiles, would this include all the Gentiles, or only those of this dispensation (Acts 15: 16, 17)? [Comment 4]. The unique work of Paul as a priest in the ministry of Christ Jesus, or the sacrificing in offering up the Gentiles stands in contrast to Israel, who themselves will be offered up by the Gentiles to Jehovah (Is. 66: 20). As the Levitical priests ministered to the people in teaching, judgement, and sacrifice (Ezek. 44: 23) so Paul's priestly ministry was comprehensive (2 Tim. 1: 11, Rom. 15: 18, Eph. 3: 8).

In this charge Paul firstly had to minister Christ Jesus I Comment 5 J - literally the anointed Jehovah Saviour, a person, also to minister

in sacrifice an infinite concept, "the gospel of God". In Rom. 15: 16-17 the Revised Version has Christ Jesus, but the Authorised has Jesus Christ. We would judge that the positional difference has no spiritual inference. It is important to note that the sacrificial ministry was the gospel of God. It was sanctified by the Holy Spirit, and the oblation offered up was the Gentiles and not Christ. In no way was it a ceremonial ritual.

Paul was no boaster but he could have boasted in things pertaining to God (Rom. 15: 17) concerning his responsibility in the great commission. His record of achievements in word and deed, confirmed by powers and wonders, by the Holy Spirit from Jerusalem to Illyricum (Rom. 15: 17-19) may be added to this. The accomplishment of it would lead to the obedience of the Gentiles by word and deed (v. 18) [Comment 6].

In Paul's carrying of the gift from the Gentiles, he expresses their good pleasure of appreciation for spiritual things contained in the gospel from Jerusalem. The love of the Spirit is to be the constraining factor in the strivings of the prayers of the Roman church on Paul's behalf.

W. Townsend

From Liverpool: *Paul's Assurance:* Paul is being tactful in v. 14. He has written at length to them teaching doctrine and outlining correct attitudes and behaviour expected of those in God's house. Now he is saying that he has not written these things because they are spiritually weak and do not know what is right but rather only to *remind* them of them [Comment 7]. His confidence extends to three areas of their spiritual lives. That they are full of goodness indicates that they would show in their lives some of the grace of Christ and do good deeds out of love for their Lord. He can hardly mean literally that their knowledge is complete, but they had a spiritual understanding and held on to that which the Holy Spirit revealed to them [Comment 8]. They were obviously mature in Christ for they had the ability to discern the Lord's will and to instruct and correct one another too.

Paul's Curriculum Vitae (vv. 15-21): There are five things Paul says about himself which are summed up in the sentence, "I have fully preached the gospel of Christ", and all with the goal that the Gentiles to whom he went with the Gospel might be an acceptable offering to God in their lives.

- (1) He is a minister to the Gentiles by way of divine commission (Acts 9: 15, 13: 46).
- (2) Though he was well able to debate with anyone on any subject he chose only to speak about Christ, for Christ was everything to him.
- (3) He was an itinerant missionary [Comment 12].
- (4) He had fulfilled his obligations to the Lord and his hearers in *fully* preaching the gospel, including the way of the Lord for disciples.
- (5) He was a pioneer.

Paul's whole attitude was that God should be praised in the lives of his people and so he speaks here the language of worship and sacrifice. The NIV makes this clearer than RV in v.16 "... so that the Gentiles might become an offering acceptable to God, sanctified by the Holy Spirit" [Comment 9], a thought which answers to Isaiah 66. Paul's task was an enormous one yet he tackled it in the power of the Holy Spirit and won victoriously for Christ.

*Paul's Plans** Having previously been hindered from visiting them by the pressure of work and the desire not to leave an area without having introduced the gospel Paul now looks forward to seeing the Roman believers. He only intended to 'call in' on his way to Spain though there is no evidence that he ever got there. It is typical of Paul that he should plan to go to farthest extent of the Roman Empire with the Gospel.

Paul's Collection: Paul is delighted to be going to Jerusalem with a monetary gift from the churches in Macedonia and Achaia. They who have benefited spiritually from the Jewish Christians can now send benefit to them in their material need. The attitude of the Pharisees and Saducees being so antagonistic, life would be hard for the Christians in Jerusalem, which was controlled by those two parties.

Paul's Request: In the future Paul looks forward to the Romans being able to assist him on his proposed journey to Spain (v.24). More immediately he seeks their fellowship in prayer and sees that as joining him in his struggle. This should encourage us to pray for those engaged in the Lord's work for it is a way in which we can play a part in it.

D. J. Webster

From Paisley: Admonition, the Greek word for which means literally "putting in mind", forms an integral part of the life of the believer. The apostle, recalling his years in Ephesus, reminded the elders how he ceased not to admonish them night and day with tears (Acts 20: 31) and there is a responsibility particularly on elders to do this (1 Thess. 5: 12). Saints should not be resentful of this, since it is for our

spiritual benefit. So the apostle exhorts saints in Rome to admonish one another. The Greek word for minister (*leitourgos*) means to perform a public duty, often at one's own cost. When viewed in this light, the preaching of the gospel is an all-important work, especially for the apostle in relation to the Gentiles. He wrote at the beginning of the epistle of being a debtor to Greeks and Barbarians (1: 14) and how well he fulfilled his ministry in days when travel was not so easy, in preaching from Jerusalem to Illyricum, seeking to preach Christ where He was not already named. Should we not have a similar ambition today, when Western nations show a disregard for the gospel and Eastern nations are crying out for help? The word minister, also covers priestly service in the sanctuary (Heb. 8: 6; 10: 11); the administration of material matters (Rom. 15: 27; 2 Cor. 9: 12); the work of authorities (Rom. 13: 6) and the work of angels (Heb. 1: 14). Ministering the gospel shows it also to be a priestly service, leading to acceptance of the Gentiles in their offerings to God [Comment 10].

The matter of fellowship is not confined to spiritual things, and the apostle reminds the saints of the needs of the poor in Jerusalem and how the churches in Macedonia and Achaia had made a contribution to their needs. This also forms an essential part of fellowship today.

So, the apostle anticipated visiting the saints in Rome, though his sights were on travelling to Spain. Whether this ambition was ever fulfilled is not known. Little did Paul think he would arrive in Rome in chains and probably meet his death there. Such is the over-ruling power of God in relation to the work of His servants.

J. Renfrew

From Wishaw: The apostle indicates his high regard for the saints at Rome by complimenting them on their attitude towards each other. They were "full of goodness, filled with all knowledge" (v. 14); this enabled them to administer correction and instruction to one another. Their knowledge enabled them to detect where and when correction and instruction was required; their goodness dictated the manner in which it was to be applied. Such an attitude highlighted the maturity of the Christians at Rome in stark contrast to the believers in the church of God at Corinth; at Corinth correction and instruction from the apostle was required, suggesting an absence of Christian maturity in the lives of the Corinthian believers, insomuch that they failed to administer the proper admonition amongst themselves (1 Cor. 6: 5).

Paul never forgot that he was "a minister of Christ Jesus unto the Gentiles"¹¹. His ministry was fruitful, and many Gentiles were led to obey

God by accepting the 'gospel of God'¹. This vindicated Paul's apostleship, and allowed him to present the Gentiles to God as an offering, in a similar way that a priest in the Old Testament would offer a sacrifice.

Paul was a pioneer of the gospel. It was his ambition to preach the gospel in previously uncharted territory. It may be that this was why he wished to go to Spain so as to present the gospel to them. In v. 19 Paul claims to have "fully preached the gospel"¹. Is this a reference to the geographical extent of his preaching, or to the inclusive nature of the content of his preaching? [Comment 11]. Whatever his reason for travelling to Spain via Rome, it is clear it was assisted by the completion of his present work in and around Corinth.

It was Paul's desire to witness for himself the work of God at Rome. This he hoped to do on the completion of his task of delivering a gift to the saints at Jerusalem from the churches in Macedonia and Achaia. The Jerusalem saints were in need, and the saints in Macedonia and Achaia had richly contributed to that need. Such a contribution would be further proof of the positive response of the Gentiles to the gospel of God; and the apostle states they owed such help to the Jews since their spiritual blessings found their origins in the Old Testament.

In v. 30 Paul draws alongside the saints at Home so that together they could pray to God for him. Not that the apostle was being selfish, but so that he would be able to execute his task of delivering the gift to Jerusalem without interference. How we should learn to strive together in prayer to God, and pray specifically and earnestly to Him that any service for Him may not be hindered.

J. Shepka, M. D. Macdonald

COMMENTS

1. (Bolton and Leigh): Although referring to Jews in a future day, Is. 66: 20 is perhaps the most helpful verse in explaining what is meant by "the offering up of the Gentiles" in Rom. 15: 16. From this it will be seen that friends in Bolton and Leigh correctly choose their first option.

I.

E.

P.

2. (Bolton and Leigh): There can be no doubt at all that Peter, John and the other apostles were likewise engaged in "royal priesthood" service. Nevertheless there was something special about Paul's offering up of the Gentiles, in view of the Lord's own words reported in Acts 26: 17, "unto whom I send thee". Moreover the word used here of ministering "the gospel of God" is not used with reference to the preaching of others.

E. A.

A priest is a man who represents God to man and man to God. While it is easy to see Paul in his preaching as representing God to man how is it that Paul, in offering up the Gentiles to God, represents man to God? He cannot represent Gentiles for they are for the most part unsaved and have no lot nor part with the people of God. He cannot represent non-Gentile (or even Gentile) saints in the churches of God for that would be reconstructing the middle wall of partition. It may be that the idea of offering up introduces the idea of priestly work but, of course, in such matters we must discriminate between the work of the offerer and the work of the priest. One of the areas of divine truth which the Lord has been pleased to illumine this past century has been that concerning the unique relationship of the priesthood to the churches of God forming the house of God. In particular, it has been learned that the doing of priestly work, as for example in the offering of sacrifices does not make a man a priest. This distinction is neatly underlined in the very word "offering up" for that word is used of the Lord Jesus offering Himself at Calvary (Eph. 5: 2; Heb. 10: 10, 14). Many have persisted in erroneously saying that the Lord was then a priest and do so in spite of the fact that Heb. 7: 11-16 prove conclusively that the Lord was not a priest till after His resurrection. We would fall into the same error if we were to presume that the "offering up" of Rom. 15: 16 was made by Paul acting as a priest.

Our co-editor has shown that "a minister *Leitourgos*" of Christ Jesus" refers to Paul's unique calling in preaching to the Gentiles and so we are left with examining the expression "ministering" the gospel of God to see if this indicates a priest at work. At first sight this might appear to be so for it (*hierourgeo*) is like *hierous* meaning priest. In fact, however, the two words have simply the same stem "hier" meaning holy in the sense of sacred or consecrated to God. It occurs, for example, in the "sacred writings" (2 Tim. 3: 15) and in "sacred things" (1 Cor. 9: 13). The same stem occurs in the common word for temple (*hieron*). It is a sacred place. Similarly, priests take their character (and in Greek their name) from their sacredness. Thus *hierourgeo* literally means to be a worker in sacred things. It is of interest to see how much interpretation is brought into the translation of the word as we move from "ministry" (RV) to "ministering in sacrifice" (RVM) to "priestly duty"

<NIV>.

I. E. P.

3. (Bolton and Leigh): The Lord taught His disciples to pray after a certain manner, concluding their requests with the petition, "Deliver us from evil". Deliverance from those who rejected the gospel would possibly rescue Paul from discouragement, opposition, and actual danger. In the event the journey to Rome was other than he had envisaged and God

overruled the matter. On the other hand deliverance from unyielding Judaizers would keep the prospect of the Lord's special work through the apostle progressing unhindered. He had grounds for anxiety in either case, naturally speaking, and the word *apeithounton* would admit of either interpretation.

R A

The word for "disobedient" (Rom. 15: 31) is used in the main to describe the actions of the unsaved in rejecting the word of the Gospel but it is not exclusively used of them. Paul (Acts 26: 19) was not "disobedient" to the heavenly vision.

I E P

4. **(Dulwich):** The expression "the offering up of the Gentiles" in this context in Rom. 15 refers more immediately to the Gentiles of this dispensation saved by grace.

5. **(Dulwich):** The words "of Christ Jesus" are not generally construed here as being an instance of objective genitive after *leitourgos*, but are understood rather in the sense of the English possessive case,

6. **(Dulwich):** The achievements, however, are not viewed here as his achievements but as the works of Christ, since Paul's glorying was in regard of what pertains to God.

E. A.

7. **(Liverpool):** Yes, such ministry presumes to find the attention of saints like those of Prov. 9: 9; 19: 25.

8. **(Liverpool):** It is easy to be filled with knowledge if you have not got much to fill in the first place. Scriptures such as Prov. 2: 1-6; 15: 14; 18: 15 show that knowledge has to be sought after. Paul's commendation is thus a tribute to the way in which the Romans had hungered after knowledge and been filled. He that has knowledge is most conscious of his ignorance and need to know more and so will open up to it (Prov. 12: 1 RVM, 15: 14). Such is the blessing of the knowledge of the Lord.

9. **(Liverpool):** We have already commented that the use of the word "priestly" (Rom. 15: 16 NIV) involves interpretation of a spiritual sort and, as we have suggested, wrong interpretation at that. We note, too, that the NIV introduces the words "to God" which are not in the original after the word "acceptable" but it is in the expression "that the Gentiles might become an offering acceptable to God" that the NIV has gone its own way altogether. It takes a noun in the genitive case ("of the Gentiles") and turns it into a nominative thereby making

a singular verb ("be made"¹¹ or "become") into a plural. Since the verb needs a complement it takes the subject of the verb ("offering up") and turns it into a complement thereby reducing the complement ("acceptable") to an adjective qualifying "offering up". It may be that such changes are permissible or even desirable to make the English plainer but it should be noted that the actual meaning has been changed in the process. Instead of the point of the expression being the acceptability of the offering up it has been changed to emphasize the fact of the offering up. Is not their acceptability the immediate reason for Paul writing to the Romans, a people he had never met? If "clarity" is to be achieved at the expense of faithfulness then we would prefer to be without it for it is then obscurity.

/ . E. P.

10. (Paisley): "the offering up of the Gentiles" is perhaps not an offering up by the Gentiles so much as an offering consisting of Gentiles. The nearness of this phrase to the expression "ministering the gospel" invites this clarification here.

11. (Wishaw): He had completed the pioneer work which he believed it was his special task to fulfil in the area indicated.

12. (Liverpool): The term 'missionary'¹ itself however is not used.

E. A.

QUESTION AND ANSWER

(Wishaw): Romans 15: 31. Was the ministration here the gift from Macedonia and Achaia, or was it the message that the Lord wanted His servant to pass on to the saints at Jerusalem?

2 Cor. 8: 4 mentions "the ministering to the saints" in the context of a gift. Moreover the "For" of v.26 appears to be explanatory of the "ministering" in v.25. But for the view that the ministration of v. 31 was a message, see Aberdeen contribution.

E. A.

Bible Studies

A magazine for the exploration of the Word of God [Acts 17: 111]

EDITORIAL

8712

THE REVELATION OF THE MYSTERY

This month we conclude our study of the Epistle to the Romans, which has extended over the last two years. We have read the words of a great teacher expounding to his readers the doctrines which he had taken to himself so thoroughly that he called them "my gospel" (16: 25). We have recognized the characteristic expressions which he uses, but we have also seen that what was written was not the product of Paul's own philosophy or speculation, but was received by revelation from God. The theme recurs again and again in Paul's writings (e. g. 1 Cor. 2: 1; 4: 1; Eph. 1: 9; 3: 9; Col. 1: 25, 27) that he was a steward of 'mysteries' which had been concealed down the ages, but which could now be revealed, because God Himself had revealed them. They related to the justification of men by faith in the work of Christ, and the building of those justified men into a Church which will be the eternal demonstration of the wisdom of God (Eph. 3: 10). Such things could not be discovered by any process of reasoning, but they are perfectly consistent with reason, and the Epistle to the Romans represents Paul's reasoned and orderly presentation of the doctrine of the gospel.

The concept of the divine revelation of truth through the written Word has to be guarded carefully by Christians today, resisting the widespread tendency to treat letters such as the one we have been studying as nothing more than the opinions of an outstanding Christian teacher. Paul declared that it was "through the scriptures of the prophets" (i. e. the Old Testament writings) that the mystery was made known (16: 26), and "the obedience of faith" required. He himself wrote with the authority of an apostle commissioned to demand the same obedience of faith to his own words (1: 5). If this authority is

denied or undermined there can be no definite source of doctrine, since all of the Biblical writings must similarly be questionable, unless one holds that the Church is such a source. However, even the most fundamental Christian teaching about salvation through faith in Christ was only recovered at the time of the Reformation by means of an appeal to the authority of Scripture against the authority of the institutional Church. Everything that we hold therefore stands or falls on the foundation of the belief that Scripture is given by revelation, that "men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit" (2 Pet. 1: 21). To paraphrase Martin Luther, "Here we stand. We can do no other".

P. L. H.

ASSEMBLY LIFE IN **ROME** (**Rom. 16: 1-27**)

From Aberdeen: The expression "in the Lord" comes across significantly, being mentioned in connection with Phoebe, Ampliatus, Narcissus, Tryphaena and Tryphosa, Persis, Rufus and Tertius. Tryphaena and Tryphosa were commended for their labour in the Lord. Persis was commended because she laboured much in the Lord. (Perhaps the differing commendations of vv. 1-16 give some idea of what will be spoken at the judgement seat of Christ). Mary bestowed "much labour" on the saints at Rome: men and women labouring in the Lord. Its great aim is summed up in the letter to the Corinthians; "... always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not vain in the Lord" (1 Cor. 15: 58).

Paul speaks about Rufus* mother as also being "mine". Obviously it is an older sister that Paul treated in this way. Such a relationship is called for in the first letter to Timothy. Assembly life operates like a family, the family of God (1 Tim. 1: 1 f 2).

An interesting point could be made about Andronicus and Junias, who were relatives of Paul (see Question and Answer). They were men "of note among the apostles" (16: 7). Could we say of them that they were "chief men" among the brethren? [Comment 1]. Certainly they are described as "fellow prisoners" of Paul, and the passage implies that they were imprisoned in Rome.

Finally, attention could be drawn to the "smooth" speakers referred to in the latter part of the portion. As well as marking such persons we might well mark the tense used - the present tense "are causing"

(divisions). The "hearts of the innocent" would appear to describe believers who could not see through the "smooth" talkers. Alongside this word of warning we also have the reminder of God's supreme power over all evil, and His ability to quell Satan and his work.

James Johnson

From Birkenhead: Paul's letter is almost finished. The time arrives for him to send his closing greetings.

Firstly, however, he considers the one who we assume was to convey the letter. Phoebe is commended to the church in Rome; an example of the procedure so wisely adopted amongst the churches of God today to show that unity exists between the churches, as each saint is welcomed into fellowship by others. Phoebe, as she reached her destination, was to be assisted. She was in strange surroundings, and as the saints in Rome met her they were to ensure that all her needs were catered for. This is refreshing to observe, because in her home church in Cencreae she had served well, herself meeting the needs of many. This passage gave us the opportunity to consider the service of women in the church. This is an invaluable part of the activities of each assembly, but there is no clear case for saints in the church to recognise deaconesses in a similar way to the deacons (e.g. 1 Tim. 3) [See Comment 5].

Priscilla and Aquila had been co-workers with Paul (Acts 18) and his high regard for them is obvious. As in the past, they were vitally active in the work of the Lord. We noticed that Paul often makes clear that those who are his friends are one with him in the Lord. They, along with himself, have acknowledged His authority (vv. 2, 8, 11, 12, 13).

It is encouraging to see that Paul in his greeting to Epaenetus remembers that he was the firstfruits of his Asian work - the sort of fact which surely rivets itself on the minds of those who serve God.

He recognizes the labour of the saints, and remembers that there are those who are one with him in a natural and a spiritual sense. There are those who are beloved, and Rufus* mother who played the part of a mother to Paul. As Paul's loving greetings reach out to them he is anxious that they should show that their love abounds one to another, and as a token of this they are to salute one another with a holy kiss. Today the equivalent may be a warm handshake.

Paul is desperately anxious lest some will cause divisions and occasions of stumbling within the church. This will be brought about by the dissemination of a different doctrine from the apostles' teaching. This will be in opposition to the truth, and the saints are to turn away from it and give no heed to it. The dangerous teaching will appear palatable and acceptable to the simple guileless saint, and therefore Paul warns against their being gullible. They are exhorted to be wise, to seek after the good and to keep free from the contamination of evil teaching.

Behind ail this is our great adversary, who from the time of his encounter with Eve has sought to deceive. The saints are encouraged to realise that final victory over Satan is assured. With this knowledge they are to be strengthened in their endeavours.

And so Paul, after including greetings from others who are with him, launches into his final doxology. With the Amen written, the pen is then laid down.

A. Hyland, R. D. Williams

From Bolton and Leigh: We have now come to the end of our series of studies in Romans. In this chapter, Paul greets at least 26 'great* saints by name; some are even greeted in their own homes. Paul was not only a soul-winner but he was a friend-maker.

The first of these 'greats¹ is a sister called Phoebe, and because she was being commended by Paul it was generally accepted that she had the responsibility of carrying this letter to Rome. She was probably one of the first of Paul's converts. The commendation she was given clearly shows the high regard and esteem in which Paul held her. Having succoured many, including Paul himself, he exhorts the Romans that they should now give all the help and assistance that she may now need herself. She was to be received worthily in the Lord, being herself subject to Him, by those who were also subject to Him.

We come now to Priscilla and Aquila and we find (considering also Acts 18: 1-13, 18-26 and 1 Cor. 16: 19) that Paul and Aquila laboured manually together as they were both tentmakers, and now despite persecution a church (part, no doubt, of the church of God in Rome) is meeting at their house. Epaenetus (Paul's first convert in Asia - see also 1 Cor. 16: 15) was also to be saluted by the saints.

As Paul proceeds through the list of 'great¹ saints there is less said about each individual. We wondered whether the Rufus in v.13 was the same as that found in Mark 15: 21. We thought that the mother of Rufus had been *like* a mother to Paul, not that Paul and Rufus were blood brothers.

Mention was made of the discovery of the burial ground on the Appian way. Commentators have stated that engravings show the names of the majority of the saints saluted by Paul in this chapter. Whether these were the same persons we didn't know, as these were all names common to those times. Whilst our names are not engraved in stone that can be erased by weather we thank God that, like the saints in Rome, our names are written in heaven by God, never to be erased.

In contrast, we noted from vv. 17-20, Paul points out that there were foes to be avoided; men who were troublesome, causing divisions and disagreements. Instead of preaching the truth, they were using deceit and clever speeches. Such men should be marked, identified and avoided. A similar thought is expressed in Prov. 4: 14, 15; "Avoid it, pass not by it; turn from it, and pass on^{M#} It is a matter of obedience (v.19) to the Lord. V.17 also suggests that these foes come from within.

There follows a roll of heroes, Timothy, the beloved and true child in faith of Paul; then three of Paul's kinsmen, Lucius, Jason and Sosipater who make up, with others, six of Paul's relatives mentioned in the chapter [see Question and Answer]. Mention is also made of Tertius who was acting as secretary to Paul; Gaius, Paul's host; Erastus, who held high office in the city as treasurer and Quartus 'the' brother. Why 'the' and not 'our'⁹? [Comment 21 •

V.20 - 'The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly'. In what way would God do this? [Comment 3].

The epistle closes with a wonderful and glorious doxology. Paul calls the theme of his epistle "my" gospel and this theme is the same as that found in the Old Testament as preached to Abraham (Gal. 3: 8) (Comment 4]. The mystery of the Church which is His (Christ's) Body, hidden even in the story of Adam and Eve (see Eph. 5: 22, 23) will be gloriously fulfilled in Christ and the Church (His Bride), Jews and Gentiles having been united into one Body.

It was noted that this gospel was made known to the nations "unto obedience of faith"¹¹ not "obedience to the faith", and every believer is blessed (see 1: 5). So Paul closes, glorifying God; "To the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory for ever. Amen."

W. Paterson, Jnr.

From Derby: This section of the letter, commending sister Phoebe to the church in Rome, gives a lot of information about the church in Rome. There are very many sisters today doing the work of Phoebe the deaconess but today we do not recognize their work as we do men, with the name deacon (Comment 5).

Paul lived for some time with Priscilla and Aquila in Corinth after they had been forced out of Rome by Claudius. Paul had much in common with them. He shared with them race, employment and a mutual love for the work of the Lord. How avidly Paul would listen as they talked about those in the Rome assembly! It is noted that only seldom in Scripture is the name of the woman put before her husband. Priscilla may perhaps have been of a higher social rank, or may just have been the more dominant personality, and thus more easily remembered. Here Paul publicly thanks Priscilla and Aquila (v.4) for a great service they did in risking their lives for him. His ability to recognize and speak of the great work done by sisters in an assembly should be noted; he names eight of them here.

It is improbable that Paul would write here the name of every person in the church in Rome; he would just mention those he knew of particularly. Only five or six are Jews, judging by their names, the rest Gentiles, hence Paul's constant referring to the problems which can come from joining such diverse cultures. Some of the Gentile saints may have been slaves, and some would be poor while some, for example Priscilla and Aquila and Philologus and Julia, had homes of their own in which the saints met [I Comment 7] •

Andronicus and Junias would have been converted Jews when Saul was yet breathing threatening and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, and he may well have had them on his original 'hit list'! Who can measure the grace of God?

Rufus (v. 13) may have been the son of Simon of Cyrene (Mk. 15: 21). He was "chosen in the Lord"; this phrase probably singles him out as a choice or distinguished Christian. Just a few of Paul's Corinthian friends are mentioned (vv. 21-23), sending their own greetings to Rome.

In v. 16 Paul sends salutations from all the churches of Christ or house groups which made up the church of God in Corinth , to the church of God in Rome I Comment 6] •

We have the complete canon of Scripture and we wondered what the saints in Rome would make of "God... shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly" I Comment 3].

The final doxology again comes from the depths of Paul's being and repeats his desire, expressed at the beginning of the letter (1: 11) that God should strengthen them. Well may Paul review this epistle and speak of "the only wise God".

R. Foster, S. J. Wymer

From **Dulwich**: This chapter brings an inspired conclusion to Paul's letter to the church of God in Rome. He enumerates some 35 individuals and they are all worthy of note. We shall look at them in alphabetical order.

1. *Ampliatius* (or *Amplias*) (v. 8): a disciple that was numbered in the church in Rome, designated by Paul as "my beloved in the Lord".

2. *Andronicus* (v. 7): his name means "conqueror"; a relative or fellow-countryman of the apostle. Andronicus together with Junias had been fellow-prisoners with him, and were of note among the other apostles before Paul (i. e. the other apostles who lived before Paul) (Comment 8] •

3. *Apelles* (v. 10): a disciple whom Paul describes as "the approved in Christ".

4. *Aristobulus* (v. 10): his name means "the best counsellor". A saint in the church in Rome. His household is saluted by Paul. Tradition has it that he was one of the 70 disciples, and preached the gospel in Britain, but this is uncertain.

5. *Asyncritus* (v. 14): his name means "incomparable". He is grouped with Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas, and the brethren that were with him (probably all Greeks).

6. *Epaenetus* (v. 5): described by Paul as "my beloved", and "the first fruits of Asia unto Christ".

7. *Erastus* (v. 23): a disciple in the church in Corinth who was a chamberlain, or public treasurer, in that city. He sends his greetings to the Romans in Paul's letter.

8. *Gaius* (v. 23): Paul's host while the apostle stayed in Corinth. He was one of two disciples whom Paul baptized (see 3 Cor. 1: 14 - the other was Crispus). He joins with the whole church in Corinth in saluting the Romans in Paul's letter.

9. *Hermas* (v. 14): his name means "interpreter". His name is Greek,

as well as the other four mentioned (see 5 above).

10. *Hermes* (v. 14): see comment 5 above. According to tradition he was one of the 70 disciples, but this is uncertain.

11. *Herodion* (v. 11): not to be confused with the Herodians (who comprised a Jewish political party that favoured Greek customs). Herodion was another relative of the apostle to whom Paul sends greetings,

12. *Jason* (v. 21): the Thessalonian who showed hospitality to Paul and Silas (Acts 17), and was in consequence attacked by a Jewish mob. A companion of the apostle and another relative. It is conjectured that Jason and Secundus (Acts 20: 4) were one and the same person.

13. *Julia* (v. 15): a sister in the church in Rome, (possibly the wife or sister of Philologus, as she is linked with him in Paul's salutation).

14. *Junias* (v. 7): another relative or countryman of the apostle who with Andronicus had been fellow-prisoners with him.

15. *Lucius* (v. 21): his name means "of light". Lucius of Cyrene is first mentioned in the New Testament in company with Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Manaen, and Saul who are described as prophets and teachers of the church at Antioch (Acts 13: 1). Whether Lucius was one of the 70 disciples, is a matter of conjecture, but it is highly probable that he was one of the congregation to whom Peter preached on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2); and there is little doubt that he was one of the men of Cyrene who went to Antioch preaching the Lord Jesus (Acts 11). It is commonly supposed that the Lucius of Romans 16 was a relative of the apostle.

16. *Mary* (v. 6): her name means "bitter". Another of the Marys of the Bible, a Roman sister, who is described by Paul as having bestowed much labour (toiled hard) for the church in Rome.

17. *Narcissus* (v. 11): his name means "flower, causing lethargy". A brother in the church in Rome, some members of whose household were known by Paul to be "in the Lord". Some have assumed his identity with the secretary of the Emperor Claudius; but this is quite uncertain.

18. *Kereus* (v. 15): another brother in the church in Rome. According to tradition he was beheaded at Terracina, probably in the reign of Nerva. He had a sister, to which Paul refers but does not mention her by name. They were possibly part of the household of Philologus.

19. *Olympas* (v. 15): another possible member of the household of Philologus, who was a brother in the church in Rome.

20. *Patrobas* (v. 14): one of several Greeks in the church in Rome (see 5).

21. *Persis* (v. 12): another sister at Rome whom the apostle greets as "the beloved, which laboured much in the Lord".

22. *Philologus* (v. 15); his name means "a lover of words"¹¹. Many of his household seem to have been in the church in Rome. As his name is linked closely with Julia, he may have been her husband, or brother.

23. *Phlegon* (v. 14): his name means "burning". Another Greek brother in

the church in Rome (see 5 above).

24. Phoebe (vv. 1-2): more is written about Phoebe in this chapter than about anyone else. She was a sister (a deaconess) in the church in Cenchrea, commended by Paul as "our sister... a servant of the church... "

25/26. Prisca and Aquila(v.3): or Priscilla and Aquila, whom Paul found at Corinth (Acts 18). Aquila was a native of Pontus, but fled from Rome in consequence of an order of Claudius commanding all Jews to leave the city* He and his wife Priscilla became acquainted with Paul and they worked together at their common trade of making tents. When Paul left Corinth one and a half years after, Priscilla and Aquila accompanied him to Ephesus. Paul called them his "fellow-helpers in Christ Jesus"¹¹, and they laid down their own necks for his life. It would appear from Romans 16 that some of the church in Rome met in their house.

27. Quartus (v.23): his name means "fourth". He is called by the apostle as simply "the brother", who salutes the saints in Rome.

28. Rufus (v.13): his name means "red". He could be identical with the Rufus mentioned in Mark 15: 21, along with Alexander, sons of Simon the Cyrenian. The apostle salutes him as "the chosen (or elect) in the Lord" and salutes "his mother and mine". Perhaps she had looked after Paul and treated him as her own son.

29. Sosipater (v.21): another relative or fellow-countryman of the apostle who was a brother in the church in Corinth.

30. Stachys (v.9): his name means "ear of corn". Saluted by Paul as "my beloved".

31. Tertius (v.22): Latin for "third". Probably a Corinthian who was the amanuensis through whom Paul dictated this, and possibly, other letters. He is thought by some to be Silas, but this is uncertain. He joins Paul and Timothy in their greetings.

32. Timothy (v.21): or Timotheus whose name means "honoured of God". A young man of Lystra, son of Eunice, a Jewess, and a Greek father. His grandmother's name was Lois. Under their training, his education was emphatically Jewish, for "from a child" he had learned to "know the Scriptures" daily. The arrival of Paul and Barnabas in Lycaonia brought good news of salvation to Timothy and his mother, and they received it with "unfeigned faith". Timothy was set apart to be an evangelist but there was a great obstacle. Timothy, though reckoned as one of the seed of Abraham, had been allowed to grow up into manhood without being circumcised; so Paul took him and circumcised him, even although he refused to permit the circumcision of Titus. Timothy became one of the apostle's closest and constant companions, although there were times when Paul left him alone. Paul wrote at least two letters to Timothy. Timothy was a devout and zealous leader and teacher in the early churches. When this letter was written Timothy was with Paul and he joins the apostle in his greetings to the Romans.

33/34. *Tryphaena and Tryphosa* (v. 12): two sisters in the church in Rome, described as those "who laboured in the Lord"¹¹.

35. *Urbanus* (v. 9): another brother in the church in Rome. The apostle calls him "our fellow-worker in Christ".

As he wrote naming the saints one by one, Paul commended them for their obedience, for it was known to the other churches. However, he was anxious that they should turn away from those who were causing divisions and occasions of stumblings. It would seem that some had crept in to the church who were clever orators and with subtle persuasion were diverting the saints into following new doctrines. "Be wise unto that which is good, and simple unto that which is evil".

It seems that the apostle is also teaching us today from this chapter. Is it necessary that we should know other doctrines and practices in other religions to appreciate the truths which we hold dear? Has that not been what has happened to some who have left the Fellowship as learning what others do has had a harmful effect on them [Comment 9]. Paul ends his letter with a marvellous doxology in v. 27.

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Mark McKaig

From Ibadan: The style of life of the saints in Rome and their 'modus operandi'¹ could be an acceptable pattern for other churches of God to follow, giving a spiritual insight for the present day. Worthy of notice among other things are:

- (a) The cordial atmosphere prevalent among the saints (v. 19).
- (b) The involvement of women in ministry work and other church affairs (vv. 1, 2, 6, 12, 15). The question as to whether these women are deaconesses or not, should not bring about any controversy. What matters most is their work for the Lord and the rewards awaiting them for the same.
- (c) The spirit of oneness, brotherly affection, and friendship (vv. 4-16).
- (d) The universally recognised faith of the saints (Rom. 1: 8).
- (e) A set sample of unparalleled obedience in the assembly (v. 19),

With all these known facts about the Roman saints, spiritual blessing is clearly manifested and for this Paul was very glad, and full of good wishes for them all (vv. 19-20).

Not all was as it should be in the assembly, however, and Paul could not forget to give timely warning to the Christians in the assembly to beware of those who caused divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine they had learned (v. 17). Such groups of people are deceivers (v. 18). They should be avoided.

There is no gainsaying that the diagnosis and prescriptions for the saints in Rome would augur well for Christians in all other churches of God. May God be with us all. Amen.

From Liverpool: At the commencement of this chapter we have a specimen letter of commendation, revealing something of the lovely character of Phoebe, who was also the bearer of this letter to the church in Rome. Paul speaks highly of her caring ability, being a succourer (*boetheo* to come to the aid of anyone) of many, including Paul himself. V. 2 highlights to us the type of role the Lord expects of women in the churches of God today. The saints in Rome were exhorted to show to Phoebe the same loving care that she had shown to others. Do we show the same care to those who are commended to us ?

Verses 3-15 give some insight into the assembly life in Rome, revealing a very close-knit community made up of mature committed Christians of differing social standing, this being confirmed in Rom. 1: 8.

We noted the recurring phrases "in Christ" and "in the Lord", our understanding of them being:

- (a) "In Christ" refers to our relationship with Him and with one another as fellow-members of the Church which is His Body (Rom. 12: 5)_f which includes all believers in Christ throughout this dispensation (1 Cor. 12: 13, 14) and is unconditional (John 10: 28, 29).
- (b) "In the Lord" refers to those who own Christ's Lordship and bow to His claims upon them (Mat. 28: 18-20). The Lord Jesus Himself said "why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" (Luke 6: 46). This phrase expresses our relationship to Him as servants, and is conditional.

This being so, we wondered why both terms are applied to different saints when they were all "in Christ" and had all subjected themselves to His will (Acts 2: 41, 42) [Comment 10].

Although the church of God in Rome was in many respects a pattern church, they could not afford to be complacent, for Satan was not far away, seeking to destroy the work of God and divide that which He had brought together. Hence Paul's injunction to be "wise unto that which is good, and simple to that which is evil" (v. 19).
J. W. Seddon

From **Paisley**: Assemblies of God are made up of individuals each one of whom is a trophy of divine grace. The service of both brethren and sisters is diverse, and Romans 16 beautifully portrays the individual characteristics of each, and commends them for their faithful service.

Phoebe is spoken of as a servant or deaconess of the church in Cenchreae, and also a succourer of many. Her work lay in ministering to the needs of others, and the Greek word in masc. form (*prostotes*) was the title of a citizen in Athens who had the responsibility of seeing to the welfare of resident aliens who were without civic rights. Among the Jews it

suggested a wealthy patron of the community (Vine). This is the only reference in the New Testament to the church in Cenchreae, and more is said about the sister than the church.

Prisca and Aquila have honourable mention in the Scriptures from the time that Paul lodged with them in Corinth (Acts 18: 30) to their companionship with the apostle to Asia (Acts 18: 18) and their influence on Apollos in Ephesus (Acts 18: 26). Twice, in 1 Cor. 16: 19 and Rom. 16: 5, reference is made to the church in their house.

Other individual saints are mentioned by name, being commended for their labours; some suffering imprisonment, but faithful to the Lord. Eternity alone will reveal the faithfulness of saints in Rome, especially during the times of fierce persecution.

The term "churches of Christ" used in v. 16 is unique in the Scriptures and would convey the thought of ownership - purchased with the blood of Christ (Acts 20: 28).

As in every divine creation evil influences can be at work, so in the church in Rome there were those who were causing divisions and occasions of stumbling. This was the work of Satan, but the God of peace would overrule in such circumstances. Saints were to turn away from such trouble-makers.

The apostle concludes his letter with salutations from fellow workers and his prayer that God will establish the saints in Rome. How thankful we are to God for the preservation of this epistle which has had such a world-wide influence on people's lives.

J. Renfrew

From **Wishaw**: It is appropriate to find Paul concluding his epistle to Rome by referring to the calibre of the saints there. But before he does so, he commends to them Phoebe a servant or deaconess of the church at Cenchreae. Why she should be at Rome is not clear, but it seems certain that she required the help of the assembly at Rome to perform her mission. This highlighted the interdependence of the churches and the mutual affection they had for each other. It also conveys the important role of women in assembly life that she was a benefactor of many, including the apostle. This follows on the character of those illustrious women who were last at the cross and first at the tomb. What significance should we attach to the marginal reference "deaconess"¹? Is this an official term, or merely a word to describe the nature of the work she did?[Comment 5]

As Paul was grateful to Phoebe for what she had done, he was full of praise and gratitude for Priscilla and Aquila, with whom he had a long association. It is worthwhile noting that Paul speaks of this couple as "my

fellow-workers". He recognized that without their help and the assistance of others his hardships would be greatly increased, a point that should not go unnoticed, for we all depend on each other to further our spiritual experience.

Priscilla and Aquila were also self-sacrificing, for they risked their lives for Paul's sake. Although there was need for such godly people as Priscilla and Aquila, yet it would seem that they reckoned Paul was of more value as far as the assemblies were concerned. For such an attitude of heart all the churches of the Gentiles ought to have **been** grateful.

The impressive catalogue of praise by Paul is continued, indicating the high esteem he had generally for the church of God in Rome. Both men and women are mentioned by him for their "labour", or in some cases "much labour", and also for their "help". But such praise is tempered by a warning to watch for and identify if necessary those who would cause divisions and offences. Even an assembly like Rome, with all its undoubted qualities, could be the subject of attack by individuals out to satisfy their own selfish aims. A distinction was drawn between those who unwittingly teach wrong doctrine (which should be corrected) and those who knowingly and deliberately teach it for the sole purpose of causing division.

Paul draws the epistle to a fitting close by attributing all credit to "the eternal God" for the revelation of the "mystery" of the gospel, planned from eternity in the divine mind, revealed by the apostles and prophets and the preaching of Jesus Christ, and to be made known to all the nations.

J.

Shepka, G. Schleyer

November Bible Study 1987 "The Offering up of the Gentiles"

Birkenhead contributors are asked to accept my sincere apologies for the month's delay in the inclusion of this article which came to hand in good time but was mislaid.

E. A.

From Birkenhead: Encouragement and praise are essential if Christians are to be built up. Paul, therefore, hastens to commend the Romans on three qualities which they had displayed: moral excellence, a well-informed mind, and a deeply caring attitude. The Romans were anxious to help one another, and had shown they were able to correct one another with wisdom and kindness. They possessed not only a broad knowledge of the faith, but also the ability to convey it to others in a reasoned fashion. We would do well to cultivate such qualities in our own lives.

Thus, Paul is not writing to the Romans because they are ignorant, but because he wished to remind them of what they already knew. Moreover,

he writes with **boldness** because of his authority as an **apostle to the Gentiles (Acts 9)**. Paul sees his apostleship as a priestly service, and his **Gentile converts as the acceptable offerings which he presents to God**. The Gentiles **had once** been unclean, **but now they had** been sanctified by the **Holy Spirit (Acts 15: 29)** (see **Comment 2, BS. 8711, p. 169**).

Paul reflects upon the **work** which Christ has accomplished through him in the **course** of his ministry. He had **preached the good news from Jerusalem to Illyricum**, in **places where it had never yet been heard**. Paul did not build upon another person's foundation, and he gives a scriptural basis for such a policy (**Isa. 52: 15**). Paul had been well educated, and he had exercised his **full potential in the service of God**. His **one aim was to bring glory to God (Phil. 1: 21)**, and now he shares his plans with his **readers in order that he might have their fellowship in prayer**.

A journey to Spain would afford Paul the opportunity to visit Rome. He looked forward to meeting Christians in the capital, and being refreshed by their friendship, and seeing their spiritual state. Paul could speak with confidence that his preaching in Rome would be attended by great blessing (**Rom. 1: 11, 12**).

First, however, Paul had to visit Jerusalem. The collection for the **Jerusalem church**, which had been organized amongst the **Gentile churches** was now ready to be handed over. The gift was seen as a recognition of **moral debt to the Jews**, and would be a means of strengthening fellowship between **Jews and Gentiles**. Paul was eager to ensure that the **poor were provided for**, and he recommended that a collection should be made each week (**Gal. 2: 10; 1 Cor. 16: 1, 2**). Paul considered excellence in giving to be a response to **God's grace in salvation (2 Cor. 8: 6-9)**. We should also show concern for those who are poor, so that no one will be lacking in what is needed.

Paul had promised to accompany those who were chosen to deliver the gifts. He asks the Romans therefore, to pray that he might be kept from danger in Jerusalem, and that his ministry there might be of some profit. It is important that we too should support those engaged in full time ministry. If we are well informed of their work, then we will be able to present specific requests on their behalf.

J. D. Williams

COMMENTS

1. (Aberdeen): The phrase "of note among the apostles"¹¹ can bear either of two meanings, both in English and in the original Greek. It might mean "well-known to the apostles" or "distinguished as apostles". If the latter view were taken, it would mean accepting that there was a much larger group of apostles than the twelve plus Paul, among whom these two other-

wise unknown men were prominent. The term 'apostle¹' can have a more general sense of 'messenger¹', and it might be used in this sense of a larger group, without implying that they shared in the special status of those who had been the witnesses of the Lord's life and the custodians of His teaching. However, one inclines to prefer the former interpretation, that these men were held in esteem among the apostles.

It is usual to distinguish between the twelve apostles of the Lamb (Rev. ^{P. L. H.} 21: 14) and the other apostles like Paul and Barnabas (Acts 14: 14).

2. (Bolton and Leigh): One can only suggest a possible answer to this. The rest of the people in this short section (vv. 21-23) are distinguished by some comment about them. Perhaps Paul was passing on greetings from someone whom he did not know well, about whom all he could say was that he was "a brother"¹¹ i. e. a fellow Christian.

3. (Bolton and Leigh): I suggest that the saints in Rome were being encouraged to look forward to the day of the coming of the Lord, which would relieve them from the difficulties of their present life, and which would be followed by the defeat of Satan (Rev. 20: 1-3, 10).

4. (Bolton and Leigh): What Paul set out in his letter to the church in Rome was certainly the fulfilment of the gospel preached to Abraham, but it was hardly the same; it revealed many things which were quite unknown in Abraham's time.

5. (Derby and Wishaw): The Greek word *Diakonos* simply denotes a servant, without any implication as to the nature of that service. It is clear in some cases (e. g. Phil. 1: 1) that a recognized office within the church is implied, whereas in others (e. g. Col. 4: 7) a more general service is indicated. In the case of Phoebe, the context does not indicate which of these is meant, and the question of whether women should be formally recognized as deacons must be decided on other grounds, which are outside the scope of this comment.

6. (Derby): This is a possible interpretation of the phrase "churches of Christ"¹¹, but since this is the only occurrence of the phrase, one cannot be sure. An alternative is that it refers to churches of God, in the same way that the "Spirit of Christ"¹¹ is used as an alternative to the "Spirit of God"¹¹.

p L H

Given the overwhelming evidence that Paul wrote from Corinth it is hard to resist the conclusion that "churches of Christ" were sub-groups within the church of God in Corinth, particularly since we know that such existed (1 Cor. 14: 33).

I. E. P.

7. (Derby): Something of the cosmopolitan character of the church in Rome is seen in mixture of Greek and Latin names as well as Mary, a Hebrew name, in Rom. 16. *I. E. P.*

8* (Dulwich): The phrase "who also have been in Christ before me" refers to Andronicus and Junias, not to the apostles.

9. (Dulwich): Anyone who wants, to know the truth (not only in spiritual matters) must be prepared to examine what he hears and reads, like the Jews in Berea (Acts 17: 11) to see "whether these things are so". The obvious danger in accepting 'the truths which we hold dear'⁹ without examination is that those who taught them might have been mistaken, even though they were sincere and spiritual men. Both the Brethren movement and the churches of God which came out of it would never have appeared had not men been willing to scrutinise what they had been taught in the light of the word of God.

P. L. H.

This is most unTimothy-like behaviour (2 Tim. 3: 14). See also Prov. 6: 27; Ecc. 10: 8, 11. God call a man into the way of truth and the Holy Spirit leads a man into it. Certainty comes not from proving all else to be wrong but by the answer of the born-again, Spirit-filled heart to the written Word. "Have not I written unto thee excellent things of counsels and knowledge; to make thee know the certainty of the words of truth... ? (Prov. 22: 20-21). *I E P*

10. (Liverpool)j The distinction which Liverpool friends make between "in Christ" and "in the Lord" is generally valid. However, the term "in Christ" is not only used as a technical term meaning "incorporated into the Body of Christ", but it is also used more generally. For instance, one might suggest that Urbanus (v. 9) is a fellow-worker in the cause of Christ, and Apelles (v. 10) is approved as an example of Christian behaviour. *P.* *L.* *H*

QUESTION AND ANSWER

"My kinsmen" is written of six people in this portion. Were they relatives of Paul, or is he using the term affectionately for fellow Jews?

This question cannot be answered with certainty, for the word could bear either sense, but it seems unlikely that Paul would have had as many as six relatives in the church in Rome. Earlier in the letter (9: 3) the apostle uses the expression "my kinsmen according to the flesh: who are Israelites", and it seems most likely that the word is used in the same sense in chapter 16. He was writing to a predominantly Gentile church. *P. L. H.*