**Romans**

**“The Righteousness of God Revealed”**

1. **Introduction: 1:1-15**
	1. **Greetings: 1:1-7**
	2. **Thanksgiving: 1:8-15**
2. **Statement of Purpose: 1:16-17 “The Righteousness of God Revealed”**
3. **Main Teaching: 1:18-15:13**
	1. **Chp. 1:18-4:25 Coming under Grace**
	2. **Chp. 5:1-8:39 Living under Grace**
	3. **Chp. 9:1-11:36 Overflow of Grace**
	4. **Chp. 12:1-15:13 Shaped by Grace**
4. **Closing: Chp. 15:14-16:27**

**Romans**

**“The Righteousness of God Revealed”**

1. **Introduction: 1:1-15**
	1. **Greetings: 1:1-7**

**Romans 1:1-7**

**“To all who are called saints”**

**I. Intro.**

**II. Vs. 1-5a Fourfold description of Paul**

**III. Vs. 5b-7 Fourfold effectiveness of the gospel**

**I. Intro.**

There is a story of an African slave who had displeased his owner by attempting to run away numerous times. The owner was so incensed that he planned to kill his slave by running him through with his sword but before he could accomplish this a stranger stood in front of the slave and took the blow meant for the salve. Though wounded the stranger demanded the freedom of the save for the wrong done to him saying that his blood was payment for the salve. The owner reluctantly agreed and the slave thru himself down at the feet of the man who by his blood had freed him and said insistently “*You have bought me by your own blood and I shall serve you all my life*”. That is the story of Paul’s gospel to the Romans.

Paul spent 10 years from A.D. 47 to 57 in evangelizing the territories east and west of the Aegean Sea. During those years he concentrated on Roman provinces of Galatia, Macedonia, Achaia and Asia. His first campaign concluded with the planting of Churches in Iconium, Philippi, Thessalonica, Corinth and Ephesus and many other cities in the area. During the winter of 56-57 A.D. Paul spent considerable time in Corinth at the home of Gaius as he prepared to take the offering taken up by those churches to Jerusalem to help in famine relief. During the early days of A.D. 57 Paul used a secretary Tertius (16:22) to dictate his heart to a Church that he had never visited in hopes of preparing a visit in the future. By this time the Church in Rome had already begun to impact Roman society as the wife of a high ranking Roman commander had been acquitted of embracing this so called superstition. Three years later Paul had the opportunity to visit Rome as a prisoner. Four years after that (*seven years after the writing of this letter*) Rome was devastated by fire set by the madness of Emperor Nero and he blamed this superstition sect called Christianity as the culprits. What this reveals us the rapid growth of Christianity no doubt enhanced by this letter and Paul’s visit. In the book of Acts chapter 28 Paul comes to Rome and in the 17th verse Paul is seen ministering in Rome. In the 16th chapter of Roman’s Paul mentions 26 people he knows by name in Rome no wonder they came to meet his 4 years after the letter was written.

Paul’s letter to the Romans is a description of the “*Power of God let lose upon the ruin of man*.” It boldly proclaims that God through His Son Jesus has found the only way to justify all of ungodly fallen humanity. As long as we think we are good enough to earn heaven or earn God’s favor then we don’t have a chance. Through this glorious letter we will be on that road together as we learn that God has more for us than changing our destination He wants to change us into the image of the very one who has changed our destiny. These 16 chapters has “*Remodeled*” many lives:

* Augustine was converted by reading a few verses in the 16th chapter
* Martin Luther’s heart was changed by reading one verse 1:16
* John Bunyan while in jail studied the letter and was so inspired he wrote Pilgrim’s Progress
* John Wesley was reading Luther’s commentary on Roman’s and was changed

Romans was written 30 years after Jesus’ resurrection some 8 to 10 years before Paul’s death. Based upon Paul’s letter the church was made up partly of Gentiles and partly of Jews. The wide acceptance of the Gentiles into the faith apart from Jewish conversion had been dealt with at the council in Jerusalem many years earlier but the wide spread appeal this had upon the Gentiles had not been anticipated as in most churches apart from Jerusalem the gentile believer out numbered the Jewish believers. This pushed the need to write about the teaching of “***Justification by Faith***” (1:16-17). The question that loomed big for the early church was “*How was it possible in spite of everything that most of the Jews were still rejecting their Messiah*?”

**II. Vs. 1-5a Fourfold description of Paul**

*God* is the most important word in this epistle, it occurs 153 times in the book; an average of once every 46 words - this is more frequently than in any other New Testament book. Paul tells us four things about Jesus who is the gospel:

1. Vs. 3 He is God’s Son:
2. Vs. 3 He was born the seed of David according to the flesh
3. Vs. 4 He was declared the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness by the resurrection from the dead: It was the resurrection that revealed to us Who Jesus has always been.
4. Vs. 1, 3, 6 and 7 Jesus is not only a man he is also the Christ anointed King of Kings and Lord of Lord’s.

Most every New Testament letter follows the same pattern:

* First there is the ***introduction*** made up of the greetings and thanksgiving. In this case this makes up the first 15 verses and is divided into the greetings in the first seven verse followed by the thanksgiving in verses 8-15.
* The next section of the letter is the reason for writing also called the “***statement of purpose***”. For the most part these are usually found in proximity to the introduction and will sum up what the main teaching of the letter will be.
* After this comes the bulk of the letter or ***main teaching*** in which the reason for writing is given in more detail and clarity.
* Finally we have the ***closing*** of the letter which can be anywhere to a few verses to a whole chapter.

Vs. 1-5a After his conversion, Saul of Tarsus changed his name to Paul. As Saul his name meant “*requested one*” as Paul it meant “*little*”. No one can know for sure the reason for this perhaps it was for ease of travel “accessibility” as Saul being a Jewish name would have made it more difficult to travel. Perhaps the name Paul was a nickname do to his small stature? One thing is certain from Paul letters is that the name fit his view of himself after his conversion as he no longer saw himself as “*The Man in Demand*” instead he saw himself as of “*little importance*”. Saints, I think there is a lesson in this name for all of us when we become “*little*” we become much more “*accessible*” to others! The key to powerful preaching is powerful humility! Paul gives a fourfold description of himself:

1. **Bondservant of Jesus Christ**: He calls himself a servant by choice of Jesus Christ and he does so to a city of over a million people with half of those being slaves. He regarded himself as a purchased possession of his Lord and Master Jesus. As a bondservant he owned nothing, and was nothing apart from his Master. His time, talents and treasures were all the time at the disposal and use of the Master as He saw fit. To any other person such ownership would be despicable and revolting but because it was to the One who had saved him by the shedding of His own blood Paul viewed this position as the greatest one any human could ever experience. If one is a salve of Jesus than they are no longer a slave to the passions and moral depravity of the former life. Thus we must become a slave of Jesus to be freed from this world!
2. **Called *to be* an apostle**: Second Paul identified himself by his calling which was to be sent out as an ambassador of the King of Kings to a world that didn’t recognize His right to reign as King. This means that such a calling was not by Paul’s work or design, his appointment came from none other than Jesus his master. Paul elsewhere refers to this calling as three fold:
3. Gal. 1:15 It was at his birth long before Paul was aware of it.
4. Acts 9:15 Tells us that it was commissioned at his conversion.
5. Acts 13:2 Tells us that it was specific to the work in Antioch among the Gentiles.

Now you may called to be His ambassador and be a carpenter, you may be called to be His ambassador and be a school teacher, home maker or you can fill in the blank that fits you.

1. **Separated to the gospel of God**: Concentration follows consecration and commission, Paul reveals. As such Paul declares that his one and only purpose of his life was devotion to spreading the “Good News” about his Master. This was his aim and goal in life and he was going to employ every effort and provision supplied by God to accomplish this.
2. Vs. 5a **Through Him we have received grace and apostleship**: Here Paul reveals the only need equipment to accomplish the goal “*Apostolic Grace*”. Paul had no worries with regards to the provisions of the task because he knew that the task would never be able to outlast God’s provisions to accomplish them.

**III. Vs. 5b-7 Fourfold effectiveness of the gospel**

Having given us his fourfold description of himself Paul moves on to a fourfold description what this was to be used for in verse 5b-6:

1. **For obedience to the faith**: This phrase only occurs twice in this letter here and at the end in 16:26. Faith always implies submission and surrender which always leads to glad obedience. Paul’s aim was to see people gladly surrender their lives over to loving obedience to the Master.
2. **Among all nations**: Here we see range and scope of Paul’s aim; it was universal in nature and not selective. It was not limited by geography or by those within that geography. As such Paul knew no limits within his service to see all whom he came into contact with both hear of His Masters “Goodness” and have opportunity to know of this “Goodness” personally.
3. **For His Name**: It was the Name above all names that Paul was delighted to proclaim because Paul had personally encountered the blessing of acquaintance with His master. This was Paul’s motivation in all he did was to bring honor and glory to the name that had redeemed him and would redeem all who trust in the Name of Jesus.
4. **Among whom you also are called of Jesus Christ**: Finally Paul concludes that there was personal responsibility to willing surrender to a relationship to Jesus. Just because Paul was passionately dedicated to his calling and they heard the word didn’t make it automatic that they were going to personally know the love of the Master. They like Paul would need to heed the call and appropriate His grace.

Vs. 7 The words “*to be*” are in italics which means that in the original they aren’t there and were added by the translators. As such this should read “*To all who are in Rome, beloved of God, called saints.*” There are folks that want to categorize Christians and give some a special title if they meet a certain amount of works. But according to the Bible there are only two categories of people “*Saints*” and “*Anits*” and if you are a believer in Christ than you are a saint. There was a young boy in a church that had beautiful stained glass windows of the so called “*saints*” and his Sunday school teacher asked the class “*Who are the saints?*” and he replied “***They are the people who the light shines through****.*”

 In Paul’s time the Greeks would greet each other with the word “grace” and the Jews would greet each other with the word “peace” but Paul links the two greetings together but place grace before peace as you will never know peace until you have first experienced grace. So if today you find that you have no peace I suggest to you that what you need is a fresh encounter with Him who is full of Grace and truth! You will have the “Peace from God” when you have first have the “Peace of God”. In religion the “Law” shouts “*responsibility*” but in relationship the Lord loving says, “*Just respond and the work will be done because the price has been paid*!” And in responding to Jesus love you will do more than you will ever do under the pressure of the law of religion.

**Romans**

**“The Righteousness of God Revealed”**

1. **Introduction: 1:1-15**
2. **Thanksgiving: 1:8-15**

**Romans 1:8-17 “I am not ashamed”**

1. **Intro**
2. **Vs. 8-15 Eight characteristics of a transformed heart**
3. **Vs. 16-17 A debtor, ready to preach, not ashamed**

**I. Intro**

Rome was a city where Caesar Nero would dress 1,000’s of Christians in the skins of lambs and throw them to the lions then taunt them by saying, “*Where is your Good Shepherd now*?” He would dip Christians in hot wax and light them in his garden and say, “*Now you are a light of the world*.” Rome was the entertainment capital of the world and was so wicked that even Hollywood would be forced to blush, where the acceptable greeting of the day was “Caesar is lord”. Yet it is to this place that Paul declared that he was not ashamed of the gospel. Faith is not only the starting point of our salvation it is the staying power of our salvation. Paul wrote in Col. 2:6 “*As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him*”. That is why when Paul wrote to the Galatians in 3:3 he said “*Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh*?”

**II. Vs. 8-15 Eight characteristics of a transformed heart**

Vs. 8-15 Paul writes of his desire to come to Rome and we are told in Act. 2:10 how there were people from Rome among the Jews present at the Day of Pentecostal, so when they returned home that was a start of the church. Along with this Christians continually migrated to Rome from all parts of the empire. Paul knew many of the Christians in Rome by name but he knew two things about them and every Christian. He knew they were ***beloved of God*** and ***that they were saints***. In verses 8-16a as we look at Paul’s words that he wrote about what he was thankful for, I see ***8 characteristics of a transformed heart***:

1. Vs. 8 **A thankful heart**: Paul didn’t say “*I thank my God through Jesus Christ for around 40% of you as the other 60% drive me nuts*!” Saint’s nothing speaks louder of the transformation that God has done in our heart than the love we have for one another! Notice though that he thanked God for their faith spoken throughout the whole world. Such thanksgiving came by way of Jesus, which reminds us that we have the privilege of saying “*my God*” because we have made God’s Son our Lord. The evidence of this was in the fact that Paul gave thanks for “all believers”. Dear ones ***our thankfulness must not rest upon the circumstance turning out the way we attended but on the fact that said circumstances lay in nail scared hands of the One who died for us.*** Paul thanks God not for their faith unto salvation he thanks God for His work in them as they lived out that faith! The church in Rome wasn’t famous because of their pastor, the size of their congregation or their building. No, ***they were famous because the way they lived out Who they believed in***.
2. Vs. 9-10a **A concerned heart**: Though ***Paul was thankful for what God had been doing, he was prayerful towards God at what still needed to be done.*** The word “*serve*” here is also translated worship. The phrase “*without ceasing* “with regards to prayer speaks of a tickle in the throat is reflexive. Friends that is how we should be in our prayer life, when someone irritates you constantly like a cough then just keep clearing your heart of that irritant by speaking to the Father about them until things have cleared up. Paul concluded two actions as worship:
3. Speaking of the “*goodness of His master*” to a world that didn’t know Him.
4. Lifting up prayers on behalf of others without ceasing.

***Paul’s worship of God was best seen not in the songs he sang but in speaking to people about God and speaking to God about people***! To Paul most of these Christians whom he had never met were never taken of his prayer chain. Far too often we are committed to prayer for folks when things aren’t going well but here we get an encouragement to continue in prayer for folks so that things continue to go well.

1. Vs. 10b **A willing heart**: Paul had a heart that was not only willing to prayer for folks he was willing to be the answer to the prayer as well. Yet such eagerness to be used of God never went outside God’s plan in doing so. He was ready, willing and available but only according the will of his Master. Paul never thought of “*demanding things from God*” or by his prayers trying to sway God away from His perfect will to his imperfect plan.
2. Vs. 11 **A loving heart**: Paul wanted to go to Rome to serve the people not to get something from them. In Col. 1:28 Paul explained what his goal was, “*everywhere we go, we tell everyone about Christ. We warn them and teach them with all the wisdom God has given us, for we want to present them to God, perfect in their relationship to Christ*.” The gift Paul wanted to give them was “spiritual” that would further “establish” them.
3. Vs. 12 **A humble heart**: Paul realized that those believers had spiritual gifts that would help establish him as well. Dear ones ***the greatest teachers are always the ones that desire to learn more than they desire to teach***! Consider this that Paul one of the greatest theologians was willing to learn and receive from Roman Christian’s who were novices in their faith. A teachable heart is that is willing to receive teaching regardless of who God chooses as the instrument of instruction is the key to spiritual growth.
4. Vs. 13 **A optimistic heart**: Paul tells the Roman Church of his desire and plans to visit them but this was not a social call it was a call to bear fruit. He was a big proponent of “*Where God guides, God provides*” and believed that God was going to do a work there in Rome. According to Phillip. 4:22 the outcome of that optimism included those from Caesars household. We will never accomplish great works for God’s kingdom if we don’t believe that God will enable us accomplish what He has called us to do.
5. Vs. 14 **A committed heart**: Prior to Paul’s conversion Paul was committed to destroying the gospel and anyone that promoted it but after having personally been transformed by the Love of God Paul saw himself a debtor to every person who like him ignorantly or willfully hadn’t encountered the transforming power of the Love of God.
6. Vs. 15 **A ready heart**: Paul was not only willing he was eager to fulfill what God had called him too. Life had but one value, “to do God’s work” and this value consumed him. In this letter Paul loves the phrase “I am ready”; it served as his motto in life. In Acts 9:6 the 2nd words out of Paul’s mouth after his conversion was “*Lord, what do you want me to do?*” In
* Rom. 1:15 Paul said he was ready to preach and to serve
* Act. 21:13Paul said he was ready to suffer
* 2 Cor. 10:6 Paul said he was ready to do unpleasant work
* 2 Tim. 4:6 Paul said he was ready to die

Paul would have never guessed that when he would be sent to Rome it would be at the governments expense. When we pray for something, God may grant us the blessing; but it may be in a way that we never looked for. You shall go to Rome, Paul; but you shall go in chains."

**III. Vs. 16-17 A debtor, ready to preach, not ashamed**

Vs. 16-17 In a sophisticated city like Rome, some might be embarrassed by a gospel centered on a crucified Jewish savior, embraced by the lowest classes of people - but Paul is not ashamed. “*For it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes*”. Here was this little Jewish tent maker telling the world about a peasant Jewish man who had died in a manor reserved for the worst of criminals, yet to this Paul says boldly, “***I am: a debtor, ready to preach, not ashamed***!” And in verse 16 Paul gives his readers **four reasons why he felt that way about the message**:

1. **Its origin**: ***It was the gospel of Christ***! Any message that was given by Caesar would have the immediate attention of all Romans. But Paul says that this message isn’t just from Christ it is about Christ, who in the very first sentence called the message the gospel of God. Why would anyone be ashamed of a message that originates from God and is about God?
2. **Its operation**: ***It is the power of God***! The word “*power*” is the word in which we get our English word dynamite and Paul says that the gospel carries enough power to break through the walls of a harden heart. But this power is not ***destructive*** it is ***constructive*** as it saves people from the bondage of their own passions and past! As powerful as Rome was one writer of that time described it as “*a cesspool of iniquity*”. Rome had the power to destroy every nation it encountered but it couldn’t defeat their own sinful passions which were destroying them like a cancer. Paul had seen the gospel work in the darkest reaches of the human soul, and he would write in Col. 1:13 saying that “*He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love*.”
3. **Its outcome**: ***Unto Salvation***! The word “*salvation*” had a meaning of personal and national deliverance as the Roman emperor was looked upon as a savior from captivity as was a doctor was from illness. But here we see that those two areas are limited as Paul declares that this salvation everyone.
4. **Its outreach**: ***To everyone that believes***! Faith is the acknowledgment of our own inability and God’s ability! As a Christian we can say:
* Of the past, “I was saved”
* Of the present, I’m being saved
* Of the future, I will be saved

And such salvation is from the ***penalty, power and presence*** of sin! If you trusted God than you would be saved ill regardless of whom you were and what you had done. God doesn’t ask people to “***behave***” He asks them to “***believe***” as it is trust in Jesus finished work on the cross that saves the sinner like me.

Vs. 17 This is the key verse in all of Paul’s letter, the “***righteousness of God revealed***”. The word “*righteousness*” is a favorite of Paul’s it is used over 60 times. In the death of Jesus, God revealed His righteousness by punishing sin; and in the resurrection God revealed His righteousness by making salvation available to the believing sinner. This truth is the answer to the question of, “*How a Holy God can forgive sinful people and still be holy*?” In the law the Jews thought that righteous was by “works” but as Paul will teach all the law did was reveal that God is Holy and God and we are incapable of working out our salvation by being good.

**Romans**

**“The Righteousness of God Revealed”**

1. **Introduction: 1:1-15**
2. **Thanksgiving: 1:8-15**

**Romans 1:8-17 “I am not ashamed”**

1. **Intro**
2. **Vs. 8-15 Eight characteristics of a transformed heart**
3. **Vs. 16-17 A debtor, ready to preach, not ashamed**

**I. Intro**

Rome was a city where Caesar Nero would dress 1,000’s of Christians in the skins of lambs and throw them to the lions then taunt them by saying, “*Where is your Good Shepherd now*?” He would dip Christians in hot wax and light them in his garden and say, “*Now you are a light of the world*.” Rome was the entertainment capital of the world and was so wicked that even Hollywood would be forced to blush, where the acceptable greeting of the day was “Caesar is lord”. Yet it is to this place that Paul declared that he was not ashamed of the gospel. Faith is not only the starting point of our salvation it is the staying power of our salvation. Paul wrote in Col. 2:6 “*As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him*”. That is why when Paul wrote to the Galatians in 3:3 he said “*Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh*?”

**II. Vs. 8-15 Eight characteristics of a transformed heart**

Vs. 8-15 Paul writes of his desire to come to Rome and we are told in Act. 2:10 how there were people from Rome among the Jews present at the Day of Pentecostal, so when they returned home that was a start of the church. Along with this Christians continually migrated to Rome from all parts of the empire. Paul knew many of the Christians in Rome by name but he knew two things about them and every Christian. He knew they were ***beloved of God*** and ***that they were saints***. In verses 8-16a as we look at Paul’s words that he wrote about what he was thankful for, I see ***8 characteristics of a transformed heart***:

1. Vs. 8 **A thankful heart**: Paul didn’t say “*I thank my God through Jesus Christ for around 40% of you as the other 60% drive me nuts*!” Saint’s nothing speaks louder of the transformation that God has done in our heart than the love we have for one another! Notice though that he thanked God for their faith spoken throughout the whole world. Such thanksgiving came by way of Jesus, which reminds us that we have the privilege of saying “*my God*” because we have made God’s Son our Lord. The evidence of this was in the fact that Paul gave thanks for “all believers”. Dear ones ***our thankfulness must not rest upon the circumstance turning out the way we attended but on the fact that said circumstances lay in nail scared hands of the One who died for us.*** Paul thanks God not for their faith unto salvation he thanks God for His work in them as they lived out that faith! The church in Rome wasn’t famous because of their pastor, the size of their congregation or their building. No, ***they were famous because the way they lived out Who they believed in***.
2. Vs. 9-10a **A concerned heart**: Though ***Paul was thankful for what God had been doing, he was prayerful towards God at what still needed to be done.*** The word “*serve*” here is also translated worship. The phrase “*without ceasing* “with regards to prayer speaks of a tickle in the throat is reflexive. Friends that is how we should be in our prayer life, when someone irritates you constantly like a cough then just keep clearing your heart of that irritant by speaking to the Father about them until things have cleared up. Paul concluded two actions as worship:
3. Speaking of the “*goodness of His master*” to a world that didn’t know Him.
4. Lifting up prayers on behalf of others without ceasing.

***Paul’s worship of God was best seen not in the songs he sang but in speaking to people about God and speaking to God about people***! To Paul most of these Christians whom he had never met were never taken of his prayer chain. Far too often we are committed to prayer for folks when things aren’t going well but here we get an encouragement to continue in prayer for folks so that things continue to go well.

1. Vs. 10b **A willing heart**: Paul had a heart that was not only willing to prayer for folks he was willing to be the answer to the prayer as well. Yet such eagerness to be used of God never went outside God’s plan in doing so. He was ready, willing and available but only according the will of his Master. Paul never thought of “*demanding things from God*” or by his prayers trying to sway God away from His perfect will to his imperfect plan.
2. Vs. 11 **A loving heart**: Paul wanted to go to Rome to serve the people not to get something from them. In Col. 1:28 Paul explained what his goal was, “*everywhere we go, we tell everyone about Christ. We warn them and teach them with all the wisdom God has given us, for we want to present them to God, perfect in their relationship to Christ*.” The gift Paul wanted to give them was “spiritual” that would further “establish” them.
3. Vs. 12 **A humble heart**: Paul realized that those believers had spiritual gifts that would help establish him as well. Dear ones ***the greatest teachers are always the ones that desire to learn more than they desire to teach***! Consider this that Paul one of the greatest theologians was willing to learn and receive from Roman Christian’s who were novices in their faith. A teachable heart is that is willing to receive teaching regardless of who God chooses as the instrument of instruction is the key to spiritual growth.
4. Vs. 13 **A optimistic heart**: Paul tells the Roman Church of his desire and plans to visit them but this was not a social call it was a call to bear fruit. He was a big proponent of “*Where God guides, God provides*” and believed that God was going to do a work there in Rome. According to Phillip. 4:22 the outcome of that optimism included those from Caesars household. We will never accomplish great works for God’s kingdom if we don’t believe that God will enable us accomplish what He has called us to do.
5. Vs. 14 **A committed heart**: Prior to Paul’s conversion Paul was committed to destroying the gospel and anyone that promoted it but after having personally been transformed by the Love of God Paul saw himself a debtor to every person who like him ignorantly or willfully hadn’t encountered the transforming power of the Love of God.
6. Vs. 15 **A ready heart**: Paul was not only willing he was eager to fulfill what God had called him too. Life had but one value, “to do God’s work” and this value consumed him. In this letter Paul loves the phrase “I am ready”; it served as his motto in life. In Acts 9:6 the 2nd words out of Paul’s mouth after his conversion was “*Lord, what do you want me to do?*” In
* Rom. 1:15 Paul said he was ready to preach and to serve
* Act. 21:13Paul said he was ready to suffer
* 2 Cor. 10:6 Paul said he was ready to do unpleasant work
* 2 Tim. 4:6 Paul said he was ready to die

Paul would have never guessed that when he would be sent to Rome it would be at the governments expense. When we pray for something, God may grant us the blessing; but it may be in a way that we never looked for. You shall go to Rome, Paul; but you shall go in chains."

**III. Vs. 16-17 A debtor, ready to preach, not ashamed**

Vs. 16-17 In a sophisticated city like Rome, some might be embarrassed by a gospel centered on a crucified Jewish savior, embraced by the lowest classes of people - but Paul is not ashamed. “*For it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes*”. Here was this little Jewish tent maker telling the world about a peasant Jewish man who had died in a manor reserved for the worst of criminals, yet to this Paul says boldly, “***I am: a debtor, ready to preach, not ashamed***!” And in verse 16 Paul gives his readers **four reasons why he felt that way about the message**:

1. **Its origin**: ***It was the gospel of Christ***! Any message that was given by Caesar would have the immediate attention of all Romans. But Paul says that this message isn’t just from Christ it is about Christ, who in the very first sentence called the message the gospel of God. Why would anyone be ashamed of a message that originates from God and is about God?
2. **Its operation**: ***It is the power of God***! The word “*power*” is the word in which we get our English word dynamite and Paul says that the gospel carries enough power to break through the walls of a harden heart. But this power is not ***destructive*** it is ***constructive*** as it saves people from the bondage of their own passions and past! As powerful as Rome was one writer of that time described it as “*a cesspool of iniquity*”. Rome had the power to destroy every nation it encountered but it couldn’t defeat their own sinful passions which were destroying them like a cancer. Paul had seen the gospel work in the darkest reaches of the human soul, and he would write in Col. 1:13 saying that “*He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love*.”
3. **Its outcome**: ***Unto Salvation***! The word “*salvation*” had a meaning of personal and national deliverance as the Roman emperor was looked upon as a savior from captivity as was a doctor was from illness. But here we see that those two areas are limited as Paul declares that this salvation everyone.
4. **Its outreach**: ***To everyone that believes***! Faith is the acknowledgment of our own inability and God’s ability! As a Christian we can say:
* Of the past, “I was saved”
* Of the present, I’m being saved
* Of the future, I will be saved

And such salvation is from the ***penalty, power and presence*** of sin! If you trusted God than you would be saved ill regardless of whom you were and what you had done. God doesn’t ask people to “***behave***” He asks them to “***believe***” as it is trust in Jesus finished work on the cross that saves the sinner like me.

Vs. 17 This is the key verse in all of Paul’s letter, the “***righteousness of God revealed***”. The word “*righteousness*” is a favorite of Paul’s it is used over 60 times. In the death of Jesus, God revealed His righteousness by punishing sin; and in the resurrection God revealed His righteousness by making salvation available to the believing sinner. This truth is the answer to the question of, “*How a Holy God can forgive sinful people and still be holy*?” In the law the Jews thought that righteous was by “works” but as Paul will teach all the law did was reveal that God is Holy and God and we are incapable of working out our salvation by being good.

**Romans**

**“The Righteousness of God Revealed”**

**III. Main Teaching: 1:18-15:13**

**Chp. 1:18-4:25 Coming under Grace**

**Romans 1:18-32 “Four Stages of a Godless Society”**

1. **Intro**
2. **Vs. 18-20 Unintelligence**
3. **Vs. 21-23 Willful Ignorance**
4. **Vs. 24-27 Self Indulgence**
5. **Vs. 28-32 Unreligious**

**I. Intro**

Paul having declared that the “*righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith*” now from verse 18 to chapter 3:20 precedes to show his readers that man has no righteousness of his own both by nature and choice mankind is completely unsuited to be in the presence of a Holy God. Mankind is guilty and can do nothing to change his condition. ***If God doesn’t intervene than the case is closed***! In verses 18-32 Paul’s view is the pagan gentile world and he declares that they are as a whole ungodly and unrighteous. The greatest peril facing the human race is the wrath. When you think of the wrath of God most think of lighting coming down upon someone or condemning someone to hell but in this section we see that ***God’s judgment upon man is to leave them to what they want***! Paul was writing this letter to Roman believers in a city where the first 520 years of the Roman Empire there had not been one single case of divorce. But things had changed, Roman philosopher Seneca said that at this time “*Women were married to be divorced and divorced to be married.*” He went on to say that Rome was “*stricken with the agitation of a soul that could no longer master itself. Money had become the ruin of the true honor of things.*” And the Roman poet Juvenal said of this time that, “*No guilt of deed of lust was wanting since poverty disappeared in Rome*.” One Chinese man who had never read the Bible read the first chapter of the book of Romans and told his missionary friend, “*I thought you said that this book was an old book, how can it be so old if it so accurately speaks about the events going on in China today*?” ***This section is a great example not of evolution but the four stages in man’s devolution***!

**II. Vs. 18-20 Unintelligence**

1. 1:18-20 **Unintelligence**: Human history began with mankind knowing God, not man worshipping idols than evolving to the worship the One True God. God revealed himself through His creation from the things He created. Though mankind knew the truth about God they didn’t allow this truth to work in their lives. Instead they suppressed the truth so that they could live life the way they wanted and not be convicted by God’s truth.

The pagan nations are without excuse for their present ignorance and condition because when they knew God, they chose not to thank Him or worship Him. Instead they choose to create god’s according to their imaginations, all the while claiming that they were more intelligent than everybody else. For Paul the fear of righteous judgment from a Holy God upon unholy people was the first motivation for people seek God’s righteousness as they clearly had none of their own. People will not seek out the wonders of God’s available grace until they know the perfect demands of God’s Holy Law. A person has no reason to seek salvation from their sin until they realize its power and penalty over them. We will not ever want the “*good news*” until we have comprehended truly how “*bad the news is about us*”. Paul proves why the human race is guilty before God by using two phrases:

1. **Ungodliness**: Which refers to man's offenses against God
2. **Unrighteousness**: Which refers to the sins of man against man

The word “*suppress*” is a Greek word that means to steer a boat against the current and what this says is that the “*current*” wants to take us towards the truth about God but our flesh wants to take us in the opposite direction.

Vs. 19-20 The phrase “*the things that are made*” is one word in the Greek, Poima in which we get our English word Poem from. Paul declares that ***God’s creation is a glorious poem, a work of art that is fitted together in a majestic hymn***. The same word is used in Eph. 2:10 where we are told that we are His work of art created in Christ Jesus unto good works. Paganism and idolatry are not steps in human evolution to enlightenment, from “*slime to divinity*”. God’s creation is His billboard as to His nature as it continually proclaims His character, nature and intentions to His creation. Robert Jastrow, an astrophysicist and director of NASA’s Goddard Institute for Space Studies said, “*We see how the astronomical evidence supports the biblical view of the origin of the world….the essential elements in the astronomical and biblical accounts of Genesis are the same. Consider the enormousness of the problem: Science has proved the universe exploded into being at a certain moment. It asks what cause produced this effect? Who or what put the matter and energy into the Universe? And science cannot answer these questions….For the scientist who has lived by his faith in the power of reason, the story ends like a bad dream. He has scaled the mountains of his ignorance; he is about to conquer the highest peak; as he pulls himself over the final rock, he is greeted by a band of theologians who have been there for centuries*.”

**III. Vs. 21-23 Willful Ignorance**

1. 1:21-23 **Ignorance**: Man knew God but didn’t want to because then He would have to honor God. Mankind is willing to use God’s gifting but only in ways that he will get the praise for it. The result of this is an empty mind and a darkened heart. The first thing that God exchanged the worship of God for was of course himself.

Vs. 22-23 Paul describes the character of fallen man by giving two reasons why everyone is born under God’s judgment:

1. **Professing to be wise, they became fools**: Fallen mankind justifies themselves by rationalizing their sin. The evidence supports intelligent design not random chance yet if the atheist and non believer admit that than they the logical outcome is that the God that created and designed me would have a specific function and purpose for me. So rather than admit that people suppress the truth that they see all around them so that they can continue living the way they want.
2. **And change the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like..**: This rejection of God’s truth inevitably leads to fallen man creating his own religion. Natural man is not “***basically good***” but he is “***basically religious***”! Anthropology in every corner of our globe and in every culture has proved this; by suppressing the worship of the true God they have instead fashioned icons and idols that represent these *four things*. Looking at the automotive industry we can see that the first cars were named after their makers “*Ford, Chrysler, Dodge, etc*.” But as models progressed so too did the names to “*T-bird, Hawk, Falcon, Eagle*” than that changed to four footed things like, “*Impala, Rabbit, Cougar*”. Then finally it has gone too creepy things, “*Cobra, Viper, and Gremlin*.”

**IV. Vs. 24-27 Self Indulgence**

1. 1:24-27 **Indulgence**: From idolatry to immorality in just one short step. If man is his own god than he can do whatever he pleases to fulfill his desires without the fear of judgment. The natural result of self-deification is always self-indulgence and Paul mentions the sins which were so prevalent in the Roman empire. Because of this God gave them up to which means that He permitted them to go on in their sins and reap the sad consequences of their behavior.

Three times we are told that “*God gave them up*” first to uncleanness and then to vile affections. Then finally we are told that “*God gave them over*” to a debase mind. ***If people exchange the truth of God for a lie and worship and serve the creation instead of the Creator the whole order of nature becomes violated***.

1. Vs. 24 **The first “*God gave them over*” to widespread sexual immorality**. The degrading, dishonoring use of our body for selfish reasons. Immorality is a result of the idolatry that men fall into. When God gives people over to this it means that He allows them to pursue what they want and this seems to always seen in the area of human sexuality. The societal restraints on morality are removed and people began to sow their wild oats but God does so that they will realize that they can’t do so without reaping the results.
2. Vs. 25-27 **The second “*God gave them over*” to homosexuality**. Because people exchanged the truth of God for a lie they became confused sexually and exchange the God created procreation and the natural use for intimacy (man for woman and woman for man) for that which is unnatural. When Paul was writing this the Greek philosophers had exchanged the truth of God for a lie such as Socrates. Legal marriage between same gender couples was recognized, and even some of the emperors married other men. At the time of Paul’s writing, Nero had taken a boy named Sporus and had him castrated, then married him (*with a full ceremony*), brought him to the palace with a great procession, and made the boy his "wife." Later, Nero lived with another man, and Nero was the "wife." The lie is that somehow homosexuality is biological a “*genetic trait*” which cannot be helped and therefore must be encouraged. Paul says that those who practice this behavior receive “*the penalty of their error which was due*”. One of the things that is noticeable among homosexuality is that they lose their sense of identity as men who are masculine by nature act out as feminine and women who were created feminine begin to act masculine. All of this sexual confusion mars God’s design for male and female.

**V. Vs. 28-32 Unreligious**

1. 1:28-32 **Impenitence**: When mankind began this downfall you would think that they would repent and seek the true and living God but just the opposite is true. Because he was left to his own ways by God he only grew worse, so God further gives them over to a depraved mind that cannot discern right from wrong. Paul finishes off by listing 24 specific sins all which are commonly practiced today. They not only do these 24 things they cheer society on in doing them as well.
2. Vs. 28-32 **Finally “*God gave them over*” to** **the exploitation of others**. In this terrible list of sins are ***the marks of a civilization on the brink of collapse*** as they ***reflect a contempt and arrogant disregard for others, a desire to exploit other people for personal gain***. The term “*debased mind*” in verse 28 literally means ***a mindset that cannot be lived with as it refuses to fit into any societal boundaries and instead seek to legalize all and every immoral behavior***.

The list in Rom. 1:29-31 gives concrete examples of the kind of things which are not fitting. Notice how “*socially acceptable*” sins such as covetousness, envy and pride are included right along with “*socially unacceptable*” sins such as murder and being unloving. English Historian Edward Gibbon wrote 6 volume work called “*The Rise and Fall of the Roman Empire*”. He offers an explanation of why the Roman Empire fell makes the observation that 14 out of the last 15 emperors were practicing homosexuals who appointed homosexual generals and commanders. He believed that this made all of Rome and especially the military effeminate and ease pry to invading barbarians. All people are born sinners but no one is born a homosexual in the end there still is a choice.

 Saint’s, do not make the mistake of thinking that this passage lists the people God can’t stand. This passage is about showing us the very group of people God desires to redeem. In Luke 17:28-30 Jesus said that “*Likewise as it was also in the days of Lot… Even so will it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed.*” One of the signs of the end times according to Jesus is the celebration of homosexuality. When Paul was writing this letter he was in Corinth where homosexuality was being practiced everywhere yet when the gospel of Christ came in Paul writes 1 Cor. 6:9-11 that though “*fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, homosexuals, sodomites, thieves, covetous, drunkards, revilers, and extortioners would not inherit the kingdom of God*.” He goes on to say “*And such* ***were*** *some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.*”

**Romans**

**“The Righteousness of God Revealed”**

**III. Main Teaching: 1:18-15:13**

**Chp. 1:18-4:25 Coming under Grace**

**Romans 2:1-16 “Games People Play”**

1. **Intro**
2. **Vs. 1-4 Mirror, mirror on the wall**
3. **Vs. 5-11 Depositing in the right account**
4. **Vs. 12-16 I can still see you**

**I. Intro**

In chapter 1:18 Paul declared that the “*wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men*” the moralist and the self-righteous would be quick to agree indicting the “*obvious sinner*”. So in the 2nd chapter Paul writes about the self-righteous moralist in verses 1-16 and the self-righteous Jews in verses 17-29.

The moralist, a group of culture, refinement and education was most likely followers of philosophies like the Stoics who lead moral and outwardly righteous lives. But philosophy cannot preserve its followers from indulging in the flesh, culture cannot cleanse a heart nor can education alter our nature.

**II. Vs. 1-4 Mirror, mirror on the wall**

Vs. 1 If there is any here among us that have never passed judgment upon others than you may skip this section as it doesn’t apply to you. But if you are like me than you’d better pay attention because this section is for us. To start with Paul makes two very important points:

1. “*Therefore you are inexcusable, O man, whoever you are who judge, for in whatever you judge another you condemn yourself*”: Paul indicates that ***those that judge do so because they know right from wrong, otherwise they would not presume to judge***. These people are clearly aware that wrong actions merit judgment, upon those who do them, what they are ignorant of is what Paul’s 2nd point is all about.
2. “*for you who judge practice the same things*”: Paul, says *these same people who are standing over others are as guilty as the very ones they have judged.* In John 8:3-9 the religious leaders through a naked lady caught in the act of adultery right in the middle of His bible study and said, “*Master, Moses said she should be killed, what do you say*?” I’m certain they thought they had Jesus, because if He said, “*Let her go*!” then he would be going against the Bible and if He said, “*Kill her*!” than He would no longer be the friend of sinners. But Jesus just bent down and started writing in the dirt like He never heard them. Then after a while He said “*Let he who is without sin throw the first stone!*” And each one of those fellows dropped the rock that was in their hand and walked away. What did Jesus write in the dirt that day that caused those self-righteous men to drop their stones and walk off? Well the answer lies in the word “*wrote*” as it means “*to write against*”. I think Jesus wrote the name of every guy who had a rock in his hand and beside each name a place or a time in which they had a fantasy and entertained doing the same thing they had caught the gal doing. Jesus had said in Matt. 5:22 that if you lusted in your heart you committed adultery and every one of those men had at sometime committed adultery in their hearts. ***In my own life I see three reasons why that I am guilty of doing the same things I judge others for***.
3. **Blind Spots**: I think all humans have “*blind spots*” to many of our own faults and attitudes. We simply don’t see that we do the same things that we judge others for. We are even surprised when someone sees our faults and protest saying, “*Don’t you think I know myself*?” The answer is NO! Proverbs 21:2 says that “***Every way of a man is right in his own eyes, but the Lord weighs the hearts***.” The truth is our sin always becomes visible on other people!
4. **Selective Memory Loss**: We all seem to suffer from this; we always seem to remember every wrong done by others towards us and every good we have done towards others. In fact if married when we have a disagreement with our spouse we possess an amazing clarity of their wrongs and our rights but we never seem to be able to recall the opposite.
5. **Name Games**: The final way we don’t see this in our lives is that we have developed a cleaver way of renaming things with regards to our actions and attitudes: *Others have pride*, I just have good self-esteem. *Others have a bad temper*, I’m just passionate. *Others nag*, I’m just encouraging. *Others are gossiping*, I’m just sharing my opinion. *Others are critical*, I’m correcting. *Others are negative*, I’m just being realistic.

Vs. 2-4 Next Paul develops the 2nd part of his argument by asking two questions:

1. Vs. 2-3 “*Now we know that God's judgment against those who do such things is based on truth. So when you, a mere man, pass judgment on them and yet do the same things, do you think you will escape God's judgment*?” How ridiculous it is to hope that the God who sees all both inside and outside somehow will judge others for the same things we are guilty of and yet let us slide. When we begin to ask, “*Why, doesn’t God just judge people*?” In saying this Paul is asking each of us to examine our own hearts and start being critical of our own attitudes and actions instead of others. It has been pointed out that there are **four ways a person can escape justice**:
2. *If no one knows about their offences*
3. *If they can escape beyond the bounds of jurisdiction*
4. *If there has been a failure in the legal process after arrest*
5. *If they escape from prison and hide from the law*

But none of those situations will work when a person is trying to escape the judgment of God. ***The darkest sin is not righteousness violated it is, mercy despised***.

1. Vs. 4 “*Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness leads you toward repentance*?” Paul’s second question is since you know that those who judge aren’t going to escape the same judgment, why are you not take the opportunity God is giving you to repent? There was a woman who quickly grabbed a few cookies from a vendor at the airport before she got on her plane. She set next to a man with an empty seat between them. After the plane was in the air she reached into the empty seat and grabbed a cookie then noticed that the man next to her did the same thing. Shocked she gave him a looked to show her disapproval than grabbed another cookie and so did the man but instead of eating the whole cookie he broke it in half and gave her the other half. Throughout the rest of the flight she was so angry she couldn’t speak. After the plane and the man got off she was about to complain to the stewardess when she opened her purse only to realize that her bag of cookies was still inside. That’s the way we are when we are self-righteous about another’s sin: We are partaking of the same cookie while complaining about others eating ours.

The moralist like the obvious sinner had set aside ***three things about God’s kindness***:

1. God’s “***Goodness***”: He had not judged them for their past sin, though they deserve it.
2. His “***Forbearance***”: His kindness with regard to their present sin. That very moment they had fallen short of His glory, yet He held back His judgment.
3. His “***Longsuffering***”: His kindness to them in regard to their future sin as He knows that we will sin tomorrow and the next day, yet He holds back His judgment.

People mistake God’s patience towards their sin as forgetfulness! They think, “*If God was really concerned about my sinful actions then He would strike me dead*!” God’s patience isn’t ***approval*** or ***indifference***; He’s giving us time to have a change of heart about Him and our sin.

**III. Vs. 5-11 Depositing in the right account**

Vs. 5 Paul points out that such judgment upon the obvious sinner should have brought the moralist to humble repentance instead of an attitude of superiority. It’s amazing how we expect that in our case God should exercise some favoritism. We just assume that God will overlook areas of sin without us ever having to agree with Him and call them what they are, SIN! Jesus encourages us in Matthew 6:20 to “*lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal*.” ***The truth is people are constantly making deposits to their account the only question is what bank have you deposited your treasures in***? Hey did you notice that, ***God doesn’t drive us to repentance He draws us to repentance***?

Vs. 6-11 We are either saved by faith in Christ alone or we will be judged by our works and surprisingly most people choose to be judged by their works. That is the case of the moralist as he believes that God judges on the curve and their self-righteousness they are always looking in the rearview mirror at folks whose outward sin is more obvious. But God doesn’t judge by man’s standard He judges on His Son’s standard which is perfection.

 The word “*Partiality*” in verse 11 comes from two ancient Greek words put together – “*to receive and face*” thus the word means to judge things on the basis of externals or pre-conceived notions. ***God's judgment is not withheld because someone has heard the truth; it is withheld if they act on the truth***. Far too often people think they are saved because they heard the truth and know the truth but hearing and knowing offer no security apart from responding.

**IV. Vs. 12-16 I can still see you**

Vs. 12-16 In the gospel God found a way to condemn our sin and to destroy it without destroying us. When we want to correct sinful people we punish them by imprisoning them, sometimes to protect society, we take their lives. But God doesn’t do that, He changes people from self-centeredness to selflessness. Only in Christ are we more than just paying our debt to society, we are new creations and we have the privilege to continually pay our debt of love to all of society not just our victims. In this last section Paul takes up the person that is religious, who has an understanding of the truth; his problem is that he just doesn’t live by it himself while demanding that others do. ***God is going to ask each person what they think is right and wrong and then He is going to ask them if they lived by their own standard all the time***. In conclusion we see **six principals of God’s judgment**:

1. Vs. 2 **It’s according to truth**: God sees beyond the facts to the motives
2. Vs. 5 **It’s according to accumulated guilt**: God does not act quickly but gives ample time for the person to treasure up his judgment.
3. Vs. 6 **It’s according to works**: According to Rev. 20:11-15 God will open the books upon every single person and will judge based upon what He has recorded.
4. Vs. 11 **It’s without respect of persons**: God sees people through His eyes of Holiness according to truth not according to human popularity. He alone is impartial!
5. Vs. 13 **It’s according to performance, not knowledge**: Hearing God’s word has no advantage if it is not followed by obedience. *There is no lie so destructive in satan’s entire arsenal then the false peace that comes upon a person who thinks knowing God’s truth is the same as obeying God’s truth*!
6. Vs. 16 **It’s reaches into the secrets of the heart**: God’s judgment comprehends the very secrets of a person’s heart.

Hearing the Word of God does not ensure us being “doers” of the Word of God. James 1:22 in the NIV says, “*Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.*” God has so designed His word that it is not merely informational it is transformational. ***So as you read the Bible, as you listen to the teaching of the word don’t just write down things you didn’t know right down things you want God to change about you***!

**Romans**

**“The Righteousness of God Revealed”**

**III. Main Teaching: 1:18-15:13**

**Chp. 1:18-4:25 Coming under Grace**

**Romans 2:17-29 “Like God, Like People?”**

1. **Intro**
2. **Vs. 17-20 Right advantages, wrong conclusions**
3. **Vs. 21-24 Are you like the God you profess?**
4. **Vs. 25-29 The Peril of presumption**

**I. Intro**

In verse 11 Paul wrote to the moralist that ***with God there is no respecter of persons***, but the religious Jew would be thinking, “*That is true with moral and immoral Gentiles but not when compared with religious Jews*!” So in verses 17-29 Paul outlines for his readers that this statement is true for all people, even religious people. Jews were convinced that God had given them special favor based upon three things:

* National descent from Abraham
* The outward sign of circumcision
* The Word of God

 Yet that very Word said in Deut. 7:7 that, “*The Lord did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any other people, for you were the least of all peoples*”. ***Paul argues that what makes a person a child of God isn’t national origin, a mark on their flesh or a book in their library it is a matter of personal transformation in the heart by simple truth in Jesus***. The fact is most Jews were despised by Gentiles as they had received extraordinary privileges from the Roman Government that no other people group enjoyed which further infuriated most gentiles.

* ***They were allowed to transport the temple tax every year to Jerusalem which was forbidden by every other occupied country***
* ***They were allowed to have their own courts and live according to their own laws***
* ***They were allowed to continue the practice the Sabbath and not work but still receive compensation***
* ***They were exempt from being forced to join the Roman army***

These special compensations no doubt fueled the world’s hatred but it wasn’t the only reason. What bothered the gentiles the most was the Jews contempt and hatred for all people that were not Jews. In Isaiah 49:6 God says that He had given Israel “*as a light to the Gentiles, that You should be My salvation to the ends of the earth*.” ***No person can be missionary to a group of people whom they have contempt for***. If asked directions the Jew’s wouldn’t respond except to another Jew! If someone was thirsty they wouldn’t give them a drink of water. If a fly landed on them they would go through ceremonial washing not because of the fly but because it may have landed upon a Gentile. Folks, God’s promises are not a matter of pedigree but a matter of character transformed by God.

**II. Vs. 17-20 Right advantages, wrong conclusions**

Vs. 17-18 Paul starts out with the claim then its privileges:

1. They were proud of their name “*Jew*” which comes from Judah and means “*praise*”, ***they saw themselves as those who were to be praised***!
2. Second they were proud of 5 privileges which caused them to boast and Paul points out that ***with special privileges come special responsibilities.*** He lists five advantages the Jews of his day had in their position before God.
3. Vs. 17a *They rejoiced in having the law*: The Jewish people of Paul's day were proud of the fact that God gave His holy law. ***They believed this confirmed their status as a specially chosen people, and thus insured their salvation***. There are a great many today who also boast that they have the Bible and good teaching available to them, some even boast in the translation they use.
4. Vs. 17b *They boasted in their relationship to God*: They felt that they had an inside track to God. Every now and again you hear people boast that because of a specific doctrine or an affiliation with a particular group that they have a special standing with God, that only those who share their truth can boast of.
5. Vs. 18a *They knew the will of God*: They not only had the scriptures they had the prophets and direct revelation of God and what was on His heart. There are those today that think that they have special insight through God’s word or an in house profit that others don’t have.
6. Vs. 19 *They took pride in morally superiority*: They had a list and checked it twice and didn’t hang out with those who were naughty and not nice. Many in the church today take pride in the things they don’t do and believe that God is impressed as well. “*We don’t dance, we don’t play cards, and we don’t go to the movies*.”
7. Vs. 20 *They saw themselves as instructors of the foolish*: They could quote whole books and sections of the Bible from memory and felt that this qualified them to instruct those who were childish.

These qualities became a source of identity which led them into the false thinking that those 5 privileges which led them to make 4 conclusions that they believed to be true about themselves.

1. Vs. 19a *They were guides to the blind*: Because of their unique standing with God they were given the right to correct those around them. They needed to ***inform*** the unfortunates who either because of the lack of advantage or stupidity needed to be guided.
2. Vs. 19b *They were a light to those who were in darkness*: They saw themselves as the ***illumination*** to all who dwelt in darkness, the expert that would bring the needed clarity to all who stumbled around in the night.
3. Vs. 20a *They were the instructor of the foolish*: They were ***the moral and ethical police*** if you will that needed to be on patrol 24/7 to set right those who were behaving beneath their standards.
4. Vs. 20b *They were the teachers of babes*: Their egos were so large that they thought themselves as ***the mentors*** for those who didn’t share their insight.

They were outwardly correct but inwardly arrogant full of pride which led them to be boastful and bitter.

**III. Vs. 21-24 Are you like the God you profess?**

Vs. 21-24 The Jews were notorious in the Roman empire of being overly shrewd in business dealings taking advantage of people to make a buck, yet they never considered that stealing. They also weren’t too strict on a little hanky-panky with slave girls that they dealt with, all the while condemning adultery. They had no problem doing business with pagan temples even though they denounced the idols worshipped there.

It all comes down to practice above possession, “*If you have the law, do you keep it*?” Judaism in Paul's day interpreted the law so that they thought they were able to keep it. Yet in Matt. 5:19-48 Jesus exposed the error of such interpretations. God will hold us accountable for both motives and actions. In Amos 3:2 the prophet writes “*You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities*.” ***The truth is with greater privilege comes greater responsibility***.

 There is nothing more repugnant than a person who is boastful of their religion yet in their actions and attitudes discredit the very religion they profess! Folks that’s the problem with self-righteousness; it gives the skeptic and the cynic reasons to not listen and obey the truth of the God’s word. ***There are folks who take an exact record of how many THEY win to Jesus but they take no record of how many THEY have driven away***. “*Like God, like people, like people like God*!” Oh dear ones that very statement ought to cause us to reexamine our concept of our relationship with God.

**IV. Vs. 25-29 The Peril of presumption**

Vs. 25-27 Circumcision was:

1. An identification of God’s covenant people, an outward sign of an inward reality.
2. An illustration of how God dealt with our old nature, the flesh which is clarified in the O.T.
* Exodus 6:12 speaks of the circumcision of the lips
* Jeremiah 6:10 speaks of the circumcision of the ears
* Ezekiel 44 speaks of the circumcision of the heart

God’s people were to cut away the areas of their lives so that they would “*speak tenderly*” “*listen with compassion*” and “*feel and act with brokenness and humility*” and they fell into the illusion that because they were circumcised outwardly that this was what God wanted. ***Outward expression means nothing if it isn’t accompanied by inward experience.*** The Christian church need only substitute *baptism, confirmation or church membership* to immolate the same pride as they rest upon those things as a sign that they belong to God. But Paul says that these things are worthless unless something has happened that changed the heart. It isn’t a matter if you were ***baptized, galvanized or pasteurized*** it is only a matter of if you have only trusted in Jesus’ finished work on the cross on your behalf!!!!

Vs. 28-29 Finally Paul says that their religion is worthless if it doesn’t hold to the reality that God intended. Religious folks have two dangers:

1. ***The Peril of Presumption***: Nothing is easier than self-righteousness and self-deception. ***The greater the knowledge, the greater the danger in being content with information without transformation***!!! Without transformed hearts we may well become occupied with Christian work, Christian people, and Christian terminology all the while never encountering the new transformed life that comes from the Spirit of God. Jesus said in Matthew 7:22-23 “*Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness*!'” The greater the privilege the greater the peril, the higher the delight the more imperative the duty!
2. ***The Peril of Formalism***: The lesson from circumcision is that the religious seal and the spiritual reality are separable. Circumcision, baptism, church attendance etc. is just an outward sign and no guarantee of an inward reality. Just because a person has participated in applying the sign doesn’t mean that what the sign was meant to signify is being applied! ***To trust in the sign of circumcision all the while not living a circumcised life was the height of hypocrisy. The word of God profits no one when it is only honored on a shelf and not lived out in a life***! God sees reality and recognizes it as righteousness; people see outward ritual and recognize it as righteousness!

The last verse contains a pun “*The praise of such a man comes not from men but from God*”. In the Greek the word “*praise*” is taken from the Hebrew word for praise which is “*Judah*”. Paul is saying two things by the use of this pun:

1. That the “*praise*” of such a man comes not from men but from God
2. That the “*Jewishness*” of such a man comes not from men but from God

**Romans**

**“The Righteousness of God Revealed”**

**III. Main Teaching: 1:18-15:13**

**Chp. 1:18-4:25 Coming under Grace**

**Romans 3:1-8 “Feelin alright; not feelin to good myself”**

1. **Intro**
2. **Vs. 1-2 God’s Librarians**
3. **Vs. 3-4 Special People, Special Life**
4. **Vs. 5-8 Evangelizing the Evangelists**

**I. Intro**

In the movie “***Fiddler on the Roof***” Tevye asks God, “*I know, I know. We are Your chosen people. But, once in a while, can't You choose someone else*?” Looking at the tragic history of the Jewish people it is hard to see how anyone would see an advantage of being Jewish. Their history has been one of slavery, hardship, warfare, persecution, captivity, humiliation and mass murder. In 70 A.D. over a million Jews of all ages were butchered and over 100,000 that survived were sold into slavery. In A.D. 115 600,000 men were killed when they rebelled against Rome. And of course in the 1940’s 6 million were murdered! Yet the reality is that in spite of this they are chosen by God to be the people to whom God would bring forth the Messiah, the savior for all humanity.

Chapter 3 is divided with the first eight verses being an imaginary dialogue with an objecting religious Jew. The second part of this chapter Paul deals with mankind’s condition before God, (all have sinned). I can picture Paul debating some distinguished old Jewish Rabbi, where he tells him that the only thing that makes him right before God is faith in the Messiah Jesus. In the first 8 verses of chapter three Paul offers up what he anticipated would be three arguments to his position that all three groups were under the wrath of God because of unrighteousness.

* **What advantage is it is be a Jew**
* **Will Jewish unbelief cancel God’s faithfulness**
* **If our sin commends God’s righteousness, how can He judge us?**

**II. Vs. 1-2 God’s Librarians**

Paul has put the religious Jew on the same level of the sinning and moral gentile and realizes that the Jew would naturally object to being in the same class. What advantage is there in being God’s “*Chosen People*” (*a classification that God made Himself*)? Paul was anticipating that the Jews could charge God with breaking His deal with them. “*Without respect of persons, you say Paul?????* *Hold on their a minute! You’re telling me that my position and privilege don’t matter?*”

1. Vs. 1 **Objection**: “*Well, then Paul if what matters is being a Jew inwardly the circumcision of the heart than what advantage is there in being a Jew outwardly*?” This is a twofold question of religious superiority, the first part of this question will be addressed in verse 2-8 the 2nd part of it Paul won’t take up until chapter 4. Their argument was that in Paul’s teaching there seemed to be no use for the Old Covenant and that being the case it would call into question God faithfulness as He is the One that initiated the Covenant to start with.
2. Vs. 2 **Answer**: Paul answers this make believe Rabbi, “*Advantages! Well of greatest importance is the Word of God*!” ***They were God's librarians, as this heavenly treasure was entrusted to them.*** The Word of God cannot make a sinner a saint by their mere possession, and they are no substitute for the righteousness of God in Christ but they do point clearly to salvation. The word of God not only held the law but the promises of God to His people and God has not and will not forfeit those promises, He will yet be faithful to His people! When the bubonic plague swept across Europe killing 1 out of every 3 people the Jewish populations was left virtually untouched. The reason for this was their keeping the strict dietary and personal hygiene of the Law. The same can be said of their applying the biblical financial principals.

Though everyone has been given the light of a conscience and the truth about God made visible in His creation the Jews were given the advance degree as they had the written Word of God. More than all other people they had been given the greatest advantage to obey the word of God. But like a power tool in the hands of an infant they hadn’t used it at all. Jesus said in Matthew 23:24 that they were “*Blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel*!” ***Saint’s we don’t have to answer every persons question with regards to the Bible all we need to do is apply its principals in our lives and folk’s will see the truth and not just hear about it***.

**III. Vs. 3-4 Special People, Special Life**

1. Vs. 3 **Objection**: “*What if some did not believe? Will their unbelief make the faithfulness of God without effect*?” What about the fact that some of the Jews lacked faith? Does their lack of faith destroy the validity of the Word of God making the faithfulness of God of no effect? The make believe Rabbi goes right at Paul saying that under Paul’s teaching that Jewish unbelief made the Word of God of powerless.
2. Vs. 4 **Answer**: “*Certainly not! Indeed, let God be true but every man a liar. As it is written: That You may be justified in Your words, and may overcome when You are judged.*” The very idea of this horrifies Paul! Just because the some religious Jews didn’t believe the Word of God doesn’t mean that the Word is any less powerful and God any less faithful. In the Greek Paul uses the strongest possible word which can be translated, “*God forbid*” or “*May it never be so*!” To suggest such a thing would be tantamount of saying that somehow God failed, and Paul says let “*God be true and every man a liar*”. To prove his point Paul quotes the 51st psalm which David wrote when he repented of his double sins of adultery and murder. He had tried to hide his sins and went on acting as if he was the righteous king of Israel, then along came Nathan the prophet who said to him “*David, you are the man, you’re guilty*!” And when David confessed his sins he sat down and wrote this psalm saying, “*It’s not God’s fault that I did these things it’s my fault, I did it! I’m a lying, murdering, adulterer*”. It is their unfaithfulness not God that’s the problem. ***Suppose, every single person was issued a winning lottery ticket number but no one cashed it in, would it prove that the number was not a winning because no one came forward? No, it would just show how foolish people are not to cash it in***!

God will still fulfill His promises to the religious Jews even though some fail but He will do so not upon the rituals they keep but upon faith in Jesus. Jesus spoke to the religious leaders who felt that the Word of God and the rituals were why they would inherit all of God’s promises saying in John 5:39 “*You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me*.”

In a similar way today, people might ask, “*What’s the point of being a good Christian, going to Church, being baptized, reading my Bible, praying and doing the right things, if I don’t have a special privilege*?” Paul believed that with a special position came a special responsibility not a special privilege. “*You’re a special people therefore you must live a special life*!” ***Man’s faithlessness never alters God’s faithfulness or frustrates His purposes. Man’s unfaithfulness simply sets God’s truth in relief: His righteousness is always vindicated over against man’s unrighteousness.*** In the end not one person in Christ will ever be able to say that one promise of God has failed them. What they will see when our hearts are examined is that what failed us was not God’s promises but rather our faithfulness to enter into His promises by faith!

**IV. Vs. 5-8 Evangelizing the Evangelists**

Vs. 5-8 The 3rd objection raised by the hypothetical Rabbi is, “*Paul you say that God is going to be glorified even though we make mistakes, why would He judge us, in fact why not sin all the more so that he can look even better?*” Paul’s argument to that logic is that, “*If that was the case then God no one could be judged by God for sin. And if God isn’t Judge then the world is locked into sin and the world would be in a helpless and hopeless state.*”

1. Vs. 5 **Objection**: “*But if our unrighteousness demonstrates the righteousness of God, what shall we say? Is God unjust who inflicts wrath? (I speak as a man.)*” Salvation by grace not works was said to give an excuse for continual immoral behavior. Evidently some were using Paul’s teaching to justify their habitually practicing sin, the sloppy agape deal. What Paul wrote of was that the righteousness of God was gifted to people based upon trust in Jesus alone, which caused some to say that we should continue in sin that grace might abound.
2. Vs. 6 **Answer**: “*Certainly not! For then how will God judge the world*?” Paul answers this upon the principal of logic which is that such an approach would prevent God from Judging righteously. God is the sole Judge of His creation and He does so consistently to His character not separate from it. The gospel of justification by faith, apart from works was misrepresented by many who insisted on being saved by works. ***Paul’s argument is that we are not saved by works but by grace because we have placed our trust in Jesus and this will be seen in our works***!

Today people argue that “*God is unjust if He inflicts wrath because He is in control of everything, and He is unjust if He inflicts His wrath on me.*” Judas could make his case: “*Lord, I know that I betrayed You, but You used it for good. In fact, if I hadn't done what I did, You wouldn't have gone to the cross for everybody. What I did even fulfilled the Scriptures. How can You judge me at all*?” The answer to Judas is: “*Yes, I used your wickedness but it was still your wickedness. There was no good or pure motive in your heart at all. It is no credit to you that I brought good out of your evil. You stand guilty before Me*." ***Friend’s it is never right to do wrong and it is never wrong to do right***!

Vs. 7-8 Paul further strengthens his argument by including himself as a sinner in using the personal pro noun “***I***”. To use the ridiculous “*Let’s do evil that good may come*” argument would eliminate the difference between “*good and evil*”. All this would do is bring anarchy and chaos as society would plunge into a moral abyss. God’s rejection of Israel was not final! The door was opened to the Gentiles to do what the Jews didn’t evangelize the lost. God had called the Jews to bring salvation to the Gentiles but because of their hard heats God sent the gentiles to evangelize the Jews.

The Jews believed they had a special position before God and Paul agreed but The more opportunity a person has to do right the greater the condemnation if they do wrong! With privilege always comes responsibility! Once man has sinned, he displays an amazing ingenuity in justifying his sin. The need is not for ingenuity to justify sin, but for humility to confess it and power of God to turn us from it!

**Romans**

**“The Righteousness of God Revealed”**

**III. Main Teaching: 1:18-15:13**

**Chp. 1:18-4:25 Coming under Grace**

**Romans 3:9-20 “We’re Bad; Good!”**

1. **Intro**
2. **Vs. 9-18 Three reasons why no one is right**
3. **Vs. 19-20 Three things the Law does for us**

**I. Intro**

You go in for a routine checkup and you think to yourself, “*I’m in good shape, upright and mobile, know a lot of folks who can’t say that. Don’t drink, smoke, I exercise and watch my weight.*” The Dr. listens to your heart, draws some blood, and checks your blood pressure and says come back in a week and we will go over these tests. And when you come in he says, “*Man you’ve got some real health issues that if left un-dealt with will take your life.*” “*What, are you talking about, Doc*!” You protest. “*I’m in great shape compared to lots of folks I know!*” “*Well*”, he says, “*Friend the tests I ran aren’t in comparison to others they are* ***diagnoses of your health*** *when compared with the ideal health, you’re dying if you don’t make some changes today*!” The first three chapters of Romans is that visit to your ***Great Physician*** where most go in to His office and say, “***This is no big deal, and I’m a good person***!” But the ***divine diagnosis*** is that ***you may not be as bad as you could be but you are as bad off as you can be and without a heart transplant you’re going to die!***

**II. Vs. 9-18 Three reasons why no one is right**

Vs. 9 Paul has scanned the horizon of humanity with only one question: “*Is there any way any person can be good enough to make it to heaven on their own apart from faith in Christ?*” His answer to that question is found in verses 10-18 as Paul compiles a 14 fold divine verdict on the entire human race which is not based upon his opinion but upon what the scriptures say. These quotations are from Psa. 14:1-3; 5:9, 140:3, 10:7 and 36:1 and from Isa. 59:7-8 all support the opening statement that “*There is none righteous, no, not one*.” Paul looks at the human condition as one would an X-ray study of the lost sinner, from head to foot. As depressing as this X-ray **Paul wants us to understand our complete inability to save ourselves.** The fall touched every part of our being, and the inventory of body parts in verses 13-18 that are corrupted (throat, tongues, lips, mouth, feet and eyes) demonstrate this. Paul divides them into three reasons why no man can make it on his own:

1. Vs. 10, 11 ***Character***: “*There is none righteous, no, not one*” “*There is none who understands; there is none who seeks after God*”: This is ***how God see’s man’s character apart from Jesus***. Mankind is totally depraved, throughout all humanity and time and God says, “*I can’t find one good person who on his or her own merits is right all the time*!” Even further astounding is the declaration that there isn’t even one person though out history who has sought to be right all the time. I think of all those folks who go to schools, take up causes that seem to be good and are searching to be right. But God says, “*Nope they sought to be right more than some but not one person has sought to be right all the time*.” *Ok, but there are those that at least try to seek God don’t they*? Well according to God NO! Amongst all the “*seekers*” in religion who dedicate themselves various worship practices and rituals it certainly looks like from our perspective that they are seeking God but what they are seeking is “a god” on their terms and conditions not “THE GOD” on His terms and conditions all the time.
2. Vs. 12-17 ***Conduct***: Having established man’s true character Paul moves on to speak of ***mankind’s conduct in both speech and action apart from Christ***. And He couldn’t be any clearer than what he says in verse 12 “*There is none who does good, no, not one*.” Imagine a video camera constantly scanning your every move throughout your life nothing at any time escaping its watchful eye. Now imagine me saying “*Today to prove that there is no one that does good all the time, I’ve selected \_\_\_!*” I’m sure that next week we wouldn’t have a single person in Church. Paul starts out with our speech our throats, tongues and lips and says that they are a grave of deceit, full of poison. People love toilet talk, they love gossip, and they set out to deceive all the time. Caustic words, sarcasm and slander cutting up our fellow human’s with no thought of how it harms others in fact we laugh at it as long as we aren’t at the end of the punch line. *According to a new study by the Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts the average person curses once every 175 words and when angry the average goes up to two out of every three words*. Paul says that such action doesn’t stop with the mouth it moves to the feet as it is swift to shed blood causing misery and destruction every where it trods.
3. Vs. 18 ***Cause***: Finally Paul tells is ***the root cause*** for all of this, “*There is no fear of God before their eyes*.” That is the sole reason why people talk and act the way they do.

It isn't as if there were some and God couldn't see them.

1. *There has never been a truly righteous man apart from Jesus Christ. "Even Adam was not righteous: he was innocent - not knowing good and evil but he was not righteous!*
2. *There is none who seeks after God: We deceive ourselves into thinking that man, on his own, really does seek after God. Man initiates the search but he doesn't seek the true God, instead he seeks an idol that he makes himself*.
3. *They have together become unprofitable: The word unprofitable has the idea of rotten fruit. It speaks of something that was permanently bad and therefore useless.*
4. *There is no fear of God before their eyes: This summarizes the entire thought. Wherever there is sin, there is no fear of God.*

**III. Vs. 19-20 Three things the Law does for us**

Vs. 19-20 Paul points out that this horrific description of man's utter sinfulness came to us in the law; and it is intended for those under the law, to silence every critic and to demonstrate the universal guilt of mankind - that entire world may become guilty before God. Many Jewish people of Paul's day took every passage of the Old Testament describing evil and applied it only to the Gentiles - not to themselves. ***The law cannot save us it cannot declare us right by our mere possession. It’s useful in giving us the knowledge of sin, but it cannot save us***.

 It is because of the above three truths with regard to all of humanity that even a “*Holy and Good Law*” is powerless to make a person right all it can do is reveal just how wrong they are and need of being made right! He law is there to point out what should be the obvious in all of us that we aren’t “*Basically Good*”. In the final sentence in the book of Judges as Samuel compiled 350 years of history of Israel he summed up the reason for their sin saying, “*everyone did what was right in his own eyes*.” Paul says here that the Law does three things for us:

1. Vs. 19a **It stops our mouths**: When we see what God’s standard truly is we can no longer compare ourselves against someone else, it shuts our mouths of self-righteousness! All the excuses and self justification will be stopped. In Matthew gospel in chapters 5-7 he recorded for us Jesus’ words revered to as the “*Sermon on the Mount*” where Jesus makes it clear that the keeping of the law was not just an external thing, it was an internal thing as it dealt not just with what people do on the outside but what they think and their attitudes on the inside.
2. Vs. 19b **It puts everybody in the same category, sinner**: There isn’t a single person that on their merit that will be good enough. Hebrews 9:27 puts it this way “*it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment*”. There isn’t any reincarnation to go back and do it again and again until you reach perfection. The reason for this each time you would still have the same outcome, guilty of being a sinner.
3. Vs. 20 **It reveals what sin is**: In Matthew 22:36-40 a religious leader asked “*Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?" Jesus said to him, "'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets*.” All the Law does is ask us to Love, first towards God and secondly toward our fellow man. ***The law points out that our chief sin is a failure to love God and each other all the time***.

By the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified!

* ***This means*** *that the law, having been broken, can only condemn us - it can never save us*
* ***This means*** *that even we could now begin to perfectly keep the law of God it could not make up for past disobedience, or remove present guilt*
* ***This means*** *that keeping law is NOT God's way of salvation or of blessing under the New Covenant*

J.B. Phillip's paraphrase of the phrase “*For by the law is the knowledge of sin*” says that “***It is the straight-edge of the Law that shows us how crooked we are***”. Before you can make something flat you have to have something that is perfectly flat.

**Two things we must never forget:**

1. **I’m a great sinner!**
2. **Jesus Christ is a great Savior!**

Justification isn’t just pardoning our guilt, neither is it just forgiving our debit both of those would make us only rehabilitated sinners. Justification expunges our record, wipes our crimes off the books and says that we have never had any infraction and God looks at you and me as if we have never sinned. ***Paul taught that people apart from a relationship with Jesus are bad, but he never believed them to be too bad to be saved***! The truth is I’ve been purposefully “***mistreated by God***”! Because I’m a guilty sinner He should have cast me into hell and never looked back. Instead He has “***mistreated me***” giving me what I don’t deserve and can never earn all because of His Son dying on my behalf He has treated me as His son! Man has the power to sin and Jesus alone has the power to free me from the penalty and power of my choice.

**Romans**

**“The Righteousness of God Revealed”**

**III. Main Teaching: 1:18-15:13**

**Chp. 1:18-4:25 Coming under Grace**

**Romans 3:21-31 “But Now”**

1. **Intro**
2. **Vs. 21 God’s answer to man’s failure**
3. **Vs. 22-24 How the gift of righteousness is obtained**
4. **Vs. 25-26 How and why it works**
5. **Vs. 27-31 The results of it working**

**I. Intro**

After Paul’s assessment of the human condition you can almost hear a sigh of relief. Paul has proved that all humans are sinners; now he explains how all sinners can be saved.

* In verse 21 God’s answer to man’s failure
* In verse 22-24 How the gift of righteousness is obtained
* In verse 25-26 How and why this works
* In verses 27-31 The results of it working

“***The Law forbids disobedience and requires obedience, but it cannot provide the power needed to prevent the one or guarantee the other***!” ***What God’s justice demanded His love provided and His provision for both was His Son Jesus Christ***! Poet Elizabeth Clephane wrote: “*Lord, you have here the 90 an 9, are they not enough for you? But the Shepherd answered, “This of mine has wandered away from Me; and though the road be rough and steep, I go to the desert to find My sheep”. But none of the ransomed even knew how deep were the waters crossed; nor how dark was the night that the Lord passed through until He found His sheep that was lost.*” **Sin is not so much breaking God’s Law as it is breaking God’s heart**! That is why on his death bed American missionary to the Native Americans David Brainerd said, “*I do not go to heaven to be advanced, but to give honor to God*!”

**II. Vs. 21 God’s answer to man’s failure**

Vs. 21 “*But Now*” appears on our pages like the sun after a hurricane as the righteousness of God is revealed. Having proved the “*unrighteousness of mankind*” Paul can reveal the “*righteousness of God*”. God's righteousness is not offered to us as a supplement our own righteousness, it is given completely apart from our own attempted righteousness.

People often misinterpret the meaning of words like the word “*righteousness*”. Many people think that this word means “*to behave the right way*” but **Biblically “*righteousness*” isn’t about what you do it is a declaration about what you are!** The real idea behind the word is “*worth*” which resonates with lots of people as they seem to be always struggling with their sense of “*self worth*”. Most people think they have to do something to get “*self worth*” but the Bible tells us that we can’t earn our “*self worth*” we can only receive it. **The gospel deals with not only with happens to us when we die, it sets us right now as we are given “*self worth*”!** **And this worth isn’t based upon some genetic trait or special talent it is completely based upon the character and nature of the God who values us.** To emphasize this Paul makes two points:

1. Vs. 21a ***It is “self worth” apart from the Law***: That means that our “*self worth*” is not predicated upon our obedience, ***it’s a gift***. You do not “***earn***” it by doing your best to please God as His standard isn’t our best its perfection!
2. Vs. 21b ***It is not a “new self worth” it’s foundational “self worth”***: The religious Jews knew they didn’t measure up by the law that’s why they had the sacrificial system. Since God has always had in place our “*self worth*” as a gift than He isn’t going to change His mind or come up with a new improved way that we may obtain our “*self worth*”. Under the Old Testament Law, righteousness came be man behaving, but under the gospel it comes by believing.

**III. Vs. 22-24 How the gift of righteousness is obtained**

Vs. 22-24 Paul told us how this righteousness **does not come**; (through the deeds of the law). It is through faith in Jesus Christ to all and on all who believe. ***The righteousness of God is not ours BY faith; it is ours THROUGH faith. We do not earn righteousness by our faith. We RECEIVE righteousness through faith in Jesus Christ***. Along the way Paul developed his teaching about salvation around three themes.

* **Justification**: “*An image from the court of law*”! Justification solves the problem of man's guilt before a righteous Judge.
* **Redemption**: “*An image* *from the slave market*”! Redemption solves the problem of man's slavery to sin, the world, and the devil.
* **Propitiation**: “*An image from the world of religion, appeasing God through sacrifice”!* Propitiation solves the problem of offending God our creator.

There is one way expressed in four different aspects:

1. ***Vs. 22a Through faith in Jesus Christ***: Faith is only as good as the object it trusts in! *Our justification comes from our being linked not to God generally but to Jesus personally*. Paul stresses the truth that you can only receive the gift of “*self worth*” by trust in a person. The gift of self worth involves a relationship to a living person, a time when you opened up your heart and life to Jesus and asked Him to be what He is, Lord. In all the religions of the earth the emphasis is upon man’s self effort to bring self worth only in Christianity do we see man’s self worth a gift by way of a relationship.
2. ***Vs. 22b To all who believe***: Paul explains that you are saved and gain a sense of self worth when you personally believe. Whether heathen or Hebrew, Buddhist or Baptist – there is only one way to salvation; by faith. ***It’s not what I’ve done or who I am; it’s who Jesus is and what He’s done!*** Faith is the hand that receives the gift offered by God and knowing that God is offering a gift does no one any good if they won’t receive it. He has declared all people guilty so that He can offer His salvation equally to all people.
3. ***Vs. 24a Declared of value freely by grace***: It is God who freely and wholly saves us we cannot contribute a thing to it. Hey, did you notice that this verse says that we are “*being justified*”? In the Greek that is in the aorist tense which means that our justification is continually happening. The word “*freely*” means without a cause and that is how it should be translated here.
4. ***Vs. 24b Finally we are told that it is Jesus that accomplished the work of redemption which is why we have self worth***: We are brought face to face with the cross of Christ. Saints, if our brand of Christianity doesn’t emphasize the cross, then we are listening to the wrong gospel. “***It is no gospel that speaks much on Christ but little of the cross. To speak on the beauty of His life without speaking of the sacrifices of His death has no power to free people from their sin.***” Salvation is free but it is not cheap! Three words in these two verses tell us that “***redemption, propitiation and blood***”. Propitiation means to satisfy God’s Holy and just demands so that He can freely forgive our sin.

**IV. Vs. 25-26 How and why it works**

Vs. 25-26 Paul now moves to a brief explanation of “***HOW***” and “***WHY***” this redemption works. ***If God loved us so much that He overlooked our sin choosing not to punish us for it He would no longer be holy. Ah but if He punished us for it though He would be Holy He wouldn’t demonstrate His love***. The only solution being Jesus Christ’s sacrifice whereby He would both be just and the justifier to those who put their trust in Jesus.

1. Vs. 25a **How**: First Paul says that God Presented His only Son a “*sacrifice of atonement*”. The word “*propitiation*” is a Greek word used in the Septuagint for the mercy seat, (the lid that covered the ark of the covenant), upon which sacrificial blood was sprinkled as atonement for sin. As a theological term which carries two ideas
2. *To satisfy justice*
3. *To release love*

What Paul is saying here is that ***human sin injured God and justice demands that we be punished for that injury but Jesus death on the cross paid our penalty thus justice was satisfied. Ah but it was more than justice satisfied it is love released as God reaches out to those who injured Him by their sin and grants us as sense of self worth, acceptance and value as He showers His love upon us***.

1. Vs. 25b **Why**: Paul is referring to all the thousands of years where God hadn’t done anything about mankind’s wrong doings. What he is saying is that justice wasn’t compromised it was settled at the cross. Through the animal sacrifice those who looked in faith to the coming Messiah had their sins "*covered*" by a sort of an "***IOU***" or promissory note. Because of Jesus God’s love is free to act towards us consistent with His character and nature to love sinners without breaking His own nature of holiness. No one can claim that God is unfair when the price paid for our forgiveness was the blood of His Son.
* ***It's easy to see how God could only be just by sending every guilty sinner to hell, as a just Judge.***
* ***It's easy to see how God could only be the justifier by telling every guilty sinner, you’re pardoned.***
* ***But only God could find a way to be both just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.***

**V. Vs. 27-31 The results of it working**

Vs. 27-31 Paul raises **three questions with regards to the self worth** we have in Jesus Christ.

1. Vs. 27 **Who can brag**?: Because we are justified freely by His grace, there is no room for self-congratulation. In heaven no one will say, “*Look what I have done, what I accomplished!*” Our boasting will be “*Look what the Spirit of God accomplished in spite of me*!” Jesus is the Savior we are the save-ees. You can’t be self-righteous about the gift of righteousness we have in Jesus.
2. Vs. 28-30 **Is any one excluded from grace**?: Saving faith has a distinct character. It is not just agreeing with certain facts, but it is directing the mind and will in agreement with God. There are two groups in Christianity today: Those who emphasis ***behaving*** and those who emphasis ***believing*** but the truth is ***the way we believe will affect the way we behave***. No one person has “*favored person status*” all are alike before God. There is One God and he is equally the God of Jews as well as the gentiles.
3. Vs. 31 **Do we no longer need the Law**?: We can see how someone might ask, “*If the law doesn't make us righteous, what good is it?*” The law anticipated the coming gospel of justification by faith, apart from the deeds of the law. ***The gospel is that Jesus Christ came to fulfill the righteous requirement of the Law***. The very righteousness the law demanded is the very righteousness given to us by faith in Jesus. The purpose of the law according to Galatians 3:24 is to be our “*teacher to lead us until Christ came. So now, through faith in Christ, we are made right with God*.” The manager at a lakeside hotel had a problem even though signs were posted on the balconies “*No fishing*” people still continued to do so. After some research it was found that no one ever fished from the balconies until after the signs were posted as they never thought of it. That’s often the case with the Law as it sets a standard that we are unable to keep.

**Romans**

**“The Righteousness of God Revealed”**

**III. Main Teaching: 1:18-15:13**

**Chp. 1:18-4:25 Coming under Grace**

**Romans 4:1-12 “Worth before Works”**

1. **Intro**
2. **Vs. 1-3 Grace before good works**
3. **Vs. 4-5 Having begun in the Spirit**
4. **Vs. 6-8 Man after God’s heart?**
5. **Vs. 9-12 More of God less of me**

**I. Intro**

The final 11 verses of chapter 3 must have blown the minds of the readers of Paul’s letter; “*Self worth, value, apart from doing or keeping anything*?” Why such a teaching goes against all of human nature, against all religions and philosophies. ***What will happen to society if we tell folks that they aren’t of value because they are trying to be good, they are of value solely on the basis of their relationship to God who is good***? Won’t society plummet into chaos, anarchy and lawlessness where people will have nothing to restrain them? To prove his point Paul call’s to the witness stand two revered ancestors Abraham and David. The history of the Jewish people didn’t begin with Moses it began with Abraham and their kingdom began with David. Paul uses Abraham as an example of being declared of worth by faith apart from works and he will address three important questions about Abraham:

1. ***How Abraham was made righteous?***
2. ***When Abraham was made righteous?***
3. ***Why Abraham was made righteous?***

**II.** **Vs. 1-3 Grace before good works**

Vs. 1-3 Paul answers the first question in these three verses by saying that Abraham was a “*good man*”, you will see that as you read about him in Genesis. He trusted God to lead out of a country to one that God would show him. Over and over again we see that Abraham was a man of “*good works*” and Paul doesn’t dispute that. Instead **Paul says that those “*good works*” were not what caused God to declare him of value**. Most folks learn early on like Abraham that a way of gaining a sense of significance and self-worth is “***performance***”. If you perform at your word or above expectation you will be highly regarded by our peers. And clearly Abraham could boast about his good works before his fellow man. Ah but it doesn’t work that way with God as He is never impressed by our outward performance because He isn’t limited by what we humans see as He looks beyond the action to the heart. He sees the selfishness and self-centeredness behind our actions. He sees all the maneuvering and manipulation in what we do to get what we want. That’s why Paul says that Abraham could brag some to us but not before God! **When did Abraham realize that his self worth wasn’t based upon his good works?** Well in Gen. 15:5 God show Abraham the stars in the sky and said, “*Even if you could count all those stars, you still wouldn’t be able to count how many descendants you will have*.” God spoke this to a man who didn’t have any children and he and his wife Sarah were well past the age of being able to produce children. And Abraham simply believed God and it was accounted to him as “*self worth*”. Just by believing God’s blessing he had self-worth, he hadn’t done anything to have God say that, there was no condition made upon that statement by God, and it was his by faith. Based upon Paul’s words to the Galatians God had made it clear to Abraham that He was talking to him about His Son Jesus and that through Him not only would Abraham have earthly descendants he would have spiritual ones as well. That is what Jesus told the religious leaders in John 8:39, 56 who claimed that a heritage to Abraham when He said “*Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing My day and he saw it and was glad*.” **James also uses this section in Genesis and adds that he was called God’s friend not because of the way he behaved but because of the way he believed**! ***Listen up friends***:

* ***God didn’t declare Abraham of value or worth when he left Ur of the Chaldees***
* ***Neither was it when he offered his only son Isaac on Mount Moriah***
* ***God declared him of value and worth in Gen. 15:16 when he simply trusted God at His word.***
* ***Even more amazing is that even though Abraham trusted God to keep his word he soon doubted and took matters in his own hands and tried to produce a child of faith through his wife’s hand maiden Hagar.***

Yet even this didn’t dislodge God’s declaration of being of value and worth. ***Abraham was not declared righteous when he followed God obediently or when he offered himself sacrificially, he was declared right when he trusted God supremely***! The one and only thing that man can do is trust God to do what He said He was going to do!

**III. Vs. 4-5 Having begun in the Spirit**

Vs. 4-5 If God had declared Abraham of value and worth because of his obedience or sacrifice then his value would have been based upon works and effort and he would have simply have received what his effort had earned him. God would have only paid Abraham what He owed Him. That’s Paul’s point here Abraham did or didn’t do anything that merited God’s blessings. He uses an illustration that we have within our IRS regulations which states that if money under a certain amount is given you as a gift then it is not taxable. But if you are being compensated for the work you are doing then it is taxable. If you work then it isn’t a gift it is wages for your labor and there is an obligation to pay you.

 It’s amazing how many Christians fall into this wrongful thinking. ***Though they realize that they trusted in Jesus for their eternal destiny they spend the rest of their lives trying to earn God’s approval and self worth.*** Apparently the Galatians struggled with this as Paul wrote them in his letter to them in 3:3 “*Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh*?” If we are doing things to ensure God’s favor thinking that in so doing God “***Owes You!!!***” We can’t do anything to secure God’s favor, we already have it the moment we trusted in Jesus. ***Our doing things now is because we have God’s blessings and favor not to get them.*** It isn’t our “*great faith*” “*prevailing prayer*”, “*dedicated devotion*” or “*tireless work*” that has been the secret behind the innumerable blessings lavished upon our lives. “***It’s unmerited, undeserved and unearned favor***” and all that I can do in light of this is worship Him! Oh saints, far too much of our “***bible reading, prayer and service***” is to earn a reward from God instead of as Paul wrote in Ephes. 1:3 that “***the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ***”. “*Are you saying not to* *read my Bible pray and serve?*” No, I’m saying that all the above things are **not to fulfill an obligation or to earn a reward they are because you love Him and want to spend time with Him**. God isn’t impressed with your effort He is blessed when you want to be near Him. Saints, *our being declared of value is not God making us perfectly right, but counting us as perfectly right*. After God counts us as right, then He begins making us truly right, which will culminate in our resurrection when we will see Him face to face. Dear ones, Jesus’ work on the cross is so great that He does not just declare of value the “*godly*” He declares of worth the “*ungodly*”.

The Greek word grace “*Signified spontaneous generosity of the heart without any expectation or return.*” The other day I cut my finger and Hannah was following me around and I asked if she would like to help Grandpa and she said, “*Yeh, sure yeh*!” So I got a Band-Aid and she pulled the backing off as I wrapped it around my finger then unsolicited she said, “*Gama, Hani kiss and make better*!” I hadn’t told her if she did that then I give her something she did all on her own! It is not the penitent man, or the praying man that God has declared of worth it is the ungodly man!

**IV. Vs. 6-8 Man after God’s heart?**

Vs. 6-8 Paul uses another person as an example and he too is a giant among them, David. Paul says that David spoke of the blessedness of a man to whom God credits His self-worth apart from works with regards to failure. **The quote here is Psalm 32 where he writes about how he found this gift of self-worth when he was suffering from a guilty conscience as he had committed adultery and murder.** David knew what it was like to be a guilty sinner; he knew the seriousness of sin and how good it is to be truly forgiven. If David was judged on works alone, then God must condemn him. “*No sinner can carry their own sins and come back cleansed of guilt. No amount of money, no science, nor any other earthly power can carry away from the sinner one little sin and its guilt. Once committed, every sin and its guilt cling to the sinner as close as does his own shadow, to all eternity unless God carries them away*.”

 You talk about a guy not earning self-worth, what could David ever DO to regain self-worth after sinning like this? In 1 Samuel 13:14 we are told that “*The Lord has sought for Himself a man after His own heart*”. God being all knowing knew that David was going to blow it; so what is it that made him a man after His heart? I believe that it is the fact that he would simply receive his self-worth from God and not attempt to earn it. The believer is not merely a pardoned criminal, but one who has been placed in a right relationship with the One he offended. The state of being right before God covers past present and future! God no longer sees us as sinners, screw-ups, He sees us as His children. ***Two men, one called “*a friend of God” *the other “*a man after God’s heart” *and they both have in common receiving their self worth by trusting God not by performance.***

**V. Vs. 9-12 More of God less of me**

Vs. 9-11a Paul now moves to the 2nd question “*When Abraham was made righteous*?” God chose the symbol of circumcision to describe the cutting away of the flesh. Paul’s point here is that **Abraham received the symbol 14 years after he was pronounced as being righteous by faith and a friend of God**. So clearly nothing not even this symbol of cutting away the flesh caused God to gift Abraham self worth. It wasn’t circumcision that caused God to say, “*Ok, now you can be my friend*!” The same could be said to day of church affiliation, baptism or any other thing.

Vs. 11b-12 Finally Paul explains “*Why Abraham was made righteous*?” It was to make the father of all who believe! Circumcision stands for the “*Gift of self worth from God*” and was given Abraham as an outward sign and a reminder for everyone that we can only receive self worth we can never earn it. What a change this makes in our motivation if we know that we do not have to earn God’s love, His favor, His forgiveness it’s already ours in Christ. We no longer need to seek to get our self worth from others; we don’t have to show folks our value and significance by our works. You are set free from that tread mill. Instead you are free from performance based self worth and now free to simply love God and people because of His love for you. Faith always involves a twofold process:

1. **Renunciation of self**: Faith implies the cessation from self reliance and dependence.
2. **Reliance on God**: Faith also implies the commencement of total dependence upon God. Our trust responds to His truth, our faith to His faithfulness.

The basic thought of Christianity is that all man can do is take God at His word and stake everything on the faith that His promises are true!

**Romans**

**“The Righteousness of God Revealed”**

**III. Main Teaching: 1:18-15:13**

**Chp. 1:18-4:25 Coming under Grace**

**Romans 4:13-25 “An extraordinary God waiting to do the impossible for the unworthy”**

1. **Intro**
2. **Vs. 13-16 No Hassel, faith**
3. **Vs. 16-20a Two things to remember about faith**
4. **Vs. 20b-25 Four objectives of our faith**

**I. Intro**

Paul has paraded before us Abraham as a witness that God grants by unmerited favor, self worth and value apart from works. What makes Abraham all the more remarkable as an example of a man of faith is what he didn’t have:

* ***A Bible to read, he only had God’s word hidden in his heart***
* ***Other believers cheering him own in his trust, he was alone***
* ***A record of folks who blazed the trail before him; he was blazing the trail for us***

Yet with that said Abraham was more a person of faith without all the things we are. Now this morning we will look some specifics with regard to Abraham’s faith. Friends, faith reasons from God and His word not from self and circumstances; it is God’s ability that is the foundation to faith’s stability.

**II. Vs. 13-16 No Hassel, faith**

Vs. 13-15 In these verses Paul make ***two points***:

1. Vs. 13-14 That all of God's dealings with Abraham happened (according to Galatians 3:17-18) 430 years before the law was given. Based on this Paul tells us that faith is not about trying to obey or to live up to a standard. Faith does not expect God to accept and love us because we have tried our best.
2. Vs. 15 Paul’s second point is that works as a basis of worth is requires us to do something that we can’t. You may say, “*Pastor, I’ll give you a million dollars if right now you fly around the room!*” It isn’t a problem of the reward it is a problem of the request because you are asking me to do something that is impossible for me to do. The law asks us in our own natural abilities to LOVE God and my fellow man all the time perfectly without failure. If I can’t love people who love me how am I going to be able to always love those who don’t love me? Therefore the law is worthless for obtaining the promise.

Vs. 16 We are not saved by faith, we are saved by God's grace, and grace is appropriated by faith. Grace cannot be obtained through works, whether they be past, present, or promised. If works was the basis of our salvation, then our salvation would depend on our performance and no one can keep the law good enough to be saved by it and as such would never be certain they are saved at any given moment. With our ***Salvation***:

* **The Father thought it**
* **The Son bought it**
* **The Spirit taught it**
* **The Bible brought it**
* **Satan fought it**
* **By God’s grace we got it**

The word “all” in the Greek means “ALL” which includes you and me! I can’t stand all the promises made by some companies that come with restrictions. I booked a flight for the pastor’s conference with flight miles from “*The No Hassel*” card. Then as I booked it came all the restrictions and hassles. The poor fellow on the other end of the phone had to read the list of “*Hassles*” from the no Hassel list of restrictions for well over a minute.

**III. Vs. 16-20a Two things to remember about faith**

Vs. 17 Notice the tense of this verse as Paul quotes God as telling Abraham, “*I* ***have made*** *you a father of many nations.*” Not “*will make*” but “*have made*” yet in reality it hadn’t happened yet. God speaks of His promises towards us as if they had already happened even though we haven’t seen them yet and He does this so that we will know the certainty of the things He has promised. “*God calls those things which do not exist as though they did*!” Saints, think through the implications of this truth as God declares us as already glorified which frees us up to see ourselves in His glorious work and not in our failure. Paul in Philip. 1:6 says “*being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ*”. Based upon verses 19-21 we see that Abraham did four things with his faith:

1. Vs. 19 ***He didn’t look at his limitations***: At 86 years of age Abraham received the promise and 14 years later at 100 he still believed that God could do what He said He was going to do and give them a child. Reproductively his body was dead, physiologically Sarah was barren her whole life but Abraham chose not to look at his situation but trust God to be faithful to keep His word. There may very well be a gap between the promise of God and the performance of God and it’s there to prepare you for the presence of God! Don’t allow the limitations to blind you to the One who is limitless.
2. Vs. 20 ***He didn’t lower his expectations***: Abraham’s original name Abram meant “*Exalted Father*” and we can only imaging the taunts that he and Sarah had to endure being without child for 100 years. But at 100 years of age God changed his name to Abraham “*Father of many nations*” and Abraham still believed even though he hadn’t even held one child in his arms.
3. Vs. 20b ***He gave God adulation***: He gave God glory before he received the promise not just after. Oh what confidence in God when we give Him the glory before we have received the promise. **Doubt will have no place to lodge when you fill the rooms of your heart with praise before you receive what God has promised you**!
4. Vs. 21 ***He handed God the situation***: Abraham knew that if God promised him than it was up to God to fulfill what He had promised. He didn’t try to figure out what, how or when God was going to do what He had promised. And even when Abraham staggered in his trust as Sarah said, “*Honey, I’m 76 and barren we are going to have to help God out!*” Even though they had “*flawed faith*” God had “*flawless faithfulness*” and kept His promise even though Abraham and Sarah couldn’t keep their eyes on Him.

Paul gives us three things about our faith:

1. ***Object***: Vs. 17b Paul says that the object of our faith must the God of Abraham. ***The truth is the quality of your faith is only as good as the object is has placed its trust in***! The amount of faith or trust I have in something is not the determining factor that is why Jesus said that all we needed is to have faith the size of a mustard seed to move mountains. ***We shouldn’t emphasize the amount of our faith rather we should emphasize the object of our faith Jesus Christ***. The question isn’t how little or large our faith is the question is how little or large our God is! There were two things that helped Abraham in this with regards to trusting God:
2. **It is God who gives life**: Abraham realized that the object of his faith was in God who makes dead things live. He alone can make those things that once lived and function but are not broke start to work as they were designed to do. Saint’s do you have some area in your life that just doesn’t function, it’s broke and you are hopeless that it ever will be the way it once was? Well put you trust is the One that makes broke and ruined things work as they were designed.
3. **It is God who calls those things which do not exist as though they did**: Oh you may say, “*Pastor this are of my life has never worked, it’s not* ***DIS-FUNCTIONAL*** *it’s* ***NON-FUNCTIONAL****.*” No worries my friend, God calls those things which do not exist as though they did as we read in the 1st chapter of Genesis “***Let there be***!”
4. ***Obstacles***: Next Paul speaks of the obstacles of faith and he mentions two polar opposites:
5. Vs. 18-19 **Hopeless Circumstances**: The hopeless circumstances Abraham had to battle were both His body and his wife’s Sarah’s body. At a 100 Abraham’s body was sexually dead so there was no seed to fertilize Sarah’s egg which was also dead, things couldn’t get any worse from a human perspective. Ah but God told Abraham that through this union there would come a SEED (Jesus) in whom all the world would be blessed. Abraham at 100 and Sarah at 90 without ever having a child but God was so certain in His promise to them that He said “*I’m not only going to bless you I’m going to use your blessing to bless the world*!” Abraham didn’t deny the human facts but he didn’t limit God who promised and instead of saying “*No way*” he said, “*I believe You*!”
6. Vs. 20 **Staggering Possibilities**: Paul says that Abraham had to battle the, “*It’s too good to be true*” syndrome, which I think sometimes is harder than hopeless circumstances. Can you imagine Abraham coming in after his morning devotions to sit down for breakfast with Sarah, “*How was your time with the Lord this morning? She asked. Well babe it was amazing God spoke to me the most amazing promise; in fact it’s what we have waited for our whole lives! What are you mumbling about? We are going to have a baby, baby!*” Sarah laughed in unbelief. ***Too good to be true***! Ah but in time when she began to put on a few pounds, began to feel that promised life move inside her she began to believe that what God said He would do He had done.
7. ***Objectives***: Vs. 20b-25 Saint’s ***the hardest thing God asks us to do is trust Him, keep trusting Him and live like you trust Him.*** Paul speaks of four objectives of our faith!
8. Vs. 20b **Faith grows**: Like Sarah you may have only a little seed of faith but as God begins to show us that He is going to do what He said He was our faith grows.
9. Vs. 20c **Faith glorifies God**: Our trust in God’s word grows so too will are attitude of gratitude. Faith always ends up in praise because we are never the object of our trust God is.
10. Vs. 21 **Faith grounds us in His word**: Faith grasps God promises and continues to grow and we become more grounded in our trust in His word instead of trying to do things to help God out.
11. Vs. 23-25 **Faith gives**: That’s the amazing thing about faith you just can’t shut it up in a box as we are told the promises made to Abraham and Sarah sprung out and became our gift as well. God’s declaring Abraham of worth and value apart from works is the same basis in which God declares us of worth and value.

We ought to be pretty exciting people to be around don’t you think? Whenever there is a situation that is either *hopeless are too good to be true* we ought to be right in there telling folks about our God who does the impossible.

**Romans**

**“The Righteousness of God Revealed”**

**III. Main Teaching: 1:18-15:13**

**B. Chp. 5:1-8:39 Living under Grace**

**Romans 5:1-11 “Into The Courts Of Heaven”**

1. **Intro**
2. **Vs. 1-2 Rejoicing in the hope of glory**
3. **Vs. 3-5 Rejoicing in present sufferings**
4. **Vs. 6-11 Rejoicing in God**

**I. Intro**

If a reader of this great letter stopped in the 4th chapter he would know of his need to be saved and he would know of the means of his salvation but he wouldn’t know of the blessed benefits of it. Paul has two purposes in the first 11 verses speaking of the blessings of our salvation:

1. ***To say how wonderful it is to be a Christian***
2. ***To speak of our endless blessings***

In doing this in the first 11 verses of chapter 5 Paul uses the word for “*rejoice*” three times which serves as the outline:

1. **Vs. 1-2 Rejoicing in the hope of glory**
2. **Vs. 3-5 Rejoicing in present sufferings**
3. **Vs. 6-11 Rejoicing in God**

On Jan 24, 1972after 28 years of hiding in the jungles of Guam, local farmers discover Yokoi, a Japanese sergeant who was unaware that World War II had ended. He was still fighting a war on a 200-square-mile island that had again become a U.S. possession. Yokoi was left behind by the retreating Japanese forces, went into hiding and for the next three decades waited for the return of the Japanese with his next orders. Finally in 1972, he was discharged and sent home to Japan, where he became a national hero, married and returned to Guam for his honeymoon.

 What does this story have to do with Romans 5 and us today? Well there are far too many Christians today living in the jungles of their former life fighting battles with God when they should have embraced as Savior. Yokoi could have enjoyed life experienced peace, started a family but instead he stayed put not realizing that his country was no longer at war. Saint’s the war is over we have peace with God the treaty has been signed in His blood.

**II. Vs. 1-2 Rejoicing in the hope of glory**

Vs. 1-2 There are five ways based upon these verses we can tell that we are rejoicing in the hope of glory.

1. **First, we lose our fear of God**: By that I don’t mean our worship or reverence but rather our fear and doubt of His love. We will begin not to see him as our judge or as a principal that has announced that he needs to see us after school but as our loving Father.
2. **Second, we lose our fear of death**: When we come into the understanding of the unmerited love of God towards us, death no longer has a sting in fact we strangely look forward to as we don’t see it as the ending of all the things but rather the beginning of everything! We’re not afraid of what lies beyond this life as we anticipate the glory of being in the presence of the One who loved us so that He laid down His life to ensure that those who trust on Him will be where He is.
3. **Third, we have a peace with God**: “*Peace with God*” doesn’t mean “*tranquility of mind*” it means a “*cessation of hostility*”. It is not the peace of God it is peace with God. It isn’t that we have first ceased being hostile towards God it is that He has ceased to be righteously hostile towards us. This peace brings us instantly into His presence no matter what the circumstance or how little we deserve it. The Bible doesn't say we have peace with the devil, the world, the flesh or sin. Life is still a battle for the Christian but it is no longer a battle against God it’s a battle against our former life.
4. **Forth, we have access to the King**: ***The access isn't just into a standing of grace, but into the very courts of heaven***. The Jew was kept from God by the veil in the Holy of Holies and gentiles were kept out of the temple area under punishment of death. But Jesus’ work on the cross has torn the veil from top to bottom and destroyed the barrier keeping gentiles from access to God. “*The idea is that of introduction to the presence of a king*”. This is more than an audience with ones king; it is into the chamber with ***our best friend the King*** with all assurances that he considers us so. Our “*access*” and “*standing*” are such as they cannot be revoked. “*We are not brought to God for the purpose of an interview, but to remain with him; to be in his household; to behold his face, and walk in the light of his countenance.*” At the hospital on Monday as my Grandson Nathaniel was born my little granddaughter Hannah was asked what her brother’s name was and she didn’t hesitate, “***His name is Prince***!” That would make them children of the King, oh how right she is!! The basis of this friendship isn’t predicated upon us being holy and working so hard that the King has no choice but to regard us as His friends. ***We are not in His courts because we have been loyal subjects***! He has pulled us vagabonds off the streets of the world where we lived in rebellion to His rule and chose to live in the squalor that our flesh was convinced was riches. And even as the Kings friends we are motley crew of ill-mannered misfits who far too often take for granted our Kings lovingkindness towards us. The king is the One who has lavished His love upon us ill-respective of our consistent miss-behavior. His unmerited favor washes over us every moment of the day. How do we thank Him? Far too much of the time by bragging to our fellow misfits that the reason for His love and favor towards us is because of some small penance of work that we have done to manipulate Him to do what He was already going to do!
5. **Fifth, we have hope of the glory of God**: *Peace with God*” dealt with our past no longer holding our sins against us. And “*Access to God*” takes care of our present as we can come into His throne of grace any time we would like. Ah but “*Hope with God*” takes care of our future as ***one day we shall not only behold His glory we shall share His glory***. It is not our glory or glory that is manifested by our works; no it is undeserved glory that has clothed because of His grace. (Rom. 8:17) Everyone who has put their faith in Jesus and none in themselves has come to a place of complete assurance, continual acceptance and confident anticipation.

**III.** **Vs. 3-5 Rejoicing in present sufferings**

Vs. 3-4 Paul anticipates the fact that such a claim wouldn’t match the personal experience do to persecution, so he says, “*I know we have many tribulations now but we glory in those also.*” The word “*tribulation*” does not refer to minor inconveniences, but to real hardships. It comes from a word that describes the crushing of olives under heavy rocks to extract the oil. Such hardships were not unfamiliar to Paul as he had lived a life full of tribulation. Paul had discovered that such “*stresses*” produce “*endurance*”. Then Paul says, “*Perseverance produced, character; and character, hope*”. Our declaration of value apart from works doesn’t mean that we will no longer experience the trials of living in this world. In Fact remember that Jesus promised His disciples in John 16:33 “*That in this life you will have tribulation*” the promise is that “*we can be of good cheer because Jesus has overcome the world*.” ***These trials work for us not against us and no amount of stress can separate us from the love of God they will only cause us to drawn closer to his love.*** Trials only build our godly character of patience, which proves our character and leads us to hope.

Vs. 5 There is often a mindset in Christians who see their self worth and value based upon work that such “*stresses*” are either “*undeserving*” or “*a direct result of our failure*” but Paul offers a different view they are to strengthen our “Hope”. Stresses cause us to reevaluate the motive behind our works and to abandon everything except resting in the “*Love of God*” which He has already poured out towards and continues to pour out towards us. ***God's love isn't given to us in a trickle, it is poured out in our hearts***. This love is ours by the Holy Spirit who was given to us. As such the lack of awareness of God's love can be credited to a failure to be constantly filled with the Holy Spirit and to walk in the Spirit.

For 7 wonderful years I lived in the beautiful Monterey Peninsula. The symbol for the area is the 250 year-old Lone Cypress found on the 17 mile drive. This tree has been painted, sculpted and as I can attest made into jewelry. The secret to its admired beauty is the wind that constantly blows as it produces an outward beauty as well as an inward strength. The root system of the Cypress goes deeper than any other tree in the state even deeper than the mighty redwood. ***Dear ones if we want to be reflecting the beauty of the Lord He will need to sink our roots down deep and the winds of tribulation are certain to do just that. God puts us in fixes to fix us!***

**IV. Vs. 6-11 Rejoicing in God**

Vs. 6-11 The greatness of God's love is seen in its giving to the undeserving, those without strength, the ungodly, to sinners. ***God’s grace displayed in Jesus is so strong that it not only changes our status from sinner to saint it changes our state as we cannot stay acting like a sinner we must begin to act as a saint!*** Paul declares ***three spiritual blessings that assure us that we cannot be lost***.

1. Vs. 6-8 **God’s love within**: There are many times that the “*due time*” seems to be **way over do**! But God’s timing is always perfect as Jesus died at the due time when we recognized that we were sinners who needed a Savior. We may have to wait for the hope to be fulfilled but our waiting isn’t absent of His presence it’s saturated in the presence of His love. He reminds us that since He has acted towards us in love while we were still practicing sin how much more confident can we be that He will continue to act towards us in love while we are now called His beloved children? Spurgeon said, “*You will say*”:
* “*Oh, I am one of the worst in the world*.” But Christ died for the worst in the world.
* “*Oh, I have no power to be better*.” But Christ died for those that were without strength.
* “*Oh, my case condemns itself*.” But Christ died for those that legally are condemned.
* “*Oh, my case is hopeless*.” But Christ died for the hopeless. He is the hope of the hopeless. He is the Savior not of those partly lost, but of the wholly lost.
1. Vs. 9-10 **Salvation from future wrath**: ***Since God chose to save us while we were against Him we can again be confident that He will continue to save us while we are His children***. Yes there is “***wrath to come***” but we who have received the covering of His Son’s blood shall escape this wrath. And since His death accomplished so much for us we can expect that His life will also accomplish great things on our behalf as we are told that now Jesus sits at the right hand of the Father ever living to make intercession on our behalf defending us against the accuser of the brethren. The one who died for us has become the executor of His will as we are assured of every spiritual blessing in heavenly places and are accounted as His inheritance!
2. Vs. 11 **Reconciliation with God**: The word “reconciliation” means to be brought back into fellowship with God as Jesus has become the “*peace child*” to places us back into His family. ***If God does this much for His enemies, how much more will He do for His friends!*** This reconciliation isn't only helpful when we die; it touches our life right now.

**Romans**

**“The Righteousness of God Revealed”**

**III. Main Teaching: 1:18-15:13**

**B. Chp. 5:1-8:39 Living under Grace**

**Romans 5:12-21 “Because of One Man”**

1. **Intro**
2. **Vs. 12-14 Adam he’s our man, if he can’t do it nobody can**
3. **Vs. 15-17 Heartaches and ruined lives are why Jesus died on Calvary**
4. **Vs. 18-21 Life through Jesus Christ**

**I. Intro**

In Ray Stedman’s book “*Authentic Christianity*” he describes one of the marks of an “*Authentic Christian*” as “*Unquenchable Optimism*” which describes the reality that the believer in Christ always has reasons for rejoicing. I remember hearing one of my Christian friends tell me something that illustrated that truth when he declared to a non-Christian that: “*If this is the absolute best day of your life it’s a real bummer as it is only going to get worse from here on out*” Then he said, “*But as a follower of Jesus I can have the absolute worst day of my life and I can rejoice because it is only going to get better from here on out*!” To understand this section all we need to do is take a look at Paul’s repeated use of three phrases:

1. **One**: It is used 11 times in this section and Paul uses it as the bases of our identification either in Adam or in Jesus.
2. **Reign**: Paul uses this word 5 times as Paul saw these two men Adam and Jesus as Kings that reigned over a kingdom.
3. **Much more**: Paul uses this phrase as a comparison of what we gained in Christ verses what we lost in Adam. Jesus not only undid all the damage during Adam’s reign He did much more by making us children of God. In Adam we lost our kingdom in Jesus we as kings!

**II. Vs. 12-14 Adam he’s our man, if he can’t do it nobody can**

Vs. 12 It may befuddle the atheist but according to Jesus (Mat. 19:4-6) and Paul (here in Rom 5:12) they, regarded Adam and Eve as real people and their fall as a lasting effect to the present day. You can't take away Genesis 3 without taking away principles that lay the foundation for our salvation. Adam was more than the first man as his name means in Hebrew means “*humanity*.” Death entered the world and spread to all men as God promised Adam that, “*in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die*” (Gen. 2:17). Every death and grave is a silent reminder of the spread and reign of sin. **Paul draws the first two of four consequences of Adam’s sin in verse 12**:

1. Vs. 12a **Because of Adam’s failure, sin entered the world**: (**Universality of sin)** Chesterson said, “*Whatever else may be said of mankind, this one thing is clear: He is not what he is capable of being*.” Theologically speaking we call this “*original sin*”. That’s not fare you cry, but the reality is that Adam was our champion; he was the best we have ever had. He in a perfect world where he experienced the best of what God had to offer without a hint of failure. We could let lose the cheer, “*Adam, Adam he’s our man, if he can’t do it nobody can*!” Yet even though he was undefeated, on his home court in the Garden of Eden he got whipped. Now if you think you could do better try going one day without sin, without one bad thought, one unkind word or one bad attitude. Then when you throw in not just the ***sins of commission*** but the ***sins of omission*** where you didn’t do wrong you just didn’t do right, then old great, great, great grandpa Adam doesn’t look so bad. Even more amazing is that such sin is not a learned behavior it isn’t based upon a lack of education or poor environment. In 1926 the Governor of Minnesota commissioned the Minnesota Crime Commission to do a study on the causes of delinquency that was published in the Journal of the American Institute of Criminal Law and Criminology in May 1927. It’s finds were that: “*Every baby starts life as a little savage. He is completely selfish and self-centered. He wants what he wants when he wants it: his bottle, his mother's attention, his playmate's toys, his uncle's watch, or whatever. Deny him these and he seethes with rage and aggressiveness which would be murderous were he not so helpless. He's dirty; he has no morals, no knowledge, no developed skills. This means that all children, not just certain children but all children, are born delinquent. If permitted to continue in their self-centered world of infancy, given free reign to their impulsive actions to satisfy each want, every child would grow up a criminal, a thief, a killer, a rapist.*” David wrote in Psa. 51:5, “*Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me*”. Now I love my grandchildren but the truth is we never have to teach them to be bad, they got that from Adam passed on to Grandpa and then on to their parents.

2. Vs. 12b **Because of Adam’s failure death entered the world**: (**Universality of death)**. People may think that Adam and original sin is a load of baloney but every funeral, every grave marker makes them a liar. The moment a baby is born and they start to live they have kicked into action an eternal clock that no one knows but their creator that will one day stop ticking and they will die. ***We are born to die and it is the story of the human race***, as Paul puts it in verse 17 “*death reigned*”, then in verse 21 he says that “*sin reigned*”. Paul will tell us in Romans 6:23 that *the wages of sin is death* and that death is not only physical but spiritual and eternal death as well. The reason for all of this is Adam, that’s why it says the wages of “sin” not the wages of “sins” plural.

Adam is the common father of every person on the earth and we without choice we were born with his genetic makeup. By nature because of Adam’s sin we were subject to death even before we have made a choice to exercise what we are by nature. Sin and death have been royal tyrants who have dictated their wills upon all of humanity with only one exception, Jesus.

Vs. 13-14 Next Paul anticipates a question with regards to the “*Law*” and says that we were made sinners by nature because of Adam, as sin and death were in the world before the Law was ever given. In the garden of Eden Adam did far more then disobey a little command he made a decision to call himself an independent creature, the captain of his own ship and deny the God who he had enjoyed and walked with everyday. In so doing he enthroned himself as god. ***The “Law” revealed that what we are by nature we will soon enough be seen by choice!*** “*Death reigned*” even over those who had not sinned in the exact way Adam did, showing that the principle of sin was at work in every human.

**III. Vs. 15-17 Heartaches and ruined lives are why Jesus died on Calvary**

Vs. 15 This verse starts the comparison and contrasts of Adam and Jesus. The clearest contrast is that:

* ***Adam sinned once and brought death to all***
* ***Jesus died once and brought life to all***

As a result of Adam's offense, many died as a result of the free gift of Jesus, the grace of God which abounded many lived. This world is not the land of the living it’s the land of the dying. Yet as certain as this is Paul says that the reign of life through Jesus is much more certain. Imagine that “*The believer's reign in life through Jesus*” is more certain than death or taxes! **Paul draws the third of four consequences of Adam’s sin in verses 16-17**:

3. Vs. 16-17 **Because of Adam’s failure, condemnation entered the world**: Because of Adam’s foolishness enumerable numbers have died and the carnage of ruined lives liter human history. In that old song called “*Something about that name*” there is a stanza that goes “*I will serve thee because I love thee, You have given life to me, I was nothing until you found me, You have given life to me,* ***Heartaches, broken pieces, ruined lives are why You died on Calvary,*** *Your touch was what I longed for, You have given life to me*” Oh dear ones Adam’s failure would be insurmountable if not for the fact that “***Heartaches, broken pieces, ruined lives are why Jesus died on Calvary***”. Adam polluted. Jesus purifies! Adam washed out. Jesus washes us clean!

**IV. Vs. 18-21 Life through Jesus Christ**

Vs. 18 Between Adam and Jesus all of humanity is identified: ***We are born identified with Adam but we can be born again into identification with Jesus***. We initially didn’t chose Adam but the moment we sinned we identified ourselves with him and the moment we chose Jesus we identify ourselves with Him.

Vs. 19 Both Adam and Jesus communicate the effect of their work to their “*followers*” as Adam’s work makes us sinners Jesus’ work makes us saints. Satan could not complain to God that it was not fair that another Man represent us by acting on our behalf because it was our representative in Adam that placed us in the state we are in. **Paul draws the final of four consequences of Adam’s sin in verse 19**:

4. Vs. 19 **Because of Adam’s failure sin *continually* inters the world**: Adam’s failure would be tragic if he was lost. It would be a tragedy if his generation would be lost. Oh but his failure has affected every single person after him with no escape, no option, and no hope found in man’s ingenuity or creativity. Oh listen to me where sin did abound grace did much more abound. Sin reigned in death but grace and life reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord! Jesus didn’t come against death with a crusade or a march, He came with compassion. He didn’t mobilize the multitudes or strategize and compartmentalize. No He came to lay down His life that we may have life! In Jesus I have found everything I was looking for and many things I didn’t know ever existed. Because of Him I’ve stopped striving to prove I’m worthy of His love. ***I was a worker now I’m a worshipper which cause me to worship in my work***.

Vs. 20a Not only does the law not justify us it doesn't even make us sinners - Adam did that. The purpose of the law is so that man's sin is more visible by contrasting it with God's holy standard. In the jewelry industry to grade diamonds every gemologist needs to have a “*proof set*” of stones by which they can grade diamonds. They are without flaw and in various color grades (*D, E, F, G, H, I, J, K etc*) so that a person can lay the perspective stone next to that which is the standard. That’s what God's perfect law does as it exposes our “*flaws*”, reveals how “*off color*” we are making our sin abound.

Vs. 20b-21 Ah but where “*sin abounded under the law, then grace abounded much more under Jesus.”* The phrase “*abounded much more*” means “*super-abounded*” as God makes His grace super-abound over abounding sin! Is it not amazing that “*where sin abounded*” it was not God's anger or judgment that abounded much more. No, it is God's love and grace that abounded much more.

 Some folks have a misconception of “*abounding grace*” as they will say in response to their casual attitude towards sin, “*Hey I’m under grace*”. But according to Paul’s letter in Tit. 2:11-12 abounding grace teaches us: “*to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts and instead that we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age*.” A person who isn’t “*deny ungodliness and worldly lusts*” or “*living soberly, righteously and godly in this present age*” is demonstrating not that they are under grace but that they aren’t under grace!!! ***The legalist's fear is that the reign of grace will provide wicked hearts with a license to sin, but Scripture doesn't share that fear***. Grace does not accommodate sin, it doesn’t wink at unrighteousness, it confronts it with the atonement at the cross and the victory won at the open tomb. “*Grace is no friend to sin; it is its sworn enemy.*” Let us refuse to be content with a Christian existence that cannot be fully summed up as “*He reigned in life through Jesus Christ*!” Yes over sin, over satan, over the world system, over difficulties, adverse surroundings and circumstances.

**Romans**

**“The Righteousness of God Revealed”**

**III. Main Teaching: 1:18-15:13**

**B. Chp. 5:1-8:39 Living under Grace**

**Romans 6:1-14 “It’s not in saying NO; it’s in who you KNOW”**

1. **Intro**
2. **Vs. 1-2 Grace isn’t the problem**
3. **Vs. 3-5 Show them what they’ve won**
4. **Vs. 6-10 Wrestling with a quadriplegic**
5. **Vs. 11-14 Not living between “Good Friday” and the “Resurrection”**

**I. Intro**

Having established that our salvation is apart from works Paul anticipates that some will argue that “*If you emphasize grace, people will do whatever they want with regard to practicing sin.*” Let’s say that you were steeling large amounts of money from your employer who had always treated you right. He catches you red handed and instead of firing you or throwing you in jail he gives you the option of paying off the debt yourself after you have been fired and done jail time or become his son. Now you choose becoming his son and you experience more blessings than you ever imagined. Do you think that having been so blessed that you would say, “*Man, if I’m this blessed receiving what I didn’t deserve might as well continue steeling from him, so he will bless me even more?*”

* In chapters 1 through 5 Paul spoke of the positional truth of justification: Which tells us we are dead ***in*** sin free from the ***penalty*** of sin.
* In chapters 6 through 8 Paul will speak on the practical truth of sanctification: Which tells us we are dead ***to*** sin free from the ***power*** of sin.

**II. Vs. 1-2 Grace isn’t the problem**

Vs. 1-2 “***Grace isn’t the problem***”, Paul says. Folks, “*You can’t fight sin and the flesh by just saying NO, NO, NO!*” In Rom. 2:4 Paul said “*that the goodness of God leads you to repentance*”. It’s knowing the “*goodness*” of God that enables you to say NO! Too many Christian live between “*Good Friday*” and “*Resurrection Sunday*” believing in the cross but never entering into the power of the resurrection, living in the wilderness somewhere between Egypt and the promised land.

The word “*continue in sin*” speaks ***not*** of an ***infrequent action*** but ***a lifestyle of practicing sin like they did prior to knowing Jesus***. Apparently there were those who believed that such a lifestyle of sin was not just for personal satisfaction it was for the glory of God. Paul’s immediate answer to this was an emphatic NO WAY! You can only say No because of who you KNOW! In four words he explains why, “*We died to sin*!” ***The rest of this chapter is an explanation to those four words***. “***We died to sin***”; doesn’t mean that “***sin is dead in me***!” As a Christian I have not reached a place (*nor will I in this body*) where I cannot sin. The word “*died*” ***is in the past tense, something that has already been done which means that Paul is not talking about a gradual change whereby we continue to die until we reach a place where we outgrow sin.*** Our once dead spirit has come alive by faith in Christ but our souls and bodies have functioned for years under the control of sin. That means our habits; thoughts and actions have all been established under the wrong influence. But now in Christ our spirit is free from sin alive while our souls (*the seat of our feeling thoughts and actions*), along with its influence over our bodies have been wired incorrectly. Prior to this we had no choice and we did what sinners do, sin! I watched an interview with “*Brock Lesner*” the huge MMA fighter who prior to this was a world class wrestler. That’s what it was like fighting against the flesh before being a Christian; even if our heart had wanted to stop sinning it would just force us to do what it wanted. **Before, we were dead in sin; now we are dead to sin**.

**III. Vs. 3-5 Show them what they’ve won**

Vs. 3-5 Paul turns to two visual aids to help us realize this new power over sin, **baptism** and **grafting** a plant or a branch saying that every Christians should know this.

**Baptism**: The idea behind the Greek word for baptized is “*to immerse something*.” In Baptism we are identifying with Jesus’ death when we go under the water and with His resurrection when we come up out of the water. In baptism as a symbol our former life has been “*put under*” and what comes up out of the water is “*clean*” washed in Jesus “*brand new*”. Baptism doesn’t save us only faith in Jesus does that, baptism is an out ward sign that we identify with Jesus in His death and resurrection. In Desert storm chaplains didn’t anticipate such an outpouring of the Holy Spirit as many soldiers gave their life to Jesus. Out there in the desert they lacked the ability to conduct baptisms but one soldier came up with a perfect place to be identified with Jesus, a coffin!

**Grafting**: The phrase “*we have been united together in the likeness of His death*” is the process by which a graft becomes united with the life of a tree. Our participation in the death of Jesus makes our participation in His resurrection certain. The “*crucified life*” is preparation for “*resurrection life*”. If a drunk dies he can no longer be tempted by alcohol because his body is dead to all physical senses, he can’t see it, smell it or taste it or experience the felling it would give him. In Christ we have died to sin so that we no longer want to continue in it. Folks, you cannot die with Christ and not be risen with Christ and you cannot be risen with Christ and not die with Christ. God doesn’t command us to be dead to sin He tells us that we are dead to sin and alive in Christ and encourages us to act upon that truth. The cross of Christ has not only separated us from the consequences of sin; it has separated us from the authority or power of sin over us as lord.

**IV. Vs. 6-10 Wrestling with a quadriplegic**

Vs. 6-7 **In these verses Paul explains what it means to die in Christ**: Our old self, the person who was identified with Adam died with Jesus on the cross and as such our being a “***natural-born sinner***” ended the moment we became believers in Jesus. Now you may be thinking, “*Hey if my old nature has been crucified than I’m living a horror flick, I think I got a problem with a Zombie*.” That phrase “*done away with*” doesn’t mean “***annihilated***” it means “***rendered inactive***” or “***paralyzed***”. ***Our old nature is paralyzed from the neck down, which means it still has the ability to yell and scream telling you that you have to act in anger, you have to lust, lie, gossip etc***. That old “*Brock Lesner*” as menacing as he is, has been made a *quadriplegic,* paralyzed from the neck down. What a glorious revelation to realize that we are wrestling a *quadriplegic* that can only bluff you into doing what you used to do. Paul explains that Jesus was crucified in order that the sin which was in this body of ours would come to an end of dictating what we have to do. He explains in 2 Cor. 5:21 speaking of Jesus’ work on the cross he says, “*For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him*.” It was our sin that caused Jesus’ body to die. We bury a body because it is powerless, inactive and in burying Jesus’ body covered in our sin the sin’s natural reign over us has ended. Paul elaborates in 2 Cor. 5:17 that “*if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new*.” Two thousand years ago something amazing took place long before we came into existence; my old nature died with Jesus that ***not only the penalty for my actions may be put to death but also the power of the actions themselves***. This truth is what John writes about in 1 John 3:9 where he says, “*Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God.*” Our flesh now is a quadriplegic trying to convince us to do what we formerly had to do. A dead man can no longer have authority over us, ***we don't battle the old man, we simply reckon him as dead***.

Vs. 8-10 **In these verses Paul explains what it means to be risen with Christ**: Not only have we been set free from sin as we recognize ourselves dead to sin but ***we have also been united to Jesus in His resurrection in which we have His power to resist sin***. In place of the old man, God gives the believer a new man – (*a self that is instinctively obedient and pleasing to God*). The first step was to understand that the demands of your flesh are just that “***demands***” he has been rendered paralyzed. The second part of this is equally important as we understand that we are ***not*** wrestling this oversized quadriplegic in our own strength we are doing so in the strength that overcame death! If we let the new man within us influence the mind, the will, and the emotions, then we will find the battle less intense. The new man not only has life; he has eternal life. With the new life, he lives to God.

**V. Vs. 11-14 Not living between “Good Friday” and the “Resurrection”**

Vs. 11-14 The word reckon in verse 11 is an accounting term that means to “***add it up***” and as such Paul is saying “*do the math and you will arrive at the answer that you are dead to sin*”. If you take a look at this passage you will discover that there are ***three ways we can master the flesh***:

1. ***Association***: Going back to verse 6 we read “*knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him*”. Friends, you’ve got to decide who you are going to listen too. The story is told of three friends who decided they were going to attempt to cross Niagara Falls on a tight rope. The three friend’s names were ***Fact***, ***Faith*** and ***Feeling***. But before they attempted to cross the falls they stretched a line across a swimming pool to practice and they started with ***Feeling*** leading the way but every time he did whether ***Faith*** or ***Fact*** was next they always ended up in the pool. Then they tried to put ***Feeling*** in the middle but if ***Faith*** was behind him they would again end up wet. Finally it was decided that ***Feeling*** had to go last behind ***Faith*** and ***Fact*** and that ***Faith*** should not ever look behind him to see ***Feeling*** or they would again fall but instead keep his eyes fixed on ***Fact*** and they would make every time. Friends, don’t let your ***Feelings*** guide you and don’t look back no matter how “*tight and dangerous*” the journey. Keep your eyes on the Fact of the Word of God and you will always cross over.
2. ***Appropriation***: Vs. 11 “*Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord*.” The word “*Reckon*” is a word that comes from an accounting term. God never calls us “*crucify*” the old man, but instead to account him as already dead because of our identification with Jesus' death on the cross. Friends we need to do the math, add up the numbers to come to the irrefutable conclusion of how compete the work of Christ was on the cross on your behalf. Our failure isn’t because there isn’t enough riches it’s because we have failed to appropriate Christ’s riches and grace. We need only to be reminded of the fact that Jesus not only paid for the penalty of sin He has broken its power over us and that squawking and demanding of the flesh comes from a flesh that is paralyzed and we don’t have to do what it is demanding that we do.
3. ***Application***: Vs. 13 “*And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God*.” The final step to master the flesh is application ***Faith*** has to take a step of action following after ***Fact*** without looking at ***Feelings***! You need to realize that satan and the world system formed a habitual pattern in your life that isn’t going to give up easily its hold over you, you are going to have a battle it moment by moment but all you need to do is constantly remind yourself of this twofold process. “*Hey hands, feet and eyes; we aren’t going to listen to the quadriplegic flesh, instead we are going to say NO to him and yes to true living and life in Jesus and have some real fun*!” Spurgeon is said, “*The grace that does not change my life will not save my soul.*”

**Romans**

**“The Righteousness of God Revealed”**

**III. Main Teaching: 1:18-15:13**

**B. Chp. 5:1-8:39 Living under Grace**

**Romans 6:15-23 “You’re Gonna have to Serve Somebody”**

1. **Intro**
2. **Vs. 15 Shall we sin because grace abounds?**
3. **Vs. 16-19a Designed to be mastered**
4. **Vs. 19b-21 Free to or free from?**
5. **Vs. 22-23 You get what you pay for**

**I. Intro**

On October 3, 2003, during a live show at The Mirage, Roy Horn of Siegfried and Roy fame tripped over his pet seven-year-old male tiger “Montecore” and suffered a near fatal bite on the neck. Horn had trained the tiger since he was a cub and had performed with him in the act for six years. As Roy Horn was being driven in critical condition to the hospital he was insisting that they “*Don't shoot the cat*!” The Mirage suffered financially the loss of $50 million in annual ticket sales and untold millions in sales of food, beverages, hotel rooms and the casino's gambling winnings. A spokesman said that even a greater loss was losing Siegfried and Roy who were “the faces” and brand name of the Mirage hotel.

What does this story have to do with Romans 6:15-23? Only this: **You can’t keep playing with your “Flesh”; you won’t be able to tame it by saying nice kitty**! “*Can’t I just take it out every now and then to perform? If I cage it this may cost me financially, I’ll lose my identity*!” Saint’s, like Siegfried and Roy you can get it to “*disappear*” for a while even “*jump through hoops*” but sooner or later it will ***trip you up and bite you***, just like it did Roy. Though I can appreciate Roy’s love for his trained Big Cat but sooner or later my friend you are going to have to “*shoot the cat*”! Far too many Christian’s look at sin like Roy looked at his tiger, a pet. “*After all I don’t tell dirty jokes all the time. I don’t get drunk every week*!” Remember your “***pet flesh***” hasn’t improved he is still wild and sooner or later it’s going to bite you if you don’t shot it.

**II. Vs. 15 Shall we sin because grace abounds?**

Vs. 15 Having convinced us that a lifestyle of habitual sin is not compatible with one whose life is changed by grace, Paul asks about an occasional sin here and there. The phrase “*Shall we sin*” in the Greek indicates this as it means ***dabbling in sin***, not a ***continual habitual sin***. The question in verse 1 was “*Shall we continue* ***IN*** *sin*” and the question here is “*Shall we continue* ***TO*** *sin*” and both have the same answer “*God forbid*”. **The first deals with a *permanent state* the other with an *isolated act***.

There is a subtle lie that enters the heart of even the most dedicated Christian that would never ask, “*Shall we sin that grace might abound*”. Instead they ask, “*Shall we sin* ***because*** *grace abounds*!” “*What if* *we sin occasionally because of the momentary pleasure involved*?” “*If we are under grace, not law, should we be concerned about a little sin here and there*?” Every one of us faces temptations that beg us to react, that seem to shout at us “*Go on give in this once*!” “*You’re not going to hell because of this one thing, after all if God didn’t want you to do this he wouldn’t have placed it in front of you*.” “*You’re not under the law, you’re under love; you can repent later*!” ***Friend’s it’s not what God will do to you if you sin; it’s what sin will do to your relationship with God that should trouble your heart***.

**III. Vs. 16-19a Designed to be mastered**

In verses 16-23 Paul offers us **three reasons why we shouldn’t “*sin occasionally because of the momentary pleasure***”.

1. Vs. 16-19a **Sin makes you a slave again**: There is profound truth that no person wants to admit; “*Humans were designed to be mastered*” the only question is by whom? Oh we would like to think that we are the masters of our own fate, the captains of our own ships but far too often our so called “*freedoms*” are the very things that have enslaved us. Saint’s, the option to live our life ***without serving*** either sin or obedience isn't open to us. There is no “***neutrality***” in the flesh as Bob Dylan said, “*But you’re gonna have to serve somebody, yes indeed You’re gonna have to serve somebody Well, it may be the devil or it may be the Lord But you’re gonna have to serve somebody*.” In verse 17 Paul says that we “***were***” slaves of sin because now in Christ we have been set free from its power that it once had over us as we “*obeyed from the heart*”. Saints listen up, ***we can be legally free positionaly yet still choose to live like a prisoner***. Also in verse 17 we read the phrase “*that* ***form*** *of doctrine*” which is a word used to describe a mold used to shape molten metal. As a goldsmith we often practiced the “*lost wax*” technique as we would carve out our pattern in wax then place it in plaster heat it up for many hours until the wax had melted, place the flask on a centrifuge, melt the gold in a crucible and let the spring loaded centrifuge go throwing the gold into the mold. Folks, when God wants to shape us He first melts us by the work of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God. Then he lets us go into the mold of Jesus. Sin not only takes you further than you intended to go it often takes others with you. There is a little poem that illustrates this that goes: “*I said a naughty word the other day, a word I hadn’t meant to say. But when it went out my mouth it was not lost when it flew, as someone else heard it and now they say it TOO*!” In verse 18 Paul answers the question: “*Why not occasionally sin?*” another way. We are free from sin and now slaves of righteousness. We serve ***Mr. Righteousness*** as our boss not ***Mr. Sin*** as we don’t work for him anymore. The Greek idea of being a slave was:
* ***One whose will is swallowed up in the will of another***
* ***One who serves his master to the disregard of his own interest***

The thought here is that since we “*have been set free from sin*”, we never have to sin again. Now sin is inevitable until our flesh is resurrected in glory but it isn't because God has designed a system by which we **must sin**.

**IV. Vs. 19b-21 Free to or free from?**

**The 2nd of three reasons why we shouldn’t “*sin occasionally because of the momentary pleasure***”.

1. Vs. 19b-21 **Sin will make you ashamed**: Shame is the awareness of actions that have caused damage to others and sin in our life has left its irreparable scare on folks. Sin leaves a stain that not even tide or bleach can completely remove. Saint’s it’s always easier to make a good impression than it is to repair a bad one! We have all had words and actions we wished we could repair but when we see that person out and about we avoid because we are uncomfortable. You can’t drop the seeds of sin into the soil of your heart without one day reaping the fruit of what you have sown.

**V. Vs. 22-23 You get what you pay for**

**The final of three reasons why we shouldn’t “*sin occasionally because of the momentary pleasure***”.

1. Vs. 22-23 **Sin will spread death in your life**: When Paul talks about death in these verses he isn’t talking about physical death he is talking about the absence of life. The end of the things that constitute life like joy, peace, light and laughter. Fear creeps in followed by depression and anger; soon we are walking around bitter and shriveled up people. If we continue in sin we will inevitable look back over our lives at thousands of miles in the desert of wasted opportunities! Oh how much more we could have enjoyed the gift of this life had we not dabbled in this sin or that. ***Sin hides in the empty container of promised freedom, then places us in the box and closes the lid***. We don’t have to experience this kind of death the sad truth is often we choose it! Dear ones, what good is it to be free from sin by Jesus Christ and have the opportunity and possibility to walk in His wholeness, sense of worth and security of His constant love for you if you choice to ignore these things and go right back to being a slave? Jesus has made us free to be living as His ambassadors having a life of wholeness and self worth not bound up with conflicting kingdoms.

Let me conclude by giving you **three ways we can keep from enslaving ourselves to Mr. Sin.**

1. Vs. 19b **Don't show up to work for your old boss**: You start working at a new job with an amazing boss who pays you better than you ever imagined, incredible benefits. But at lunch you check out and go to your old crumby job with the tyrant of a boss and say what do you want me to do today I’m yours. That’s crazy, why would anyone do that? I don’t know but it’s repeated in our lives daily!
2. Vs. 20-22 **It’s easier to stop an immobile object**: “*Lawlessness just leads to more lawlessness*”, Paul says but so does “*Righteousness lead to holiness*”. *There is dynamic power in our habits and once momentum gets going it’s difficult to change the direction we are pointed in so you better make sure you are heading the right way*. If you’ve got going the wrong direction the first thing you are going to have to do is stop going that way and the 2nd equally important is start going the right way! To help in this determination Paul gives us a **twofold test to determine the direction** our action or attitude will be taking us:
3. Vs. 20 **If you aren’t sure what direction you are going ask yourself, “*Are you free TO or free FROM*”?**: When we are slaves of sin, we were free from doing what is right. Saint’s we are either at any given moment “*free to sin*” or “*free from sin*” but ***you will never be both at the same time*** and the only true freedom is freedom from sin’s power.
4. Vs. 21-22 **Ask yourself what is the outcome of the action or attitude**: The tree you plant will produce fruit either “*death*” or “*life*” and the tree that produces “*death*” always seems to taste good at first but it always makes you sick in the end. Whereas the fruit of life tastes good and continues to be sweet all the way through. **Consider these three things**:
5. ***How little satisfaction your former sins afforded at the time you committed them.***
6. ***How nothing but shame and sorrow followed you upon the completion of them.***
7. ***How the lasting fruit would have caused eternal death if it wasn’t for God’s grace and mercy.***
8. Vs. 23 **You get what you pay for**: When you work for sin, your wages are death. When we serve God we get the best benefit package imaginable. “*Every sinner earns by their long, sore, and painful service, hell*!” The author of Hebrews describes Moses choice to either be identified with the Egyptians, to whom he was regarded as royalty, or to be identified as a Hebrew slave and in 11:25 we are told that “*He chose to share the oppression of God's people instead of enjoying the fleeting pleasures of sin.*” Make sure you read the “*fine print*” of the offer your old boss Mr. Sin is offering as it only offers temporary pleasure with a price tag that will cause you years of heartache. We ought to want to be as good a Christian as we were a sinner!

 **Romans**

**“The Righteousness of God Revealed”**

**III. Main Teaching: 1:18-15:13**

**B. Chp. 5:1-8:39 Living under Grace**

**Romans 7:1-13 “From Duty to Devotion”**

1. **Intro**
2. **Vs. 1-6 Signed, sealed and delivered**
3. **Vs. 7-13 I fought the law and the law won**

**I. Intro**

**Romans chapter 1 dealt with the perversity of sin**

**Romans chapters 2-3:18 dealt with the pervasiveness of sin**

**Romans chapters 3:18-5:21 dealt with the penalty of sin**

**Romans chapter 6 dealt with the power of sin**

**Romans chapter 7 deals with the preoccupation of sin**

The word “law” is used 23 times in the 25 verses of chapter 7. What is this legalism that Paul so adamantly warns us against? It is the belief that I can become pleasing to God by obeying a list of rules and regulations (*do’s and don’ts*). The weakness of legalism is that it only sees sins ***plural*** all the while missing seeing sin ***singular***. It judges the outward all the while missing the inward. The end result of prolonged living under the law is that it will inevitably produce two types of people: ***Quitters*** or ***Pretenders***!

* ***The Quitter***: Sooner or later a person living in legalism will give up on this false brand of Christianity, as they are honest about their failure to live up to their own standard and drop out believing that either Christianity failed or they did.
* ***The Pretender***: This person will become extremely hard to live with as they will focus all of their attention on what others aren’t doing and what they are doing to escape the nagging reality they are grossly inadequate in most areas.

In this section Paul will discuss two topics that will deliver those who suffer needlessly with either of these two casualties of Church-ianity.

* Vs. 1 “***Doesn’t the Law help us get a handle on sin***?”
* Vs. 7 “***What good is the law if we don’t need it anymore***?”

**II. Vs. 1-6 Signed, sealed and delivered**

Vs. 1-2 “*Doesn’t the Law help us get a handle on sin*?” The law addressed by Paul refers to “*a standard of conduct used as a source of righteousness by us and others.*” The most obvious of these is what we call the Ten Commandments, which pointed out our failure never patted us on the back when we got it right. The law is a diagnostic tool like an x-ray machine; it reveals plainly what has always been there, but was hidden before, so you can't blame an x-ray for what it exposes.

Paul uses the illustration of marriage to show that “*Death dissolves legal obligation*” in verse 1-3. According to Old Testament Law a husband could divorce his wife, but a wife could never divorce her husband. That’s why Paul uses this analogy as an illustration of someone married to ***Mr. Perfect Law*** and the only way to escape his glaring perfection and your glaring imperfection is to die. Mr. Perfect Law can’t die we have to die to Him, friends it’s the only way. You see the trouble living with Mr. Perfection isn’t what you get from him; the problem with Mr. Perfect is what He gets from you, ***imperfection***! He is always on time, He always follows the rules, does exactly what He is suppose to do. In every situation and every circumstance you can expect nothing less than perfection. At first he is very attractive but the problem comes when married to Mr. Perfect we soon discover that though Mr. Perfect is well “*perfect*” we are far from it. And with every burned meal, every late arrival at an appointment, every miss placed action or word we realize that though we are married to Mr. Perfect, he is married to us and all of our imperfections standout like black ink on white paper!

Vs. 3-4 The only antidote is to be free from marriage to Mr. Perfect; but how to accomplish this? You go to your lawyer and say, “*Sir, I want out of my marriage as soon as possible.*” “*On what grounds*?” your lawyer asks. “*Well sir, he’s, he’s just to perfect*!” “*I’m sorry, I think I miss understood you, did you say you want a divorce from your husband because he is, to perfect*?” “*Yes sir, that’s my reason for divorce*!” “*He always acts and behaves perfectly and it’s driving me in sane, every time I go into the bathroom, the toilet seat is always down. Every time I go into the bedroom his clothes are always picked up, the bed made and his side of the sink is clean; I just can’t take it anymore.*” “*Well Mrs. Perfect; I’m sorry to inform you have no grounds for divorce and the only option I can see that will ever end your marriage to Mr. Perfect is death*.”

 Folks, you will never see a trial in which they dig up a corpse and charge him with a crime then sentence him to serve time because the authority of the Law doesn’t reach to the grave, we are free from the Law when we are dead. Listen up dear ones as we are told by Paul in Galatians 2:20 that we have “*been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me*.” Every one of us in Christ has been set free from our marriage to *“Mr. Perfect Law*” because in Christ we have died so now we are free to be married to ***Mr. Love***, Jesus! When we throw off the bounds of legalism we will become fruitful because we will become excited about being married to Mr. Love and ***what we saw as duty in our relationship to Mr. Perfect we will now see as devotion to Mr. Love***.

Vs. 5-6 **The Christian Life is meant to be a life lived in love and devotion not legalism and duty**! Far too many churches in an attempt to keep people in the pews have reduced the Christian life to a legalistic system of expectations and control so that folks will “***HAVE***” to stay connected instead of running off to the next “***great thing***”. Folks ***the answer isn’t to develop a better trap it’s to remove the doors***. “*But if you remove the doors won’t people run off out into the world or to other fellowships*?” Not if the reason they are here is out of devotion and not duty! **Paul’s point is summed up in two statements**:

1. Vs. 4 “***we have become dead to the law***”: When we were unsaved we were under the authority of the law but when we trusted in Jesus and were united with Him we died to the law. It wasn’t the law that dies it was us who died to the law. The law couldn’t die because it still rules over people but we have died to it as believers so that it no longer rules over us. But that doesn’t mean that we are just “*lawless*” as we are now “*married*” or “*united*” to Jesus. What this means is that we are no longer motivated by a list of rules to do what is right instead we are motivated out of love to do what we are now created to do love.
2. Vs. 6 “***we have been delivered from the law***”: This is the logical conclusion that the law cannot exercise authority over a dead person and as such we are delivered from the control and motivation of the law. This deliverance has not made us rebellious or independent it has made us “*bond servants*” serving out of choice predicated on love. What does such service look like? Well Paul describes it as a service in “*the newness of the Spirit*” instead of in the “*oldness of the letter*”. That means is that our motivation has changed from the energy of the flesh to the energy of the Holy Spirit. It has also changed to a relationship to the Living God from that of the impersonal letter.

There are **four ways you can determine if you are living under the law**:

1. ***You point out how well you are doing, so you can distract others from looking at areas where you aren’t doing well.***
2. ***You are critical of others, which is another diversionary tactic so others will become distracted and start looking at someone else’s flaws instead of yours.***
3. ***You struggle with admitting when you are wrong, because if you do you will have to admit you need to change.***
4. ***You suffer from anxiety and depression as you cannot maintain your own standards.***

**III. Vs. 7-13 I fought the law and the law won**

Vs. 7-13 Paul deals with the paradox of the law: ***In its self it is holy the voice of perfection but it doesn’t bring about perfection in us it brings about destruction***. The root of the word Holy means “***different or out of this world good***”! But how can something “*out this world good*” be so destructive to us at the same time? It is clear by the use of the personal pronouns “***I***” and “***me***” used 8 times in 6 verses, that Paul is describing something that he personally had gone through in the past. Paul anticipates what the argument would be: “*What good is the law if we don’t need it anymore*?” To answer this Paul gives ***four functions of the law today***:

1. Vs. 7 ***The law reveals sin***: Paul didn’t use murder or adultery as an illustration he used the last of the 10 commandments “*coveting*” because it is ***invisible*** to the naked eye, an inward attitude instead of an outward action. It was for this purpose that Jesus taught on the true intent of the 10 commandments saying that if you lusted in your heart you committed adultery and if you angered in your heart than you murdered.
2. Vs. 8-9 ***The law arouses the sin***: There is something about the human nature that always wants to push the limit. If the sign says keep of the grass but we have to walk on it. If it says, 70 we have to go 75. Legalism doesn’t make a person sin less it cause them to sin more because the flesh is got to test the prohibition.
3. Vs. 10-11 ***The law kills***: The law cannot give life it can only show a person that they are guilty, it offers no solution. There is nothing more deadly than a Christian or a church that is proud of its “*high standards*” and its attempts to live by them in their own strength. These “***Pretenders***” condemn the “***Quitters***” that flee the legalism which only creates more anger and bitterness.
4. Vs. 12-13 ***The law shows the sinfulness of sin***: People realize that there are such things as evil and sin in the world what they fail to realize is the destructive nature of sin personally. Most folks only recognize that they are a victim of some else’s sin, not that their sin is victimizing others.

Saint’s get back to devotion not duty fall in love with Jesus and things will turn around in a flash. In the book of Isaiah the prophet spent the first 5 chapters pronouncing woes upon people and nations, ah but in chapter 6 when he came into contact with the living God he said, “*Woe is me*” as he realized that he was no better than the folks he was pronouncing woes upon. The English Philosopher and writer G.K. Chesterton was asked by a woman that wanted him to write about what was wrong with the world he wrote back his reply in two words: “***I am***”. The problems of the world today is not ***political***, ***economical*** it’s ***PERSONAL!*** Folks the law says, “*Responsibility*” but love says, “*Respond to Me*!”

**Romans**

**“The Righteousness of God Revealed”**

**III. Main Teaching: 1:18-15:13**

**B. Chp. 5:1-8:39 Living under Grace**

**Romans 7:14-25 “The Pig and the Prodigal”**

1. **Intro**
2. **Vs. 14-19 What’s my problem**
3. **Vs. 20-23 The bad side of good**
4. **Vs. 24-25 The answer is a Who not a how**

**I. Intro**

Having explained what the law is supposed to do, Paul now explains what the law cannot do.

1. Vs. 14 ***The law cannot change you***: Even though it is holy, just, good and spiritual, it nonetheless lacks the power. The old nature knows no law the new nature needs no law.
2. Vs. 15-21 ***The law cannot enable you to do good***: It is clear by the many uses of personal pronouns that Paul was having a problem with “*self*”. Our mind, will and body can either be controlled by the old nature or the new nature the flesh or the spirit. That’s the questions Paul asks; “*How can I do the good I want*?” “*How can I not do the evil I don’t want*?”
3. Vs. 21-25 ***The Law cannot set you free***: How frustrating it is to exert all your energy in trying to live a good life only to discover that your best is not good enough. Is there any deliverance? Yes thank God! The secret of doing good and not doing evil is to yield to the Holy Spirit.

Some folks that have read this have become convinced that Paul was a golfer and reading verse 15 I can see how they come to that conclusion: “*For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do*.” But what Paul is talking about is much more serious than a game of golf and it is something that based upon the original language was a personal experience at the present time that he was writing this letter.

**II. Vs. 14-19 What’s my problem**

Vs. 14 The 2nd half of chapter 7 Paul addresses the truth that the law ill respective of how holy it is cannot restrain a carnal man (the “*flesh*”). The word in the Greek means, “*characterized by the flesh*” and speaks of the person who can and should do differently but does not. Notice that be the use of personal pronouns “*I*” and “*me*” Paul does not excuse himself as a person in this view. He describes his condition as “*Sold under sin*”. He is in bondage under sin and the knowledge that he is isn’t helping him out. Like a man arrested for a crime and thrown in jail; the law will only help a person out if he is innocent, but offers no help for the person who is guilty and in fact the law argues against him, not for him.

 Folk’s, just because Paul says that he is carnal, doesn't mean that he was not a Christian. The truth is his awareness of his carnality is evidence that God has done a work in him. His condition is not one that he is happy about nor one that he is justifying it is one that he recognizes and is tortured over even though he understands that the law is good it’s killing him.

Vs. 15-19 So what does he do with this condition? What everybody does, try to be do what is right our own strength. And in this Paul discovers **three realities in verse 15**:

1. Vs. 15a “*For* ***what I am doing****, I do not understand*”: ***His problem wasn't desire***; he wanted to do what is right. His heart said “*There are things I would love to do right, but I just can’t seem to do them.*”
2. Vs. 15b “*For* ***what I will to do***.”: ***His problem wasn't knowledge***; he knows what the right thing is. His heart said, “*There things I don’t want to do, yet I keep finding myself doing those things*.”
3. Vs. 15c “*that* ***I do not practice***”: ***His problem was a lack of power***: how to perform what is good I do not find. He lacks power because the law gives no power.

Vs. 16-17 Paul says as a born again Christian he now has ***a conscience*** that agrees with what is right but he also discovered that there is something else within him that rises up and says, “NO!” So that even though he was determined to do what was right and not do what was wrong he found his determination wilted as the law says: “*Here are the rules and you had better keep them*.” But it gives us no power for keeping the law. In verse 17 Paul seems to be offering up an excuse in the sentence “*But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me.*” But he is not denying his responsibility as he recognizes that as he sins, he acts against his nature as a new man in Jesus Christ. As such he owns up to his sin, but realizes that the impulse to sin does not come from who he really is in Jesus Christ. The Rabbi’s taught that everyman had two natures: “*Yetser hatob*” and “*Yetser hara*” and they could choice to which nature ruled their actions.

Now I saw this at work first hand in my granddaughter Hannah as she got her Easter basket from Nana. She was allowed to eat a little bit of candy prior to having dinner but was warned that she could only have the little. Her response was great she got excited and said “***Yeh, Sure Yeh***!!!” But she had that candy and started going after another than another until Mom and Dad had to take the basket away, than she got mad and yelled at her parents to “***Stop, NOW***!!” What went wrong with Hannah is the same thing that goes wrong with us the “***I and Me***” problem. The “***I***” wants to do it saying “***Yeh, sure Yeh***” but the sin in “***Me***” yells at my Dad “***Stop it Now***”. Our redeemed heart never wants to do anything that other than what our loving heavenly Father has told us but our old flesh is the exact opposite. And the problem is that we are made in such a way that our well power is never enough to keep us from sin!

Vs. 18-19 Paul came to understand that he had a battle between two selves. C.S. Lewis wrote that “*Anyone who has tried to do good is aware of this struggle. We never know how hard it is to stop sinning until we try.* ***No man knows how bad he is until he has tried to be good.***” Whenever we are disappointed at ourselves it’s an indication that we have either forgotten this verse or don’t believe it. Paul says, “***nothing***” not “***something***” or “***a few things***”! Oh what a difference between what the world says that “*we are all basically good*” and what the Bible says about Christians that “*nothing good dwells in my flesh*”. Yet when I become upset at myself, bummed out at my failures God has to remind me, “*Hey child of mine, why are you so depressed, didn’t I write to you that there was nothing good about your old self. Now you have yet another reason to believe Me and my word*!”

**III. Vs. 20-23 The bad side of good**

Vs. 20 In Luke 11:11-32 Jesus told the parable of the “*Prodigal Son*” and this story illustrates how you can differentiate between a pig and a prodigal. Take a pig out of a pigpen, any pig you want, wash him up in a special tub with special soap, and give him the real “*spa treatment*”. Spray him with Channel # 9 and dress him up in a white tux with tails then take him out into a clean environment with the finest furnishings except in one small corner dig a whole fill it with mud water and all sorts of stench and watch what happens to your pig in only a few minutes. Why that reformed pig will do what all pigs do he will go right back as soon as possible and make his home in that slop. The prodigal on the other hand will find himself in the mud from time to time but he will never be comfortable making the pit his home.

Vs. 21-23 Our eyes are prone to looking where they shouldn’t, our ears often try to hear something they shouldn’t and our tongues wag around in our mouths more than a dog’s tail spreading junk about others. “*What’s the matter with me? Why can’t I do what is right? Why am I so weak?*” Believers are perfect with regards to their justification but their sanctification is only begun and is a progressive work. Some have experienced more trials with their soul and have awakened to a sense of their lost condition quicker to proclaim “*O wretched man that I am*.”

**IV. Vs. 24-25 The answer is a Who not a how**

Vs. 24-25 The Greek is literally, “*Wretched through the exhaustion of hard labor*.” Paul had referred to himself some 40 times since Rom. 7:13 in his unsuccessful struggle against sin and in so doing he became entirely self-focused and self-obsessed. He is completely worn out yet wretched because of his unsuccessful effort to please God under the principle of Law. If you read the older commentaries as I do you will see that the writers do not say, “*How good I am*!” Rather, they are apt to bewail their sinfulness. When Paul writes the phrase “*from this body of death*” he is making a reference to ancient kings who tormented their prisoners by shackling them to decomposing corpses. Paul longs to be cut free from the wretched body of death clinging to him. Right here we arrive at the “*Sermon on the Mount*” in Matthew 5 where Jesus said, “*Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven*.” Blessed is the person who has come to the end of themselves, who has come to understand that they are spiritually bankrupt and cries out “*I’m a wretched person*.” *That is our battle getting to the place where we are no longer trying to control sin in our lives but our determination*. Paul’s struggle ended when he realized that what he need wasn’t to be found in “*what*” but rather in a Who! Far too much of our lives have been in search for WHAT:

* ***Program***
* ***Procedure***
* ***Principle***

Saint’s as long as our quest is after the what and not the Who we will remain in our struggle because the Bible doesn’t offer us the any answers in what it only offers one answer in Who, Jesus! The answer is not in theology it is in Jesus personally! This is difficult for us:

* ***Because of Jesus on the cross, the penalty of sin was paid***
* ***Because of Jesus on the cross, the power of sin was broken***
* ***Because of Jesus on the cross, my preoccupation with sin has been eliminated***

The entire tone of the statement reveals how desperate Paul was for deliverance. He is overwhelmed with a sense of his own powerlessness and sinfulness. We must come to the same place of desperation to find victory. Such a battle with the flesh as I mentioned before leads a person to become either a “*quitter*” or a “*pretender*”. Yet there is another alternative to “*quitting*” and “*pretending*” it’s “***turning***”! The words “*Who will deliver me*” show that Paul has given up on himself, and asks "*Who will deliver me*?" Instead of "*How will I deliver myself*?" But Paul’s “turning” isn’t to some new program, some new teaching or technique. NO, his turning is to the very same Person who he turned to save his soul Jesus!

 The cry went out in verse 24b “*Who shall save me from this body of death*” and as such the question was asked correctly but it was also answered correctly, “*I thank God –through Jesus Christ our Lord*.” Finally, Paul looks outside of himself to Jesus. ***Jesus didn't come and die just to give us more or better rules, but to live out victory through those who believe.*** Paul never found any peace, any praising God until he looked outside of himself and beyond the law to his Savior, Jesus Christ. Friends we don’t need:

* A “***teacher***” to show us a better way of doing what we cannot do, we need a Savior!
* A “***coach***” to motivate us and encourage us to do what we still cannot do, we need a Savior.
* A “***doctor***” to diagnose your problem to do what we still cannot do
* We need a ***Savior!***

**Romans**

**“The Righteousness of God Revealed”**

**III. Main Teaching: 1:18-15:13**

**B. Chp. 5:1-8:39 Living under Grace**

**Romans 8:1-11 “Change of Address”**

1. **Intro**
2. **Vs. 1-4 Freedom from judgment**
3. **Vs. 5-11 What do you want from life?**

**I. Intro**

***Romans 8 begins with no condemnation; it ends with no separation, and in between there is no defeat***. If you have ever struggled with anxiety then this chapter ought to bring you some much needed relief. It is amazing to notice the repeated words in the Bible, last week I told you that Paul in Romans 7:14-25 used the first person pronoun in the present tense “***I***” over 40 times. But here in chapter 8 Paul uses the word “***Spirit***” 19 times, hum it seems to me you won’t battle the “***I***” as much if you spend more time with the Spirit.

You see **we are always anxious in one of three areas** all addressed in Romans 8:

1. **We are anxious about something in the past**: But Romans 8:1says “*There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit*.”
2. **We are anxious about something in the present**: But Romans 8:28 says that “*We know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose*.”
3. **We are anxious about something in the future**: But Romans 8:38-39 says that we are “*Persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord*.”

In the original the final two verse of chapter 7 and the first two verse of chapter 8 are all one sentence and when read that way bring a greater clarity to the passage as it summarizes all that Paul had been saying in chapter 7 and the first word in chapter 8 ought to be a word that ties it together like “***but***”. Paul is making it clear that just because we have been saved through the finished work of Jesus Christ doesn’t mean that the battle is over in fact we will be entered into the battle between our old flesh and our new nature which are going to battle not for your soul but for control. Think of this battle as being tied to a person in a “*three legged obstacle race*” and you get the general idea as it’s a battle of control and direction. There are **three things every Christian should know about their new life in Christ**:

1. ***There is a very real internal battle the moment we got saved we entered into***
2. ***That this battle is not between God and us as it is without condemnation from Him***
3. ***That provision has already been made for our victory over ourselves in the Spirit filled life in Christ***

**II. Vs. 1-4 Freedom from judgment**

Vs. 1 The phrase “*There in now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus*” is even more powerful when examined in the original language. The word “*therefore*” implies a changed circumstance which involves a change of time. The time is “Now” which is the present and the word NO is emphatic which implies no sort of condemnation. The phrase “*Who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit*” is not found in the earliest ancient manuscripts of the Book of Romans and they do not agree with Paul's context. They were probably added by a copyist who either made a mistake or thought he could “help” Paul by bringing in these words from Rom. 8:4. ***The unbeliever has judgment day before him but the believer has judgment day behind him and because of this there in NOW NO CONDEMNATION in Christ Jesus***! The basis of this incredible declaration is to be found in the words ***In Christ Jesus***! The verse **doesn’t say** that:

* There will now be “*no mistakes or failures in Christ Jesus*”.
* There are now“*no consequences for mistakes and failures in Christ Jesus*”.
* What is says is that when we make mistakes and failures that we will not be condemned by them by God because we are in Christ.

Saint’s you aren’t fighting God on this, He isn’t pointing an angry finger at you and shaking His head in disgust, in fact He isn’t surprised at your battle or your failure. He isn’t rejecting you and kicking you out of His family and He isn’t mad and shunning fellowship with you. Joined to Jesus, we hear the verdict: “***no*** *condemnation*” not “***less*** *condemnation*.” Our standing hasn't improved, it's been **completely transformed**. **The reason for this is threefold**:

1. Vs. 2 **The law cannot claim you**: We have been made free from the law of sin and death as we have a life in the Spirit and as such the law no longer has any jurisdiction over us. The “Law of sin and death” is made up of three powerful forces that operate in conjunction with each other: The flesh, the world system which offers up things that entrap my flesh and satan who energizes the whole mess with his lies and deception. If just one of those three things is inactive I will have victory but together I’m defeated. Ah in comes the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus that has made us free from the effects of the deadly three.
2. Vs. 3 **The law cannot condemn you**: The reason for this is because Jesus has already paid for our suffering and condemnation on the cross. There is a human law that mimics this truth it’s called “*double jeopardy*” and states that a person cannot be tried twice for the same crime so since Jesus was tried and paid for our crime we can’t be retried for it. **There are three reasons why are FREE from God condemning us based upon what we read in chapter 7**:
3. 7:18, 22 ***There is nothing in my flesh that is good and nothing in my new heart that doesn’t want to do good***. Because of that truth God will not and doesn’t condemn us.
4. 7:11, 15-19 ***We can’t handle the flesh, it is two powerful and we are two powerless in our strength to deal with it***. Because of this God will not and doesn’t condemn us.
5. 7:24 ***God has already made provision in Christ for our past present and future failure.*** Those very real failures are driving me two him and if He condemned me they would drive me from Him.
6. Vs. 4 **The law cannot control you**: To break the cycle of guilt and failure God sent His own Son. He did not send an angel, prophet or holy man. And Paul is very careful to describe this incarnation as being in the “*likeness of sinful flesh*” not the likeness of “*flesh*” which would make Him a phantom or a mirage but in the likeness of sinful flesh which means that He came in the flesh but without sin.

Based upon these truths Paul asks’ in Romans 8:34 “*Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.*” We will be just like Paul, disgusted by our behavior, and even say the same thing about ourselves as Paul does about himself, “*Oh what a jerk I am*!” But even though we are disgusted about our failure we must not start believing that God feels the same way about us as we do.

**III. Vs. 5-11 What do you want from life?**

Verse 5-11 explains that just being a Christian doesn’t mean that you will automatically look and act like Jesus. The question Paul anticipates is “*Hey Paul if I’m free from the condemnation of my past, present and future sins, why not just continue to practice these sins*?” His answer is twofold:

1. Vs. 5 To do so would be an indication that you are not born again, “*those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh*.”
2. Vs. 6 To do so would only destroy you and rip you off where as the things of the Spirit bring you “*life and peace*”.

The way we can determine our direction in walking is to take note of what we are thinking about all day long. What’s important to us, how do we view this circumstance or that situation.

Vs. 6 We could translate this “*The thinking of the flesh is death, but the thinking of the Spirit is life and peace.*” On January 6th 1041 then President Franklin Delano Roosevelt addressed Congress on the state of the war in Europe, he closed his speech by saying that he looked forward “*to a world founded upon four essential freedoms: The freedom of speech, the freedom of worship, the freedom for want, and the freedom from fear.*” Paul in Romans makes **a declaration of four spiritual freedoms away from death**. **Death in our present experience always consists of four things**:

1. **Fear**: *Anxiety, dread, timidity*
2. **Guilt**: *Shame, self-hatred, perfectionism*
3. **Hostility**: *Resentment, bitterness, revenge*
4. **Emptiness**: *Loneliness, depression, discouragement*

These are all forms of “*death*” which come upon us when we set our thinking on the things of the flesh. If you summarize the entire Bible you will discover that **Life is also made up of four things that are the opposite of death**:

1. **Trust**: *Hope, confidence*
2. **Acceptance**: *Security, assurance*
3. **Love**: *Friendliness, kindness*
4. **Fulfillment**: *Excitement, vitality*

Vs. 7-8 The Soul is the center of our emotions, intellect and will and in will come 1,000’s of times a day a fork in the road where we will need to choose between two paths the spirit or the flesh. Paul very plainly tells us that when we are at the fork in the road not to be persuaded by the lure of the “*flesh path*” because it is at war against God and it cannot please God. Can a Christian choose to go down that road of the flesh? Yes, but they will do so apart from enjoying fellowship with God. There is no such thing as a happy carnal Christian.

Vs. 9 The word for “*dwells*” is a word that means to make ones home with. So Paul says that we have not merely changed locations with have been transformed into a dwelling place whereby the Holy Spirit takes up His permanent residence. Can you imagine the Holy Spirit taking up His home in your heart and your life, putting His feet up on the easy chair of your heart and saying, “*Man, Dale I feel so at home in your life, I’m so glad that I came to live here with you. I love what you watch, why you like the same things I like*.” You see if you are a Christian than that is the situation going on in your heart every moment of the day as the Holy Spirit dwells in you and if He doesn’t dwell in you than you are not a Christian.

Vs. 10-11 The phrase, “*Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His*”, means that every believer has the Holy Spirit. As such we cannot divide Christians among the “*Spirit-filled*” and “*not-Spirit-filled*.” If a person is not filled with the Holy Spirit, they are not a Christian at all. What we can say is that there are some who miss out on living the Christian life in the constant power of the Spirit because they are not constantly being filled with the Holy Spirit. The question as believers isn’t whether we have the Holy Spirit it is does He have us?

**Romans**

**“The Righteousness of God Revealed”**

**III. Main Teaching: 1:18-15:13**

**B. Chp. 5:1-8:39 Living under Grace**

**Romans 8:12-17 “Who we are” verses “The way we were”**

1. **Intro**
2. **Vs. 12-17 Sons of God**

**I. Intro**

In the 8th chapter Paul started out by letting all believers know that “*There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus*” and a collective sigh of relief ought to have been heard from all believers as Jesus’ work on the cross has:

* **Paid for the penalty of my sin**
* **Broken the power of my sin**
* **Removed the guilt of my sin**

But what is the practicable implication of those facts? Paul divides this into two sections the first (verses 12-17) Paul reveals that this has allowed us to enjoy being a child of God. The 2nd section (verses 18-30) he speaks on the seeming contradiction of our standing with our oft experience of suffering.

**II. Vs. 12-17 Sons of God**

Vs. 12-13 Our debt is to the Lord, not to the flesh, we don’t owe it any pampering and if we give in to its demands it will only rob us of the things of life. Paul is specific in writing these words as he says “*if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live*.” In the news on May 5th was this article: “*A South Korean man said to have fanatical religious views was found dead on a crucifix with his hands and feet nailed to it after an apparent attempt to emulate the death of Jesus Christ, the* [*Korea Herald*](http://www.koreaherald.com/national/Detail.jsp?newsMLId=20110504000668) *reports. When they found him on the cross he had a stab wound to the right waist and several whip marks. An autopsy showed that he used an electric drill to make holes in his palms. A hammer, a hand drill and a knife were found nearby the body.* ***Police are investigating whether the man killed himself or had help in his crucifixion*.**” Friends I’m no C.S.I. but I think I can tell you with some certainty that “*he had help*” even if he used a drill. There would be no way to do this by yourself. Dear ones that is true not only physically but spiritually as well as there is only one way to “*put to death the deeds of the body*” and that is by the Spirit. Too many believers are trying to fight their old ways in their own strength, it’s one thing to drill a hole in your hand, whip yourself and it’s another thing to stay on the cross and the only successful way of doing that is by the Spirit.

Vs. 14-15 There are so many wanting direction from the Lord and here we have yet another benefit of the Spirit filled life. The Spirit of God will give you guidance in your life. Augustine, one of the most influential theologians from the fourth century wrote, “*Love God and do as you please*.” Some see his words as irresponsible; “*Do whatever you want? Are you kidding?*” But Augustine had solid ground to stand on as thousands of years earlier, another theologian in Israel named David said in Ps. 37:4, “*Delight Yourself in the Lord, and He will give you the desires of your heart*”. The reason for this truth is if you Love God He will change your desires to His desires! Our being led by the Holy Spirit is not a pre-condition to being a child of God; Paul didn't say, “*As many as go to church, these are the sons of God.*” He didn't say, “*As many as read their Bibles, these are the sons of God*.” Spurgeon noted that, It does not say, “*As many as are* ***driven*** *by the Spirit of God. The devil is a driver, and when he enters either into men or into hogs he drives them furiously. Whenever you see a man fanatical and wild, whatever spirit is in him it is not the Spirit of Christ*.”

This is the first time Paul has used the phrase “*sons of God*” and though this seems sexist it is actually a generic term that includes both men and women, “*all believers who have received the gift of right standing and worth by trusting in Jesus alone*”. We need to understand biblically that not every person is a child of God relationally. The world tends to mix this concept up with being God’s creation but being our creator is vastly different than Him being our Father. That was Jesus point to Nicodemus that you “*must be born again*”, we are all God’s creatures but we aren’t all God’s children, part of His family by way of adoption through new birth!

1. We are adopted because God wants us to realize that we weren’t naturally a part of the family of God, adoption is an action a legal process as we were taken out of a family and adopted into another family.
2. Once adopted we are now considered born into the family of God. ***He now not only makes us legally His, He makes us relationally His so that we will share not only the benefits of His kindness legally but the benefits of His nature relationally***. We like naturally born offspring will take on the characteristics in attitudes and actions of our Father and older brother Jesus. That is what Jesus told Philip in John 14:9 “*He who has seen Me has seen the Father*”. It was what is behind the calling us Christians or “*Christ like*” by those in the worlds as Christians took on the attitudes and actions of the One they spoke about. Or as Peter put it in 2 Peter 1:4 speaking of the “*exceedingly great and precious promises that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature*”. We can’t tell outwardly looking at someone if they are God’s child or not, no special glow or hallow but you know inwardly, relationally and Paul is going to help us with **three practical ways we can know if we are God’s children**.
3. Vs. 14b “**Led by the Spirit of God**”: This speaks of control and here we see that the One in control leading our life is no longer our fleshly passions but rather the Spirit of God. The Bible says that if we are being led by the Spirit than when things come into our lives we will react differently than we did prior to being led by the Spirit. Take for instant the Bible when we read it or listen to the teaching of the Word we will recognize what Jesus said in John 10:27 when He said “*My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.*” Prior to being believers the Bible at best was only a collection of antiquated boring stories that had no relevance in our lives. Now, we not only recognize the fact that God is speaking to us we also want to put our lives in line with what He is telling us. Another way we can see we are being “*Led by the Spirit*” is in our communication with Him and the sense that we aren’t just throwing out a shopping list but talking directly to our Dad who loves us. Then there is also a desire to hang around our brothers and sisters as those whom outside of the family of God we would most likely have nothing in common with. Then we see the fruit Paul spoke about in Galatians 5:22-23 Love, described in 8 characteristics joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.
4. Vs. 15b “**We cry out, Abba Father**”: “*Abba, Father*” is most suggestive as “*Abba*” is Aramaic, and “*Father*” is Greek. This suggests that God is not the Father of one people but all people in Christ. Of further interest is that Abba is a word for a baby’s lips and Father is for the more mature which tell us that young and old can approach God by the Spirit. This speaks of an emotional loving response, one of security and devotion. One of the things that is hard for people to understand when looking at Christians is that our responses are not religious they are relational because we feel love we respond in love. We have our Father’s love surrounding us, His concern protecting us, His wisdom directing us. In Exodus 17:15 after Moses built an altar of devotion to the Lord he called it the *“Lord is my Banner*”. In Song of Solomon, Solomon waxed poetic saying that God’s “*banner over him was love*.” As a person who lost my earthly father when I wasn’t yet 5 I can tell you that these last 30 years of being a believer I’ve experiences a real powerful emotional sense that I have a Dad who loves me. One of the first Bible verses I ever learned was Psalm 68:5 where we are told that God is “*A father of the fatherless*”.
5. Vs. 16 “**The Spirit bears witness with our spirit**”: The testimony of the Spirit is not ***to*** our spirit but ***with*** our spirit. Beyond the outward observations and the inward emotional experiences is a deep conviction and awareness that we are Children of God. In Romans 5:5 Paul explained it this way saying that “*the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us*.”

Paul says that those who are God's children, born again by the Spirit of God, know their status because the Holy Spirit testifies with our spirit that this is so. We don't have to wonder if we are really Christians or not. God's children know who they are.

Vs. 17 We started out in Adam now by faith in Christ are children of God, led by the Spirit and heirs of God as all that He has is committed to us in Christ. Dear ones because we are in Christ, we have the privilege of relating to the Father as Jesus does - therefore, we are heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ. Remember this truth “*One who has been adopted into a family must also be adapted for that family.*” In Luk. 18:18 the rich young ruler asked Jesus, ***what must I do to inherit***? But he missed the point because ***inheritance is not a matter of doing it is a matter of being***. Such a blessing defies our ability to grasp it, all that our Dad has in store for those whose only worthiness is to be found in our reception of His love. The point of Paul in telling the Romans and us this is that we will begin to identify more with who we are than the way we were! Friends it will become much easier to say no to our former flesh life when we see that pursing it rips us off from something far greater. But Paul also reminds them that just because we are in Christ, doesn’t mean we are immune from suffering. In fact, our sharing in present suffering is a condition of our future glorification. In 1 Cor. 2:9 Paul wrote that, “*Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him*.” But the 2nd part of this verse seems to contradict this truth as we read: “*if children, then heirs--heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together*.” Is Paul linking ***groaning with glory***, ***hallelujah with hurts***? How can those two opposite things go together? In 2 Cor. 4:17 Paul would further elaborate on this saying, “*For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory*”. Suffering is a part of our inheritance as much as glory.

**Romans**

**“The Righteousness of God Revealed”**

**III. Main Teaching: 1:18-15:13**

**B. Chp. 5:1-8:39 Living under Grace**

**Romans 8:18-30 “*The Biography of Me*”**

1. **Intro**
2. **Vs. 18-22 The hills are alive with the sound of groans**
3. **Vs. 23-25a From groans to glory**
4. **Vs. 25b-30 Groans for our good and God’s glory**

**I. Intro**

In John 16:13 Jesus told His disciples that “*When He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come*.” Therefore we know as the third person of the trinity the Holy Spirit will guide us in the same direction as does the Father and the son:

* **Into repentance**
* **Into think little of self and much of Jesus**
* **Into truth**
* **Into love**
* **Into holiness**
* **Into usefulness**

Most importantly the Spirit will continually bring us to an intimate, joyful relationship with God, whereby our response to Him is by speaking to Him calling Him (Abba, Father) translated Daddy! But what about suffering?

**II. Vs. 18-22 The hills are alive with the sound of groans**

Vs. 18 This verse is the theme for the next 9 verses (through verse 26) that the glory that a waits is greater than anything we will ever experience here on this earth. Paul’s observation is that, the intensity of our suffering is nothing when compared to the intensity of our coming glory. The glory that Paul speaks of is not a glory that is going to be revealed **to us** but rather one that will be revealed **IN US**! This glory is not a spectator sport we are going to experience it personally. This section on suffering is best understood by the three groans of: **Creation, Believers and the Holy Spirit**.

1. Vs. 18-22 **Creation Groans**: When God finished His creation in Genesis 1:31 He said it was good, but today we are told that creation its self is groaning for the good old days when things were good. Paul uses the phrase “*earnest expectation*” and in the Greek that word describes someone stretching out in expectation, standing on its tippy toe. Creation is waiting for what will happen to us believers because they are linked to us in the fall. Someone has well said that *it was mankind’s fall that put thorns on Roses*! Creation is under the “*bondage of corruption*” in scientific terms it is known as the “*2nd Law of thermodynamics*” which says that everything is decaying, running down instead of evolving and speeding up. In anticipation of that day nature groans in the anticipation that it will be liberated from the curse we put it under. If as Julie Andrews piped in the Sound of Music, “*The Hills are alive with the sound of music*” they are singing in a minor key. Isa. 11:6-9 describes this redemption of creation as being a time when; “*The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall graze; their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play by the cobra's hole, and the weaned child shall put his hand in the viper's den.*” “*Creation is not undergoing death pangs . . but birth pangs*.” So dear ones maybe it isn’t a bad idea to hug a tree and tell them you are sorry for the condition they are in.

**III. Vs. 23-25a From groans to glory**

1. Vs. 23-25a **Believers Groan**: Next Paul says our groaning is because as Christians we have tasted the firstfruits of glory that is to come and we long for more. The final words in the Bible echo this as John hears Jesus proclaim that He is coming quickly and responds enthusiastically “*Even so, come, Lord Jesus*!” Though our spirits are redeemed we too are groaning as we await the redemption of our bodies. ***Every groan and grunt ought to be a reminder that glory awaits us!*** We are in a waiting pattern anxiously awaiting what “*for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ*” Titus 2:13.
* **Faith looks backward and upward; Hope looks onward**
* **Faith is concerned with Him who promises, Hope is occupied with the good things promised.**
* **Faith accepts, Hope expects**
* **Faith appropriates, Hope anticipates**.

**Vs. 25b-30 Groans for our good and God’s glory**

1. Vs. 25b-30 **The Holy Spirit Groans**: Today it is the Holy Spirit who intercedes through our groanings that we may live life in His power through our sufferings. God has two purposes for our suffering:
* Our good
* His glory

We have the assurance that His plan will succeed in both areas! While watching that T.V. commercial for Direct TV that says, “*Don’t just watch TV direct TV*”, I realized that a lot of the time that could be said of our prayer lives. Saints, ***prayer isn’t to direct God, it is to be directed by God***! As such we don’t have to explain the situation and tell Him what to do. **The Holy Spirit's intercession is perfect as He searches the groans of our heart and interprets what our minds and words cannot express, articulating and guiding our prayers according to the will of God.**

Vs. 28 ***This verse doesn’t tell us that everything that happens to us is good. What it says that every situation whether good or bad, will eventually work together for good, if you know Gods love***. Dear ones, ***there is no incident or circumstance no matter how slight that is without purpose or meaning***. Paul doesn’t say “*most things, some things*” work together for good but “***ALL Things***”! ***God does not begin a work in our lives to abandon it in the midst of our present suffering***. What appears to be a thousand jumbled up movie scripts dropped together from 1,000 feet of our life’s experiences is in reality a divinely coordinated novel, brilliantly written with every moment fitting together perfectly.

Vs. 29-30 In these two verses Paul identifies **five ways in which God is writing the novel of our lives**. First it is important that as we read these verses that we understand the context. He is **not** in this chapter dealing with “*election*” which deals with explaining why some people believe in Christ and others don’t he will take up that question in chapter 9. All Paul is doing in these two verses is explaining what God has already done to bring us to faith.

1. Vs. 29a **Foreknew**: Read this carefully as it says “*those* ***WHOM*** *He foreknew*” and not “*those* ***WHICH*** *He foreknew*”. Many folks miss read this and think that this is about God looking down the corridor of time and seeing whom would believe in Jesus and then choosing based upon that. But what Paul writes is concerned with our individual specific existence as believers and that among all those who have ever been believers on earth God knew each and every one of them. You’re not an accident, you haven’t flown under God’s watchful radar. He has known all about you friend. Think of the uniqueness of each and every believer brought about at human conception! Add into that our geographical upbringing, education, life experiences, cultural dynamics etc. Yet we are told that God knows each of us through all of human history. Think of the mind of God and His vastness in His ability to know all about each and every believer, all of this before time began. Suddenly I feel very small, yet very significant at the same time! In Matthew 10:29 Jesus said, “Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? *And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father's will*.”
2. Vs. 29b **Predestined**: As soon as people read this word they think, “*You mean God pre-determines who will go to hell and who will go to heaven*?” But the context in this verse explains what God is *pre-determining* us too is, “*to be conformed to the image of His Son*.” ***God’s predestination has nothing to do with going to hell and everything to do with what He has pre-determined the goal of every believer to be conformed into, namely the character of Jesus***. Everything that happens to us is focused on that purpose. I’m afraid that far too many Christians think that God’s primary concern for us is our “*happiness*” but the truth is that His primary concern for us in our “*holiness*”. And because of this God knows that our character, our wholeness will never be developed apart from trials. It is what we cooperate with His plan for our wholeness that we will experience our happiness.
3. Vs. 30a **Called**: Up to this point in these verses we have been speaking about God’s mind and purpose but here we have become involved as we respond. In John 6:39 Jesus said, “*all He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day*.” The Holy Spirit draws us and wins us and our heart begins to be open to Jesus. This is what Paul will develop more in the 9th chapter with regards to our free will and God drawing us into a relationship. We don’t “*Find God*”, we just stop running from Him and the moment we do we realize that He was calling us along.
4. Vs. 30b **Justified**: Remember that those that are justified are declared of value or worth in God’s sight. All of this is without merit or works of our own. The truth is our calling by God and our response to it is what has now declared us of value and worth. You get the sense in reading Paul’s words that there is a progression here from eternity where God foreknew us to His plan for us to be in the image of His Son, calling us, then declaring us of worth which leads to our eternity and glorification.
5. Vs. 30c **Glorified**: Finally are told that God doesn’t declare us of value and worth apart from our glorification. Paul writes this in such a way that suggests it has already happened. Now we know as Philip. 1:6 says “*that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ*” but here it is declared as already being completed. By declaring it as finished reveals that none of God’s children are lost in the process of sanctification. The same numbered called are the same number he declared of worth and they are the same number that will be glorified. Not a one of us will be lost dear ones. At times it may seem as you will never finish your race but you will in spite of your present suffering and oft repeated failures because what God has started before time began will be completed in eternity and God is about doing whatever it takes to get us there.

**Romans**

**“The Righteousness of God Revealed”**

**III. Main Teaching: 1:18-15:13**

**B. Chp. 5:1-8:39 Living under Grace**

**Romans 8:31-39 “*Where Are You?*”**

1. **Intro**
2. **Vs. 31-32 If God is for us**
3. **Vs. 33-34 Who shall bring a charge**
4. **Vs. 35-39 Who shall separate**

**I. Intro**

This section starts off with a word that by its very use creates doubt, “**IF**”. When the word “IF” is followed by the phrase “*God is for us*” than we may tend to feel insecure about our standing in God’s love. I did some research into the original Greek meaning of the word “IF” and Greek scholar Kenneth Wuest translates the “IF” in this sentence as: “***In view of the fact*** *that God is on our behalf, who can be against us?*” Do you ever think that such verses are “*too good to be true*?” There are those who have a tendency to over value their effort (***or lack of it***) and under value God’s. God is for you, He isn’t “*disappointed*” with you. For God to be disappointed with you would mean that He isn’t “*all knowing*”. That’s one of the many lies of satan as we know according to Rev. 12:10 that he not God is “*the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night*.” These final nine verses emphasize the believer’s security but what is in focus isn’t the believers “*eternal security*” but rather his present security in the love of God. In this section **Paul asks three questions and gives five reasons as to why we are secure in the love of God**.

**II. Vs. 31-32 If God is for us**

Paul outlines for us **three things that God’s love defeats** and he does this by ***asking and answering three questions and then giving five reasons we are secure in the love of God***:

1. Vs. 31-32 ***If God is for us….***?: We start with the realization of this truth than we move to its implications. Since God has proved His love for me while I was yet a sinner apart from Him, that means that He is for me not against me. The first thing that is defeated by the love of God in answering Paul’s question is ***FEAR***. And in answering this Paul will speak of ***two common things that we fear*** that are destroyed by the love of God.
2. Vs. 31 ***Who shall be against us…?***: Since God is for me and not against me I don’t have anything to fear with regards to any ***successful opposition*** against me. We have already crossed over the biggest most successful obstacle separating us from God’s love, “Sin” and have joined the winning team. David wrote of this fact in Psalm 27:1 saying, “*The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid*?”

1. “***God is for us***”: In verse 32 we are told that the Father proved it by giving His only Son. In verse 34 we are told that Jesus is for us and in 8:26 we were told that the Holy Spirit is for us, so we can conclude that all the Godhead is on our side. Perhaps we feel like Jacob did after the disappearance of Joseph and Simeon in Genesis 42:36 “*All these things are against me*.” But we are assured in Rom. 8:28 that “*all things are working together for our good and God’s glory*”. Saints, I have a suggestion for you: ***Before you start your day take a moment in prayer and remind yourself of this truth, that no matter what you face, or who you face you need not have any fear because God is for you and is only going to give you those things this day that will be to make you better***. According to Jer. 29:11 His plans for you today are to bless you and to give you a future and a hope.

1. Vs. 32 ***How shall He not with Him also freely give us all things***?: The 2nd thing ***we fear is lack or want***. God has already given us His best, His only begotten Son, are we to believe that having done so that now that God will with hold that which we need? Listen to the words of David in Psalm 23:1 where he proclaims, “*The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.*” The first thing that God’s love destroys is the **fear of successful opposition and fear of consuming lack**.

2. ***Jesus died for us***: Since our security in His love is based upon His love not our performance that means it is 100% secure. So since God did this on our behalf before we became His children He is going to now “*graciously give us all things*”. Back in Genesis 3:9 Adam fell into sin then sought to hide from God and cover his failure by sewing together “*fig leaves*”. But dear ones take note that God called to Adam and said, “***Where are you***?” Not, “*Where* ***were*** *you*?”, “***What did you do***?” He didn’t even ask, “***Why did you***?” ***The heart of the Father was concerned with Adam’s absence not the reason for it***. The Father’s interest is to restore us back to fellowship. In heaven there is no blackboard where we have to write a 1,000 times what we did and why we did it. Instead there is our Savior and Lord with visible scars on the throne who welcomes us home with the words, “*Well done good and faithful servant*”.

**III. Vs. 33-34 Who shall bring a charge**

1. Vs. 33-34 ***Who shall bring a charge against God’s elect…Who is he who condemns***?: In these two questions Paul is addressing the 2nd thing that God’s love defeats and that is ***GUILT***! God is not the accuser of Christians, He doesn’t sit in the clouds with a score cards counting our falls and then giving us a score like an Olympic ice skating judge. Therefore we don’t have to defend before God our slip ups and hard landings. Instead we simply tell Him right away when we do a face plant. Did you know that Jesus has already bore the shame of your guilt so that you don’t have to hide it or justify it? Don’t let your slip ups drag you down grab a hold of His love and He will raise you up!
2. Vs. 33 ***God has declared us of value and worth***: The only one who has the right to charge us has instead clothed us in His rightness and declared you of value that means not no matter what we experience day to day our security never changes. Jesus has already taken into account all our failures and defeats and has paid for our security. In Mark 16:19 we are told that after Jesus ascended into heaven that He sat down at the right hand of God. Hebrews 8:5 tells us that “*Moses was divinely instructed when he was about to make the tabernacle.”* As God said*,* “*See that you make all things according to the pattern shown you on the mountain.*” A careful examination based upon these two verses reveals something interesting: In the tabernacle that Moses was divinely instructed to build according to the pattern there was no place for the priest to sit. There was a table to eat from, a lamp to see by, and a bowl to wash your hands in, an altar to sacrifice on ***but no chair***! So why does the New Testament speak of Jesus sitting at the right hand? Well because prior to his coming the work of the priest was never done but when Jesus the Great High Priest became the sacrificial lamb on the cross His final words were “*It is finished*” and as such there is no more work to be done and a chair was placed in heaven for Him to sit. ***The application for you and I is since Jesus is sitting at the right hand in the tabernacle in Heaven why are we convinced that we need to keep working to earn His approval and acceptance***? Dear one, it is either “FINISHED” as Jesus declared or it is not and I for one chose to believe Him and have received His love.
3. Vs. 34 ***Jesus intercedes on our behalf***: In Rom. 8:26-27 we saw that the Holy Spirit intercedes on our behalf and here we see that Jesus does as well. The same person who died for us is now seen praying for us. He is praying His grace over us so that we can overcome temptation. He is being our advocate when we fail to appropriate His grace to restore us back to fellowship. Saints, the very One who hung on the cross for our sins now represents us before the throne of God in heaven, what security we have in Jesus.

**IV. Vs. 35-39 Who shall separate**

1. Vs. 35-39 ***Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?***: The 3rd thing that God’s love defeats is ***SEPARTION***! Paul asks the question than divides his answer into two things that we often think cause separation, **TROUBLES** and **POWERS or PEOPLE**. God is completely and absolutely in love and committed to us.
2. Vs. 35-37 Taking a look at the things Paul lists here “*Tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril or sword*” we see that these 7 things all fall under the category of ***TROUBLE*** with a capital “***T***”. The word “*distress*” refers to a tight or narrow place and when we go though trouble or trials we can often feel distant or disconnected to God’s love. In reality these things ought to draw us back into His arms. In fact He says they make us “*more than conquerors*” in Christ.
3. Vs. 38-39 Next taking a look at these 7 things together and they speak of another group that we tend to think can separate us from God’s love ***PEOPLE or POWERS***. Be that super natural forces or powerful people that attempt to create distance both now or in the future are even take our lives they will have no success in keeping us from the love of God.
4. Vs. 35-39 ***Jesus loves us***: ***In verses 31-34 Paul outlined how God cannot fail us but that is only one half of our security, can we fail Him and lose our earthly security?*** In Rev. 2:4 as Jesus spoke to the Church that was in Ephesus His indictment wasn’t that they “***Lost***” their first love rather it was that they “***Left it***”. Suppose some great trouble came our way that caused us to walk away from His love would we lose the opportunity to ever come back to that Love? Paul tells us that those troubles and trail aren’t meant to separate us from His love they are designed to cause us to cling tighter to His love. God’s trials aren’t there working against us they are instead working for us that is why God hasn’t sheltered us from the storms of life. But what about powers and people who are bent upon separating us from God’s love, causing us to become distant now and in the future? Paul’s words in verse 37 declares us “*super-conquerors*” more than just victorious and he has done so ahead of all the battles so that we will enter into the fight knowing that we have already won and are secure in God’s love. We’re to be lambs, salt added to flavor, create thirst and bring healing. We’re to be light that illuminates, not dominates. And from the world’s perspective, we’ll never win or get it. If we don’t understand this than we’ll become frustrated, disillusioned and embittered. Dear ones we aren’t called to be crusading conquerors we are called to be “MORE THAN” conquerors!

**Romans**

**“The Righteousness of God Revealed”**

**III. Main Teaching: 1:18-15:13**

**C. Chp. 9:1-11:36 Overflow of Grace**

**Romans 9:1-13 “Don’t you love me?”**

1. **Intro**
2. **Vs. 1-5 Five advantages God gave Israel**
3. **Vs. 6-9 I love you, I promise**
4. **Vs. 10-13 A faithful God to unfaithful people**

**I. Intro**

In the 8th chapter Paul spoke of the things that the love of God destroys in the life of the believer; things like fear, guilt and separation! His purpose over the next three chapters is to exhibit what he had just explained with regards to Man’s fallen nature and God’s winning love. Paul anticipates that someone would ask about the Jew who seemed to have been set aside by God for the building of His church.

* **Chapter 9 Deals with God’s sovereignty in Israel’s past election**
* **Chapter 10 Deals with God’s equity in Israel’s present rejection**
* **Chapter 11 Deals with God’s integrity in Israel’s future restoration**

**II. Vs. 1-5 Five advantages God gave Israel**

Vs. 1-3 The first thing Paul wants to do before he deals with Israel’s position before God is deal with his heart towards Israel. ***Paul didn’t hate the people he hated that they were apart from the love of God***. When he looked at Jesus He rejoiced but when he looked at his the Jews he wept. He hated their condition so much that if he could trade places with them he would. Any religious Jew would recognize these words as being reminiscent of Moses who in their rebellion at the “*Golden Calf*” incident pleaded before God saying to the Lord in Exodus 32:32 “*If You will forgive their sin--but if not, I pray, blot me out of Your book which You have written*.” In 2 Cor. 11:24 Paul recounts that “*From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one*.” They hated him and soon would cause a riot in Jerusalem that would lead to his beating and planned. Yet Paul choose rather to act towards then as Jesus had commanded in Matthew 5:44 saying, “*I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you*”. Dear ones it is one thing to pray that “*You could trade place for a lost loved one*” and it’s another to pray that way towards the person or people that causes you the most pain and suffering! Spurgeon said, “*Lesser things did not trouble Paul because he was troubled by a great thing - the souls of men. Get love for the souls of men - get your soul full of a great grief, and your little griefs will be driven out*.”

Vs. 4-5 After stating his heart towards his countryman Paul address the Jews separation from the love of God. Saints listen up, ***God didn’t make a wise decision when He chose you*** to be the object of His love. ***He made a gracious choice that displays His love***! One of my favorite shows is on the History Channel called “***American Restoration***” talented people work on ruined objects transforming them back into what they originally what they looked like making them not only functional but works of art; that’s what God has done to us. Upon our arrival as we enter into heaven when Michal and Gabriel strike up the band **the song isn’t going to be about the wisdom of God choosing us it’s going to be about how great God is that He has made you a trophy of His transforming love**. “*Wait, wait Gabe*” says Michal, “*Look at this one, man he looks incredible remember what a mess he was before God started working on him*?” The word “*Glory*” here is the word that was used to describe the cloud by day and the fire by night that went with Israel during their wilderness experience. The word carries the idea of something that has weight and substance to it, something that is by its presence is real as we used to say in the 70’s its “***Heavy Man!***” Paul lists 5 “***heavy***” advantages that God gave Israel to start with:

1. Vs. 4a **Placement**: God had singled out these people through adoption which according to Deut. 7 wasn’t based upon them being the most numerous, or advanced in fact they were the least. Things have not changed in God’s adoption as he takes pleasure in calling the “*Foolish things of the world to confound the wise*”.
2. Vs. 4b **Personal Revelation**: Paul uses the word that means *Shekinah glory* which was the ***direct personal revelation of God’s presence*** in the cloud that covered then by day and the fire that guided them at night. When the tabernacle was completed this same glorious presence remained in their camp. No other people literally had God in their camp, like Israel did.
3. Vs. 4b **Prosperity**: By prosperity I don’t mean financial or physical things I’m speaking of the things that Paul mentions here namely “***the covenants and the giving of the law***”. ***These were the things that Israel needed to succeed and excel in life.*** If you look out at history no people group has been able to accomplish the things culturally, economically, agriculturally, scientifically or in the area of the arts as have the Jewish people. These blessings came in giving them the book on how to do things. They succeed agriculturally because God told them every 7th year to give the land rest, they were given insight into sanitation and things to eat and not eat. In business they were given insight on making good business decisions and as a society they had laws on crime and punishment and jurisprudence.
4. Vs. 4c **Purpose**: God not only gave them things that would enable them to succeed and excel, ***He also gave them a purpose in doing so as we are told that God gave them the “service of God”***. In Isaiah 42:6 the Lord said, “*I, the Lord, have called you in righteousness, and will hold Your hand; I will keep You and give You as a covenant to the people, as a light to the Gentiles*”. There is nothing more satisfying that the recognition that your talents, gifting and blessings are for a purpose, to bless others. It is as Acts 20:35 tells us “*more blessed to give than to receive.*”
5. Vs. 4d-5 **Promises**: Finally Paul speaks on ***the promises to their forefathers men like Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses David all of which was fulfilled in God’s Son Jesus***. Israel’s blessings were not given on the basis of Israel keeping their word but on God keeping His Word. And Paul identifies Jesus here in this verse as the blessed God Himself.

What does these things have to do with Israel being outside of the love of God? It reveals that God has always been faithful in loving His people even though they continued to reject that love as a nation. Paul is taking them on a little historical journey showing God’s loving gracious hand upon the nation even when they were rejecting Him.

 Have you ever considered the amount of blessings God has bestowed upon you while you were apart from Him? Jesus said in Matthew 5:45 that the Father, “*makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust*.” If it wasn’t so then we would only have sun shining on those who have a relationship with God, only those that read their Bibles and pray would get rain on their gardens.

**III. Vs. 6-9 I love you, I promise**

Vs. 6-7 With those 5 advantages and Israel still exhibiting faithlessness does that mean that God failed seeing that He was unable to save those He so wanted to save? Paul’s answer is that though ***God grants great opportunities and special privileges to people, this in no indication that he guarantees to save them***. Paul thinks of someone looking at Israel and saying, “*God's word didn't come through for them. He didn't fulfill His promise for them because they missed their Messiah and now seem cursed. How do I know that He will come through for me*?” To further illustrate this truth Paul again goes back and looks at Israel’s history by using a play of words with the word Israel which means “ruled by God”. They are not all “***God ruled***” who claim to be “***ruled by God***”. God’s salvation is based upon a divine promise not on natural advantages such as inheritance. Abraham, who had two boys but only one was his son by faith Isaac. Ishmael was his and Sarah’s attempt to fulfill the promises of God by means of the work of the flesh. In Gen. 22:2 God said to Abraham “*Take your son, your* ***ONLY SON****, up the mountain*”, God didn’t recognize Ishmael as Abraham’s son of promise. Abraham wanted Ishmael to be the child of promise but God said no. But according to Genesis 17:20 “*as for Ishmael, I have heard you. Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly. He shall beget twelve princes, and I will make him a great nation*.” It wasn’t that Ishmael wasn’t blessed it was that he wasn’t blessed in the way Abraham had wanted. God doesn’t count His children based upon national identity but rather on personal choice. It is an untrue assessment to say that all Jew’s are outside of the Love of God as it would be to say that all are included and then say that because not all are choosing to be included that somehow God’s or His word failed.

Vs. 8-9 Furthermore His promise is based upon what God does, not on what man will do! Though Ishmael was 13 years older and Abraham pleaded with God to bless him the son of the promises was Isaac. ***We get upset at God when He doesn’t choose our Ishmaels; we complain that it’s not fair.*** ***Far too often we expect God to bless and honor our ideas and plans. Friends God is committed to fulfilling what He has promised not what you want Him to promise to do***.

**IV. Vs. 10-13 A faithful God to unfaithful people**

Vs. 10-13 Much is made of this quote of Paul out of Malachi but it is important that we take its meaning for the original language and the context. The meaning of the word hate here is “*love less*” not “*love not at all*”. The context would be the same as we are to Love Jesus supremely and all other we are to “love less”. In Gen. 33:8-16, Genesis 36 we see that Esau was a blessed man. God hated Esau in regard to inheriting the covenant, not in regard to blessing in this life or the next. Someone once said, “*I cannot understand why God should say that He hated Esau.*” Spurgeon replied, “*My trouble is to understand how God could love Jacob*.” God’s choice of Jacob not Esau before they were born reveals God’s choice was not based upon character or conduct therefore Israelis present disobedience cannot nullify God’s plan or purpose as He will be faithful even if His people were unfaithful. **This section teaches us three things with regard to God’s sovereignty and election which He carries out His way**:

1. ***Salvation is never based on natural advantages***: What we are by background or birthright does not enter into whether you are going to be saved or are saved.
2. ***Salvation is always based upon a promise from God***: This is why we are always exhorted in the Bible to believe God’s promises in His word. Our redemption includes the necessity to be confronted with God’s promises and for us to give a willing voluntary submission and surrender to them.
3. ***Salvation never takes notice of whether we are bad or good***: In God’s view all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God and the degree of how far we have fallen compared to someone else is irrelevant. We are all children born into a fallen race and all equally lost and as such all equally redeemable!

**Romans**

**“The Righteousness of God Revealed”**

**III. Main Teaching: 1:18-15:13**

**C. Chp. 9:1-11:36 Overflow of Grace**

**Romans 9:14-33 “What if God…?”**

1. **Intro**
2. **Vs. 14-18 It’s a matter of choice**
3. **Vs. 19-29 It’s just not fair**
4. **Vs. 30-33 Human delusion**

**I. Intro**

The 9th chapter of Romans poses several challenges to the Bible student:

1. First, Paul didn’t set out to write a paper on the sovereignty of God as it relates to election. He was dealing with gentile conversion and what that has to say to the Jews and the promises God had made to them.
2. Secondly, *we have a tendency to think of God as nothing more than an enlarged man with human attributes and motives*. We have a problem with anyone having that much authority over another as they often become tyrants. Our response to this is to distrust and fight against anyone that has absolute power over us. Our nation was founded by people who fled nations that had absolute power over them to establish democracy and a constitution to make sure that there was a system of checks and balances to ensure that no one person could have that much power over the affairs of our lives.

In the first 13 verses Paul established three truths with regards to our election to His salvation:

1. ***Salvation is never based on natural advantages***: What we are by background or birthright does not enter into whether you are going to be saved or are saved.
2. ***Salvation is always based upon a promise from God***: This is why we are always exhorted in the Bible to believe God’s promises in His word. Our redemption includes the necessity to be confronted with God’s promises and for us to give a willing voluntary submission and surrender to them.
3. ***Salvation never takes notice of whether we are bad or good*:** In God’s view all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God and the degree of how far we have fallen compared to someone else is irrelevant. We are all children born into a fallen race and all equally lost and as such all equally redeemable!

**II. Vs. 14-18 It’s a matter of choice**

Vs. 14 In these verses Paul outlines the basis of His election and he starts off with the truth that ***God’s choice is based upon His sovereign right to choose***. Election is always totally a matter of grace because if He elected on the basis of merit or works than no one would ever be saved. All of us deserve judgment not mercy and it is God’s mercy and grace that is “*unfair*”! ***If God had to give an account of His actions to someone then the person He would give account to would be His God***. His sovereign rule over us will not destroy us or rob us from something that is really in our best interest. The clearest example of this was in His prohibition in the garden not to partake of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God said that in the day we eat of it would die and satan countered to impugn God’s motives and say that what motivated this command was jealousy. His command was not based upon jealousy but rather our continual benefit. The truth is God sovereign power is our only hope. Once a man asked Spurgeon how he reconciled divine sovereignty with human responsibility and he replied “*No need to reconcile friends*”.

Vs. 15-16 **Moses is an example of God’s way of choosing**: Israel, with the exception of Moses and Joshua, deserved to be destroyed but God only destroyed 3,000. Moses was chosen in a time when Pharaoh was putting to death all male Hebrew babies and God elects to save him from destruction. Yet he is delivered into the very ones whose commands were given to destroy him. There he was raised in all the benefits of royalty whereby he rediscovers his roots and becomes a murderer, then fugitive and vagabond for another 40 years until God plucks him out of the desert to be the deliverer. What was Mosses contribution to this? Nothing! ***For 40 years he thought he was someone, the next 40 years he thought he was nothing, the last 40 years he realize that God does something through nothings***. Paul establishes **three things about God's mercy in verse 16:**

1. ***him who wills***: It is **not given to us because of what we wish to do**
2. ***him who runs***: It is **not given to us because of what we actually do**
3. ***But of God***: It is **given simply out of His desire to show mercy**

Vs.17-18 **Pharaoh is an example of God’s way of choosing**: In Exodus we are told 10 times that Pharaoh hardened his heart and 10 times that God did so. God’s hardening was only confirming Pharaoh’s decision as Pharaoh’s heart was left by God in its natural state, defiant and rebellious against Him. In Exodus 5:2 Pharaoh said, “*Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I do not know the Lord, nor will I let Israel go*.” When a man seeks his own glory it is destructive as he has to put others down to elevate his greatness. But God demonstrates His glory, His greatness, for the welfare and benefit of His creation not to boast in His superiority. ***The same sunlight that melts the snow hardens the clay, the difference isn’t the sunlight it’s what it shines on***! ***Pharaoh was raised up that God’s power might be displayed* ON *him, Moses was raised up that He might display His power* THROUGH *him***.

**III. Vs. 19-29 It’s just not fair**

Vs. 19-29 In verse 19 Paul brings out a hidden accusation against God by saying, “*God uses men to do evil, and then He turns around and blames them for the evil He made them do and punishes them for it.*” “*That’s not fair, that’s not just*!” People are always looking for someone to blame for their condition so they won’t have to take responsibility for their own choices. ***People are not lost because they are hardened; they hardened because they are lost and they are lost because they are sinners.*** **Paul answers the charge four ways**:

1. Vs. 20 **The first answer to the accusation that God is unfair is to ask God’s accuser what their credentials are to bring such a charge.** God who is infinite in wisdom and power is being questioned by finite man who has extremely limited understanding and power. We are incapable of judging God who alone is mighty and wise, absolute in power, infinite in knowledge, knowing all things from the beginning to the end? ***We know nothing of what God knows yet we are often guilty of judging Him based upon what we don’t know***. Job cried for the right to ask God “*How Come*” and in Chapters 38-41 God says that He would allow this if Job could answered a few questions first. In chapter 38 ***God asks Job if he can handle the job of running the universe***, “*Have you commanded the morning since your days began, and caused the dawn to know its place?*”. Job wisely replies that he can’t. In the 39th chapter God asks, “*Does the hawk fly by your wisdom?*” ***God asks* *Job how have you done with power and authority***. In the 40th chapter God asks “*Have you an arm like God? Or can you thunder with a voice like His*?” ***God asks Job how have you done with absolute power***? By the 42nd chapter ***Job understands that God is out of his league and that even though he can’t understand the why, he can take his rest in Who***. Folk’s, God is not responsible for sin; ***He is under no obligation to save anyone, when He saves it is purely and completely an act of mercy and grace***!
2. Vs. 21 **The second answer to the accusation again comes back to the accuser as God says that the potter has rights over the clay**. We might object to being called “*clay*” after all we do have feelings, we are alive. But how about our authority over the plants and animals? Do you ask permission of your lawn when you mow it? Do you ask you pooch what kind of food he would like to have today? Nope, you just exercise authority over that which you are superior. How about your children? Do you ask them if they would like to go to school today? Does your boss ask you if you would like to do your job? ***In God’s infinite wisdom and knowledge He reads with unerring accuracy the operations of the human heart***. The reason people refuse to come to God’s love will be found in their love of sin not in their non-election. The most read verse of Jesus in the Bible is John 3:16 and there we are told specifically that, “*For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that* ***whoever*** *believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life*.”
3. Vs. 22-28 **The third argument Paul brings up has to do with what people see as unfairness in God’s election as they impugn His motives**. Paul starts by asking “*What if God*”. Before we assume the worse about God’s decision we should consider the best. God has purposes and plans that we just can’t see and even if we could we may not be able to understand them. One of those is to display His power by being patient towards those who practice evil towards Him and their fellow man instead of just zapping that person. And sometimes in His wisdom He displays His power and judgment quickly and decisively. Why the one and not the other? I don’t know but I know that He always does what is right and in this case it has to be right even though it doesn’t appear that way to me now. ***The wrath of God is on display right next to the patience of God to draw people of all kinds to Himself.*** God does not force people to come to Him, we are drawn to Him and sometimes what draws us is the reality of judgment and sometimes what draws us is the reality of love and sometimes it is a combination!
4. Vs. 29 **The last argument is aimed again at God’s accusers in election by saying that people make the mistake of assuming that everyone is neutral**. The fact is we aren’t neutral we are sinners by nature and choice, we are all lost, all are victims of sin and apart from God’s intervention the only thing we can do is resist God. That is what Paul already established in chapter 3, that ***there is no who does right, none who seeks after God, not one***. God’s judgment causes man to wake up and stop resisting His love; apart from this His grace wouldn’t make sense. ***The amazing aspect of God’s election isn’t in His choosing some and not others it’s that He has chosen any at all***.

**IV. Vs. 30-33 Human delusion**

Vs. 30-33 This passage specifically deals with the Gentile salvation and the Jewish separation. The problem wasn’t that the Jews were pursuing after righteousness but that they thought that their self-efforts they had obtained righteousness. They arrogantly believed like Cain of old that God would have to accept their effort over His Word and character.

The larger application here is: “*How can I tell if someone is chosen or not*?” “*If natural advantages and whether we are good or bad when compared to someone else can’t determine this than how can I tell*?” ***The simple answer to determine if you are elected by God being drawn by Spirit into salvation or being permitted to remain lost is what you do with Jesus***! Many in Israel chose to stumble at the ROCK because to stand on it would mean that they weren’t good enough on their own works. You can be very religious in your garden working in it every day, spend the rest of your life weeding your garden, planting and watering but what do you do with the ROCK; that is what will determine where you will spend eternity. ***It is a human delusion, fostered by Satan, that salvation is within our natural reach. That any time we want to we can, with minimal effort at the last minute, make up our mind to do a little this or that and God will be forced to accept what we have offered instead of us accepting what He has offered, His only begotten Son*.**

**Romans**

**“The Righteousness of God Revealed”**

**III. Main Teaching: 1:18-15:13**

**C. Chp. 9:1-11:36 Overflow of Grace**

**Romans 10:1-21 “Essentials to salvation”**

1. **Intro**
2. **Vs. 1-13 Reason for rejection**
3. **Vs. 14-17 Remedy for rejection**
4. **Vs. 18-21Results of rejection**

**I. Intro**

This chapter offers the solution to the problem Paul addressed in Romans 9:30-33 “*that Israel’s lack of experiencing God’s grace wasn’t because He withheld it from them but rather that they sought His favor by works and by rejecting grace*.” The key word in the 10th chapter is a word that tends to upset folks, SAVED! It bothers folks because:

1. Its use presuppose that someone needs to be saved
2. Its use presupposes that a person isn’t saved but is lost or fallen

Paul is explaining in this section:

* Vs. 1-13 Why the nation rejected Jesus
* Vs. 14-17 What the remedy is for their rejection
* Vs. 18-21 What are the results of their continual rejection

Along the way the broader application will reach beyond the Jews and their need to salvation to all of humanity. On the heels of God’s sovereign election this chapter deals with human responsibility. God’s choosing is always consistent with His nature but never outside of our responsibility and freedom to choose.

**II. Vs. 1-13 Reason for rejection**

Vs. 1 Despite Paul’s earnest desire for his countryman to be saved and God’s desire that none shall parish Paul finds two things necessary that he can participate in this:

1. Vs. 1 ***Prayer***: **The willingness to go to God for men**
2. Vs. 8 ***Preaching***: **The willingness to go to men for God**

Ill respective of man’s rejection we are still told that we are to pray for their salvation and speak to them about the benefits of receiving Jesus. You would think that Israel as a nation would have been eagerly awaiting the arrival of their Messiah and been prepared to receive Him. For 100’s of years they had the prophecies concerning Him and the Law that spoke of the necessity of receiving Him. But when He came like what was foretold they as a nation rejected Him as John wrote in John 1:11 “*He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him*.” In these verses Paul outlines **four reasons for their rejection**:

1. Vs. 1 **They didn’t feel a need to be saved**: Israel saw that other’s (*Gentiles*) needed salvation but that they didn’t. When Jesus came He told many parables that illustrated this problem. Furthermore the salvation they felt they needed wasn’t spiritual it was physical from Roman dominance and occupation.
2. Vs. 2 **They were zealous for God**: Every since they had returned from the Babylonian captivity they felt that they were cured from their idolatrous ways. They had cleared the temple of outward idols worshipped and served only the true God, they were so committed that they had even elaborated on God’s law implementing traditions making them equal to or defining the intent to the law. Sincerity on its own is never enough we must have passion for God the right way. They had the dangerous combination of religious zeal and biblical ignorance which produced a deadly outcome! People can read and study the Bible all the time but fail apply its essential teachings in their own lives.
3. Vs. 3 **They were proud and self-righteous**: They had become proud of their religious works in keeping the law and refused to see their own sins and thus their need for a Savior. Their ignorance was not based upon a lack of opportunity it was based upon arrogance and a refusal to admit their own short comings.
4. Vs. 4-13 **They misunderstood their own law**: The law told them they were sinners in need of a Savior, the sacrificial system spoke to them that without the shedding of blood there was no remission of sins. It wasn’t that they were indifferent to righteousness rather it was that they fully sought to have it on their own terms rather than by faith. Theirs was righteousness by self-effort rather than righteousness by faith. In other words their problem was not “*educational*” it was “*transformational*”. The law is a great diagnostic tool but offers us nothing for treatment or cure!

Vs. 6-7 Moses soon understood that the law wasn’t going to work as he brought down the stone tablets with those “***10 rules***” and right in front of him were 3 million folks who had been breaking all 10 of them before he ever read them to them. That is why there is a sacrificial system within Judaism as the author of Hebrews states in 9:22 that “*all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission.*” To take up our works as a basis of God’s acceptance is saying that Jesus work isn’t adequate to make us right before God.

Vs. 8-10 So what are we to do if not keep “*10 rules*”? The first thing Paul tells them that they won’t have to do is go searching for the answer it will be near them the “Word of Faith”. The mouth symbolizes the outward man and his intellectual comprehension that is understood in words. ***The mouth without the heart will lead to hypocrisy but the heart without the mouth leads compromise***. It can take a life time to have a change of heart, that’s why we ought to be careful about what we allow to captivate our hearts. Our hearts will break before they let go of something and even when broken will take a long time to move on.

 So then what we hear in the gospel is believed upon in the heart and confessed or agreed verbally as the truth. And what we verbally agree upon is that Jesus is LORD and as LORD he has forever shown that by being raised from the dead. Notice that Paul didn’t use the word “Savior” though that is true what makes our confession unto salvation is the agreement that He is LORD over our life, all of it. Greek scholar A.T. Robertson said, “*No Jew would do this that had not really trusted Christ, for Kurios in the Septuagint is used of God. No Gentile would do it who had not ceased worshipping the emperor as Kurios.*” ***A Jesus who is not LORD over all our life is not a Savior over any of it.***

* He is over our past, forgiving our sins
* He is Lord over our present, dwelling with us and guiding us, directing us away from things that will separate us from enjoying His presence.
* He is Lord of our future, leading us to our final transformation into His glory.

The question we need to ask ourselves and others is not: “*Is Jesus your Savior*?” but rather “*Is Jesus your Lord*?”

**III. Vs. 14-17 Remedy for rejection**

Vs. 14-15 This next sections answers the question to what happens to those who have never heard of Jesus. Paul outlines ***FIVE STEPS TO SALVATION*** which is given here in reverse order:

1. **Whoever calls**: Paul emphasizes the **every person’s individual personal conviction and response**. Far too many folks think that going to Church regularly and hearing the truth makes them “saved” but Paul says that each and every person must call on the Jesus to be their LORD.
2. **In Whom they Have believed**: To have belief, ***the mind has to be engaged not just emotions stirred*** as they will have no understanding of why their emotions are stirred and won’t know what they are believing in. The gospel is not given until people have been given something to believe, something that their minds can grasp what is being offered and why it is personally good news for them.
3. **Him who they have heard**: This implies that ***there must be a message***, something that they have heard. The amazing thing about Christianity is that there is a message that is verifiable in history, geography and archeology. As such Christian truth is an objective truth and does not rely on a “*burning in our bosom*” or some other emotional response. The truth we respond to is a truth that can stand and even invite the skeptic.
4. **How shall they hear without a preacher**: Before the message ***you have to have a messenger.*** There is a great mystery in this to me as the delivery method God chooses to use to distribute Good News is very flawed as he chooses to use humans. Yet with that said I suppose that the reason for this is that those of us who are messengers can say can say like were hear on the info-mercials, “*I’m not just a spokes person, I’m a constant consumer*!”
5. **How shall they preach unless they are sent**: Finally before you can have a messenger you have to have someone that is willing to be sent. Make no mistake about it as it is God who sends and equips those He sends with the message. This week I’ve been reminded to make sure that as and individual and a Fellowship that we continue to “*fish for men*” in the fresh water lake of “*un-churched*” and not the pond that most within Christianity fish in, the pond of “*catch and release*”!

Vs.16-17 This passage serves as ***the basis of the Church’s missionary program***, but first it stood as the only way Israel could be saved, which is calling upon the name of the Lord. A veteran missionary once said that there are four reasons why the church must send out missionaries:

1. Mark 16:15 “*Go into all the earth*”: **The command from above!**
2. Luke 16:27 “*Send him to my father’s house*”: **The cry from beneath!**
3. Acts 16:9 “*Come over and help us*”: **A call from without!**
4. 2 Cor. 5:14 “*The love of Christ constrains us*”: **A constraint from within!**

Yet even with the five steps to salvation just outlined we still see many who will not respond, as Paul clearly says that “*not all obeyed the gospel*”. Yet that doesn’t take away from the reality the faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God. Like it or not the responsibility is still upon the hearer. Faith is aroused by the hearing of the Word but the person hearing it still has to choose to obey its message.

**IV. Vs. 18-21Results of rejection**

Vs. 18-21 There are ***three results to Israel’s rejection***:

1. Vs. 18 **Israel is still guilty**: Israel had the benefit both of the law and the prophets as well as seeing God’s work in their past and presence, as such they had both the Word and Works of God witnessing against their present rebellion. Israel had heard but would not heed, no wonder Jesus said eight times while among them, “*to Him who has ears to hear to let hear*!”
2. Vs. 19-20 **The message goes to the Gentiles**: Israel rejected her Messiah and God sends the Word of salvation to those that will hear and be saved. This is what Moses had said in Deut 32:21 recorded here in verse 19. It was also an act of grace which is recorded by Isaiah in verse 20.
3. Vs. 21 **God still loves Israel**: This final quotation is also from Isaiah; and while Israel has set aside God, He has never set them aside. In fact individual Jews are still coming to Christ daily and have been every sense the resurrection.

**Romans**

**“The Righteousness of God Revealed”**

**III. Main Teaching: 1:18-15:13**

**C. Chp. 9:1-11:36 Overflow of Grace**

**Romans 11:1-24 “Irresistible Goodness”**

1. **Intro**
2. **Vs. 1-6 Saving the unworthy and the unlikely**

**I. Intro**

The 11th chapter deals with Israel and its relationship to the Church. Historically these two haven’t always gotten along throughout the centuries and their disagreement has led to outright persecution. It is unfortunate that the Church didn’t spend time reading the 11th chapter of Paul’s letter to the Romans as it gives us a great perspective of how we should live with our friend and older brother Israel. In the 29th verse of this chapter as Paul spoke on the subject of Israel’s rejection and what that meant with regards to God’s future plans for them, he wrote that “*The gifts and callings of God are irrevocable.*” This fact amazes me from two different perspectives:

1. ***From man’s perspective***: God doesn’t say, “*Take a chance on me you might hit the jack pot.*” No, He promises that if we come to him with our burdens He will give us rest. There is no gamble, no uncertainty, **just an unwavering promise made to wavering people**!
2. ***From Gods perspective***: As an all knowing being with the ability to see the end from the beginning I’m taken aback by **His continue faithfulness in spite of my fickleness**.

**II. Vs. 1-6 Saving the unworthy and the unlikely**

Vs. 1a Twice in this passage (verses 1 and 11) Paul asks if God has permanently rejected His people Israel and both times he answers “***certainly not***”. That should have put an end to the false teaching by many Christians throughout history that God was done with Israel; that now the Church is “*spiritual Israel*”. Amazingly they teach that the Church has inherited the blessings of the “Old Covenant” but give all the curses and punishments to Israel.

Vs. 1b-2a To make sure we understand what he means; Paul has given himself as the example. Paul asks, “*If God was done with the Jews how can you explain me; a self proclaimed murder of Jewish Christians*?” In his letter to the church in Galatia Paul says that God’s election was done while he was still in his mother’s womb. His conversion is recorded three separate times in the book of Acts alone and in 1 Cor. 15:8 he spoke of himself as “*One born out of due time*”. In 1 Tim. 1:16 he stated that God saved him that, “*in him first Jesus Christ might show forth all long suffering as a pattern to them who would hereafter believe on Jesus to everlasting life*.” **Paul’s life illustrated His words**: “***God has not cast away His people whom He foreknew***”. God has never and will never set aside any individual with respect to salvation when they come to God through faith in Christ.

Vs. 2b-6 ***The fact that most of the nation had rejected Jesus as their messiah was no proof that God was finished with His people***. As example of this Paul recalls Elijah who had thought he alone was left after his encounter with the priests of Baal in 1 Kings 18. Queen Jezebel set out to destroy all the true prophets of God as Elijah held up in cave and cried out to the Lord saying that he alone remained. ***Elijah made three mistakes with regards to his view of things as God told him that there remained 7000 just like him***:

1. ***Elijah forgot that he had limited knowledge!*** Things rarely are as bad or good as they seem. The reason is we don’t know everyone’s heart we can’t see the multitude of folks who remain faithful and true.
2. ***Elijah forgot God’s unlimited power!*** The situation or circumstances are never as bad as they may seem because God is not as weak and impotent as we make Him out to be. God is so powerful that He can and does use the opposition of His enemy to bring about His plans and purposes. He alone is the One who wins when He wins and wins when He loses.
3. ***Elijah forgot the principals of God!*** Salvation is by grace not works and if one attempts to earn God’s favor by works then grace is off the table. Grace is God’s work and He will not allow us to mix the two together.

By mentioning Paul then Elijah as witnesses for the future hope of Israel we see that:

1. **Like Paul**: No matter how hard and unlikely a person might seem from human perspective to be saved that this doesn’t hinder God.
2. **Like Elijah**: No matter how few in number there might be who will be saved there is always a remnant which is more than we realize.

**Romans**

**“The Righteousness of God Revealed”**

**III. Main Teaching: 1:18-15:13**

**C. Chp. 9:1-11:36 Overflow of Grace**

**Romans 11:7-36 “Irresistible Goodness” (part B)**

1. **Intro**
2. **Vs. 7-10 Three things we forget**
3. **Vs. 11-24 Saving the unknown**
4. **Vs. 25-36 Rebel without a cause**

**I. Intro**

Paul started the chapter 11 by asking a hypothetical question as to whether or not God had “*cast away*” His people Israel, to which he categorically proclaimed “*God forbid*”. To support this truth Paul first called himself to the stand as “*one born out of due time*”. If there was a high school yearbook in Paul’s time there is little doubt that he would have been voted as “*least likely to become a Christian*”. Yet even though it didn’t look like God was working in young Saul’s life He was. Then Paul called Elijah to the stand to testify. And Elijah that fire and brimstone preacher came forward to say: “*There was a time when I thought that I was all alone in God’s redeeming work and that I was about to die myself but God showed me what I could not have seen that there were 7000 just like me.*” In this final section of verses from 25-36 Paul goes on to show from the prophetic word that the hardness of Israel was not only known by Him but part of His plan.

**II. Vs. 7-10 Three things we forget**

Vs. 7-10 To Israel **Religion had gotten in their way to seeing and hearing God**. What a powerful reminder this is that in our pursuit for God! Be careful as the very implements we use to worship Him can become the objects of worship and actually hinder our worship. Most of Israel is blinded today but there is a remnant, God grants those eyes to be blinded that want to be blinded. I believe ***that God’s goodness is so completely irresistible that if He was not to blind the eyes that wanted to be blinded then the people who didn’t want to know Him or walk with Him would be overwhelmed by His goodness and be forced against their free will to receive Him.*** ***The common denominator for every religious Jew that has been saved is that they had totally abandoned their hope in Israel’s goodness for the Hope of Jesus Christ’s goodness!*** The great thing for Israel to realize is that if they are to be saved then they are to be saved the same exact way of the Gentiles through God’s abounding grace seen in Jesus Christ. ***Friend’s mankind’s only work is to completely trust in God’s work which is grace! Nothing can harden our hearts quicker than when we trust in our own special privilege, without fellowship with the God who alone gives it***.

**III. Vs. 11-24 Saving the unknown**

Vs. 11-15 Paul takes up the 2nd question: “*Is their fall beyond recovery*?” Reading through the book of Acts causes us to see Paul’s plan was always the same as he traveled into a community he always went first to the Jews then upon their rejection of the gospel to the Gentiles to provoke the Jews to jealousy. We ought to be so alive and vibrant in our Christian practice as to cause folks to want to ask, “*What do you have that I don’t*?” Three things happened to Israel as a result of their rejection:

1. Vs. 11 They stumbled
2. Vs. 12 They failed
3. Vs. 15 They were cast away

But none of those three things is permanent or irreversible. In the Old Testament the promises to the Gentiles were always attached to Israel entering into her promises. But history records not Israel’s rise but rather her fall, which brought about Gentile salvation thought the gospel first given then rejected by Israel. At the present time we are in the time frame of being blessed to provoke Israel to jealousy but their yet remains a time when we will be further blessed when Israel does enter into their inheritance during the millennial period. Paul’s argument is that if Israel’s rejection has led to such a blessing than what will their acceptance lead to?

Paul reminds them of **two illustrations**:

1. Vs. 16 ***A lump of dough***: This reference is to Num. 15:17-21 and speaks to the offering of a portion which meant that all of it belonged to the Lord. When God accepts part He sets apart the whole. Paul uses Abraham as an example of “*firstfruits*”. Since Abraham was accepted before God by faith that would mean that the reason God accepted (the dough) would be accepted as well.
2. Vs. 17-21 ***The olive tree***: This is a symbol of the nation of Israel and there place in the plan of God. The roots of the tree support the branches of the tree. “*When an old olive tree had lost its vigor, one remedy in antiquity was to cut away the failing branches and graft in some wild olive shoots. The result was said to be the invigoration of the failing tree*.” Such was the case of Ruth the Moabitess.

Vs. 22-24 As Paul explains the process of grafting he explains that ***God has done a miraculous work.*** You see normally if you graft something like a nectarine branch into a peach tree the branch still produces nectarines not peaches. So as we were grafted in this wild withered worthless Gentile branch into this healthy olive tree you would have expected that what would have came out of our branch was worthless fruit but that isn’t what happened. God produced wonderful fruit as He changes our fruit by His Spirit and if God can do that taking our bitter fruit and turning into good fruit think of what He can do with the natural branches.

**IV. Vs. 25-36 Rebel without a cause**

Vs. 25-29 Paul says that the Gentiles shouldn’t be ignorant in Israel’s blindness least they become prideful. He calls their present “*blindness*” a mystery but the word doesn’t mean hard to understand but rather something brought about by supernatural means, something that God has done. But even in saying this Paul tells us two things about Israel’s blindness:

1. Vs. 25a **Limited in scope**: Notice that Paul himself says that this is a “*blindness in part*”. Not every Jew was blinded to the gospel after all the early church was founded by mainly Jews who clearly weren’t blinded. And there have been countless millions who have seen and recognized Jesus as their Messiah. But still when compared to the billions who through the millenniums haven’t seen Jesus, clearly there has been blindness.
2. Vs. 25b **Limited in duration**: Second Paul is very clear that this blindness will not exist forever instead it will end when the “***fullness*** *of the gentiles has come in*”. There is a yet future time when the Jews as a whole will no longer be blinded to Jesus as their Messiah and that future time has something to do with us Gentiles. The question is: “*What does this phrase refer too*?” There are two possibilities:
3. **Most interpret this phrase with numbers**: In fact two popular translations even put the word “*number*” in this passage: NIV = “*Full number*”, NLT = “*Complete number*”. In this interpretation some say that there is a specific number of Gentiles that will be saved that Paul is referring to and when that number is reached than the blindness will be lifted. There is no doubt that there is a specific number known only to God of how many Gentiles will be saved but the question is: “*Is this* ***number*** *of Gentile converts tied to Israel’s blindness?*”
4. The second interpretation (*and the one I favor*) ***has nothing to do with quantity and everything to do with quality***: This is the 2nd time in chapter 11 that Paul has used the word “*fullness*” and both times in the Greek it is the same word that simply means, “*that which fills*” which can speak of quantity as well as quality. The first time it is used in verse 12 Paul uses it of the Jews and does so to contrast Israel’s loss and the Gentile blessings to what Israel’s blessings might bring. Paul was not using the word to describe ***numbers*** but rather ***greater satisfaction or encounter with the living God***. I believe therefore that here in this verse **Paul is not talking about a number but rather a time when the Gentile believers will encounter a greater amount of their riches in Christ and will be just so alive with the Spirit of God that it will cause the Jews to say, “*Man I want what they have*!”** An awakening within the Church whereby we become so full of “*every spiritual blessing in heavenly places*” that we leak and this becomes the catalyst of removing the blindness that now covers Israel’s eyes.

Vs. 30-32 Paul says that unless we realize that we are disobedient in our heart than we cannot be saved. Those who refuse to see their need for mercy and grace will never be recipients of it. The enemy of grace and mercy is self-righteousness and pride! It is only when we realize our need that we can receive what we are so desperate for, the love of God!

Vs. 33-36 Having said that Paul breaks into praise about how great God judgments and ways are above his understanding. Then he quotes Isa. 40:13, Jer. 23:18 and Job 41:11 and asks **three questions about God’s wisdom**:

1. Vs. 34a ***Who has known the mind of the Lord***: Who has ever anticipated what God is going to do? I’ve tried to figure Him out especially when it comes to some situation in my life. I try to look at the options like Tevye on “*Fiddler on the Roof*” when he was trying to figure out what to do saying, “*On the one hand*”. But try as I might I can never know the mind of the Lord unless I have the mind of Christ. (1 Cor. 2:16)
2. Vs. 34b ***Or who has become His counselor***: Who has ever thought of or suggested something that God had never thought of. Far too often I’ve looked at a situation and saw a cleaver way to work it all out then spoke to God about my way thinking that I was being really helpful to Him. But in the end His way is the better way as He alone saw the flaws of my idea and knew the best way and we went with that one.
3. Vs. 35 ***Or who has first given to Him that it should be repaid to Him***: Who has ever put God in a position that He owes us one? Everything is His from the start so how can He ever owe us what is His already. God is the originator of all things as everything comes from Him and He is the sustainer of all things as all things depend upon Him. C.S. Lewis once quipped “*To argue with God is to argue with the very One that makes it possible to argue*!”

J.B. Phillips wrote: “*If God was small enough to figure out, He wouldn’t be big enough to worship*”. Friends, there are always going to be things about God that we can’t figure out but there will always be more than enough things that we can understand to worship Him alone! “*Who has become His counselor*?”

 **Romans**

**“The Righteousness of God Revealed”**

**III. Main Teaching: 1:18-15:13**

**D. Chp 12:1-15:13 Shaped by Grace**

**Romans 12:1-2 “Persuaded by His Mercies”**

1. **Intro**
2. **Vs. 1-2 Persuaded by His Mercies**

**I. Intro**

This chapter starts off with an interesting four words: “*I beseech you therefore*”! The word “*beseech*” means to plead or to beg. But it is the word “*therefore*” that catch’s my attention. This word has an arrow attached to it and the arrow is always pointing backwards. Paul is about to plead for his readers to do something ***but not before reminding them that his motivation*** has to do with what he has been writing about for the last 11 chapters. As such he is holding to a pattern you will see him do continually in his letters and that is to place the believers “***position***” before their “***practice***”, thereby emphasizing “***doctrine***” before “***duty***”. For those 11 chapters Paul has been emphasizing what God has done through grace in sending His son Jesus to die in our stead “*therefore*” he is pleading believers to respond. It is as if Paul is saying: “***Because God is rich and wise, great and glorious, a God of love and mercy; while we are ignorant of the future, forgetful of the past and unable to control the present***” present you bodies as living sacrifices. Based upon the vast number of books and the question I’ve gotten over the years for many years one of the most asked questions in the Christian life is: “*How can I know God’s will for my life*”. The question is based upon a presupposition that God’s will is hidden, lost or hard to determine. But nothing could be further from the truth God’s will doesn’t have to be found because it’s not lost. Today we will look at specifically what God’s will is for each of us.

**II. Vs. 1-2 Persuaded by His Mercies**

Vs. 1 God does not condemn or command us for our past failure, instead He pleads with us that His mercies towards us might move us! ***Greater is God’s persuasive mercies in bending our hearts than any other power.*** There is always greater power to turn a life in love than hate. Many folks misunderstand grace: As recipients of God unmerited favor we don’t “*do to get*” we “*do because they have gotten*”! We followers of Christ have the opportunity to lay down our life because Jesus has laid down His life for us! ***Revival happens at any point in time when we willing yield areas of our life over to God because we have become so convinced that what He has for us is so much better than what we have been holding on too***!

Paul says, “*Take your body, all the tasks you have to do each and every day and offer all of it as an act of worship to God*.” When Paul uses the word present your bodies he does so in a tense that means “*once for all*” rather that a continuous action. Do it once then live the rest of your life on that basis, Paul says. I would think that it impossible to give God a gift but here we are told that the gift He would have us to give Him is our bodies. Now that just seems a bit weird, this old carcass that snores and smells has a bad heart and dirty mind and causes us so much trouble all the time and God wants us to give that to Him as a gift? Even more amazing is the words that follow this as we are told that by presenting our bodies to Him as a living sacrifice He will turn around and make them Holy and acceptable to Him. In this verse I see **five things about offering ourselves**:

1. **It is voluntary**: As Paul asks us to present a term that was used in the temple to bringing in gifts. Paul’s words make such an offer a gift not a command.
2. **It is complete**: The phrase suggests that we are to offer all of us.
3. **It is sacrificial**: In the temple there were two classes of sacrifices: Those associated with reconciliation (sin and peace offerings) and those associated with consecration (burnt and meal offerings). It is the 2nd class of offering that Paul is describing here. We are redeemed so that we may be consecrated or set apart for a Holy work. That is why our offering is living not dead!
4. **It is practical**: It is our service and as such it has to do with our work. We aren’t just saved to sit; we are saved to serve all the days of our lives.
5. **It is rational**: It is our “reasonable” service, it’s logical and makes sense since we have been given our position in Christ that we should now exercise that position for Christ.

**The first step to finding God’s will for our lives:** Is to present our bodies as a “living sacrifice” to Him. This means that we come to Him and say, “*Lord, I’m yours, I love you more than anything or anyone else, and I’m going after You*.” Now I’ve found a problem in my life being a “*living sacrifice*” and not a “*dead sacrifice*” and that is I have a tendency to climb off the altar. Worship is allowing God to use all of you each and every moment to be the dynamic instrument through which He can be glorified.

 Vs. 2 Sounds intriguing but just ***how do you give your body to God***? Based upon this verse it is a **two step process that we will need to keep repeating**:

1. **Do not be conformed to this world**: We will need to stop forcing our lives into the pattern of this world. And by pattern we are talking about the philosophy of life that surrounds us. To sum up the philosophy of this world is relatively easy: “*It’s all about ME*!” In this philosophy I’m the center of my universe, all that matters is ME, and what is pleasing to me is what matters. Have you noticed that we are born with this philosophy engrained upon us? We are totally into the advancement of SELF, “*What’s in this for ME*” is our question. The whole of the world and most folks are into this philosophy but the problems arise when I’m living as if “*It’s all about ME!*” and you’re living as if “*It’s all about YOU*!” And they can’t both be true. Friends, don’t let the world pressure you into thinking that this is the way to live any longer.
2. **Be transformed by the renewing of your mind**: With almost everyone else thinking and acting if “*It’s all about them*” it’s very difficult to live as if it’s all about the LORD! So Paul takes up the 2nd step and it has to do with the way we think. We can’t go on thinking the world revolves around ME, we can’t let our lives to be continually shoved into the mold of SELF. Notice it is the “*renewing*” of the mind which suggests that this is a continual process one that comes day by day. This renewing allows us to see what life is really all about isn’t us but God, then others and finally self. In fact we were designed that way that SELF only is really satisfied when it is last!

Based on this we see every person has to categories in their lives:

* **Conformers:** The word for conform has as its root a word that means “*outward form*” which changes. So Paul is saying don’t try to fashion your life around the t outward form of the world which is constantly changing. When we are like this we are “***thermometers***”, adjusting to the climate of the culture, conforming to its temperature. J.B. Phillips translates this verse, “*Don't let the world around you squeeze you into its own mould*”. I was reading the introduction to a new book by Daniel Fusco called “*Ahead of the Curve*” in he stated that in 1997 the University of Chicago held a conference titled “*After Post Modernism*” and it wasn’t until 2006 before any in the church held a conference on “*Post Modernism*” (Above All Earthly Powers: The Supremacy of Christ in a Postmodern World.) That is one of the many glaring problems with Christians being “*conformers*” we are at least 10 years behind the curve.
* **Transformers**: Or we can be “***thermostats***” instead of adjusting to the temperature of the culture we are changing the climate of the culture. That doesn’t mean that we aren’t in-tune to the culture around us nor does it mean that we are evangelizing the culture to become our culture. Paul explained it this way in 1 Cor. 9:19-22 where he wrote: “*For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win the more; and to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those who are under the law, as under the law, that I might win those who are under the law; to those who are without law, as without law (not being without law toward God, but under law toward Christ), that I might win those who are without law; to the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men that I might by all means save some*.”

**The second step of finding the will of God for our lives**: Involves this transformation and we do this once we have chosen to be a living sacrifice by keeping our mind on the Lord. Then as the psalmist reminds us in Psalm 37:4 we will have “*Delighted ourselves in the Lord, and He shall give you the desires of your heart.*” But just what is “*delighting ourselves in the Lord?*” Well it’ devotion and in the first two verses of Romans 12 Paul reveals to us that ***devotion involves three things***:

1. **Present your bodies**: According to 1 Cor. 6:19-20 our bodies are our houses of worship and the question we need to ask ourselves is what are we worshipping? Paul gives us two reasons that we are to do this once for all act:
	1. Right response: Paul says that we are to do so because we have been the recipients of the mercy of God.
	2. Reasonable service: It is a daily way we can demonstrate our worship to God.
2. **Give Him your mind**: The world wants your mind, wants to control what you think but God wants to transform your thinking. The word transform means a change from within. The world wants to control what you think so it exerts pressure and stimulus from the outside. Ah but God wants out mind to be transformed and He does this from the inside by releasing pressure and stress.
3. **Give Him your will**: Your mind controls your body but your will controls your mind. You don’t control your will by “*willpower*” you control your will when you yield it to the will of God and it’s His power that gives us “willpower” and “won’t power”.

**Romans**

**“The Righteousness of God Revealed”**

**III. Main Teaching: 1:18-15:13**

**D. Chp 12:1-15:13 Shaped by Grace**

**Romans 12:3-8 “A Change of Mind”**

1. **Intro**
2. **Vs. 3 Who we are**
3. **Vs. 4-8 What we have**

**I. Intro**

In the 2nd verse Paul told his readers to be “*transformed by the renewing of their minds*” the rest of the chapter will explain specifically what it means to have a change of mind!

 After 22 years of pastoring I’ve realized that for the most part when people come into my office with relational difficulties their quest is to get the other person to change. Friends, the best place to start when you notice that someone needs to change is always yourself! There are two very good reasons for this:

1. You are the only one by the working of the Spirit of God through the Word of God that has the power to change.
2. Often it is our transformation that motivates the other person to being open to the same transformation.

**II. Vs. 3 Who we are**

Vs. 3 It is interesting to note that it is not wrong to think about yourself, it is wrong to think more highly then you ought about yourself. We need to do a regular inventory of we are how we see ourselves in Christ. In fact Paul exhorts believers under his apostolic authority to do just that. Next Paul tells you to do a self check in two areas:

1. “***Not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think***”: Paul says **we need to avoid overrating ourselves**! You may think you think to highly of yourself but there is a sure fire way to determine that you do and that is when others treat you not very well. When people are saying that we aren’t all that, we get real upset and say, “*Well how dare they treat me this way*!” Some folks are easy to tell that they think more highly of themselves because they are always talking about themselves they are their favorite subject. But with others we have learned that this isn’t very becoming to boast about ourselves so we adopt a more subtle way of thinking more highly of ourselves and that is to get folks to do it for us. We go around and put ourselves down so that people will respond by saying, “*Oh no you’re not that way why you are the smartest, most kind person I know*!” And inwardly we think to ourselves, “*Yeh, their right, I am*!” Now you can tell if you are doing this real quick because when we bait the hook that way and the person instead of responding the way we had hoped says, “*You know, I’m glad you said that about yourself because I’ve been noticing that about you for years*!”
2. “***But to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith***”: If we are to avoid “*overrating ourselves*” just how are we to see ourselves? Paul identifies two ways we are to see ourselves:
3. **Soberly**: The word here in the Greek means “*to be in ones right mind*” and as such conceit is considered to be “*out of your mind*”. To be sober minded about oneself is to realize that you are sinner, that you have a flesh that will constantly try to get you to be enslaved to lusts and passions. We need to realize that we can never trust ourselves; we’ve always got to be on the lookout for the “old man” with his thoughts and attitudes.
4. **Measure of faith**: The second thing we are to do is to look back over all the truth in spite of you that God has to say about you. You used to be dead in trespasses and sin’s, you used to walk according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, conducting ourselves in the lust of the flesh, fulfilling the desire of the flesh, children of wrath. But now He has made us alive! All of this is because of His great love with which He has loved us and now He has raised us up together making us to sit in heavenly places that in the ages to come that He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in kindness towards us. WOW!!!

Ray Stedman said that when he would first get up as he was starting his day he would remind himself of three truths:

1. **I’m made in the image of God**: I’m not an animal; therefore I don’t have to behave like one. I have the ability in Christ to respond and relate to the living God and behave in a way that God created me to behave not like a beast!
2. **I’m filled with the Holy Spirit**: I have the power of God working in me; all of the strains and stresses of today need not affect me and mold me into that beast that I used to be. Instead the Holy Spirit will be using those very things that used to shove me into acting like an animal into acting more like Jesus.
3. **I’m a part of God’s plan**: There are no coincidences or accidents everything I’m going through today is part of His design and plan. God will not only be working out His plan in me, He will be working out His plan through me today for others. So I can just enjoy the journey, can’t wait to see what new adventure God is going to be doing today!!!

**III. Vs. 4-8 What we have**

Vs. 4-5 The second thing that changes are minds is the Holy Spirit working through other believers on our behalf. The Church is an organism not an organization as Paul refers to it as a human body. There ought to be one in “***unity***” yet individually different thus without “***uniformity***”. The body of Christ isn’t about as becoming a member so that we can get something out of it. It is about as being a member so that we can make certain that someone else gets something out of it.

Vs. 6-8 The word “gifts” here is a word where we get out word “*graces*” from which speaks lot about the “gifts”. They should be “graceful”, which speaks about being natural and beautiful to see operate. There are four places in the New Testament that you can go to find teaching on the gifts of the Holy Spirit, here and in 1 Corinthians chapter 12 and chapter 14 as well as Ephesians chapter 4. But a careful examination of these passages reveals that in the 1 Corinthian passage’s the word for gifts is *italicized* which means that it is not in the original and the Ephesian 4 passage the word is not mentioned. So in reality this is the only place that the gifts are specifically mentioned. The gifts here in Romans 12:6-8 are to be the **motivations** behind the **manifestation** of the gifts listed in 1 Corinthians and the **ministries** or offices of the gifts listed in Ephesians chapter 4. ***I like the fact that the work of the Holy Spirit is first concerned with the motivation before the manifestation and the ministry position***. This truth is further illustrated by what Paul has already written in verse 3-5 where we are told to think soberly of ourselves. Paul divides these gifts into two groups; one of four gifts the other of three gifts:

1. **Vs. 6b-8a Those that expound the word**
2. **Vs. 8b Those that expand the work**

**Those that expound the word**

1. **Prophecy “*Declares the Word*”**: There are two types of prophecy mentioned in scripture and the one we most associate with this word is predictive in nature as it is engaged in “*fore-telling*”. But the primary meaning and usage in scripture of prophecy is not predictive but is simply declaring truth as it is engaged in “*forth-telling*”. Paul’s word of motivation in the exercise of this gift is that it needs to be always kept within “*proportion*” of our faith. The word “*proportion*” in the Greek is mathematical term that deals with the right ratio or proper proportions. So Paul is saying that in declaring the word that we should do so always in the proper proportion of our faith within the limits already established in the tenants of our faith as well as the faith God has established in us. There is a limit, a set guide to our declaring God’s truth, it will always be consistent to what God has already made known in His word and it should always point people to God not to the prophet.
2. **Ministry “Demonstrates the Word”:** The word used for ministry here is the same word where we get our word deacon and therefore refers to the person serving and not in what they are doing. As you read through the New Testament you will always see Jesus “*Touching*” and “*Teaching*” folks. In Acts chapter 9 the church was mourning the loss of Dorcas as many folks gathered to Peter displaying the clothes she made. Peter was called to declare the Word that warmed people’s hearts but Dorcas was called to sew clothe that warmed their bodies. Paul’s word in exercising this demonstration of the Word is that the person should do so in the realm in which God has placed them. In other words they need to bloom where they are planted instead of looking to find a better gig, a more visible platform they should just go for it right where they are.
3. **Teaching “Defines the Word”:** A prophet will share occasionally but a teacher shares expositionaly. And like ministry it ought to be aimed at understanding.
4. **Exhortation “Develops the Word”:** Those taught but not exhorted become “*fat sheep*” that only take in truth but never live it. Those who are exhorted but not taught become “*excited and active*”, but have no depth or understanding to what they do and will burn out quickly or work in wrong ways. Again in each of these cases we note that they are to exercise the gift right the where they are and in the abilities God has given them.

**Those that expand the work**

1. **Giving “Expands the work”**: The word for “*gives*” means to “*impart*” of one’s earthly possessions and Paul’s encouragement is to do so with no strings attached with generosity. We can see how as Paul proclaimed already that we don’t all have the “same function” but how vital each and every function is each other and to the furtherance of God’s work. You can have someone who is called and gifted in declaring the Word or defining the Word but without someone called to “*expand the work*” it will not go anywhere.
2. **Leading “Engineers the work”:** The word here means a “*person who is placed in front*”. And they are to do so with care doing their best for others, for the benefit of God and others before self. During a private fishing trip in the Alaskan wilderness, a charter pilot and fishermen left a cooler with bait in the plane. A bear smelled it and destroyed the Piper PA-18A 150 airplane. The pilot used his radio and had another pilot bring him 2 new tires, 3 cases of duct tape, and a supply of sheet plastic. He patched the plane together, and FLEW IT HOME! That’s what those that lead know how to do “***patch things up so that others can fly home***”.
3. **Mercy “Encourages the work”:** There are those that “*expand the work*” by giving, then there are those that “*engineer the work*” by leading but you still need those that “*encourage the work*” by constantly displaying mercy towards all that are doing the work. And Paul says they are to do so with cheerfulness and that word is where we get our word ***hilarious*** from. God has placed in the body those that encourage others by their sense of humor and joy filled life.

**Romans**

**“The Righteousness of God Revealed”**

**III. Main Teaching: 1:18-15:13**

**D. Chp 12:1-15:13 Shaped by Grace**

**Romans 12:9-21 “Need a Hug”**

1. **Intro**
2. **Vs. 9-13 Hugging people in Church**
3. **Vs. 14-21 Hugging people in the world**

**I. Intro**

A man was walking by a used book store and saw a book that intrigued him by what he thought was its title “*How to Hug*”. When he went in to purchase the book he was disappointed because instead of a book on hugging it was an encyclopedia that covered “*words from How to Hug*”. I’m afraid that many times this describes people’s church experience as they come to Church to get a hug and instead of a demonstration they get clobbered by and encyclopedia. On June 30th 2004 a movement was started by a lonely man named Juan Mann who had been transformed by a random hug from a stranger. He started a campaign at a local Mall in Sydney Australia by holding a sign that simply read “*Free Hugs*”. To date well over 69 million people have watched the video but what he didn’t realize is that Jesus started that campaign 2000 years ago; it’s just that the Church has failed to keep it going! This morning in verses 9-21 we are going learn “*How to Hug*” and I promise no encyclopedia! There are two main areas that Paul says we need to be hugging people:

1. Vs. 9-13 In the Church
2. Vs. 14-21 In the world

**II. Vs. 9-13 Hugging people in Church**

Vs. 9a Last week Paul’s focus was humility and this week his focus is love. There is a natural progression in the spiritual life from humility to love and Paul follows that flow! The first thing we see if we are going to “hug” properly is ***sincere love***! The word “*sincere*” in Latin literally means “*without wax*” and was used by people when buying a marble sculpture when they would ask the artist if it was “*without wax*”. Many of the artist’s would use bee’s wax mixed with marble dust to hide the flaws in their work. Clearly if we are going to hug people we need to do so in love without any wax covering hidden motives or attitudes. Paul mentions ***six ways to hug folks within the church***:

1. Vs. 9b “***Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good***”: The word “*abhor*” is a word in which we get our word for “*horror*” from. We are to hate sin as we hate that hell to which it leads. Oh that we would so view all the “evil” that so tempts us as the things that we avoid at any cost as they horrify us. But that is only part of the picture as we can treat sin and temptation as a horror flick but we will also need to **cling to that which is good**. ***We will continue a losing battle if all we do is become horrified at our temptations.*** A recent article in “*Science Daily*” was investigating human behavior and people's motivation to generally pursue pleasure and avoid pain. But how can this be reconciled with the decision to engage in experiences known to elicit negative feelings, such as horror movies. For years people believed that generally one of two theories explained why people like horror movies.
2. The first is that the person is not actually afraid, but excited by the movie
3. The second explanation is that they are willing to endure the terror in order to enjoy a euphoric sense of relief at the end

But, a new study argues that neither of these theories is correct. Instead the theory that people cannot both “*experience negative and positive emotions simultaneously*” is in correct. In other words, “*horror movie viewers are happy to be unhappy*”. As the authors put it, “*the most pleasant moments of a particular event may also be the most fearful.*” There you have it friends we have to do more then be horrified of sin we need to glue ourselves to that which is good! We need to realize that hugging involves the person not what they do or don’t do. **We aren’t called to love what a person does we are called to love the person!** We ought to hate what is evil in people without hating people when they do sinful things.

1. Vs. 10a “***Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love***”: Secondly, love remembers that **action is based upon relationship not mutual friendship**. Paul says we are to be “*kindly affectionate to one another*”, with ***brotherly love***. Our concern isn’t based upon how well we know someone or how much we enjoy their company. The question is whether or not through Christ we are related to them.
2. Vs. 10b “***in honor giving preference to one another***”: Third, if we are going to hug properly **we are going to have to view people as more deserving than we are**. It has been said that, “***There is no limit to the good a person can do if they don’t care who gets the credit*!**” That is the way to hug someone, do so and tell them that it is from someone else!
3. Vs. 11 “***not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord***”: Fourth, **a good hug must remain enthusiastic despite the setbacks**. We are told how to make sure our love doesn’t become one of this lack luster hugs: it must have two ingredients if it’s not going to lack diligence:
4. **Fervent in the Spirit**: First it has to be ***empowered by the holy Spirit***
5. **Serving the Lord**: second its aim must be ***through the person to Jesus***
6. Vs. 12 “***rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer***”: Fifth, **church hugs need to posses the tri-fecta of joy:**
7. **Praise**: It has to rejoice in hope, believing that God is going to make something good come from the mountain we have made out of a mole hill.
8. **Patience**: It has to be patient when everything and everyone is rocking our boat, knowing that the rocking of the boat always leads to the stilling of the storm.
9. **Prayer**: It has to maintain constant communication trough out to the only One that can transform our biggest obstacle, ourselves.
10. Vs. 13 “***distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality***”: Finally, if **we are going to hug folk’s properly in church then we are going to need to do practically and consistently!** We are going to have to hug folks where they need to be hugged if you know what I mean? Hospitality and hospital came from the same Greek work and best way to make people whole and well is to treat them as if they are an invited guest! “*Given to hospitality*” is literally pursuing “*stranger loving*”. There are far too many folks pursuing “*strange loves*” but not near enough of Christians pursuing “stranger loving”.

**III. Vs. 14-21 Hugging people in the world**

Having seen how to hug people in the Church Paul switch’s his focus to those outside our doors and gives us ***six ways to hug people in the world***:

1. Vs. 14 “***Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse***”: First, Paul says that **you are going to have to hug folks who would rather kick you then hug you**. For the most part when someone is kind to us and goes out of their way to bless us we say nice things about them to others. To hug folks that don’t like you, find something about them that you can say good about them and tell others that one or two things.
2. Vs. 15 “***Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep***”: Second, if ***we are going to be affective in hugging people in the world then we are going to have to remain flexible and adjustable to their ever changing moods.*** Sometimes they need a hug of consolation other times they need a hug of a “*high five chest bump*”! And to give someone a “*high five chest bump*” when what they needed was a shoulder to cry on is not going to be well received. It is comparatively easy to weep with those who weep but much more difficult to rejoice with those that rejoice. To give our condolences and not our congratulations only means that someone has loss not that someone has won!
3. Vs. 16 “***Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion***”: Third, if you are going to hug folks in the world you are going to have to consider yourself on the same level as than the one you are going to love. The biggest obstacle we Christians face in loving the world is in forgetting our own sinful past as we believe that we are just a little bit better than those sinful folks out there.
4. Vs. 17 “***Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men***”: Forth, if you are going to hug folks in the world you are going to have to drop the knife that you planed to plunge in their back when they aren’t looking. Now this is especially difficult when you realize that they may have one ready to plunge into your back as you hug them.
5. Vs. 18 “***If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men***”: Fifth, you are going to have to be committed to hugging people even though they are equally committed to kicking you. You’ve heard it said that it takes two to “tango” well I’ve never “*tangoed*” but I can tell you it takes two to “***Tangle***” and if you aren’t into that dance they will have to be going solo.
6. Vs. 19 “***Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord***”: Finally, to hug folks in the world you will need to keep a clean slate as folks can be pretty messy. You will need to keep handing them off to the Lord to deal with. When we try to get even all we will do is escalate the conflict. Paul gives two reasons why we should not avenge ourselves:
7. Because He is already at work taking care of the other person, albeit maybe not the way or in the timing you would like it.
8. Second, God alone has the right to avenge and He can do so without collateral damage. He often does so in a redemptive way that touches the life that we would want to have destroyed.

Vs. 20-21 Paul moves on in anticipation of what he knows we would be thinking: “*So I’m suppose to just sit here and let that person let that person put the knife in me as I hug them*?” Well of course not, Paul quotes Prov. 25:21-22, “*If your enemy is hungry, feed him; If he is thirsty, give him a drink; For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head.*” “***The coal thing on their heads sounds right but I’m not sure how feeding them when they are hungry or giving them something to drink when they are thirsty is part of that?***” By doing this God’s way ***two things will happen***:

1. **You will turn their negative into God’s positive**: Putting coal on someone’s head was an ancient custom of lighting fires as they would use coals from one fire to start another fire for someone else. They would come over and say, “*You got a light*?” And you would take some embers for your fire and place it in an earthen vessel that they would carry on top of their heads. ***This became a metaphor of being neighborly and providing warmth and light to someone who would have been cold and in the dark without your generosity***.
2. Vs. 21 **Secondly you automatically win because you are overcoming evil by doing good**: Three times in verses 14-17 Paul tell us not to return evil for evil thus we can see that the point is that we aren’t to react like the world. We aren’t to combat evil with evil we are to combat it with good.

**Romans**

**“The Righteousness of God Revealed”**

**III. Main Teaching: 1:18-15:13**

**D. Chp 12:1-15:13 Shaped by Grace**

**Romans 13:1-7 “Lessons in Civics”**

1. **Intro**
2. **Vs. 1-2 Obey the powers that be**
3. **Vs. 3-5 Reasons to obey**
4. **Vs. 6-7 Benefits of obedience**

**I. Intro**

In the 12th chapter Paul dealt with the obligations of love and focused his attention to those within the body of Christ and those outside the body of Christ. Here Paul points out that we have obligations to love outside these personal relationships to general relationships such as being a good citizen in the country the Lord has placed them. I’ve heard said that there are a few things you should never discuss “*Religion and politics*” and one other that no one wants to talk about “*taxes*” and here Paul is going to do all three. Paul can’t be talking about us being subject to the “*governing authorities*” with the mess we are in right now? The times in which Paul wrote these words were far more evil then now. When one considers that he was writing to the church in Rome where 2/3 of the people were slaves and many within the church were Jewish and they were notorious for their up risings. Yet it is to this very group that Paul tells Christians that they are to be subject to the governing authorities. Paul defines for us three ways that we are to maintain a relationship with the state:

1. **Vs. 1-7 The Christian’s obligation to the state**
2. **Vs. 8-10 The Christian’s obligation to the citizens of the state**
3. **Vs. 11-14 The Christian’s practice of their civil obligations**

**II. Vs. 1-2 Obey the powers that be**

Vs. 1 The first things we learn about both the forms of Government as well as those that occupy the positions of power within the government is its source as Paul says that “*the powers that be*” are from God. Paul tells his readers of their ***obligation for civil obedience*** and that there is not one Christian that is exempt from obedience to the state! The reason for ***this has nothing to do with the righteousness or lack thereof of the “powers that be” but rather because of the “righteousness” of the God who is the source of their authority and the One who has sanctioned it***. ***God is not removed or uninterested in governments and political affairs, He is orchestrating them***.

God hasn’t sanctioned any one form of government so it can take on many different forms and still be from Him. All of society needs government as ***God intended man to live under authority***. I’m reminded of a quote from a letter written by the French diplomat Joseph de Maistre in August 1811 about Napoleon Bonaparte in post revolutionary France when he said, “*Every nation gets the government it deserves*”. We Americans love to think that only democracy is ordained by God but the time that Paul wrote this Rome had been a monarchy, republic, principality and now and empire under their 5th emperor and perhaps the most ruthless Nero. The best form of government for a nation is whatever form God has brought into being for that time and place. Sometimes God uses a government or the powers that be to bless a people and sometimes He uses them to judge them and to get them to repent! America has tried to set up democracies in parts of the world where the people of that country just can’t seem to make it work. In Daniel 2:20-21, Daniel told King Nebuchadnezzar “*God changes the times and the seasons; He removes kings and raises up kings; He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding*.” God is interested in not only the form of government but also the persons who occupy the offices of authority. And by His grace and wisdom He not only sends us good leaders but allows us to have bad ones at times as well. In Daniel 4:17 King Nebuchadnezzar came to this decision when he wrote a decree saying, “*That the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, gives it to whomever He will, and sets over it the lowest of men*.”

Vs. 2 In light of the corruptive form of government that Paul and believers were living under at the time of this letter ***he still condemns the resistance to the governing authorities saying that it is equivelant to resisting God***. Since God has allowed the “*power that be*” to govern over us the flip side of that is also true: ***governments are in power “under God”***. In February of 1948 Louis Bowman inserted those very words “*Under God*” in the pledge of allegiance quoting from Lincoln’s Gettysburg address. Under President Eisenhower’s administration it was signed into law as part of the pledge of allegiance. This in no way suggests that everything that a government does to its citizens is justified or ordained by Him.

This concept isn’t new as you will recall Jesus words in Matthew 22:21 as they handed him a coin with Caesar’s image on it and He said, “*Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's*.” ***God has put His image on man, we belong to Him.*** We can give certain things to Caesar but people belong to God, they may have right to our property and possessions, they may regulate how we treat one another but they have no right to the spirit of man. They have no right to tell us how worship, or forbid our obedience to the Word of God. Whenever a government commands that we do what ought not to be done we don’t have to listen. We must not enslave people, oppress them because they are God’s not the governments. Such is the case in Acts 5:29 after being commanded to never speak about Jesus “*Peter and the other apostles answered and said: "We ought to obey God rather than men.*” To oppose overtly the government that is in power such as was the case at the founding of this country; two things not mentioned here must be considered:

1. ***What is our responsibility should the government persecute Christians?***
2. ***What is our responsibility should the government fail to do its duty to its citizens?***

Paul wrote this during the reign of the Roman Empire which was no democracy, and no special friend to Christians - yet he still saw their legitimate authority. Jesus suffered under Pontius Pilate, one of the worst Roman governors Judea ever had; and Paul under Nero, the worst Roman Emperor. And neither our Lord nor His Apostle denied or reviled the 'authority! We are bound to obey the governing authority unless they order us to do something in contradiction to God's law.

**III. Vs. 3-5 Reasons to obey**

Vs. 3-4 Paul adds additional reason for submission to the “*powers that be*” saying they are “*servants of God*” and ought not to cause any fear or trouble to those who are good citizens only to those who are evil-doers. Three times in this section Paul refers to them as “*ministers*” and that is the same word we use for deacon and was used of those who served in the Jewish temple.

***Governments are to protect its citizens from evil***: This evil may be in the form an outside attack. Or it may be from the inside attack like crime from within. This is why governments have armies, police forces and courts. Rulers that bear the sword simply means that they have the authority to act on behalf of society to afflict punishment upon those who have injured the citizens. They have the right on behalf of its citizens to execute force if necessary even to taking a life. There is no doubt that these powers have been abused and miss applied but the answer is to correct the problem not eliminate governments right to act in behalf of its people. So the next time you get pulled over realize that the person who did so was acting like a deacon.

Vs. 5 He further tells his readers that such obedience to the “*powers that be*” are not only to be made by the believer because it will keep is out of trouble but because it is the “*right thing to do*”! ***This conscience sake not only gives us the right moral compass it also serves as the governments limitation.*** The powers that be that govern in God’s name must not do anything contrary to that Name and if they do we are not obligated to participate in their practice. Now I’m certain that all of us can come up with examples from both parties of those who have abused their God given authority but we aren’t called to always respect the person in office, we are called to respect the office because the powers that be are from God.

**IV. Vs. 6-7 Benefits of obedience**

Vs. 6-7 ***The second function governments have is to tax its citizens***: ***Governments not only serve their citizens by protecting them from without and from within they also provide common services that minister to the needs of the people. Utilities, education and relief agencies are common things that taxes are to go for.*** Governments have two things at their disposal to ensure that their citizenry complies with these things physical force and economic force.

***Taxes to whom taxes are due***: To get people to do the right thing in caring for each other the government has the right to tax’s its people to ensure that folks get the care they need. We may not like the amount the government takes and the way they spend it but the answer is not to be found in not paying but rather in changing the laws or the people making the laws. It is our responsibility to do the right thing even when we are trying to change it. Paul gives an example of civil obedience in the paying of taxes to which he says, *“render therefore to all their due*” and then he mentions four aspects of civil authority:

1. ***Personal property taxes***: Taxes, refers to an annual collection such as property or income tax. I’m certain that most folks don’t think of their IRS agent as a minister of God. Some say that they don’t want to pay their taxes because the money the government is collecting is going against the things of the Bible but so to in Paul’s time.
2. ***Export, or import taxes***: Sales tax is paid upon purchase, something that we don’t have in Montana.
3. ***Fear, or respect of the government***: Fear does not mean terror but rather that which removes terror and as such we are to have high regard for those in authority over us who have removed our terror.
4. ***Honor and respect for those under the government as well***: But beyond that we are to pay what we owe; honor.

This is not the only passage that deal with the Christians civil duty:

* 1 Tim. 2:1-2 where Paul exhorts “*first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence*.”
* Titus 3:1 we read that they were to be reminded “*to be subject to rulers and authorities, to obey, to be ready for every good work.*”
* 1 Peter 2:13-17 Peter writes, “*submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether to the king as supreme, or to governors, as to those who are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and for the praise of those who do good. For this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men-- as free, yet not using liberty as a cloak for vice, but as bondservants of God. Honor all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king*.”

Justin Martyr (103 to 165 AD) wrote during the height of Christian persecution, “*We worship only God, but in other things we will gladly serve you, acknowledging you as kings and rulers of men, and praying that, with your kingly power, you may be found to possess also sound judgment*.”

**Romans**

**“The Righteousness of God Revealed”**

**III. Main Teaching: 1:18-15:13**

**D. Chp 12:1-15:13 Shaped by Grace**

**Romans 13:8-14 “Living on the Edge”**

1. **Intro**
2. **Vs. 8-10 Payback time**
3. **Vs. 11-14 What time is it?**

**I. Intro**

We come now to the 2nd and 3rd parts of this chapter as Paul has been giving us a civics lesson on how to be godly citizens to the “*powers that be*”. I’m amazed at how one phrase can answer how we are to respond to the state and our fellow citizens who may not like us all that much. Paul simply writes in verse 8 “*Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law*.” Just like the original readers of this letter we Christians today need to learn how to display love amid all the pressures we face each day. Do you think LOVE makes a difference? Let’s put it to the test: We Christians just like everybody else have things we love; sports, food, hobbies etc.

* Name who won the championship 10 years ago in your favorite sport?
* Name what you ate three weeks ago on a Thursday night?
* Name what you made or did with regards to your hobby a year ago?

How come if we love them we can’t seem to remember that much about them? Oh but recall the time when someone loved you, reached out to you, remember the situation, the details, the people. ***You have just learned a great and powerful lesson it is not what we love that has a lasting impact, it is who has loved us and who we have loved***. Love makes ALL the difference!!!!

**II. Vs. 8-10 Payback time**

Vs. 8-10 There is something about trying to follow a bunch of rules and regulations that we humans just find difficult. If the speed limit says don’t go over 70 then we have to go at least 75. I’m convinced its part of the fall, my granddaughter has learned when she asks for a piece of candy to start counting 2, 3, 4. She then realized that she could just skip the counting and started saying a lots and now she is saying “lot’s a, lot’s a, lot’s a”! I believe God knows that about us, so he had Paul write not on what not to do but on what to do by saying, “*This is easy, my children all you have to do is love*!” Have you ever had a person that just brings your blood to boil and you are struggling on what to do? Well Paul says, “***Love them and you won’t be able hurt them***!” I had a fellow a few years back that before he left the church decided to call people in the church directory to see if they would join him. When we heard of it I took some leadership and I bought him lunch and asked him if we had offended him personally in any way as we were unaware of anything. He told us no, then we loving asked him why he felt obligated to call folks and encourage them to leave fellowship with us. He denied doing so and left angry! We then had the opportunity to bless him with a substantial amount of business! I don’t know how it made him feel but it made me feel great! I can’t honestly say that love made a difference to that person but I can tell you that loving him made a difference in me! ***My biggest problem is a lack of love but it’s not a lack of love FROM others it is a lack of love TO others***! ***You see, loving people and harming people are mutually exclusive, you can do one or the other but you can’t do both at the same time***! Paul gives us ***three specific things about our obligation to love***:

1. **Debt**: Paul say’s that this is ***not a suggestion but neither is it a command***; it is something even more binding, ***we owe a debt***! The word “*owe*” is the verb to the noun in “*due*” in verse 7. The connection is when you pay all your dues you still have an ongoing obligation to love one another. When you owe somebody something, it’s on your mind continually until you make a payment. So the moment you and I came into contact this morning I owed you something and you owed me something, LOVE! I needed to make a payment directly to you, to give you *kindness, courtesy, patience and understanding*. Whatever the situation or circumstance maybe I need to pay my debt to you and you to me. Our first response should be, “*I need to pay this fellow what I owe him right away, even though he hasn’t paid me what he owes me*!” If we did that right up front it may jog their memory about what they owe us! In Philemon 1:18-19 Paul was writing to a church leader about his runaway slave named Onesimus saying, “*If he has wronged you or owes anything, put that on my account. I, Paul, am writing with my own hand. I will repay--not to mention to you that you owe me even your own self besides.*”
2. **Everyone**: The second thing we learn about our debt of love is that doesn’t have a limitation upon who we need to pay. Paul said we were to owe NO ONE anything except to love. Read down a few verses to verse 10 where he describes “NO ONE” as our neighbor! Now I was thinking that’s only two or three families, I can do this. Then I started thinking about more than just geography. A neighbor is the one who lives next to you; they are the ones at this very moment that are seated next to where you are. That would mean that at any given moment my neighbor is the person I’m closest to: at the store, as I’m driving, on the phone, at work. I need to give *kindness, courtesy, patience and understanding* to whoever is closest to me this very moment.
3. **Positive**: The final thing I learn about my debt of love is that it goes beyond what I don’t do to them to harm them. That’s the difference between the “LAW” and “LOVE”. The law’s concern focuses only on not doing negative things to those closest to you. Do what you want with your property, but you can’t do what you want with your neighbor’s property, wife, stuff, name or life! There are folks that think, “*Well that’s enough; not doing those things to those closest to me is loving them*!” Ah but love say’s, “*Don’t just not do harmful things to those closest to you do good things to your neighbor.*” Love them, reach out to them, help them, and find ways that you can bless those closest to you. The law stops at the line but love crosses over that line and goes the extra mile, brings a coat not just a scarf, not just a glass of water and a piece of bread but a 5 gallon container full of water and a 5 course meal!

**III. Vs. 11-14 What time is it?**

Vs. 11-14 After saying that we Christian’s owe everyone a debt of love Paul now moves on to give a motivating factor, THE TIMES we are living in. **He says that understanding the times will motivate us four ways to love our neighbors**:

1. Vs. 11-12a **Wake up**: The first thing Paul says is that the “times” ought to cause us to get going, not to “*political mobilization*” but to “*evangelical globalization*”! Right now the night is all around us but that only signals that the day is about to dawn. If we have been waiting for the opportune time to pay back the debt of love to someone then there is no better time to start then today because you may not be given tomorrow. The alarm has gone off folks it’s time to recognize all the opportunities to love those closest to us. The church needs to awake out of its spiritual slumber and start reaching folks with the glorious good news that Jesus is coming. It’s a lot easier for us to send our dollars to some foreign mission field so that someone we barley know can love someone we don’t know at all, rather than us reaching out to someone ourselves. That leads us to the 2nd thing we are called to do.
2. Vs. 12b-13 **Clean up**: Paul say’s in light of that we need to “*cast off*” the works of darkness. Time for us as to clean up a bit and do what the author of Hebrews in 12:1 says to “*lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us*”. We all need to do some spiritual house cleaning and get rid of some junk that has been cluttering up our lives. Paying back the debt’s of love is going to require us let go of three things that are keeping us from loving others:
3. **Parties**: Paul says if you are going to be involved in paying back your debt of love you if you are all about the good times and getting wasted. Not only do you get “*wasted*” you end up “*wasting*” time that you could be spending on having a real good time blessings someone else. Each of us only has so many moments to spend to demonstrate God’s powerful love and if we are spending it getting wasted then all we will end up is wasted.
4. **Immorality:** Paul describes it as lewdness and lust and says you can’t love people and live for sexual conquests at the same time. In using these two terms Paul covers the whole range of immorality here from, adultery, homosexuality, immorality and pornography. If we indulge in these things Paul says we will be wasting time that will destroy us and others.
5. **Contentions**: Finally Paul says that if we are going to pay back our debt of love then we are going to have to clean out strife and envy. There are some that just live for gossip and the spread of negativity. They aren’t happy unless they are unhappy and spreading that unhappiness around to others. Folks, you can’t be paying back that debt of love if you are all about trying to cause division and strife. In Matthew 12:30 Jesus said “*He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters abroad*.” What effect do you have on people, are you gathering them or scattering them. This is how we can tell if we are with Jesus or against Jesus. Proverbs 27:15 says that, “*A continual dripping on a very rainy day and a contentious woman* (person) *are alike*”.
6. Vs. 14a **Dress up**: To walk properly requires us to wear the right outfit and it won’t include the following attire “*revelry and drunkenness, lewdness, lust, strife and envy*”. But dressing right isn’t just about what you aren’t wearing it is about what you are wearing and in this case we are to put on the Lord Jesus Christ. When we get up in the morning we put on clothes that make us presentable to others and friend there is no outfit in your closet that makes you more presentable to others then the Lord Jesus Christ! Make wearing Him today your life, wherever you go and whoever you meet folks will be complementing you on how nice you look. They say that what you wear makes the person and I couldn’t agree more when what you wear is Jesus. There is a fashion today that seems to be a mix-match of several outfits and I’m afraid that this is what the Christian looks like sometimes, a little of the world’s clothing and a little of Jesus.
7. Vs. 14b **Grow up**: Finally we are told that we will need to grow up and growing is going to require us to make no provisions for the flesh, not to give it any inroads into our lives. That may mean that we are going to have to let go of things. Paul writes in 1 Cor. 13:11that “*When I was a child, I spoke as a child; I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things.*” J.B. Phillips translated this verse “*Let us be Christ’s men from head to foot, and give no chances to the flesh to have its fling*.”

**Romans**

**“The Righteousness of God Revealed”**

**III. Main Teaching: 1:18-15:13**

**D. Chp 12:1-15:13 Shaped by Grace**

**Romans 14:1-12 “About Diets and Days”**

1. **Intro**
2. **Vs. 1-3 Accounts Receivable**
3. **Vs. 4-12 Reasons to not Criticize or Categorize**

**I. Intro**

Having dealt with ***Christian Civics*** Paul now takes up yet another touchy subject, ***Christian Ethics***. The dictionary describes “*Ethics*” as a philosophy that deals with what is good and bad, right and wrong, moral duty and obligation. Have you noticed that often the Church’s favorite indoor sport is trying to change each other? This chapter deals with Christian “*No No’s*” the so called “*taboos*” of the Church, such as:

* Those that believe that it’s wrong to drink alcohol trying to change their fellow believers opinion that it’s alright to have a glass of wine or a beer with dinner.
* Those that read out of the 1611 King James Bible trying to change folks to stop reading out of those “*per-versions*” such as the N.I.V. which they say means “**N**early **I**nspired **V**ersion”.

The list goes on and on to ad noisome all the while those apart from Christ wonder what’s wrong with us. This is such an important topic that Paul is going to spend 1 and ¼ chapters on it as it is an extension of what he had said in 13:8 that we owe one another a debt of love. There seems to be two groups in any church that are always about trying to change the other:

1. Those that are convinced they need to “***Give it up***”
2. Those that are convinced that they need to “***Live it up***”

While many in the Church are engaged in the sport of evangelizing their fellow believers the world is in desperate need to hear the gospel. Here in Romans 14 we learn that “*Love must be patient and tolerant of other Christian views*”.

**I. Vs. 1-3 Accounts Receivable**

Vs. 1 The NLT renders Rom 14:1: “*Accept Christians who are weak in faith, and don't argue with them about what they think is right or wrong*.” Almost every church mentioned in the New Testament had divisions to contend with that the writer has to address. Today is no different as folks are often in disputes over “***grey areas***”. This verse is plain and ought to be easy to put in practice but it’s not is it? *Don’t reject folks, don’t ignore them, place them in categories, and argue with them simply because they practice their faith different then you*. Friends, grace sanctifies the heart much more easily then the head! Remember God washes our hearts in this life, but He washes our brains in the life to come! Accept them without doing the above because they are your brothers and sisters in the family of God and He doesn’t need or ask for your permission to invite them into the family! The word “*receive*” in the Greek is a word that means that we are to do so without an ulterior motive so that we can convince them later. *This requires us to fully accept each other even if they sprinkle and you dunk… your donuts, you though I was going to say baptism didn’t you*?

Vs. 2 This wasn’t about nutrition it may have been about being kosher or idols but the point Paul is making is much broader in scope then just diets. ***The point is if the scriptures are silent about it then it’s a matter of opinion and personal preference that the Lord will direct us individually.*** Oft times folks like to lump it all together under the verse in 1 Cor. 6:19 where Paul says, “*Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own*?” But then Paul admonishes Timothy in 1 Tim. 5:23 to “*No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for your stomach's sake and your frequent infirmities*.” The problem with using 1 Cor. 6:19 as the proof text on smoking, dancing, chewing gum, sugar etc is that verse 18 gives us the context as being “*sexual immorality*”. There are things that the Bible is clear on with regards to things that we should abstain from: It’s always wrong to have sex outside of marriage, it’s always wrong to get drunk, or get high. God has spoken on these on these things and we are to exhort one another to abstain from these areas and in so doing we aren’t judging God’s Word is.

 Even more surprising is Paul’s estimation of who is the weaker brother. This is even more remarkable when we consider Paul’s own history. The natural leaning of most folks is to see the one that has the most rigid standards as the more mature believer. Yet verse 2 says “*he who is weak eats only vegetables*”. The weak person is described as being “weak **IN** the faith” not “weak in **FAITH**”. Their problem is not in faith but in understanding. Jesus said in John 8:31-32 that “*If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.*” Thus the mark of maturity and understanding the Bible is freedom and the person who understands that these unclear things have no bearing upon God’s love of us is stronger than the person who doesn’t. Barclay in his commentary on this said that the person is weak in the faith for two reasons:

1. They have not yet discovered the meaning of Christian freedom and in their heart are still looking to things to govern their life with regards to right and wrong. They are frightened by freedom and liberty.
2. They have not yet separated themselves from a belief that “works” work in gaining favor with God. They are still trying to earn a right relationship with God instead of receiving one by grace through faith. they are still thinking more about what they can do for God instead of what God has done for them.

Vs. 3 Having described the problem Paul now gives his readers who are on both sides of this problem what to do about it. The strong that have greater understanding must not reject the one who lacks understanding. The word “*despise*” means to “*look down*” or “*push out*”. Someone has described a legalist as a person “*who lives in terror that someone, somewhere, is enjoying themselves*.” But that attitude towards the weaker brother is what Paul is referring to here by “*looking down*” on them.

 The other side of that is also addressed and those that don’t eat are told not sit in judgment over those that do. When we sit in judgment over another we typically do two things:

1. ***Criticize***: We are going to be thinking or saying “*I don’t see how a person is a Christian if they are doing things that I don’t allow myself to do*.”
2. ***Categorize***: We are going to thinking or saying, “*They aren’t much of Christian if they are engaged in doing what I don’t do myself*.”

Folks that are engaged in this want the church to come up with uniform codes to enforce these standards upon all and if you don’t they will seek to find a Church that will.

**III.** **Vs. 4-12 Reasons to not Criticize or Categorize**

Vs. 4-12 Having said that we ought not to do this to our fellow Christians Paul gives us **three facts we ought to consider before we ostracize our fellow Christian**.

1. Vs. 4 ***The believer that doesn’t see these grey areas as you doesn’t belong to you***: The truth is God is standing with the person I can’t stand, the person I put down He holds up. Who am I to judge my Masters servant? If God wants to correct him in some nonessential area that I have made essential then He is perfectly able to do so. It is not our responsibility to change our fellow believer to our way of thinking. If such an area is not defined by the word then we ought to leave to the Master to whom they belong to convince them. You see the Lord didn’t consult you and me in saving them and He isn’t asking for our help in making them just like we are. Notice that Paul says that before God the person “*stands or falls*”, the words means to be ***straightened out.*** Then Paul says that even if he isn’t standing God will keep working on him to “*straightened him out*” until he does stand. We are all a “*work in progress*”, we are all in the continual process of “*change*” and what God has started He will finish. There won’t be a single person in heaven not finished that God wasn’t able to get to in time. There are far too many in the body of Christ that believe that they’re the Holy Spirit’s “***little helpers***” trying to force compliance to their rules and regulations. I have a word for us “stop it” let the Holy Spirit do His work!
2. Vs. 5-8 ***God sees what we cannot, hearts***: Paul takes up another area on Christian ethics that was relevant to their time to show that this was more than a one area problem. The problem wasn’t only about diets it was about days as well! Eight times in these verses the word Lord is found which suggests to us that no Christian has the right to play “Jesus” over someone else. Often these differences arise out of honest convictions which we can’t see or know. The person isn’t trying to ruffle our feathers just because they don’t agree with us they maybe acting on what they are convinced is right for them. Paul says; let each be fully convinced in their ***OWN MIND***, it doesn’t say in someone else’s mind. God’s sees both view points and both maybe honoring Him in what He told them to do or not do. The vast majority of issues in the Church today that causes divisions are just a matter of opinion and a difference of perspective. Those opinions and perspectives seem logical to us, well thought out but to others in makes no sense. We have all had areas where we practiced something and were convinced in our mind that God had told us to do it or not do it that way that latter one He changed our mind as we grew in His grace. The bottom line is ***there is something worth of far more value than us being right and that’s our relationship with the other person***. Whether we live in liberty or are called to limit ourselves the important thing is that we belong to the Lord!
3. Vs. 9-12 ***God alone has paid the price to judge***: The judgment seat of Christ is the bema seat, equivalent to the judge's seat in the Olympic Games. After each game, the winners came before the judge's seat to receive crowns for first, second and third places. Jesus knows the price of limitation as He humble Himself and became a man even to the point of death. He also knows what life is like as He like no other man lived FREE! So Paul is saying stop trying to take Jesus’ place on the throne of judgment. We are not His consultant’s; we have no right to stand in that place. In 1 Cor. 4:5 Paul says, “*judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts. Then each one's praise will come from God*.” Weather we are into “*Living it up*” or “*giving it up*” our focus is to glorify God!

For a chapter and a half Paul is going to give us three guiding principles on how to apply what early church founder Augustine wrote: “***In essentials, unity; in nonessentials, liberty; in all things, charity!***” The Three admonitions are:

1. 14:1 Receive
2. 14:19 Edify
3. 15:2 Please

**Romans**

**“The Righteousness of God Revealed”**

**III. Main Teaching: 1:18-15:13**

**D. Chp 12:1-15:13 Shaped by Grace**

**Romans 14:13-23 “Let your brothers conscience be your guide”**

1. **Intro**
2. **Vs. 13-18 Walking in love**
3. **Vs. 19-23 Not destroying the work of God**

**I. Intro**

Paul continues on dealing with Christian ethics and how we behave to our fellow believers in those “*grey areas*”. He doesn’t want to leave the impression that mature believers are to just leave alone their weaker brothers leaving them immature in their faith. Christian love isn’t just not be combative in desires to take people along the same path we are on.

Have you noticed that instruction assembly manuals have gotten much simpler over the years? No longer do they give a plain paper novel that resembles “*War and Peace*”. Now they give you a one sheet full color assembly guide located right on top of the newly purchased treasure. This page resembles something that a 4 year old could follow, (mostly pictures). I like that, I can understand that! One of the things I’ve always appreciated about the Word of God is its simplicity! Take this chapter before us, Paul doesn’t just say in verse 13 (NLT) “*So don't condemn each other anymore*.” He goes on to say, “*Decide instead to live in such a way that you will not put an obstacle in another Christian's path*.” What follows in the remainder of this chapter is “**How To Do This**!” an instruction manual of, “*How to live in liberty and freedom, for dummies like me*!”

**II. Vs. 13-18 Walking in love**

Vs. 13 In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus taught that we should not judge others in a standard that we would not want to have applied to our self. Here Paul says, “*Don’t judge some other Christian, judge yourself instead.*” Are you acting in a way that is making someone else feel condemned, or behaving in a way that could destroy a fellow believer because of your liberty? If you can answer those questions **YES** then God is judging you! ***What something does to a person determines its quality***! But that isn’t the only criteria we need to be concerned with as we need to also ask “*How does my use of this or practice of that effect my fellow Christian*?”

 The truth is we do affect each other; we can cause grief, causing some to fall away from the faith and even destroy folks. When our children were little Donna and I adopted a policy that we wouldn’t watch anything of T.V. that wasn’t appropriate for our kids to watch. I can recall that they were over someone’s house when they were in their early teens when the classic movie the Wizard of Oz came on and they had never seen it as we hadn’t allowed it. “*Legalistic*”, some would say but to us we wanted to make sure that we as adults could handle wouldn’t cause them nightmares. Strong Biblical knowledge isn’t the only quality the mature believer should have they must possess an equally loving character as the battle isn’t one in the head alone but in the heart as well. When a child is afraid of the dark you cannot argue with them to convince them that they have nothing to be frightened over instead they must be assured by love not just convinced by facts.

Vs. 14-18 The NLT renders this, “*I know and am perfectly sure on the authority of the Lord Jesus that no food, in and of itself, is wrong to eat. But if someone believes it is wrong, then for that person it is wrong.*” In the 1940 Disney classic Pinocchio Jiminy Cricket offered Pinocchio this lesson on “*temptations*” saying; “*The world is full of temptations! They are the wrong things that seem right at the time. But even though the right things seem wrong sometimes….the wrong things are always wrong even at the right time*!” Paul moves on to give us **two reasons why we shouldn’t judge other believers**:

1. Vs. 14-15 **Do not deliberately do things that offend or make your brothers and sisters in Christ uncomfortable**: Paul had arrived at this opinion not by any other means than the direct teaching of the Word of God. The issue of eating something’s that others didn’t believe was right had nothing to do with a lack of morality. Before conscience is set knowledge must persuade, therefore we may have a conscience on some “*nonessential*” grey area that can change because we hadn’t the knowledge prior. The conscience cannot be commanded it must be persuaded by the Spirit of God working through the Word of God. When this takes place we can move further and further into the freedom we have in Christ. It’s never a “*loving action*” to force people to move at our pace instead it is better for us to adjust our pace to theirs. It is tragic that oft times the Church has demanded from someone what Jesus has already paid for by refusing even the smallest of self denial on their behalf! We need to ask “*Does my Christian walk please God and is it approved in the hearts of others*?”
2. Vs. 16-18 **Give up your rights when it threatens peace or hinders growth in a fellow believer**: Even if “*You let your, conscience be your guide*” Paul says that this is not enough as “*You need to let* y*our brothers conscience be your guide.*” If you insist on pushing your view on someone so hard then you are majoring in minors. In verse 16 the word “*evil*” is the word “*blaspheme*” and in using it Paul suggest that a person that is that opinionated can so offend someone and cause them to curse that which may very well be good. Often we see division over some minor area of Christian practice cause folks to have to pick sides and the world mocks Christians as they see the church just as a religion of do’s and don’ts. It is the eternals not the externals that must be the priority in our lives as followers of Jesus. Those eternals are listed for us in verse 17 as righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. As we yield to the Holy Spirit in our liberties we will experience more of these three things, not to mention that there will be more harmony within the Church.

There are ***three things Paul says that others should see in us***:

1. ***Righteousness***: Already at length in the first 11 chapters Paul has written about our assurance of “*right standing*” before God solely based upon the work of Jesus. We are loved by God and delights in calling us his children. As such we know that it is not based upon what we do or don’t do. The world ought to see this lived out in our lives on a daily basis not a bunch of folks who look like they have been baptized in lemon juice. They should see us living in self respect, gentleness with assurance.
2. ***Peace***: The world ought to see us living in a calmness that isn’t based upon favorable circumstances. We should be people who don’t get rattled by minor irritations of the moment. The reason for this is His presence and the reality that He is at work even though we can’t always detect it. The world will not see this peace if we are busy screaming at each other.
3. ***Joy***: These three always seem to fit together: ***Our understanding that were are God’s beloved leads to peace that can’t be taken from us by adversity and the outcome of this is that we are full of joy***. This joy is not to be confused with happiness which is conditional in nature based upon favorable circumstances and situations. The joy I’m speaking of is because of the above two things which causes me to realize that life is worthwhile even in the midst of problems and trials.

When we are living in these three gifts founded upon our relationship with God it won’t be any big deal to give up momentarily our freedom. We get to yield our right of way to someone else instead of insisting upon it and plowing ahead.

**III. Vs. 19-23 Not destroying the work of God**

Vs. 19-23 Paul gives us **three guidelines to follow in laying down our liberty**:

1. Vs. 19a “***pursue the things which make for peace***”: Or as the N.L.T. renders this “*let us aim for harmony in the church*”. Enjoy what the Lord has told you in the “*grey areas*” as long as it doesn’t destroy someone else’s peace. Paul clarifies this in verse 20 saying, “*Don't tear apart the work of God over what you eat*.” When you have folks from different backgrounds, cultures you want people to make their focus what they have in common not what they don’t have in common. If we destroy the harmony and peace that is ours in Christ for some minor freedom then we are tearing apart the work of God. ***The quickest path to peace in any situation is the one that leads you away from yourself as it will always lead you to Jesus***.
2. Vs. 19b “***try to build each other up***”: ***The way we do this isn’t to insist on our freedom it is to instruct them on our freedom***. If we insist instead of instruct we are by passing the learning process that we have come to. People are seldom argued into a position they are won to one. In 1 Peter 2:12 Peter wrote, “*having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation*.” When we try to push someone to our position all we end up doing is hardening theirs! Neither is it a good idea to let those with immature positions run the Church as those who are freed up yield to their legalistic whims. If this takes place you will see narrow-minded people with only one aim; “*prevent everyone else from enjoying the blessings God has given us*.” I received a letter in the mail this week from a man that lives in Kalispell who warned me I was in danger of going to hell and leading you all with me for teaching damnable heresy that Jesus could come back for His people at any moment. After reading his letter I filed it in the waste basket and prayed for him. The way he wrote to me made me even more convinced because if the way he wrote is what happens to a person who believes that way then I want nothing to do with it!
3. Vs. 22-23 “***You may have the faith to believe that there is nothing wrong with what you are doing, but keep it between yourself and God***.” We need to allow God’s Word to be the basis for our practice and leave it at that. If you flaunt or insist on your position then your issue is pride. In Hebrews 11:6 we read that “*without faith it is impossible to please Him*”. That is what Paul has in mind here. In verse 23 he says, “*If you do anything you believe is not right, you are sinning*.” There is no airport scanner that went off this morning when you came in here to worship God making sure you believe exactly like me. ***You are free to hold to your convictions and I’m free to hold mine but we are not free to divide and cause division***! Conscience is strengthened by knowledge but knowledge must be balanced by love; otherwise it will tear down instead of build up!

 **Romans**

**“The Righteousness of God Revealed”**

**III. Main Teaching: 1:18-15:13**

**D. Chp 12:1-15:13 Shaped by Grace**

**Romans 15:1-13 “He aint heavy, he’s my brother”**

1. **Intro**
2. **Vs. 1-2 True mark of maturity**
3. **Vs. 3-13 No hopeless situations**

**I. Intro**

The fifteenth chapter continues on the theme of Christian ethics dealing with how to handle the grey areas that we so commonly disagree on. The summation of what has already written is found in the first verse of chapter 15, “*We then who are strong ought to bear with the scruples of the weak, and not to please ourselves*.” If Paul was to use today’s wording he might have started out by saying, “*Lighten up*”. The church can become so rigid and pessimistic that to the people outside the Church we don’t seem to believe what we preach that God wins! At a church board meeting the men gathered in prayer extolling the virtues of God, His power, presence and provision but no sooner had they said amen, then the pastor said, “*Men the situation in the church is completely hopeless and nothing can be done*!” One board member boldly spoke up; “***Pastor before we go on with the situation I must say that either our prayer was full of meaningless words or your statement is untrue, because both can’t be true***!” Dear saints, **there are no hopeless situations; there are only people who have grown hopeless about them**! In 1969 the Hollies adapted and Boy’s Town slogan into a hit with the words that sang, “*The road is long with many a winding turn that leads to who knows where. But I’m strong, strong enough to carry him. He aint heavy, he’s my brother*.” That’s the heart attitude we should towards our fellow believer that we see as weak!

**II. Vs. 1-2 True mark of maturity**

Vs. 1 Christians are to bear not just forbear with patience the weaknesses of ther fellow believer. The idea behind the word “*bear with*” isn’t to put up with the person because they are such a bear but rather support them because you are stronger than they are. The word “*ought*” is a word that can be rendered “*we owe it to them*”. One of the most depilating diseases in all of humanity is the selfishness! It knows no limitations and has seemed to affect all of us at some time. That’s the illness Paul has been addressing with regards to Christians esthetics. *The true mark of maturity is not to be found in our liberties alone; Paul says, but in our ability to love seen in laying those liberties aside for the benefit of others*.

Vs. 2 So when you have to make a decision about some grey area you have the freedom to practice you needed to ask yourself two questions:

1. **Does this action please my neighbor**? That is what Love is concerned with even if it means laying down our rights. J.B. Philips renders this: “*We who have strong faith ought to shoulder the burden of the doubts and qualms of the weak, and not just to go our own sweet way.* ” He has asked each of us to judge ourselves and to seek to please others before self. He has told us that instead of insisting on our rights we need to bear others wrongs instructing them instead of insisting on our way. We are not to just endure those whom we consider weaker we are to encourage them cheering them on.
2. **Does my giving up my freedom entrench my neighbor’s immaturity**? Paul is not talking about being a “*Man-Pleaser*” as this wouldn’t fit under the definition of being “*for their good or for their building up into maturity*”. We need to make sure that we don’t ***give up*** when we **give in**, as we are called to please our neighbor but ***for their own good***, leaving them room to grow beyond their insecurity.

**III. Vs. 3-13 No hopeless situations**

Vs. 3-12 These kinds of decisions are difficult to navigate to say the least. In the 1978 song by Kenny Rogers (The Gambler) he offered this advice “*You've got to know when to hold 'em! Know when to fold 'em! Know when to walk away! Know when to run*!” So to encourage us Paul gives his readers **four things that will help to “*Know when to hold ‘em! When to fold ‘em, when to walk away and when to run*”**.

1. **Vs. 3 The first example is Jesus’ who often encountered this problem**. According to Psalm 69:9 Jesus was willing to pay a tremendous price in order to serve us. Have you ever felt that you were unfairly being called upon to make a sacrifice by having to give up something that you felt was your right? Listen how Paul speaks of this in the NLT translation Philip. 2:5-8 “*Your attitude should be the same that Christ Jesus had. Though he was God, he did not demand and cling to his rights as God. He made himself nothing; he took the humble position of a slave and appeared in human form. And in human form he obediently humbled himself even further by dying a criminal's death on a cross*.” The first thing to note with regards to Jesus is to realize that His compromise never involved displeasing or disrupting His relationship to the Father; as He said in John 8:29 (I always live to please Him). ***Laying down our rights doesn’t include laying aside our relationship to the Lord!*** The 2nd point Paul makes is that our decision mustn’t be predicated upon or motivated by people’s response or bullying. ***In other words when push came to shove Jesus was willing to please people but never at the expense of pleasing the Father***! You will see how Jesus practiced this for instance the passage in Luke 14:1-4 when the Pharisees took issue with Jesus healing on the Sabbath. He didn’t stop what He was doing He continued, ignoring their protest and finally took the time to correct their misunderstanding of the truth with regards to the Sabbath. Yet on another time when they accused Him of not paying His taxes He sent Peter to catch a fish and when he would open the mouth he would find a coin to pay the taxes for both Peter and Himself and He said he was doing that as to not to offend them. At another time in Luke 7:34 Jesus said that there was no way to please some folks as they were upset at John the Baptist because he didn’t eat and drink and they were mad at Him because He did so with sinners. ***A person’s maturity is best measured not by how many years they have walked this earth with the personal knowledge of Jesus but rather how many times they have been willing to lay down their rights and privileges that they may be a blessing to someone else***!
* **So always seek to first please the Lord**
* **Never let people’s reactions hinder you from pleasing the Lord**
* **Realize some folks just can’t be pleased**
1. Vs. 4 **The 2nd thing we can count on to help us sort things out as it relates to behaving towards our fellow Christians in grey areas is the examples found in the scriptures, as the things written were done so for our learning**. You can read of people like Moses, who according to Hebrews 11:25 “*chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin*”. There is the story of Jonathan, Saul’s son who took off his robe and yielded his right to the throne to David because he knew that God had given it to him. ***The key in all of these examples is that their actions were always motivated out of achieving the objective that God be glorified even if it meant they were not***.
2. Vs. 5-6 **The third thing we can count on to help guide us in our use of liberties is the Holy Spirit.** No matter what the situation the God of Patience and comfort will enable you to be like-minded (patient and full of comfort) towards one another. Often I find the biggest obstacle that need to be overcome for me to discern the right way of handling my liberty is ME! Our almost 4 year old granddaughter Hannah is struggling with patience and has begun the habit of nagging every few minutes to see if she can get what she has requested a little faster, it isn’t working but it is annoying. I started to realize that’s probably what I sound like to the Lord, “*Dad, can I, can I PLEASE, PLEASE, HURRY, HURRY!*” Paul couches this in words of a prayer which suggest to me that the first place start with when there is disunity is to bow your heart before the Lord and ask Him to grant unity were discord exists. Paul says, “*pray for like-mindedness*”. Two people with different opinions on non essentials will only come together if they first agree on the essentials and that is what we ought to be praying for. How do you know when you have achieved this unity in the Spirit? Well the outcome according to verse 6 will be praise to the Lord. Unity isn’t about compromising liberties it’s all about surrendering these up so that He alone will be praised. How often we fail to recognize that our chief aim is to glorify the Lord in all we say and do no matter what the cost to ourselves! Prayer is what starts the ball rolling which leads us to see our similarities instead of our differences which leads to our praising the Lord that He loves us in spite of us!
3. Vs. 7-12 **The final thing that helps us sort through our decisions is to realize that God’s side is always on reconciliation and never on separation**. The key word in this closing section is the word “*ministry*” it appears 4 times and Paul uses three different Greek words in English it appears as “*servant, minister and service*”. The first word describes who we are, the 2nd word describes what we do and the third word describes how we are to do it! That was the purpose of Jesus sacrifice that in His body that through faith in Him that He would reconcile both mankind to God and people to people! In Isaiah 58:12 the prophet referred to Jesus saying that “*Those from among you shall build the old waste places; You shall raise up the foundations of many generations; and you shall be called the* ***Repairer of the Breach****, The* ***Restorer of Streets to Dwell In****.*” Our God has always been a missionary God One who’s heart is always to put together what we are so prone to tear apart! Looking at these quotations it is not immediately apparent that there is a progression in the promises listed but ther is:
* Vs. 9 Ps. 18:49 The Jews are seen as glorifying God **AMONG** the Gentiles.
* Vs. 10 Deut. 32:43 The Gentiles rejoice **WITH** the Jews.
* Vs. 11 Ps. 117:1 The Jews and Gentiles are **TOGETHER** praising God.
* Vs. 12 Isa. 11:10 Jesus is reigning **OVER** both Jew and Gentile.

Vs. 13 Paul concludes with a beautiful benediction of what you have available to achieve unity amongst the brethren. **All the great words of our faith appear here**: Hope twice, joy, peace, believing, abounding and of course the Holy Spirit by Whom all the above are appropriated to us to bring about this unity in the body of Christ. Saints let’s try something new in our Christian life: “***Let’s start believing our beliefs and doubting our doubts***!” Instead of “***Believing our doubts and doubting our beliefs***!” Disunity and disagreement do not glorify God, in fact they rob Him of it. In Genesis 13:8 Abram talked it over with Lot over a disagreement and said, “*This arguing between our herdsmen has got to stop," he said. "After all, we are close relatives*!” I might add another two reasons to Abram’s words, “*It breaks Dad’s heart*!” and “*The neighbor’s are watching*!”

**Romans**

**“The Righteousness of God Revealed”**

**IV. Closing: Chp. 15:14-16:27**

**Romans 15:14-33 “*Nothing I asked for; but everything I hoped for*” (part a)**

1. **Intro**
2. **Vs. 14-16 The Church at Rome**

**I. Intro**

In most of the New Testament letters you want to look for the purpose that the author had in writing and you will find it in Romans 1:11 where Paul wrote that he, “*long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift, so that you may be established.*” He further clarified that in 16-17 as being; “*the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes…For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith*." Here in the last ½ of the 15th chapter Paul again brings this up having just written about the practical implications of this spiritual truth. ***He wasn’t writing because he felt the Roman Christians didn’t know what was right; he wrote to them because they needed to be remind to do what they knew was right***. In the 2nd part of this text that we will look at next week Paul will use himself as the example to follow as he refers to his own ministry. A confederate soldier wrote in his diary these words:

* ***I asked God for strength, that I might achieve and I was made weak, that I may learn to obey.***
* ***I asked God for health, that I may do great things, I was given infirmity that I might do better things.***
* ***I asked God for riches, that I may be happy; I was given poverty, that I might be wise.***
* ***I asked God for power, that I might have the praise of men; I was given weakness, that I might feel the need for God.***
* ***I asked for all things that I might enjoy life; I was given life that I might enjoy all things.***
* ***I got nothing I asked for; but everything I hoped for. And despite myself, all my unspoken prayers were answered. I am among all men, most richly blessed.***

Looking at that ministry Paul could have said, “*I got nothing I asked for but everything I wanted*!

**II. Vs. 14-16 The Church at Rome**

Vs. 14-16 Paul didn't just preach the gospel he instructed believers how to live before God. Notice how Paul makes reference to the God head in verse 16, as he is a minister of Jesus Christ, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering of the gentiles would be acceptable, sanctified be the Holy Spirit. In verses 26-27 Paul is going to bring up to the Roman believers the financial commitment that the Church provided so that he could bring an offering to Jerusalem to help the famine plagued believers living there. But before he does that he wants to mention that the greatest offering we can give is our life’s that always seeks to in every way glorify God. That is done by the continual work of the Holy Spirit who sets us apart for a holy purpose. The final verses of the 15th chapter of Romans have two themes:

* **Vs. 14-16 The Church at Rome**
* **Vs. 17-33 Paul’s ministry**

Concerning the Church Paul started this letter by saying in Romans 1:8 “*that their faith was spoken of throughout the whole world.*” Now in the 14th verse Paul elaborates on ***three reasons that this was true***.

1. ***Full of goodness***: Paul says that this Church was affective throughout the whole world because they had **the right motives**. They were motivated by goodness; it acted the way it did because they were acting the way their Master had acted towards them. There was no ulterior motive behind their actions just pure goodness!
2. ***Filled with all knowledge***: This is a remarkable statement when we consider that the book of Romans is the most complete theological and doctrinal books in the New Testament. What he is saying here is that **the Roman believers didn’t lack any spiritual understanding doctrinally**; they had “*all knowledge*” in this regard. Now immediately we ought to begin to question why Paul wrote so much on “*justification, sanctification, salvation etc*.” if these believers already knew all this. I’ll leave you with that question to answer in a minute as we look at three things this church needed.
3. ***Able to admonish each other***: Finally **they were competent to council** each other with regards to spiritual truth. I believe that one of the characteristics of a healthy Church is that the pastoral’s staff of weekly counseling will be at a minimal amount! The reason for this is that the body of Christ will be acting as its own counselors and will be encouraging and coming alongside their brothers and sisters as they exercise their spiritual gifts. There are far too many Churches that have adopted an over dependence upon a select view folks instead of finding their place to serve.

Vs. 15-16 Yet with Paul’s observation as to the reason why this church’s faith was being spoken of throughout the world he also has ***three things they lack*** hence the letter in the first place. Now you would think that a Church that was characterized by “*all goodness, full knowledge, and as a body complete counseling*” would not have anything it lacked but they did.

1. Vs. 15 ***Reminded of the truth***: Now we can answer that question I first posed as to “*why Paul felt obligated to write about what he proclaimed they already knew*?” The answer is that ***they leaked***! Their problem wasn’t that they had never learned these great doctrinal truths but that having learned them they had forgotten what applying them would produce in their lives! In 2 Cor. 4 Paul writes of the fact we Christian’s are designed by God to be containers and as such we are to contain the “*Glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ*” (2 Cor 4:6). Having declared this truth he goes on to speak of a remarkable fact that such a priceless treasure of the Glory of God as seen in Jesus has been placed in “*clay pots*”! Ordinary every day, fragile hardened dirt. Paul goes on to inform us “***Terracotta Pot’s***” that **this was designed so that all other clay pots in the world will see that the value of mankind isn’t in the pot but rather in Who it contains**. Finally in this same section Paul goes on to say that not only do we hardened dirt pots contain the greatest treasure there has ever been but that God then allows our pot’s to be “*hard-pressed, perplexed, persecuted and struck-down.*” Hey, wait a minute, if we are “*hard-pressed, perplexed, persecuted and struck-down*” **we will crack and break and what’s in us will spill out and as a containers we will be in constant need to be refilled.** You got it! ***We were by design of the Master called to contain Jesus and leak***! That is why in Romans 12:2 Paul tells his readers that being a living sacrifice involves the constant need to have our mind renewed. It never ceases to amaze me how I have no problem remembering worthless information but can’t remember people’s names. God knows this about our condition and repeats Himself to keep calling us back to reality. In 2 Peter 1:12 Peter wrote something similar saying, “*I plan to keep on reminding you of these things—even though you already know them and are standing firm in the truth.*”
2. Vs. 16a ***A leader to follow***: The 2nd thing this Church need was someone they could look up to and follow as a pattern. Notice that Paul puts himself in that position as a servant that they could follow in being an offering that was acceptable. They could follow Paul’s example of how to behave in certain situations. I’m so thankful that when you put things together that you can look at the box not just read the instructions, aren’t you? ***Paul was the picture on the box that they could look to in order to see how things ought to look like when assembled correctly***. It may sound a bit egotistical to suggest that to folks; “*Hey follow me if you want a pattern!*” But when you consider Paul’s words in 1 Cor. 11:1 where he admonished them saying, “*Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ*”, then it makes perfect sense. We all need someone to point us up to Jesus when we are kicking at the dirt as we tend to forget that Jesus is still the undefeated Champ and nothing or no one will ever be able to dislodge Him from the throne!
3. Vs. 16b ***Sanctified by the Spirit***: The final thing this church lacked is the completed sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit. This isn’t a putdown we all lack this and will until we are seeing Jesus face to face. We can be busy with the Holy Spirit working THROUGH us but the greater work is always the Holy Spirit’s work IN us. Furthermore we can fall into the trap in our thinking that what the Holy Spirit is able to accomplish “through” us equals what He is accomplishing “in” us but this isn’t always the case. Because of the greatness and power of God, He is able to do amazing things through our lives but that has everything to do with Him and nothing to do with us. **It isn’t the “*gifts of the Spirit*” that indicate the sanctification of the Spirit it is the “*fruit of the Spirit*” that does**!

**Romans**

**“The Righteousness of God Revealed”**

**IV. Closing: Chp. 15:14-16:27**

**Romans 15:14-33 “*Nothing I asked for; but everything I hoped for*” (part b)**

1. **Intro**
2. **Vs. 17-33 Paul’s ministry**

**I. Intro**

We conclude this morning with the 2nd half of these verses where Paul uses himself as the example to follow as he refers to his own ministry. He tells them in essence, “*I got nothing I asked for but everything I wanted*! Looking at Paul’s life and ministry reminds me of a more modern example in David Livingstone when he applied to the London Missionary Society they asked him where he would like to go and he replied “*Anywhere, as long as it is forward*!” Oh if we all could have such a heart!

**II. Vs. 17-33 Paul’s ministry**

Vs. 17-20 In the Spirit of a “*leader to follow*” Paul now moves to the 2nd part of this chapter which was his own ministry and he starts out with **four examples they could apply**.

1. Vs. 17 ***The first has to do with how he viewed success***: Paul didn’t attach numbers or events as the key’s to determine if he was being successful. Instead he looked to the bases of ***Who got the glory***! How much better the church would be if all adapted Paul’s view of success and stop ***the world’s definition of success based upon popularity***. What matters is not what man thinks of my performance, what matters is what God thinks of my performance and if I’m doing what He has called me to do in His power for His glory He has declared it a success and of value. But if not; even if men praise it, sell books and gather from the four corners of the earth to marvel at **my work**, it is an utter failure! To help us in our new definition of success Paul lists **three things that kept him defining it that way**:
2. Vs. 18 **Paul only remembered what God had done**: He kept the perspective that we are only instruments in the hand of the Master and can’t play a tune apart from Him playing masterfully through us. A day doesn’t go buy that I don’t receive some flyer inviting me to go to some seminar with a lineup of Christian “*superstars*” that will be performing! We Christians seem to be very impressed with the instrument that God uses and not very impressed with the Master who can pick up any instrument and play perfectly not because of the quality of the instrument but rather because of the skill of the Master! Paul would have never allowed such a bio to be placed as a basis of enticing believers to come and hear him speak. When questioned by the Church in Corinth, asked for letters of recommendations he simply said that they were his letters! God doesn’t need my brilliant mind, dashing good looks, and eloquent oratory skills; thank God because as you have noticed I don’t possess any of these qualities. What He wants is my availability and brokenness and He uses me in spite of me! Dear ones ***there is no limit to what God can do through any person who is willing to allow God to get all the glory for the work only He can do through them***!
3. Vs. 19a **Paul was reminded that any and all work that was accomplished was because of the Power of the Holy Spirit**: The 2nd thing Paul could point to was that ***what He did was all powered by God***! Too many folks in the Church today view the Holy Spirit as the horn on a locomotive, “*It’s just there to toot, make some commotion; bring in some excitement, clear the tracks*!” But the Holy Spirit isn’t for “*commotion*” He’s there for “locomotion!” The only correct way to speak to an instrument that moves you is to say, “*Man the Master sure made you sound good*!” There is a power from the Spirit of God that is unmistakable that at times people try to mimic with emotionalism or shouting and all kinds of theatrics but these aren’t the hallmarks of the Spirits power transformation is!
4. Vs. 19b-21 **Paul was reminded that success was not an isolated event**: In the geographical list of “*from Jerusalem to Illyricum*” (further clarified in verse 26 *where Paul also traveled and received an offering for the suffering believers in Jerusalem listing Macedonia and Achaia*): Is Israel, Turkey, Greece, and Yugoslavia; well over 1,400 miles radius with varied cultures and traditions yet the gospel worked each and every time. In other words ***the gospel wasn’t limited to one culture through one servant which was a testimony not of Paul but of the power of the gospel to change lives***. *He saw his calling not to fish in other peoples aquariums but instead to go out to the untapped oceans of humanity where he could truly be a fisher of men*. It was for this reason that he continued his practice to go to where no man has gone before. Paul knew that the power lay not with the messenger but with the Holy Spirit, as the scriptures testified.

Right here in these two verses I believe that we can see two reasons why the westernized church doesn’t resemble the early church found in our Bibles:

1. The church today relies upon human power and ingenuity to accomplish what only the Holy Spirit can produce; changed lives. Often when the Holy Spirit is mentioned in the Church He is viewed as a whistle not the engine that He is.
2. Second, the Church has spent most of its energy and resources fishing in aquariums where the fish are already caught and they are just releasing them into their own tanks, only to be caught by other fishermen to be released into their aquarium.
3. Vs. 22-24 The 2nd thing Paul could point to in a leader to follow is seen on **how Paul planed**. Based upon the text **four things** they could glean:
4. The first thing to note in this section is that **Paul was a planner**: Paul had plans to go to them in Rome; from there he had plains to go to Spain. There are those who think that making plans is somehow diminishing the work of the Holy Spirit to guide us but God is a good of order I believe that if you plan for nothing you will always accomplish your plan!
5. The 2nd thing I note is that in his plans **Paul remained flexible**: He longed to go to Rome and then Spain but he had been much hindered in doing so the timing had to change and then later the way in which God would accomplish this would change. Christian planning is never about telling God what to do or when to do it, instead it is about letting your heart be directed by the Holy Spirit and trusting that He will work out what He has spoken.
6. The 3rd thing I see is that **Paul remained persistent**: Having to adjust to the timing and the way Paul didn’t give up on what he believed the Lord had spoke to him with regards to going to Rome and then Spain. I’m afraid that far too many times we believers give up on God’s direction when He doesn’t follow our script. is ways aren’t our waysHiHis ways aren’t our ways but that doesn’t mean that we should fold up and not follow what He has spoken to us!
7. The final thing I notice with regards to God’s direction is that **Paul saw this as a team effort not an individual one**: He hoped to see them but involved others in achieving the plan when it took place. There are far too many of us that see ourselves as the “*Lone Ranger*” but remember that even the “*Lone Ranger*” wasn’t alone as he had Tonto and Silver! Paul was purposefully dependent upon others to accomplish the plans that the Lord had set before him. Why Spain?
8. First Spain was at the very Western end of Europe, the limit of the known civilized world and Paul wished to take the gospel as far as he could take it to the ends of the earth!
9. Second, Spain was going through an intellectual revolution at the time as the greatest thinkers were Spaniards and as such perhaps Paul wanted to have an opportunity to touch not only his generations but future generations by reaching Spain.
10. Vs. 25-29 The third aspect of Paul’s ministry that they could adopt has to do with **faithfulness in keeping his promises**. Even though Paul future was somewhat uncertain he still planned but even more important than the plan for the future was the ***faithfulness to finish what he had started in the past***. Promises were made and ill regardless of what he faced he was going to finish what he started and he encouraged the others to adopt this same principal in ministry. Not knowing what God has for you in the future never negates what He has for you to do in the present! Far too many Christian’s never finish the things they have started but are very eager to go to the next exciting thing. In the 27th verse Paul take time to instruct these Roman believers in the principals of giving that: “*If you have been blessed with spiritual things then one way to thank a church or a ministry is to make sure they can continue to do so for other and contribute financially to further them down the road to bless someone else*.” Notice that Paul says in verse 28 that going on to Rome than Spain was only after he had finished the task of collecting the offering for the famine relief in Jerusalem.
11. Vs. 30-33 The final part of this chapter is Paul requesting that they would pray for him and this leads us to the final example of his ministry they could apply. **Paul trusted in and relied upon the power of God to accomplish the purpose and plans of God**. Though God may very well prompt people to participate with Paul, his trust was not upon people to join him but upon God to empower Him! One way every Christian can and should participate in ministry is to under gird God’s servants in prayer and Paul expected and asked for such prayers to be made upon his behalf. Prayer is born of the Spirit of God, awakened by a desire to help and a sense of love and compassion. Paul says, “*Join me in the battle by praying for me as I fight the good fight*!” Notice here that **three things about Paul’s request for prayer**:
12. Vs. 31a It was for protection from unbelievers: According to Acts 21 he was beaten so badly that they were using him as the rope in a game of tug of war. Had it not been for the Roman guard that took him into protective custody they would have killed him. Have you ever prayed something and having done so experienced the opposite of what you had prayed for? Well Paul could relate but it doesn’t mean that God didn’t hear him; it meant that God had a plan that differed from Paul’s.
13. Vs. 31b It was for acceptance from believers: This doesn’t appear to be the situation either as he brought the offering from the gentiles but never seemed to thank him. And during the next two years while according to 2 Tim. 4:16-17 while in protective custody, “*no one stood with me, but all forsook me*.”
14. Vs. 32-33 He expected to see results: This happen but not the way he thought it would as he went in chains as a prisoner. The purpose and power of prayer isn’t about us getting what we think is best from God it is about God getting His best out of us!

Let us cease chiding people for failing to bring folks to hear the gospel, instead let us encourage each other to obey the Lord and bring the gospel to the world!

**Romans**

**“The Righteousness of God Revealed”**

**IV. Closing: Chp. 15:14-16:27**

**Romans 16:1-16 “The Family Album” (part A)**

1. **Intro**
2. **Vs. 1-16 Friends to greet**

**I. Intro**

The 16th chapter of Romans is no insignificant relic of the past; names that are easier to forget then they are difficult to pronounce! No, it is a chapter of the future not the past, a testimony that what matters most in this life is not our possessions or positions but our friendships which is all of this life that will remain and pass into eternity. What we have here my precious friends is no mere list of names but a testimony of what God does in lives that will last forever. A quick peek into the “***Family Album***” which is a true representation of heaven as we gather around the throne of God Who alone has made our enduring love and friendship possible.

Behind every name is a story and the ones listed here would make up a “*love story*” as these are all folks that God loved and loved God. The story is in their transformation and how God was now using them to love others in making new friends. Many of these names and their stories will have to wait as we don’t know much of them but we will one day. Of the 24 specific names mentioned six are women which is interesting concerning the fact Paul is often maligned for what many perceive as his disregard for women in authority. I suggest that if you want to know what Paul thought of women you only need to read this chapter to see that he valued them as equals in serving Jesus and verbally shows his appreciation for all they do. Three times (verses 6, 12) Paul says that these ladies “*labored*” and he chooses a word in the Greek that means “*to work to the point of exhaustion*”. Two of these names mean “*dainty*” and “*delicate*” but Paul says that these two aristocrats had developed a habit in Christ of working until they just couldn’t do another thing. Of those 24 specific names 13 occur in inscriptions on official documents in the Emperor’s palace in Rome. This is interesting because of what Paul wrote in Philip. 4:22 that, “*All the saints greet you, but especially those who are of Caesar's household*.” Christianity had penetrated the imperial palace of the world empire in less than 70 years and it had done so on the back of friendship.

**II. Vs. 1-16 Friends to greet**

Paul was a friend maker and because of this he was a soul-winner! As Paul recollected their names he sent them a message of love which has become embalmed in the Holy Scriptures. Spurgeon once said, “*It is better to be God's dog than to be the devil's darling*.” God loves multiplication and in the words of “*Three Dog Night*” “*One is the loneliest number that you'll ever do*”. This chapter divides into three sections of which we will only look at the first part of it this morning:

1. **Vs. 1-16 Some friends to greet:** The first list found in verses 1-16 is of those folks that Paul was sending a greeting too.
2. **Vs. 17-20 Some foes to avoid:** Sandwiched between these two lists (verses 17-20) is people to avoid so that their obedience can continue to be known to all.
3. **Vs. 21-24 Some friends to thank:** The 2nd list found in verses 21-23 is a list of those he was sending a greeting from while he was in Corinth.

Of the 33 names mentioned our eluded too:

* **Nine of them were with Paul**: Eight men and one woman
* **Twenty four of them were in Rome**: Seventeen men and seven women
* **Two households are mentioned**: As well as two unnamed women the mother of Rufus and the sister of Nereus, as well as some unnamed men

Vs. 1-2 The letter was carried by a traveling business woman named “*Phoebe*” and the Church through history ought to be grateful to this faithful servant who traveled from Corinth to Rome carrying this precious letter. Paul tells us that she was from the sea port of Cenchrea about 9 miles from the city of Corinth. Her name “Phoebe” is the feminine form of a title given to the pagan god Apollo, and meant “*the bright one*” and she certainly seemed to fit her name (*this would make her a Gentile not Jewish*). Phoebe was on her way to Rome and the fact that we are reading this letter suggests that Paul’s commendation was well founded. This was a faithful lady who obviously could be entrusted with a very important task. There is an indication in the language here that she labored spreading the gospel and teaching the Word as did Paul as he describes her as a helper of many.

Vs. 3-5a Paul turns his greetings to a wonderful couple that we know quite a bit about Priscilla and her husband Aquila. Their names are mentioned some 6 times in the scriptures and four of those times Priscilla’s name is mentioned first, which indicates that she had a more visible role in ministry then did her supporting husband. Paul says that they risked their lives for him and that may be a reference to the riots that broke out in Ephesus mentioned in Acts 19. They also had a church in their house as the first 300 years of the Church there were no buildings as we have now.

Vs. 5b-6 “*Epaenetus*” was the first believer led to the Lord when Paul came to Asia which capital was Ephesus located in modern day Turkey.

 Mary recorded here seems to be associated with him and Paul distinguishes her by what she did among them saying that she labored or toiled among them. There are 6 Mary’s in the bible and you usually think of Jesus’ mom or Mary of Bethany the sister of Martha and Lazarus. Yet all we know of this Mary is that she is a worker and the word used means to sweat. Think of that: ***This gal joins a list of Mary’s because she was willing to break a sweat for Jesus!*** Oh saint’s don’t you see that ***notoriety isn’t in what we do it’s in how we do it and Who we do it for***!

Vs. 7-10a Some see “*Andronicus*” and “*Junias*” as relatives of Paul be that as it may, he doses say that they shared other things in common as they were “*fellow prisoners*” and were known among the leadership of the Church. What I find of further interest is Paul’s words saying that they were saved before he was. They predated his conversion and no doubt knew him when he was “*Saul of Tarsus*” persecuting the Church in Jerusalem and consenting to the death of Stephen. Imagine what encouragement these two were to Paul as they could see his progression in Christ. They could testify of his heart and love for people as they shared a cell with him. They were well regarded among the apostles, having become Christians sometime in the first three or four years after Pentecost. The idea that Andronicus and Junia are apostles themselves (though not of the twelve), is in the sense of being ***special emissaries of God***, not in the sense of being of the twelve.

 “*Amplias*” (verse 8) is and interesting name as they have found a single tomb in the Domitilla cemetery in the catacombs in Rome with this very name. The single name infers that he was a slave but yet the tomb is very ornate which suggests that he was a Christian and highly regarded in the Church in Rome. We know nothing of “*Urbanus*” and “*Stachys*” (verse 9) other than what is recorded here that they were loved and Paul appreciated his work. “*Apelles*” (verse 10), name means “*Called*” and Paul says he was, “*approved in Christ*”. The word approved means to “*endure testing, to withstand the pressure*”. Oh dear ones **that us what our calling ought to signify that we have endured the testing of our faith, withstood the pressures of life all because we have found our home in the Lord**. In Psalm 61:3 we read that God has “*been a shelter for me, a strong tower from the enemy*”, that is what “*Apelles*” ad proven by his life!

Vs.10b-11Also mentioned by Paul is some Christians that had risen to high places within the Roman government. “*Aristobulus*” (verse 10) was the great-grandson of King Herod the Great who killed all the Jewish males 2 years and under in Bethlehem seeking to kill Jesus. He killed his children, his wives and anyone else that was a threat to his power. Yet with that said the servants of his great grandson are named among the believers in Rome! Aristobulus had been a close friend of Emperor Claudius and it seems some from his household had become believers and upon his death it is reported that they became property of the emperor. In connection to this household of servants Paul also sends a greeting out to “*Herodion*” (verse 11a) who he calls a relative an indication that Paul had a family connection to the ruling family of Jews. ***Friends, don’t worry about the fact that you come from dysfunction family God does His most amazing work in the garden’s full of dirt!***

“*Narcissus*” (verse 11b) is another name that pops in ancient Roman history as he was the house keeper for Flavius Clemens who became the consul of Rome the highest political office of the city. Flavius was condemned to death by the Emperor Domitian in 95 AD some 35 years after this letter. He was put to death because he was a Christian and his wife Domatilla who was also a believer was banished Island of Pontia. What this seems to indicate is that Roman society had already been infiltrated by the Lord through believing servants who lived in such a way that their masters became followers of Jesus.

The interesting twist to this story is that Flavius Clemens was the son of Flavius Sabinus who had been Nero’s consul when Nero had ordered him to persecute Christians charging them with the fires which almost burned Rome to the ground in 64 A.D. Nero had ordered him to roll believers in pitch and set them on fire making them human torches. Could it be that 30 years earlier the young Flavius Clemens had witnessed the courage of these Christians at the hands of the brutality of his father and the influence of a young “*Narcissus*” became a follower of Jesus himself?

Vs. 12 The names of “*Tryphena*” and “*Tryphosa*” suggest nobility as their names mean “*dainty*” and “*delicate*” yet in Christ they had become hard workers. *Think of that a moment as Jesus can take a person born in slavery and make them royalty and he can take one born to nobility and make them even greater royalty by making them His servants*. “*Persis*” (verses 12b) was yet another woman who served whom Paul calls “*the darling*” she must have been a sweet heart in her service to others.

Vs. 13 Rufus perhaps is the same one spoken of in Mark 15:21 and if so his father was Simon the Cyrene who was compelled to carry the cross of Jesus on that first Good Friday as he was there to celebrate the pass over.

Vs.14 It seems here in these five names as well as those not mentioned is a group of young Greek businessman that that had come to Rome and started a home church at their place. I love that When folks that share something in common band together to share Someone in common pooling their time, talent and treasure to impact their communities!

Vs. 15-16 Here again is another group that most likely made up a house church: “*Philologus*” (verse 15) was probably a nick name as it means “*lover of the Word*” and he gathered together with these men and women to “*love each other*” because they loved the Word!

Of the rest of these names, Paul finds something wonderful to say about almost every one of them - noting their labor, his special regard for them (beloved), their standing in the Lord (approved in Christ . . . in the Lord . . . chosen in the Lord). It shows Paul's generous way of paying compliments in a way meant to build up God's people. In Luke 7:45 we are told that the common greeting was a kiss. Based upon a comment from Clement of Alexandria it seems that this practice was later abused.